

I LIKE ART

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Joseph Sorrentino

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PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

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SYNOPSIS: Frank and Harry bump into each other at a gallery opening and begin a conversation about art. When Frank announces his desire to go to Japan to study Noh Theater, Harry misunderstands and is led to believe that there is no theater in Japan. This play pays homage to Abbott and Costello's "Who's On First."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(TWO MEN)

FRANK.....A well-dressed, well-spoken man, in his mid-late 30s. He's an actor.

HARRYA much less well-dressed man, in his late-50s. He's a blue collar worker. Or was one, anyway.

SETTING

An art gallery, opening night. Frank, dressed all in black is holding a glass of wine. He has helped himself to quite a bit of wine. He looks at paintings, chuckling to himself. There's a table with a bottle of wine and plates with chips. Harry walks on. He has a backpack. He's helped himself to plenty of wine. Harry goes to the table and pours some wine. He corks the bottle, puts it in his backpack. He pulls an empty chip bag from his backpack and empties the chips on the table into it. He's about to leave when Frank speaks; they speak more to themselves than to each other at first.

All in the Name of Frankenharry . . .

Joseph Sorrentino's *Frankenharry* plays get their name from the two unforgettable Philadelphia actors, Frank X and Harry Philibosian, who starred in the original Philadelphia Fringe Festival productions. Although the relational plays are not really linked, there is an underlying “opposites truly do attract” thread. Frank is usually the urbane, well-dressed and well-spoken actor while Harry is more of a blue collar Everyman stumbling his way through life. Whenever he stumbles into Frank's life, it almost always ends with surprising and refreshingly comic results. The sharply drawn characters with contrasting qualities give audiences a reason to get involved with them over and over again. These Philadelphia Fringe favorites have been called “clever . . . idiosyncratic,” “ . . . genuinely funny” and “hilarious” and may be produced individually or as “An Evening with Frankenharry.”

AT RISE:

FRANK: Good God . . . I mean . . . the things that pass for art these days. (*HARRY stops, looks at paintings.*) I don't know why I bother to come to these openings anymore.

HARRY: Me neither. You don't get here early enough, the wine's all gone and all ya get's a couple lousy crumbs. What's the sense?

FRANK: Makes no sense at all. Now in New York, one can still feast on art.

HARRY: My wife . . . she was from New York. Her and her damn family feasted on whatever they got their grubby little hands on . . . buncha damn locust.

FRANK: (*Points to painting.*) Look at that. My art teacher told me never to do that. (*In front of new painting.*) Now the meaning here is so obvious it's almost insulting.

HARRY: Insultin' me alla time . . .

FRANK: (*Walks to table, looking for wine.*) Huh . . . damn locust. (*Starts to leave.*)

HARRY: (*Pulls bottle from backpack.*) Hey . . . care for a little snort?

FRANK: Don't mind if I do (*HARRY pours.*) Thanks. Carry your own around, huh?

HARRY: Better believe it. You can't count on gettin' nothin' these days. Buncha damn locust.

FRANK: You're tellin me.

HARRY: I got some other stuff here (*Offers FRANK chips.*)

FRANK: You are well prepared.

HARRY: Semper fi.

FRANK: Semper fi?

HARRY: Always be prepared. That's what Semper fi means. But if ya get to the better galleries . . . grab yourself a handful of cheese, handful of crackers, you got yourself a meal. You are good to go.

FRANK: Go to a lot of openings?

HARRY: All I can

FRANK: Nice to meet a real aficionado

HARRY: A what?

FRANK: Aficionado. An . . .

HARRY: Oh yeah . . . I'm definitely one of them. Plus I like art.

FRANK: Do you?

HARRY: Whaddya kiddin'? 'Course I like art. I seen art. Not all art but what I seen I liked.

FRANK: Of course.

HARRY: My wife . . . she liked art too. Did a lotta paintin' herself. Portraits and what not mostly.

FRANK: Emulate anyone in particular? *(Pause.)* Copy anyone?

HARRY: I got no mind for names. Mostly she did them paintin's . . . you know . . . them kids with the big eyes . . .

FRANK: Really . . .

HARRY: Oh yeah. Real emotional stuff, if you ask me. I was always tellin' her she should sell the stuff . . . there's money to be made ya know. I ain't sayin' she could run with the big dogs but I figure, you price somethin' right, somebody's gonna buy it. We never did see eye to eye on that. How 'bout you?

FRANK: Me?

HARRY: You an artist?

FRANK: Yes. Well, actually, I'm a theater artist.

HARRY: What, you paint theaters?

FRANK: Heavens no. A theater artist . . . an actor.

HARRY: No kiddin'. Been in anythin'?

FRANK: Not lately. There's nothing I'd even consider auditioning for. My God, the theater scene is so . . . so cliché, know what I mean?

HARRY: Cliché . . . sure I know what cliché means. Whaddya think? I been to college. More wine?

FRANK: Don't mind if I do.

HARRY: Actin' . . . that's gotta pay pretty good, right?

FRANK: You kidding?

HARRY: What?

FRANK: The money . . . if you get any . . . it's never much.

HARRY: No kiddin' - -

FRANK: I don't know what I'm still doing here. I should leave.

HARRY: You don't hafta. I got plenty of stuff . . .

FRANK: What? No, no . . . I mean I should leave Philly . . . move.

HARRY: New York?

FRANK: Japan.

HARRY: Japan? I'll never understand why anyone would want to go there. I mean, why the hell am I gonna go to a place where they actually enjoy eatin' raw fish? Someone puts a gun to my head, OK maybe I eat it. Other than that . . .

FRANK: I loved it. It's an incredible place. Wonderful people . . . beautiful country . . .

HARRY: I seen pictures . . . in them books . . .

FRANK: And best of all . . . Noh theater.

HARRY: What?

FRANK: Noh Theater. They have Noh Theater.

HARRY: Wait a second . . . you tellin' me they have no theater in Japan?

FRANK: It's what they're known for.

HARRY: Well I'll be.

FRANK: What, you didn't know?

HARRY: I just figured after we beat them in World War Two, I thought we gave 'em everythin' we had . . . all the modern stuff . . . includin' theater.

FRANK: I'm sure we tried but thank God they held onto Noh Theater.

HARRY: No theater . . . ain't that somethin'? So goin' there, it was like a break for you?

FRANK: A break? More like a revelation. I mean, Japan's where Noh Theater began. Other countries have Noh Theater . . .

HARRY: Other countries have no theater?

FRANK: Of course.

HARRY: Jeez . . . I never knew . . . gotta be a lotta third world countries and what not I guess. Some sorta religious thing, huh?

FRANK: It is in Japan. After centuries of Noh Theater . . .

HARRY: Centuries. Well I'll be damned. Centuries of no theater.

FRANK: Oh yeah. They got it kicked over there . . . Noh directors, Noh producers, Noh actors.

HARRY: No actors even?

FRANK: Can you imagine?

HARRY: Boy can I. Must be heaven.

FRANK: It is.

HARRY: They're the sons of bitches drinkin' all the wine and eatin' all the food around here.

FRANK: That would never happen with Noh actors.

HARRY: You're tellin' me. Buncha damn locust, the actors here. Present company excluded, of course.

FRANK: It takes real dedication to do Noh theater. All that rehearsal.

HARRY: Rehearsal?

FRANK: Yes.

HARRY: Rehearsal for what?

FRANK: For Noh Theater.

HARRY: You tellin' me they hafta rehearse?

FRANK: What do you think, you just show up and do Noh Theater?

HARRY: Well I just figured . . . I mean if it's no theater . . .

FRANK: Oh . . . it's an incredible amount of rehearsal.

HARRY: Boy this is really . . . I am really out of the loop here.

FRANK: I sat in on a rehearsal there. *(Pause, sees HARRY looking confused.)* What?

HARRY: I just can't believe you gotta rehearse to do no theater.

FRANK: Of course you do. Noh performances are incredibly precise . . . the audience is extremely demanding.

HARRY: Audience? What audience?

FRANK: What audience? All the people in the seats. That's what audience.

HARRY: You tellin' me people show up for no theater?

FRANK: Show up? They're mad for it. They show up in droves. *(HARRY laughs.)* What's so funny?

HARRY: You joker. You really had me goin' there for a minute. You really did. No theater . . . no actors . . . no rehearsals. I'm not as dumb as I look ya know.

FRANK: What are you talking about?

HARRY: People goin' to see no theater . . .

FRANK: I'm telling you, they're mad for it. Absolutely mad for it.

HARRY: You expect me to believe . . . you really expect me to believe people get dressed up, go out and sit around watchin' no theater? Why not just stay home, watch no TV?

FRANK: It would never work on TV. Besides, it's the whole experience . . . it's the audience watching Noh theater as much as anything.

HARRY: My wife . . . she liked theater . . . I can just imagine, 'C'mon honey, let's get dressed up and see no theater, but first we'll stop and have no dinner.' Bad enough she was always on me for not takin' her out . . . maybe that was the problem with us . . . but with my salary . . . you joker . . . no theater . . . you really had me goin' for a minute.

FRANK: I am not kidding.

HARRY: No?

FRANK: Cross my heart.

HARRY: Look in my eyes. Go ahead. (*FRANK does.*) People actually go to see no theater?

FRANK: Yes.

HARRY: I'll be damned. Gotta be a cultural thing.

FRANK: It's like going to the opera. Very expensive.

HARRY: They pay to see no theater?

FRANK: Of course they do.

HARRY: Jeez, would I love a piece of that action.

FRANK: The government subsidizes it up the wazoo but tickets are still very expensive.

HARRY: The government pays 'em for doin' no theater.

FRANK: Amazing, isn't it?

HARRY: Jeez, and here I'm thinkin' farmers got it made gettin' paid for growin' no vegetables. Them people in Japan got an even sweeter deal. You know, word gets out about this, everyone's gonna wanna do it.

FRANK: And the actors . . . the ones that do Noh Theater . . . they're as big as any star in Hollywood. Bigger. Demigods, practically. And do they ever rake in the bucks.

HARRY: For doin' no theater.

FRANK: They deserve it. Doing Noh Theater's very demanding.

HARRY: Boy would my wife have appreciated that. Woman never did no work in her life. If she coulda gotten paid for it she woulda been a millionaire . . . Lemmee ask ya, do they have no movies? I

could sorta understand that. Grab yourself a big bag of popcorn, ice cold Coke. Or Pepsi . . .

FRANK: I don't think it would translate well to film.

HARRY: Yeah, you're probably right. There's the language difference and . . . I mean, ya gotta give the people somethin', right? If ya got no theater . . .

FRANK: What else do you need?

HARRY: But I'm tellin' ya . . . I still can't . . . Genius . . . no theater . . . gettin' paid for it . . . and gettin' people to show up and gettin' them to pay for it . . . pure genius. Jeez, here I am thinkin' I'm a man of the world. Just goes to show ya . . . *(Pause.)*

FRANK: What am I doing here?

HARRY: Talkin'. We're just talkin' is all.

FRANK: Exactly. Talking. That's all I ever do. Talk. I'm tired of talking. I should be doing. I should be doing Noh Theater.

HARRY: Ya know, ya should.

FRANK: I should. I should be in Japan.

HARRY: That's the ticket. Go to a place where they appreciate no theater.

FRANK: Good God, you're right.

HARRY: Why stick around here gettin' no pay for doin' theater when you can be in Japan gettin' pay for doing no theater? Paid for no actin', no rehearsin' . . . you don't have to worry 'cause the audience can't be expectin' much. I mean, they're showin' up for no theater, right?

FRANK: No, no . . . you're right. Damn it, I'm finally going to do it. Thanks. That's what I need to do. I can't thank you enough.

HARRY: You're welcome. My wife . . . she was always sayin' how I could help other people alla time. Never could seem to help her, though. Easy to give advice to a stranger, right?

FRANK starts to leave.

FRANK: May I . . . may I . . . uhm . . . I'm just curious . . . where is your wife?

HARRY: I lost her . . . couple years ago this was.

FRANK: I'm terribly sorry . . . I didn't . . . I never should have . . .

HARRY: No, no. It's OK. It was in K-Mart.

FRANK: K-Mart?

HARRY: Yeah.

FRANK: Ah. Well, I'm off.

HARRY: Break a leg. Hell, break two legs. (*FRANK leaves.*
HARRY waits a moment, walks to table.)

HARRY: Buncha damn . . . (*Reaches under table, finds bottle of wine.*) Yep . . . they always hide one. (*Starts to leave, looks at paintings.*) Ya know, I like art. (*Walks off.*)

Lights down.

THE END