

# ALL IN THE TIMING

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FOURTEEN PLAYS

David Ives

"Utterly delightful one-act plays that percolate with comic brio.... There is a real heart beneath Ives's intellectual tomfoolery."

—The New York Times

*The Universal Language* received its premiere at Primary Stages (Casey Childs, artistic director) in New York City in December 1993. It was directed by Jason McConnell Buzas; the set design was by Bruce Goodrich; costume design was by Sharon Lynch; lighting design was by Deborah Constantine. The cast was as follows:

DAWN	Wendy Lawless
DON	Robert Stanton
YOUNG MAN	Ted Neustadt

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*A small rented office set up as a classroom. There is a door to the outside at right, another door at left. In the room are a battered desk; a row of three old chairs; and a blackboard on which is written, in large letters, "HE, SHE, IT" and below that, "ARF." Around the top of the walls is a set of numerals, one to eight, but instead of being identified in English ("ONE, TWO, THREE," etc.) we read "WEN, YÜ, FRE, FAL, FYND, IFF, HEVEN, WAITZ."*

*At lights up, no one is onstage. We hear a quiet knock at the door right, and it opens to reveal DAWN, late twenties, plainly dressed, with a stutter.*

DAWN: H-h-h-hello . . . ? *(She steps in quietly.)* Hello? Is any-b-b-body here? *(No response. She sees the blackboard, reads.)* "He. She. It. Arf." *(She notices the numbers around the walls, and reads.)* "Wen—yü—fre—fal—fynd—iff—heven—waitz." *(Noticing the empty chairs, she practices her greeting, as if there were people sitting in them.)* Hello, my name is Dawn. It's very nice to meet you. How do you do, my name is Dawn. A pleasure to meet you. Hello. My name is Dawn.

*(The door at left opens and DON appears, about thirty, in lab coat and glasses.)*

DON: Velcro! [Welcome!]

DAWN: Excuse me?

DON: Velcro! Bell jar, Froyling! Harvardyu? [Welcome. Good day, Miss. How are you?]

DAWN: H-h-h-how do you d-d-d-do, my n-n-name is—  
*(Breaks off.)* I'm sorry. *(She turns to go.)*

DON: Oop, oop, oop! Varta, Froyling! Varta! Varta! [No, no, no! Wait, Miss! Wait!]

DAWN: I'm v-very sorry to b-b-bother you.

DON: Mock—*klahtoo boddami nikto!* *Ventrica!* *Ventrica, ventrica.* Police! [But—you're not bothering me at all! Enter! Please.]

DAWN: Really—I think I have the wrong place.

DON: Da *rrroongplatz?* Oop da-*doll!* Du doppa da *rektplatz!* Da-meetcha playzeer. *Comintern.* Police. Plop da chah. [The wrong place? Not at all! You have the right place. Pleased to meet you. Come in. Please. Have a seat.]

DAWN: Well. J-just for a second.

DON (*cleaning up papers on the floor*): Squeegie la mezza. [Excuse the mess.] (*He points to a chair.*) Zitz?

DAWN: No thank you. (*She sits.*)

DON: Argo. [So.] Bell jar, Froyling. Harvardyu?

DAWN: "Bell jar"?

DON: Bell jar. Bell. Jar. Belljar!

DAWN: Is that "good day"?

DON: Ding! [Yes.] "Bell jar" arf "good day." Epp— [And.] Harvardyu?

DAWN: Harvard University?

DON: Oop! [No.] Harvardyu?

DAWN: Howard Hughes?

DON: Oop. Harvardyu?

DAWN: Oh! "How are you."

DON: Bleeny, bleeny! Bonanza bleeny! [Good, good, very good.]

DAWN: Is this Thirty East Seventh?

DON: Thirsty oyster heventh. Ding. [Thirty East Seventh. Yes.]

DAWN: Suite 662?

DON: Iff-iff-yü. Anchor ding. [Six-six-two. Right again.]

DAWN: Room B?

DON: Rambeau.

DAWN: The School of Unamunda?

DON: Hets arf dada Unamunda *Kaka-daymee.* [This is the School of Unamunda.] Epp vot kennedy *doopferyu?* [And what can I do for you?]

DAWN: Excuse me . . . ?

DON: Vot. Kennedy. Doopferyu?

DAWN: Well. I s-saw an ad in the n-newspaper.

DON: Video da klip enda peeper? Epp? Knish?

DAWN: Well it says— (*She takes a newspaper clipping out of her purse. Reads.*) "Learn Unamunda, the universal language."

DON: "Lick Unamunda, da linkwa looniversahl!" (*A banner unfurls which says just that. Accent on "sahl," by the way.*)

DAWN: "The language that will unite all humankind."

DON: "Da linkwa het barf oonidevairsify alla da peepholes enda vooold!" (*DAWN raises her hand.*) Quisling?

DAWN: Do you speak English?

DON: "English" . . . ?

DAWN: English.

DON: Ah! Johncleese!

DAWN: Yes. Johncleese.

DON: Johncleese. Squeegie, squeegie. Alaska, iago parladoop johncleese. [Sorry. Unfortunately, I don't speak English.]

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DAWN: No johncleese at all?

DON: One, two, three worlds. "Khello. Goombye. Rice Krispies. Chevrolet." Et cinema, et cinema. Mock—votsdai beesnest, bella Froyling? [But—what brings you here?]

DAWN: Well I wanted to be the first. Or among the first. To learn this universal language.

DON: Du arf entra di *feersta* di *feersten*. [You are among the first of the first.] Corngranulations. Ya kooch di anda. (*He kisses her hand.*) Epp! Voila-dimir da zamplification forum. (*He produces an application form.*)

DAWN: Well I'm not sure I'm ready to apply just yet. . . .

DON: Dai klink, pink dama? [Your name?]

DAWN: "Dai klink . . . ?"

DON: Votsdai klink? Vee klinks du?

DAWN: Um. No nabisco. (*As if to say, I don't understand.*)

DON: No nabisco. Klinks du Mary, klinks du Jane, orf Betsy, orf Barbara? Fred?

DAWN: Oh. My *name!*

DON: Attackly! Mi klink. Echo mi. "Mi klink . . ."

DAWN: Mi klink.

DON: "Arf." Parla.

DAWN: Mi klink arf Dawn di-di-di-Vito.

DON: Dawn di-di-di-Vito! Vot'n harmonika klink doppa du! [What a melodious name you have!]

DAWN: Actually, just one d-d-d-"d."

DON: Ah. Dawn di Vito. Squeegie.

DAWN: I have a s-s-slight s-s—

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DON: Stutter.

DAWN: Yes.

DON: Tonguestoppard. Problaymen mit da hoover.

DAWN: Da hoover?

DON (*points to his mouth*): Da hoover. Da veazle, da nozzle, da volvos, da hoover. Et cinema, et cinema. [Face, nose, lips. Etcetera, etcetera.] *Mock!* Hets arf blizzardo. Hets arf *molto* blizzardo! [This is very strange.]

DAWN: Something's wrong?

DON: Dusa klinks "Dawn." Iago klink "Don." Badabba? [Understand?]

DAWN: Um. No.

DON: Dawn-Don. Don-Dawn.

DAWN: Oh—I'm Dawn and you're Don.

DON: Ding! Arf blizzardo, oop?

DAWN: Arf blizzardo, yes.

DON: Votsdiss minsky? Dis para-dons. Dis co-inki-dance. [What does this mean? This paradox. This coincidence.]

DAWN: Well. Life is very funny sometimes.

DON: Di anda di destiny, dinksdu?

DAWN: Di anda di destiny . . . ?

DON: Neekolas importantay. Argo. Da binformations. (*Back to the application form.*) Edge?

DAWN: Twenty-eight.

DON: "Vont-wait." Slacks?

DAWN: Female.

DON: "Vittamin."

DAWN: How do you say "male"?

DON: "Aspirin." Oxipation?

DAWN: I'm a word processor.

DON: "Verboblender."

DAWN: Is Unamunda very hard to learn?

DON: Eedgy. Egsovereedgy. (*He picks up a book.*) Da bop.

DAWN: Da bop?

DON: Da bop.

DAWN: Oh. Book!

DON: Da bop. [The room.] Da rhoomba. [The walls.] Da valtz.  
[The door.] Isadora. [The chair.] Da chah. [Two chairs.] Da  
chah-chah.

DON & DAWN: Da chah-chah-chah! [Three chairs.]

DON: Braga! Sonia braga! Iago trattoria Shakespeare enda Una-  
munda.

DAWN: You're translating Shakespeare into Unamunda?

DON: Forsoot! Nintendo. [Listen.] "Ah Romeo, Romeo, bilko  
arfst du Romeo?" (*Pointing to a rose on the desk.*) "Na rosa  
pollyanna klink voop sent so pink!" Balloontiful, eh?

DAWN: Yes. Bonzo.

DON: Bonanza.

DAWN: Bonanza.

DON: "Mock visp! Vot loomen trip yondra fenstra sheint? Arf  
den oyster! Epp Juliet arf sonnnng!" Video, Froyling, Una-  
munda arf da linkwa *supreemka* di *amamor*! [You see, Miss,  
Unamunda is the supreme language of love.]

DAWN: You know, it's strange how much I understand.

DON: Natoraltissimississippiementay! Linkwa, pink dama, arf ar-  
moneea. Moozheek. Rintintintinnabulation! Epp Unamunda  
arf da melodeea looniversahl! Porky alla da peepholes enda  
vooold—all da peepholes enda looniverse cargo a shlong  
enda hartz. Epp det shlong arf . . . Unamunda! [Naturally!  
Language, sweet lady, is harmony. Music. And Unamunda  
is the universal melody. Because all the people in the  
world—all the people in the universe carry a song in their  
heart. And that song is . . . Unamunda!]

DAWN: So "linkwa" is "language"?

DON: Perzacto. Wen linkwa. (*He holds up one finger.*) Yü— (*Two  
fingers.*)

DAWN: Two—

DON: Linkages. Free— (*Three fingers.*)

DAWN: Three—

DON: Linguini.

DAWN: I see. And "is" is—?

DON: Arf.

DAWN: "Was" is—?

DON: Wharf.

DAWN: "Had been"—?

DON: Long wharf.

DAWN: And "will be"—?

DON: Barf. Arf, wharf, barf. Pasta, prison, furniture dances. [Past,  
present, future tenses.] Clara?

DAWN: Clara.

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