

Killing Time

a play in one act
by Neil Rhodes

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Killing Time by Neil Rhodes

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First performed by Llanymynech Amateur Dramatics Society at
Llanymynech Village Hall, 26th February 1999

Jacob	:	Eric Booth
Linda	:	Kate Allan
Stuart	:	Peter Coxhead
Malcolm	:	Neil Morley
Roger	:	Ian Pollitt

Directed by Neil Rhodes

Sound & Lighting	:	Ian Pollitt
Music	:	Neil Rhodes

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CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

- JACOB In his sixties. He is a quiet man, but authoritative, being the former tutor of the other three. He plays a wind or brass instrument.
- STUART In his forties. He is rather garrulous. He plays keyboards and synthesiser.
- LINDA In her forties. She is sharp and ironic. She sings.
- MALCOLM In his forties. He is energetic, but prone to self pity. He plays a drum synthesiser.
- ROGER The recording engineer. He is heard through the speakers.

Only Jacob needs to be able to play a musical instrument. Linda can sing as discordantly and a rhythmically as she wants. The other two are miming (unless the director wants the cast to create the discordant and experimental piece of music they are playing). The set is a recording studio: musical instruments, cable, microphones, chairs, and other bits and pieces, are scattered. There is a single exit. We assume the glass, and behind it the recording engineer, is downstage, because the actors walk to the edge of the stage to talk to him.

(A DISCORDANT PIECE OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC STARTS IN DARKNESS. AFTER A BAR OR TWO LIGHTS UP ON JACOB, PLAYING A WIND INSTRUMENT, LINDA VOCALISING, AND STUART MIMING PLAYING KEYBOARDS. THEY ARE FOLLOWING SCORES ON STANDS. SUDDENLY LINDA SCREAMS. THEY ALL STOP PLAYING)

STUART: That's not in the score.

LINDA: It is now.

(SHE SCREAMS AGAIN)

STUART: Shouldn't we stick to the score?

JACOB: Yes, we should.

LINDA: I'll stick it all right. Stick it up his... stick it...

JACOB: Linda.

LINDA: It's sunny outside. A lovely day to be sitting in the park. Oh God, I hate him. Is he there? Are you there? I hate you. Got that? Hate you!

(THE INDISTINCT VOICE OF ROGER, THE RECORDING ENGINEER,
COMES OVER THE SPEAKERS)

STUART: What?

JACOB: We can't hear you.

ROGER: Sorry. Is that better?

JACOB: Yes.

LINDA: What did you say?

ROGER: I said sorry, is that better?

LINDA: No, before!

ROGER: Oh. I said sorry...

LINDA: Before!

ROGER: It was before. You said you hated me. I was saying sorry.

LINDA: Not you, Roger. I don't hate you, I hate Franklin.

ROGER: Franklin's not here.

LINDA: (TO JACOB AND STUART) It's quarter past. Where is he?

ROGER: I don't know.

LINDA: Not you, Roger. (TO JACOB AND STUART) And where's bloody Malcolm? Oh God. I want to be outside.

JACOB: If we just get this done.

LINDA: But it's an absolute pile of shit. You know that.

JACOB: No, Linda, I don't know that.

STUART: I think it's good.

LINDA: What!

STUART: I've always liked the way Franklin gets right to the core of things in his music.

Killing Time

LINDA: Oh yes? He writes a piece called "Killing Time" and has a clock in it.

JACOB: Come on, Linda. You must admit, it's not like anything else he's done. He's not fixed in a rut.

LINDA: Yes, well, having been married to him for six years I can assure you he was never very good at rutting. I just think this is a waste of time.

STUART: Ah. You see.

LINDA: What do I see?

STUART: "Waste of time."

LINDA: That's what I said.

STUART: And that's what it's about. "Killing Time". How do you kill it? How can you waste it? Where does it come from, if we can lose it? Where does it go, if we've got rid of it?

LINDA: Stuart, it's wonderful that success hasn't changed you.

STUART: I hope it hasn't.

JACOB: Can we continue?

LINDA: But Franklin's not here!

JACOB: Franklin doesn't need to be here, Linda, we can follow the score.

STUART: And what's fascinating is that perhaps he's trying to get us thinking: is he here, in another sense? I mean, if time is the fourth dimension, why doesn't it behave like the other three? We can go forward, and sideways, and up, but we can only go one way in time. But suppose it's just our perception of time that sees it like that. And if we opened our eyes we could go anywhere in time, and we could leap, to the future, to the past, back to the present. Then, in that sense, he is here. And we're the ones who aren't.

(ENTER MALCOLM)

MALCOLM: Don't tell me, I know I'm late.

(MALCOLM KISSES LINDA)

LINDA: Oh no. You were already here. We were already there. No one's late, and no one's early.

Neil Rhodes

first wrote plays while working as an actor/teacher for a children's theatre company, but has since written mainly for adults. Five of his plays have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and 4, and one half-hour play has been broadcast on HTV. He has won the DAW Crawshay Cup for Best Original Script on four occasions, 1999's winner being *Killing Time*.

Killing Time

is a comedy with a serious twist. Four musicians gather in a recording studio, to play composer Franklin Campbell's latest piece of experimental music, whose theme is time and its passing. The trouble is, are they being foolish to be in a place with only one exit, and with Franklin on the outside? Especially when he holds a grudge against each of them: Linda, who was his wife until she went off with Malcolm; Malcolm, who was his best friend, until he went off with Linda; Jacob, who was his tutor at college but who failed him; and Stuart, who is, in Franklin's opinion, far less talented, but far more successful.

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