

THE DAY THE MUSIC CAME BACK

A short drama by
Alvaro Saar Rios

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www.youthplays.com
info@youthplays.com
424-703-5315

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

A.M.F.M., human, teenager.

BASS, human, teenager (character name sounds like "base").

DISCO, human, teenager.

TREBLE, human, teenager.

G MINOR, human, teenager.

SETTING

Somewhere in the United States. At least a hundred years in the future.

PRODUCTION NOTES

When possible, this play should be performed by an extremely diverse cast.

The moment where the characters hear music for the first time, the song should be unrecognizable to most of the audience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This play was commissioned by Beacon Academy.

It premiered at Beacon Academy's Spring One-Act Festival in Evanston, IL in Spring 2019, directed by Ava Dieden. The cast was as follows:

A.M.F.M.....Kalman Slater
BASS.....Eleanor Plunkett
DISCO.....Aine Murtagh
TREBLE.....Madie Morton
G MINOR.....Anneke Stracks

Original Music Composition by Kalman Slater.

(Somewhere in the United States. At least a hundred years in the future.)

(We are in an empty space.)

(As the play begins, we see A.M.F.M. telling a story. G MINOR, DISCO and TREBLE listen.)

A.M.F.M.: Went to go visit her again at the hospital. My grandmother. Went last night to see her. My parents didn't know. Snuck out and went straight there. She looked tired. Maybe that's why she finally told me.

She said her favorite singer was a woman who looked just like her mother. Long hair. Brown eyes. And her smile was one that made you forget all the troubles in your life.

My grandmother can't remember what her last name was. She said everyone only knew her by her first name anyway. Selena.

(Everyone in the space repeats "Selena" as if it is a chant.)

The first time she heard Selena's mmmmmmmmm...her mmmmmmusic was when she was five. Heard it on a player in her house. She said in those days, everyone had at least one. Said the government even let you turn the player on. But only on Sundays, though. You couldn't listen to it any other day. On the last day, the day before the beginning of the Days of Silence, that was the first time my grandmother heard Selena's voice. Even though it's been over a hundred years, she says she still hears her singing.

(Bang! A noise is heard offstage. Beat as everyone remains still.)

G MINOR: That's Bass.

(Some cover their own mouths in hopes of convincing G Minor to shut up. Moments later, we hear Bass's secret knock.)

Told you.

A.M.F.M.: Treble, go let Bass in.

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DISCO: WaitWaitWait. Treble, stop. We shouldn't open the door. Bass is late.

G MINOR: What's your deal, Disco? Why are you acting so crumpled?

DISCO: When we first met, we came up with rules to protect ourselves. Don't tell anyone your real name. Don't bring anything. Be at the door at your assigned time.

TREBLE: We've never had a meeting without Bass.

DISCO: Because Bass has always been here. On time. I know you all know this, but I feel I always have to remind everyone. If anyone finds out we are here talking about...you know.

G MINOR: Say it. Say "music." Ever since we've been meeting, I don't think I've ever heard you say it.

DISCO: Because I have seen what happens to people who say that word in public.

A.M.F.M.: You may have seen it, but I experienced it. And I'm still not afraid to say it. Mmmmmmmusic.

(Beat.)

DISCO: I'm sorry. I just— It just seems like things are getting worse. Go ahead, Treble.

(Treble exits.)

(Moments later, Treble enters followed by BASS.)

BASS: Thank you for letting me in. I thought about not coming. Because I missed my assigned time. I know. But you know how important these meetings are to me. And I made sure no one followed me. Won't happen again. I promise. And if I break that promise, you do not have to let me in.

DISCO: Why were you late?

BASS: Was at my grandfather's house.

TREBLE: Last meeting, you told us your grandfather died.

BASS: Good memory. And yes. His life did expire. That's why I was at his house today. I was helping my parents clean it out. My grandfather had a pile of bricks in his basement, and he never wanted anyone to touch them. Said he was going to use them but never did. My mom asked me to throw them away.

G MINOR: Ummm...not to sound like I don't care, but can we get back to the meeting? Whose turn is it?

BASS: I promise you will want to hear the rest of my story. So, I'm moving the bricks.

G MINOR: This is so riveting.

BASS: I grab the last one. It looks exactly like a brick but it feels...hollow. I shake it and it sounds like something is in it.

A.M.F.M.: Dead mouse?

BASS: Treble, will you check the door?

TREBLE: I know how to work a lock, Bass.

BASS: Please.

(Treble exits and then returns moments later.)

TREBLE: Locked.

BASS: Close your eyes. Everybody.

DISCO: Why are we closing –

G MINOR: Just do it.

DISCO: OK. They're closed.

(Bass pulls out an object – possibly an iPod, Walkman or phone – and presses a button.)

(Beat as nothing happens.)

BASS: Give me a sec. But keep your eyes closed.

(Bass presses button again. Still nothing.)

You were working earlier.

(Bass presses button a few more times but still no luck.)

DISCO: Can we open our eyes now?

BASS: Go ahead.

DISCO: What in the— You're not supposed to bring anything here. You know that.

TREBLE: What is that you're holding?

BASS: My surprise that doesn't work.

A.M.F.M.: But what is it?

TREBLE: Look at the way G Minor is looking at it.

G MINOR: It's... It's a music player!

(Long beat as everyone scatters away from Bass.)

BASS: Are you sure it's a player?

G MINOR: Saw a picture of one once. My grandfather showed it to me. Before he was taken away.

DISCO: That's a music player?! Oh, we are dead. We are so dead. I knew I shouldn't have come today. I had a feeling this morning. A bad one. And I didn't listen to it. We are soooooo dead.

A.M.F.M.: Disco, will you stop saying that?

DISCO: D.E.A.D.

BASS: It was working earlier. That's why I was late. I was listening to it.

TREBLE: In your grandfather's basement?! What is wrong with you? You know the government has a Listener in every

neighborhood. If anyone heard that thing, they are going to report it.

BASS: You should have heard it. It was...it was...no words I use will explain what it felt like in my ears.

DISCO: I want to leave! Now!

A.M.F.M.: Nobody leaves until midnight. That's also one of the rules we came up with.

DISCO: We let Bass in, even though Bass was late. Bass brought something, even though we are not supposed to. Don't tell me about rules.

G MINOR: We are safer in here.

DISCO: I don't want to be silenced.

TREBLE: Nobody made you come here. You came here just like we did. Voluntarily.

DISCO: Because all I thought we were going to do was talk about... That we were going to talk. Tell the stories our grandparents told us. Like we always do.

TREBLE: We could still get sent to the cages for talking about music.

DISCO: Going to the cages is different than being silenced, which is what will happen if we are caught with a music player. I want out!

BASS: If your ears took in what mine did, you would have done the same thing. I wasn't just hearing it. I was feeling it. It's not natural that we are not allowed to listen to music.

DISCO: Music is not worth dying for.

BASS: You wouldn't say that if you actually heard it.

(Beat.)

DISCO: Give me it.

BASS: Why?

DISCO: Give it.

G MINOR: I can see it in your eyes. You want to destroy it.

DISCO: You bet I do.

BASS: I won't let that happen.

A.M.F.M.: Neither will I.

(Disco looks to Treble and G Minor. They join Bass.)

(Long beat.)

DISCO: They. The Silencers. They visited my neighbors last night. The way they pounded on the door. My ears will never forget it. Bang-Bang-Bang! Bang-Bang-Bang!

Someone said my neighbors were hiding instruments in their walls. And it was true. They weren't even taken to jail. They were silenced right there in front of everyone. Things are just getting worse.

TREBLE: If you saw that happen, then why did you come today?

DISCO: Because I didn't want to just not show up.

A.M.F.M.: Others have done that.

DISCO: I know. So I know how it feels. Remember Boombox?

TREBLE: Boombox? You mean Boom?

G MINOR: I totally forgot about Boom.

BASS: In my opinion, the best storyteller.

A.M.F.M.: Boom's grandparents were underground musicians. Even made their own instruments.

DISCO: The day Boom was supposed to show up and tell another story about Grandma and Grandpa Boom, what happened? Boom didn't show. And we don't know what happened to Boom because, well...because we don't know. But I never got to say goodbye. And that might sound too emotional for some of you, but that's what affected me the most. I never got to say goodbye to Boom. And I don't know how much I mean to you all, but you all mean a lot to me. These meetings have meant a lot. And I can't just not show up. I at least have to say goodbye.

BASS: Wait. What are you saying? You're never coming back?

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