

The Box

By Alan Austin

Arizona Performing Arts Theatre, LLC
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CAST

Female in Audience

Stage Manager

Lighting/Sound Engineer (Jim)

Male Voice

Scene: Empty stage. Two blocks centre. House lights up. No stage lighting. Enter Stage manager . Female is planted in front row of audience. Male voice is backstage and Jim is in Lighting/Sound booth. Stage Manager enters as soon as pre-show music is over.

STAGE MANAGER

Shouts to Jim in lighting booth

There's a big box backstage they want moved to the main stage. You gotta give me a hand. Come on, it's heavy.

Exits. Re-enters with Jim. They are carrying a six foot long packing case. They both struggle with its weight.

Jesus, this is heavy! Put it on the blocks. It's got an address on it. Theatre Artists Studio. Well at least that much makes sense. As soon as they tell me they're ready to start, I'll let you know.

Exit. Pause

House lights go down. Blackout. A cell phone rings.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Oh, it must be mine. I'm sorry. I'm so embarrassed. I could have sworn I turned it off.

She finds the phone in her bag, opens it so its' light shines and audience can see it and then turns it off. Stage lights come up.

Pause.

There's a gentle tapping from inside the box.

Pause. More tapping. Slightly more urgent.

MALE VOICE

Hello.

Pause

Hello. Is anybody there?

Pause

Where am I?

Pause. More urgent knocking.

Could someone help me please? Hello?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

From her seat
You're in a theatre.

MALE VOICE

Is someone there?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Louder
You're in a theatre.

MALE VOICE

Hello! I thought for a moment I was on my own.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

No, there are a lot of people here.

MALE VOICE

It's very quiet.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

We're waiting for a play to begin.

MALE VOICE

That's umm... interesting.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

You're on the stage.

MALE VOICE

Nobody told me.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Goes to box on stage.
What are you doing in that er..... box?

MALE VOICE

Actually there's not much room to do anything.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

No , I mean why are you in there?

MALE VOICE

I don't know. The last thing I remember I was driving up from Tucson.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Really? I came up from Tucson this morning.

MALE VOICE

Could you get someone to help get me out of here ? It's claustrophobic.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

It must be awfully hot! I'll find the Stage Manager. He was just here.

She crosses Uc to look backstage

Hello? Hellooo? Is anybody there?

Pause

There doesn't seem to be anyone around. Hello?

Stage Manager enters from curtains stage left and goes center

STAGE MANAGER

Yea?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I was in the audience... and... there's a man in this box. He wants to get out. It's very claustrophobic.

STAGE MANAGER

A man? In this box? Are you crazy lady?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I heard him. We all heard him. He wants to get out.

STAGE MANAGER

Hello "man in the box".

He knocks. Silence

Anyone there?

Silence

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

He was talking a minute ago. He comes from Tucson.

STAGE MANAGER

Well if it makes you happy, I'll go and get a screwdriver.
We've got to unpack it anyway. I think it's for a play.

*Walks carefully around the box looking for screws to see
how to open it.*

I'll probably need a hammer and a crowbar too. I'll see
what I can find.

Exits

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Hello? Are you there?

MALE VOICE

I must have passed out. I felt so... strange.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

The Stage Manager has gone to get some tools to open
the box so we can get you out.

MALE VOICE

Thank you. Sorry to be such a problem.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Can you breathe?

MALE VOICE

Yes. I feel fine now. I just don't know how I ended up
here.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Your voice sounds familiar.

MALE VOICE

I was going to say that to you.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Maybe we've met. Tucson's not that big a place.

MALE VOICE

My name is Jim.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I'm Mary.

MALE VOICE

Nice to meet you Mary. I have a niece named Mary.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Are you sure you can breathe all right in there?

MALE VOICE

What?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Can you breathe?

MALE VOICE

Sure. I'm feeling much more comfortable. How about you?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I'm fine. Just a little embarrassed in front of the audience. They're very understanding though.

MALE VOICE

The audience?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Yes.

MALE VOICE

What are they waiting for?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

They've been waiting for the show to begin. Now I think they really want to make sure that you're all right.

MALE VOICE

Could you apologize for me for holding up the show?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

(to audience)

He's sorry he's holding up the show.

MALE VOICE

You sound like such a nice person.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Sits on edge of box.

Thank you.

MALE VOICE

I hope you don't mind me asking but ...are you married?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

No. I'm single.

MALE VOICE

I'm single too.

Pause.

I'm always so... busy.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I can identify with that ...he should be back any minute...the Stage Manager.... with the screwdriver. You must be awfully hot in there.

MALE VOICE

No, honestly I'm fine.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

We're going to watch some short plays tonight. You might want to stay.

MALE VOICE

What?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

We're going to watch some short plays.

MALE VOICE

What about?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Lots of things... life I suppose ... the way people treat each other... loneliness...separation...that kind of thing.... I suppose you could call it the human condition.

MALE VOICE

Serious stuff.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Yes, but not always doom and gloom. There has to be a few laughs along the way... mistakes ... otherwise... what would be the point?

MALE VOICE

You're right.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I think I'll go back to my seat now. It was nice meeting you.

Re-enter Stage Manager so Female does not leave but stays to help him open the box.

STAGE MANAGER

OK! We have a screwdriver and a crowbar.

He drops them noisily on the top of the box.

We need to get this off stage ASAP. You know what they say... the show must go on. You said you heard voices.. Like Joan of Arc?

(He laughs)

Voices? Joan of Arc... she heard voices...I read it somewhere.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

I'm telling you, there's a man inside that box. He's from Tucson. His name is Jim.

STAGE MANAGER

He listens with his ear to the box, takes out cross from under shirt and then delivers the following as he attempts to open the box.

I can't hear anything. Anyway, if someone's in there we'll get him out. Lousy construction. I hope it's the new lighting. These screws are ancient. I'll just put the crowbar under here.

He levers up one end of the top.

Could you get the other end?

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

She lifts the other end of the top of the box.

Sure.

STAGE MANAGER

There we go.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Oh my God.

She drops to her knees.

There's no one here. There's no one here. But I heard a voice. I know I heard a voice. I hope...

She pulls a shawl close around her and begins crying, her shoulders heaving.

STAGE MANAGER

(cuts her off as soon as she says "I hope... He now becomes more caring)

There's just papers. Old newspapers and magazines. Look, I'm sorry you're upset but there's no one here.

Why don't you go back to your seat and take it easy?
Come on. It's just some old papers. Probably sent to the
wrong place.

Takes her back to her seat.

Pause. Goes back to box on stage.

Hey, Jim, come on down. We gotta get this box off the
stage.

*Jim comes down from sound booth to box. Dialogue
continues as box is taken off stage.*

Wasn't this heavy when we brought it in? I'm sure it
was! You know this is really weird. This was so heavy
when we brought it in here.

(They continue to ad lib as they take the box offstage.)

MALE VOICE

*Voice comes on as soon as Stage Manager and Jim are off.
Very slow light fade timed with voice. Each line is slower
and last one is similar to a computerized voice.*

Hello? Is anybody there? ... Is anybody there? ... Is...
anybody... there?

*After final 'Is anybody there?' there is a sound effect of a
terrible car wreck. After the sound effect, the female rises
and hurriedly exits. As she does, her cell phone rings.*

Prop List

Box. Similar to a coffin or packing box. 6 foot long, 3 foot wide and about
18 inches deep. In the bottom there is heavy mesh at center intervals to
allow sound to escape. The top is held on by very large oversized screws.
The address is on the side.

Speakers for inside box so Male Voice appears to come from box.

Headphones for Male Voice so he can hear Female clearly and block out other noise.

Screwdriver, crow bar and hammer for Stage Manager

Two large wooden boxes painted black to put the Box on.

Cell phone with a bright light for Female in Audience in a large purse.

Sound effect of car wreck

Shawl for Female in Audience