ROCKABYE

JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH

Currency Press,
Sydney

MTC MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

CURRENCY PLAYS

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To John Bluthal

Rockabye was first produced by Melbourne Theatre Company at the Sumner Theatre, Melbourne, on 8 August 2009, with the following cast:

SIDNEY JONES	Nicki Wendt
JULIA	Kate Atkinson
ALFIE / KURT	Richard Piper
TOBIAS BERESFORD	Pacharo Mzembe
LAYLA	Zahra Newman
ESME	Betty Bobbitt
JOLYON	Daniel Frederiksen

Director, Simon Phillips
Set Designer, Brian Thomson
Costume Designer, Esther Marie Hayes
Lighting Designer, Philip Lethlean
Composer / Sound Designer, Peter Farnan

CHARACTERS

SIDNEY JONES, attractive, slim, 40s
JULIA, late 20s/early 30s, very attractive
ALFIE, in his late 40s/early 50s
TOBIAS BERESFORD, around 30, handsome, black
LAYLA, around 30, beautiful, black
ESME, in her 60s
JOLYON, in his 30s
KURT, in his 30s, German

The actor who plays Jolyon or Alfie can also play Kurt.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks go to Matt Cameron, Peter Farnan, Raymond Gill and the cast of the Melbourne Theatre Company production for their invaluable insights in the evolution of the play. Thanks also to Ann Tonks, Kylie McCormack, Martina Murray and all at the MTC. Particular thanks to Simon Phillips, for endurance, insight, patience, fortitude and faith.

This play went to press before the end of rehearsals and may differ from the play as performed.

OPENING IMAGE

A spotlight in the middle of darkness. A roughly constructed, makeshift bassinet with a baby in it. A soundscape builds. It's the soundtrack of a life—tiny snatches of African music, crying, laughter, a mother singing a lullaby, traffic noises, animal noises, babies crying, soothing words, airplane noises, snatches of conversation, more African music, lullabies, TV, radio—a chaotic but rhythmically beautiful jumble of culturally diverse sounds, stolen from a life.

The spotlight diminishes on the bassinet, which vanishes, as the lights come up.

SCENE ONE

An elegant, hiply decorated London mansion.

SIDNEY*, a very attractive, thin woman in her mid forties, wearing expensive exercise clothes, is sitting on a sofa in a smartly appointed home office with her feet on the coffee table while* JULIA*, casually dressed, wearing a Bluetooth and carrying a clipboard, stands in front of her.*

Their exchange is rapid-fire.

SIDNEY: And the thing—
JULIA: Done—
SIDNEY: The benefit—
JULIA: I said no—
SIDNEY: Nicely?
JULIA: Very nicely—You've previously—
SIDNEY: Yes, I have—
JULIA: Committed to a—
SIDNEY: What?
JULIA: Breast—
SIDNEY: Good—

JULIA: Cancer—
SIDNEY: Excellent—
JULIA: Function previously—
SIDNEY: Good—
JULIA: Previous to their own.

Quick beat.

SIDNEY: *Is* there a breast cancer function?
JULIA: No.

Quick beat.

SIDNEY: Photos?
JULIA: They wanted the second one—
SIDNEY: The big—the one with—
JULIA: The muscly one—
SIDNEY: The big guy in the thong—
JULIA: In the thong, yes. Well—
SIDNEY: —endowed.
JULIA: Jamal—
SIDNEY: The one with me—
JULIA: He had his crotch in your—
SIDNEY: Where are we with the visa?
JULIA: Howard's onto it. The whole firm is—Howard cancelled the holiday—
SIDNEY: He cancelled a public holiday?
JULIA: Not for the public—
SIDNEY: He cancelled a public holiday?
JULIA: For the firm. You know he's always trying to impress you.
SIDNEY: Did I ask?
JULIA: No.
SIDNEY: Did I?
JULIA: No.
SIDNEY: For your opinion?
JULIA: No you didn't.
SIDNEY: Coloured tabs?

JULIA: They only make single colours.
SIDNEY: I *wanted* multicoloured.
JULIA: You can mix the packets yourself.
SIDNEY: What? *Self-mix?*
JULIA: Let's move on.
SIDNEY: The wheatgerm.
JULIA: Didn't have Peruvian. Only, ah, wherever it normally comes from.
SIDNEY: I have to do everything myself!
JULIA: I've got Esme on the net.
SIDNEY: Esme thinks the net is something you wear on your head at bedtime.
JULIA: I'm training her.
SIDNEY: It has to be Peruvian or I'm bloated—
JULIA: I know.
SIDNEY: The bloats—
JULIA: I know.
SIDNEY: And if that happens, the wardrobe's ruined.
JULIA: Berlin—
SIDNEY: Let's talk about Berlin—
JULIA: Berlin's good—
SIDNEY: Did you stop by?
JULIA: Yes
SIDNEY: And?
JULIA: They have the size six.
SIDNEY: Hallelujah!
JULIA: That's the good news.
SIDNEY: Slowly.
JULIA: The size six is missing a button.
SIDNEY: What?
JULIA: Yes—
SIDNEY: A button?
JULIA: Yes.
SIDNEY: You're kidding me?

JULIA: No. Unfortunately.
SIDNEY: Did they look?
JULIA: They looked.
SIDNEY: They looked?
JULIA: They had fifteen sales assistants on it.
SIDNEY: *Blind* sales assistants.
JULIA: They're looking but it's not simple.
SIDNEY: Haven't they got another fucking button?
JULIA: In Paris. Maybe. Only they'd have to actually make it.
SIDNEY: They'd have to make it?
JULIA: Somebody would have to make it. And not just anybody.
SIDNEY: The suspense is killing me.
JULIA: Yvette.
SIDNEY: Yvette?
JULIA: Makes that button.
SIDNEY: Yvette.
JULIA: The button maker. Apparently there are three women in the *atelier* and they make the buttons. But first they'd have to source the original fabric.
SIDNEY: Before they make the button?
JULIA: It's a silk crepe de chine.
SIDNEY: Do I look like an idiot?
JULIA: The fabric's no longer in the *atelier*, so they have to go to the source.
SIDNEY: The source.
JULIA: In the foothills.
SIDNEY: The foothills?
JULIA: The Uzbekistan foothills.
SIDNEY: They make fabric in the Uzbekistan foothills?
JULIA: Yes they do. And to make the button they have to send someone in—
SIDNEY: To Uzbekistan?
JULIA: To the underground city. The only way in is by mountain goat.
SIDNEY: To get a one-inch piece of ocelot-print crepe de chine?
JULIA: If you want the top—

SIDNEY: I want the top—
JULIA: You need the button.
SIDNEY: Who's got the goat?
JULIA: I'm on top of it—
SIDNEY: You're on top of the goat?
JULIA: Metaphorically.

Beat. They both sit in silence.

SIDNEY: Get the goat.
JULIA: Consider it… got. [*Beat.*] Okay. The Arbiter.
SIDNEY: [*steeling herself*] Okay.
JULIA: There's a chance.
SIDNEY: There's no chance, Julia.
JULIA: He might like it—
SIDNEY: He won't like it—
JULIA: Alfie sent over a file of his stuff. He wants you to read it just in case—
SIDNEY: What stuff?
JULIA: Everything from Lady Gaga to Angelina Jolie.
SIDNEY: He hates me, Julia—
JULIA: It's worth a shot. He's the one, Sidney.
SIDNEY: I know he's the one, Julia.
JULIA: He's the one who can—
SIDNEY: I know, Julia. I know he's the one.
JULIA: Only last week, he won a *British Press Award*—
SIDNEY: A *Hackademy* award, you mean—
JULIA: He's not a hack—
SIDNEY: They're all hacks, Julia—
JULIA: He's a very very well-respected hack, Sidney. And his late-night show is officially the hippest show in town.
SIDNEY: Oh, so *I*—an industry fixture with *decades* of—of—of success and many many award… nights—and three ads and at least one affair with European royalty, am expected to *prostrate* myself before a twenty-something upstart who happens to be riding the zeitgeist, in the hope that he deigns to shine his benevolent light on my new album?

Beat.

JULIA: Yes.

SIDNEY: [*just slightly hopeful*] He's heard the album?

JULIA: He's heard it—

SIDNEY: Jesus, Lord!

JULIA: Alfie's talking to him now.

Beat as they ponder the profundity of this thought.

Oh. She's arrived.

SIDNEY: [*a change of tack entirely*] She's here?

JULIA: In the sitting room.

SIDNEY: Why didn't you tell me?!

JULIA: I am telling you.

SIDNEY: Did Esme get her something to eat?

JULIA: She's not—

SIDNEY: Okay.

JULIA: She ate on the plane.

SIDNEY: Well, for God's sake tell her—

JULIA: I did. [*Beat*.] I was wondering if tonight—

SIDNEY: Oh, no—

JULIA: Tonight—

SIDNEY: Jesus!

JULIA: It's a wedding. Can I—?

SIDNEY: A wedding!

JULIA: Can I—?

SIDNEY: Is it *your* wedding?

JULIA: Well, no.

SIDNEY: Don't I pay you enough? Is your life so horrible? You know what's going on for me right now. You know how much support I need. And yet you still want to go to weddings, *like they matter*, like they're forever. Let me tell you something, in eight months he'll be bonking his travel agent and she'll be sick of the way he holds his cutlery.

JULIA: Oh.

SIDNEY: They'll be dividing up the Cristofle before you can say 'it'll never work'.