

# **The Motherf\*\*ker With the Hat**

**By Stephen Adly Guirgis**



**I n i t i a l T h o u g h t s**

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## RUMINATIONS

Set in modern day New York City, Stephen Adly Guirgis' *The Motherfu\*\*er With the Hat* is a fast paced, ferocious and darkly comedic glimpse into the precarious lives of ordinary people. Intermingling themes of substance and emotional addiction, jealousy, sexual duplicity and paradox, the five characters in *The Motherfu\*\*er With the Hat* are united in their inability to escape the confines of their own base desires, habits and circumstances.

Yet, each character also possesses an extraordinary ability to live, to risk, to hope, to struggle, to dream. There is a genuine poetry to their desperation. These characters are passionate, vibrant, flawed and unpretentiously human. As a result, the truth of their actions, deceptions and foibles hold universal humor and depth.

**“Funny indeed — not to mention surprising, disturbing, and poignant... dark, rich comedy... But not putting characters or their dilemmas in neat boxes, Guirgis gives us, in HAT, a slice of hard life that’s as provocative as it is absorbing.” -USA TODAY**

## ENSEMBLE / CHARACTERS

The five characters in *The Motherfu\*\*er With the Hat* are also archetypes. Each is simultaneously nuanced and universal, singular and interchangeable. That is what gives them breath and makes them both alive and entirely relatable in a way that transcends their specific circumstances.

In Guirgis' author's notes to the actor that precede the play he writes,

**“Just focus on living truthfully and fully through the circumstances of the play and your character. Put your heart into trying to affect the other person in the scene, moment to moment. Tell the truth. And know that the opposite of love is indifference, not hate.”**

With all it's high octane language and richly twisted comedy, at its core *The Motherfu\*\*er With the Hat* is a love story—A love story that is indicative of the “beautiful melting pot that is New York City and the setting of this play”. With its countless secrets, deceptions, hopes, beauty, failures, resilience, New York is in many ways the sixth character of this play.



## STYLE AND AESTHETIC LANDSCAPE

Contemporary, textured, flavorful and almost imperceptibly enhanced stylistically, ***The Motherfu\*\*er With the Hat*** presents an opportunity to push the edges of realism. For example, Guirgis' language is rich and richly poetic. It has a distinctive rhythm, cadence and tambour. It ebbs, it flows and it builds—but it isn't self-conscious. It's just how these characters speak. The language represents the style of the play, a style that calls for both actors and audiences to become seeped in its ferocity and pacing.

***The Motherfu\*\*er With the Hat*** isn't a kitchen sink drama and although there are certainly glimpses of so called 'slice of life' realism, there are also moments when that realism stretches into conversations and actions that boarder something else entirely. Absurdity? Melodrama? Farce? An exciting challenge of the play will be to discover each of these moments with the ensemble and to play them generously and truthfully.

## SET

I propose a non-traditional approach to the staging of ***The Motherfu\*\*er with the Hat***. A  $\frac{3}{4}$  or full on 'round' seating and performance configuration will serve the play in the following ways:

- 1) Allow the set to be more representational than literal
- 2) Establish a sense of fluidity and dimensionality for the actors
- 3) Create a more immersive experience for the audiences that allows them to feel as though they are existing (and at times almost trapped) in the same world as the characters

Versatile, flexible and minimal, the set for ***The Motherfu\*\*er with the Hat*** will multi-task as three distinct locations, with playing areas that overlap and/or intersect with one another. Because of the fast paced nature of the play, transitions between settings will be extremely fluid and performed entirely by the actors, within the scene whenever possible.



## LIGHTING

Lighting plays an integral role in shaping both the visual landscape of the play as well as the tone and mood within each scene and the transitions that link them. Artificial light is an ever-present aesthetic of New York City even in the day. Be it from traffic lights, cars, neon signs, screens, etc, the presence, sound and energy of light and the lack of complete darkness is something that provides a very specific texture. The use of practical's in addition to a traditional plot may also be a tool to enhance individual playing spaces. I look forward to collaborating with designers to discover what is possible!



## SOUND

Much like light, the sounds of the city are ever present. Traffic, voices, transformers, music, machinery, construction. This is both the soundscape and the white noise of urban existence. The presence of sound will create the kinesthetic experience that the world on the outside is constantly creeping into the more intimate landscapes within the play. Silence can then be used as a tool to focus, enhance and zoom in on specific moments.

## **COSTUMES**

Contemporary, urban and largely influenced by neighborhood as much as career, daily routine, etc. I see the palate as vibrant but not garish, colorful but not overly saturated. Although the clothing these characters wear is in no way remarkable, I envision that these characters take a certain amount of stock, even pride in their wardrobe as an extension of both identity and self. What they wear is as richly textured as each of their distinct personalities and the City of New York itself.

## **PROPERTIES**

Hand props and movable/removable/ mobile set pieces will contribute greatly to defining spaces and characters.