



MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE, VOL #2
FALL 2024
CLASS #2

LUNGS BY DUNCAN MACMILLAN

DUNCAN MACMILLAN'S *PLAY INVITES THE AUDIENCE INTO THE LIFE OF A YOUNG COUPLE DEBATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONCEIVING AND RAISING A CHILD.*

"...A BRACINGLY DRAMATIC WALK THROUGH THE THICKET OF COUPLES COMMUNICATION...A SMART AND STIMULATING EAVESDROP ON THE MODERN VOCABULARY OF INTIMATE NEGOTIATION." — WASHINGTON POST.

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DUNCAN MACMILLAN (BORN 1980) IS AN ENGLISH PLAYWRIGHT AND DIRECTOR. HE IS MOST NOTED FOR HIS PLAYS *LUNGS*, *PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS*, *EVERY BRILLIANT THING*, AND THE STAGE ADAPTATION OF GEORGE ORWELL'S NOVEL *1984*, WHICH HE CO-ADAPTED AND CO-DIRECTED WITH ROBERT ICKE.



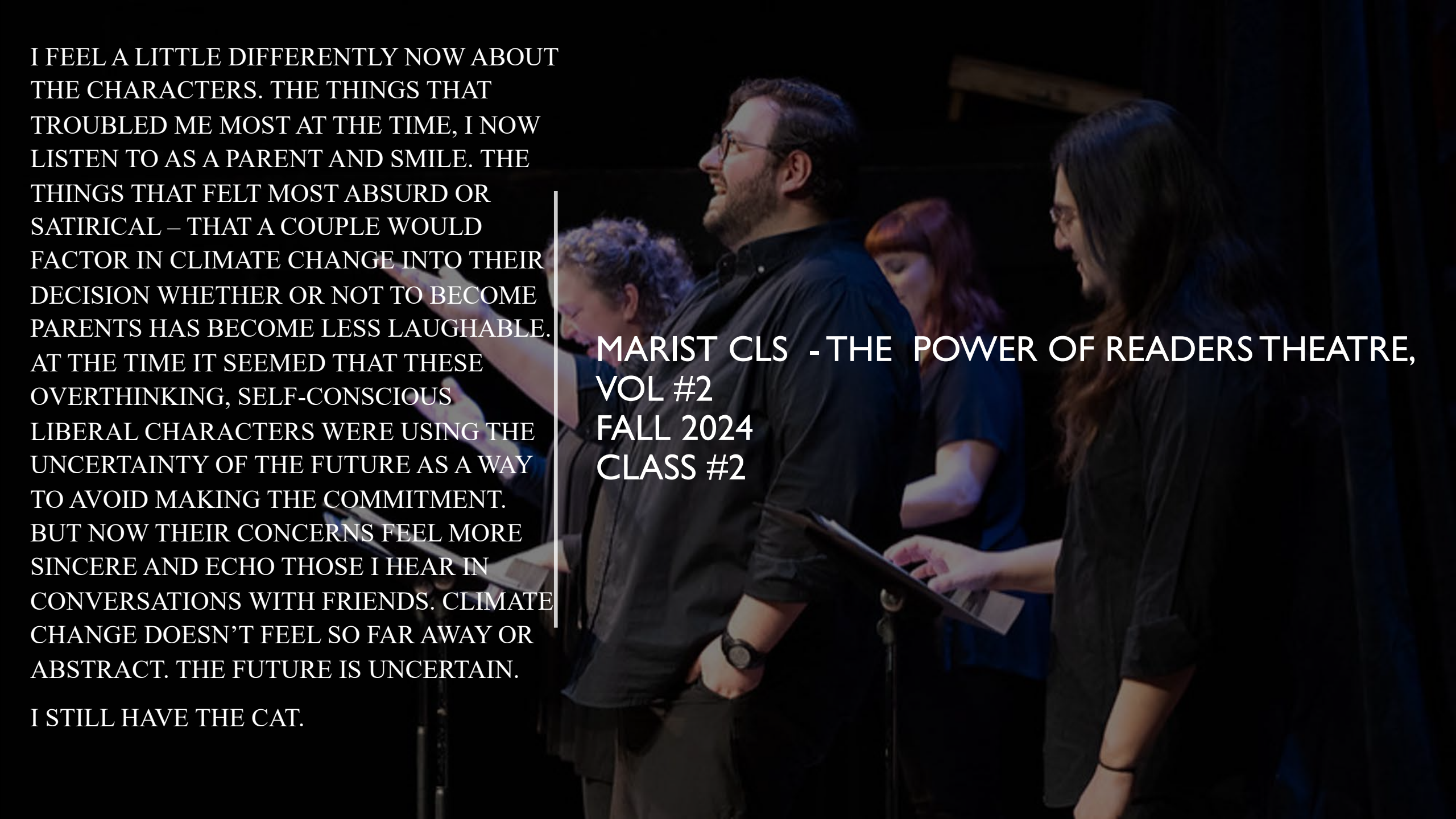
IN 2011, DUNCAN MACMILLAN WAS ASKED ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF
LUNGS.

“A FEW THINGS HAPPENED LAST YEAR. I TURNED 30, I GOT ENGAGED, I GOT A MORTGAGE, AND I GOT A PROPER JOB. THE BABY CONVERSATION WAS NEXT, AND THIS IS SOMETHING THAT I WAS VERY CONSCIOUS OF AT THE TIME. WE HAVE A CAT NOW, WHO WE OCCASIONALLY REFER TO AS “BABY PRACTICE.”

I’D BEEN STRUGGLING TO FIND A WAY TO WRITE ABOUT SOME OF THE BIGGER ISSUES FACING OUR SPECIES, UNABLE TO DISTILL MY QUESTIONS INTO A COMPELLING DRAMATIC METAPHOR. I WANTED TO WRITE A PLAY THAT WAS DIRECT, CLEAR, FAST, FUN, AND STYLISTICALLY PARED-BACK. I WANTED TO WRITE SOMETHING FOR TWO GOOD ACTORS WHERE THEY COULD TELL A STORY WITHOUT PROPS, SCENE CHANGES, COSTUMES, LIGHTING, OR SOUND, JUST TWO BODIES IN SPACE, LETTING THE AUDIENCE FILL IN THE GAPS. IT SEEMS APPROPRIATE THAT THE PLAY IS AS “CARBON-NEUTRAL” AS POSSIBLE. I WANTED THE AUDIENCE TO FEEL AS IF THEY WERE EAVESDROPPING ON A PRIVATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO THOUGHTFUL, EDUCATED PEOPLE WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO DO THE RIGHT THING. FOR ME, DRAMA IS ABOUT LIVE DECISION MAKING.

I’M SURE WRITING *LUNGS* WAS A WAY FOR ME TO ARTICULATE ANXIETIES I WAS SUBCONSCIOUSLY HAVING ABOUT TURNING 30, CONSIDERING PARENTHOOD AND THE STATE OF THE WORLD. THE PLAY WAS WRITTEN QUICKLY AND WITHOUT ANY PLANNING. ONLY WHEN I HEARD IT READ DID I REALIZE ALL THE RESEARCH I’D BEEN DOING, PARTICULARLY TO DO WITH CLIMATE CHANGE, HAD MADE ITS WAY INTO THE PLAY.”

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I FEEL A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY NOW ABOUT THE CHARACTERS. THE THINGS THAT TROUBLED ME MOST AT THE TIME, I NOW LISTEN TO AS A PARENT AND SMILE. THE THINGS THAT FELT MOST ABSURD OR SATIRICAL – THAT A COUPLE WOULD FACTOR IN CLIMATE CHANGE INTO THEIR DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO BECOME PARENTS HAS BECOME LESS LAUGHABLE. AT THE TIME IT SEEMED THAT THESE OVERTHINKING, SELF-CONSCIOUS LIBERAL CHARACTERS WERE USING THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE AS A WAY TO AVOID MAKING THE COMMITMENT. BUT NOW THEIR CONCERNS FEEL MORE SINCERE AND ECHO THOSE I HEAR IN CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS. CLIMATE CHANGE DOESN'T FEEL SO FAR AWAY OR ABSTRACT. THE FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN. I STILL HAVE THE CAT.

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IF THERE IS ONE PLAY IN THIS WORLD THAT YOU MUST READ IT IS *LUNGS* BY DUNCAN MACMILLAN. TO SAY THIS PLAY IS A MASTERPIECE WOULD QUITE FRANKLY BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT. IN MY OPINION, IT IS A BIBLE FOR HOW WE AS HUMANS NAVIGATE THE COMPLEXITY OF OUR LIVES. I'D GO AS FAR TO SAY YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND IT NOT JUST IN THE ARTS SECTION OF THE BOOKSHOP, BUT IN THE SELF-HELP, PSYCHOLOGY, AND PHILOSOPHY SECTIONS TO NAME A FEW.

RYAN BURLE

A man and a woman are standing on a stage, facing each other as if in conversation. The man is on the left, wearing a dark jacket and pants. The woman is on the right, wearing a patterned top and dark pants. They are positioned in front of a large, light-colored wall with a grid pattern. The floor is made of light-colored wooden planks. In the foreground, the silhouettes of an audience are visible, looking towards the stage.

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“THEATRE ARTISTS, LIKE ALL
OTHER MEMBERS OF
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY,
HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO
RECONSIDER HOW WE DO
WHAT WE DO. THIS
OPPORTUNITY IS NOT MERELY
A QUESTION OF REDUCING
OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT BUT
IS NECESSARY FOR THEATRE
TO BE A CONTEMPORARY AND
RELEVANT FORM OF ART”
DUNCAN MACMILLAN



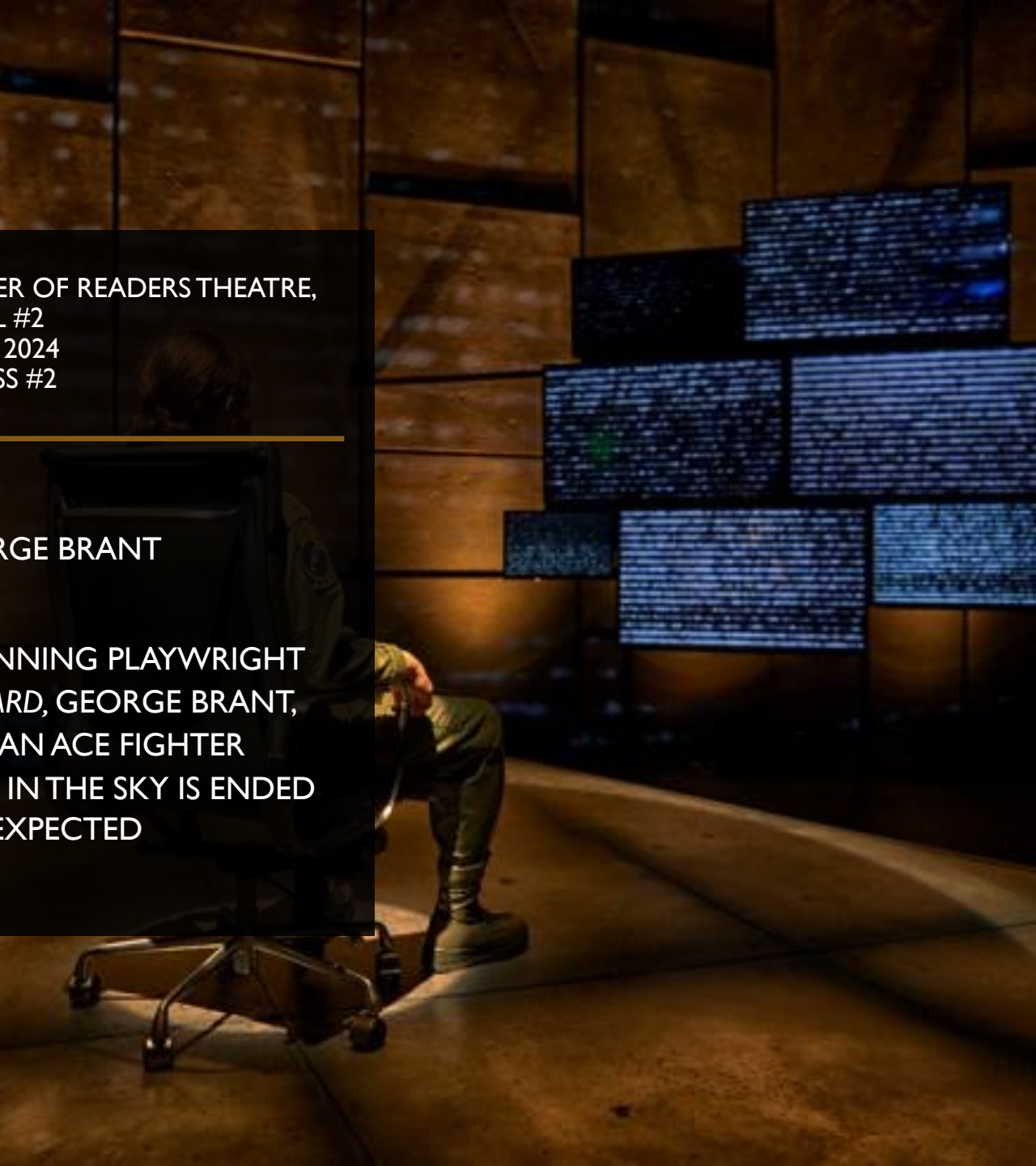
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- NEXT WEEK
- *GROUND*ED BY GEORGE BRANT

FROM THE AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT OF *ELEPHANT'S GRAVEYARD*, GEORGE BRANT, COMES THE STORY OF AN ACE FIGHTER PILOT WHOSE CAREER IN THE SKY IS ENDED EARLY DUE TO AN UNEXPECTED PREGNANCY.





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Lungs

By Duncan Macmillan