

## Young Adults

*Classyass* premiered in Actors Theatre of Louisville's 26th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays, March 3–April 7, 2002.

Timothy Douglas was dramaturg. Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj directed the following cast:

AMA Jason Cornwell  
BIGB Nikki E. Walker  
MILES Robert Beitzel

### CHARACTERS

AMA: Or Amadeus. Black college freshman.

BIGB: Or Belinda. Black woman, twenty, dressed like a street person.

MILES: White college senior and radio station manager.

SETTING: A small room that serves as a modest campus radio studio at Bellmore College. Ama speaks into the mic with a suave broadcaster's voice.

AMA: Okay you Bellmore boneheads, that was Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture." Bet those cannons busted a couple of you dozers. Perfect for 3:47 A.M. on a cold, rainy Thursday in finals week. It's the end of time at the end of the line. Study on, people. Bang out papers. Cram the facts. Justify that exorbitant tuition and make Bellmore College proud. I'M FEELING Y'ALL! Especially those of you studying for Calc 801 with Professor Cobb. Call me if you have a clue about question #3 on page 551. You're listening to Casual Classics, because you don't have to be uptight and white to love classical music. This is WBMR, the radio station of Bellmore College. Miles Morgan is your station manager. I'm Ama—Amadeus Waddlington, with you til 6 A.M. Guzzle that warm Red Bull and cold Maxwell House. Here's music to squeeze your brains by. It's Dvořák's "New World Symphony" comin' atcha. *(He puts on the CD, grabs a beer and a huge textbook, and sprawls out on the floor. A bold knock interrupts him. He shouts.)* Go to hell, Miles. I like "New World"! *(Another knock.)* Okay, okay. I'll play Beethoven's Symphony #1 next. Lots of strings, okay? *(Persistent knocking.)* Damn! *(AMA strides to the door and opens it. BIGB strides in, carrying shopping bags and waving several faxes.)*

BIGB: You messed up, boy!

AMA: Excuse me?

BIGB: And your smart-assed faxes made it worse!

AMA: Do I know you?

BIGB: (*examining the mic and CDs*) I want a public apology.

AMA: Don't touch that! Listen, whoever you are . . .

BIGB: Whomever!

AMA: Whatever!

BIGB: You ain't got a clue who I am.

AMA: A fabulous person, no doubt, but you've got to go. This is a classical music show and I've got a killer calculus final tomorrow.

BIGB: Color me compassionate. You're shorter than I thought. But I figured right about you being a dumb ass. I told you right here. . . .

(*BIGB shows AMA the faxes and he realizes who she is.*)

AMA: Oh my God . . . you're . . . BigB! I thought you were . . .

BIGB: . . . a brother, I know, 'cause I ain't hearing none of your bullshit. Well, I thought you was a white boy, and I was right.

AMA: Look, I don't know what you want. . . .

BIGB: How long I been faxing you, moron? You said the "Gloria" was by Fauré. . . .

AMA: . . . As I told you one thousand faxes ago, "Gloria" is by Poulenc and when I played it, I said Poulenc. . . .

BIGB: . . . Fauré!

AMA: . . . Poulenc!

BIGB: I know what I heard, you arrogant shithead.

AMA: Does that BigB stand for "bitch" or "borderline psychotic"?

BIGB: I ain't even 'pressed by you trottin' out them tired SAT joints. I'm down at the Palmer Street Shelter, which you

knew by the headin' on the fax, and you just figured I didn't know shit about classical music.

AMA: BigB, I'm truly flattered that you even listen, but you don't . . .

BIGB: My crew at the shelter want to come up here and kick yo ass.

AMA: Whoa, whoa there. I'm sorry about our misunderstanding, okay?

BIGB: And that s'posed to float my boat?

AMA: Let's be calm, okay, B?

BIGB: BigB to you, and I know you ain't s'posed to be drinkin' beer up in here.

AMA: You never saw that.

BIGB: Now I got two things on ya. This gonna be what they call an interesting evening. (*Thumbing through his calculus book.*) This the shit probably got your brain too messed up to know your Poulenc from your Fauré. (*She sips AMA's beer.*)

AMA: Don't do that. Suppose I have a social disease?

BIGB: Ha! Bet you still a cherry.

AMA: Suppose YOU have a social disease?

BIGB: I'll just call your dean and tell him I caught it sippin' outta your freshman-ass beer bottle.

AMA: What do you want from me?

BIGB: You made me look stupid in front of my crew.

AMA: Look, I'm just a nerd playing dead white men's music. Why do you even listen to my show?

BIGB: So a sister like me ain't s'posed to be a classical music affectionado.

AMA: The word's "aficionado." . . .

BIGB: Boy, I'm feelin better 'n' better about bustin' yo ass.

AMA: This is like something out of Scorsese. If I apologize for the thing I DID NOT DO, will you go?

BIGB: Maybe. Or maybe I'll stay and watch you work awhile.

AMA: It's against the rules.

BIGB: Lots of things against the rules, freshman boy. Don't mean they ain't delicious to do.

AMA: If my station manager comes in . . .

BIGB: Tell him I'm studyin' witcha, that we putting the "us" in calculus.

AMA: Well, you don't exactly look like a student.

BIGB: Well, you don't exactly look like a asshole, but you the poster boy. Where you get "Ama" from anyway?

AMA: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. My dad's a classical musician.

BIGB: Oh yeah? Where he play at?

AMA: He sells insurance. No major symphony'll hire him.

BIGB: I know that's right. Oughta be called "sym-phoney"—like phoney baloney, right?

AMA: (*patronizingly*) That's very clever, BigB, but I've got a lot of work to do. How about I give you and your people at the shelter a, what do you call it, a "shout out." Right in the middle of Dvořák. How would you like that? (*AMA goes to the mic, but BIGB stops him.*)

BIGB: How you gonna interrupt "New World Symphony" and mess up everybody's flow? You crazy, Amadeus Waddlington. You also a lucky bastard. BigB like you. She gonna take it easy on you.

AMA: Why does your use of the third person chill my blood?

BIGB: Take me to dinner and we cool.

AMA: What?

BIGB: Over there to the Purple Pheasant, where the president of Bellmore College eat at!

AMA: . . . Are you crazy? I don't have that kind of . . .

BIGB: . . . an' buy me a present . . .

AMA: . . . a present? I'm broke!

BIGB: . . . somethin', how they say it, "droll." Yeah, "droll" and "ironic"! Like a CD of "Dialogues of the Carmelites" by POULENC. I can see you 'n' me sittin' up in the Purple Pheasant, chucklin' over our little in joke, sippin' a half-ass California pinot grigio.

AMA: Who the hell writes your material?

BIGB: And pick me up in a shiny new car.

AMA: Hello? Freshmen aren't allowed to have cars.

BIGB: Beg, borrow, or steal, my brother, but you better have yo ass waiting for me at the shelter tomorrow night at 7:30. And don't shit in your khakis. My boys'll watch your back in the 'hood.

AMA: You're delusional.

BIGB: Oh, you insultin' BigB, now? You don't wanna be seen with her?

AMA: I'd love to be seen with her . . . you! I'd give my right arm to have the whole town and the president of Bellmore see me escort you into the Purple Pheasant. Hell, I'd even invite my parents. But I'm a scholarship student with five bucks to my name.

BIGB: (*sniffing him*) Ya wearing cashmere and ya reek of Hugo Boss. Don't even try to play me, boy.

AMA: Maxed out credit cards, BigB. I'm just a half-ass, wannabe, freshman with a little gig, trying to make some headway with Mr. Mastercard. I'll apologize on air. I'll stamp your name on my forehead, I'll run naked down the quad and bark like a dog. . . .

BIGB: . . . anything but take me out. You're a snob, Amadeus Waddlington. You a broke-ass, cashmere-wearin' shit-talkin' loser who don't know his Poulenc from his Fauré. . . . (BIGB finishes off AMA's beer.) . . . and drinks Lite beer! My crew was right. Ya need a beat down.

AMA: BigB, please . . .

BIGB: See, I be down at the shelter, diggin' on ya voice early in the mornin'. People say you ain't shit, but you gotta way a soundin' all mellow an' sexy. And when you spank that Rachmaninoff, oh yeah, baby! So when you screw up the Poulenc I send a friendly fax to point out yo error and help yo ass out. . . .

AMA: And I appreciate . . .

BIGB: But you had to get up in my grill wit that, "what-do-you-know-about-classical-music-you-stupid-ass-homeless-crack-head" kind of attitude. (*She starts to leave.*) Well, Palmer Street crew will be very happy to whup yo behind.

AMA: (*stopping her*) I didn't mean to give you attitude. I'm sorry. I'm broke, I swear! I'll show you my bills, I'll show you my bank statements. Isn't there anything else I can do, BigB? Please!

(*Pause. BIGB looks AMA up and down, to his great discomfort.*)

BIGB: Kiss me.

AMA: What did you say?

BIGB: I'm gettin' somethin' outta this deal. Kiss me.

AMA: But . . .

BIGB: Not one a' them air flybys, neither. Gimme some tongue!

AMA: Oh God.

BIGB: (*She advances on him.*) Lay it on me, Amadeus Waddlington. Kiss me or kiss yo ass good-bye.

AMA: (*backing away, near tears*) This isn't Scorsese, it's John Woo.

BIGB: Come on classyass, pucker up! (BIGB tackles AMA and plants a long, deep kiss on him. When she lets him go, AMA steps back, looks at her, touches his mouth, and faints. BIGB kneels calmly beside him. Her entire demeanor changes. Her voice is rich, cultured, her grammar impeccable. She sits him up and gives him a few light slaps.) Hey! Hey! Ama? Damn it, Amadeus Waddlington, wake up!

(MILES MORGAN enters drinking a beer.)

MILES: Who are you, and what the hell did you do to Waddlington?

BIGB: He just fainted. Get something cold.

(MILES pours cold beer on AMA's head. AMA comes to.)

BIGB: Have you sufficiently recuperated Mr. Waddlington?

MILES: (*to BIGB*) Hey, you look familiar. . . . Where do I know you from? . . . In the paper . . . from the shelter. You're. . . . Man you sure look . . . different! Oh my God. . . . You're not going to tell your father about the beer, are you? I'm a fifth-year senior trying to graduate. . . .

BIGB: Just make sure he's okay.

(MILES bends down to AMA who grabs him by the collar. They whisper urgently, while BIGB thumbs through the CDs and eavesdrops, greatly amused.)

AMA: Oh God. Oh God! I kissed her!

MILES: Way to go, man!

AMA: I'm gonna die!

MILES: She's that good, huh? Bet she's a knockout under all that stuff she's wearing. You all going to a costume party or something?

AMA: Don't you get it, Miles? I kissed her!

MILES: Lucky bastard! Kickin' it with Dean Stafford's daughter.

AMA: *(after a beat)* What did you say?

MILES: That's Belinda Stafford, Dean Stafford's youngest daughter! She dropped out of Bellmore to work at the shelter. It was all in the papers and everything.

BELINDA: *(handing him money)* Thanks for the beer and the amusement, Mr. Waddlington.

AMA: Is this true? Are you really . . . ?

BELINDA: *(removing her dirty garments and putting them in a bag)* I work night shifts at the Palmer Street Shelter. You can imagine that some of the women find it hard to sleep. Your music and your incredibly boring commentary usually do the trick. Everything was fine until you responded so rudely to my fax. You assumed because it came from the shelter . . .

AMA: No . . . I just . . . I didn't. . . .

BELINDA: You're an arrogant, ill-informed elitist, Amadeus Waddlington. I've known guys like you all my life. It broke Daddy's heart when I dropped out of Bellmore, but your faxes reminded me exactly why I did it. So, I decided to teach you a lesson. You're not going to die from my kiss, but I hope you won't forget what it felt like to think that you were. *(She scatters the faxes over his head and starts to exit.)*

MILES: Now, uh, Ms. Stafford, you wouldn't mention this to your father . . .

BELINDA: I've got people without winter coats on my mind.

AMA: *(Rushes to her.)* BigB, I mean Belinda, I mean, Ms. Stafford, please wait. I get a lot of shit from people about this show and I thought you were just another brother hassling me. I don't have an attitude about the shelter because I've got too many poor folks in my own family. I'm sorry about the vibe. Can I make it up to you? Maybe put in some hours at the shelter.

BELINDA: If you think you can hack it. I picked out some CDs for you to play. My people sleep well to Debussy. I'll be checkin' you! *(She puts on her headphones as she exits.)*

MILES: And you won't mention this to . . .

*(MILES exits calling after BELINDA. AMA suddenly remembers he's on air. He runs to the mic.)*

AMA: Yo, my people, was that dope? Bet the "New World Symphony" woke yo asses up! Hey, I'm still waiting to speak to anybody with a clue to #3 on page 551 in Cobb's calculus class. Anybody? It's 3:59 on WBMR the voice of Bellmore College. I'm Amadeus Waddlington and this is Casual Classics, because you don't have to be uptight and white to love classical music. You don't have to be a snob either. I wanna give a shout out to my girl BigB. I think I'm in love, people. Yo, B, I apologize. "Gloria" was, is, and always will be Poulenc. I dig the lesson. . . . *(He touches his lips.)* . . . and I dig the way you taught it. I'll be down to lend a hand, you better believe that. And for the folks listening at the Palmer Street Shelter, here's a little Debussy to soothe you to sleep. Better times ahead, my people. Better times ahead.

*(Lights dim as sounds of Debussy come up. Blackout.)*