

Brisé

Cast of Characters:

PAUL – Male, 29, any ethnicity, a professionally trained dancer

Place:

In and around San Francisco, California

Time:

Present

Synopsis:

Following a nasty fall, professional dancer Paul is diagnosed with a rare form of dementia. In a daily video diary, Paul details his day-to-day life with his new condition. But when his estranged mother arrives, Paul is forced to face hard family truths that had been buried for years, even as everything else slips away. *Brisé* is a one-man play about voice, about movement, and about holding on tight to the things we try our hardest to forget.

Notes:

Throughout the play, Paul describes different people he encounters verbally, but the director should also attribute physical movements when appropriate. He is a dancer, after all.

Although it appears Paul is speaking directly to the audience, he is actually speaking into a video camera. However, the actor should feel free to use any audience member as “the camera,” so much so that audience members should feel as though he is speaking directly to them.

When the play is marked with three asterisks, it indicates a passage of time. That passage might be from one day to the next, or it might be several days or weeks later. It also might refer to multiple recordings done in the same 24-hour period. A brief stage direction may be included to indicate specifics.

Brisé

(Lights up on an empty apartment room. There are indicators that the room is a bedroom, but there is no bed. The upstage wall is broad and empty.)

(PAUL enters. Young, handsome, late twenties. He is fit. He wears a t-shirt and shorts. There is a wide bandage across his forehead. He looks out over the audience. He sits, legs extended. He stretches.)

PAUL:

Testing. Testing.
I'm going to hate my voice on this, aren't I?
Testing. Testing.
Ah—

(PAUL exits. Beat. He reenters with a mug of steaming liquid, sits back down.)

Okay.
I'm Paul.
Come here often?

And I should take this seriously.

(Raising up the mug)

It's tea. With rosemary. I read online that there were a number of herbs that help you, help you strengthen your brain or something. And the only herb I recognized from the list was rosemary. So... rosemary it is.

(He sips. It is an unexpected flavor)

It's like liquid Thanksgiving.

(Beat. PAUL grins. He looks out at the audience.)

The first time I shaved my legs.
The first time I went ice-skating.
One of my early recitals for Ms. Celio. Okay, so I hated her. And she had this giant mole that screamed early signs of carcinoma right under her left eye. I would finish class with everyone else, and then run into the bathroom and re-choreograph everything. I mean, everything. I single-handedly massacred Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. *Single-footedly*. I was a diva bitch at nine.
Harry Potter, the books.
N'Sync, the boy band.

Legally Blonde, the movie and the musical.
Oh! *Brokeback Mountain*—I had the freaking lunch box.
My first audition for the Joffrey.

My grandmother's apartment in Palo Alto. It was this little one bedroom over a liquor store—which explains more than you know. She used to have me sleep on this Chippendale camelback sofa knockoff—with these great swooping arms that were as hard as marble. The whole thing was upholstered in purple paisley. And smelled like cat urine, although I don't remember her having any cats.

(He stops, suddenly very self aware. He takes a sip of tea, grimaces.)

I really... hate my voice.

(He reaches forward to turn off the camera.)

* * *

(Evening. PAUL is standing with a plastic bag from Target.)

Teddy came to pick me up today; he asked me where I want to go.

Right, so he showed up at my door with a Diet Dr. Pepper and a grin that, like, could melt butter. He was in this tee-shirt that I bought him four Christmases ago—we were visiting Ramon in San Diego. It's got a picture of Beethoven's face wearing Stevie Wonder glasses and dreads—which speaks an awful lot to who Teddy Nakamura is as a musician. Now, four years later, it has thin little holes around the collar, and I've told him to throw it away, but he won't do it. He likes the way it shrunk just enough to cling tightly to his body.

I have a hard time arguing with that.

I told him I needed a new hat. So we got this—

(PAUL reaches in the bag and pulls out a black skull cap, adorned with red and white flames)

I think it looks badass. I wear skullies to keep my hair from flopping in my face—

Anyway, we got this one at the Target in Brisbane, which is ridiculous, and I told Teddy it was ridiculous, because we're so much closer to the one in San Bruno. But He just shrugged and blew me a kiss, and we turned onto the 101 and he cranked up Katy Perry, which he started to sing at the top of his lungs.

Teddy sings in the car. A lot.

Twenty minutes later, we were parking at Market and seventh—nowhere near the Target. And he led me into the studio—hardwood floors and the mirrored walls—and he sat down at the piano, and he began to play.

(PAUL has set down the bag, and has retrieved a thin, black remote control. He presses it, and music begins to fill the space. It is the soft entrance to Rachmaninov Prelude Op.23 No.4 in D major. PAUL listens for a moment, smiles.)

Rachmaninov is my kryptonite.

(Delicately, so as not to disturb the bandage on his forehead, PAUL pulls on his new skullcap, and begins to move.)

This, this is everything. It just... opens me up.

(The dance echoes the music, mellifluous and elegant, and it pulls PAUL away from the camera, into his own head. It is a tightly choreographed piece, one that PAUL is effortlessly familiar with. It is languid and emotional, buoyant like a leaf borne on the surface of moving water. He verbalizes during it—not words, but sounds, little verbal cues that correspond with specific movements—sometimes they echo the music, sometimes not.)

(In the middle of the music, PAUL turns back to the camera, removes the remote from his pocket, and lowers the volume until the music is just a whisper behind him. He smiles, broadly.)

You owe me thirty-five dollars.
And then we got tacos and I bought a new hat.

END HERE —>

* * *

(The music is gone; the hat is, too.)

Think about what you want to remember.
Not you. Me.

(Beat)

I'm not sure who's watching this—if I'm being broadcast in a classroom somewhere, or in training sessions at Laguna Honda, or if I'm up on Youtube. Please "like" this video! Just kidding. I don't really give a shit if you like this video.