

*This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries,
This Girl Does Nothing*

Recipient of the 2010 Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award
Short-listed for the 2012 Australian Writers Guild Award for Best Children's Play
Developed with assistance from the Australian Latin American Foundation

Written by
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First performed by
AmarGinados Grupo Teatral
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)

First directed by
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Original Production

The first performance of *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing* took place at the Campo Salles Theatre, Buenos Aires, Argentina, in April 2011 in a production by AmarGinados Grupo Teatral. The cast was as follows:

ALBIENNE	Maria Eugenia Gonzalez
BEATRIX	Brenda Kreizerman
CARMEN	Leticia Leiva
NARRATOR	Javier Lopez
NARRATOR	Rocio Fernandez Brandauer

Note: The play is a story told. This could be by one, by some, or by many.

The play was directed by Solange Perazzo, produced by Martina Amiras and assistant directed by Santiago Magarinos. It was originally performed in Spanish, as translated by Solange Perazzo.

Subsequent Productions

- 2011 Denmark: Playwrights Slam reading – ASSITEJ World Congress, Copenhagen
- 2011 USA: University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (produced by Pitt Arts)
- 2011 Australia: Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney (produced by Parnassus’ Den – reading)
- 2012 Argentina: Campo Salles Theatre, Buenos Aires (produced by Amar Ginados)
- 2012 Scotland: Imagine, Edinburgh (produced by Frozen Charlotte – reading)
- 2012 Australia: Casula Powerhouse, Sydney and Q Theatre, Penrith (produced by Barking Gecko, Casula and Penrith)
- 2012 USA: Lakes Community High School, Illinois
- 2013 USA: Pennsylvanian regional tour (produced by Pitt Arts)
- 2013 Australia: Western Australian state-wide tour

Studied as part of Theatre for Young Audiences courses at New York University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the John F Kennedy Center for the Arts, Washington DC.

L10- Albienne puts arms up

Prologue: Beginnings

S4 ALBIENNE: Once upon a time, a girl was born.

S6 BEATRIX: And twice upon a time, a girl was born.

S8 CARMEN: And thrice upon a time, a girl was born.

NARRATOR: Until there existed three girls who were sisters, who were triplets.

ALBIENNE: Albienne was the oldest.

BEATRIX: And Beatrix was the next.

CARMEN: And Carmen was youngest.

NARRATOR: And they looked identical, in the same way that when visiting a block of flats, a person may say: 'those flats are identical'. And of course they are right, but of course they are not.

ALBIENNE: Because in one window the curtain is patterned.

BEATRIX: And in one more the curtain is blue.

CARMEN: And in a third there is no curtain at all.

NARRATOR: So all these identical flats end up looking different, because different people live in them. Just as those three identical bodies ended up looking different, because different people lived in them as well.

ALBIENNE: Albienne for instance, enjoyed cake very much and by age nine, her body had become that of a true cake appreciator, round like a gateau and warm like a brioche.

BEATRIX: Beatrix in the middle enjoyed the expelling of energy and the world within which to do it, and would run around outside from sun up to sundown. And so she was a child of the sun through and through, with blonde hair and brown skin and freckles on her nose.

CARMEN: Carmen found the world to be a heavy thing, and carried it upon her shoulders. It was like a school backpack that you know holds important contents, but that you sometimes wish you could just leave on the bus and never have to pick up again. The world she carried made her shoulders small and her eyes dark, though her heart was as large as her sisters – it was just a little smothered by world-carrying, that was all.

NARRATOR: The three sisters lived in a forest and had as their parents a woman, who shall be the mother, and a man, who shall be the father. The mother sewed

up clothes for the people in a village nearby, and the father chopped down trees deep in the woods.

ALBIENNE: But this is only one thing they did, the work thing they did. They also helped to build castles from old boxes, lined up dominoes and knocked them down...

BEATRIX: ...Showed the girls how people drink tea in China and dance in Peru, cooked them dinners/

ALBIENNE: /And cakes.

BEATRIX: And cakes. Had quiet chats in other rooms sometimes, walked alone sometimes...

CARMEN: ...Sat at the kitchen table and played cards sometimes, ran, swam and built good fires when the Winter came.

NARRATOR: All this, and all fit into the first ten years of Albienne, Beatrix and Carmen's life.

ALBIENNE: And the girls knew in their hearts that this happiness they felt...

BEATRIX: Living in that forest with that man and that woman...

CARMEN: It would never end.

L16 S10 NARRATOR: ...Until one day, it ended.

L18 ALBIENNE: That day, I was sitting beside the river, which was full of currents, and eating a cake, which was full of currants as well.

BEATRIX: That day I was balancing at the top of the tallest tree I'd ever climbed, and trying to reach a bird's nest that needed investigating.

L20 CARMEN: That day I was writing at my desk about dragons and thinking about how even things that don't exist can become extinct, just by people talking about them less.

ALBIENNE: And from the river I saw the policeman riding to our house as fast as he could.

BEATRIX: And from the tree, I saw the policeman run to our front door.

CARMEN: And from my room, I heard boots running in, and the putting down of a cup of tea, and then slow muffled talking... And then silence, and finally a long sigh from Papa, the longest sound I've ever heard.

L22

NARRATOR: And after letting out every ounce of air in his lungs, the father breathed in again... and he pulled every daughter that he possessed to him, from out of the trees and off the riverbanks and through the doors of neighbouring rooms. Until there they stood, held in his arms, softly being told that...

ALBIENNE: Our Mama...

BEATRIX: Who we so loved...

S15

CARMEN: Was dead.

Silence.

Scene One: Re-beginnings (Aged 10)

L24

NARRATOR: When someone like a mother is suddenly gone, she is not the only thing that's lost. Many other losses occur as well.

ALBIENNE: Albiennne lost her appetite, and no éclair or meringue or black forest or vanilla slice could tempt it back.

BEATRIX: Beatrix lost her sun. Of course it was still there, still hanging in the sky. But it had little to do with her any more – the moon now became her companion as she lay awake at night.

CARMEN: Carmen lost her oddness. Before it was strange, how she was quiet when her sisters were loud. But now the three girls and the father sat around the table in silence. They grew to be clever with their looks, so a certain sad gaze meant, 'pass the milk please' and another said, 'how was school today?' and a third translated as, 'quite good – but I had a maths test and forgot how to do long division, even though I knew it this morning...'

L26 S17

NARRATOR: And slowly – ever so slowly – the seasons passed, and new Spring grass was warmed by strong Summer sun, and then covered by gold Autumn leaves, and finally hidden by bare Winter snow. And then the grass grew again and this meant a year had passed and the girls were now eleven.

ALBIENNE: Albiennne began ever so slightly, to rediscover her appetite. A new baker moved to the town with a very handsome son. And Albiennne was not sure if it was the tarts that filled the window, or the boy that filled her head, but either way, she grew hungry for life again.

BEATRIX: Beatrix rediscovered the sun. One day her father chopped down the one tall tree that blocked the morning rays from her window. And they poured into Beatrix's room and down upon a photo of her mother. And it warmed her mother, and made her look alive again. And Beatrix could not be angry with the sun anymore.

CARMEN: Carmen rediscovered her backpack called ‘The Weight Of The World’. It happened as she was walking one day and passed a beggar in the town. And he saw her face... and *he* offered *her* some money, as she looked more needy than he. Carmen imagined his story then, and a hundred other stories of other people with other lives. And she acknowledged them all – and picked up the backpack.

NARRATOR: Even the girls’ father began to act differently. He began shaving again, and he whistled occasionally, and once – sitting by himself beside the fire – he laughed out loud, at a joke that could be heard only in his head.

BEATRIX: And one day, when all were sitting around the table, he said:

L28 S18

FATHER: Girls, there’s somebody I’d really like you to meet soon. Her name is/

Beatrix storms from the room. Silence.

FATHER: ...Her name is Eleanor and she shops at a shop where I shop, and she wears her hair up, and if I am honest with you – which I promised I always would be – it seems that her and I enjoy each other’s company very much.

L30 S20

CARMEN: And everything happened very quickly after that.

ALBIENNE: The woman called Eleanor came for lunch. And she brought a cake, and it was sweeter than any I’d had before, and on the top – painted in icing sugar – was the face of the baker’s son.

CARMEN: The woman called Eleanor came for dinner. And she held father’s hand on the edge of the table, and when she started eating I noticed her shoulders were a little bent. And she caught my eye and leant in to me and she said:

ABC: I carry the world sometimes too.

BEATRIX: The woman called Eleanor, who was not our mother, came to live with us. She started working in the garden, in our mother’s garden, and one day when I came outside to see what she had destroyed, Eleanor said...

ABC: I’ve planted a hundred sunflowers for you, Beatrix. I hope that’s okay.

BEATRIX: ...

And I didn’t know what to say after that. So I said nothing... and instead picked up the rake, and rolled up my sleeves, and helped her to smooth out the dirt. And in silence, we worked side by side, until it got dark.

Pause.

L32

NARRATOR: The seasons passed once more and the girls were twelve now, and around the house, little things began to change.

S23

ALBIENNE: In Spring, the cakes that Eleanor baked grew smaller and smaller, until they were biscuits, then buttons, then... nothing.

BEATRIX: In Summer, I went out to the garden with handfuls of sunflower seeds and found that Eleanor had planted... radishes.

CARMEN: In Autumn, I was collecting firewood at the edge of the forest and spied Eleanor heading away from the house. She walked with her shoulders curved like always, but at a point, I saw her look around and then... straighten her back. And her posture – it was beautiful.

L34

NARRATOR: And then Winter came – and it was not a pleasant season. The three girls went to sleep each night listening to Eleanor and their father argue. His beard grew back. His whistling was halted. And then after the arguing, came something worse. A silence fell over the house.

L35

ALBIENNE: Soon it was decided that the three girls should all move into one room.

NARRATOR: And their father (kind and loving as he was, but being a man with a twice-broken heart) he said nothing.

BEATRIX: And when it was suggested that the girls stop eating cake, or playing outside, or worrying about others...

NARRATOR: He said nothing again.

CARMEN: And when finally one night Eleanor suggested something unbelievably mad, unbelievably unbelievable...

NARRATOR: He said nothing a third time, and just stared into the fire (that had gone out long ago).

Beat.

CARMEN: Until finally he spoke.

FATHER: Put on your coats, children. The night is cold and we need firewood.

CARMEN: And this was true. So we did.

L35.1 S25

ABC: See you shortly girls.

L36

NARRATOR: Said Eleanor – and there was something strange about these words, the girls would agree later. But obediently, politely, they tipped their hats and headed out into the snow, following behind their father.

The four trudge through the snow together, for a long time.

ALBIENNE: We have passed lots of firewood, father.

Silence. They walk on.

BEATRIX: We have not been this deep in the woods before, father.

Silence. They walk on.

L36.1 CARMEN: We have walked for hours, father. We do not know where we are anymore.

L37 S28 NARRATOR: And there the man halted. And he turned in the snow, which was falling fast, and had covered any footprints that had been laid down. And then he knelt and looked at each girl in turn.

FATHER: Albienne – you are the oldest, and you know cakes like no other. You should taste every experience in this world.

Beatrix – you are a child of the sun, and you warm those around you. You should meet every person in this world.

And Carmen – you are concerned with all except yourself. You should find your place in this world.

I love you three with all my heart. As I have no more use for it... it's all yours.

Beat. He turns and leaves.

S30 ALBIENNE: And once upon a time...

S32 BEATRIX: Twice upon a time...

S33 CARMEN: Thrice upon a time...

ABC: Three girls, who were sisters, who were triplets –

L38 & snow CARMEN: they found themselves alone in a wood.

Scene Two: The Woods and the Decision (12)

BEATRIX: What becomes of children who are left in a wood, Albienne?

ALBIENNE: Different things, Beatrix.

BEATRIX: Good and bad things?

ALBIENNE: ...Just different. We should make a fire straight away, and build some kind of shelter.

BEATRIX: Yes, and sharpen a rock into a knife, and watch the stars to work out when morning will come, and/

CARMEN: /Our papa has left us. The first thing we should do, is think about that.

Pause.

ALBIENNE: Yes.

BEATRIX: Yes.

CARMEN: Yes.

Albienne laughs. Beatrix cries. Carmen does nothing.

L39 S34

ALBIENNE: You know what has happened, don't you? Papa has set us off into the world. This wood is the doorway to everything that's outside our house and our village and our childhood and our experiences.

BEATRIX: There may be bears out here.

ALBIENNE: And boys out here.

CARMEN: And storms that make great noise out here.

ALBIENNE: We may be great out here.

BEATRIX: Or freeze out here.

CARMEN: We may fall down to our knees out here. The only thing we cannot do, is go back. And that's okay – life is not for going back.

BEATRIX: But we must. We must find papa, and remind him of the wrongness of what he has done.

CARMEN: No. Either he knows and has acted anyway. Or he does not know/

ALBIENNE: /In which case it's too late for him. And so we will travel onwards.

CARMEN: No.

ALBIENNE: No? I thought you said there's no going back.

CARMEN: There is not. And I feel the same about forward. So I'm staying right here.

BEATRIX: But here's nowhere. Here's just... the place we were left. There is no light. There is no sun.

CARMEN: It is night. The sun will come. Will you stay with me?

BEATRIX: No. I'm going back – the way Papa fled. And I'll find him.

ALBIENNE: But he fled, you said it yourself. I go forward – if these woods really are a door, then I'm going outside. I will leave no key under the watering can. I will walk until my legs cannot, or my spirit cannot, or I am finished, or the world is finished. I'm walking away.

CARMEN: Not always, Albienne. Because the world is round and after half a globe's worth of walking away from here, you will start walking towards here. You'll come back up the other side of the planet and eventually find your way to me.

BEATRIX: And I will walk the other way. I'll follow our Papa, follow the sun, going from East to West and find him, But if no Papa turns up, then I'll meet you another time, big sister Albienne, at the opposite end of the world. And maybe we'll be different then and our hair will be much longer, or very short, or combed to one side, or salty from swimming in the sea. Whatever it is, I'll look forward to that.

Silence.

L40

NARRATOR: And then they stood in silence, Albienne the eldest and Carmen the youngest and Beatrix in the middle. And already the sun was beginning to rise over the treetops and a new day was beginning. Which is good, because new days are the best things for starting life journeys. And then...

The three say nothing but come together and hug. They separate and depart.

ALBIENNE: I picked up a strong walking stick from the ground and set off East.

BEATRIX: I rolled up my sleeves and rolled down my socks and set off West.

L42

CARMEN: And I watched them both leave, and thought of clever, poignant things I could have said to them... And I collected twenty or thirty branches piled from smallest to biggest, and then struck a flint, and began my first fire in / what would be my new home. /

S35

Scene Three: Beatrix and the Ocean (14)