

# Sacramento Theatre Company

## Study Guide



Book & Lyrics by Joe DiPietro, Music by Jimmy Roberts

**Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles**

# **Sacramento Theatre Company**

## **Mission Statement**

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

## **Our History**

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

**For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:**

**<http://www.sactheatre.org>**

# I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change

## Sacramento Theatre Company Production Study Guide

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Study Guide Materials Written and Compiled by Anna Miles

## **Information on the Playwright and Composer:** ***I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change***

### **Joe DiPietro- Book and Lyrics**

Joe DiPietro grew up in Oradell, New Jersey, where he attended Oradell Public School and River Dell Regional High School. He then attended Rutgers University and graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor's degree in English in 1984. *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* was DiPietro's first produced work- it opened at the Westside Theatre on August 1, 1996, where it ran Off-Broadway for twelve years. *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* currently holds the record as the second longest running Off-Broadway show. Joe DiPietro won a Tony Award for writing the book and lyrics for *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. After *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, Joe DiPietro wrote *Over the River and Through the Woods*, which ran Off-Broadway for two years. he made his Broadway debut in 2005 with the jukebox musical *All Shook Up*, which featured the music of Elvis Presley. Other notable credits include *The Toxic Avenger*, written with Bon Jovi's David Bryan, which won a Tony Award for Best Score as well as the Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical, and *Nice Work if You Can Get It*, which won the Drama Desk Award for Best Book of a Musical. In 2010, Joe DiPietro won his second Best Book Tony Award for *Memphis*, which also won Best Musical that year. *Memphis* continues to be produced by touring companies and regional theatre across the country. Most recently, DiPietro reunited with David Bryan to write the musical *Chasing the Song*, which was work-shopped at La Jolla Playhouse in 2014.

### **Jimmy Roberts- Composer**

Jimmy Roberts graduated from the Manhattan School of Music in 1977. In addition to being a composer, he is also a pianist and entertainer in his own right. He creates his own piano concert performances which blend classical and popular modern music and has performed them at the Merkin Concert Hall, the Time Warner Center, the 92nd Street Y, Steinway Hall and the "Music at Meyer" series in San Francisco. He composed the music for *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* in 1996 with lyricist Joe DiPietro, with whom he also wrote *The Thing About Men* in 2003. *The Thing About Men* was voted Best Musical by the New York Outer Critics Circle in 2004. Other notable composing credits include the children's musical *The Velveteen Rabbit*, the as-of-yet unproduced musical *The Truth About Light*, and two commissioned works, *The Heart of the Matter*, and *I Sing, I Pray*.

## **Synopsis**

### ***I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change***

*I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* is not written as one continuous, linear narrative, but rather presents a series of musical vignettes that represent the different stages of a stereotypical heterosexual relationship. The vignettes are as follows:

#### **1.) Prologue/Cantata For A First Date**

The four characters of the play, two men and two women, prepare to go out for their respective first dates and bemoan the struggles of playing the singles game as they all search for love.

#### **2.) A Stud and A Babe**

A young man and a young woman suffer through their insecurities on a first date, each wishing they were a "stud" who makes women swoon and a "babe" who fills men with desire, respectively. By the end of the date, however, they realize that they are perfect for each other, because although neither one is a "stud" or a "babe," they both have a huge capacity to love.

#### **3.) Single Man Drought**

Two women lament the lack of attractive, desirable single men in the dating pool.

#### **4.) Why? 'Cause I'm A Guy**

The "guys" sing about their male privilege, their stereotypical macho interests, and their perceived uncleanliness.

#### **5.) Tear Jerk**

A man finds himself seeing a "tear-jerker" "chick-flick" while on a date with a woman, and while he at first pretends to hate the movie, he soon finds himself moved by the film. Because he allows his emotions to show through, the date goes very well.

#### **6.) I Will Be Loved Tonight**

A woman prepares to have a man over to her place for the night, and delights over the thought that, at least for tonight, she will not be lonely, but instead will be loved.

#### **7.) Hey There, Single Guy/Gal**

Parents criticize their young son and daughter for waiting so long to settle down and start a family.

#### **8.) Satisfaction Guaranteed**

A law office advertises "satisfaction guaranteed" contracts, which legally bind your sexual partners to satisfy your sexual needs.

#### **9.) He Called Me**

A young woman is ecstatic that a man she is dating has actually called her after he promised to do so.

**10.) Cantata Reprise/Wedding Vows**

We see a young couple agonize over getting married, and then eventually take their vows.

**11.) Always a Bridesmaid**

A woman describes the many weddings she has attended as a bridesmaid, all of which lead to unsuccessful marriages. She ends the song glad that she is a bridesmaid and not an unsuccessful bride.

**12.) The Baby Song**

A new father ponders the mysterious phenomenon that is baby talk.

**13.) Marriage Tango**

A husband and wife put their kids to bed and look forward to spending an intimate evening with each other.

**14.) On The Highway Of Love**

An otherwise happy couple find themselves arguing when they get into the car- the husband despises his wife's backseat driving, while the wife can't stand her hotrod husband's speeding.

**15.) Waiting Trio**

One woman laments waiting for her husband to stop watching football, a man goes crazy waiting for his wife while she shops, and another woman almost bursts as she waits in a long bathroom line.

**16.) Cantata Reprise**

We see another relationship phase forming, as the characters sing about growing old together.

**17.) Shouldn't I Be Less In Love With You?**

A man wonders why he is still so in love with his wife after so many years.

**18.) I Can Live With That**

An older man and older woman decide they can live with each other's imperfections in order to enjoy each other's companionship.

**19.) Epilogue/I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change**

The four characters profess the conclusion and theme of all the vignettes: that heterosexual men and women who are looking for a traditional romantic relationship are doomed to play out the cycle of "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" with each other.

## **Production History**

### ***I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change***

The musical *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, book and lyrics by Joe DiPietro and music by Jimmy Roberts, was first produced at the American Stage Company Theater in Joe DiPietro's hometown of Teaneck, New Jersey. The show ran there from February 1995 until March of that same year, then premiered Off-Broadway at the Westside Theatre on August 1, 1996. The Off-Broadway production was directed by Joel Bishoff and starred Jordan Leeds, Robert Roznowski, Jennifer Simard, and Melissa Weil, most of whom also performed in the New Jersey production. *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* ran Off-Broadway at the Westside for twelve years, until its closing on July 27, 2008 after 5,003 performance. The musical currently stands as the second longest running Off-Broadway production. *I Love, You're Perfect, Now Change* has been translated into at least 17 languages, including Hebrew, Spanish, Dutch, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Japanese, Korean, Italian, Portuguese, German, Catalan, Finnish, Mandarin, Norwegian, Polish, French and Turkish, and has been performed all across American and all over the world, including the UK, China, and Australia.

## **Fun Facts: Courtship Through the Ages and Around the World**

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### **Did you know...**

-The word “honeymoon” comes from an old French custom: A warrior often stole his bride from another tribe, so the new couple would hide out from the girl’s home tribe for an entire lunar cycle. During their time undercover, the couple would drink metheglin, mead made from honey. Hence, “honeymoon.”

-Could you imagine such a thing as a romantic utensil? “Lovespoons” date back to 17th-century Wales: a young man carved ornate wooden spoons from a single piece of wood and then gave his handiwork to his intended sweetheart as a token of affection and intention of marriage.

-More familiar to today’s dating practices are the use of flowers to express affection. The language of flowers was an important part of courtship in Victorian England. Victorians used floriography to express sentiments that could not be spoken aloud. Most of the language of the flowers expressed romantic or platonic love, though there were flowers like the lobelia, which symbolized malevolence, and aconite, which expressed misanthropy.

-Today, the Dai people of China still practice an ancient custom called “visiting girls.” Young ladies gather around a bonfire and work at their spinning wheels. The young men only approach the fire if they see a woman they’re interested in. If the woman returns the interest, she pulls a stool out from under her long skirt and the man can sit beside her. In return, he wraps a red blanket around her.

-Many cultures see marriage as literally a “tie that binds.” In some African cultures, long grasses are braided together and used to tie the hands of the bride and groom together. In a Hindu Vedic wedding ceremony, delicate twine is used to bind the bride’s hand to one of the hands of the groom. Sometimes in Mexico, a ceremonial rope is loosely placed around both of the necks of the bride and groom to “bind” them together.

-In noble circles of medieval Italy, once a bachelor negotiated with a girl’s family, he presented her with a diamond ring. Sound familiar? The custom of betrothal rings dates back to the Romans and was adopted by 13th-century Christians. But through the Victorian ages, birthstones—not diamonds—were customary in these rings. In the late 1800s, the discovery of diamond mines in Africa made the gem inexpensive enough for men to give diamond rings to their intended bride. The DeBeers diamond company hit a slump in 1919 and, after two decades of declining business, launched an advertising campaign to boost sales. In 1947, Frances Gerety—a female copywriter, who, as it happened, never married—wrote the line “A Diamond is Forever” and secured the diamond ring’s place as indicative of engaged status.

## **Is Love Universal?** ***I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* in A Modern Context**

**By: Anna Miles**

In an interview for the New York Times about *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* upon its opening at the American Stage Company Theater in 1995, producer James Hammerstein described the musical as "universal"; "people always want to connect," he said. "Connection is the key word," concludes the article's\* author, "all agree."

All agree. It is a lofty statement, as is the assertion that the musical is "universal." It is a statement that assumes a unity of experience. While it may be true that the urge to connect is a basic and primal human desire, across sexualities and gender expressions, across socioeconomic status, across race and nationality, the ways in which we connect with each other vary tremendously across these social lines. The story goes that while watching *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* during its opening year Off-Broadway, one woman yelled out, "This is my life!" But would all audiences have this response, particularly now, twenty years after the show was written and that woman saw herself in the story?

*I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* tracks the growth of heterosexual, monogamous romantic relationships using a very traditional model: man meets woman, man asks woman on a date, man and woman go on date, man and woman struggle to impress one another, man and woman get married, have children, grow old together, and live happily ever after, albeit with some annoyances along the way. The men and women represented in the musical are all gender conforming- in fact, the characters are almost relentlessly stereotypical of their respective genders. One man watches football obsessively while another sits miserably waiting for his wife to finish shopping, while yet another bemoans having to see an emotionally loaded "chick flick" instead of an action-packed "man film." The women complain about having to wear WonderBras and sexy underwear for first dates, spend hours buying shoes they don't need, nag their husbands, and desperately wait for men to call them.

*I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* was written in the 90s, the era of classic sitcoms like *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, and *Everybody Loves Raymond*, all of which asserted these same stereotypes, presenting heterosexual relationships between a certain kind of woman with a certain kind of man as the norm. Wink-wink nudge-nudge jokes in the "women: amiright?" and "men: can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em" vein ran rampant. In this way, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* was very of its time, but do its themes of connection and love hold up today, in a time when non-traditional relationships, sexualities, and gender expressions are gaining acceptance and representation, in a time when gay marriage is legal nationwide and TV shows like *Modern Family* reinvent the sitcom model?

While audiences of today, particularly younger audiences, might not be able to see their lives so clearly represented in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, most have likely still felt the anxiety of preparing for a first date, the thrill of having a secret crush, the excitement of first love, and the heartbreak of losing a partner. Not all audience members might want a traditional marriage, or children, but as James Hammerstein said back in 1995, all audience members do likely want connection. *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* presents a challenge to the modern theatre-goer: to gaze through the cracks, to read between the lines, to dig underneath the stereotypes and the wink-wink nudge-nudge jokes to find the truth of the musical: the universal desire to find another human (or humans) with whom to share one's fullest, most authentic self.

While perhaps a difficult challenge, it is a worthy one- in fact, it mimics the challenge we face on our real-life journeys to find meaningful relationships: the challenge to look past the veneer and the masks we put on to find the truth within. So while *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* might not present a relationship model everyone can relate to, it certainly does present feelings almost everyone can relate to. And on this, I think we can all agree.

\**New Musical Headed For American Stage*, written by Alvin Klein for the New York Times Theater section, 1995. For link, see "Additional Study Materials" on page 15 of this study guide.

## Study Guide Questions: *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*

- 1.) *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* features many different styles of music, from country to tango to soft shoe. Why do you think the writers decided to include so many different styles instead of sticking to one unified style throughout the show? How does using a collage of musical styles help or hurt the storytelling and the communication of the play's themes?
- 2.) *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* presents many stereotypes about men, women, and monogamous heterosexual relationship dynamics. Do you think the play satirizes (comically critiques) these stereotypes or reinforces them? If the former, what about these stereotypes is the play critiquing or commenting on?
- 3.) After seeing the musical and reading the articles about courtship through the ages and about *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* in a modern context, think about the dating practices of today. Some examples might include online dating websites, dating apps such as Tinder, the role of texting and social media in modern romantic relationships, etc. How are modern dating practices different, and how are they the same, as the dating practices depicted in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*? How might this play be different if it were written today, instead of in 1995?

# Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play

By Anna Miles

Take charge of your theatre-going experience and make it your own by asking yourself questions before, during, and after watching a play.

## Questions to ask before the play:

If you **HAVE** read the play:

How did you envision the set, or the visual world of the play, while reading?

How did you imagine the characters looked while reading the play?

What themes did you notice repeating throughout the play?

What images jumped out at you while reading the play?

How would you describe the central theme of the play in one sentence?

If you **HAVEN'T** read the play:

Do you know anything about the play? If so, what do you know?

In General:

When you think about "theatre," what impressions come to mind? What does "theatre" mean to you?

What do you expect your experience to be when you watch a play? Do you expect to be bored? Excited? Engaged? Curious? Angry? Tired?

## Questions to ask after the play:

If you **READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the production set differ from what you had imagined while reading the play? How was it similar? How did these changes affect your understanding of the story?

Did the characters look different from how you envisioned them looking while reading the play? Did they sound different? Act differently? How did these changes affect your understanding and

opinion of each character? How did these changes affect your understanding of the overall story?

How did the themes and images you noticed while reading translate to performance? Did the same themes and images jump out at you? Did you notice new ones?

Did this particular production seem to have the same central theme, or a different central theme from the one you discovered while reading? What elements of the staging, acting, or design helped convey the theme?

Did they play gain or lose anything in performance? Did you enjoy reading it more, or watching it?

If you **DIDN'T READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the play live up to your expectations? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Was your knowledge of the play correct?

Were you able to follow the story?

Which part of the story did you most respond to? What themes and images jumped out at you?

Which character did you most relate to? Why?

In General:

How did this production change or confirm your original impressions of "theatre"?

How did your experience watching the play differ from how you expected it would go?

In your own words, how would you summarize the plot of the play? How is the plot different from the story, or the thematic implications, in the play?

Did you feel the story was relevant to your life? How and why?

Did you feel the story said something about our society, or about the world at large? If so, what?

Do you feel this story is an important one to tell and keep telling? How and why?

What kind of stories do you most respond to?

# Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

## **Additional Study Material**

*New Musical Headed for the American Stage* by Alvin Klein for The New York Times, 1995  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/12/nyregion/theater-new-musical-headed-for-american-stage.html>

*Show Guide for "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change"* from Popejoy Presents  
<http://popejoypresents.com/performance-guides/show-guide-for-i-love-you-youre-perfect-now-change>