



Love's Ultimate Journey

the Actual & *Dance*

A Play in One Act by Samuel A. Simon

*“A life-affirming ode to
commitment and boundless
love.”*

-Manhattan Digest



Information Kit 2023

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the Actual *l* Dance

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Playwright: Samuel A Simon
Director & Dramaturg: Gabrielle Maisels
Music Composer: Eli Katz Zoller
Musical Director: Mike Rosengarten

Original Music Composed by Eli Katz Zoller
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www.theactualdance.com

The Actual Dance

The Actual Dance is an award-winning play that has toured internationally for 9 years. A love story with a happy ending, *The Actual Dance* is told through the eyes and heart of a husband as he struggles with what everyone expects to be his wife's losing battle to breast cancer. Its surprise ending has audiences laugh, cry and then cheer!

In the hour-long performance, and with original music, the story takes the audience on an emotional but uplifting journey that rewards them with an unexpected happy ending, and a universal, life-affirming lesson of hope and faith.

The play weaves through Sam and Susan's five decades of life together, from the moment they notice each other as teenagers, to the present day. The focus becomes that moment when Sam believes their story will end, and he (and the audience) experience the extraordinary metaphorical ritual of *The Actual Dance*, the "ultimate consummation" of their love.

There are two versions of *The Actual Dance* available for bookings — the original version featuring the playwright/performer, Samuel A. Simon, and a second version featuring actor Chuk Obasi.

The Manhattan Digest called *The Actual Dance* "...a life affirming ode to commitment and boundless love." Stage Buddy said *The Actual Dance* "is proof that life, is indeed, beautiful." From an audience member in Indianapolis: the experience "has changed how I will relate to my wife forever."

In 2022, *The Actual Dance* is available live or recorded via zoom, or in theaters within *COVID Guidelines*.

Performances may be followed by moderated discussions with the audience. Moderators of the discussion have included medical professionals, clergy, and the actors themselves. Options exist for weekend residencies and workshops.



Samuel A. Simon performs in *The Actual Dance*



Chuk Obasi performs in *The Actual Dance*

Awards, Testimonials, and Notable Quotes

Awards:

Voted Fan Favorite: Marsh International Solo Festival, 2020
Selection: DC Black and Theatre Arts Festival, 2019
Selection: Alliance for Jewish Theater Showcase Performance, 2017
Award: Men Against Breast Cancer Courage Award, 2017
Best Original Production: Northern Virginia Theater Alliance One-Act Festival 2013
Nominated: Best Actor – Northern Virginia Theater Alliance One-Act Festival 2013
Selection: New York Midtown International Theater Festival 2013
Nominated: Best Playwright and Best Sound

Testimonials and Noted Quotes:

Cancer Support Community Los Angeles, November 2020:

“Thank you. Words cannot describe how grateful we are for the profoundly moving performance you gave today. It was nothing short of powerful and was such a beautiful testament to a harrowing experience. The insight and inspiration you provided to our community was invaluable and we are truly grateful. Thank you so much for volunteering your time and resources. WE look forward to hosting you again in the future, hopefully in person!”

Judy Freeman, Program Director, Gilda’s Club Westchester: June 2019:

“You wove a beautiful love story of your fears, humor, pain, love and hopes into a magnificent tapestry for all to share. It was both emotional and uplifting. Your ‘on stage’ presence seemed so natural, and you kept those in attendance on the edge of their chairs for the entire performance. ... We waltzed together and came to the realization that this finale could be interpreted not as an end, but perhaps as yet another beginning.”

Rabbi Naamah Kelman, Dean, Taube Family Campus, Jerusalem, Israel. April 2019:

“It is my great privilege and honor to enthusiastically recommend The Actual Dance. Sam Simon is a multi-talented writer, actor and activist. This moving and inspiring performance is a heart wrenching but ultimate uplifting story is perfect for any institution that seeks to speak to the indefatigable human spirit. It is ultimately a love story between husband and wife.”

Ed & Kathy, audience members at 1st Stage at Tysons, Nov 2019:

“Kathy and I attended your wonderful performance of ‘The Actual Dance’ this past Monday. Sam, you did a magnificent job of presenting the deep, raw emotion that can overwhelm the human condition when confronted by a challenge that we initially believe is beyond our capacity. It is thought-provoking, profound, disturbing, while simultaneously rewarding. The metaphor of the orchestra, a ballroom, and a dance for the frailty of human life and the decisions each of us must face one day brought a certain elegance to a formidable, complex and agonizing topic.”

Awards, Testimonials, and Notable Quotes continued

Manhattan Digest:

“The idea of “waltzing into death” hardly seems like the type of uplifting theatrical fare. For the Simon family, it was more akin to a living nightmare. Yet under the direction of director Kate Holland and Samuel’s poetic style, *The Actual Dance* becomes a life affirming ode to commitment and boundless love.”

Larry Strassner, PhD, FACHE, RN, Senior VP of Operations and Chief Nursing Officer, MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center:

“Thank you. I would certainly recommend the show...thank you for opening up yourself so others can heal and understand that they are not alone.”

Rev. Paula J. Teague, D. Min., MBA, Senior Director Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy, Johns Hopkins Health System:

“I am writing in support of the work that Sam Simon is doing with his play ‘*The Actual Dance*.’ It provides a foundation upon which candid and curious conversation can be held. The interdisciplinary/interprofessional discussion among the medical team aided understanding of various roles as well as team work in difficult situations.”

Reverend Robert Chase, Founding Director, Intersections International:

While Sam’s relationship to his Jewish faith is an important thread in the unfolding tapestry of *The Actual Dance*, it is never presented in a way that is forced or exclusive to Judaism. Rather, themes of love and loss, discovery and redemption are universal journeys in the human condition. The play lifts the intersection of ancient traditions with very intimate personal issues in ways that are timeless, powerful and poignant. Whatever one’s religious perspective, the humanity expressed onstage touches the heart.



Audience Member: Indianapolis Fringe

“I just wanted to thank you. I saw your play Thursday evening and it has changed forever how I will relate to my wife. Thank You.” Audience member, Indianapolis, Ind. 2014

Our Story

“Susan Meryl Kalmans, that is her maiden name,” is the line in the play that talks about Susan. Yet she is a large presence throughout. We learn that she is stoic and determined and that she comforts Sam throughout his ordeal of finding a way to face her possible loss.

Susan and Sam met each other while in undergraduate school at what was then called Texas Western College in El Paso, Texas (it is now called the University of Texas at El Paso or UTEP). They were 19 years old and graduated college together. Married in 1966, Susan graduated in the fall of that year in just three-years, so she could work and support the couple while Sam finished in June of 1967.



Susan and Samuel A. Simon. To watch an interview with Susan and Sam, visit <https://vimeo.com/114475491>

After three-years in Austin, Texas where Sam earned his law degree, they moved to the Washington, DC area, living in McLean, Virginia. Susan earned a teaching degree at Texas Western and taught elementary school. She later earned a Master’s Degree in Special Needs from George Washington University and later a certificate in elementary school counseling from George Mason University. After retirement from the public school system she earned a certificate in geriatric care management also from George Mason University. She worked as Marketing and Admissions Director at Tall Oaks Assisted Living in Reston, Virginia until her retirement in 2014. She has since been active in her community and attends many of the performances of The Actual Dance and participates in post-show dialogues.

Susan and Sam are parents of two children. Marcus, their son, is a lawyer and a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and lives in nearby Falls Church, Virginia with his wife Rachel, daughter Emily and son Zachary. A daughter Rachael, is a pediatric dentist in Baltimore, Maryland, and is married to David Proper. They have two daughters, Sydney and JoAnna.

Breast cancer has played a very big role in the Simon family life. Susan’s mother died from breast cancer just one year after Susan and Sam were married. Sam’s mother died from breast cancer in 1973. Sam’s sister Marion and Susan’s sister-in-law Rosalind are both breast cancer survivors.

Susan attributes her survival to her belief that she would survive and to her commitment to physical fitness.

Sam and Susan celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on August 23, 2016.

Samuel A. Simon

Playwright and Performer



Samuel A. Simon

Sam describes his work with The Actual Dance as his “fourth age.” He comes to it after a career as a prominent member of America’s consumer movement. Trained as a lawyer, he started his career as one of the original members of Ralph Nader’s first legal advocacy group in Washington, DC in 1970. Early in his career his leadership was recognized through a profile in the New York Times. (NY Times, Jan 29, 1971 p. B1). After a stint in the US Army as a JAG Captain, Sam returned to work for Ralph Nader and then start his own consulting firm. During that time Sam became a regular in the national news, appearing on programs such as Face the Nation, The Today Show, Good Morning America, CBS Morning News, The Nightly News, Phil Donahue Show and the Oprah Winfrey Show.

In 2008 Sam began his “third age” following the sale of his consumer affairs firm in Washington and became a Senior Fellow with the then new non-profit, Intersections International, a social justice initiative of the Collegiate Church of New York. He has transitioned from that

work at Intersections to serve on its advisory board in 2013 as he began to devote himself full time to The Actual Dance.

Sam returned to theater as an avocation in the late 1990’s. He was new to play writing, but now has been active in community theater in the Northern Virginia/Washington DC area for about 15 years. He has performed in Temple Rodef Shalom Players group, including roles in plays such as Last Night of Ballyhoo (Adolph), Neil Simon’s “Fools” (Doctor) and roles in annual hour-long plays. He performed with other companies in Washington, DC area including McLean Drama Company, Great Falls Players and others. He is also trained in improv starting with Sylvia Toone in Washington and as a member of the S*T*A*R*S Troupe. He has been working with Artistic New Directions of New York through their annual Improv Retreats in the Catskills and has attended ten retreats including three “master retreats.” He has taken Gary Austin, Rachael Hamilton, and Michael Rock workshops. He is an acting student of Carol Fox Prescott, has taken classes from her for four years and has performed in Gary Austin shows.

Chuk Obasi Performer



Chuk Obasi

Chuk Obasi began taking on the role of Sam in *The Actual Dance* in 2016, drawn by the opportunity to re-imagine the telling of Mr. Simon's story after having previously viewed his performance several times prior.

Obasi is an actor/director, dancer/choreographer, and writer/poet with over twelve years of professional experience nationally and internationally. He is also a teaching artist and public speaker, having participated in speaking engagements and artistic residencies on various topics and artistic disciplines at locations across the country. Obasi Holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from SUNY Geneseo, where he studied communication with a double minor in musical theatre and dance.

Obasi currently serves as Artist in Residence at Intersections International, choreographer for STAR Theatre at the Director's Company, and actor/writer with TE'A (Theatre, Engagement & Action). He has also recently worked with the National Dance Institute (Teaching Artist), Village Playback Theatre (Performer), and Galli Theatre (Actor). Recent

works include Music concert *A Drink with Death* (Lyricist) at Feinstein's/54 Below; Critically acclaimed play *Uniform Justice* (Playwright/ Director), which he produced at the 2015 NY International Fringe Festival; Award-winning Feature films "The Depths" and "79 Parts" (Actor); Short film *Rhubarb* (Lead Actor); A 2016 arts residency at the Actor's Studio (Actor); And 2015 arts residencies at Irondale Theater, State University of New York at Geneseo, and Central College in Iowa. He has also been recently seen performing original spoken word poetry for The Diamond Empowerment Fund's 2016 and 2017 Galas in Las Vegas and at The Declaration Initiative 2016 Conference in Washington, DC.

A New York native, born in Queens and raised in the Bronx, Obasi currently resides in Manhattan with his wife and two sons. He dedicates his performances of *The Actual Dance* to the memory of his friend Bobby Kashif Cox, lost to cancer but ever present in spirit.

Acknowledgements and Production History

Acknowledgements:

The Actual Dance was developed with the generous support and encouragement of:

- Artistic New Directions (now AND Theater Company) which also serves as our non-profit fiscal agent
- Intersections International (An initiative of the Collegiate Church of New York)
- EmblemHealth Care for The Family Care Giver Program
- Individual Donors

Developmental History:

Total productions December 2021: 200

- Chuk Obasi Choreography and Redirection, 2018
- Second show added with Chuk Obasi, 2016
- Redirectes and Music added, 2014
- Performance and 1st Direction, 2013
- Written and Readings, 2012

Theatrical Production Runs and Festivals

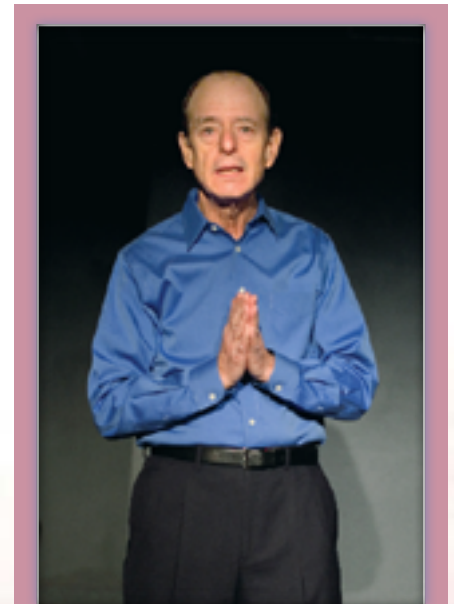
- Marc A. Sorca Hall, National Opera Center, NY, 2018, 2019, 2020
- DC Black and Theatre Arts Festival, DC, 2019
- Hopewell Theater, Hopewell, NJ, 2019
- 1st Stage of Tysons, VA, 2019
- United Solo Theatre Festival, NY, 2018
- Arts Midwest, Indianapolis, IN, 2018
- The Allen B. Lefcowitz Theater, Writer's Center, Bethesda, MD, 2018
- Studio 145, Intersections International, New York, NY, 2018
- Tampa Florida Fringe Festival, FL, 2017
- Tusten Theater, Narrowsburg, NY, 2017
- Indianapolis, Indiana Fringe Festival, IN, 2015
- 1st Stage of Tysons Virginia, 6 weekend run, VA, 2015
- New York Run: Theater Row, Studio Theater, NY, 2015
- New York MidTown International Theater Festival, NY, 2013
- Washinton DC Fringe Festival, DC, 2013

Community Living Venues

- Scarsdale Public Library, Scarsdale, NY, 2021
- Sisters Network of Central Virginia, Richmond, VA 2021
- Kathy Martin Community Ballroom, McLean, VA, 2018 (Vinson Hall)
- Maplewood Park Place, Bethesda, MD, 2018 (Sunrise)
- Brighton Gardens, Bethesda, MD, 2018 (Sunrise)
- Bluemont Park, Arlington, VA, 2018 (Sunrise)
- The Colonnades, Charlottesville, VA, 2018 (Sunrise)
- Tall Oaks At Reston, Reston, VA, 2017 (Independent)
- The Jefferson, Arlington County, VA, 2017 (Sunrise)
- Landsdowne Woods, Leesburg, VA, 2017 (Leisure World)
- Ashby Ponds, Loudon County, VA, 2015 (Erikson Property)



Chuk Obasi and Samuel A. Simon



Samuel A. Simon in The Actual Dance; NYC run.

Acknowledgements and Production History continued

Medical Venue Performance History

- Gilda's Club of Grand Rapids, MI, 2021
- Gilda's Club, St. Louis, MO, 2021
- Gilda's Club of South FL, 2020
- Cancer Support Community DE, 2020
- Gilda's Club Rochester, NY, 2020
- Cancer Support Community LA, CA, 2020
- Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, MI, 2020
- Gilda's Club New Hampshire, NH, 2020
- Cancer Support Community of the Greater Lehigh Valley, PA, 2020
- Gilda's Club Chicago, IL, 2020
- Gilda's Club Westchester, White Plains, NY, 2020
- Gilda's Club New York, New York, NY 2019
- Memorial Sloan Kettering, NY, 2017
- Franklin MedStar Hospital Center, Baltimore, MD, 2016
- Hospice of the Chesapeake, Annapolis, MD, 2016
- Washington Hospital Center, Washington, DC, 2015
- John Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, 2015
- National Conference, Society of Breast Imaging, Orlando FL, 2015
- Univ. of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville, VA, 2014

Religious Venue Performance History

International Venues:

- Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem, Israel, 2019

Jewish Performance Venues:

- Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, Palo Alto, CA, 2021
- Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center of Houston, TX, 2018
- Showcase Alliance for Jewish Theater: Boston, MA, 2017
- Temple Rodef Shalom, Falls Church, VA, 2016, 2013
- Hebrew Union College, New York, NY, 2014, 2015, 2016
- Temple Mount Sinai, El Paso, TX, 2015
- Temple Beth Ohr, Brooklyn, NY, 2014
- Hadassah of Indianapolis, IN, 2013
- Ulster County Jewish Family Services, Kingston, NY, (2013)

Church Performance Venues:

- St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, Wash. DC, 2018
- New York Theological Seminary, NY, 2016
- Grace Harlem Congregational Church, NY, 2015
- Women Anointed Ministry, NY, 2014
- Marble Collegiate Church, NY, 2013
- Ft. Washington, Collegiate Church, NY, 2013
- Middle Collegiate Church, NY, 2013
- West-End Collegiate Church, NY, 2013
- Union Congregational, Montclair, NY, 2013



Chuk Obasi performing at the United Solo Festival, 2018



Samuel A. Simon performing with musicians, Theater Row, NY, 2015.

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Acknowledgements and Production History continued

Performative Author Talks

- Performative Author Talk at Lutheran Settlement House, Philadelphia, PA, 2022
- Author Talk at Temple Beth Ami, Center Stage Shabbat, Temple Beth Ami, Rockville, MD, 2022
- Author Talk at The Kensington, Falls Church, Virginia, 2022
- Author Talk at Carroll County Public Library, Eldersburg Branch Library, Eldersburg, MD, 2022
- Author Talk at Bridgeport Public Library, Bridgeport, WV, 2022
- Author Talk at Bristol Public Library, Bristol, VA, 2022
- Author Talk at McLean Rotary, McLean, VA 2022
- Schmoozing with Avi Hoffman, Virtual Talk, 2022
- Author Talk at American Legion Post 270, 2022
- Family Caregivers: Unpaid. Overworked. Underappreciated. How to Succeed Without Becoming Patient Webinar Series, 2022

The Actual Dance: Fact Sheet and Booking Information

The Creative Team:

Playwright: Samuel A. Simon
Dramaturg: Gabrielle Maisels
Music Composer: Eli Zoller Katz
Show 1 with Samuel A. Simon
 Director & Dramaturg: Gabrielle Maisels
Show 2 with Chuk Obasi
 Director/Choreographer: Kimani Fowlin

Video Links:

Recent with music:

<https://vimeo.com/211576574> (password TAD) Rehearsal
(3 min 24 sec)

Preview:

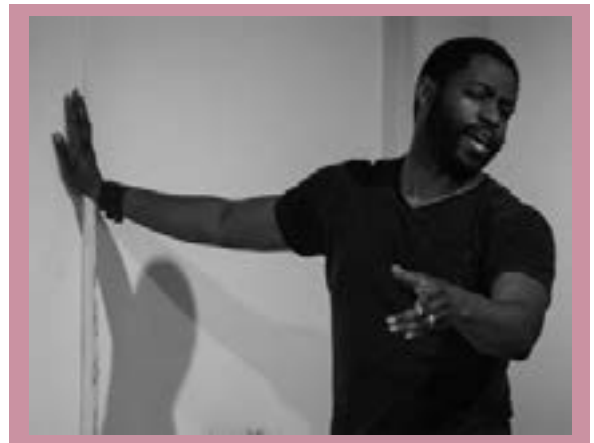
<https://vimeo.com/493450007> (14 min)

Trailer for the show:

<https://vimeo.com/90969661> (1 MIN 50 SEC)

Technical Information:

Actors: One
Musicians: Optional cued from computer, or Cello and Guitar player.
Set: Black Stool. If musicians, two chairs and lighted music stand.
Lighting: Optional. A light design set is available for venues with capability.
Run time: One hour with a post-show discussion of about one-half hour.



Contact and Booking Information:

To book performances of The Actual Dance, please contact Mr. Milt Orkin, Responsible Agent at:
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Please contact Samuel A. Simon for additional information and media inquiries:
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the Actual Dance

Starring Sam Simon



the Actual Dance

Starring Chuk Obasi

