

Student Production of A FIST OF ROSES.

University of California
Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies
Spring 2009 Durham Theater

Directed by Erika Chong Shuch & Philip Kan Gotanda

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"I left as unwound as I've ever been by a performance, and like it or not, it was the kind of soulful, emotional work that characterizes what Intersection's resident company, Campo Santo, has created in recent years...drop-dead stunning." --SF Bay Guardian, JH Tompkins

"...under Gotanda's dynamic direction and with a dream ensemble of men who can be as funny as they are fearful, sucks you in and pulls no punches. This is amazing theater." --Oakland Tribune, Chad Jones

"It may be impossible ever to hear 'My Girl' again without thinking of the brutality that can be implicit in that possessive pronoun. No wonder the new play by Philip Kan Gotanda that opened over the weekend is called 'A Fist of Roses.'" --San Francisco Chronicle, Robert Hurwitz

"An exceptional ensemble cast sets words, movement, and music in motion, engaging in a kind of perpetual masking and unmasking of masculinity. ...Rarely does theater generate a jolt like this." -SF Bay Guardian, Rob Avila

Collaboratively created, developed and directed by **Philip Kan Gotanda** and **Campo Santo** with Movement Direction by **Erika Chong Shuch**, Live Music/Beat Box by **Tommy Shepherd** Featuring: **Michael Cheng, Donald Lacy, Rajiv Shah, Tommy Shepherd** and **Danny Wolohan**.

A Fist of Roses uses elements of personal narrative, live beat boxing and movement to explore the definition of masculinity in our culture and its relationship to violence-primarily violent acts in relationships. Developed by Philip Kan Gotanda and Campo Santo through a series of interviews, open readings and public discussions with audience members and community group

a fist of roses

by

Philip Kan Gotanda

3rd in the Garage Band Series

created with Campo Santo Company. Erika Chong Shuch.

acknowledgements: Melyssa Joe Kelly, Hamish Sinclair, Man Alive Project, Asian Women's Shelter.

This play would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of Sean San Jose, Erika Chong Shuch, Tommy Shepherd, Donald Lacy, Danny Wolohan, Michael Cheng, Rajiv Shah, Michael Cano, Chida Chaemchang.

Deborah Cullinan, Luis Saguar, Margo Hall and the entire staff at the Intersection and all the rest of Campo Santo.

October 26, 2004

WORKING DRAFT -

Music-Sound: Tommy Shepherd composed and performed a BEAT-BOX score for the entire play. It accompanied scenes, aided transitions and in general served much like a live film score.

Movement: Erika Chong Shuch choreographed the Aces movement throughout the entire play. Through workshopping and rehearsals, the movement became a 6th Ace.

Visuals: Jeff Fohl created a video of two bodies in tight, ambiguous, blurred action. It was thirty seconds per frame so the entire hour and something sequence was thirty seconds of actual footage. It was projected at an angle on the stage left theater wall,

bleeding on to the stage and back wall. It provided an image that appeared to be static, yet was moving at an infinitesimal pace.

Set: James Faerron - A stark, unset set. A lone industrial pipe moved across the upstage wall. A steel rose grew out of the couplet.

Lighting: Heather Basarab

Costumes: Lucy Karanfilian.

Stage Manager: Michael Cano, Chida Chaemchang,
Assistant SM.

Pre-show music: What Makes the World Go Round by Al Green; Sally Go 'Round the Roses; Shaft Theme by Isaac Hayes.

CARD INSERTS in the Programs: (Have Pencils available)

Please answer the questions. Please do not sign. These cards will be collected before the show and may be read during the performance.

Have you ever been involved in a violent incident? In a sentence, what was it?

a fist of roses

Pre-show Announcement - Tell Audience to please finish filling out the small CARDS and that they will be picked up now.

As this goes on, WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND by Al Green. Then into the SHAFT theme by Isaac Hayes.

The Cards are collected. Music fades. Lights dim.

SHAH, LACY, CHENG, SHEPHERD, WOLOHAN
"THE FIVE ACES"

5 Males: Dressed in 50's suits. Hip shoes.

PRELUDE --

(LACY runs out, MC)
[Collusion; sets up parameters]

LACY: Hey, hey, how we doing tonight? (pointing)
Hey, you made it. Good to see you all. Hey, hey -
you ain't getting away with just sitting there all
quiet and not participating - this ain't no oriental
church, we ain't Mormons - don't be sitting back in
your seats now - listen up. I'm-a-wake your asses up -
-

I was talking to my friend, right. I said you like
eating pussy? He said I don't know man, I have some
problems. I said, 'No, no, it's good for you, protein
in there. It's better for you to be eating pussy than
fucking anyway. With you fucking is like throwing
toothpicks into an empty well- you should stick to
eating pussy. He said, 'Man, every time I eat pussy it
tastes like shit.' I said, 'Man, you taking too big a
bite.'

LACY/MC: All right, all right, that one went over like
a pregnant pole vaulter...

I like to introduce the GUYS - We are the FIVE ACES!

First, his dream is not to go to Bollywood but he does
have woodie bollocks - SHAH...

(Shah runs out)

Next to Blair Underwood, he the blackest White man I know - Irish *White Chocolate* WOLOHAN.

(Wolohan trots in)

And as a shout out to the muffled voice of the minority majority - our very own Fog City Chinaman, CHENG!

(Cheng strolls on stage)

(LACY gives way to WOLOHAN, who does his urban Black imitation)

WOLOHAN: The man who put the MAN in Mandingo, the sweetest bad-ass nigger from here to Okinawa - boys and girls... Just, LACY...

LACY: (joking, with hint of edge) Hey, watch that *nigger* business, you still just *white* chocolate.

And last but not least --

SHAH: The Human juke box --

CHENG: The voice machine --

WOLOHAN: (very white male) The other *African American*
--

LACY: SHEPHERD --

(Aces start singing a happy, celebratory version of, HAPPY BIRTHDAY --

SHEPHERD walks out --

Singing quiets)

SHEPHERD: (happy, upbeat) My birthday party. I am six years old. The picture? My mommy, my daddy, and me. This is nice. This is how it's supposed to be.

Soo...special. My mommy is beautiful in her pretty dress. She smells like Sunday morning before we go to church. My daddy - big, handsome, strong - his hair shiny, sharp, *Tres Flores*, hmm that smell. They're singing to me. Hear them? For me. Only me...

(CHENG and SHAH become Mother and Father and start to dance, romantic --

SHEPHERD watches them, lost in the reverie)

They love me. They love each other. My daddy strikes a match --

(LACY/Father lights a wooden match)

(Lights begin to dim)

SHEPHERD: And lights the candles...

(We hear a dog/Spot/Wolohan HOWLING in the distance)

(SINGING becomes loud and celebratory again)

(SHEPHERD looks out)

SHEPHERD: Spot! See Spot run! See Spot play...

(Technical move: LACY holds the match as it burns. As the flame reaches the half way burn, he turns the match over and takes hold of the match stick by the already burned head. He now holds the match inverted, watching the flame burn upwards on the remaining unburned half. Careful, as the head of the match is hot. Lick fingers or use a band-aid)

(As the flame burns out, it will die with a miniature, visual, *poof*.

One beat, then in unison they all SNAP their fingers)

ACES - SNAP!

(They drop poses and take on a neutral, without intention, character. They move to various spots on the stage and stand nonchalantly displaying a picture of the relationships and dynamics of the play)

SCENE ONE. I LOVE YOU, TOO.

[Shepherd beat-boxes: the theme, Art of Noise - Moments In Love]

LACY: (MC) Now we want to present in the "roles" of couple #1 in love: I'll be playing the man and Wolohan right here, he'll be my bitch - girl, I mean.

(young couple in love)

(they get in character. Watch each other for a moment, setting the tone of the relationship)

LACY/GUY: I love you.

WOLOHAN/WOMAN: I love you.

(Beat. LACY senses something's off)

LACY: (tries again) I love you.

WOLOHAN: I love you.

LACY: No, no. I love you, too.

(WOLOHAN is confused)

LACY: It's like - peanut butter and jelly. You're standing out like a bagel in a bowl of grits.

WOLOHAN: I don't - what? What are you talking about -
-

(LACY raises his hand, signaling for her to stop talking)

LACY: I love you.

WOLOHAN: (flummoxed) I love you.

LACY: No this is like a call and response. I say, 'I love you', you say, 'I love you, too' - we don't need you coming up with your own shit, 'I love you'. Understand? I love you, too. Okay. I love you.

(pause)

WOLOHAN: (tentative) I love you, too?

LACY: Yeah, good, good. I love you.

(WOLOHAN's relieved, got it. Back to normal)

WOLOHAN: I love you.

LACY: No, no --

WOLOHAN: (immediately) I love you, too?

(LACY opens his palms and nods, like 'that wasn't so hard, was it?')

WOLOHAN: (with a taste of feminine passive-aggressive attitude) I love you, too.

LACY: Yeah, baby, that's right...

(SHEPHERD leads them into an Doo-op version of YOU REALLY GOT A HOLD ON ME.

Aces move down stage into an informal line.

Following is spoken, except "Tighter" which they all sing. SHEPHERD sings all the way through)

WOLOHAN: Love is --

SHAH: - this thing -

LACY: Out of --

CHENG: See is --

WOLOHAN: -- control

ALL: (singing) "Tighter" --

SHAH/LACY: -- you, you, you - all I can see is --

LACY: Trying to put my hands on --

CHENG: -- you. All I want is you. I --

WOLOHAN: Put my hands on the thing -

SHAH: -- need is you.

ALL: (singing) "Tighter" --

LACY: To calm it. To make it --

CHENG: Can see is you --

WOLOHAN/ LACY: -- shut up --

SHAH/CHENG: -- see you, only see you --

LACY: I have to --

ALL: (singing) "Tighter" --

WOLOHAN: I cannot not --

SHAH: Squeeze me --

LACY: Don't you see --

(Last "Tighter" should be vocally strong)

ALL: (strong finish) TIGHTER --

(song ends)

(Others withdraw leaving Shepherd and Shah)

LACY: (MC) Now we see Shepherd playing the girl and Shah is the Mom of the girl's boyfriend.

[ACES hum bass line to HE HIT ME]

SHEPHERD/GIRL: It felt like a kiss.

(Pause. Mother proud of her son's romanticism)

SHAH/ BOY'S MOTHER: He's just like his father.

SHEPHERD/ GIRL: He hit me.

(silence)

MOTHER: He's just like his father...

GIRL: And then he took me in his arms.

(pause)

MOTHER: He's just like his father

GIRL: And I knew I loved him.

(Pause. Mother turns and looks at the young woman)

LACY: *LITTLE SHEPPY'S FAMILY DOG SHOW* -- Don't try this at home.

(SPOT played by WOLOHAN. Don't try imitating a dog. Rather, Spot should be played as a human would be as a dog. Spot has attitude)

(SHAH steps forward and watches. He's the Boy's Father. He lights a match in a cool fashion and lights a cigarette while he observes)

SHAH/DAD: Show 'em. Sheppy show 'em. (to the others)
This is good, watch. Go 'head Sheppy.

SHEPHERD: Okay, okay - I'm gonna do a little show for you now. Where'd he go -- Spot? Spot? Here boy...

(SPOT walks up to SHAH who extends his hand to shake. Spot ignores the hand and immediately leans in and sniffs his butt)

SHAH: Hey!

SHEPHERD: Spot! Spot!

(Gets Spot's attention. SHEPHERD scratches its back and against his will WOLOHAN's leg shakes)

SHEPHERD: Good boy, good boy. Okay, Spot? Hey, hey, listen up. Listen to me.

SPOT: Woof, woof...

SHEPHERD: Okay, ready?

(Hums Hawaii-Five-0 theme, pretends to be outside the door of a killer's room. Holds a make-believe gun. Kicks door in and points his gun)

SHEPHERD: Bang!

(An unenthusiastic Spot rolls over playing dead)

SPOT: Ahhh...

SHAH: (nodding to do it again, better) Sheppy...

SHEPHERD: Good, good, all right, let's do it again for Daddy and his friends...Spot? Spot?

(Spot drags himself up. SHEPHERD points the make-believe gun)

SHEPHERD: Bang!

(Spot refuses, looks away, whistling)

SHAH: (pushing kid out of way) Spot? SPOT!

(silence)

SHAH: *Hace como mi vieja en la cama.*

(Spot doesn't move. SHAH waits. This is serious. A test of wills)

SHAH: (threatening) *Hace como mi vieja en la cama.*
Act like my old lady in bed.

(Silence. Then. Slowly, Spot lays on his back with his legs spread open. This should almost feel like a violation. Satisfied, SHAH backs off. Spot gets up and dusts himself off, trying to maintain a semblance of dignity)

SHAH: (to SHEPHERD) Go 'head. *Hace como mi vieja en la cama.*

(SHAH nods for him to do it. SHEPHERD doesn't want to do)

SHAH/DAD: Sheppy.

(SHEPHERD resists)

SHAH/DAD: Come on Sheppy, don't let your Papa down...

(SHEPHERD half-heartedly mimics his father)

SHEPHERD: (quietly) *Hace como mi vieja en la cama.*

(Spot feels betrayed and doesn't budge)

SHAH: (Pressuring) Shepherd...

SHEPHERD: (Pointedly with a hint of threat) Act like my old lady in bed.

(Slowly spot rolls on to his back)

(SHEPHERD transitions the Aces into a Doo-Op verse of YOU REALLY GOT A HOLD ON ME)

Shepherd directs the opening lines to his Shah/father)

GUYS: (Singing) --

I don't *like* you, but I *love* you.

Seems that I'm always thinking of you.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, You treat me badly,

I love madly,

You really got a hold on me,

You really got a hold on me,

You really got a hold --

(LACY/MC takes over)

LACY: All right we back, we back. So got a question for ya'll. What do you call nuts on a wall? Walnuts. What do you call it when you got nuts on the chest? Chestnuts. What about when you got nuts on your chin? Chin nuts? Nope - you got nuts on your chin, man, you got a dick in your mouth.

(The ACES laugh in exaggerated fashion. Then casually settle into chairs)

LACY: Speakin' of *Chin* nuts - How 'bout we eat Chinks tonight - How's this - *Chuen toe*? That's Shanghainese - fist. *Chuen toe*. Fist. Not bad, huh? Cheng? Chengster?

(Cheng looks at the Shah and rolls his eyes)

LACY: How 'bout this one - *Wah hen*? Dent. *Wah hen*. Dent. Not bad, huh? *Mei gwei*? Roses. Yeah? That's Chinese.

SHEPHERD: (corrects LACY) *Mei Gwei*.

LACY/MC: What? I don't think so. *Mei Gwei*.

SHEPHERD: No, no - roses? *Mei Gwei*.

CHENG: Carnations. That's Black for roses.

LACY: Ah man...

CHENG: How's this - *Nei-gro*. That's Chinese for don't marry my daughter.

(Before LACY can respond --)

(WOLOHAN steps forward)

WOLOHAN: (to the audience, with knowing) *Mei Gwei*.
Roses (to LACY with knowing) *Mei Gwei*.

(Beat)

LACY/MC: White boys *always* gotta be right.

WOLOHAN: Don't gotta be right, I just AM right.
That's what's cool about being White. Called *entitlement*.

LACY: That's fucked up Wolohan.

WOLOHAN: I know it's fucked up, Lacy, it's your White Chocolate bro' here, 'member? Blackest White man next to Blair Underwood?

LACY: Yeah. Okay Teena Marie. Blackest white man except when it comes to the O.J. verdict. Was he guilty? Was he guilty?

WOLOHAN: Just because he's black, that means he's got to be innocent?

LACY: Just because he Black mean he always guilty? If the glove don't fit, you must acquit --

WOLOHAN: Can't the LAPD be racist AND OJ did it?

SHAH/SHEPHERD: (chanting like "Attica") Rashomon!
Rashomon!

(CHENG breaks in)

CHENG: Mei Gwei! (beat) That's how you speak Chinese, mother fuckers...

(silence)

LACY: Yeah, just like that. Bruce Lee knows.

SHEPHERD: Jet Li knows, too.

WOLOHAN: (singing) Everybody was kung-fu fightin'...

SHAH: Hey, hey, Jet Li's bad.

CHENG: And Bruce Lee's a god. White kids, Black kids - everybody loved Bruce Lee.

LACY: Till he whooped Kareem's ass.

SHEPHERD: No way he can block Kareem's sky hook.

LACY: And Jet Li a midget.

SHAH: But he's STILL bad.

WOLOHAN: I'm sitting this one out.

CHENG: (beat. (eloquently, with great dignity)
Mei Gwei. Remember, 'Minority majority'? Lot
more than Black and White in this country, lot
more. (beat) Free Lowell High School! Free the
U.C. system! AND WEN HO LEE WAS INNOCENT!
Goddamnit...

SHEPHARD: Who?

SHAH: Who's Wen Ho Lee?

(silence)

LACY: Okay... Here is our main couple for the
evening - Shah as the Lady, take a bow, and Cheng as
the Gentleman - His character's not Chinese but he
could be, not that that's a bad thing, just isn't what
the scene is...fuck it.

(THE COUPLE - SHAH/WOMAN and CHENG/MAN. We
track this relationship through. Couple has a
musical theme, performed by SHEPHERD)

(It's MID-WAY in relationship)

[Love TKO]

SHAH/WOMAN: (noticing) Why aren't you getting ready,
honey?

(CHENG/MAN is thinking)

SHAH: What's a matter?

CHENG: You know I like your sister.

SHAH: Yeah?

CHENG: Is your sister jealous of you? Just the way she talks about you, you know? I don't know - small things, little things --

SHAH: I want to go. See my family. I don't want to stay at home --

CHENG: I know, I know, I'm just looking out for you. You don't know what she says behind your back --

SHAH: Stop it, stop it - I don't want to hear this now -

CHENG: I know you don't, you haven't listened to me and that's why all this crap has happened to you --

SHAH: Not now, please not now ...

CHENG: Look at you. Your sister takes advantage of you, your mother takes advantage of you, the whole family does and you want to go over there and kiss their asses -

(SHEPHERD calling out over a canyon. We hear the ECHO. He's a small boy playing)

SHEPHERD: (having a good time) I - I - I...

LACY: There's this trickle down thing --

SHEPHERD: LOVE - LOVE - LOVE...

WOLOHAN: (Irish accent) I never, to my knowledge, ever met a wife beater.

SHEPHERD: YOU - YOU - YOU...

CHENG: Honor my mother's womb --

SHEPHERD: I - I - I...

LACY: -- Sisters, brothers. Kids. Grandkids...

SHAH: -- swore I would never be like him...

SHEPHERD: DO - DO - DO...

CHENG: -- from the cradle to the grave...

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

SHEPHERD: Indian, Filipino, Chinese. My Mother and Father were pen pals for 13 years before they met. Mother loved this Indian TV actor she saw riding on this elephant. My father? He's Indian. My parents would fight. But they would always say it was born out of love for each other --

SHAH: -- and I believe them.

WOLOHAN: Black American. Growing up there was a lot of police brutality. A kid about 13 was breaking into a coin machine at the laundry mat down the street. Got shot 5 times by the OPD. I saw his bloody body drug out on a stretcher. To this day, I see blinking lights in the rear view mirror --

LACY: -- I break out in a cold sweat...

CHENG: Irish American. I was one of the few White kids in my class and I got picked on a lot. This Black kid, Mafu, would follow me around - (sings) "White boy day at Maaacy's, at Maaacy's". One day --

WOLOHAN: -- I just snapped.

SHAH: African slash American. My block had the Black gang. The next block had the Mexican gang. Then this block on this side had the White gang. Me and my

sister would have to go certain routes to get home,
some places you had to run. Everyday --

SHEPHERD: -- you just had to fight. You had to.

LACY: Chinese American. Growing up spoke Mandarin at
home so when I got to school I had to learn English.
When my parents fought, they'd shut all the windows so
the neighbors couldn't hear. --

CHENG: -- Sometimes the fights were bad.

(LACY pulls out a HAT. Each of the Guys takes
out a small CARD and places it in the hat.
LACY mixes them up. The Guys reach in and
take a slip of paper.

They read them)

LACY: (reading) Broke a chair. Pulled the phone out
of the wall.

(They look around at each other, trying to
figure out who wrote it)

WOLOHAN: (reading) Yelled at my wife. Called her a
Bitch.

(They check each other out)

SHEPHERD: (reading) Sleeping in my bed, I could hear
my father hitting my mother. That sound of flesh
hitting flesh.

(Look around questioningly)

SHAH: (reading) Slapped my son because he lost the
game.

(Exchange looks)

CHENG: (reading) Nothing. I was never violent.

(Glance out at the audience, questioningly)

Transition into -

(THE COUPLE - SHAH/WOMAN, CHENG/MAN. SHEPHERD plays their theme.

Early in relationship. A quarter way in. CHENG is *delightfully* charming, we should love him. See them be physically playful before dialogue starts)

SHAH/WOMAN: What?

CHENG/MAN: No, no, nothing. (beat) You like spicy things, I can tell.

SHAH: Well, yeah, I don't know, you don't like it? --

CHENG: No, no, this is fine.

SHAH: I thought you liked spicy --

CHENG: It's quite good, it is.

SHAH: It is?

CHENG: It is.

SHAH: Well, you never said anything before --

CHENG: It is. My mother used to cook spicy for my father. He was nuts about spicy things. Anything hot, didn't matter what - chicken, pasta, casserole - throw in some chilies, he was in heaven. Whew...

SHAH: (agreeing, relieved) I know - whew, hot but hot good, huh. Spicy but --

CHENG: Well, it's just...

SHAH: Yes?

CHENG: When I was growing up I had to eat this or my Dad would throw a fit...

SHAH: Honey?

CHENG: So all three kids had to shut up and eat this stuff. (beat) You don't mind.

SHAH: No, no, it's all right.

CHENG: You sure?

SHAH: I'm sure...

CHENG: (absolutely sincere) I'm sorry, I'm not usually like this.

(SHEPHERD shifts to JUNGLE BOOGIE. Theme for the "Clumsy Couple" scenes)

(light, humorous mood)

LACY/WOMAN: I'm clumsy.

WOLOHAN/MAN: She's clumsy.

LACY: I am.

WOLOHAN: She is.

LACY: I'm clumsy.

WOLOHAN: (agreeing) Un-huh.

(SHEPHERD WHACKS his stick)

CRACK!!

(Aces line up ready to strike their exaggerated FACIAL POSES)

CRACK!! (1st pose - JOY)

CRACK!! (2nd pose - FEAR)

CRACK!! (3rd pose - ANGER)

CRACK!! (4th pose - SADNESS)

(Hold for a beat)

(SHEPHERD segues them into a Doo-Op version of
YOU REALLY GOT A HOLD ON ME)

ACES: "Baby, I love you, and all I want you to do is:

Hold me,

Squeeze me,

Hold me,

Squeeze me --"

Hold me,

Hold me --

(LACY as the MC)

LACY: Now we gonna take you back. (do a late night
DJ riff here) Young love - talking on the telephone -
y'all did this. This time I'm the girl. I'm not
really a girl, just *acting* like I'm the girl...

(teenage boy and girl on phone to each other.
In love. They laugh.)

SHEPHERD/BOY: (innocent, playful) You say goodbye
first.

LACY/GIRL: (playful) No, you say goodbye first.

SHEPHERD: No, you say goodbye first boobie.

LACY: No, you say goodbye first teddy bear.

(SHEPHERD playful but getting serious)

SHEPHERD: No, come on. You say goodbye first

LACY: Nah. You say goodbye first.

SHEPHERD: (serious, in love) You say goodbye first, baby.

LACY: (serious in love, but slightly resistant) No, you say good-bye, honey.

(SHEPHERD grows more adamant, LACY grows more resistant)

SHEPHERD: Come on now, I'm not fooling around. You say good-bye first.

LACY: Yeah, but I don't want to. You say goodbye first.

(SHEPHERD needs to control, LACY refuses)

SHEPHERD: (shaking head) Un-uh, un-uh - you say goodbye first.

LACY: Somebody talkin' but I don't hear them --

SHEPHERD: Hey, I'm talkin' to you.

LACY: (mouthing silently and holding up her hand) Talk to this.

(silence)

SHEPHERD: Lacy? I'm not fooling around.

WOLOHAN/MOTHER: Lacy!

LACY: (covering the mouthpiece) What Mom?

(LACY exits)

SHEPHERD: Lacy? (no response) Okay, okay, you wanna be like that? (no response) Don't be like that, don't be like that. (beat) I didn't like you anyway, just wanted to hit that one time 'cause all the boys said you was a fine piece of ass --

(LACY returns)

LACY: Shepherd, you still wanna go to the movies?

(beat)

SHEPHERD: Yeah, sure.

(beat)

LACY: Sheppy? Sheppy?

(SHEPHERD leads the Guys into Doo-Op verse of
YOU REALLY GOT A HOLD ON ME)

ACES & SHEPHERD: --

You really got a hold on me

you really got a hold on me

You really got a hold on me

You really got a hold on me

Baby! Baby! Baby! --

(SHEPHERD transitions into Baby CRYING)

Waah! Waahh! Waahh! --

(SHEPHERD mixes the song to James Brown "I Got
That Feeling")

SHAH/FATHER: (in RUSSIAN) Make that baby shut up!
(English, Russian accent) Make that baby shut up!
Jesus Christ, trying to get some sleep"...

WOLOHAN/CHILD: His hands are big. His smile is big, too. Except when it's upside down --

CHENG/GUY: (obsessed) Like tunnel vision - You, you, nothing, nobody else --

SHAH/RUSSIAN FATHER: *Bop-bop*, that's all I know --

LACY: My grandma would say this thing: (in Spanish) "*Sus Abolladuras emparajadas*" -- Their dents match.

SHAH: My Papa - (in Russian) "*Do it my way or do it my way*". (repeat in English) Do it my way or do it my way.

WOLOHAN/CHILD: (little boy) You do that again, I'm going to kill you. I'm going to kill you. Stick a knife right into you. Shoot you with a rocket gun. Smash your face with my fist. (adult in therapy) Even in my dreams. Even in my dreams I kill you. I kill you. Nice words. Kill you. Everybody, just nice words. Quiet. Smile. Listen. Careful, careful. (little boy) I don't want to die. I don't want you to kill. I don't want to kill you. I don't want you to kill.

(SHEPHERD plays the Couple's theme music)

(the Couple. *Really* DANCING. CHENG can dance. Romantic. We watch them. Bud of romance. 2nd Date)

[LOVE TKO]

CHENG/MAN: (oozing charm) My god, you are the most beautiful creature on the face of the earth. Have I told you this before?

SHAH/WOMAN: (charmed) Yes.

CHENG/MAN: I have? Then I'll tell you again...

(stop. Silence)

(~2/3s into the relationship. Midst of a heated fight --)

CHENG/MAN: You're fat, jeez, a pig. Look at you. How could you let yourself go like this? I'm embarrassed to go out in public with you.

(beat)

(Later)

CHENG/MAN: (contrite) You loved me before. Please. Love me again?

(beat)

SHAH/WOMAN: And then he kissed me...

(We hear the lonely HOWL of a Spot, the Dog)

SHEPHERD: The hallway is dark. I can hear muffled sounds coming from my parent's bedroom. It's hard to see but I can make out my mother and father. They're making love.

(watches. Then with gradual realization)

SHEPHERD: They're making me...

GUYS: (understanding) Ohhh...

SHAH/FATHER: (Angrily) SHEP! SHEP! SHEP!

CHENG: Maybe if I was never born...

LACY/MC: Did I tell you the one about the Guy and his puppy? What he did to his puppy? Did I tell you?

WOLOHAN: Mommy?

(SHEPHERD stands on a cliff)

SHEPHERD: (echoing) I -I - I - I. Love - love - love
- love --

SHAH/FATHER: (warm, affectionate) Sheppy? Wake-up,
boy. Time to get up son...

(silence)

(Couple)

SHAH/WOMAN: (weary, makes this frightening
realization) -- I am nothing without you. I am
nothing with you...

(CHENG misreads, and believes she's confessing
her undivided love)

CHENG/MAN: (his confession of total love) And I am
nothing without you. I am nothing without you, too.

LACY: (punching his fist into his hand) SMACK! -

ALL: (ECHOING) -KACK - Kack - Kack - Kack - Kack...
SMACK! - KACK - Kack - Kack - Kack - Kack....

(Cheng and Shah embrace, clutch each other and
slow dance. They dance through the following
song. It is intimate, with small gestures of
ambivalent struggle)

WOMAN/WOLOHAN: (sings quietly. Excerpt, THE END OF
THE WORLD by Skeeter Davis)

Why does my heart go on beating?
Why do these eyes of mine cry?
Don't they know it's the end of the world
It ended when you said goodbye.

(Cheng and Shah continue to dance in silence)

END OF SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

LACY/MC: "FROM THE MOUTHS OF --"

CHENG: Bus driver. 50-ish, African American. -- first thing I say to her is no drugs in here, no shit in here 'cause I lose my job. I say that right out, lay down the law -

LACY: Lawyer. Educated, White Male. -- I'm a lawyer.

WOLOHAN: (accent) Local contractor guy. Russian emigrant. -- Girls turn into women, and have their own minds, um, I wasn't ready for that. I was a good guy, I open car doors, pay the tab, I do everything I was taught was the right thing to do. I should have everything in my life --

SHEPHERD: (accent) Drop-out high school student.
Urban Asian Teen: -- Cool, everything was cool nigga, like when we was in junior high school. You know, we hang out, do stuff together, nigga. (beat) Now she pregnant.

LACY: Lawyer. I work for Walter, Blodgett & Klein.

SHAH: Middle class Marin Dad. -- Not with their mother, never anything like that but they've seen me be violent --

WOLOHAN: I've been man of the house since I was five. My mom kicked my father out. My aunt divorced, my grandmother by herself - I was the only male in the family, and everybody came to me, even seven, eight years old with their problems - they saw me as a man, so I was responsible to take care of everybody.

SHAH: -- in fights at the softball games --

LACY: P.I. Lawyer. I snap.

(He SNAPS fingers)

CHENG: -- catch her doing stuff and tell her, 'Get out'. She start hitting on me - 'Don't do that. Do not put your hands on me woman' --

SHAH: -- 'That's cool. That's Dad', they expect me to be like that.

LACY: I snap --

(They ALL SNAP their fingers in unison 2 times)

SHEPHERD: I want to say something and she's trying not to hear it, she just wants to do whatever she wants, nigga - smoking, drinking, it's not good for our baby - I tell her to stop nigga and she's laughing showing off for her friends so I slap her back of the head -

LACY: My parents never hit me. They were never violent, they were very anti-violent --

WOLOHAN: I figure it's my job to solve problems and since everyone always listened to me when I was growing up - I obviously know the right thing to do. So I'm fix it. I know the answers.

SHAH: -- 'That's cool. That's Dad', they expect me to be like that.

LACY: -- No one yelled, threw anything, certainly never touched anyone --

WOLOHAN: So if they don't do what I say, they're wrong. They're wrong. I'm right. Because I know. Because my mom, my grandmother, everybody else in the family told me I'm right for the past twenty years. Well, "You're wrong", hit me at about 35 years old.

SHEPHERD: -- you know, nothing hard. So she hits me in the face so I hit her and keep on hitting her till the Five- O come --

(They all SNAP 3 times)

SHEPHERD: -- She won't let me tell her how I feel. She won't let me express my emotions. She's taking me away from myself.

SHAH: -- 'That's cool. That's Dad', they expect me to be like that.

LACY: -- She throws my stereo out of the second floor window. I can't believe it - It's a very expensive Bang & Olufsun. I tell her to leave, she refuses, 'Get out, get out of my goddamn house!' - She won't budge. I lose my composure. I drag her out of the house into the street --

WOLOHAN: She starts dumping all this shit on me. She don't want to work, she sits home and drinks - Hey, this is my house, I pay bills, you move in here, go get a job and do like you said you would --

CHENG: -- I stay cool, go to the cabinet, get my Johnny Walker Black, pour me a drink, go outside and sip --

LACY: -- this frustration, I have nothing else to do. I'm paying for the house, I support her then I feel powerless to do anything. She is abusing my kindness and the system enables her to do that and I don't know what to do and I lash out --

(They SNAP 4 times)

CHENG: -- she follow me out, right up in my face --

WOLOHAN: -- I fix everything for her birthday party and she passed out in the cab, fucking drunk. No good bitch ruined my good time.

CHENG: -- I go back into the house, there's a pee jar cause the toilet's broken, grab it and pour it over her head.

WOLOHAN: Look, it's time to go to bed and have good sex she been promising me and she's passed out. She wake up - 'You want to fuck me? Then fuck you'. And I say, 'Well, fuck you.' And I beat her till she stops moaning.

(silence)

CHENG: At the court, she come and testified for me, say it was her fault. We have this thing we do a signal to let each other know we're okay. I do like this. She do this back to me. So, it's cool. I know what I did. I did the time. I'm a man about it. (listening) Yeah, we still living together.

WOLOHAN -- My grandson - all I know how to do is, "do this", "do that" - two year old kid and he didn't do I would *bop* him, *bop*, *bop*...so I thought that was okay...because I didn't hit him real hard just enough to get his attention - peed in his pants, he back into the corner and just said --"Grandpa, no bop. No bop..." -- I start to cry. I'm afraid the years he was around me. His own kids. You know, bop-bop. I don't think he was around me enough that, um, he'd get it, um...

SHAH: -- 'That's cool. That's Dad', they expect me to be like that.

LACY: They expect you to be like that?

SHAH: Do you have kids?

LACY: My daughter.

SHEPHERD: Was she there?

(Beat. No answer)

SHAH: Never in front of the kids.

END OF SCENE THREE

(Guys position themselves for their Dance routine)

SCENE FOUR. IT FELT LIKE A KISS

LACY/MC: And now a song by the Crystals. Produced by Phil Spector. Written by Carol King and Gerry Goffin. "He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)."

(We hear the song, HE HIT ME)

(The ACES do a full-on Trocadero-like choreographed dance. Like the song - teen-age romantic, sentimental, a nod of kitchy commentary, set against the very un-PC message of the lyric. Erika stages)

LYRICS:

He hit me and it felt like a kiss
He hit me but it didn't hurt me
He couldn't stand to hear me say
That I'd been with someone new
And when I told him I had been untrue

He hit me and it felt like a kiss
He hit me and I knew he loved me

ACES: (Talk-sing along with lyrics)
If he didn't care for me,
I could have never made him mad
But he hit me and I was glad

(back to dancing)

Yes, he hit me and it felt like a kiss

He hit me and I knew I loved him
And then, he took me in his arms
With all the tenderness there is
And when he kissed me, he made me his

(The Aces end with a flourish)

(Guys position themselves)

(beat)

(The ROSE is passed here)

(Women they'd like to be or admire greatly)

WOLOHAN: *Mei gwei*. Mandarin. (beat) Harriet Tubman.
Self explanatory. Emma Goldman - she took lovers,
fought tooth and nail for workers' rights, lived
righteous, lived free - Fucking Anarchist. (beat)
Roses.

LACY: *Rosas*. Spanish. (beat) My teacher, Angela
Davis. Mammy Pleasant. Madame here in San Francisco.
Made a ton of money off the the big wheels in the City
and then funded underground Slave activities.
Supposedly funded John Brown's last insurrection.
(beat) Roses.

SHEPHERD: *Rowzee*. Russian. (beat) Anne Frank. Think
about where she was at and what she done at that age.
War. Hate-killing... Billie Holiday - (sings a little
of *Strange Fruit*).

(#2nd revisit to Clumsy scenario. SHEPHERD
plays their theme)

(SHAH/WOMAN points to her face and shrugging,
embarrassed. She's holding a ROSE)

CHENG: (nodding towards her) She's clumsy.

(SHAH nods in agreement).

CHENG: She is.

(SHAH nods again, more enthusiastically)

CHENG: (agreeing with her) Un-huh.

(Return to the women they admire)

SHAH: *Gulab*. Indian. (beat) My *lola* (grandmother). She survived the war, raised her brother and sister at age 12 when her parents died. Survived the death of 3 of her 4 boys. A survivor. Roses.

CHENG: Roses. Roses...

(Cheng's character is unable to respond)

(silence)

[music out]

WOLOHAN: (angry rage) TOO SPICY YOU BITCH!!

(rest note)

(shift)

CHENG: (pleading) Stay and let me make it up to you.

WOLOHAN: I'll do anything you want me to do.

LACY: (getting emotional) You loved me before, please love me again.

SHEPHERD: (pleading) I can't let you go back to him...

(silence)

(What they love about women)

WOLOHAN: *Mei gwei* --

The mothering thing. When she puts her arms around me.
You know?

LACY: *Rosas* --

I can be who I am with her. I can be the least of who
I am and it's okay.

SHEPHERD: *Rowzee* --

I can fall in love with her. And, that, well, explains
it all...

SHAH: *Gulab* --

We can make babies together. So...

CHENG: *Roses, roses...*

We don't have to talk. We're just both sitting there.
Whatever that thing is, that's what it is.

(beat)

CHENG: (sincere. softly) Stay...

WOLOHAN: Hurts.

LACY: Hurts so bad.

CHENG: Stay...

WOLOHAN: Hurts.

SHAH: Hurts so good.

SHEPHERD: Our dents fit...

CHENG: I'm afraid the years he was around me. His own
kids. You know, bop-bop. I don't think he was around
me enough that, um, he'd get it, um...

(rest)

(Guys move into chairs)

(A MEN'S Group. They react to each others examples of animal metaphors for love)

SHAH: A porcupine --

SHEPHERD: Oh, whoa, all prickly - you want to hold it, so cute and then ouch, ouch, ouch!

LACY: An opossum --

CHENG: (correcting) Possum.

LACY: No, O-possum

SHEPHERD: What's that - OOO-possum?

LACY: Excuse me, that's what it is.

CHENG: That's what it is?

WOLOHAN: O-possum? That like an Irish Possum?

SHAH: I don't get it.

LACY: (explaining) It balls up, pretends to be dead.

CHENG: That says a lot about how you, you know, look at things --

SHAH: How can it ball up if it's pretending to be dead?

LACY: I don't know - okay it just plays dead.

WOLOHAN: Okay, Porpoises.

CHENG: Or is it porpi?

LACY: Cause otherwise you'd have to say porpussies...

WOLOHAN: They can be sensitive, they can be brutal - that's love, isn't? They even got a group, Dolphin

Love, dedicated to interspecies love. Hey, don't believe me, Google it, Google it, man.

CHENG: Shark.

(pause, everybody likes this one)

WOLOHAN: Okay - yeah, yeah, that's better than porpussies--

SHAH: Ooh, yeah, a shark, I see that.

LACY: Shark, shark, shark,

WOLOHAN: *Tiburón* -

CHENG: Man eating...

SHAH: *Mana* --

LACY: Woman eating...

(They all join in humming the Shark theme from JAWS. WOLOHAN and SHEPHERD enact the opening scene with the naked woman swimming - CHENG sings Love Boat theme - Jaws comes from underneath and pulls her down)

WOLOHAN/SHEPHERD: (impersonating the naked, female swimmer) Ahhh! Ahhh!

(joke dies down)

SHEPHERD: A Turtle.

(silence)

LACY: A turtle, a fucking turtle?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, pokes its head out, pulls it back in and it's got all that armor on it.

CHENG: That's love?

SHEPHERD: Yeah. It is to me.

WOLOHAN: A turtle?

SHEPHERD: Yeah, a turtle.

LACY: A goddamn fucking turtle?

SHEPHERD: Yeah. A god-damn fucking turtle. You got a problem with that?

(everyone backs off)

LACY: No, no, fine with me --

SHAH: Got no problem --

CHENG: Didn't say nothing --

WOLOHAN: If that's love to you...

CHENG: (snickering, asides) Turtles, fucking turtles...

WOLOHAN: (aside) Jeez, how do turtles mate?

LACY: (aside) Very slowly...

END OF SCENE FOUR

(Position themselves)

SCENE FIVE

(SHAH/Woman and CHENG/Man - continuation of the earlier conversation)

SHAH/WOMAN: What did she say then?

CHENG/MAN: Who?

SHAH: My sister.

CHENG: I don't know

SHAH: Maybe she didn't say anything. Maybe you're making this up.

CHENG: I'm not making it up, why would I wanna make it up, honey?

SHAH: I don't know, sometimes I don't know if I believe you.

CHENG: What do you mean?

SHAH: Well...

CHENG: You saying I'm lying?

SHAH: Well, no, well --

CHENG: You calling me a liar?

SHAH: I talked to my sister and she said she never said any of that.

(no response)

SHAH: What? She's lying to me? She's a liar?

CHENG: Maybe...

SHAH: You calling my sister a liar?

CHENG: Well...

SHAH: Why would she lie to me, Huh? Why would my sister lie to me?

CHENG: Because she's jealous, she doesn't like me, she wants to get between us --

SHAH: Oh, come on, she doesn't want to --

CHENG: Your whole family's never liked me, even from the beginning, I try to be nice, civil - they shut me out --

SHAH: How, who, who?

CHENG: I know they talk about me --

SHAH: They're not talking about you - Jeez, they're just worried about me, is there any problem with that? They're my family for god's sake, they're my --

CHENG: I know, I know, and that's the problem, *I'm* your family now, not them, me, me, your husband, what about me? You always side with them against me --

SHAH: No, I don't --

CHENG: Yes, yes, you do and it hurts me, honey, It hurts me bad, makes me feel like you don't --

(3 other ACES break in and circle Cheng. As they say their lines, they throw their hands into the circle like a CRAPS GAME. Use body for English. Keep on repeating the lines - Aggressive, physical, verging on violent but always PLAYFUL. MEN having FUN)

LACY: Puno! - Spanish! - Fist! --

SHEPHERD: Kamao! - Tagalog! - Fist! --

WOLOHAN: Koolack! - Russian! - Fist! --

CHENG/MAN: *Nee wei se me yow wo ze me zho?*

ALL: Why do you make me do this? Huh?

LACY: Golpe! - Spanish! - Punch! --

SHEPHERD: Dah! - Cantonese! - Punch! --

WOLOHAN: Ooo dar! - Russian! - Punch! --

CHENG/MAN: *Nee wei se me yow wo ze me zho?* Huh?

ALL: *Nee wei se me yow wo ze me zho?* Huh?

SHEPHERD: Puno!

LACY: Golpe!

WOLOHAN: Kamao!

SHEPHERD: Dah!

LACY: Koolack!

WOLOHAN: Fist!

LACY: Punch!

SHEPHERD: Fist!

WOLOHAN: Punch! Fist!

SHEPHERD: Fist! Punch!

LACY: Punch! Punch!

ALL: Punch! Punch! --

(Guys ECHO the sound into long silence)

ALL: (echoing) -- punch - punch - punch --

(female is aggressively defensive. An incident has happened before this moment. Let the prior scene's violence be the emotional catalyst for SHAH)

(Cheng/Male approaches Shah/Female)

SHAH/ FEMALE: No.

(beat)

CHENG/ MALE: What's wrong, honey?

SHAH: No, I don't want to.

CHENG: Why not, baby?

SHAH: No, no, no, no, NO! NO!

CHENG: Hey, hey, hey --

SHAH: (starts whacking him) You fucker! You goddamn asshole mother fucker!

CHENG: Don't do that, do not do that --

(Silence)

SHAH: *-Dao (Thai)*. Bruise --

CHENG: *Bungi*. Dent --

LACY: *Sus Abolladuras emparajadas* -- Their dents match.

(#2 Therapy Session)

(guys settle into their chairs. By their demeanor we can track that this is another session)

SHAH: What?

CHENG: No, this is pretty interesting.

SHEPHERD: I don't see what this has to do with, you know being a man...

LACY: This is sooo gay.

WOLOHAN: Or - female.

(Awkward pause)

CHENG: I'll start. My hair.

(no response)

CHENG: Didn't used to as a kid - wanted to be blonde.
But now...

SHAH: (thinking) My eyes.

LACY: Ahh, his baby blues - (singing like Betty Davis
Eyes song) -- He's got Indira Gandhi eyes --

SHEPHERD: My smile. My mama always said I had a nice
smile. Just like my Daddy.

LACY: My ass. That's what my girlfriends' always say.

SHAH: Girlfriends?

CHENG: Ass dropping so fast, need an oxygen mask on
that thing --

SHAH: Find one big enough --

LACY: Shut up. I like my ass. They like my ass. WE
like my ass.

WOLOHAN: My dick.

LACY: Ahh, man.

SHEPHERD: Come on.

CHENG: Can't you be serious?

WOLOHAN: Hey, I am being serious. I'm proud of it.
Girls like it, man.

CHENG: That is SOOO male.

SHAH: That is so gay.

SHEPHERD: You a chauvinist pig.

SHAH: You know, cock-centric.

WOLOHAN: (defiantly) I like my dick.

(Silence)

CHENG: Okay, okay, we believe you -

SHEPHERD: Wolohan likes his dick -

SHAH: That's the part of his body he likes the most.

LACY: White Chocolate think he got a rocket in his pocket --

WOLOHAN: And maybe I go ballistic on you...

SHAH: Now, that's gay...

CHENG: I'm not touching that one.

SHAH: He's *cock-centric* - I love saying that, *cock-centric* -- don't you think it sounds cool? A political position. You got the Left, you got the right and then the *Cock-Centrics*?

WOLOHAN: Now, that's gay...

CHENG: Okay, Okay - let's move on.

LACY: That's a good idea.

CHENG: The part we're most ashamed of.

(silence)

SHEPHERD: See. What does this have to do with, you know, the image of being a man...

LACY: My hair. I'm starting to lose it.

CHENG: Shave it - it's masculine, man.

SHAH: That's cock-centric --

CHENG: Shut-up.

LACY: I don't know man, I'm from the 60's - big-ass Afros - George Jackson, Cleaver, Geronimo, Newton - cut it off, man...

CHENG: You ever see some white guys with a shaved head? Damn - Jesse Ventura?

WOLOHAN: Shut up.

CHENG: You shut up.

WOLOHAN: He was the governor.

CHENG: But what state?

SHEPHERD: My pecks.

SHAH: What? You mean - like what? You're ashamed of...

SHEPHERD: I got breasts now.

CHENG: What? Tits? Like a woman

SHEPHERD: No, not like a woman. These are Man breasts.

LACY: Male tits? What? Guys don't have tits?

SHAH: They're sagging?

SHEPHERD: Never mind - let's move on --

CHENG: They got breast reduction.

SHAH: For guys?

SHEPHERD: Forget it, I'm not talkin' anymore. Y'all just shut up.

CHENG: Okay, who else? The part of your body you're most ashamed of?

WOLOHAN: My dick.

LACY: Oh, shut up, shut up.

WOLOHAN: You shut up.

CHENG: You shut up.

(WOLOHAN gives up)

LACY: (to CHENG) Thank you, thank you, my 3rd World brother.

SHAH: Third World...?

SHEPHERD: You didn't want to hear about my male breasts, I don't want to hear about your male dick.

WOLOHAN: No, no you don't understand. It's the thing I'm most proud of, yeah. It's the thing I'm most ashamed of, too.

(pause)

SHAH: Wow.

LACY: That's deep. Almost.

SHEPHERD: I heard something like this in a Billy Crystal movie...

CHENG: They talk about dicks in a Billy Crystal movie?

LACY: (muttering to himself) Everything's about dicks. Dicks and pussies...

SHAH: (aside) What's - (motioning to LACY and CHENG) - "Third World"?

(Lacy looks at Shah and shakes his head disgustedly)

CHENG: No, no, let's hear this - What do you mean?
About your...*Johnson*.

(beat)

WOLOHAN: With it, I am. Without it, I am not.

SHAH: Wow.

CHENG: This like Shakespeare.

LACY: Genius.

WOLOHAN: I'm proud. Who doesn't want to have more of what makes them who they are. I'm a man. My dick makes me one. At the same time, the things my dick wants are the things people say are fucked up. My dick wants women to submit, to get on their knees and open their mouth, or lie down and spread their legs. It wants other men to shut up, get out, to get the fuck out of the way. My dick wants to fuck or make me speak poetry so it can fuck or get my lazy ass out of bed and get a job so it can fuck - it wants a lot and then it wants more. It gets things done when I'd just be sitting around waiting for something to happen. I'm proud of it, of the power of it. But can I talk about this pride? No, I gotta hide it. I have to feel guilty that I want to fuck pretty much every woman I meet, that no matter what I'm talking about with a woman I am able to simultaneously think about fucking them and I'm able to want to do it so bad it hurts and at the same time feel incredibly guilty about it. But if I say this, then I'm a pig or a pervert or shallow or immature. People hate it, especially women.

SHEPHERD: They won't say it but they like it, too.

SHAH: They hate it, too.

WOLOHAN: See? See? It's what I'm most proud of AND what I'm most ashamed of.

END OF SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX

(Lacy strolls forward)

LACY/MC: JOKE - What do you say to a woman with two black eyes? Nothing. I already told the bitch 2 times.

(silence. Let the discomfort sink in.
Repeats the joke)

LACY: What do you say to a woman with two black eyes? Nothing. I already told the bitch 2 times.

(SNAPS his fingers 2 times. Then tells the joke again)

LACY: What do you say to a woman with two black eyes? Nothing. I already told the bitch 2 times.

(They all SNAP their fingers 3 times)

(3rd time revisited clumsy scenario SHEPHERD revisits "Jungle Boogie" beat)

COUPLE

SHAH/WOMAN: (hand over her eye) I'm clumsy

CHENG/MAN: She's clumsy.

SHAH: I am.

CHENG: She is.

SHAH: I'm clumsy.

CHENG: (agreeing) Un-huh.

(rest)

(SHEPHERD does a soundscape score here)

(Aces surround Shah/woman and slowly circle her)

WOLOHAN: All I can see is you. I can only see --

LACY: Love is out of control. Love is in control of you--

SHAH: It starts with --

CHENG: I can only see you --

WOLOHAN: -- prayer.

LACY: You, You, You --

SHAH: DON'T TOUCH ME, DON'T TOUCH ME, GET AWAY, GET AWAY--

CHENG: I wake up the next morning --

WOLOHAN: I didn't set out to put my hands on --

LACY: I look at my girlfriend lying next to me --

SHAH: -- nobody --

CHENG: Jesus, jesus - shit, shit, fuck, fuck --

WOLOHAN: Dents and fists --

LACY: *Golpe* -- ((*punch*))

SHAH: You ain't my Dad --

CHENG: Black and blue, Jesus fucking Christ, I --

WOLOHAN: -- I'll kill you you touch me --

LACY: All that noise coming at me --

SHAH: -- touch my mother --

CHENG: Again, again, again --

SHEPHERD/GUYS: (Read as a ROUND) WHY DO YOU MAKE ME
DO THIS? WHY THE FUCK YOU MAKE ME DO THIS TO YOU???!!!

[Sound out. Circling stops]

WOLOHAN: Like there isn't no love there, like they was
just saying certain things just so me and them won't be
on a bad page -

ALL: (echoing smacking:) SMACK- KACK-KACK-KACK-KACK --

SHAH: There isn't really no love there, there's fear
instead --

SHEPHERD: My father stood in the backyard and did like
this --

(lights dim. SHEPHERD lights a match and
throws it on the ground. Lights another and
throws it on the ground, lights another)

SHEPHERD: He looked like a little boy...

(we hear a dog HOWL in the distance)

SHEPHERD: I'll kill you...

(Rest note)

(Lights back up full)

LACY/THERAPIST: Why did you hit your wife?

CHENG/MAN: I didn't hit my wife. I hit the bitch who talked back to me.

(Rest note)

SHAH/WOMAN: just... egg shells --

END OF SIX

SCENE SEVEN. MY GIRL

(Recording of MY GIRL, by Temptations. They sing along and dance classic Temp moves. Choreography hints at violence.

About 30 seconds into it, the TAPE CUTS AWAY, leaving the Guys singing A CAPELLA)

"MY Girl, MY Girl, Talkin' 'bout MY --"

(Move into rhythmic CHANT, with FOOT STOMPING -)

MY girl, MY girl, MY girlfriend, MY girlfriend, MY wife, MY wife, My old lady, MY old lady, MY bitch, MY bitch, MY ho, MY ho, MY ho --

(CHANT moves into non-verbal, grunts --

Devolves into a line of GUYS doing a kind of Maori Warrior-Hambone male ritual dance.

Moves into SUMO foot stomps - legs raised high and brought down with a grand thump -

Wild, loud, violent.

[Bang on things?]

Then, ABRUPT STOP. They catch themselves.)

(Silence. Lacy/woman lit)

LACY/ WOMAN: One part of the body so beautiful. I will not let you touch. I like to kiss. I love to kiss. Another's breath. The smell of another's skin. The softest part touching the softest part.

I know him but I do not know him now. He becomes a stranger to me.

I am a child. My big toe is split open, I catch it in the spokes of my bike. My body falls to the ground - 'SMACK' --

ACES: (echo) Kack-kack-kack...

LACY: -- my cheek hits the concrete and I roll and roll, pretty yellow dress flies and flies. Pushes my legs apart. Shoes and socks come off. The needle goes right into my toe, ahhhh --

GUYS: (snap fingers) SNAP! SNAP! SNAP!

LACY: -- sews my toe, it's a hole in a sock into the flesh and out again. Red, so very red tears. Drip, drip, beating down, swallows, small tiny birds fast, fast asleep. See how innocent they look. Wake up, wake up little ones...

SHEPHERD: It's my 6th birthday. It's perfect. My Mommy. My daddy. And me. My mommy loves my daddy. My Daddy loves me. (beat) This isn't how it was. This is how I choose to remember it. (beat) My Daddy picks up a pair of pliers and goes after mommy --

(We hear the *sound of fluttering wings*.
Lonely, innocent. GUYS ALL MAKE THE SOUND.
Let it play out, have its moment)

LACY/MC PIMP: I drown my puppy then save her bitch-ass
right at the last moment. After that the puppy follow
me around like I was her god.

CHENG: (watching them) Swallows. Angry red swallows.
Hundreds and hundreds --

WOLOHAN: I cannot accept that. Don't you understand?
I might as well be dead.

SHAH: It's all I know.

WOLOHAN: I just... It can't be...never, never...I
can't let you --

(Shah and Lacy)

SHAH/ WOMAN: He's not going to let me.

LACY/ INTERVIEWER: (kindly) Leave him.

SHAH/WOMAN: He'll kill me first. He told me. He's
serious. He'll kill me before he lets me go.

LACY/INTERVIEWER: (kind, sincere) Why? You married
him. You loved him. You had a kid with him. Several
kids with him. And now you're scared of him? That
little bump. What? You fall down? You're clumsy,
that happens all the time.

SHAH/WOMAN: HE'S GOING TO KILL ME!

(silence)

LACY/INTERVIEWER: (patronizing) He's not going to
kill you.

CHENG: No.

(beat)

SHEPHERD: What?

LACY: (adamantly) What do you mean, "no"?

SHAH? Excuse me?

SHEPHERD: Excuse me? What did you say?

LACY: Did you say no to me?

WOLOHAN/MAN: -- ripped inside out, gutless, look what you've done to me? To me? I can't let you get away with this. It's wrong. You owe me. You owe me. Who do you think you are? You owe me --

SHEPHERD: There's this moment when - (echoing) when-when-when...

(CHENG/Woman, LACY/Man. Revisit of the earlier scene)

LACY/MAN: I love you.

(no response)

LACY: Honey? I love you.

CHENG/WOMAN: (scared) I love you.

LACY: No, no. I love you, too

(beat)

CHENG: (cautious, terrified) I love you, too?

LACY: Yeah. Yeah, just like that.

(The First Date. Full of hope and innocence)

CHENG/WOMAN: For me?

SHAH/MAN: (nodding) Un-huh.

CHENG: I love roses, they're beautiful. My favorite.
How did you know?

SHAH: Beauty deserves beauty.

CHENG: Where are we going? I'm starving.

SHAH: No - no - no - (extending his open arms,
inviting her to make the choice) What would you like
to eat?

CHENG: I get to choose, huh. I like that in a man. I
want something special. (beat) Yes. You choose.

(silence)

(SHEPHERD whacks his stick)

WHACK!-KACK-KACK-KACK

(Following do as a ROUND with each guy
starting progressively):

GUYS: I'm sorry, I'm sorry baby, I didn't mean it.
I'm so sorry, Jesus, Jesus - shit, shit, fuck, fuck - I
can't believe - I didn't mean it, I just lost it, I'm
sorry, I'm sorry baby, it'll never happen again, it
will NEVER happen again --

(round ends with a lone voice)

(silence)

CHENG: So perfect. Don't ever change, okay? Stay
just like that. Please?

END OF SCENE SEVEN

(ACES moves into the next scene)

SCENE EIGHT -

THE CARDS, THE REAL BIRTHDAY PARTY & THE END OF WORLD

THE CARDS --

(LACY goes down left where the house manager hands him the HAT with the audience cards.

The ACES each pull a Card from the hat. They read the Cards as they did in the earlier scene. They look at each other with questioning looks.

The audience begins to understand these Cards are the ones LACY collected in the hat at the top of the show. The Cards they filled out.

Guys read as many or as few as they choose. They decide amongst themselves when enough is enough.

LACY sets the Hat down in front of them and they all put their Cards in the Hat. The Hat remains)

(The ACES begin to HUM Happy Birthday as they transition into the next scene)

THE REAL BIRTHDAY PARTY --

(ACES move into positions. Continue to HUM.

SHAH and CHENG, as his idealized mother and father, begin to dance romantically. SHEPHERD watches them.

LACY, as the real father, stands in another part of stage with WOLOHAN who is the dog, Spot.

(Shepherd circles his mother and father echoing their lines)

SHAH/MOTHER: (inhaling his scent) Tres Flores...

CHENG/FATHER: (offering a red rose) *Mei gwei. Rosas. Gulab. Rowzee...*

(SHEPHERD's gaze is drawn to his father/LACY)

SHEPHERD: I watch my father in the backyard. He stands there in the dark like a pouty little boy. He lights a match and throws it at my dog --

(Father throws lit matches at Spot. Spot catches on fire. His pant leg. He tries to casually tamp it out. It's spreading up his leg to his shirt. Spot is getting more frantic as he tries to put the fire out. He begins to curl up like a piece of paper burning.

CHENG, SHAH begin to HOWL like a dog on fire. They can feel the dog's pain.

Spot crumbles to the ground. HOWLING stops.

Silence.

SHEPHERD watches his imagined dog moving away into the darkness)

SHEPHERD: (quietly) See Spot run. See Spot play...

THE END OF THE WORLD --

(Wolohan crumpled on the ground. From that position he begins to sing THE END OF THE WORLD. Slowly stands, still singing)

WOLOHAN: LYRIC:

*Why does the sun go on shining?
Why does the sea rush to shore?
Don't they know it's the end of the
world
'Cause you don't love me anymore.*

(The other Aces collect themselves and slowly move down stage. They carry the play's journey in their minds and say lines with an internalized, distanced, reflection)

LACY: -- I hit her with a high chair...

CHENG: -- I beat her head against the wall...

SHAH: -- kicked her across the kitchen floor...

SHEPHERD: -- continued to attack her...

CHENG: -- hitting with fists, smack-kak-kak-kak... 1.

LACY: -- pounding a pair of pliers, smack-kak-kak-kak...

SHAH: -- into her face, smack-kak-kak-kak...

SHEPHERD: -- until she stopped breathing, smack-kak-kak-kak... 2.

(The Aces reach the front and stand in an informal line. The Hat sits on the ground in front of them. They look out in silence.

WOLOHAN continues to sing)

WOLOHAN: LYRIC:

*Why does my heart go on beating?
Why do these eyes of mine cry
Don't they know it's the end of the
world.*

It ended when you said good-bye...

(Dim to darkness)

END OF PLAY

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1. Star Tribune (MN) Feb. 24, 2000
2. Copley News Service, November 20th, 2001: Man convicted of 2nd Degree Murder in Wife's Beating Death.

San Francisco Chronicle Newspaper.

Robert Hurwitt

A Fist of Roses: Drama. Written and directed by Philip Kan Gotanda and the company.

The sweet harmonies of the Temptations singing "My Girl" fill the small theater at Intersection for the Arts. The coy humor of the five actors executing synchronized Motown steps gets funnier as Michael Cheng and Danny Wolohan incorporate sly miming of the lyrics' bees, birds and trees. Almost imperceptibly, the actors' live voices intertwine with those on the recording.

The segue is so seamless that it's almost impossible to tell when things get ugly. Very ugly. The voices become imperative, angry, tormented, out of control. Erika Chong Shuch's choreography transforms those Motown moves into paroxysms of domestic violence. It may be impossible ever to hear the number again without thinking of the brutality that can be implicit in that possessive pronoun. No wonder the new play by Philip Kan Gotanda that opened over the weekend is called "A Fist of Roses."

Gritty, confrontational and punishing, "Roses" is a hardheaded look at male violence toward women -- and, at times, children and pets -- told in searing, fractured fragments of personal confessions. It's an atypical work for the San Francisco playwright who built his national reputation with character-based, story-driven plays about the Asian American experience -- "Song for a Nisei Fisherman," "The Wash," "Yankee Dawg, You Die." In structure, it's more like one of Gotanda's experimental word-music pieces, "Day Standing on Its Head" or "Floating Weeds." But "Fist" is also less personal stream-of-consciousness and more of a documentary collage.

It's a collaborative piece, created with the Campo Santo ensemble. Gotanda, who also directed, wrote the script based on interviews with staff and members of several rehabilitation programs for violent offenders and at women's shelters. He developed the piece in workshops with the cast and Shuch, and the collaboration continues with each performance. Audience members may fill out cards about their own personal experiences, some of which get woven into the performance.

It isn't always easy to follow, nor is it meant to be, in a traditional narrative sense. The five versatile actors -- Donald Lacy Jr., Rajiv Shah, Wolohan, Cheng and Tommy Shepherd -- appear as themselves and as a wide variety of characters, changing race, sex, age and class in dizzying succession, sometimes even switching characters with each other in midstream. Shepherd provides continuous evocative beat box and piano accompaniment.

Some stories are woven throughout the piece: a black man's (Shepherd) recollection of a traumatic 6th birthday; an Asian American couple's (Cheng and Shah) decline from insecurity through possessiveness into brutality. Some fragments occur as specific units, as when each actor depicts a specific batterer in a group therapy session. Other elements are less stories than cautionary fragments, such as Lacy -- who also plays a charmingly hip, smoothly smutty emcee -- ominously

insisting that a new lover (Wolohan, then Cheng) respond with just the right words.

Dressed in matching charcoal-gray pants and light blue shirts (costumes by Lucy Karanfilian), the actors weave constantly changing movement patterns against the distressed stucco wall of James Faerron's urban-grunge set. Heather Basarab's lights create dramatic shadows and isolate key moments in the unrelenting flow of Gotanda's staging.

Songs punctuate the action, some by Shepherd, others more familiar. Like "My Girl," Smokey Robinson's "You Really Got a Hold on Me" acquires a creepy significance. Carole King and Gerry Goffin's "He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)" is sung by the cast with unsettling conviction.

Even in a fiercely concentrated 70 minutes, there are passages that don't quite connect. A bit in which the actors invoke what might be their totem animals doesn't register dramatically or thematically. A little girl's story about what seems to be a bicycle accident is either too confusingly told or simply irrelevant. Those familiar with domestic violence issues will probably find little here that is new or surprising.

But that doesn't diminish the impact of Gotanda's "Fist." The cast deftly depicts a variety of perpetrators and victims. The men range from baffled and tormented to cluelessly defensive and self-justifying. The women may be blindsided, trapped, outraged, dishearteningly complicit -- or dead. The terrible litany of "Why did you make me do this to you?" rings out with appalling force.

Some of the outbursts of woman-hating invective are shockingly ugly; some are just pitifully, comically obtuse. But the most sinister aspect of the theme lies in the seemingly loving efforts to exert dominance and control, as in Cheng's creepy portrait of a husband trying to separate his baffled wife (Shah) from her family.

It's not the thorns that might prove dangerous or fatal in one of these men's romantic bouquets. It's the "Fist."

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Oakland Tribune

Gotanda's 'Fist' pulls no punches about violent men
By Chad Jones, STAFF WRITER

THE fine art of collaboration is on full display in "A Fist of Roses," a new work created by San Francisco playwright/director Philip Kan Gotanda, the ensemble of Campo Santo and the arts organization Intersection for the Arts.

There's no separation between script, performance or production because each element is seamlessly woven into the whole "Fist" experience.

Such fusion of acting, writing, music and movement can often be pretentious. If you don't really have a lot to say, you can hide the fact with a lot of high-art theatrics.

But Gotanda and his collaborators definitely have something to say about men and violence. Where does it come from? What does it feel like? And why is it allowed to flourish?

Work on "Fist" began nearly three years ago, just after "floating weeds, Gotanda's last collaboration with Campo Santo and Intersection. In the writing process, Gotanda interviewed graduates of the "Resolve to Stop the Violence Project" in San Francisco jails, visited women in domestic violence shelters, worked with administrators of anti-violence groups and attended many meetings of Manalive, a peer re-education group for violent men.

Gotanda could have created a piece of documentary theater in which men talked about their anger and women about escaping violent men. But Gotanda has created

more of a collage to better convey the soul of a violent man.

He's not making excuses for violence. Rather, he's examining gaps in the male psyche and emotional make-up that allow monstrous behavior in men who are, perhaps, not entirely monsters.

And here's the amazing thing: For all its depth, insight and deadly serious intentions, "A Fist of Roses" is tremendously entertaining.

At 75 minutes, this is one of those rare projects that could stand to be longer. This is the result of several things: a funny and appealing five-man ensemble; forceful, energetic movement -- not quite dance but close -- by Erika Chong Shuch; and fantastic, mostly a cappella music headed by master beatboxer and ensemble member Tommy Shepherd.

Dressed in gray shirts and black pants, the Five Aces, as the actors are known, look almost as if they could be wearing prison uniforms.

James Faerron's set is all about space and light (by Heather Basarab) so that the men are free to fill the Intersection space with the force of their vitality. Each man -- Shepherd, Donald E. Lacy Jr., Rajiv Shah, Danny Wolohan and Michael Cheng -- has a chair that gets knocked, banged, twirled around and used like a silent dance partner.

Lacy sets the tone for the show when he emerges from the audience, jokes around with audience members, tells some dirty jokes and collects cards that we're asked to fill out if we want to share an act of violence from our own lives.

After Lacy introduces his co-stars, the show begins in earnest with the men singing "Happy Birthday" as a childhood scene begins to unwind. It's a scene involving a 6-year-old boy, a father and a dog, and it's a scene that repeats throughout the show until we wind up with the violent truth.

Echoes resound throughout the show, especially fragments like "She's clumsy" or "Why do you make me do this to you?"

Race as well as ethnic and cultural backgrounds come into play as Gotanda examines why men do what they do. There are no pat answers, no crisp psychological through-lines that connect this to that. Music also plays a huge role. In addition to Shepherd's live score, the men also de-construct 1960s pop songs. "You Really Got a Hold on Me," "The End of the World" and "My Girl" are all wonderfully, powerfully performed, but they all take on dark, unsettling undertones.

The most astonishing use of music is a recording of the Crystals singing the 1962 Carole King/Gerry Goffin tune "He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)." It's worth noting that this nightmarish song was produced by Phil Spector, a man now dealing with his own violence issues.

"A Fist of Roses," under Gotanda's dynamic direction and with a dream ensemble of men who can be as funny as they are fearful, sucks you in and pulls no punches. This is amazing theater.

You can e-mail Chad Jones at cjones@angnewspapers.com or call (925) 416-4853.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN

Hit parade

Philip Kan Gotanda's *A Fist of Roses* penetrates the masculine mystique.

By Robert Avila

FUNNY HOW THE smile cracked in response to a dirty joke can sometimes bare menacing teeth, how a love song can turn suddenly dark, or how a bouquet of roses comes courtesy of a clenched fist. Funny and not so funny - it's a fine line. The genius of Philip Kan

Gotanda's mesmerizing one-act deconstruction of the nature of domestic violence, *A Fist of Roses*, lies in its ability to see both sides - the harmless joke and the brutal confession - and then to blur the line between them. The play doesn't just explore its contradictions; like its subjects, it lives through them.

The MC for the evening (Donald E. Lacy Jr.) warms up the crowd with some off-color humor before introducing the rest of the cast (Michael Cheng, Rajiv Shah, Tommy Shepherd, and Danny Wolohan), collectively known as "the Five Aces." They could be a singing group (they tackle a couple of startlingly reimagined Motown classics), or maybe teammates in some amateur sporting league, passing the baton to one another with locker-room camaraderie. There's good-natured kidding across ethnic lines, all the usual racial and macho shit. They're all on the same team, they're all friends, and they're all men.

But the Aces turn out to be a different kind of ensemble altogether - or rather, all male ensembles together. Shades of the local sports bar and comedy club soon give way to discussions among a men's therapy circle and other male group dynamics, even in recognizing themselves as actors together onstage. Meanwhile, a variety of domestic scenarios emerge, and the actors take on the roles of husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, child, and family dog, roles that can be traded or blended into others in quick succession. But while we get recurring characters and situations,

there's no plot or character development in the usual sense. At the same time, the cultural, class, and ethnic characteristics traded freely among the multicultural cast universalize the experience of domestic violence, without necessarily relativizing it or sacrificing nuance. Love and romance twist into pain and nightmare. Moods, memories, characters, relationships, and words and their meanings - all are constantly morphing into something else, including their opposites, so that a lovers' playful refrain (Man: "She's clumsy"; Woman: "I am. I'm clumsy.") becomes the public front for some private shame a short while (and a black eye) later.

Throughout, male domination reflects deep-seated insecurities. In an ingeniously orchestrated dance number, and one of the evening's most powerful segments, the ensemble gradually underscores the possessive pronoun in the old Temptations song "My Girl" while cracking open with a raging force the synonyms within the noun - "my girlfriend, my wife, my bitch, my boss, my job," etc. Here and elsewhere, *A Fist of Roses* gets at the nature of objectification, the turning of another human being into something owned, a thing to be moved around at will or to be kept still forever.

With the world premiere of *A Fist of Roses*, Campo Santo and Intersection for the Arts launch another extraordinary collaboration. It's a remarkable departure for playwright and director Gotanda, whose reputation has been built largely on well-crafted dramas about the Japanese American experience,

and one that beautifully integrates the taut yet fluid choreography of movement director Erika Chong Shuch and a simmering score by actor-composer Shepherd (who accompanies the action throughout by beat-boxing or laying down a chord progression at the piano). Then again, Gotanda has always proved a master at incorporating multiple voices and perspectives. For the kaleidoscope of scenes and tropes that make up the nonlinear narrative, he draws on interviews and public discussions (the play's "consulting advisor" is Hamish Sinclair of the Manalive Violence Intervention and Prevention Training Institute, a reeducation program aimed at batterers), as well as any memories volunteered by each night's audience (handed in on note cards at the outset). Campo Santo has repeatedly shown its ability to draw out new resources and energies from already established authors like Denis Johnson and Naomi Iizuka, and this piece, its second with Gotanda, demonstrates collaboration in the fullest sense. Rarely does theater generate a jolt like this.

An exceptional ensemble cast sets words, movement, and music in motion, engaging in a kind of perpetual masking and unmasking of masculinity. The cycle of domestic violence - suggested in scenes like that between Shah and Cheng in which a romantic slow dance becomes an abusive verbal rant and, finally, an abject plea for forgiveness - and the rhythmic quality of the action have an organic integrity that weds form and content into a subtle whole, while its guy-casual, informal unfurling belies a fundamental complexity and deft

execution. 'A Fist of Roses'
Intersection for the Arts, 446
Valencia, S.F. (415) 626-3311,
www.theintersection.org.