

A Brooklyn Love Story: Emergency Used Candles

Play Production History and Press
Clippings

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Story Synopsis

Set in the early aughts in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, A Brooklyn Love Story: Emergency Used Candles tells the story of Chiara or "Sweetheart," a young woman in her twenties who lives with her nonagenarian Italian- American grandfather, Pop. During the story, the two become best friends, confidantes, and a duo, as Pop navigates life as a widower popular with the neighborhood Senior citizen ladies. Chiara struggles with work, dating, and figuring out her place in the world. How does Pop prepare his granddaughter for life's ups and downs, for love and for the inevitable? A Brooklyn Love Story: Emergency Used Candles is a tale about the profound effect a grandfather and granddaughter have on each other as one's life is ending and the other's is just beginning.





Play Production History

July 13, 2009 - Barefoot Theatre Company's 70/70 Horowitz Festival, The Kraine Theatre, NYC Directed by Tamilla Woodard (Workshop)

December 5, 2009 - Barefoot Theatre Company's Saturday Night Special, American Ballroom Theatre - NYC, Directed by Theresa Gambacorta (Workshop)

May 1, 2010 - Emerging Artists Theatre: Illuminating Artists New Works Festival - One Woman Standing, TADA Theatre NYC (Sold-out) Directed by Victoria Malvagno (Workshop)

October - November 2010 - The Cherry Lane Studio Theatre - Barefoot Theatre Company (originating theatre company) produced the world-premiere Off - Broadway Production of Emergency Used Candles. Directed by Victoria Malvagno

September - November 2012 - Theatre 68 Los Angeles, LA Run of A Brooklyn Love Story: Emergency Used Candles, Directed by Ronnie Marmo

Winter/Spring 2013 - Manhattan Repertory Theatre, NYC, Directed by Ronnie Marmo

Summer 2013 - Shoreline Arts Alliance, CT, Directed by Ronnie Marmo

October, 2014 - Order Sons of Italy in America, Directed by Ronnie Marmo

October, 2015 - Italian American Writers Association, Cornelia Street Cafe, NYC, Directed by Ronnie Marmo

Press, Reviews & Photos

Chiara is a daughter of Brooklyn - the old neighborhood - the Italian American family dynamic - and her own glorious talent"

Adriana Trigiani, NYTimes bestselling author

"A playwright was born..." Denis Hamill, New York Daily News

"Good theatre at its most basic, should simultaneously accomplish two things: entertain and enlighten the audience. And by the time Montalto's piece of theatre had ended, she had more than accomplished both" New York Press

"What a beautifully poignant piece Chiara Montalto has created... In a one woman tour de force she tells of the relationship with her grandfather at the end of his years when she became his caretaker. Set in Brooklyn she not only "does" a perfect grandfather, she throws in a few neighborhood boyfriends that luckily got away...The symbolic bond between the two generations is filled with laughter and tears, wit and wisdom, and undeniable love and respect...Montalto touches a common heartstring in us all... this makes for an extremely satisfying theatre experience.- Off Broadway.Com

This is a one-woman work, but it doesn't appear to be, so beautifully does Chiara Montalto evoke all the other characters, most particularly "Pop." As herself, the granddaughter, she is delightful, funny, sharp yet affectionate as she portrays the foibles of her grandfather as well as the ironies in her own life...Chiara, the character, is beautifully delineated and performed; we, the audience, know what's about to befall her before she knows it herself. Broadway After Dark



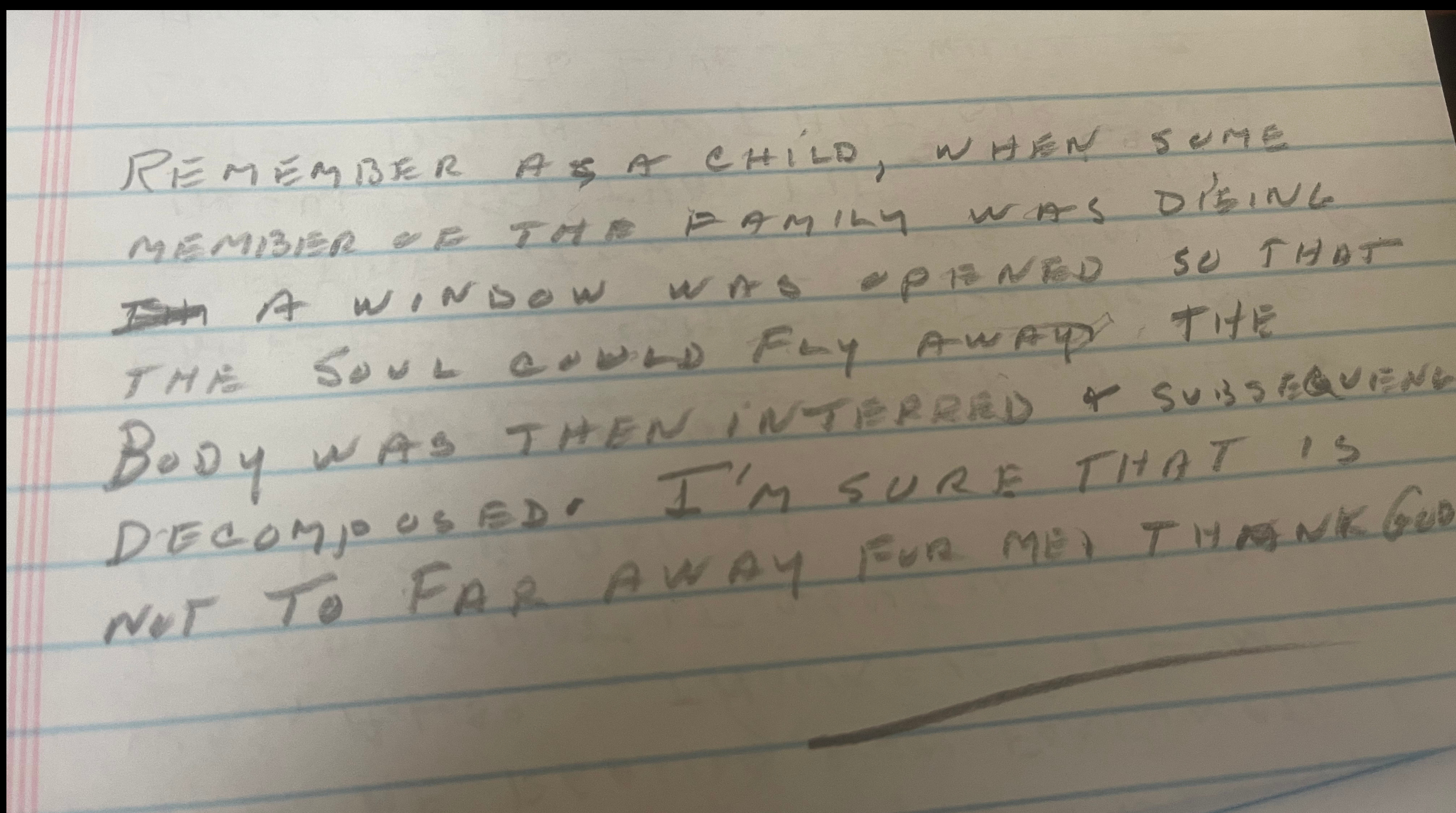
With Melissa Rauch and Kevin Sussman of The Big Bang Theory, during the LA run @ Theatre

"The exceptionally bright actor offers the audience a quaint flavor that has all but disappeared from our social culture!" Cinesnatch

"The performance of this relationship played by just the granddaughter is clever in its emphasis of how reliant and supportive the two are of each other: their lives are so closely intertwined. Montalto's shifts in tone of voice and body language play out the illusion of her character transformation." Examiner.com

"Chiara Montalto...performs...skillfully under Ronnie Marmo's tight, brisk direction" - LA Weekly

"In this seventy-five minute one woman production, Montalto achieves an acting tour de force... a roller coaster of emotions... the twin masks of comedy and tragedy have left their mark...the seamlessly choreographed metamorphoses are a constant and entertaining surprise..." Barbara Malinsky, iNK Magazine



REMEMBER AS A CHILD, WHEN SOME MEMBER OF THE FAMILY WAS DYING IN A WINDOW WAS OPENED SO THAT THE SOUL COULD FLY AWAY THE BODY WAS THEN INTERRED & SUBSEQUENTLY DECOMPOSED. I'M SURE THAT IS NOT TOO FAR AWAY FOR ME! THANK GOD

One of Pop's many notes to his granddaughter.

Grandpa taught playwright lessons in life

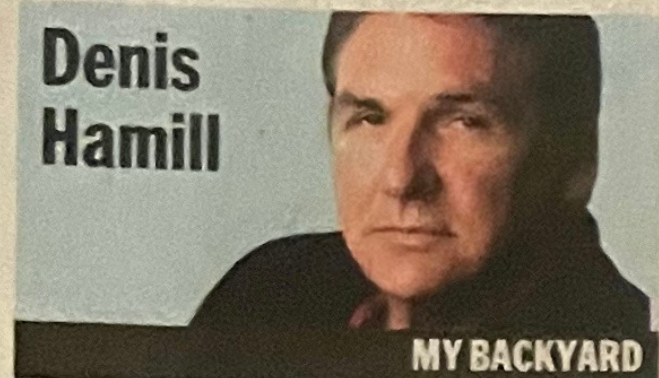
She wrote a Brooklyn love story about him. But when Chiara Montalto was struggling to find an ending to her first play, "Emergency Used Candles," about her life with her grandfather in Brooklyn, he even provided that.

"When Grandpa died, I was devastated," says Montalto, 34. "But I soon learned that he had provided me with the ending I was searching for. Even my grandfather's death taught me about life."

Grandpa died.

And a playwright was born.

Last Saturday, Chiara Montalto performed her one-woman play to a soldout crowd of 110 at the TADA Theater in Manhattan playing herself and her grandfather.



She's hoping for an extended run.

"My grandfather was very much a Brooklyn man," says Montalto. "He was a Brooklyn Italian through and through, born and raised

here. His parents were from the other side. I lived in Jersey with my parents for seven years, but when I was 20, I was in the New School for Social Research, studying New York City history, and so I moved in with my grandpa here in Bensonhurst."

Montalto says that her grandfather became the man who steered her into adulthood.

"The crux of my play is that in a weird way, my grandfather and I were almost like married," she says. "I know that sounds funny, but we really looked out for each other. And there's an eerie rhythm to it, in that I was named for my grandmother, and I look just like my grandmother. And there I was at 20 and my grandfather was 85 and we were living together. I shopped in all the local Italian stores. I cooked and cleaned for him. We ate together. We lived our lives together."

But grandpa was anything but an old foggy.

"He was old-school but an amazingly open person," she says. "He was the secretary of the ushers for his church, St. Mary Mother of Jesus on 23rd Ave. and 85th St., and he would type out his memorandums on a manual typewriter from the 1930s. So I taught him how to use a computer. He loved the computer. He learned how to e-mail and surf the Net. He thought the computer was great, but said the flip side was that young people weren't learning how to spell and relied too much on spell check. When my friends would come over, he would sit around and drink wine with a bunch of 20-year-olds, telling us great stories. My friends loved him."

And in their private moments of daily domestic life, Grandpa taught Chiara about how to live a life. "He taught me about life's beauties and difficulties," she says. "It's interesting. He was the only one in his family to go to college. He was trained as a chemist at Columbia Teacher's College, but when he graduated, he couldn't get a job because his last name was Struzzieri, and there was considerable discrimination against Italians in the 1930s. So he wound up taking a job as an investigator for the Department of Welfare, a job he loved and worked at for about 50 years. He also sold shoes on Saturdays to support his family. So from all that experience he really taught me how to live."

Meanwhile, Chiara loved history, but the muse of drama pulled her into the Emerging Artists Theater group and she began acting. She didn't know it as she lived her daily life with her grandfather that her first original play was forming in her head.

"It's funny, the stuff he taught me," she says. "See, Grandpa learned to drive before there was a Belt Parkway or a BQE, especially in his job as an investigator, so he knew his way around Brooklyn and the whole city on the streets like nobody I ever met. He would never get on the Belt or the BQE, and always insisted on taking surface streets, using amazing shortcuts. To this day, I

never get caught sitting in traffic jams."

He also taught Chiara to always be prepared in life. And during the blackout of 2003, when she got home, Grandpa's emergency candles lit up their home, giving her the metaphorical title for her play.

"I started writing the play when he was alive, but could never figure out how to end it," she says. "Then his death profoundly changed me, because he waited

until I got to him before he died. And although the play is funny, with lots of senior citizen jokes, and humorous scenes, it's primarily a play about death. But in a joyful way. I want people to come away from it with a sense of how to live life by being kind, and by treating each other well."

A Brooklyn love story.

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