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Lincoln Center – 417 West Magnolia Street, Fort Collins

Contains some adult subject matter.

**get it**  
Student Theatre with  
**OPEN STAGE**  
Theatre & Company  
By John Patrick Shanley  
Directed by Devora Millman  
**ITALIAN AMERICAN RECONCILIATION**



## Italian American Reconciliation

By John Patrick Shanley

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THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME THINGS  
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# Theatre Etiquette

- **DO dress up a bit.** You don't have to be fancy, but don't wear shorts. Absolutely no hats are allowed.
- **DO enjoy the performance.** Listen, laugh when appropriate, applaud!
- **DON'T embarrass yourself** by yelling out, whistling, clapping at inappropriate times, or acting as if you were at a sports game instead of a theatre. Don't, above all, fall asleep!
- **DON'T bring food!** This is not like a movie theatre, so food is totally inappropriate. No eating at any time.
- **DON'T talk to your friends during the performance.** If you don't understand something or wish to make a short comment once or twice, that's fine, but constant conversation is the ultimate in rudeness.
- **DON'T leave the performance unless you feel ill.** Stay in your seat during the play and during the blackouts between scenes.
- **DO focus on details, listen and watch carefully,** and take some memories of the performance with you!
- **If necessary,** you will be asked to leave the theatre, which could be embarrassing.

OPEN STAGE

Theatre & Company

## STUDY GUIDE

# Italian American Reconciliation

By John Patrick Shanley



In his wildly successful *Italian American Reconciliation* (1988), playwright John Patrick Shanley, winner of the Academy Award for *Moonstruck* (1987) and the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for *Doubt* (2005), concocts a gritty, sparkling tale about lovers, dreamers and confusion. With in New York's Little Italy as a backdrop, *Italian American Reconciliation* is an edgy romantic comedy that is "...bathed in the same moonlit madness that gave *Moonstruck* its savor and flavor ... A lovely play." –New York Post

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# Italian American Reconciliation

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## From the Director



In Act I Scene I of *Italian American Reconciliation* Huey says to Aldo, "I think of it as music." I take my inspiration for the directorial concept of this production from this line. Shanley's play has a storybook/gangster quality similar to the world created by Damon Runyon in *Guys and Dolls*. However, Shanley's fierce determination to reveal the truth is what gives him his unique ability to entertain and delight us and also bring a magnifying glass up to our own hearts.

During the rehearsal process I invited my actors to explore with me all elements of the play, from its most outrageous comedic devices to its gut wrenching exploration of the matters of the heart. The dialogue is rhythmic and clever -- it would be easy to gloss over the painful parts of the story and rely solely on the musical quality of the language. Our process was to lift the stones to see what's underneath and create relationships between characters that were totally believable. This will give the production a musical quality, which is daring and robust, similar to what you might find in an Italian opera. We are attempting to dance out on the emotional limb with out having it break under us, causing the audience to plummet to earth. We invite our audience to participate in the message of the play regarding the frailty of relationships. We will do our best to present human beings with all their foibles and foolishness as we try to provide a glimpse into the human heart.

*Devora Millman, Director*

# The Playwright John Patrick Shanley



John Patrick Shanley was born in 1950 in the Bronx in New York City. In his program biography for his 2005 Pulitzer-Prize-winning play *Doubt*, Shanley writes about himself in the third person, saying “he was thrown out of St. Helena 's kindergarten. He was banned from St. Anthony's hot lunch program for life. He was expelled from Cardinal Spellman High School. He was placed on academic probation by New York University and instructed to appear before a tribunal if he wished to return. When asked why he had been treated in this way by all these institutions, he burst into tears and said he had no idea. Then he joined the United States Marine Corps. He did fine.” A more circumspect Shanley biography states, “After he was thrown out of Catholic school in New York, he attended the private Thomas Moore Prep School in Harrisville, New Hampshire. He then returned to New York and attended New York University, left to enlist in the military, and then returned to finish university on the G.I. Bill. He graduated in 1977 from New York University as valedictorian.”

His first published play was *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, but his big breakthrough came in 1987 with the screenplay for the romantic film comedy *Moonstruck*. Boasting an all-star cast and several Academy Awards, the film won Shanley his first Oscar for Best Original Screenplay. His other early screenplays include the episodic comedy *Five Corners* and the offbeat crime comedy *The January Man*. In 1990 he made his directorial debut by filming his script for *Joe Versus the Volcano*. A strange romantic comedy starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, the film is regarded as a box-office failure, but its uniqueness has found its way into the hearts of many fans. Sticking with writing, Shanley then adapted the book by Piers Paul Read for the adventure drama, *Alive*, based on a real plane crash in the Andes Mountains. He continued with a screenplay for the cartoon, *We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story*, then adapted Michael Crichton's *Congo*. Shanley cleaned up Robert Wiener's teleplay for *Live from Baghdad*, which won a TV Emmy award. In 1998 he published the play, *The Dreamer Examines His Pillow* and in 2002 a production company in France filmed a French-language version of *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*. His 2005 play, *Doubt*, not only won a Pulitzer Prize, but also the Tony Award, Obie Award and Drama Desk Award. Whenever possible, Shanley directs his own plays and screenplays.

About his Hollywood experience, Shanley said, “Money is like heroin, and I grew up in a neighborhood that was destroyed by heroin. I've watched addiction all my life. Celebrity is like heroin. And constant praise is like heroin. And, you know, no one can resist constant praise. I had to get out.”

Shanley married actress Jayne Haynes in 1989 and they have two sons.

# Italian Americans in the New York Area

An Italian American is an American of Italian descent. The phrase may refer to someone born in the United States or to someone who has immigrated to the United States from Italy. Although Italians arrived early in the new world, Italian immigration to the United States effectively began in the 1880s, and peaked between 1900 and 1914 when World War I made movement impossible. By 1978 5.3 million Italians had immigrated to the United States; two million arrived between 1900 and 1914. In the 2000 U.S. Census, Italian Americans constituted the seventh largest ancestry group in America with about 15.6 million people. About a third of these immigrants intended to stay only briefly, in order to make money and return to Italy. While one in four did go back, the rest either decided to stay, or were prevented from returning by the war. Only Hispanics, Irish, and Germans immigrated in larger numbers.

Italian families first settled in Little Italy neighborhoods, the most famous one being around Mulberry Street in Manhattan. In the 1960s, Italian-American families spread to the suburbs, mainly Westchester County and Nassau County where a quarter of the population is of Italian origin. On Staten Island almost half of the borough residents have Italian blood.

The Fordham Section in the Bronx is the area where John Patrick Shanley grew up. If you're looking for the real Little Italy, it's on Arthur Avenue between 184th and 187th street in the Belmont District of Fordham. It's a neighborhood frozen in time. You can get imported delicacies from the old country as well as fantastic Italian-American eats. The area is full of Italian stores, delis, shops, and restaurants. It sets the scene for Shanley's film, *Moonstruck*, and his play, *Italian American Reconciliation*.



The Belmont District dates back to the time when thousands of Italian immigrants came through Ellis Island. Here Italians discovered a welcoming mass of paesani linking them to their homeland. All were connected also by their zealous Italian passion for good food. Early Belmont Italians made their living selling products from pushcarts, most often food items. In 1940, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia built the indoor Arthur Avenue Market to take the street vendors out of the cold.

Italian Americans have adapted and changed in their new country. For instance, early Italian Americans voted heavily Democratic. Since the 1960s, though, they have split about evenly between Democratic and Republican parties. The U. S. Congress includes Italian Americans, who are regarded as leaders in both parties.

Most immigrants were Catholics in Italy. Observers note that they usually became more devoutly Catholic in America. Their faith was a distinctive characteristic in America. In some Italian American communities, celebrations and parades mark Saint Joseph's Day (March 19), Columbus Day, and feasts of some regional Italian patron saints.

Common stereotypes, beginning in the 1880s and continuing to the present, link Italian Americans to the Mafia. These unflattering images remain staples of movies like *The Godfather* and television shows like *The Sopranos*. The stereotypes have been perpetuated in works by leading Italian American artists, directors, and Hollywood actors (Puzo, Coppola, De Niro, and Pacino, most notably). However, the National Italian American Foundation's survey in the 1990s showed that two-thirds of all Italian Americans held white-collar jobs in 1990. This organization has also asserted that the Mafia in the U.S. never numbered more than a few thousand individuals.

Edited copy from <http://www.answers.com/topic/italian-american>;  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur\\_Avenue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Avenue); <http://www.arthuravenue.com/index.jsp>; <http://offthebroiler.wordpress.com/2006/04/25/abbondanza-on-arthur-avenue/>

# Excerpts from Memories of Italian Americans



## Apartment Living – 1

I lived on Beaumont Avenue in the “elevator” building. It was called that for obvious reasons. All the buildings in our neighborhood had unique traits. Most incredible of all was the tile work on the floors and the marble stairs. I think now about the man-hours it must have taken to lay each piece of tile, some as small as a dime. Each building you went into had a floor that was different from the rest of the neighborhood.

One thing that was common throughout 187th St. was the aroma in the buildings. You could tell if it was Friday because everyone was cooking fish. Sundays, forget about it, you smelled the gravy cooking in the early morning, the meatballs frying a little later. No matter what building you walked into, from Webster Ave to Southern Blvd. they all smelled the same on those two days.

When you lived in an apartment building you really got to know your neighbors, even if you didn’t want to. The walls were so thin you could hear things that would make faces turn red today.

*Edited copy from: <http://www.arthuravenuebronx.com/absolutenm/annviewer.asp?a=16&z=7>*

## Apartment Living – 2

As I look back now I start to appreciate the good times I had living in an apartment at 187th street and Prospect Ave. Though my children cannot imagine living in a building like I grew up in, I would not have changed a thing, because when you grow up in an area such as ours in an apartment building, you build a bond with your neighbors and friends that lasts forever.

I grew up at 2363 Prospect Ave and it seemed everyone knew my dad, it might not have been true but it seemed that way. My dad delivered crystalline (bleach) and was given the nickname Louie Crystalline, he went up and down apartment buildings in the area yelling crystalline man and up and down flights of stairs delivering in glass bottles.

I remember hanging out with my friends Paula, Cathy, Debbie, and Doreen and having summer picnics in front of the buildings, we would get blankets and sandwiches drinks and music and have a real good picnic on the cement, and when we wanted some sun we would head for the roof and tar beach. There was a group of women who would get lawn chairs and sit out in front of the building. They knew just about all there was to know what was going on. My parents were the superintendents of the building. My grandmother use to clean the whole building on her hands and knees all five floors.

For fun I use to ride up and down the dumb waiter from the top floor to the basement. My brother had a boys club in the basement, and most of the time I had to stay out of his territory. Mary Red’s floor was the best smelling floor in the whole building, and I would stop in to say hello quite often and get a sample of what she was cooking.

We had a great means of communication back then. If we wanted to talk to someone we would yell to them in the courtyard, or if you wanted to call your mom you would scream to her at the front window.

The best memories were the holidays. At Christmas my dad decorated the whole building and New Years Eve we had a big party. The whole building was invited along with all of their relatives. They all came!

*Edited copy from: <http://www.arthuravenuebronx.com/absolutenm/annviewer.asp?a=17&z=7>*

## Italian Proverbs

Italian Americans have a proverb for almost any situation. Many of them are colorful, funny, and ring true. Here are a few:

No matter how hard you beat a donkey it will never turn into a racehorse.

Since the house is on fire let us warm ourselves.

A mother can care for ten children but ten children can’t care for one mother.

No pear falls into a shut mouth.

Silence was never written down.

Love, sorrow and money are not easily concealed.

One may have good eyes and yet see nothing.

Lies have short legs and long shadows.

A Woman is as old as she looks.

A Man isn't old until he STOPS looking.

Better bread with love than chicken with sorrow.

*For further information, you might want to visit a site that lists famous Italian Americans:*

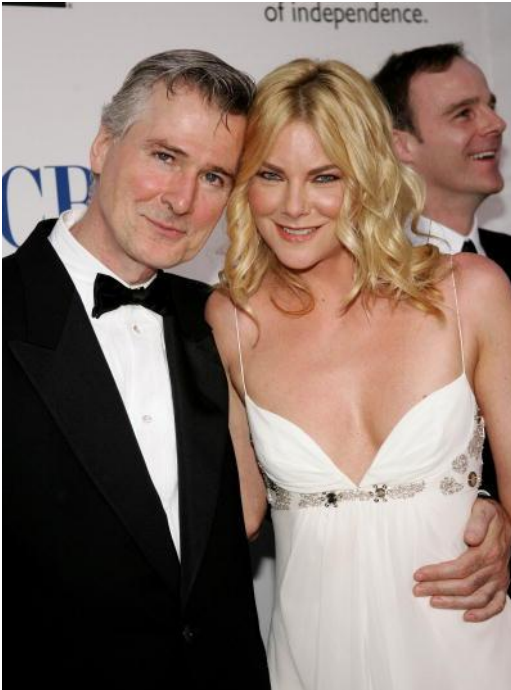


# John Patrick Shanley Looking for Connections

## John Patrick Shanley Probes Gender Barriers

By Patrick Pacheco

Newsday, October 17, 1996



After seven years of marriage to actress Jayne Haynes, four years of fatherhood to sons Nick and Frank, and two decades toiling in the bitter fields of Hollywood, the 46-year-old playwright is settling into a middle-aged maturity that, as he puts it, leaves the "electric leaps" of his youth behind in favor of "a more considered attempt to converse and discover connection."

Though he has found continued success in film, most recently with the screenplay of *Congo*, Shanley has never abandoned his Off-Broadway roots, making periodic returns with such plays as *Italian-American Reconciliation*, *The Big Funk*, and his 1994 hit, the caustic *Four Dogs and a Bone*. But his playwrighting career has accelerated. Shanley has spent most of the last 12 months in regional theater developing two new plays: two one-acts, collectively titled *Missing/Kissing*, opening tonight at Primary Stages under his direction; *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a sleek, sophisticated farce that received excellent reviews in previous runs in Seattle and Los Angeles, that is part of the Manhattan Theatre Club's spring schedule. In both of the new works, the territory is familiar - the sexual and spiritual tensions between men and women as they seek forgiveness and redemption.

Shanley's characters have often cast envious glances at the ancients, whose lives were filled with household gods, myths and heroes - now replaced by analysts, New Age bromides and conspiracy theories. This theme (articulated in the new plays as well) reflects both Shanley's current passion for reading history - his next play will be about the Renaissance sculptor Benvenuto Cellini - and his longtime preoccupation with life's mysterious primal forces.

"I had a very early and important dream," says Shanley, "in which someone asked me, 'Who are you?' and I answered, 'I am of the occult.' Now I had never had any remote interest in the occult. But as time went by and I read more, I realized that I was interested in the roll of the dice, in the way the bones fall, in the intuitive rather than the analytical response - what brings two people together in a restaurant on a certain night at a certain time in their lives."

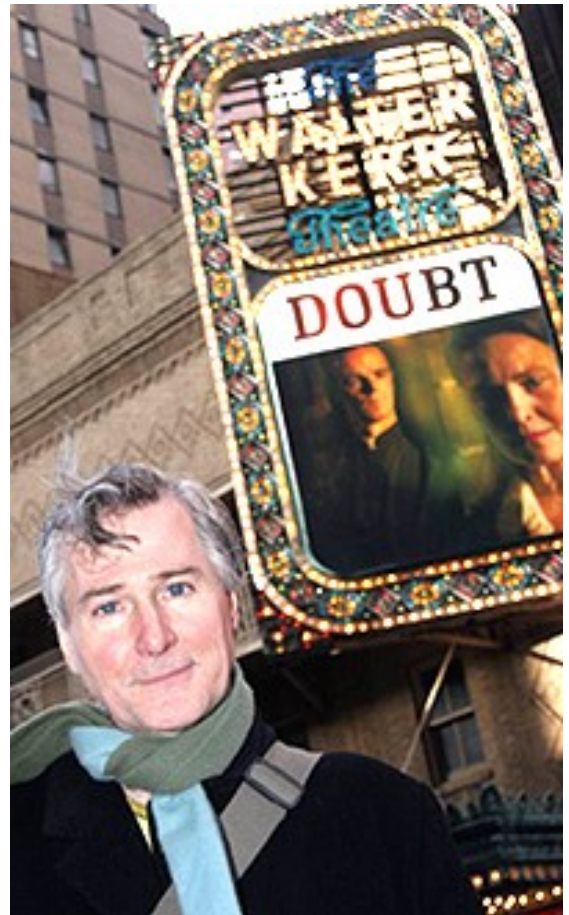
What brings them together, Shanley suggests, is pure chance - those rare, extraordinary moments of grace in life that have no explanation. Strangers meet and they have an enormous impact on each other at a critical moment. "I remember once being very upset late at night at a writers' colony," says the playwright. "A guy I didn't really know very well was giving me a ride home at three o'clock in the morning and I muttered something about I didn't know if I was ever going to have a good day. And he put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'There's nothing wrong with you.' And I cannot tell you the consolation it gave me. Another human being emotionally accepted me and gave me something that made me feel that everything was going to be all right. And it was."

Edited quote from: <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/kerkhoff/ContempDrama/Shanley.htm#Looking%20For>  
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# An Interview with John Patrick Shanley

By David Drake  
*Broadway.com*

With absolute certainty, the most celebrated new American play of the season [2004] is Bronx-born John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*. The play, which chronicles the suspicions that a Catholic school principal has upon the possible sexual misconduct of her resident priest in 1964, opened to critical and popular acclaim at the Manhattan Theatre Club last fall. It transferred to the Walter Kerr Theatre this spring (marking Shanley's Broadway debut) and promptly won the Pulitzer Prize. Since then *Doubt* has picked up the NY Drama Critics Circle, the Lucille Lortel, the Drama League, the Outer Critics Circle, the Obie and the Drama Desk. The play also won the coveted Tony Award. The Oscar-winning scribe of 1988's *Moonstruck* has seen nearly a dozen of his plays produced off-Broadway—including *Italian-American Reconciliation*, *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *Savage in Limbo* and *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, but he's never received a single New York theater award nomination until the arrival of *Doubt*.



**Has not receiving nominations ever added fuel to your fire?** No. I have a very strong impulse to write plays. I went for ten years *really* starving, writing plays. It's not even about liking it. I'm gonna do it no matter what.

**With this whole awards process, anything different for you now than when you won the Oscar for *Moonstruck*?** I was much younger when I won the Academy Award. And it was a great, great ride. But award season—back then and now—is exhausting. You end up having to go to a lot of stuff. And actually any one of them would be great fun, but the gestalt of them at the same time starts to feel a little blurry.

**Are you finding any new sense of community in all these meet and greets?** Oh, I've always had a sense of community. I got my sense at New Dramatists. I was a member for seven years along with forty other playwrights. And at the National Playwrights' Conference at the O'Neill, where I went for four successive summers, I spent a lot time with a lot of playwrights and actors.

**How important was that in your development as a writer?** Very important. This is what I do for a *living*. Until I write a play, I have no reason to go out. And I'm a rather social person! So I want to write the play so I can go out and be with people.

**How long did it take to write *Doubt*?** About a year. I was doing a play called *Dirty Story* on Theater Row, and in rehearsals one day—just out of the blue, apropos of nothing—I said, "Think I'm gonna write a play called *Doubt*." And someone said, "Well, what's it about?" I said, "I have no idea."

**Do you usually start with a title?** Not often, but sometimes. That's the sort of thing that collects stuff. You have this single image in your head—like a room, or a title—and then energy starts to collect around that point.

**Was your own Catholicism a "point" for *Doubt*?** There was something in the air I was picking up. There was a quality of *certainty* being exercised around me that something in me was answering with

something powerful called "doubt." Then at another point I started to think about black and white. And about those nuns. And *their* certainty. And that connected it to the past. I started thinking of a black woman coming into a white woman's office, and talking about whether something was black and white. In the scene with the black mother and the white principal, the black woman says to the white principal, "Some things are not black and white." Then the woman *dressed* in black and white says, "And some things are." Sometimes my mind works, in some kind of graphic abstract way.

**It seems *Doubt's* molestation narrative actually opens a whole Pandora's box of questions regarding the institution of the Catholic church. Was that intentional?**



The title "*Doubt*" really had the power for me, not the Catholic church scandals. And so, yes, I meant that to be implied in a variety of ways as a powerful and useful tool to answer something in the culture. Whether it was the invasion of Iraq—and the certainty that that was the right thing to do—or people in the Democratic and Republican parties who, year in and year out, show up like convicts chained together—having the exact same positions on everything! I don't think that's "thinking." And that's what functioning, effective members of a culture do—say, "Look! I have doubts. You should have doubts, too. And if you don't, you're a hammer-headed clown!"

**I see your email address is listed in *Doubt's* program**

**[shanleymoney@aol.com]. Do people write you?** Oh, I probably get about 15 e-mails a day. All sorts of stuff. They tell me about their experience in parochial school in the '60s. I got a letter from a Los Angeles prosecutor who saw the play and liked it very much because the principal employed the same tactics that *she* did—to get information out of suspects. I got an e-mail from a guy who wrote an entire alternate ending to the play. Including light cues, which he thought I should change. And I got an e-mail from a woman who said she was tall, blonde and beautiful and lived near me, and that we should have a drink. [Laughs.] The whole gamut! But I answer them all. It's interesting for people to be able to talk with the playwright that way.

**Looking to the future, what's up with *Moonstruck*, the musical?** I put it on ice. We were doing some very good work and then we hit some kind of chemistry wall with the enterprise. Basically, we couldn't agree on a director. So I pulled the plug and got the rights back.

**You still want to do the show?** Under the right circumstances. With the two people I was working with—Susan Birkenhead was doing the lyrics, and Henry Krieger, the music—we were doing some great work. I was really enjoying it. I did a workshop of the first act and it brought down the house! And everybody thought maybe I was a genius—for a minute. And I think it sort of messed things up in a way.

**Well, musicals often have a long gestation period.** Yeah, yeah, that's what they kept telling me: How hard musicals are. And that they kill people and everything. And, you know, I just sort of responded, "Well, maybe you're making it harder than it has to be? Cause I don't want to *die*. I just want to put on the show!"

*Edited copy from [http://www.broadway.com/gen/Buzz\\_Story.aspx?ci=513195](http://www.broadway.com/gen/Buzz_Story.aspx?ci=513195)*

# John Patrick Shanley Reviews and Quotes

## Theater: Moonstruck In Lower Manhattan

*Italian American Reconciliation* by John Patrick Shanley

By Richard Corliss

*Time* Review, 11/07/1988, p. 105



They are the last ethnic group America can comfortably mock. In movies and on TV, the Italian-American male is Stanley Kowalski without the sex appeal, the female a masochistic Judy absorbing too many Punches. So it is a tonic to meet the Italian Americans in John Patrick Shanley's play, *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, and film, *Moonstruck*. The residents of Shanley's Little Italy dare to express their feelings in street poetry whose melodic line is closer to Verdi's than to Bon Jovi's. In his new off-Broadway play Shanley goes further, announcing that these days it is the women who have aerobicized their hearts and the men who are love-sick. Shanley knows that men are the last dying breed of romantics. Of course: he's Irish American.

The romantic geometry in *Italian American Reconciliation* is familiarly lopsided. Teresa (Laura San Giacomo) loves and is in love with Huey (John Pankow). Huey loves Teresa but is in love with his ex-wife Janice (Jayne Haynes). Janice hates Huey and just about everybody else. Nor is the world crazy about her. Teresa, who thinks Janice "should live on a black mountain and drink out of a skull," tells Huey, "You're spoiled by women. You think you got woman-love coming to you out of your destiny." But who, in a Shanley comic opera, can ignore *la forza del destino*? Huey has to get Janice back.

To this end he enlists his best friend Aldo (John Turturro) to tame the shrew with roses and sweet talk. Cyrano did better. Janice stands on a moonlit balcony, takes a look at the flowers, snorts "What faw?" and tosses them to the ground. Her contempt stokes Aldo's ardor and Huey's too. As their older friend May (Helen Hanft) notes wistfully about the triumph of love over logic, "I'll never again have the courage to be that stupid."

In plot and production, this is *Moonstruck* on the cheap. But it is hardly less satisfying, with smart, authentic turns by the rambunctious Turturro and the gorgeously desperate San Giacomo. Shanley's title is appropriate: he wants to reconcile the comic-derisive image of Italian Americans with his own comic romanticism. And like almost everyone in this poignant fable, he gets what he wants.

Edited copy from: <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/kerkhoff/ContempDrama/Shanley.htm#Looking%20For>;  
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## Other Quotes from Reviews of the Original Production in 1988

"He writes wonderful Runyonesque dialogue—a sort of gritty, downtown version of sparkling drawing-room comedy—and highly rhetorical speeches that are fun to hear, because actors love to perform them.

*The New Yorker Magazine*, quoted by Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

"Ultimately Shanley is telling us a tall tale but he does it with so much humor, so much winsome charm that it is almost irresistible."

*The New York Daily News*

'...bathed in the same moonlit madness that gave his *Moonstruck* screenplay its savor and flavor ... A lovely play.'

## Reconciling Woman Trouble, Italian-American Style

By Steve Parks. Staff Writer

*Newsday*, 05-11-1999, p. B02.

Review of *Italian American Reconciliation* at the Airport Playhouse, 281 Knickerbocker Ave., Bohemia

John Patrick Shanley has a lot of nerve making a living writing about the love lives of Italian Americans. Shanley, best known for the movie *Moonstruck*, is Irish. But I'll give him this, he does have an ear for the dialect spoken in and around Little Italy, where his amusing but flawed tale, *Italian American Reconciliation* premiered in 1988, is set.

To put us at ease, the author sends an emissary to work the crowd before the play begins. He compliments a gentleman in the audience about his shirt. He tells a woman she's beautiful and that her husband should keep an eye on her. Aldo (that's his name-- Aldo Scalicki) thinks he's learned something about women.

Don't you believe it. Aldo hasn't learned a thing, except perhaps not to trust a woman with a gun. And that's the trouble with this endearingly nutty, mess of a play resurrected, comic warts and all, at Airport Playhouse.

This really isn't Aldo's story at all. It's his best-buddy Huey Maximilian Bonfigliano's story. It isn't that Michael Fasciano, as Aldo, the young man who thinks no girl can measure up to his mama, fails to lay on the ethnic charm. But we want to see more of his tortured friend Huey, who dresses up in a Shakespearean tunic and writes poetry to work up the courage to get back together with his volatile ex, Janice. Huey has reason to be afraid of Janice because she shot his dog to death and might've done the same to him except the cheap zip gun exploded in her hand. So, like *Cyrano*, Huey sends Aldo as an emissary to soften up Janice.

Matthew Sckalor delivers a temperately looney Huey. He calmly maintains a deranged notion that unless he has at least one more night with Janice ("we'll always have Little Italy," we imagine him telling her the morning after), he won't be man enough to love the woman who's taken Janice's place. Theresa, played with appropriate indignity by Tricia DeSimone, doesn't take it well when Huey breaks up with her to reconcile with his ex.

The only one with any sense, Theresa's Aunt May, played by Diana Heinlein like an advice-columnist we might all have wished for in an aunt, wastes her wisdom on Aldo, who couldn't appreciate what she means by her assessment of relationships: "You get what you pay for and the currency is trouble."



*Edited copy from <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/kerkhoff/ContempDrama/Shanley.htm#Looking%20For>  
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# Creating a Theatrical Production

From start to finish, it takes an incredible number of artists to create a theatrical production, and the greatest productions are frequently realized by individuals who respect each others' talents and abilities and develop a strong sense of teamwork — camaraderie, dedication, and joy in the work being accomplished are often the first signs that an excellent work of art will soon be created. First, and obviously foremost, is the **Playwright**. In modern theatre, the vast majority of plays are in written script form. However, other types of plays are still developed today, such as scripts that are loosely based on a “scenario” or plot line and then improvised by the actors and director with no specific spoken lines ever being formally written.

For OpenStage Theatre, the plays to be performed in a given season are selected by the **Artistic Director**, with a great deal of input and recommendations made by the Company's regular directors and key Company Members. Once the season is chosen, the Artistic Director then selects the individual **Directors** for each play. Each spring, OpenStage holds auditions for all of the shows to be produced the following season, which runs from August through the following June. The Directors cast their plays from actors and actresses who are new to the Company as well as those who have worked with the Company previously (some for as long as thirty-three years).

Each production rehearses for six to seven weeks, four to five times a week, usually for three hours per rehearsal. During the rehearsal process, the **Assistant Director** helps the Director in numerous capacities, including recording stage blocking, making notes for the Director, communicating necessary information to the performers and designers, etc. Prior to the beginning of rehearsals, the Director meets with the **Design Team**, which is composed of the **Set Designer, Costume Designer, Lighting Designer, Properties Designer/Set Dresser, Sound Designer, Hair Designer, and Make-Up Designer**. The Design Team determines all of the physical design elements for a production, from how an individual character's hair is styled to what quality, intensity and hue the lights will have during individual scenes. All of these elements—set, costumes, hand properties, furniture, set dressing, lights, sound, make-up, hair, and special effects (if needed)—must be coordinated so that they work together to actualize the Director's vision in the best possible way. The Design Team continues to meet throughout the rehearsal period, and their expertise in visualizing the final physical product of the play is a vital element for the play's success. The **Producer or Production Manager** oversees all of these efforts, as well as the realization of the designs—such as set construction, costume construction, etc. This realization may be accomplished by the Designers or by **Theatre Technicians**, such as **Master Carpenters, Stitchers, Master Electricians, Sound Engineers, Hair or Make-Up Stylists**, etc. Other Theatre Technicians vital to mounting a finished production include the **Stage Hands**, who run the show backstage, the **Lighting and Sound Board Operators**, and, most importantly, the **Stage Manager**, who is in charge of all aspects of the play once the design aspects and the acting are merged together. This “merging” occurs when the play “sets in,” or moves out of the rehearsal and construction space and into the performance space for technical rehearsals and dress rehearsals, which usually last one week. The Stage Manager makes sure the stage is set appropriately, that all equipment is operating correctly, that all performers are present for their entrances, and “calls” all the cues during performances by telling the Board Operators and Stage Hands when to execute a change in lighting, sound or stage setting.

All of these individuals are vital to the final product and, in essence, are present on the stage during the performance through their artistic contributions. They create the world the **Actors** and **Actresses** reside in during the actual performance. But all of these efforts would be meaningless without the **Audience**. The following quote, from the play *The Dresser* by Ronald Harwood, captures the true purpose of theatre:

***“I had a friend once said, ‘Norman, I don’t care if there are only three people out front, or if the audience laugh when they shouldn’t, or don’t when they should, one person, just one person is certain to know and understand. And I act for him.’ That’s what my friend said.”***



## A Brief Overview of OpenStage Theatre & Company

Founded in 1973, OpenStage Theatre & Company has committed itself to a professional orientation for the serious theatre artist. The organization's goal has always been to establish a nationally recognized theatre in Northern Colorado. Excellence, discipline and artistic integrity are the principles that continue to guide the Company, as evidenced by the Company receiving the 1997 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. OpenStage Theatre has been actively producing and promoting live performing arts in Northern Colorado since its inception, making it one of the longest practicing theatrical producers in Colorado. The Company has grown steadily and consistently and is a strong member of the statewide arts producing community. The Theatre produces shows for a wide range of audiences, including adult and family fare in both the contemporary and classical genres, and supplements its six regular season shows with challenging and original works through *openstage etc* and original radio drama through Rabbit Hole Radio Theatre. The Company has produced comedies, dramas, histories, grand operas, musicals and original works and has toured regionally. OpenStage Theatre continues an ambitious policy of community outreach and development, providing materials, personnel and professional advice to schools, government and social service agencies, businesses, and other art producers. The Company is an active partner in the planning efforts of Arts Alive Fort Collins, the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Fort Collins, the Downtown Development Authority, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Colorado Council on the Arts and the Colorado Theatre Guild. OpenStage Theatre & Company is committed to the development of Fort Collins as an important and viable cultural center for Colorado. Its reputation for quality and consistency has been built through years of hard work and with the talents of many fine performers and theatre artists. The Company has been paying honorariums to actors and technicians since 1977. In numerous instances, the training and experience acquired through OpenStage have provided individual artists with the expertise to launch successful professional careers. During its history the Theatre has produced over 400 theatrical productions, and the caliber of its shows has been compared with professional companies in Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver and...yes...even New York.

"OpenStage Theatre Company – the trailbreaker, the stalwart, the adventurer, almost all things to all theater people in Northern Colorado for [over] thirty years..." *Loveland Reporter Herald*

"OpenStage ...can easily take its place among Colorado's best companies..." *The Denver Post*

"OpenStage productions rival anything to be seen in Denver..." *Greeley Tribune*

"Northern Colorado does not have a Radio City Music Hall, a Metropolitan Museum of Art or a Rockefeller Center. But it does have OpenStage Theatre & Company, a premiere performing arts organization whose caliber of professionalism makes Fort Collins theatre-goers feel like they are in New York City...Whether you're looking for an evening of theatrical professionalism or non-traditional innovation, OpenStage Theatre & Company is a sure bet for quality entertainment." *Scene Magazine*