

TRACKS

ACT I

- 1. Prelude (0:26)Orchestra
- 2. Prologue (0:48)The Raven, Rebeck
- 3. I'm Not Going Gently (3:33)Michael
- 4. Scene: "The Rules of Death" (0:37)Michael, Rebeck, The Raven
- 5. Much More Alive (3:41)Rebeck, Michael, The Raven
- 6. You Know What I Mean (4:38)Klapper, Rebeck
- 7. A Fine & Private Place (2:47)Michael, Laura
- 8. As Long As I Can (3:52)Michael, Laura
- 9. Scene: "Close Call" (0:29)The Raven, Rebeck
- 10. Stop Kidding Yourself (3:05)Rebeck, Klapper
- 11. The Telepatheticque (4:18)Michael, Laura
- 12. What Did You Expect?/Let Me Explain (5:27)Laura, Michael
- 13. It's None of My Business (1:40)Klapper, Rebeck
- 14. Quartet (2:04)Michael, Laura, Rebeck, Klapper

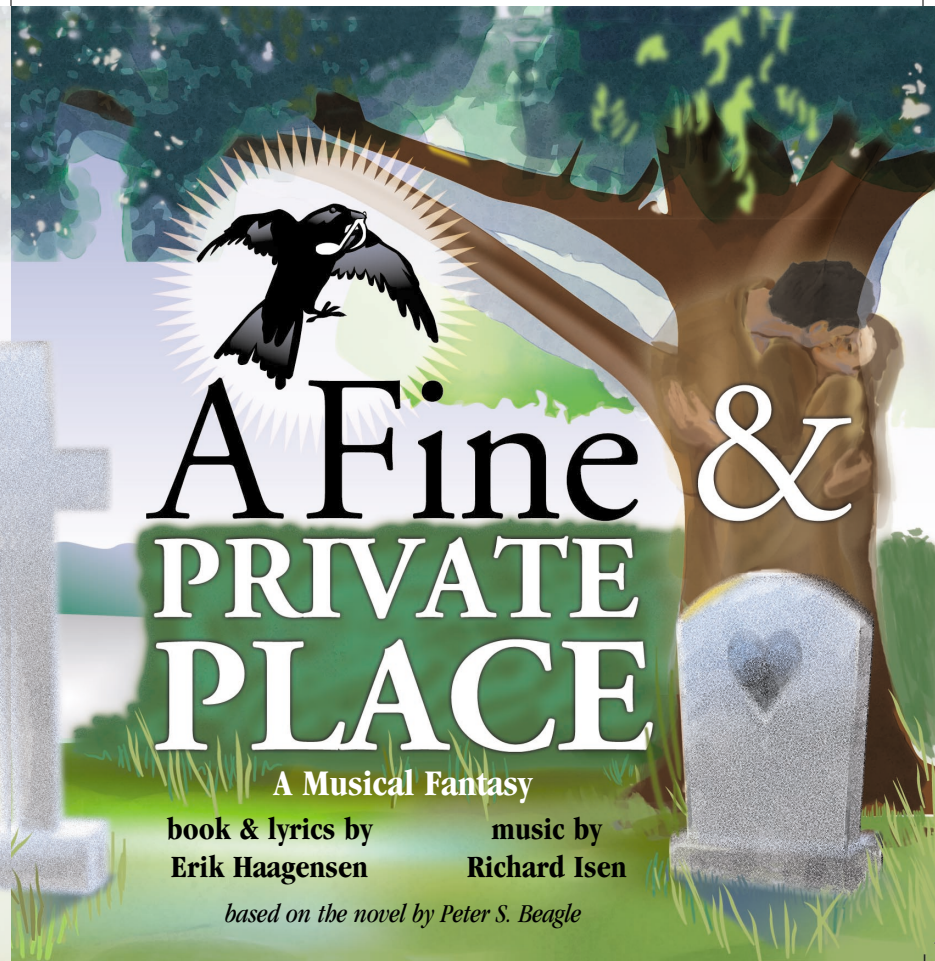
ACT II

- 15. Prelude (0:23)Orchestra
- 16. What Should I Do? (3:19)Klapper, Laura, Rebeck, Michael
- 17. Close Your Eyes (3:05)Laura
- 18. Argument (3:12)Rebeck, Klapper
- 19. Scene: "I Talk To Ghosts" (1:06)Rebeck, Michael, Laura, Klapper
- 20. No One Ever Knows (3:46)Rebeck, Klapper
- 21. Because Of Them All (3:38)Michael, Laura
- 22. Do Something (2:35)Laura, Rebeck, Michael, The Raven
- 23. How Can I Leave Here? (3:18)The Raven, Rebeck
- 24. Epilogue/Finale (3:44)Klapper, Rebeck, Campos



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visit us at afandpp.com

produced by Kristen Blodgette & David Lai



A Fine & PRIVATE PLACE

A Musical Fantasy

book & lyrics by
Erik Haagensen

music by
Richard Isen

based on the novel by Peter S. Beagle

How nice to encounter a Raven who can do more than croak out a terse and unforgiving, “Nevermore.” For in this recording of “A Fine and Private Place,” here’s another Raven who talks—one who’ll now be with musical theater enthusiasts evermore.

Finally, after 15 years of waiting, there’s a premiere cast album of this 1989 musical with book and lyrics by Erik Haagensen and music by Richard Isen.

The story that features a loquacious bird—and a few other fascinating characters—first saw the light of day in Peter S. Beagle’s 1960 novel of the same name. “**A Fine and Private Place**” is the story of Michael Morgan, who died too soon—though he may only have himself to blame for that—and Laura Durand, also recently deceased, who never found a true and abiding love in life. After these two ghosts meet in a cemetery, do they dare try again? Can they fall in love before they forget how? (Can any of us, for that matter?)

These two lost souls on the highway of death meet Jonathan Rebeck, an old codger who isn’t quite homeless, if you count the mausoleum in the cemetery as his permanent address. He’s been there 20 years—enough time, apparently, to learn how to chat amiably with ghosts. Rebeck is proof that if you hang around a cemetery long enough, you somehow gain the ability to talk to the dead without benefit of Madame Arcati.

Not that Rebeck won’t talk to the living. As the show continues, he’ll make conversation with 1) Gertrude Klapper, a widow who drops by her deceased husband’s grave, and 2) the aforementioned Raven.

And you thought Cinderella in “Into the Woods” was the only character in musical theater who talked to birds. Only this time, the bird in question answers quite a bit—sometimes quite eloquently, sometimes quite flippantly. It’s a haunting yet charming story because it’s one in which people help people. Those who have passed away pass on what they’ve learned. Those who are still alive and well can aid two ghosts in search of a relationship. Beagle’s novel hasn’t been out of print a day since it was first published. Not bad for a book written by a 19-year-old, eh?

But books are less expensive to print than musicals are to produce. So while copies of the novel still abound in new and used bookstores, fans of musicals haven’t been able to hear or revisit the score that debuted at the Goodspeed Opera House’s Norma Terris Theatre in Chester, Connecticut 15 years ago.



photograph © 1989 Diane Sobolewski

ACT I

JONATHAN REBECK is the only living resident of the Bronx's beautiful Yorkchester Cemetery. He spends his days playing chess with the ghosts of recent arrivals. His meals are flown in by a talking RAVEN with a penchant for cynical humor and fast food. **(PROLOGUE)** The latest arrival is MICHAEL MORGAN, newly deceased and mad as hell about it. **(I'M NOT GOING GENTLY)** Rebeck explains that death is the opportunity to face oneself and "travel on into the night" **(MUCH MORE ALIVE)**, which upsets Michael, who is harboring a secret he regrets. Michael would rather remain "awake" than accept both himself and an unknown future. Rebeck is so distracted by Michael that he fails to notice the approach of GERTRUDE KLAPPER, fresh from her weekly visit to husband Morris's mausoleum. Gertrude's friends don't approve of her post-mortem devotion, but she senses a more sympathetic soul in Rebeck. **(YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN)** Trapped into talking to a living person for the first time in 20 years, Rebeck is surprised to find himself enjoying the experience. Michael, however, doesn't. Klapper isn't even aware of him! He leaves in search of livelier conversation and finds LAURA DURAND, another new arrival. Laura is longing for eternal "sleep" **(A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE)** until Michael turns on the charm **(AS LONG AS I CAN)** and claims to have been murdered by his wife. Frightened by her attraction to Michael, she literally disappears from the scene. But she returns, promising Michael that she will stay until he "adjusts." A flustered Rebeck returns. The unwitting Klapper has nearly exposed him to CAMPOS, the cemetery gatekeeper! Laura decides that she and Michael should play matchmaker, to the dismay of the Raven. Rebeck denies any interest in Klapper, but, alone at the end of the day, he discovers that she has left him her phone number under a chess piece. Over the next week, he and Klapper separately try to decide what happens next. **(STOP KIDDING YOURSELF)**

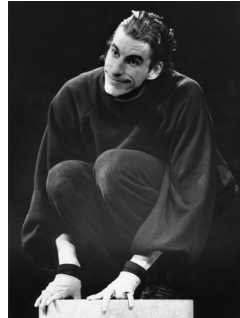
Laura is pressing a reluctant Michael to talk about his death, when Klapper returns in search of Rebeck. Michael and Laura resort to a fancy bit of telepathy in order to get them together again. **(THE TELEPATHETIQUE)** Laura is just starting to like the idea of liking Michael when she discovers, via Klapper's newspaper, that Michael's wife, now on trial for murder, claims that Michael committed suicide. It's a perfect excuse to reject him and she grabs it. Furious with herself for becoming vulnerable, she tries to go to sleep, only to discover that she can't. She's in love, whether she likes it or not. **(WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?)** A guilty Michael rehearses ways of convincing Laura that he is not responsible for his actions **(LET ME EXPLAIN)**, but can't even convince himself and decides not to come clean. He can't risk losing her. Meanwhile, Klapper has become suspicious of Rebeck's address. **(IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS)** To avoid losing her, he decides to tell her the truth, as Laura and Michael separately wonder what to tell each other. **(QUARTET)**

ACT II

Everyone spends the next several weeks wondering **WHAT SHOULD I DO?** Klapper wants Rebeck to move in with her and Rebeck wishes she would stop asking. Laura finds the courage to tell Michael how she feels. Plagued by a guilty conscience, he sidesteps the situation by declaring love between ghosts impossible. Laura's remedy is to suggest that they unite their souls telepathically: "We could know each other completely, more completely than we ever could have when we were alive." Knowing it would reveal his suicide, Michael denies that he loves Laura in the same moment that he discovers how much he does. Alone, a crushed Laura realizes that she now has nothing preventing her from sleeping. **(CLOSE YOUR EYES)** Klapper finally delivers an ultimatum to Rebeck about leaving the cemetery. **(ARGUMENT)** Michael decides that without Laura, he no longer wishes to defy death. Both go separately to Rebeck to say goodbye. At the same time, Klapper returns to say the same thing. Rebeck, not wanting Klapper to feel rejected, tries to tell her about his "gift" for communicating with ghosts: "They need me. It's what I do. That's why I can't go with you." Realizing that Laura and Michael are really in love, he asks Klapper for advice on how to keep them together. She thinks he's finding a roundabout way to discuss their own relationship. She tells "the ghosts" that nothing is certain in life except the failure of not trying. **(NO ONE EVER KNOWS)** She is crushed when Rebeck doesn't find the courage in her words to leave. What she doesn't know is that Michael and Laura do take her advice and open their minds and souls to each other in an attempt at love. **(BECAUSE OF THEM ALL)**

Now that she knows all, Laura insists that Michael get his wife off the hook for murder. Along with Rebeck, they break into the gatekeeper's office late at night to call the police with the location of Michael's suicide note. Unfortunately, a drunken Campos stumbles in. Rebeck finds out that Campos has known about him all along, can talk to ghosts, and even to the Raven. His whole sense of himself, his mission in the cemetery, and his special bond with the Raven is shattered. The next day, a hung-over Rebeck awakens to the news of Michael's disinterment. As a Catholic and a suicide, he cannot remain buried in hallowed ground. He is being moved to Mt. Merrill Cemetery ("one step above a landfill") and the lovers will be separated! Laura begs for Rebeck's help. He and Campos could rebury her in the new cemetery as well. Rebeck is excited and frightened. He would have to leave his home. Goaded by Laura and Michael **(DO SOMETHING)**, he searches for the courage to go, finally finding it in Klapper's words. **(HOW CAN I LEAVE HERE?)** The Raven watches him run off, then sighs and flies out of the cemetery forever.

Late that night, at Mt. Merrill Cemetery, Rebeck and Klapper look for the ghosts. They appear, but Rebeck can no longer see them. Nor can the ghosts see the living. The two couples pass through each other unawares as the music rises and Klapper and Rebeck exit through the audience into the world. **(FINALE)**

The Players (in order of appearance)The Raven— **Gabriel Barre**Jonathan Rebeck— **Charles Goff**Michael Morgan— **Brian Sutherland**Gertrude Klapper— **Evalyn Baron**Laura Durand— **Maureen Silliman**Campos— **Gabriel Barre**Voice of the priest— **Peter S. Beagle**Original production directed by **Robert Kalfin*****The Musicians***Musical Director/piano— **Henry Aronson**Percussion— **James Musto**Bass— **Ray Kilday**Recorded, edited and mixed at **Manhattan Beach Recording Studios, Uptime Studios** and **Sound on Sound Recording Studios.**Recording Engineers: **Dan Hople** and **MP Kuo**Editing: **MP Kuo** and **Richard Furch**Mixing Engineer: **Richard Furch**Mastering by **Tom Carr**Music Preparation by **Finn Byrhard**Graphic design and illustration by **Alan Dubinsky***Special Thanks:* Joe McConnell, Alan Dubinsky, Joel Beard, Tommy Krasker, Micah Solomon, Henry Aronson, Steve David, Sue Frost and Goodspeed Musicals, Paulette Haupt, Betty MargalithProduced by **Kristen Blodgett** and **David Lai**

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What a wonderful tribute to Haagensen and Isen that their entire Goodspeed cast—Evalyn Baron, Gabriel Barre, Charles Goff, Maureen Silliman, and Brian Sutherland—*all wanted to do it again*. Baron had to travel from Abingdon, Virginia, where she is associate artistic director at the legendary Barter Theatre. Barre rarely performs these days, for he's turned to directing, and with considerable success; his staging of Andrew Lipka's "The Wild Party" ranks among the most exciting of recent years.

Truth to tell, Barre was ideally cast as the Raven, for he has a most aquiline and prodigious nose. Want more proof? In 1998, Barre played Cyrano de Bergerac—without adding anything to his proboscis. Barre came to "A Fine and Private Place" only weeks after he'd appeared in the 1989 Broadway production of "Starmites"—as a Lizard. Don't laugh, for his portrayal landed him a Tony nomination as Best Actor in a Musical. (Anyone remember the night that Jason Alexander, up for the same award for that season's "Jerome Robbins' Broadway," went on "The Tonight Show" and made clear that if he did cop the big prize, it wouldn't be that much of an achievement—"because I'm up against a lizard, for Pete's sake!")

Still, Baron, Barre, and their three original castmates believed enough in "A Fine and Private Place" to return to it, re-learn the songs, and endure a recording session—which, for a cast album, is always an arduous and painstaking experience.

Not that you'd ever know it from the way this album turned out. How fitting that a show about the enduring nature of love should produce such a warm and winning recording. It's a musical that makes you feel better about Hamlet's daddy and all those other people who have moved on. Ghosts, as Patrick Swayze proved a few years back, need love, too—and if we'd ever given it the thought that Beagle, Haagensen, and Isen did, we'll all agree that we'd like them to have it.

If we're to believe Andrew Marvell's poem, "To His Coy Mistress," "The grave's a fine and private place." Perhaps. But it isn't for musicals and their cast albums. What a pleasure to welcome "A Fine and Private Place" into our CD collections, smack-dab between "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Finian's Rainbow."

—**Peter Filichia**

Peter Filichia is a columnist for www.theatermania.com, a critic for the Newark Star-Ledger, and the author of "Let's Put on a Musical!"