

The Great Toronto Clown Riot of 1855

A Parable In Two Acts

Kyle J McCloskey - Sample

THE ORANGE ORDER/THE TORIES

Mayor William Allen
 Sully*
 Samuel Sherwood*
 John Beverly Robinson*
 Mary Ann Armstrong*
 The Judge*
 Police Officer*
 Police Officer 2*
 Police Officer 3*
 Patrolman

WORKING CLASS ENGLISH PROTESTANTS

Liz Smith
 Fraiser
 Dudley*
 Wilson*
 District Attorney Jeff*
 Tomato Lady*
 Angry Onlooker 1*
 Angry Onlooker 2*
 Angry Onlooker 3*

WORKING CLASS IRISH CATHOLICS

Maureen O'Reilly
 Myers
 Kevin
 Burs*
 Thespis*
 Cabbage Man*
 Meehan*
 Clown*
 Jaunty Jim*
 Carl*
 Clown Jonathan Swift*
 Ticket Taker

WHO DIS?

The Mayor, Upper Class
 The Mayor's Assistant, Working Class
 Police Chief, Upper Class
 Reform Candidate, Upper Class
 Brothel Owner/Operator, Upper Class
 Of The Queen's Court, Upper Class
 Police Officer, Working Class
 Police Officer, Working Class
 Police Officer, Working Class
 Police Officer, Working Class

Sex Worker, Working Class
 Leader of the Firefighters, Working Class
 Firefighter, Working Class
 Firefighter, Working Class
 District Attorney, Working Class
 Tomato Seller, Working Class
 Angry Onlooker, Working Class
 Angry Onlooker, Working Class
 Angry Onlooker, Working Class

Sex Worker, Working Class
 Leader of the Clowns, Working Class
 Circus Bear, Working Class Brown Bear
 Clown, Working Class
 Clown, Working Class
 Cabbage Seller, Working Class
 Ringleader, Working Class
 A Clown, Working Class
 Rival Firefighter, Working Class
 Rival Firefighter, Working Class
 A Clown, Horrible British Accent
 Ticket Taker, Working Class

* Designates played by a member of the Ensemble. This play can be done with as little as 12 people
 - Everyone should partake in the orange order meeting with masks, sashes, and the like
 - Catholics should be the Landlords and Irish Children in the Clowning scenes

On Casting:

William Allen should always be played by an able-bodied, cis-gender white man

This play and all creations of this play should employ the best actor for the role. There must be a commitment to efficacy with this piece. Any questions about this should be directed to the playwright.

Casting Cont'd:

For the purposes of a production in the United States or Canada, I strongly encourage:

Casting a Black individual as Myers

Casting a White Passing or Latinx individual as Fraiser

Every character designated "male" in this play should have a wildly magnificent piece of facial hair.

On Sound:

If the production allows for it, all sounds besides music* should be created/heightened by two folie clowns. They should move throughout the space like shadows, neutral to the conflict on stage, but bumping the language in the script up. How much or how little they do is at the behest of the team.

**I am not limiting the production to pre-recorded music. Besides perhaps "Contortionist's Tango" by Beat Circus, the music are merely guides and choices I made while writing.*

On Accents:

Orange Order members speak in RP.

Working Class folks speak in a Derry Brogue.

Americans speak in either a soft Derry Lilt or American Midwestern Accent.

A Note:

The History of sectarian violence is long, complicated, and vicious. Inevitably, each conflict labeled an act of sectarian violence differs based on space, time, and the material constructs of the situation. For the purposes of my writing (and my person) I am almost obsessed with the longstanding conflict between Gaelic and English People, starting with the Norman invasion in 1169 through the present. This will undoubtedly color the play and hopefully provide some context for the situation around which this event occurs in 1855. A dramaturgical dedication to *understanding* is imperative to the process, production, and possibility of this play.

"See, people with power understand exactly one thing - Violence."

- Noam Chomsky -

"Don't you love farce?

My fault, I fear

I thought that you'd want what I want

Sorry, my dear!

But where are the Clowns?

Send in the Clowns

Don't bother, they're here.

- Stephen Sondheim -

CIRCUS (n):

A traveling company of acrobats, clowns, and other entertainers which gives performances, typically in a large tent, in a series of different places

OR

A public scene of frenetic and noisily intrusive activity.

OR

A rounded open space in a city where several streets converge

CLOWN (n):

A comic entertainer, especially one in a circus, wearing a traditional costume and exaggerated makeup

OR

An unsophisticated person, behaving rather badly

PARABLE (n)

A story used to display a spiritual or moral lesson

OR

A story that asks questions of your own moral code

Notes on Pandemonium

In the script, there are multiple places that call for "Pandemonium"

I believe it imperative for this play to be one of the loudest sounding plays you can produce, So as to highlight the moments of quiet.

Without further ado, here is a starting point/list of terms for possible language exploration:

Boots and Cats

Peas and Bees

Oh Bother

Yeeeeaaaaaooooo Boy

Whoopsie-baby!

Whoopsie-Doodle

Tiocfaidh ár lá

Oul Fella's Lost it

They's acting the maggot

Awful good

Go way outta that

A Whale of a Time

A Giraffe of a Time

A Bear of a Time

The Craic was not 100

SCENE 6

Later that night, Mary Ann Armstrong's Brothel on Queen

*Sam Sherwood is already at the bar, many sheets to the wind.
He talks, seemingly to know one, into the void.*

Or does he talk to the audience? Who knows.

SHERWOOD

Yes sir, good sir

We done do it to 'em, sir.

How many souls did those silly clowns clown?

By my count, seein' the tabs

Good for the economy

Great for the town

Clowns clown, towns town

Down for the down, baby Clown

WooooooooOOOOOOooooooooow

Happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy

They burp

We all good, we good!

Hey, guess what?

We good, baby.

We got it.

ANOTHER ROUND FOR THE TOWN OF CLOWNS

We made it, we makin' it good.

Sherwood falls asleep at the bar.

Smith walks onstage and O'Reilly meets them at center.

O'REILLY & SMITH

A 1, 2, 3!

The lights and sound explode. Music is blaring

O'REILLY

Now comes the night we've been hemming and hawing

SMITH

The start of the end of the coming and going

O'REILLY

The brothel was bumping

SMITH

The people were "thumping"

O'REILLY & SMITH

The grand stage was set for what's been comin'!

SMITH

Allen entered to cheers and applause

Mary met him - our illustrious Boss.

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG

WELCOME ONE, WELCOME ALL

TO THE GREATEST BROTHEL IN ALL OF TORONTO

I - of course - am your host for the evening's festivities.

Madam Mary Ann Armstrong!!!!!!

Hoots, hollers, claps, and daps

Drink your fill and feast on the food
 Savor the flesh that puts you in the mood
 Pockets now flush shall be flushed through the night
 Grab yourself a Lady and hold on to her tight
 But one little hair is harmed on a head
 And I'll make sure you wind up dead!
 If you need to fight we'll settle it like adults
 A duel of the fates shall settle any tumult
 So pay up, play in, have your merry way
 Relax, get loose, and don't forget to pay

*William Allen is followed in, as always, by Sully.
 Who is noticeably a bit more distracted than usual,
 Nursing their face.
 Allen is a lil' punchy.*

Why - if it isn't the Orange Man Savior of Toronto himself!
 Mayor William Allen, everybody!!

MAYOR ALLEN

Oh, please, please -

A bit of quiet. Allen then tries to rally the applause up again.

No, please, please!

More applause.

My room -

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG

Ready for you, sir. With a direct view of the entire festivities.
Very Good, baby sir, go Guzzle your Bubbly.

Mayor Allen and Smith share a glance. Mayor Allen leaves.

*Sully is fidgeting with a piece of clothing.
He is nursing a slap on the face.*

What got you, Sully Baby.
Do you need to be pampered?

SULLY

Uhm...
No...
Do...
You have anything for my cheek?

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG

Lemme see

She checks his cheek. Scarlett

Holy Shoot.

SULLY

Yeah, you sure you don't got somethin'?

Mary Ann hands them a bottle of champagne

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG

Don't get too riled or it'll pop off.

SULLY

Thanks. I think I'm going to go take a nap in the corner till he's calmed down.
Those Clowns really did a number to him.

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG

I thought they were dumb.

SULLY

Yes, I agree. Eating Irish babies? Pssshhh. Very dumb.
Although, sometimes it's only dumb till someone actually tries it, and then it's caviar!

Sully laughs their lil' tuccus off.

I need a nap.

They leave to take a nap.

Marry Ann busies herself somewhere else.

Thespis and Burs enter with an insane, violent energy.

O'REILLY
Next came the Clowns: Hot with gumption

SMITH
They stink

O'REILLY
We all do!

THESPIS
WHERE IS THE BARI!?!?!?

Someone throws a beer bottle which narrowly misses their head.

Oh! There it is!

Thespis saunters over to the bar and plops themself down next to Samuel Sherwood, who looks at him with major stink eye.

Thespis moves one spot down.

BURS
WHERE ARE THE WHORES!?!?!

Burs is immediately slapped by the closest person to them.

Fair, Fair.

Burs starts walking towards the door

Are they in here?

They open the door. ANIMAL SOUNDS.

NOPE, NOPE.

Another door opens, and he is pulled inside by a mysterious hand.

AAAAAHHHHH MYSTERIOUS HAND!!!!!!

Kevin, in another wonderful disguise, and Myers enter.

KEVIN
WHERE IS THE POUTINE!?!?!?

MYERS
Kevin, Chill.

KEVIN
I can't chill. Too many thrills.
I want a pancake, pizza, popcorn, pomegranate, pasta, pickles, potatoes, paella, pepperoni,
prosciutto, pollok, pierogis, and of course:

Their eyes grow four times their size

(As if praying)
POUTINE

MYERS
Do you remember what happened last time you ate nothing but poutine?
No one deserves that much projectile vomit.
Especially wee ladies in Victorian Dresses.

KEVIN
Oh, that's what happens when you're JUST eating poutine.
My palate, and my tum, are diversified.
And now, I must go find the goodness.
This is self-care.

Kevin disappears into the party

O'Reilly catches Myers.

O'REILLY
Look who showed their stinkin' face.

MYERS
Hey hey - I washed the manure off.

O'REILLY
Clean up fine.

MYERS
Some place you got. Not working?

O'REILLY
I'm always workin', Laddie.

O'Reilly takes a swig of the flask. She offers it to Myers

Quite a show you put on.

MYERS
You think?

O'REILLY
Got the Mayor in a tuff.

MYERS
Over what?

O'REILLY
Thinks it anti-Queen, I reckon.
Can't know for sure.
But you see that bloke snoozin' over there?
Got a burn on his face so bad.
He'll look like a blueberry tomorrow
Keep it a bit low, tonight.
If the Mayor's gettin' frisky with his fists,
Can't imagine what the others are feelin'.

MYERS
That's so dumb.
We were just tryin' to be dumb.

O'REILLY
Well, when you're dealin' with the Queen of England
Everything Dumb might as well be
The Gunpowder Treason Plot.

MYERS
So.... Keep it low?

O'REILLY
Or find me later?

A wink. A Walk away.

*Myers walks towards the bar.
He sits away from everyone else.*

Wilson and Dudley enter

WILSON
A DRINK!!!!!!

Wilson makes their way over to the bar.

Dudley makes their way over to the door with the animal sounds. They open it. LOUDER ANIMAL SOUNDS

DUDLEY
(LOUDEST ANIMAL SOUNDS)

They enter the room like a Puma.

*Frasier enters, smoking a stogie.
Smith yanks it from him.*

FRASIER
OY!

SMITH
Can't smoke in here, you know that.

She takes a huge puff, blows a smoke ring.

FRASIER
Christ, what am I to do then?

SMITH
Me?

FRASIER
No.

SMITH
Oh.

FRASIER
I... I - it's not like that, Liz.
I ain't Catholic -
God strike me down if I was -
So I can't just have my sins
Wiped away because I'm "Sorry"
And I don't mean to be rude -
But what's the point of sellin' yourself?

SMITH
What's the point of sellin' anythin'?

FRASIER
What, to live?
Home, Shelter, Food?

A beat.

Oh!!!!!!!

SMITH
You're fussy.

FRASIER
Them Clowns got me rilled.
What, with all that throwin' food around,
Eatin' babies, destruction -
There are actually hungry people in this city and -

SMITH
Jesus Lord of the Host
Go get a drink
You're bummin' me out.

FRASIER
But -

SMITH
A drink! Now!

Frasier saunters over to the bar.

O'REILLY & SMITH
TIME PASSES

They move a clock on the wall an hour

Kevin comes forward with a big bowl of poutine

KEVIN
Oh my heavens
Heavens to Betsy
Heaven Heaven HEAAAAAAAAAAAAVEN
Look what I gets me
Pork Belly Poutine

He eats with his paws; messy, gross, chaotic, beautiful

Oh my God I've been starved
Those dumb-dumbs feed me nothing but
Carrots
Hay
Sludge
Mud

KEVIN (cont'd)

Scraps
Milk
My friends that die

They clench their heart

JEROME,
SWEET LION FRIEND
SHORT KING OF THE JUNGLE
BRO-EST OF BROS
I'M SO SORRY YOU'RE GONE
BUT YOU WERE ALSO
VERY, VERY TASTY

They unclench

Oh, this is like sin
Like butter on a biscuit
Oozy and Floozy
As it moves down my
Esophagus
My tum full and ready for -

A RUMBLE IN THE TUM

Uh oh.
I gotta use the lil' cub's room.

*Kevin knocks on a door, the bathroom.
No answer.
They enter*

(O.S.)
OH BOTHER.

Burs exits from the room, his shirt off, sweaty as heck.

BURS
HOLY MOLEY THE LORD HATH BLESS ME WITH -
I gotta tinkle.

They knock on the door

Kevin, an anxious pooper, says nothing.

BURS
Occupied, ay?

Dudley emerges from the room, now wearing a hat.

DUDLEY
Someone in there?

BURS
Think so.

Dudley knocks on the door.

DUDLEY
C'mon, chap, some of us gotta attend to some duty!

(Sort of to themselves, sorta to Burs)
Christ, how big is this house and only one chamber pot?

BURS
You didn't have to knock that loud.

DUDLEY
Heh?

BURS
They might be droppin' a stinky boy in there

DUDLEY
So?

BURS
Well, I know if I was, I'd want some space and some privacy.
Let a person poo, you know?

Dudley turns away from Burs.

A moment.

They turn back

DUDLEY
Hold up...
I know you from somewhere....
You a Clown?

BURS
Who's askin?

DUDLEY
Me. You a Clown?

BURS

Depends - what it mean to you?

DUDLEY

Well, to me, it's a bit of a problem.

Youses routine earlier?

Didn't like it.

BURS

Huh.

DUDLEY

Not one bit.

Thought it distasteful.

Eating babies?

That ain't right.

And makin' fun of the Queen?

Tsk tsk

What she done to you?

BURS

Lots of things.

DUDLEY

You're an American.

BURS

Not always about the flag that flies above,

But the history of the soul.

Blank from Dudley

Me Da's from Derry.

DUDLEY

You mean Londonderry? Well -

BURS

You know what?

Maybe you'd like to see another Clown Trick.

Burs notices the hat on Dudley's head.

He lifts it off.

It falls to the floor

DUDLEY

Very funny.

Dudley goes to pick it up,

Burs kicks it away.

Burs picks it up.

Burs goes to hand it back to Dudley

BURS

Sorry, mate

*As they are about to hand it back,
They flip it onto their own head.*

Dudley swipes for it: can't get it!

Burs holds it behind Dudley's ear.

What's this?

DUDLEY

GIVE IT!

Dudley swipes, and misses again.

*Burs puts it back on Dudley's head,
Only to immediately knock it off again.*

Burs picks it up, holds it out in front of him.

*When Dudley goes to grab it,
Burs punches through the hat,
Knocking Dudley back and onto the floor.*

*EVERYONE - except Sam Sherwood - pops up and
immediately runs over.*

*Ad libbed pandemonium, shouting, loud loud loud LOUD
LOUD LOUD LOUD LOUD!!!!!!*

There is pushing and shoving.

Kevin is still in the bathroom.

Mary Ann Armstrong comes forward

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG
 HEY HEY HEY HEY HEY - NO!
 NO BRAWLS IN HERE.
 IF YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT?
Fight like Gentleman.
 LET'S HAVE A BARE KNUCKLE DUEL!

DUDLEY

(Gasping for air)
 Let me 'ave 'em!

Dudley lunges, but he has no power. Frasier steps in.

FRASIER
 Take a load off, Dudley.
 I'll fight the bloke.
 Frickin' Fenian Scum.

MYERS
 'Scuse you?
 Got somethin' to say you Prod-Piece-a-Poop?

*Noise from the respective sides,
 Like a big "OOOOOooooOOOOHH"
 Like we're back in 6th grade
 And someone just said "ur mom is ugly, bro"*

Myers and Frasier are nose to nose.

Mary Ann Armstrong Breaks them up

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG
 GENTLEMEN:
 Each of you take a corner
 And we'll settle this like Gentlemen...
 LET'S HAVE A BRAWL!!!!!!

*The following section is HIGHLY choreographed to the
 "Contortionists Tango" by Beat Circus.*

*The song starts, the corners assemble.
 This takes twelve seconds.*

After they are in there corners -
 When the horns start:
 This next section takes one minute and thirteen seconds:

THESPIS
 Are you Sure?

WILSON
 Are You Sure?

MYERS
 Yeah, I got it

FRAISER
 Yeah, I got it

BURS
 Listen -

DUDLEY
 Listen -

MYERS
 I said, I got it -
 Now - size 'em up

FRAISER
 I said, I got it -
 Now - size 'em up

THESPIS
 Protestant Pricks

WILSON
 Catholic Crum-Bums

THESPIS
 I mean look at 'em

WILSON
 I mean look at 'em

THESPIS
 Ol' mustache grown, flipped, like a jackass

WILSON
 Pssh, a beard. Who wears a beard anymore?

BURS
 They ain't tough

DUDLEY
 They ain't tough

BURS
 No Sir -

DUDLEY
 You got it -

BURS
 Unleash yourself, bloke.

DUDLEY
 Let 'em have it, Bubba.

MYERS

Aye

FRASIER

Aye

They both stand, their shirts taken off.. They mentally prepare.

O'REILLY & SMITH

OooooOOOOOOO

O'REILLY

We're in it now

SMITH

No goin back

O'REILLY

When a brawl is called

SMITH

You answer the call

O'REILLY

No matter how big

SMITH

No matter how small

O'REILLY

Myers in one corner, no sweat, no fear

SMITH

Frasier in the other, he's ready, it appears

O'REILLY

They stand two titans carrying their own banner

SMITH

One green, One Orange, One fights' all that matters

*O'Reilly wraps a green sash around Myers.
Smith wraps an Orange sash around Fraiser*

O'REILLY & SMITH

AND AWAY WE GO

On the accordion's entrance, they both begin to sway into the ring.

They size each other up, knuckles out

As the song picks up tempo, so do they.

They swirl around each other

Those in the audience begin to pick up their jeering and yelling

A few small dabs and punches are thrown

Nothing ever lands

It gets faster

And faster

And FASTER

AND FASTER

OH WOW IT'S SO FAST THEY ARE REALLY GETTING CLOSE

IT'S LOUD IN THE JOINT

THEY ARE SPRINTING AROUND THE CIRCLE

A REAL WHIRLYBURLY

AND THEN (when the other instruments drop out and it's just the accordion):

They both land a punch!

O'REILLY & SMITH
BOOM lands the punch

SMITH
Left cheek

O'REILLY
Full fist

SMITH
Right in the jist

O'REILLY
Of the cheeks

SMITH
Right by the kisser

O'REILLY
Oh man, he didn't miss 'em

SMITH
It was that little blow

O'REILLY
That let the crowd know

SMITH
This was no ordinary fight

O'REILLY
This was the night

SMITH
The Clowns kicked the Coffers

O'REILLY
Only to be caped with rage

SMITH
For when the punch landed

O'REILLY
A thought

SMITH
A slimmer of

O'REILLY
Hope

SMITH
Something

O'REILLY
Flashed across their minds

SMITH
No one knows why we fight

O'REILLY
Why we hate

SMITH
Why Provos and Catholics

O'REILLY
Irish and English

SMITH
Gotta Fight

O'REILLY
(Well, are we sure we don't know?)

SMITH
(No, too much)

O'REILLY
(Right: the show)

SMITH
In that moment

O'REILLY
After that punch

O'REILLY & SMITH
They wanted them dead

O'REILLY
And it's always that way, ain't it?
Land a punch

SMITH
Just below the eye

O'REILLY
And it's only fair

SMITH

To give one to the other guy

The boys continue fighting in slow motion under the narration.

O'REILLY

They reared back

SMITH

They swung, and swayed

O'REILLY

But it was Myers

SMITH

That bastard

O'REILLY

Who begun to pave

A way to a victory

They landed two hits

SMITH

And Frasier started dipping deep down to the pits

Each punch that landed was like lead in the paint

He slowed, and he breathed, but he was never the same

O'REILLY

With one last punch -

SMITH

Frasier stumbled back

O'REILLY

And then Myers -

SMITH

The Bastard!

O'REILLY & SMITH

Went in for the Attack

The band starts slow

The sound from the space starts to come back in

Slowly building up

Frasier is woozy at center

Myers begins to toy with his food.

This is slow, deliberate, and very violent.

The sound of the audience builds

Another punch by Myers, another stumble by Frasier

Another punch by Myers, another stumble by Frasier

Another punch by Myers, another stumble by Frasier

SMITH

Throw in the towel, THROW IN THE TOWEL!!!!

*Myers is now landing blow after blow, faster,
It's gross and messy and violent
And everything starts to speed up*

O'REILLY

Hit after Hit

And then

Hit

Hit

Hit

Hit

Hit

Hit

Myers takes a step back

He took a step back

The crowd started rumbling

SMITH

How much longer can he handle the tumbling?

O'REILLY

Myers could feel it, the jolt in his bones

He waited and waited -

SMITH

The Anticipation grows...

O'REILLY

And then, he locked eyes with his Firefightin' Foe
Reared back his fist and landed the

EVERYONE
BLOW

One last devastating punch. Frasier falls to the floor.

O'REILLY

THAT WAS HEARD FROM HERE TO THE ENDS OF THE SKY
MYERS THE CLOWN HAS DEFEATED HIS GUY
FRASIER IS DOWN
UP STAYS THE CLOWN
AND TORONTO - "THE GOOD" - HAS REVEALED IT'S TRUEST EYE

Myers throws his hands into the air

The Crowd erupts

Pushing, shoving, gesticulating amongst themselves

Mary Ann asserts her power

MARY ANN ARMSTRONG
EVERYONE OUT, NOW!!!!!!!

They all begin to leave, continuing their pushing and shoving

*In the pandemonium, Samuel Sherwood wakes up, sees all the
nonsense that has occurred*

SHERWOOD
Holy fricking shoot

Everyone exits out to the street

LIGHTS SHIF