



DIRECTED BY ALISA PALMER

TARRAGON THEATRE
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Mainspace

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Please Note: icons highlighted
in pink may be of particular
interest to educators.

About the Playwright



Diane Flacks is an Emmy, Gemini and Dora nominated writer/performer. Tarragon audiences will have seen Diane in 'Theory of Relatives', 'By a Thread', 'Gravity Calling', 'Waiting Room', 'Sibs', 'Care', and numerous Spring Arts Fairs. Recently, Diane appeared in the Canadian premiere tour of the celebrated 'Fall on Your Knees' (Canadian Stage, NAC, Neptune, Grand); and PALS (WJT). She was the playwright and an actor in 'Unholy' (Nightwood), which was remounted three times, filmed for TV, published and Dora Nominated. Her four solo shows 'Myth Me', 'By A Thread', 'Random Acts' and 'Bear With Me' (adapted from her book, 'Bear With Me') have been remounted internationally. Diane was CBC radio's longtime National parenting columnist, and a feature columnist for The Star and the Globe among others. Diane writes and produces TV, including on 'Workin' Moms', 'Baroness von Sketch Show', and 'Kids in the Hall'. She has two boys and does HIIT like a boss.

Creative Team

Alisa Palmer - Director

Rebecca Harper - Movement Coach

Jung-Hye Kim - Set & Costume Designer

Leigh Ann Vardy - Lighting Designer

Deanna H Choi - Sound Designer

Associate Sound Designer - Jacob Lin

Associate Lighting Designer - Aurora Torok

Sandy Plunkett - Stage Manager

Angela Mae Bago - Apprentice Stage Manager

About the Play

Synopsis

An all-new play about pathos; the “unshakable monster that is guilt,” and the things we’re not supposed to talk about.

Guilt (A Love Story) is a deep dive into a complex, uncomfortable, and highly human feeling. A state of being that most of us, especially parents, wrestle with inelegantly. Focusing on Flacks’ personal odyssey *Guilt* brings the perspective of a self-sacrificing Jewish mother who becomes the instigator of a family’s dissolution. Societal effects, causes and casualties and the feeling that we have when we’ve profoundly hurt others. This exploration may not pull punches, but don’t worry, it’s accompanied by laughs - because how else do we get through anything?

Diane Flacks returns to Tarragon Theatre with *Guilt (A Love Story)*, her 5th one-woman show.

Playwright's Note

Guilt came about as I was wrestling with this state of being that had paralyzed me after my divorce. In trying to understand it, I realized that my perspective: as a seemingly self-sacrificing mother who exploded her life with a mid-life crisis, was not well-represented in research or media.

Divorcing women in media were either presented as “the evil other woman” or the one-who-was-betrayed, victim. And I wasn’t either of those and felt like there was a perspective to be examined. I researched, interviewed, and investigated this perspective and the origins and utility of guilt. In time, I realized the way through, both personally and artistically, was diving in.

I originally presented a rough, short version of this before Covid at the We’re Funny That Way comedy festival in Toronto, and the response of the audience encouraged me to keep going. During Covid, with the help of director Alisa Palmer, we continued developing the piece, and did a zoom reading for Blake Brooker from *One Yellow Rabbit* in Calgary and for GCTC, with the support of Nightwood Theatre and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. Blake described the feeling of doing a zoom one-person show as performing into a black plastic garbage bag, and he is right. So, we were incredibly grateful to be invited to do a live work-in-progress performance at the High Performance Rodeo.

In the meantime, I was invited to present a few minutes of material at Tarragon Theatre's big birthday bash. That marked the first time a live audience saw any of this new iteration of Guilt, and it was a blast. The response of many in the audience was a whispered, "You're telling my story", which encouraged us all to keep going.

Thank you for being here for this deep dive into a complex, uncomfortable, and highly human feeling. A state of being that most of us, especially parents, wrestle with in our lives. This exploration may not pull punches, but don't worry, it's accompanied by laughs - because how else do we get through anything? In this time where being together in a room is still a struggle and a risk, we are grateful to you, the audience, the show's other actor, for opening yourselves up to imagine.

A word on solo shows: it's a lotta work. And a privilege and a responsibility. This is my fifth. Every time I do one, I remember how difficult and rewarding they are, and every time, I say, "this is my last one". And then a story that feels like it could only be told in this way presents itself. I've come to accept that, like in dreams, you are everyone in your solo show. Even if it's not at all autobiographical. And it's a way to use everything you have in your arsenal as an artist to connect in an intimate way with an audience so that we all feel less alone. It's a contract - "trust me, we're going surfing together. I'll take care of you. Let's go on this ride, because I think it will do us all good."

Guilt (and Motherhood)



1

A Look at and Beyond Mom (or Dad) Guilt

Guilt is typical for caregivers; learn about causes and management strategies.

2

How to Shut Down Feelings of 'Mom Guilt'

Melissa Young, MD of the Cleveland Clinic, discusses how to overcome the crushing reality of mom guilt.



Read about navigating 'mom guilt' from the Cleveland Clinic here.



3

'Mom Guilt' Is a Trap—So Why Do So Many of Us Still Feel It?

This *VOGUE* opinion piece addresses the cultural and structural imposition of guilt on moms.



4

Drop The Worry Ball

A guidebook for parenting courageously and responsibly by allowing your kids to be who they are while building structures that keep them safe.



Dr. Alex Russell discusses topics in his book at length here.



Guilt (and Psychology)



1

The Science Behind Guilt and Shame

Learn about the differences and similarities of how guilt and shame are processed in the brain.

2

Being Kind to Yourself

Self-criticism is often seen as a virtue, but psychologist Kristin Neff says there's a better path to self-improvement – self-compassion.



3

My Stroke of Insight

Jill Bolte Taylor shares her astonishing story of psychological research and using herself as a subject. This TedTalk was an inspiration for the play.



4

Neurobiological Underpinnings of Shame and Guilt

In this study, an fMRI was adapted to look for emotion-specific differences in functional brain activity using shame- and guilt-related stimuli.



5

Guilt – the Misunderstood Emotion

Patricia Coughlin, PhD, discusses the role of guilt in health, psychopathology, and love.



Guilt (and Judaism)

1



Examining the Legacy of Jewish Mother Guilt

As Canadian writer Rebecca Eckler doles out a guilt trip on her daughter for the first time, she reflects on the cyclical nature of guilt.

2

One to One: Judy Gold

Writer, social commentator, actress, and standup comic Judy Gold discusses her book and play "25 Questions for a Jewish Mother"



3



The Modern Jewish Girl's Guide to Guilt

Got Guilt? Ruth Ellenson does – she's the editor of *The Modern Jewish Girl's Guide to Guilt*, a collection of essays by Jewish women.



[Check out the book here](#)



4

The Origins of Jewish Guilt: Psychological, Theological, and Cultural Perspectives

A study from the National Library of Medicine.



5

Jewish Guilt: It's Optional

The legacy of guilt and Joseph in the Book of Genesis.



Queer Motherhood



1

Queer Families are Teaching Us There are Many Ways to be a Mother

The radical, beautiful alternative to traditional roles.

2

Trailblazing Mamas

Queer Family Podcast interviews a Canadian couple who fought for queer parental rights.



If you like this podcast, check out the book *If These Ovaries Could Talk* by co-hosts Jaime Kelton and Robin Hopkins.



3

What Queer Parenting Memoirs Teach Us About Motherhood

How these stories are changing the narrative about what it means to be a mother.



4

Things They Don't Tell You About Becoming a Non-Carrying, Queer Mom

Autostraddle writer Jálynn Castleman-Smith shares her personal experience of motherhood.



5

Confessions of the Other Mother: Non-Biological Lesbian Moms Tell All

A hilarious, heart-wrenching, and honest tale.



Conscious Uncoupling, Nesting, & Child Care



1

What is Conscious Uncoupling?

An introduction from a counselor & psychotherapist.



For more resources check out *Conscious Uncoupling: 5 Steps to Living Happily Even After*.

2

The Benefits Of Birdnesting After Divorce

Learn about the pros and cons, joys and struggles from experts with personal experience.



For more resources check out:

Nesting After Divorce: Co-Parenting in the Family Home

and

The Parent's Guide to Birdnesting



3

Birdnesting: The Divorce Trend Where Parents Rotate Homes

The BBC explores this growing trend.



4

Nina Raff, LCSW, Co-Parenting

The *Queer Divorce Club* podcast dives deep into the world of co-parenting.



More from Diane Flacks

1



Bear With Me: What They Don't Tell You About Pregnancy and New Motherhood

A frank and funny account of her pregnancy and the first months with her newborn.



Check out Diane's comedy special on similar topics [here](#).

2

On Theatre: Diane Flacks presents "Guilt"

CKUA's Lisa Wilton spoke with Diane Flacks on Traffic Jams about the play, and getting personal with strangers:



3



Giving Up Not an Option, So Laugh

Diane Flacks discusses finding moments of levity in life's darkest hours.

4

Who's Your Daddy

And Other Writings on Queer Parenting

This ground-breaking collection of writing brings vital and refreshing insights into queer parenting and includes an essay from Diane Flacks on being a parent in Critical Care.



Conversation Starters

What do you think guilt is and what do you think its role is in human nature?

There are three frameworks for understanding guilt outlined in this guide. Are there other frameworks of guilt you can identify?

What did you think about guilt prior to seeing this play? Has the show affected that understanding in some way?

What do you find redeemable and irredeemable about the actions of the main character?

Discuss the use of comedy in the play. How did it affect the way you received the narrative?