

OSLO INTERNASJONALE TEATER PRESENTS
THE RETURNING
TILBAKekomSTENE/RETOURS
 BY FREDRIK BRATTBERG
 PERFORMED BY
 COMPAGNIE DIVINE COMEDIE



SCRIPT AS PROGRAM,
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ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
 HENNING HEGLAND
 PERFORMED IN FRENCH
 TRANSLATED BY TERJE SINDING

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The Returning
 (Tilbakekomstene / Retours)
 By Fredrik Brattberg
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Mother
Father
Gustav - their son in his late teens
The piece has two modes of speech. One is normal speech within the scene, while the other is direct audience address.

I
The Mother and Father
A living room and kitchen. A bay window. A front door. A door leading to the parent's bedroom and a door to Gustav's room. Father is standing by the bay window. He looks scraggly and unkempt. Mother is sitting on the sofa knitting and watching TV.
Mother - Why am I knitting? I have no one to knit for anymore. I can't be bothered to knit for you. You don't take care of anything. You can't even be bothered to drop things in the laundry. You used to care about your looks. Can't you come here and sit with me? Can't you keep me company?
Father - I'm looking for the neighbors pooch. It's run away again.
Mother - I don't know if this'll end up being a sweater or what. I'm just knitting. Knitting and knitting.
Father - When you first get a dog, you should take care of it. Is it that difficult to keep it on a leash?
Mother - Why don't you come here and sit down. Here on the sofa.
Father - Some people shouldn't have a dog. Imagine, that they don't whistle for it. That they don't go out and look for it.

The father searches for a long time. Mother is worried. She doesn't like that father is at the window searching.
 They're waiting for it to return on it's own. For it to stand at the door and bark.
Mother - You should go fetch it yourself then. You could fetch it and return it to them.
Father - That's not my job, is it. They can take care of their own dog.
Mother - If it's bothering you so much, I mean.
Father - No, I have enough to worry about as it is.
Pause.
Mother - Come on over here and sit down. Here with me.
Father - Now it's playing in the street. A car could come and run it over.
Mother - You promised me you'd stop doing that. Standing there by the window.
Father
 I'm looking for the pooch.
Mother - You imagine you see something. But you never see anything. You know it makes me worried. You know I don't like it.
Father - Is it that difficult to keep it on a leash?
Pause.
 There's someone coming. There's a car coming up the street.
Mother - I'm sure it's going to the Pedersens.
Father - No, It's not going to the Pedersens. Come look.
Mother - It could be anyone.
Father - Come look. No one on this street has a car like that. And it's not turning into the Pedersens. It's heading over here.

2
 The mother gets up, goes to the window and stands next to the father.
Mother - Excited. It looks as if it's heading over here.
Father - It's heading over here. No doubt.
Mother - We usually don't receive guests. This late in the evening.
Father - It's him.
Mother - Oh my lord. Imagine, imagine if it's him. They're turning.
Father - No, they're not turning.
Mother - They're turning in the driveway. They made a wrong turn.
Father - That's not certain.
 Yes. Yes, they're turning.
Mother - I can't take this anymore. You imagine you see something, but then you see nothing. It's just a normal car, someone visiting someone else, someone turning in the driveway. Can't you understand, I can't take it anymore.
 You've been on sick leave for half a year, and the only place you can stand is right there, by the window. But you have to stop. I won't let you stand there any longer. I can't take it. I can't take these false alarms. Gustav is dead.
 Pause. Gentler. I want Gustav to have a grave. I want us to have a ceremony where we can say he is dead. It's the only way we can move on. *The mother embraces the father and comforts him.*
 My dear, can you do this for me? Can you be a part of this, for my sake?
Suddenly the mother comprehends what she has said, that she has admitted to herself the certainty of her son's death. She breaks down and is herself in need of comfort.

Father - Two months later a grave was allocated for Gustav. Following the advice of the pastor.
 We asked friends and family to bring objects which reminded them of Gustav, objects that we could fill the coffin with and bury.
 We never knew Gustav had so many friends.
 The coffin was filled to the brim, and more. Everywhere there were crucifixes and photos and candles, objects to remember our beloved son.
 The mother sits down on the sofa with her knitting.
Mother - The day after the burial he still stood by the window and searched for Gustav.
 But Gustav didn't come. Come and sit yourself down. Here with me.
Father - I'm looking for the neighbor's pooch.
Mother - Can't you come sit here, on the sofa.
Father - Imagine, that they don't whistle for it. That they don't go out and search for it. Now it's playing in the streets again.
Mother - As time passed he spent less and less time at the window. Gradually we returned to our old life.
 Why don't you come over here and keep me company.
The father sits down on the sofa, next to the mother.

THE RETURNING
TILBAKekomSTENE/RETOURS

Translators Note:
 The food here was chosen for a US audience. The original used Fenalår a dried cured leg of mutton (a relatively fancy food which is eaten sliced like Spanish jamon), and an almond cake - Kransekake - which is a traditional cake used at weddings and funerals. We chose a whole turkey and pecan pie. Feel free to adapt the food to your needs.



DIRECTED BY:
JEAN CHRISTOPHE BLONDEL
WITH: VALÉRIE BLANCHON,
SYLVAIN LEVITTE
MAGNE HÅVARD BREKKE

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 Grafisk Design - Anders N. Pedersen - anderspederseh.no

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 When the mother sees it's Gustav she about to embrace him but collapses on the floor and hugs his legs. The father comes running. He also collapses and ends up on his knees clinging to his son.
Mother - The pecan pie! The pecan pie from the funeral.
Mother - After a few hours things were looking pretty bad, and that's when it happened. There was an avalanche. Gustav tucks back into his food again at the same pace. His parents wait expectantly for him to continue.
Mother - And then? Shoulders, while the father, crying, stays close to his son.
Gustav - And then I can't remember this morning. I woke up in the bushes and managed to stumble back here.
Mother - Gustav took us to the mountains when Gustav has saved the worst of his hunger, he starts to speak. He speaks while father sits down next to him and touches him, his hands, his head, his face and his body. Mother goes to the refrigerator to see what she can serve him.
Father - Oh, Gustav. Oh my Lord, Gustav, Mother - Yes, Yes, why haven't we heard anything from you?
Father - No one understood anything.
Mother - But it didn't matter.
Father - It didn't matter at all.
Mother - Gustav was back.
Father - Our dear Gustav was back.
Mother - You have to promise me, Gustav. That you'll be careful.
Father - Times were different then, you know, Gustav. We had you, so we needed the money.
Time has passed. The father looks well kempt with a new white shirt.
Gustav - Dad, will you come out and help me fix the scooter?
Father - But you know much more about scooters than I do.
Gustav - You could fill up the oil. And I need someone to help me with the back wheel. You know I need to change the tire on the back wheel.
Gustav - I tried to run, but it didn't help. The avalanche was too large. And it came really fast.
Gustav - It's fine, it's fine...
Gustav tucks back into the cake with the same energy to utter just that sentence. He collapses so that his parents have to grab him.
Father - Oh, Gustav, my dear Gustav. How I've cried, Gustav. How I've cried. Oh my Lord, Gustav, how I've cried. Oh my Lord, how you're mother has cried. Oh my Lord, you can have food. Our little boy, you can have food.
Father - Let's carry him to the kitchen.
Mother - Here. Here. Let's place him here. Gustav eats. He eats and eats. He eats as if he's never tasted food before. After a while, when Gustav has saved the worst of his hunger, he starts to speak. He speaks while father sits down next to him and touches him, his hands, his head, his face and his body. Mother goes to the refrigerator to see what she can serve him.
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Mother - You have to promise me, Gustav. That you'll be careful.
Father - Times were different then, you know, Gustav. We had you, so we needed the food is getting cold.
Mother - Well I sit down us two then. While ego.
Mother - You have to promise me, Gustav. That you'll be careful.
Father - Yes, he should've. If he finishes school at four, he should have been here a pooch. It's run away again.
Mother - Come and sit down on the sofa.
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4
 To find my way back to the class, but the more I walked, the more I got lost in the mountains.
Mother - Oh, my dear Gustav.
Father - Pecan pie? You're giving him frozen pecan pie?
Gustav - Is it possible... Is it possible to get some food?
Gustav - It's possible... Is it possible to get down his hollow cheeks.
Father - Pecan pie? You're giving him frozen pecan pie?
Gustav - It's fine, it's fine...
Gustav tucks back into his food again at the same pace. His parents wait expectantly for him to continue.
Mother - And then? Shoulders, while the father, crying, stays close to his son.
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Father - When you first get a dog, you should take care of it. Is it that difficult to keep it on a leash?
Mother - Why don't you come here and sit down. Here on the sofa.
Father - Some people shouldn't have a dog. Imagine, that they don't whistle for it. That they don't go out and look for it.

5
 The father and Gustav leave.
Gustav - Yeah, but for 20 dollars?
Mother - Hi. How was your day?
Father - Hi dear.
Mother - Come sit down. My dear, come sit down.
Father - He should have been here an hour ago.
Father - Shortly after the burial I was promoted. I no longer had the time to stand by the window at night.
Father - Of course you can have food.
Father - Of course you can have food.
Mother - Oh, of course you can have some and notice how thin he's become.
Mother - I have some leftovers from last night, you know. Some sausages and potatoes.
Father - Our dear boy, I can't believe you're back with us.
Mother - You really like sausages.
Father - Now tell us where have you been? Gustav - I haven't had food for weeks, if it's possible... If it's possible to wait...
Mother - To the father. Yes, we'll have to wait with questions until he's had some food. The mother places the food on the table and Gustav eats. He eats and he eats, at a terribly fast pace. After a few mouthfuls the father asks.
Father - Now, where have you been?
Mother - Now, where have you been? Gustav doesn't answer. He's only concerned with eating.
Mother - We'll have to wait with the questions. He's so hungry.
Gustav eats even more.

6
 FOLD DOWN

