

Welcome to Hear/Now, a season of audio theater from Keen Company!

We're an award-winning nonprofit theater in New York City, championing identification and connection through stories about the decisive moments that change us.

I'm Jonathan Silverstein, the Artistic Director, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to *1993 by finkle*, the 1st production in our season of audio theater.

Join us in embracing the virtual Off-Broadway experience. Take a moment to find your seat, silence any distractions, and lower your house lights.

It's time to settle in for a night at the theater, and enjoy *1993*...

1993 EPISODE ONE

by finkle

*A cacophony of sounds – all indicating the passing of time.
Then - Music.*

finkle

(singing)

GONNA TAKE YOU BACK TO A TIME
SIX YEARS BEFORE 1999
NINETEEN NINETY THREE
IS THE PLACE TO BE

AVENUE B

IN THE EAST VILLAGE

(NEW YORK CITY)

EVERYTHING I WAS DOING

I WAS DOING WRONG

I WAS ONLY 21 (SO YOUNG!)

WENT OUT EVERY NIGHT

AND WORKED ALL DAY

Well actually I worked at night and slept during the day,

You'll get to it later

Ok cool.

WOULD GO TO BOY BAR ON THURSDAY NITES

FLAMINGO EAST WAS WEDNESDAY RIGHT

THE WONDER BAR HAD A BACKROOM

AND IF YOU WERE THERE TOO

I PROBABLY SLEPT WITH YOU.

THAT WAS my 1993

1993

1993

1993!!!

Were you alive in 1993?

Did you live in New York City?

Do you remember anything that happened in the world that year?

Do you remember anything that happened to you that year?

What was your favorite song?

Your favorite book?

What kind of clothes did you wear?

How long was your hair?

Did you even have hair?

I had a lot of hair then.

But I hated it.
I hated a lot about myself.

1993

1993

1993

finkle

and now episode one!

Low Romance – Swift.

Sound of street, downtown. Footsteps on wood steps
Knock on door
Door open
Creak

BYRON

Seven dollars.

Cash register.

BYRON

Thank you .
Welcome to the boy bar, baby.

Loud club music.

TWEAKED OUT GUY

Wanna do a bump?

STEVEN

A bump of what?

TWEAKED OUT GUY

Special K Ketamine.
It's a horse tranquilizer.
Come on, it'll blow your mind
And then I can blow you.

STEVEN

Get your hands off me.

TWEAKED OUT GUY

Fine... But do you still wanna do a bump?

STEVEN

Yea.

The harsh inhale, catching breath after.
The music starts to warp.

STEVEN

I'm having trouble putting sentences together.

TWEAKED OUT GUY

It levels out.
It's good for dancing.

I cut it with amaretto.

Can you taste it?

(whispering, echoey – like we're hearing it through Steven's ears)

Oh sweetie, are you ok in there?

You're not answering me.

Try to move your arm.

Are you trying?

It's ok.

Don't panic. Uh.

You. Are. In. A. K. Hole.

"k-hole" echoes

Heartbeat, getting faster and faster.

The music, the scene fades away.

For a moment we are inside STEVEN's body.

We can feel how scared he is.

What does fear sound like inside your body?

The music changes – "For All Time" motif

GENET

Nice penny loafers.

You look like you just came from a bar mitzvah.

You're in a k hole huh?

Don't take drugs from strangers kid.

Sound of inhale

GENET

You smell nervous.

I feel bad taking advantage of you right now.

But a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

I'm gonna slide your wallet out of your back-pocket now, swift.

See ya.

Door swinging open.

SIREN.

Soundscape of the streets.

"Your Unhappiness" underneath

Steven rushes out the door of Boy Bar, out of breath

BYRON

Leaving so soon?

STEVEN

I need to report my wallet was stolen – what's your policy.

BYRON

Le Boy Bar is not responsible for any items that are lost or stolen.

STEVEN

There was a guy. He just left, I think.
He was wearing a white t-shirt.

BYRON

You are describing 90% of our clientele except you, look at your in your cardigan.

STEVEN

It's a v-neck.
And its cashmere

BYRON

Ooh la la.
Off with it.
We don't believe in SWEATERS below 14th street.

STEVEN

I need my wallet back.

BYRON

And I need a million dollars.
Let's focus on things that are more realistic.
Like you and me.
What's your name?

STEVEN

Steven.

BYRON

With a ph or a v?

STEVEN

With a v.

BYRON

Steven with a V.
For v neck atrocity.
Let me get a good look at you.
How old are you?

STEVEN

21.

Beat.

BYRON

I give you two years max.

STEVEN

For what?

BYRON

Before your beauty abandons you.

Right now in the glow of youth you are a solid 7.5.

But when that light fades you'll be lucky to be a 6.

But that's alright.

Sixes and sevens are the hottest lays.

Sixes and Sevens will take you to motherfucking heaven!

My name is Byron.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE/TRANSITION -6s&7s

finkle

6 6 AND 7

6 6 AND 7

6 6 AND 7

TAKE ME TO HEAVEN

HEAVEN YEA

HEAVEN YEA

DON'T WANT NO 8 OR 9

DON'T WANT NO 8 OR 9

BETTER THAN AN 8 or 9

TOO BIG (OW!!) SEVEN's fine

THEY WORK HARDER FOR THE PRIZE

SIX AND SEVEN PLEASE BE MINE

NOT ICKY WICKY

TEENIE WEENIE

SHAKE EM LIKE

MARTINI

SIXES SIXES

SEVEN SEVEN

TAKE ME TO HEAVEN

HEAVEN YEA

HEAVEN YEA

HEAVEN YEA

HEAVEN YEA

DON'T WANT NO 8 OR 9

DON'T WANT NO 8 OR 9

Well you know on occasion an 8 or 9 is ok

But a 6 or 7,

can last me all day..

And that's no joke

As the song fades out, the sounds of NYC almost dawn
through a window on the 4th floor.
A door opening, creaks
Then shuts. Locks.
The creaking of an old hardwood floor.
Three lamps turned on, one by one.
The first a metal chain, the second a click, the third a
rope chain -
The sound of the two walking around.

STEVEN

I like your apartment.

BYRON

Tell me what you like about it.

STEVEN

I like the way you decorated it. It's very bohemian. I like how
you have that cool shade over the lamp in the corner.

BYRON

That's a caftan.

STEVEN

And this poster -

BYRON

It's not a poster darling. It's oil.
A gift from a French aristocrat who used to keep me in a cage in
Paris when I was little thing like you.

STEVEN

He kept you in a cage.

BYRON

Let's not talk about the past.
Come. Sit with me.

BYRON sits on the couch.
Pats the spot next to him.
STEVEN sits.
The ambient sound drops out here, only Byron's voice.

BYRON

But before we go any further, there's something you should know.
I have AIDS

Have you ever been with someone with AIDS before?

STEVEN

No.

BYRON

Are you scared?

STEVEN

No.

BYRON

You should be.

But I'm glad you're not.

Did you know my last name is Flowers?

Byron Flowers.

And I'm meant to deflower you.

STEVEN

What makes you think I haven't been deflowered already.

BYRON

Hahahah.

I'm going to teach you everything correctly.

Safety first!

Condoms are too unreliable and I want to make sure we are as safe as possible.

My method of safest sex is simply to wrap my partner entirely in saran wrap.

Sound of BYRON walking across the room.

Opening a cupboard

BYRON

It's quite straightforward.

I have an industrial size box of saran wrap that I keep here in this cupboard.

I pull a long piece off.

Saran wrap being pulled out of box.

Sliced off.

BYRON

And then I wrap it around our waists sort of like a mini skirts.

Wrapped around bodies.

BYRON

Then I poke holes for private parts.

The poking of holes.

BYRON

And then, finally I wrap our phalluses in saran wrap as well.
And slide little pieces in between cracks.

The sound of this..

BYRON

And now we get to it.

STEVEN

Doesn't it all just fall off?

BYRON

Hush up, you're spoiling the mood.
(*more intimate now*)
Hello.

STEVEN

Hi.

BYRON

"Years from now when you speak of this, and you will -be kind".

STEVEN

Uh ok.

BYRON

That was a quote from a play. Tea and Sympathy.

STEVEN

I don't really read.

BYRON

Nobody's perfect.

The sound of screwing.
A bell ring - order up!
Sounds of Sidewalk Café.
Utensils, eating.

STEVEN

What? Why are you looking at me like that?

BYRON

I find your youth very inspiring Steven. You have it all ahead of you. All your dreams, all your possibilities. When I was your age I had big dreams. Not that I don't have dreams anymore. It's just that the dreams have gotten smaller as I've gotten older. But could I tell you a secret - my dream now would be to headline Wigstock. Oh wouldn't that be wild! Have you ever been?

STEVEN

No.

BYRON

It happens just a block over in Tompkins Square. All the greatest downtown performers- drags queens and kings, acts of all sizes, shapes, abilities and colors. It's in August. We'll go together if you're still around.

STEVEN

Yea ok.

BYRON

You know what...I'm suddenly seized by this idea. A New Year's resolution. I'm going to play Wigstock this summer. Why couldn't I? I'm not just a door person I'm a star. If Rupaul can do it, why can't I? Of course I'm significantly older than her but like the great Lucille Lortel says, "Age is nothing but a number and mine is unlisted!". I'd have to come up with a name! Maybe you would help me. You're my muse! But enough about me. Tell me about you. What are your dreams Steven? What is it that you want?

STEVEN

I'm not sure. I think I'll know when I see it.

BYRON

Well I know what I want. More of you. Is that terrible of me?

STEVEN

I need to deal with the fact that my wallet was lifted last night.

BYRON

And that will prevent you from coming back to my place?

STEVEN

I should probably head home and -

BYRON

And where's home?

STEVEN

I've been staying with - a friend uptown.

It's just temporary.

Just until I find a place down here.

BYRON

You could move in with me.

STEVEN

You want me to move in with you?

You don't even know me.

BYRON

You'll move in and we'll get to know each other.

I'll give you a drawer for whatever things you want to leave with me.

Here's a key.

Key jangle.

STEVEN

I need to think about it.

BYRON

Well don't think about it too long, my offer is only on the table for a limited time. - oooooooh, look who it is!

GENET

Hiya Byron.

BYRON

Wanna piece of bacon?

GENET

You know I don't eat that shit.

Besides, looks more like you're having chicken.

BYRON

He's talking about you, you know.

SONG - JEAN WAYNE GENET

finkle

JEAN WAYNE GENET
IS HIS NAME
HE'S GOTTA A SORTA NEIGHBORHOOD FAME
STEAL YOUR MONEY
STEAL YOUR HEART
SCREW YOU DEAD
THEN MAX OUT YOUR CREDIT CARD

BYRON

Jean, Steven.
Jean is my downstairs neighbor.
And a vegan.

GENET

Charmed I'm sure.

BYRON

Steven lost his wallet last night at the Boy Bar.

GENET

Is that right?

BYRON

Perhaps you know something about that.

GENET

Maybe I do. Maybe I don't.

finkle

JEAN WAYNE GENET
WAITS QUIETLY
DON'T EVER DOUBT A MAN
WHO NEEDS TO BE FREE

BYRON

Where are you off to?

JEAN WAYNE GENET

Gotta see a guy about a thing.

BYRON

You are the true definition of shady.

finkle

FIRST THING TO KNOW JEAN MOVES SLOW
JEAN MOVES SLOW

GENET

Pleasure meeting you kid.
See you around.

finkle

JEAN WAYNE GENET
NEEDS TO BE FREE

STEVEN

He lives below you?

BYRON

Has been - going on five years now.

Small beat.

STEVEN

I think I will take that key after all Byron.

BYRON

Welcome! Welcome to 512 East Fifth Street.

Interruption.

finkle

Hi I need to jump in here a sec.
I'm finkle.
I created this story
Occasionally I'm going to break into an episode to highlight
things that I think are important.
Right now I want to highlight the importance of 512 East 5th
Street
512 is not just where Genet and Byron and now Steven live in
1993.
It's also where I lived.

Um, ok so

I graduated from college NYU a semester early in December 1992.
Which looking back on it - it's like why did I leave school a
semester early? Like what was the rush?

Um, but anyway, um,

My friend Brooke who I had met in Shakespeare class and really
liked um she and I decided that we wanted to live together and
we wanted to live in the heart of everything so we looked for
apartments in Alphabet City and um found 512.

We had a converted 2 bedroom, which means it was really just a one bedroom with a wall dividing the bedroom in two. I remember that the wall didn't go all the way to the top. There was like a foot or two of space - which I presume was for ventilation but it ultimately made both Brooke and I feel as if we never truly had any privacy.

We paid \$1100 which now seems like a steal but at the time was a lot of money.

um But it was ok because Brooke had a job working in a restaurant and I had gotten a job at a fancy hotel working the nightshift and we both were making a pretty good amount of money, um and besides these were just jobs to make some you know cash we both had big dreams. And my dream in 1993 well it wasn't even a dream it was like I felt like I had a calling, I believed it was my destiny to become a pop star. In order to um achieve my destiny I borrowed a friends 4 track recorder, um I got a keyboard from another friend and I borrowed a couple microphones and some echo and reverb pedals from some other friends and bought a whole bunch of cassette tapes and I spent the better part of the year making my debut pop album - which I called YOU.

I'm just let that title sit there.

We'll get back to that title for sure.

Anwyay,

When I was finished with the album at the end of the year I proceeded to never play it for anybody ever in the entire world. I held onto the tape a really long time but somewhere in one of my many moves over the last 15 years the tape has gone missing from my life.

In a lot of ways this entire piece is my way of trying to replicate that album. Like, Which of course is impossible. I hardly remember any of the songs But I'm trying to capture something of its energy. Like I remember it as like a gloriously sloppy affair. It was needy and emotional and dirty and truthful. Songs started in weird places and ended on strange notes, and my voice was like searching itself the whole time I never properly mixed. And yet I remember loving every note of it and listening to it over and over trying to hear it through someone else's ears.

What would someone else think?

Why did I never let myself find out?

Anyway, um ok so, 512 East 5th Street. Back to that. It sits between Avenue A and Avenue B.

It's a pretty nondescript tenement building.
It has four floors and 7 apartments.

On the first floor in the front lives like uh we'll just call this woman Mrs. Kravitz there's like an old woman who lived there she's not important to the story.

And the first floor in the back there was a guy Mr. Fritz he had died two years previous to the story starting.

On the second floor in the front is Loreena who the entire second episode is about.

So you'll meet her soon.

And uh, In the back on the second floor is where Brooke and I lived.

On the third floor right above us in the back is where Jean Wayne Genet lives in a teeny studio.

um

And on the 4th floor is where Byron lives. Years ago he had gotten permission to break down the wall between the two apartments and so he had a floor and he got southern and northern light. It's like a romantic space, full of scarves and paintings and knick knacks that are like from around the world.

Anyway, I'm going to jump ahead uh in the story now.

It's the next day.

Steven has officially moved into Byron's place.

Byron who's liked thrilled about this, has decided he wants to make a celebratory dinner. But there's nowhere, well there were no like no gourmet markets in the East Village in 1993. So he walks west on 4th Street to 6th avenue, he just walks a couple more blocks up to Balducci's.

Where he buys a chicken and sweet potatoes, brussel sprouts, onions and garlic to roast and a really nice bottle of Pinot Noir.

Steven meanwhile is taking a shower.

Sound of shower.

A knock at the door.

STEVEN

Hello?

Steven listens. Then turns off the shower.

STEVEN

Hello?

Another quick knock.

STEVEN

One sec. I'm coming

Sound of Steven getting out of the shower.
Wrapping himself in a towel
Walking quickly across the floor.
Another knock.

STEVEN

I'm coming! One sec!

Unlocking several locks.
The door swings open.

STEVEN

Oh! Hey!

GENET

I think this is yours.

STEVEN

What? My wallet.

GENET

See ya.

STEVEN

Wait!

Sound of Genet quickly walking down the stairs.
Music swells.

STEVEN

My wallet.
He brought me back my wallet.

Sound of door shutting.

This has been Episode 1 of 1993 by finkle.
Directed by Jonathan Silverstein.
All voices, music, sound, noise, and silence created and compiled by finkle.
Publishing Assistance by Garrett Schultz.

This performance is part of Keen Company's Hear/Now Season of Audio Theater, led by Artistic Director Jonathan Silverstein.
The Season's Audio Consultant is Garrett Schultz.
The Hear/Now theme is composed by Billy Recce.

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Thank you for listening. I look forward to joining you at the virtual theater again soon!