



# INCOGNITO

BY NICK PAYNE



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INCOGNITO  
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*Despite being based, albeit very loosely, on several true stories,  
this play is a work of fiction. But then isn't everything.*

INCOGNITO was originally produced in the United States by the Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer), on May 3, 2016. It was directed by Doug Hughes; the scenic design was by Scott Pask; the costume design was by Catherine Zuber; the lighting design was by Ben Stanton; the original music and sound design was by David Van Tieghem; the movement direction was by Peter Pucci; the dialect coach was Stephen Gabis; the fight director was J. David Brimmer; the production stage manager was Catherine Lynch; and the stage manager was Vanessa Coakley. The cast was as follows:

THOMAS STOLTZ HARVEY,  
VICTOR MILNER, “ANTHONY”  
RICHARD WALSH, JON WILLIAMS ..... Morgan Spector  
MARTHA MURPHY, ELOUISE HARVEY,  
BRENDA WALSH, ANNA VANN,  
EVELYN EINSTEIN ..... Geneva Carr  
MARGARET THOMSON, LISA-SCOTT  
HANNIGAN, PATRICIA THORN,  
SHARON SHAW ..... Heather Lind  
HENRY MAISON, MICHAEL WOLF,  
HANS ALBERT EINSTEIN, BEN MURPHY,  
FREDDY MYERS, GREG BARRACLOUGH ..... Charlie Cox

INCOGNITO was first commissioned by Nabokov Theatre and Live Theatre Newcastle and originally produced by Nabokov Theatre, Live Theatre Newcastle, and the HighTide Festival in April 2014. It was directed by Joe Murphy; the set and costume designs were by Oliver Townsend; the lighting design was by Tim Deiling; and the music and sound design was by Isobel Waller-Bridge. The cast was Paul Hickey, Amelia Lowdell, Alison O’Donnell, and Sargon Yelda.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Ben Hall and Lily Williams at Curtis Brown, and John Buzzetti at WME.

Minna.

Mum.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the following books and their authors: *Possessing Genius: The Bizarre Odyssey of Einstein's Brain* by Carolyn Abraham, *Into the Silent Land: Travels in Neuropsychology* by Paul Broks, *Permanent Present Tense: The Unforgettable Life of Amnesiac Patient, H.M.* by Dr. Suzanne Corkin, *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain* by David Eagleman, *Moonwalking with Einstein: The Art and Science of Remembering Everything* by Joshua Foer, *The Paradoxical Brain* edited by Narinder Kapur, *Time Traveler: A Scientist's Personal Mission to Make Time Travel a Reality* by Ronald L. Mallett, *Driving Mr. Albert: A Trip Across America with Einstein's Brain* by Michael Paterniti, *The Making of Memory: From Molecules to Mind* by Steven Rose, *Forever Today: A Memoir of Love and Amnesia* by Deborah Wearing and *Case Studies in Neuropsychological Rehabilitation* by Barbara Wilson.

## CHARACTERS

THOMAS STOLTZ HARVEY, born USA in 1912

ELOUISE HARVEY, born USA in 1912

HANS ALBERT EINSTEIN, born Switzerland in 1904

LISA-SCOTT HANNIGAN, born USA in 1941 (approx.)

FREDDY MYERS, USA, 20s

ANNA VANN, USA, 30s

MICHAEL WOLF, born USA in 1965 (approx.)

OTTO NATHAN, born Germany in 1893

EVELYN EINSTEIN, born USA in 1941

HENRY MAISON, born UK in 1933

MARGARET THOMSON, born UK in 1933

VICTOR MILNER, born UK in 1913 (approx.)

JON WILLIAMS, born Wales, UK, 40s

SHARON SHAW, UK, 40s

*MARTHA MURPHY, born UK in 1971 (approx.)*

*PATRICIA THORN, born UK in 1978 (approx.)*

*“ANTHONY,” UK, 40s*

*RICHARD WALSH, UK, mid-50s*

*BRENDA WALSH, UK, mid-50s*

*BEN MURPHY, UK, early 20s*

*GREG BARRACLOUGH, UK, 30s*

## DOUBLING

1 (male, 40s): Thomas Stoltz Harvey, Victor Milner, “Anthony,” Richard Walsh, Jon Williams, Otto Nathan.

2 (female, 40s): Martha Murphy, Elouise Harvey, Brenda Walsh, Anna Vann, Evelyn Einstein.

3 (female, 20s–30s): Margaret Thomson, Lisa-Scott Hannigan, Patricia Thorn, Sharon Shaw.

4 (male, 20s–30s): Henry Maison, Michael Wolf, Hans Albert Einstein, Ben Murphy, Freddy Myers, Greg Barraclough.

A change in formatting—between normal, **bold**, or *italic* text—indicates a change in storyline.

*What binds that me to this me, and allows me to maintain the illusion that there is continuity from moment to moment and year to year, is some relatively stable but gradually evolving thing at the nucleus of my being. Call it a soul, or a self, or an emergent by-product of a neural network, but whatever you want to call it, that element of continuity is entirely dependent on memory.*

—Joshua Foer,  
*Moonwalking with Einstein:  
The Art and Science of Remembering Everything*

*In order to survive, humans have invented science. Pursued consistently, scientific enquiry acts to undermine myth. But life without myth is impossible, so science has become a channel for myths—chief among them, a myth of salvation through science.*

—John Gray,  
*The Silence of Animals:  
On Progress and Other Modern Myths*

*Who tells the story of the self? That's like asking who thunders the thunder or rains the rain. It is not so much a question of us telling the story as the story telling us.*

—Paul Broks,  
*Into the Silent Land:  
Travels in Neuropsychology*



# INCOGNITO

## ENCODING

MICHAEL. Evelyn?

EVELYN. Excuse me?

MICHAEL. My name is Michael, Michael Wolf? I wrote you a coupla months back—

EVELYN. I have nothing to say to you.

MICHAEL. If I can have, like, two minutes—

EVELYN. I don't appreciate being followed.

MICHAEL. What? No, oh my God; that is so not what this is about—

EVELYN. I got your letters, Michael, and you wanna know what I did with them?

MICHAEL. Can I like—

EVELYN. I fed them to my poodle.

MICHAEL. Look, I get why the whole me-approaching-you-in-the-street thing is kinda unorthodox—

EVELYN. Goodbye, Michael.

MICHAEL. I think I know who your father is. And if you can gimme, like, five minutes of your—

EVELYN. Excuse me?

MICHAEL. I...think I know who your father is.

EVELYN. (*Beat.*) Five minutes?

MICHAEL. Five minutes.

EVELYN. I have an appointment.

MICHAEL. Got it.

EVELYN. I have an ulcer.

MICHAEL. I'm sorry to hear that.

EVELYN. Needs looking at.

MICHAEL. Got it.

EVELYN. The clock is ticking, Michael.

MICHAEL. Okay, so there is like, so much I wanna—You know about the professor's executor, right?

EVELYN. I know he died, if that's what you mean.

MICHAEL. Right—Well it turned out this guy, this Otto Nathan guy, had been sitting on this, like, gold mine of like—I mean letters and diaries and correspondence—'bout the professor. And I mean some of these letters, I mean some of these, like, *exchanges*, no one, and I mean not one goddamn person, had ever—

EVELYN. Three minutes, Michael.

MICHAEL. I think the professor had an affair with a ballet dancer. When he was sixty-two, I think the professor had an affair with a ballet dancer and I think the whole thing was kept a secret—And I'm sorry if this is literally like the crudest summation of your life, like, ever, but—

EVELYN. Final minute.

MICHAEL. Evelyn, Hans Albert wasn't your father. Hans Albert was your brother and the...I am like ninety-nine percent certain that the professor was your father. And I know what you're probably thinking—

EVELYN. I very much doubt that.

MICHAEL. Why in the hell should I trust a reporter, right?

EVELYN. Time's up.

MICHAEL. Evelyn, there's this guy, there's this guy named Thomas Harvey—

EVELYN. Don't ever come to my street again.

MICHAEL. Evelyn, Evelyn—

EVELYN. I have an appointment and I gave you your five minutes, Michael, and I would be grateful—

MICHAEL. Harvey took the professor's brain—And I think he still has it and I think you could do a DNA test. You could find out. If I can find this guy, and I think that I can, Evelyn—You could use the

brain to perform a DNA test, and you could know for sure, who you are, one way or the other.

*(Beat.)*

Milk. My mom used to say you gotta drink a glass and a half of milk. Ulcers.

EVELYN. *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. Listen can I buy you lunch?

VICTOR. Hello Henry.

HENRY. Hello.

MARGARET. Hello Henry.

HENRY. Hello my love, where have you been?

MARGARET. Right here. I've been right here.

HENRY. I thought you'd left?

MARGARET. No.

HENRY. Where have you been?

MARGARET. I've been right here.

HENRY. Well, it's good to see you.

MARGARET. You too.

VICTOR. Did you have a good night's sleep, Henry?

HENRY. Tell you the truth, I didn't stay awake to find out.

VICTOR. Now Henry, Margaret tells me you're quite the piano player? Margaret tells me you're a bit of a *dab hand*, Henry.

HENRY. I don't know...

VICTOR. What do you think, Henry; would you like to give it a go?

*(Victor gestures to a piano.*

*Henry moves to the piano and takes a seat.)*

HENRY. What do you want me to play?

MARGARET. Whatever you want.

HENRY. *(Beat.)* I'm not sure I know how to?

MARGARET. You do. I promise you.

HENRY. *(Beat.)*

*(Margaret takes a seat beside Henry.)*

VICTOR. We have to let him—

MARGARET. I know.

*(Beat.)*

Ready?

HENRY. As I'll ever be.

*(Margaret plays a note.*

*Beat, then: Henry plays the same note but not quite as well.)*

VICTOR. The idea is to let him—

MARGARET. I know.

VICTOR. Margaret, I understand this is difficult for you—

MARGARET. Please.

*(Beat; Margaret plays a different note.*

*Henry mimics.*

*Margaret plays a different note.*

*Henry mimics.*

*Margaret plays a very brief, straightforward melody.)*

HENRY. *(Beat.)*

MARGARET. Henry?

HENRY. Hello my love, where have you been?

MARGARET. *(Beat, then.)* Here. I've been right here.

VICTOR. Perhaps we ought to stop?

PATRICIA. Martha?

MARTHA. Yes.

PATRICIA. Patricia.

MARTHA. How's it going?

PATRICIA. I'm sorry I'm so late.

MARTHA. You're not that late.

PATRICIA. I'm pretty late.

MARTHA. You are pretty late, but that's alright.

PATRICIA. Are you angry?

MARTHA. No.

PATRICIA. *You sound sort of angry?*

MARTHA. *This is how I normally sound.*

PATRICIA. *Then we ought to get you a drink angry lady.*

MARTHA. *The bar was pretty busy.*

PATRICIA. *They normally come and take your order.*

MARTHA. *There weren't any tables.*

PATRICIA. *I'm still getting the angry voice, gotta be honest.*

MARTHA. *Sorry—You're right. I am annoyed. I'm sorry. I got here, on time, about half an hour ago, and the place was rammed, full of fucking hipsters, no seats, and when I tried getting served, tried to actually order a drink, nobody seemed remotely interested, so I stood around for a while, pretending to check my emails, then I went to the loo, THEN, for no discernible reason whatsoever, I listened to a load of old voicemails, and then I came outside for a cigarette even though I'm trying to quit.*

PATRICIA. *And then I arrived—"Yay." I am really fucking sorry. I'm serious.*

MARTHA. *It's okay.*

PATRICIA. *It's not.*

MARTHA. *It's not but in the grand scheme of things it is.*

PATRICIA. *I got made redundant. Like, a week ago. And I went in, today, to see a colleague, and I had like this total fucking melt down. I got really sad, I went home, I smoked a joint, and I may or may not have had a small helping of Bombay Sapphire after which I may or may not have fallen asleep, woken up, looked at my watch and gone (Whispers.) "Fuuuuck."*

MARTHA. *I'm sorry to hear about your job.*

PATRICIA. *Yeah well you know what? Fuck 'em. But enough about me let's talk about me. D'you wanna go somewhere else?*

MARTHA. *I really don't mind either way.*

PATRICIA. *Be honest.*

MARTHA. *I really am sorry to hear about your job.*

PATRICIA. *Thank you.*

MARTHA. *But yes this place is my idea of hell.*

# INCOGNITO

by Nick Payne

2M, 2W (doubling)

Four actors play a combined 21 characters within INCOGNITO's three interwoven stories. A pathologist steals the brain of Albert Einstein; a neuropsychologist embarks on her first romance with another woman; a seizure patient forgets everything but how much he loves his girlfriend. INCOGNITO braids these mysterious stories into one breathtaking whole that asks whether memory and identity are nothing but illusions.

*"...tantalizing...[a] lively, self-examining drama of ideas... Mr. Payne makes it clear that science and sentimentality need not be mutually exclusive. ...as befits a work about the vagaries of memory, Mr. Payne's multilayered works remain in your mind, challenging our most fundamental notions of autonomous selfhood."*

—The New York Times

*"[INCOGNITO] is likely to send you out of the theatre working out the puzzle. And keep you thinking for days after...highly recommended, thought-provoking, impressive and entertaining."*

—The Huffington Post

*"...at the top of its class...clever and poignant...one of [Payne's] great gifts is the ability to poignantly meld complicated philosophic and scientific tenets with simpler human struggles."*

—The Guardian (US)

*"[INCOGNITO] further confirms that Payne is in a class of his own as a contemporary writer. ...an examination of the brain through the lens of personal identity. ...Payne's writing style...allows for such heady concepts to spring naturally from everyday conversations. In fact, INCOGNITO never once feels like a stolid post-grad lecture on neuroscience. Through and through, it is a compelling, humane story, featuring absorbing characters with whom we feel a kinship."*

—TheaterMania.com

**Also by Nick Payne**  
IF THERE IS I HAVEN'T FOUND IT YET  
CONSTELLATIONS

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