

Slow Onset Evening

Slow Onset Evening takes advantage of the drama inherent in a "late start." In addition to the late start, enormously long gaps of downtime permeate the production.

Cast:

Theater Manager

Actor 1

Actor 2

Elizabeth Dean - gossip and difficult audience member

Michael Thomas - gossip and difficult audience member

Usher1 - Confronts Michael Thomas

Usher2 - Confronts Michael Thomas

Usher3 - Confronts Elizabeth Dean

Usher4 - Confronts Elizabeth Dean

Barbara Taylor - Wealthy donor to the arts

Donald Taylor - Wealthy donor to the arts

NOTE: Barb and Don Taylor can be replaced by real life local wealthy donors/patrons of any theater organization. In the alternative, the names of real life well-known, local wealthy donors/patrons can be substituted for the names "Barb and Don Taylor."

And so, the show begins with a late start.

For purposes of timing, I'll assume an 8:00 starting time.

Without much explanation, audience members are not let in until 30 minutes after start time (about 8:30). Ticket staff informs some people that this might be the seat, but not everyone. The audience stays in the lobby until 8:30. Barb and Don Taylor, Elizabeth Dean, and Michael Thomas move about the lobby. The remaining actors are backstage

During the 30 minute late start, occasional alarms go off and on in the lobby accompanied by PA system command form phrases that are self-contradictory and that contradict each other.

- Follow hallways to the basement exits.
- Following hallways to the basement will not succeed.
- This is a state-of-repair command.
- Take your time to move quickly through the space.

People are paged by ushers and front of house staff and instructed to do various things:

- Elizabeth Dean
- Michael Thomas

- Daniel Lopez
- Linda Williams
- Matthew Anderson
- Barbara and Donald Taylor
- Jessica Miller
- Andrew Moore
- Sarah Davis

From 8:15-8:30, Elizabeth Dean and Michael Thomas move virally throughout the lobby spreading gossip in brief exchanges.

Elizabeth Dean: Do you know what's going on?

Michael Thomas: Something about the sewer or something.

Elizabeth Dean: Do you know what's going on?

Michael Thomas: Something about food poisoning or something.

Elizabeth Dean: Do you know what's going on?

Michael Thomas: Something about the servers or something.

etc

At about 8:30, ushers open the doors and the audience is let in to the theater. The stage is set for some type of domestic/living room scene.

While the audience is being seated (8:30 - 8:40): SOME EVENT HAPPENS.

[Stage lighting comes on. A living room setting.]

After the audience has been seated, Theater Manager takes the stage (8:45).

Theater theater manager:

OK, sorry for the late start. We'll get going, but I wouldn't want to start without a thanks to Barb and Don Taylor for keeping this thing afloat. So, where are they? Barb? Don? OK, there.

[Barbara and Donald Taylor stand. Applause continues for 5 minutes with all cast members participating.]

[Lights out.]

[Introductory music. A minute or two.]

[3 minutes of silence in the dark.]

Actor 1

(Heard semi-faintly coming from backstage. Delivery should be loud and fierce, yet experienced by the audience as faint, but fully intelligible. About a 5 minute rant.)

Anyhow this guy Jack over at marketing. What a fucking prick. That guy's such a fucking goddamn prick. He's like a he's just some kind of a bald, fucking fat fucking prick sitting over there. I got no time for this, fucker. Fuck you, Jack. That's what I say to him. I say it right to his face in the meetings. And I say, "Jack, fuck you, you fucking fat, ugly prick." That's how the meeting's go. You're a fucking, ugly, fucking fucked up prick, Jack. Jack, you prick." That's what I say to him in these meetings, these fucking. . .

He'll say, "Hey, I've got an idea, and I'll say, "Stick it up your ass, you fucking fat, ugly, fat, fucking, ugly, fucking prick. Stick your idea up your ass, roll it up and stick it straight up your fucking bald asshole. Take this whole sensitivity training issue, and you can put this on the phones, take it, roll it up, real tight Jack real tight. Take it and stick it up your fucking hairy asshole, you fucking goddamn fucking prick. You bald, fucking sensitive prick, Fuck you.

We're not fucking taking the sensitivity shit anymore Jack. That's what I told him at the meeting. I said, fuck you. Fuck you, Jack. Fuck off, Fuck off with this sensitivity shit. Go fuck yourself. Go roll it up and stick it up your fucking hairy asshole, Jack, because fuck you, we're not doing the sensitivity fucking bullshit anymore. It's a bunch of goddamn motherfucking bullshit crapola. Fucking fuck you, and fuck everyone who's involved in the sensitivity fucking bullshit crap.

They can all go to hell, they can go fuck themselves, roll it up, roll up the sensitivity training, take the handouts, take the goddamn fucking handouts and roll 'em up and take those people and stick the fucking handouts right up their fucking hairy ugly fucking ugly bald assholes. Jack, you lead the way. Stick it up your fucking asshole, Jack you bald fucking prick.

This is what I say to him at these meetings. Fuck you, Jack. Stick it up your fucking asshole, all this sensitivity bullshit. It's not sensitive, it's fucked up. You're fucked up, Jack. Shit I gotta go.

[2 minutes of silence.]

[Ushers1-4 enter the theater with flashlights and ask various people to see their tickets for a few minutes. Eventually, Usher1 and Usher2 light upon Elizabeth Dean and Ushers3 and Usher4 light upon Michael Thomas. The following two dialogues are performed simultaneously. This entire event takes about 10-15 minutes.]

Michael Thomas:

Usher1:

Usher2:

Usher1:

Can you help escort him out of this theater? He doesn't have a ticket here, and he's not going to be . . .

Michael Thomas:

What did I do? Sir, I'm sorry, what did I do wrong? Please tell me.

Usher1:

Okay.

Michael Thomas:

Please tell me what I do wrong. Okay, that's fine. Please tell me what I do wrong. Did I talk to somebody? Did I talk too. . .

Usher2:

So he's.

Michael Thomas:

Can I get on my phone? Hey?

Usher1:

Originally, it started because he wouldn't show me a ticket, and then it turned into the I didn't need to show you.

Usher2:

You're talking too loud.

Michael Thomas:

Nope. This is my seat on. You can go.

Usher2:

Okay.

Michael Thomas:

Why can't I watch the show? Why can't I watch the show? Please tell me.

Usher1:

Do you think yelling is gonna help?

Michael Thomas:

Dude, no, but this guy's telling me I can't watch my show. I have a seat and now I can't watch the show because he's saying I don't have a good attitude.

Usher2:

It's not your attitude.

[House lights come on.]

Michael Thomas:

Like, okay, I had my car here all day. Okay.

Usher2:

How much have you had to drink?

Michael Thomas:

I had two glasses of wine, dude.

Usher2:

At the lobby here? On the lobby here?

Michael Thomas:

No, I had I had one glass of wine. I need to watch the show. Sometimes. . .

Usher1:

So you're not making this show. Where'd you have the wine at you say? Was it here at the lobby here?

Michael Thomas:

I need to watch this show.

Usher1:

You're not making this show. Why?

Usher2:

Because you don't have a ticket.

Michael Thomas:

Okay, what exactly did I do?

Usher1:

Okay, the space is limited and people need . . .

Michael Thomas:

So my car has been here all day.

Usher1:

None of that matters. Let's go this way.

Michael Thomas:

So what do you want me to do? Because this is a . . . This isn't right.

Usher1:

You're going to leave.

Michael Thomas:

Let me show you I didn't do anything. I didn't.

Usher1:

You don't have a ticket. Okay?

Michael Thomas:

But I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything. I didn't. . .

Usher1:

People in are here. Okay? They're. . .

Michael Thomas:

People in here are better? Like literally better than me? Like I don't I didn't do anything.

Usher2:

You. . .

Michael Thomas:

I mean check with the ticket guy.

Usher1:

I don't need to check. Let's go.

Michael Thomas:

I got here this morning.

Usher1:

Okay, but that doesn't matter.

Michael Thomas:

And my car has been here all day.

Usher1:

I don't care about that.

Michael Thomas:

Nice. Okay. And you give me shit for coming here? And I didn't do it.

Usher1:

You're not going to this show.

Michael Thomas:

Anything. There's something like, I didn't do anything. Okay, so what do I do?

Usher1:
It's Okay, but let's go. Let's walk this way.

Michael Thomas:
I'm not. It's important.

Usher2:
I understand.

Usher1:
Let's go this way, and I'm going to show you where else you can go.

Michael Thomas:
I didn't. So you look at somebody the wrong way and they're like you can't go to this show?

Usher1:
One second. You can't go that way. You have to go back that way..

Michael Thomas:
Okay. I was on time though. I have my ticket.

Usher1:
Can I see it?

Michael Thomas:
Nothing's here. I don't have it with me. It's your fault.

Usher1:
Listen listen to me.

Michael Thomas:
I'm not disrupting anything. What did I actually do?

Usher1:
Listen to me.

Michael Thomas:
What did I do that I can't watch this show? I'm trying to talk to you. What? What? Why can't I watch my show? Please tell me. Are you gonna let me answer?

Usher1:
Yeah. I told you once already.

Michael Thomas:
What did I do?

Usher1:
I'm gonna tell you one more time.

Michael Thomas:
Tell me, please.

Usher1:
I asked for your ticket. You don't have one. That's it.

Michael Thomas:
Are you dumb? I've done this a million times.

Usher2:
Okay? You just wanted to know why you have to leave, right?

Michael Thomas:
Yeah.

Usher2:
We're reiterating what the theater manager said. It's too late now.

Michael Thomas:
But I didn't say or do anything wrong. Please tell me why I can't stay at the show. Dude. Just tell me. Just tell me why I can't.

Usher1:
So let's get you out to the lobby.

Usher2:
It's important.

Michael Thomas:
I'm not dumb, okay? I'm not. I need to see this show.

Usher2:
That's debatable.

Usher1:
Listen to the next thing. I say, be quiet and listen to the next thing I say very carefully. Be quiet. Listen to the next thing I say very carefully. You just told me you had a ticket and that you don't have a ticket.

[It gets very physical from here to the end as he's escorted out of the theater.]

Michael Thomas:
Because listen. You guys tried to do this at the last show.

Usher1:
You're being erratic. You are very upset for whatever reason.

Michael Thomas:
This is my first time seeing it.

Usher1:
Do not fight. Do not. Listen.

Michael Thomas:
What? Can you please please please stop relax. Just walk relax.

Usher1:
I tried to explain the situation to you multiple times.

Michael Thomas:
It's actually hurting me. Please stop! Stop. Stop! Stop. You're hurting me.

Usher1:
I tried talking to you reasonably, but you didn't want to hear anything I was saying.

Michael Thomas:
Get your hands off.

Usher1:
Stop kicking.

Michael Thomas:
Get your hands off me!

Usher1:
Stop kicking.

Michael Thomas:
Stop touching me! You dare to touch me one more time? You're pulling my hair.

Usher1:
I don't have your hair.

Michael Thomas:
Get off me. I'm not doing anything down.

Usher2:
Relax.

Michael Thomas:

I didn't do anything! Okay, basically what did I do? Tell me. On the record, what did I do do? What did I really do? What did I do that's so wrong? Dude, get your hands off me.

Usher1:
Listen.

Michael Thomas:
Get your hands off me!

Usher2:
Listen. Relax.

Michael Thomas:
I'm kicking.

Usher1:
I know.

Usher2:
Stop kicking. Don't you dare kick me.

Michael Thomas:
I'm not kicking you, sir. Why are you grabbing me so much? Come on. What did I do? What did I do wrong? You guys are just bored. Can you tell him to let go of my arms? Let my arms down. Let my arms down.

[They exit the theater forcefully.]

[This scene is essentially simultaneous with the above scene.]

Elizabeth Dean:
Usher3:
Usher4:

Usher3:
What's up, ma'am?

Elizabeth Dean:
I don't know what? Did someone keep an eye on me or?

Usher3:
Yeah, theater manager wouldn't. . .

Elizabeth Dean:
The theater manager over there?

Usher3:
Yeah. Okay, does he have the charge?

Usher4:
I think so.

Usher3:
Okay.

Elizabeth Dean:
Hey, what's going on?

Usher3:
This one?

Usher4:
Yeah.

Elizabeth Dean:
You shouldn't be trying to get me to pay again.

Usher3:
Did you pay this way? Sorry about that. Did you pay this?

Elizabeth Dean:
Yep. Don't touch me. [Stands.]

Usher3:
Why don't you sit down for me?

Elizabeth Dean:
You got it. [Sits.]

Usher3:
You paid this. [Elizabeth Dean stands and tries to grab receipt.] Don't grab don't touch me. Sit down. Sit down.

Elizabeth Dean:
We're going to figure this out.

Usher3:
Are you will you just sit down?

Elizabeth Dean:

Don't talk to me like I'm a little kid. Okay. Don't talk to me like that. You're not a police officer. Okay. Sit down. We'll get you get this figured out.

Usher3:
Let's figure it out.

Usher4:
All right, sit down. We'll figure it out.

Elizabeth Dean:
Okay. Let's go. All right.

Usher3:
Did you pay this?

Elizabeth Dean:
Yep.

Usher3:
How'd you pay it?

Elizabeth Dean:
Credit card.

Usher3:
This credit card.

Usher4:
Is that true?

Usher3:
No, that's not true.

Usher4:
So, do you have a receipt that shows that you paid for it?

Elizabeth Dean:
When I called, they took a credit card. Okay.

Usher3:
And so. So then they would have given you a receipt by email. Did they give you a receipt?

Elizabeth Dean:
I'm not here to. . .

Usher3:
Okay, okay.

Elizabeth Dean:
Listen, listen. We don't need to go through all this. Okay.

Usher3:
I'm being told that you didn't pay it, right? So it's my job to check with you, right? Because it's a crime, right? You're stealing from this theater.

Elizabeth Dean:
It's for service. It's not a crime.

Usher3:
It is.

Usher4:
It's theft of service.

Elizabeth Dean:
I prayed.

Usher3:
You prayed?

Elizabeth Dean:
You want to be a smart ass motherfucker?

Usher3:
I'm confused.

Elizabeth Dean:
Yeah. You're going to get real confused, fast. Yeah.

Usher3:
Is that a threat to me or. . .

Elizabeth Dean:
What is this? What is this? Are you, are we trying to act big here? Boy, I mean small guy with a big guy syndrome.

Usher4:
Look, we're just trying to make sure these people get paid, right?

Elizabeth Dean:
I'm a nurse. Okay.

Usher3:
Thank you for what you do.

Elizabeth Dean:
You don't know what I just came from.

Usher3:
Okay. That's none of my business.

Usher4:
That's none of our business. You need to calm down though.

Elizabeth Dean:
I don't need to do shit.

Usher3:
I'm just trying to figure this out. Okay, so we can get this paid.

Elizabeth Dean:
Touch me and find out what to figure out.

Usher3:
Where's the receipt?

Usher4:
That's not the right receipt. OK.

Elizabeth Dean:
Give me one more chance though.

Usher3:
The reason we're talking is they said that you didn't pay for the ticket?

Elizabeth Dean:
Yes, I did, but just get away from me, okay? I'll talk with you.

Usher4:
I'm going back up but you've gotta be with us.

Elizabeth Dean:
I'll pay my bills all day long.

Usher3:
Okay.

Elizabeth Dean:
I got all the money over.

Usher3:

I'm not saying you don't have the money or anything. They just said that you would refuse to pay it.

Elizabeth Dean:
That's totally wrong.

Usher3:
Okay.

Elizabeth Dean:
My god. I love paying. The money. I've got all the money everyone needs.

Usher3:
So then I have no clue what your deal is. I really don't.

Elizabeth Dean:
Okay.

Usher4:
They said that you didn't pay or it came back not paid. Okay, so this is a yes or no. Are you going to pay this ticket? This charge?

Elizabeth Dean:
Yep. Okay. Yep, it's paid. Consider it paid up.

Usher3:
You want to use cash?

Elizabeth Dean:
What pisses me off is why. . . Look how embarrassing this is.

Usher4:
Nobody knows who we are or who you are.

Elizabeth Dean:
Oh, nobody. I mean, it's obvious.

Usher4:
Would you like to step out and we can do this?

Elizabeth Dean:
I mean, but it's embarrassing. It's ridiculous. I got money. I got what, \$20?

Usher3:
That's why they're here.

Elizabeth Dean:

Okay? So that's not a lot of money, right?

Usher3:

Okay. That's that's why they're here talking.

Elizabeth Dean:

Okay, but when I already paid it, it starts to add up, that's the issue.

Usher4:

And you told me you had a receipt for it, right?

Elizabeth Dean:

Yep.

Usher4:

Can you show me that receipt?

Elizabeth Dean:

No.

Usher4:

Okay. Then I have reason to believe that you did not say for it.

Elizabeth Dean:

So I get double charged. I paid with the card.

Usher3:

If you would show me and then we can get it cleared up and get out of your hair.

Elizabeth Dean:

Where are you from?

Usher4:

Look it up, you said you paid it with a card.

Usher3:

Come on. [They start heading out of theater toward the lobby. Elizabeth Dean goes with them.]

If you could show me that credit card receipt, I will tell them them that they're mistaken and that you did pay it, but that would help alleviate everything if you could show me that card.

Elizabeth Dean:

I think it's all misunderstood. I'm so sorry.

Usher3:

You're fine. Can we walk up there to the lobby and take care of that.

Elizabeth Dean:

Yep, absolutely.

Usher4:
All right.

Elizabeth Dean:
Oh, man. my goodness.

Usher3:
It's all right. That's all right, ma'am.

Elizabeth Dean:
I'm so sorry. I get it now. I get it. I got it figured it out. It's figured it out.

Usher3:
Can you grab your stuff then?

Usher4:
We'll walk out there, get it paid for?

Elizabeth Dean:
Yep. Maybe that's all fucked up though.

Usher3:
What?

Elizabeth Dean:
I think I came to this place earlier. Like afterwards.

Usher4:
You were sitting there for a while.

Usher3:
Down there?

Elizabeth Dean:
Okay.

Usher3:
Relax. I swear to God, you're making a big scene out of your whole life.

Elizabeth Dean:
Don't grab me. Let me. . .

Usher3:
I'm not even close to you.

Elizabeth Dean:
Congratulations. Right now. Right now, that doesn't even matter.

Usher4:
Best thing for you. . .

Elizabeth Dean:
Shut up. I didn't. . .

[They exit the theater with relatively little physicality.]

[Lights back down.]

[10 minute silence.]

Actor 2:
So, at times, you'll find there's been a slow onset to the evening. Different in winter. In summer though, slow. Slow slow slow. Weather permitting, etc., etc., etc.

[Paces around stage for 30 seconds.]

I think I'm starting to be done with finding people interesting. Some still are. Not very though. And not for long.

[Paces around stage for 30 seconds.]

I keep waiting for big American cities to be exciting again. New York or Chicago, but even Duluth or Denver. They used to be still sort of "in-progress." You could walk around in the unfinished spots. Or the burned out spots. You could see the possibility. Now they're all done. I don't know. . .

[Paces around stage for 30 seconds.]

My dad always complained about how chicken didn't have any taste anymore. Then when I was about 25 I had a free range chicken and right away I could see what he meant.

[Paces around stage for 30 seconds.]

The main reason I never wanted kids was sleep deprivation. I just can't handle not getting enough sleep. I would never have made it. I'd have ended up on the news or something.

[Paces around stage for 30 seconds.]

Like I said. It's been kind of a slow onset to the evening, but OK, there it is.

[Paces around stage for 30 seconds. House lights up.]

OK! Barb and Don Taylor!

[Big gesture toward them. Applause begins as Barb and Don Taylor stand up. Applause continues until the audience starts leaving the theater, or up to 10 minutes, whichever comes first.]