

SA KA LA

by Jon Fosse

Translated from the Norwegian by Sarah Cameron Sunde

**Translation commissioned by
Oslo Elsewhere
Anna Gutto and Sarah Cameron Sunde, Artistic Directors
Dramaturgy by Oda Radoor
New York City, 2008**

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S.C.Sunde
849 Saint Nicholas Ave, #5A
New York, NY 10031
sarah@osloelsewhere.org
646.325.7015*

SA KA LA by Jon Fosse was first presented by Aarhus Teater in Denmark in 2004. This translation, was created for the U.S. premiere of the play, and was first presented by Oslo Elsewhere (Anna Gutto & Sarah Cameron Sunde, Artistic Directors) at 45 Bleecker Theater, in New York City on September 6, 2008.

The creative contributors and cast were as follows:

Director.....Sarah Cameron Sunde
Dramaturg.....Oda Radoor

HENNING.....Raymond McAnally
JOHANNES.....Frank Harts
MOM.....Kathryn Kates
THE NURSE.....Jacqueline Antaramian
THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER (Nora).....Marielle Heller
THE OLDEST DAUGHTER (Hilde).....Birgit Huppuch
THE FRIEND (Trine).....Anna Gutto
KARSTEN.....Mike Caban
THE BROTHER (Ola).....Noel Joseph Allain

Set Designer.....Jo Winiarski
Lighting Designer.....Paul Hudson
Costume Designer.....Jennifer Caprio
Sound Designer.....David Margolin Lawson
Properties Designer.....Kerry McGuire
Casting.....Calleri Casting/Paul Davis
Stage Management.....Ryan Raduechel

This translation is dedicated to John and Meredith Warren

CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR THE U.S. PREMIERE PRODUCTION:

"Fosse's writing is Pinter-ish in its economy and in its sense of place" - *VARIETY*

"Fosse, through director Sarah Cameron Sunde's witty translation, effectively explores the distances between even the closest family members...[Fosse's] language is minimalist and repetitive, Beckettian and (to use a musical analogy) Reichian...The frequent use of the syllable "Yah" (halfway between Norwegian "Ja" and American "Yeah") effectively ties all the characters together and replaces the usual "Um"s and "Well"s and "Y'know"s of American idiom." - BLOGCRITICS

"Sa Ka La, the latest work of Norwegian playwright Jon Fosse to arrive here owes a lot to Edward Albee...The dialogue is short and terse with existential overtones...a play of chilly contrasts." - NYCONSTAGE

"PICK OF THE WEEK! [A] compelling production of a play that has taken too long to find an American audience... It is as if Samuel Beckett, the playwright of absolute minimalism, had convinced Fosse's fellow Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen, the master of realism, to agree to a collaboration." - OFFOFFONLINE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Novelist, poet and playwright Jon Fosse was born in 1959 on the west coast of Norway and now resides in Bergen. The author of more than 30 books and 30 plays that have been translated into over 40 languages, he is one of the most provocative, celebrated, and produced European playwrights of today. His novels include *Red, Black, Closed Guitar, The Boathouse, The Bottle Collector, and Melancholia I-II*, and his volumes of poetry include *Angel with Water in its Eyes* and *Dog and Angel*. Since 1993, Fosse has focused primarily on playwriting. He quickly received international acclaim, particularly after Claude Regy (legendary French director of Pinter's work) came out of retirement to direct his play *Someone is Going to Come*. Afterwards, *Le Monde* dubbed Fosse "the Beckett of the 21st Century." Including *And We'll Never Be Parted, The Guitar Man, Night Sings Its Songs, Dream of Autumn, Sa Ka La, Girl on the Sofa, and deathvariations*, his plays have been produced on major stages across Europe, as well as around the world in countries such as Japan, Australia, Canada and Chile. Norwegian National Television (NRK) calls Fosse "Norway's biggest cultural export" and he is the recipient of numerous international awards and honors. He was named Best Foreign Playwright by *Theater Heute* (the leading theatrical magazine for German speaking countries); was designated a Chevalier by the French government; and in 2003 he became the youngest person ever to win Norway's highest cultural honor, Norsk Kulturråd Ærespris (The Norwegian Arts Council Honorary Award).

ABOUT OSLO ELSEWHERE:

Oslo Elsewhere was founded by Anna Gutto and Sarah Cameron Sunde in 2004 with the mission to bring the most innovative plays and ideas about contemporary theater from Norway to the United States, and vice versa. Oslo Elsewhere develops new translations for American audiences and produces bold, relevant theatrical plays that challenge sensibilities and provoke audiences beyond the everyday.

Oslo Elsewhere has produced US-premieres of *Night Sings Its Songs, deathvariations* and *Sa Ka La* by Jon Fosse, as well as a contemporary adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. PAJ (Performing Arts Journal) published American-English translations of *deathvariations* (Fall Edition, 2007) and *Sa Ka La* in their book *NEW EUROPE plays from the continent* (2009).

Sarah Cameron Sunde and Anna Gutto are experts on Jon Fosse and contemporary interpretation of Henrik Ibsen, and active advocates for the importance of American-English translations for American audiences. They have spoken on several panels about translation as well as written essays for a variety of publications such as *PAJ, The Brooklyn Rail, Stikkordet* (Publication of the Norwegian Actors Union) and the Norwegian book *Ibsen's Women*.

NOTES ON TRANSLATION:

In translating plays there are always things that are 'untranslatable'. Since plays are meant to be experienced live, one cannot simply translate words; one must translate the action that lies underneath the words. Actions and subtleties are cultural, and it is imperative to translate specifically for the culture that one is working in. Thus, Oslo Elsewhere creates American-English translations for American audiences as opposed to using pre-existing British translations.

The Translation Think Tank (a loose affiliation of translators interested in investigating the current status of theater-in-translation in the U.S.) and Oslo Elsewhere have come to the conclusion that in order to create a successful translation, it is necessary for two things to be present in the individual or the group of collaborators working on a new translation: 1) that at least one person understands both cultures and speaks both languages and 2) that at least one person understands theatrical language and the way actions function in a play.

NOTES FROM THE TRANSLATOR:

To translate Jon Fosse is to allow his unique voice come through in the American English language. He has established a new voice in theatre – a voice unlike any we have heard before. A voice that is equally new in Norway as it is in the rest of the world. I want *that* voice to work for an American audience.

Note on the use and meaning of "yah":

Yah = Norwegian "ja" = yes

Yah = American "yeah", only not so nasal, please.

Also, Yah = yep, hmm, ok, so, well, fine, oh, sure, yeah, uh-huh, tsk, ugh...

These other words have not been inserted in place of the 'yah' because rhythm and repetition is vital in Fosse's writing. My goal is to provide an affirmative in American-English that lives somewhere between 'ja' and 'yeah' and carries a lot of flexibility. It should be simple and not sound foreign. It can be used for emphasis in certain cases, but it should primarily be used as a 'filler' where the breath or thought holds for a moment. The 'yah' serves to link the characters, while also allowing the interpretation of this one word to be character specific. In all cases, the 'yah' should be of help, not of hindrance. I encourage the creative team to find ways into the sound that allows the repetition to help tell the story without putting too much emphasis on it. When the 'yah' appears at the beginning of a line, please do not make the mistake of thinking that there is a comma after the yah, before the rest of the phrase. Instead, try to think about it as if the 'yah' simply leads to the rest of what is being said.

Lastly, every choice has been made to serve the action of the play, with the knowledge that these words will be spoken out-loud, by live actors on the stage. Please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah@osloelsewhere.org if you have any questions about the translation.

This translation would not have been possible without invaluable insights and support from the following people: Jon Fosse, Anna Gutto, Oda Radoor, Marie-Louise Miller, and Einar & Cammy Sunde.

CHARACTERS

Henning

Johannes

Mom

The nurse

The youngest daughter (Nora)

The oldest daughter (Hilde)

The friend (Trine)

Karsten

The brother (Ola)

To the left: a window, a sofa

To the right: a window

HENNING

comes in

We married sisters
you and I
that's what happened
Henning turns around

JOHANNES

comes in

Yah
yah that's what
happened

HENNING

I

Henning
took Hilde

JOHANNES

And I
Johannes
took Nora

HENNING

And when you marry the daughter
yah well Mom comes too

JOHANNES

So both of us are married
to Mom

HENNING

And clearly
yah clearly you attend the party
when Mom turns sixty

JOHANNES

And the big day
yah today's
the day

HENNING

Because today she
the great
the grand
the incomparable

turns sixty

JOHANNES

And that should be celebrated

HENNING

It must be celebrated

JOHANNES

Of course it will be celebrated

Short pause

HENNING

At the very least

Short little pause

JOHANNES

But there'll just

be a few of us

HENNING

There isn't really enough space

somewhat short pause

obviously

JOHANNES

No obviously not

Short pause

It'll be the immediate family

as they say

HENNING

Yah

somewhat short pause

and then of course

she

is coming

yah you know

JOHANNES

Yah

HENNING

She's coming yah

Trine

somewhat short pause

but unfortunately

apparently she's bringing her husband

JOHANNES

She has a husband

HENNING
Yah
and he's coming
with her

JOHANNES
Trine
yah

HENNING
She and Mom are such good friends

JOHANNES
And they are so alike

HENNING
Maybe that's why
they get
along so well

JOHANNES
Definitely

HENNING
Apparently his name is Karsten

JOHANNES
asking
Trine's husband
Short pause

HENNING
Yah

JOHANNES
Quite a lady that Trine
yah

HENNING
In oh so many ways
Trine
yah
yah I've been there

JOHANNES
You have

HENNING
Yah

JOHANNES

Sure

HENNING

Pretty damn sure
And it wasn't half bad

JOHANNES

You've been there

HENNING

Yah
Short pause

JOHANNES

Long time ago

HENNING

Not too long

JOHANNES

Me too

HENNING

You too
Henning and Johannes begin to laugh
Me
I've been there many times

JOHANNES

But a long time ago

HENNING

I wouldn't say that
Somewhat short pause

JOHANNES

I wonder what Trine's husband is like

HENNING

Me too

JOHANNES

You've never met him

HENNING

No
somewhat short pause
no obviously not
Pause

JOHANNES

By the way
yah it's nice that you and Hilde are throwing the party

HENNING

Hilde felt like
yah like we should do it

JOHANNES

We could have done it
instead

HENNING

It's ok that we're doing it
right

JOHANNES

Yah sure

HENNING

Yah
short pause
Mom didn't really seem to want
to throw her own party

JOHANNES

But she probably would have
yah if no one else had done it
I mean
it's not like she's the type to not throw
any party at all
to celebrate her life quietly
or whatever you'd say

HENNING

Quiet isn't her forte

JOHANNES

That's one way of putting it
Pause

HENNING

She is nice
though
Kind

JOHANNES

Sure she is
Pause

HENNING
Very nice
She only wants what's best
it's like she
wants everything to be ok
and she is
kind
yah as the day is long
she is kind

JOHANNES
She is
Short pause

HENNING
Well she did welcome me into the family

JOHANNES
Me too
Short pause

HENNING
She is generous
in her own way

JOHANNES
Generous and kind

HENNING
She is
Short pause
And you
yah you're doing ok

JOHANNES
Oh yah thanks
Somewhat short pause
And you

HENNING
Oh yah thanks
pretty much the same
yah
Pause. Henning goes over to the window, looks out, then looks at Johannes
Yah that's how we met
yah
we married sisters
you the youngest
and I the oldest

JOHANNES

That's what happened

yah

Johannes walks over to the window, stands next to Henning and looks out

What a beautiful day

somewhat short pause

it was a beautiful day

the day she turned sixty

somewhat short pause

that's good

somewhat short pause

because we do love her

don't we

HENNING

We do

somewhat short pause

of course

Short pause

JOHANNES

And they'll be here soon

Short pause

HENNING

I'm sure they will

Pause. Henning goes and sits on the sofa and The Nurse and The Youngest Daughter roll a hospital bed onstage, place it to their right

THE NURSE

Yah this is the room

yah

THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

Yah

Short pause

And

you know

I don't think I told you

yah that it's her sixtieth birthday today

THE NURSE

No

no you didn't tell me that

Asking

She turns sixty today

THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

Yah

somewhat short pause

yah she
and I
yah I was supposed to pick her up
we
the immediate family
were supposed to celebrate her birthday
and when
yah when I got there
yah I found her on the floor
in the bathroom
she lay there
cuts herself off

THE NURSE
Yah you told me that

THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER
And I'm thinking
yah how long could she have been lying there

THE NURSE
Well the doctor thought
yah that she hadn't been lying there all that long

THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER
That is what he said

THE NURSE
I'm sure she hadn't

THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER
But that nothing can be done

THE NURSE
Sometimes that's how it is
somewhat short pause
yah
yah there's too much damage
and
yah like the doctor said
yah it's a severe stroke

THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER
But it's so awful
yah that nothing can be done

THE NURSE
Yah
Pause. The Youngest Daughter sits down on the edge of the bed, strokes Mom's hair. The Nurse also goes over to the bed. Pause

HENNING
stands up
Yah I'm sure they'll be here any minute
yah
Henning walks towards Johannes

JOHANNES
walks away from the window
Yah

HENNING
It might be fun

JOHANNES
You think so

HENNING
Maybe
Somewhat short pause
So maybe it's not exactly the kind of party one looks forward to
Somewhat short pause
But anyway
somewhat short pause
yah you fall in love
how stupid right
and then there you are
with your wife and your mother-in-law
and whatever else comes with it

JOHANNES
Yah

HENNING
Including your sister-in-law's childhood friend and
cuts himself off

JOHANNES
asking
Trine
Henning nods
She was Hilde's friend

HENNING
Was

JOHANNES
Yah
Short pause
But it could be worse for us

HENNING
Or it could be better

JOHANNES
Sure it could

HENNING
But I'm fine
I am
yah I'm a happy man

JOHANNES
Me too
Short pause

HENNING
But you two haven't had kids either

JOHANNES
We're thinking about it

HENNING
Yah
Pause

JOHANNES
Yah
of course
short pause
yah I'm fine
too
it's not that
Pause

HENNING
We are I think
yah as good as one can expect
Somewhat long pause

JOHANNES
But they really should be here soon

HENNING
Yah
yah imagine that
Mom turns sixty today

JOHANNES
Yah
yah she is

like
a Mom
to all of us
isn't she

HENNING
She is generous

JOHANNES
Caring
as they say

HENNING
And today
she turns sixty

JOHANNES
She'll be here soon

HENNING
Yah
yah I'm sure they'll be here soon
and Mom
she
I bet she'll be the first
you'll see
this is her day
y'know
her big day
and when she gets here
yah

JOHANNES
Stand up straight
Stick out your chest

HENNING
And when she walks through the door
she'll hold one arm out
Henning sticks out his chest, lifts his head up to look important, walks swaying his hips, holding his little finger out, he imitates
No is that really you
It's so great to see you
This is so great
So nice
So cozy
So good
So fantastic
So fucking fantastic
and so outstanding
and so grand

JOHANNES
Because everything is so fantastic

HENNING
Everything is so incredible

JOHANNES
And so extremely outstanding

HENNING
imitates
And I am most outstanding of all

JOHANNES
Because I have the biggest boobs

HENNING
imitates, shaking his chest
I have the biggest boobs

JOHANNES
And today is my sixtieth birthday

HENNING
imitates
Imagine me
one so grand
so young
so youthful
so
yah to put it bluntly
yah so attractive
with bite
and I am sixty years old
imagine that

JOHANNES
And that Trine
she's just as divine

HENNING
Don't go there

JOHANNES
One is young and divine
The other is old and divine

HENNING
Don't say that to Mom
yah about her being old