

The Thrill was commissioned by the Stratford Festival in Ontario, Canada, where it received its world premiere at the Studio Theatre in the 2013 season. It opened on Tuesday, August 13, 2013, and featured the following cast and creative team:

Elora: Lucy Peacock

Julian: Nigel Bennett

Hannah: Patricia Collins

Francis: Robert Persichini

Director: Dean Gabourie

Artistic director: Antoni Cimolino

Executive director: Anita Gaffney

Designer: Eo Sharp

Lighting designer: Itai Erdal

Sound designer: Jesse Ash

Dramaturge: Iris Turcott

Stunt coordinator: John Stead

Stage manager: Julie Miles

Assistant stage manager: Corinne Richards

Characters

Elora Dixon: a formidable, funny middle-aged lawyer with a neuro-muscular degenerative disease; a self-described “bedpan crip.” She has never walked or used a toilet and she loves her wheelchair. She “waves her freak flag high.” She has difficulty digesting, and her spine is curved like an S, but she is quite comfortable. She has a beautiful long braid and loves fine and dramatic clothing. With twenty-four-hour care she has remained in her own home and has a thriving practice as a lawyer and disability-rights activist.

Francis Fisher: Elora’s primary caregiver. He has been with her for over ten years, and so they share a droll sense of humour, a love of language, and a sense of justice. They do bicker quite a bit, as Francis likes things to be in order and frequently he has to save Elora from herself. Francis was an actor and stand-up comedian at one time, but he has given it up, partly because he was not successful and partly because he married Lance, who wants him to stay close to home. Although he is never sentimental about it, Elora is his best friend in the world and he is terrified of losing her.

Julian Summer: Julian was brought up in Ireland by his English mother and Irish father. He grew up on the family farm and became a teacher of English and technical writing at a community college. He wrote a book called *Wheelbarrow* about the death of his sister, which argues for the right to die. It became an international best-seller along the lines of *Tuesdays With Morrie*, and so he has been

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travelling the world doing readings and talks, discussing right-to-die issues. Julian is a joker, exuberant, relishes words and arguments. He falls in love with Elora.

Hannah Summer: Julian's mother is in her eighties, living in her own home, falling apart. Mostly lucid, a smart, once-formidable woman who adores her son.

Setting

Elora's home, a lecture hall, a restaurant, Hannah's home.

Pages 4 - 6 are not included in this preview.

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You know about the gulag?

And if you don't know, you will. Oh you will.

The light slowly comes up on ELORA's face and widens to include:

ELORA's room.

Scene Two

FRANCIS is braiding ELORA's beautiful long hair into a perfect French braid. ELORA, as always, is in her motorized wheelchair. She can move her hands and her feet, and her voice is perfectly articulate and clear.

FRANCIS: Aghhhhh. Will you hold still?

ELORA: I'm not made of stone, you know!

FRANCIS: If you don't hold still I cannot do your braid. Do you want your braid?

ELORA: You know I want my braid.

FRANCIS: Then you have to hold still!

ELORA: My braid must be perfect today, Francis.

FRANCIS: Is it ever anything less?

JUDITH THOMPSON

ELORA: No, it's never.

FRANCIS: Because of who?

ELORA: Because of you.

FRANCIS: Because. . . of *moi*.

ELORA: Braid-maker extraordinaire.

FRANCIS: Braid and bread.

ELORA: You know I love your bread.

FRANCIS: My pumpkin bread.

ELORA: You should sell that—on eBay—mail it all around the world.

FRANCIS: It is divine. With a little crème fraîche?

ELORA: Heaven on my tongue. I mean it, you should sell that bliss; you could make a king's fortune.

FRANCIS: Honey, I'm far too busy with you, and I don't care a fig for fortunes; you know that.

ELORA: Or you wouldn't be here.

FRANCIS: That is God's truth. . . Elly, hold that head of yours still.

ELORA: I'm trying.

FRANCIS: Ooo another fly-away. You're going to look wanton.

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ELORA: And there are a hell of a lot more greys—

FRANCIS: So I'll take a magic marker to 'em.

*The music of a band can be heard from the street—jazz
horns and trumpets.*

ELORA: Ohhh. . . will you listen to that. . . nectar to my ears.

FRANCIS: It's one of those street bands from New Orleans. . . here
for the festival. . .

He looks out.

Very nice, oh very nice indeed.

ELORA: I do love those horns. Makes something inside me. . . bubble. . .

FRANCIS: There. All done. Wanna look-see?

He holds up a mirror.

ELORA: A power French braid. Be afraid, prosecutor Pete!

FRANCIS: They are trembling at the thought of that braid. I can feel
them; can ya feel them?

ELORA: I'm just. . . so. . . nervous about today. Isn't it crazy?

FRANCIS: Just garden-variety stage fright, dear. Nothing three deep
breaths won't cure. Now come on, breathe deeply.

ELORA: (*tries*) Can't seem to catch one. And my guts are in a twist.

JUDITH THOMPSON

FRANCIS: Honey, you been doin' this for years. And you mostly beat their asses. That is why your clients love you.

ELORA: Judge R. Harrison hates me. He looks at me like I'm a . . . bedbug.

FRANCIS: Because you don't put up with his patriarchal shit.

ELORA: (*chuckles*) And he is cozy with the CEO of this corporation who screwed this poor woman out of a job because she has cancer.

FRANCIS: You don't sugar-coat like the rest of 'em.

ELORA: I can't. Even if I wanted to. . .

FRANCIS: You tell it like it is, girlfriend!

ELORA: I am compelled.

FRANCIS: You are. So you must accept: Some people love ya for it, and some people'll hate ya for it.

ELORA: I have to admit, when that judge looks at me like I am an insect crawlin' over his sandwich, I do wonder. . . if I shouldn't. . . behave in a more—embroidered fashion. . . “Good mornin’, Judge Harrison. You’re lookin’ dashing today, Judge Harrison—”

FRANCIS: Wouldn't be you.

ELORA: “Can I kiss your hairy ass, Judge Harrison.” But I might win him over.