

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

On the text:

Almost, Maine employs a lot of very specific overlapping dialogue. You'll often see this symbol: //. It will appear in the middle of a character's line, and it indicates the point where the next speaker should begin their next line. This "railroad tracks" method can be hard to work out on the written page, so you will also see this symbol: >. It will appear at the end of a line that is not a complete thought. It simply means to keep going. The person speaking should continue speaking through to the end of the thought, which will be continued in their next line.

Sometimes you'll see dialogue in brackets like these: []. These words are not spoken. They're simply a guide to what a character leaves unsaid.

Please don't completely dismiss the stage directions. Many are actions — actions that are of equal importance to what is spoken.

On place:

Almost, Maine, is not a coastal town. It is nowhere near the ocean. And ... it doesn't exist. It is a mythical composite of several Northern Maine towns. Were it to exist, Almost would be located in the remote heart of Aroostook County, the sparsely populated northernmost county in Maine. It would occupy unorganized territory that is officially designated as Township Thirteen, Range Seven, or T13-R7. It is far away from things. (See the map at the back of this volume.) Potato farms dominate the landscape, and the expansive North Maine Woods are to the west. *National Geographic* once printed something to this effect: "They call Montana 'Big Sky Country.' Well ... 'they' haven't seen Northern Maine."

Winters in Almost, Maine, are long, cold, and snowy. It usually feels like winter up there from October to May.

On the northern lights:

The northern lights are brilliant, ribbon-like, otherworldly displays of light. Northern Mainers are fortunate: They live just inside an area in which the northern lights regularly appear. Growing up, I remember being treated to a northern lights show at least once a year.

The northern lights occur when atoms become "excited." During solar storms, electrons are sent streaming towards the Earth.

As these electrons enter the Earth's atmosphere, they strike atoms, "exciting" them — charging them by knocking out an electron. When this happens to enough atoms, the brilliant light display that is the aurora borealis hovers and streaks across the sky. When the aurora fades, it's because the affected atoms have returned to their grounded state. *Almost, Maine* is a play about people who are normally very grounded but who have become very excited by love ... and other extraordinary occurrences.

On time:

The plot of each scene in *Almost, Maine* climaxes with some sort of "magical moment." I have this notion that the magical moments in all of the scenes are happening at exactly the same time — as the clock strikes nine — and that these magical moments and the northern lights are giving rise to one another.

On the people:

The people of Almost, Maine, are not simpletons. They are not hicks or rednecks. They are not quaint, quirky eccentrics. They don't wear funny clothes and funny hats. They don't have funny Maine accents. They are not "Down Easters." They don't wear galoshes and rain hats. They don't say, "Ayuh." They are not fishermen or lobstermen.

The people of Almost, Maine, are ordinary people. They work hard for a living. They are extremely dignified. They are honest and true. They are not cynical. They are not sarcastic. They are not glib. But this does not mean that they're dumb. They're very smart. They just take time to wonder about things. They speak simply, honestly, truly, and from the heart. They are never precious about what they say or do.

On cast size and age:

Almost, Maine is a play for four actors. In my mind, these actors should be in their late twenties or into their thirties. However, I have seen the play done beautifully by four actors who were in their forties.

Almost, Maine is also a play for as many as nineteen actors.

On presenting *Almost, Maine*:

In the original published version of *Almost, Maine*, "They Fell" was a scene for two men. Transport Group's 2014 revival production

was the first to present the male and female versions of “They Fell” in rotating repertory. The female version of “They Fell” immediately follows the male version in this volume. You are free to present either version, or both versions in rotating repertory. Rotating repertory is my preference — it’s more fun!

Original music composed for *Almost, Maine* by Julian Fleisher is available for licensing through Dramatists Play Service. Please visit the *Almost, Maine* page on www.dramatists.com for more information regarding the ordering and use of the original music.

Please keep in mind that “cute” will kill this play. *Almost, Maine* is inherently pretty sweet. There is no need to sentimentalize the material. Just . . . let it be what it is — a play about real people who are really, truly, honestly dealing with one of the toughest things there is to deal with in life: love.

If you are involved in a production of *Almost, Maine*, please refer to the notes section in the back of this volume.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for doing my play. Thanks for believing in a place like *Almost, Maine*.

—John Cariani