

## Performance History

*Pochsy's Lips* was first presented by Pochsy Productions at the Orlando Fringe Festival in Orlando, Florida, in April 1992. It then toured to Fringe festivals in Montreal, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. Pochsy Productions presented a full production at the Poor Alex Theatre in Toronto in November 1992. Subsequent productions were presented at venues in Canada and the US, including the Actors Theatre of Louisville, Dallas Theatre Centre, the Denver International Women's Festival, Alice's Fourth Floor (NYC) and Mixed Blood (Minneapolis).

Pochsy: Karen Hines

The Musician: Greg Morrison

Text, lyrics and melodies by Karen Hines

Directed by and written in collaboration with Sandra Balcovske

Music and sound by Greg Morrison

Original recorded score by David Hines

Set by Campbell Manning

Lighting by Michel Charbonneau

**Set**

In the centre of the stage there is an ancient hospital bed with white iron head- and footboards, like from the thirties. There is no mattress, only unpainted wooden slats held together with a thick silver chain. The slats and chain are twisted and warped, and the head- and footboards bend in toward each other. The bed looks horribly uncomfortable, and even dangerous.

An old white rotary dial phone sits on the bed. At the foot of the bed there is a low table covered with reams of cream-coloured surgical gauze for a tablecloth. The gauze drapes onto the floor, sometimes extending in spots, like tentacles. The table is piled high with get-well cards—so many that they spill onto the ground around the table, all tangled up in the gauze.

On the table there is also a metallic water pitcher, a makeup bag, a water glass, a bunch of grapes and a pen. Hidden in the folds of the gauze there is a spray can of insecticide bearing, as its label, a large skull and crossbones.

On the opposite side of the stage, there is a metal iv pole with an iv bag hanging from one of the pole's metal loops. The iv pole is clean and new. The bag is half-filled with colourless liquid.

In the shadows, stage left, there is an old upright piano and a synthesizer. Both are concealed under desiccated black fabric that looks like a cross between velvet and decaying rubber.

**Lights**

Over the course of the performance, the lights change from a nice warm dappling of pinks and baby blues to a more and more warped state. Increasingly, the lights cool, and, increasingly, the stage is bathed in a tenebrous display of footlights and angled shafts of gothic hues.

Occasionally, under the brighter lights, the musician is dimly visible at the piano.

## Costume and Makeup

At the beginning of the show, Pochsy is swathed head to toe in gauze, almost like a mummy. For the rest of the show, she wears pink baby doll pyjamas, with matching pink lace-edged bloomers and lacy pink ankle socks. Her shoes are delicate white canvas sneakers. Her outfit is pristine.

Her face is chalk-white, except for the dark circles under her eyes, her thick black eyelashes and her blood-red lips. Later in the show, she will also have red cheeks. Her hair is black.

On her right wrist, there is a bandage of gauze and adhesive tape. Her head is bandaged in gauze.



*(Pre-show music: Louis Armstrong's 'Saint James Infirmary.' As the song finishes, lights fade to black. Pin spot up on Pochsy, draped from head to toe in surgical gauze. There is a moment of silence, then she speaks with a terrible gravity, directly to the audience.)*

POCHSY: We live in a scary time. Advances we have made in science, medicine, and environmental awareness seem not to be keeping pace with the technological advances we have made. We are constantly bombarded by ominous information regarding ever-accelerating environmental poisoning, a continuing apocalyptic threat and mysterious and uncontrollable disease. All indicators point to the distinct possibility that we are a species bent on self-extinction. No one is safe. And there is no escape.

*(Music swells. Pochsy sings 'Everything's Falling Apart,' brightly, freely, winsomely.)*

Everything's falling apart,  
But everyone's falling in love.

Seems like the end of the world is nigh,  
But it's not over for you and I.  
Oh, everything's falling apart,  
But everyone's falling in love.

*(Lights up to full. Pochsy strips out of the gauze, revealing her pink baby doll pyjamas. She twirls around and dances with the IV pole. She rides it across the stage in a graceful arabesque.)*

What's that gloomy cloud above your head?  
Fluffy toxic cloud of misery!  
Take the psychic scissors,

Cut the rope of worry.  
Watch that cloud fly away!

Oh, everything's falling apart,  
But everyone's falling in love.

*(Pochsy twirls, untangles the IV tubing from the pole, presents it to the audience, as though in a magic show, then slips the IV needle beneath the bandage at her wrist and inserts it into her vein.)*

Ooh!

*(She swoons and dances.)*

Take my hand, fall into my eyes,  
Walk along the beach with me,  
Look up into the purple sky,  
And at the shiny black ducks resting peacefully.  
Oh! *(She steps lightly over an imagined duck.)*



Everything's falling apart,  
But everyone's falling,  
Filly-fally falling,

Everybody's falling,  
Hear my love song calling yo-oo-o-o-oo-ou ...

*(Pochsy stops dancing, swoons again, and reclines on her bed. The music follows her, sensitively.)*

Everybody's falling in love.

*(As the song ends, she points her toes, pulls the IV pole closer to the bed, and strikes a pretty pose. Then she speaks.)*

When I think about Love, I think about all the sad and lonely people who wander through their whole lives without ever finding (*gravely*) that special someone. That person who will melt their heart and make them whole. That person who will be there for them. In the hard times.

*(Pause..)*

But then I think ... it's probably their own fault. They just don't have a positive attitude. And so they don't recognize Love when it comes knocking on their door. And they send Love right back out into the rain, where it slips on the top step of the fire escape and falls, and knocks its head on the railing. And then bounces off and knocks its head on the other railing. And then Love slides down, on its tailbone, till it lurches forward at the bottom, where Love cracks its skull. And lies there, paralyzed. Totally conscious and alert ... aware of everything ... seeing, and hearing, and feeling everything but ... unable to move.

*(She giggles.)*

I think I'm a little bit in love. With my doctor. Doctor Caligari.

*(She giggles again and squirms girlishly. Love music plays under.)*

I don't know; there's just something about him. Like the way that he looks at me. *(dreamy)* When he's examining me.

It's like I'm the only one in the room.

*(She drapes herself alluringly across the bed. The IV tubing pulls taut.)*

I remember our first examination together: as I lay on his table, the thin cotton of my floral print dress draped damply over my youthful form, I stared into his eyes, and I knew that I wanted to be with him. *(rapturous)* Bound together with him in a madness of our own making. I wanted to take the disillusionment out of his eyes and fly away with him. Set up a practice in the slums of Calcutta.

I think he likes me, too, 'cuz I don't know, but *(kittenish)* I don't think anybody could be sick enough to have as many tests done on them as I have had done on me.

*(Love music ends.)*

Love has made me the happiest girl in the world.

*(Pochsy picks up the telephone and begins to dial.)*

H-hello? Wh-I was just calling y- No! It didn't even RING! OH my GOD, that's SO WEIRD! HI-I-I! How ARE you? *(She listens, but possibly a little too briefly to hear.)* Oh, I'm pretty good. *(She listens, again very briefly.)* Oh, no, I don't think I want to go out with you anymore. Well, bec- I found somebody better than you. Yeah, he's a doctor. *(She smiles at the audience.)* Oh, no, I'm sorry... No, I don't want to be friends. No, I already have plenty of friends. *(She seems suddenly horrified.)* Oh, you can't live without me?

*(Pause.)*

Oh, well. 'Kay bye.

*(She hangs up. Sad music plays under. A cool pool of light appears at the foot of the bed, and Pochsy moves into it to pray. She moves the IV pole a little to one side, so the audience can see her better.)*

Dear Lord,

Please forgive me for all of the evil and weak things I have done in my life. Please give me the courage and the strength to carry on. Open my lips, oh Lord, and I will sing Thy praises. I need a sign.

*(She sings 'I'll Believe.')*

I'll believe in You,  
 If You'll believe in me ...  
 But not till then.  
 If You're in the skies above me,  
 Please, God, show me that You love me,  
 I will obey You  
 Then.

Please forgive me for all the people whom I have hurt, and grant them the strength and the clarity – and the wisdom – to forgive me too. And for those people who have hurt me, please, Lord ...  
*(She pauses. She looks intently at God.)* Find a way to hurt them back.

If You'll just give a sign,  
 Give me something that's all mine,  
 Then I'll open up my heart,



I'll do my best,  
I'll do my part ...

But not till then.

Love, Pochsy

*(Pochsy blows God a soft little kiss. Music ends. Lights return to 'normal' – as before, only cooler. For a moment, Pochsy just gazes at the audience.)*



You know, I think it's very important, even when you're not feeling well, to look your very best! You never know who might pop in and, well, *(intrigued)* it seems I'm going to be seeing a specialist!

And besides,

*(She sings the 'Wonder Bra' jingle.)*

When you're looking good,  
You feel good.  
And when you feel good,  
You look gre-e-eat!

And great is how I want to look, 'cuz *(intensely)* when I like what I see? I enjoy being me.

*(Pochsy reaches for her makeup case and pulls out a compact. She shows it to the audience and speaks as though in a TV commercial.)*

Starts off as a powder, but goes on so smooth and creamy ...

*(She applies red blush to her white cheeks.)*

It makes you seem lit from within.

*(She tilts her face up for the audience.)*

Is that about right?

*(Beat.)*

Oh, I know, what's right, right? I mean, it's so individual.



*(Pause.)*

You are what you believe yourself to be. Anything your mind can conceive and believe, it will achieve.

*(Pause.)*

Like, the other day, before I came here, I was going somewhere, and so I was on an escalator, but I was late to where I was going

and so I was walking up the escalator. But up ahead of me on the escalator there was this couple, (*almost crying*) and they were standing side by side. So that I couldn't get by.

So I went up behind them and I said, (*waif-like*) 'Excuse me, please.' But they didn't listen. So I stood right up on my tiptoes and I went (*nasty, heavy sigh*) 'H-H-H-H-H-H-H!'

*(She is suddenly very placid.)*

Not only did they step aside but I could tell from the looks on their faces that they felt like shit.

You see, it's astonishing how very short a time it takes for very wonderful things to happen.

Believing is magic.

*(The lights dim and cool a little more. Pochsy notices. She drapes herself in a different direction across the bed. She rolls the IV pole to the other side of the bed, pulling it by its tubing.)*

Before I came here, I had a job. I worked at Mercury Packers. Where I packed mercury. And when I first got here, the nurse – the one with the fat ass – she asked me a whole bunch of questions that she had to get answers to to put down on this form that she was filling in. So, she asked me, when I worked at Mercury Packers, did I ever handle the mercury with my hands? So I said, (*as if to a child*) 'Well, if I had gloves on, then I wouldn't, but if I didn't ... then I would.' (*She rolls her eyes.*)

And besides, if you spill the mercury and it falls on the floor and bursts into all those shiny, sparkly little bubbles? The best way to pick it up is to go like (*she licks her finger and mimes picking up a mercury ball with it*) ... that.

I think that nurse is just jealous of me. Because she knows Doctor Caligari likes me.