

***Canard, Canard, Goose?***  
Anthology Introduction

Looking back on the creation of The Civilians' first show *Canard, Canard, Goose?* I am trying to distill exactly why immediately post-9/11 we chose to do a show about alleged geese abuse. There was no good reason. There were only circumstances, lots of bad reasons, and a deadline. As it is chronicled in the play—with great dramatic license—the making of the play was essentially a group of people stumbling ahead, using curiosity as our only guide, fueled by desperation.

The 'making of' story begins when Bonnie Metzgar gave us a date to perform (November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001) at Joe's Pub, the Public Theater's house nightclub. We planned out an idea for a project and set a first rehearsal, which turned out to be a few days after September 11<sup>th</sup>. With the smell of the smoldering Towers still everywhere in the city, our planned idea then seemed stupid and meaningless so we dropped it. Everything at that time was rollercoaster emotions, bizarre pronouncements from the cultural front and ominous signs from our political leaders. And perhaps because of all this confusion we decided to pursue a story with clear good guys (geese) and bad guys (Disney). Or we chose it because it offered escape from the city. Or we said yes because for whatever reason at that time this story was the right the kind of stupid. The idea itself knew it was stupid, so there was no way to go but forward.

It turns out this was an ideal beginning for a theater company. Everyone was thrown into doing something new. Michael Friedman, for one, ended up writing songs for a musical for the first time. I learned many things, but perhaps most importantly I learned that The Civilians' process requires a leap into the unknown. Just as a solitary writer needs to create with some balance between the subconscious and the rational; a collaborative approach equally needs some push to suspend the usual ways of thinking and get to the interesting stuff. I learned that somehow the play is out there already in the world; that the way to find it lay in creating circumstances in which something unexpected might happen and then trying to find the points of connection. *Canard* certainly has its rough edges, but it's the way—like Anna Paquin—we learned to fly.

—Steve Cosson