

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Cancelled by Popular Demand

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by Jeff Blake

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EXTRACT

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This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre  
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## THE CHARACTERS

Three characters are all played by one actor. Transition between characters is cued to sound and light. The music plays underneath each character.

**Lazlo** - He is the exasperated, world weary misanthrope who is connected with the decision to cancel humanity, although we don't know exactly how he is involved. He delivers his lines as a dictator might to the throngs (loud announcements and long, confident pauses). Lazlo appears in a blaze of white light and big song (typically to James Brown).

**Ray** - the optimistic middle man and the Master of Ceremonies. Ray introduces Lazlo as he makes appearances throughout the show, and keeps the audience updated with the happenings of Lazlo's new movie about a zebra and Robert De Niro.

Ray appears in a wash of moving coloured night club lighting with tinkling piano sounds playing in the background. He is apologetic for Lazlo's appalling manners and regrets the cancellation.

**Linkman** - the dour, grumpy and low status theatre tech. He never directly addresses the audience and is often found lurking up stage away from the audience, mumbling in the shadows re-arranging long cable cords. Linkman appears in broken shadows with up-tempo, repetitive jazz playing in the background.

## OPENING

*(The stage is in total darkness except for 1 spot revealing a white box in stage centre.  
Ray's music starts to play)*

*[Sound: RAY music]*

*(RAY in stylish 50's grey suit enters from behind the side curtains. He charms the audience with a mock contemporary dance piece, as he circles the white box. The dance slows down and RAY steps forward.)*

*[Sound: RAY music]*

RAY: Welcome to the biggest night of your life. An evening which puts "life" back into sitting in groups. A night where all your dreams, your prayers, your wishes will come true. Here in the theatre; the church of creativity.

Tonight, Mr Lazlo Steigenberger will perform for you his entire life's work on a compilation album which you've all been awaiting. I will be filling in gaps, painting word pictures from Lazlo's new movie which he is currently making in the jungles with Robert De Niro. Robert De Niro everyone.

*(RAY bows to audience)*

My name's Ray, I'm your host. I'm new. The woman who normally hosts, Rhonda, is dead. No she's not. Yes she is. She was killed. No she wasn't. Yes, she was. By an audience not unlike yourselves. No she wasn't. Yes she was. You worked yourselves up into a frenzy, formed a pack.

So, I know we're only a minute in, but if this doesn't feel like the sort of show that you'd normally attend, or indeed enjoy, please go, leave now... Alright stay. But if you stay just do me one favour ... be nice. Just be nice. Because Mr Steigenberger, he loves you, I love you, it's a

world of love. It's a nation of love in a room of love and that's the sort of evening... show.... moment we're going to have...

And nowwww. For your pleasureeeee, I give you the one the only, Laaaaazlo Steigenberger. Put 'em together, come on, clap your hands....

*(RAY turns to address the stage door)*

Come on Mr Steigenberger.....

*(RAY holds the pose of introduction until awkward, then when no Lazlo appears, he turns into LINKMAN. LINKMAN busies himself by tidying up along the side of the stage moving towards the back. He is a low talker and a mutterer.)*

*[Sound: LINKMAN music]*

LINKMAN: Oh that's just great, come for a night out and you get a little bald man yelling at you.

Work tonight they said, there's a show on they said..... I thought theatre was dead.....or was that football? Football's dead? No it's television ...television is dead...well I heard something's going on anyway, something on the radio ...cutting tiger penis's off..aphrodisiac...aphrodisiac?...strange...doesn't turn me on...

*[Sound: LAZLO music]*

*(As LAZLO's music starts, LINKMAN discreetly transforms into LAZLO by donning a pair of distinctive black frame glasses and leaping energetically onto the white box just as James Brown belts out "It's a man's world")*

LAZLO: THE UNIVERSE.

WHAT IT IS

It's a massive, massive thing.

And it sits somewhere out in the

middle of nothingness and endlessness.