



*From us to you: 19 stories from leading playwrights for
people across the UK to record*

THE APPLE PICKERS

By Nicholas McQuillan

Cast size: 2

This play is suitable for: Two Person

STEP 1: REHEARSE

- Make sure you have enough people for each part or maybe you could play multiple parts.
- Try to learn all your character's lines, if possible.
- If you're looking for some guidance, check out our [How To... videos](#). We've brought together a bunch of the best actors and directors to give you their tips and advice on how to make the best film you can.

STEP 2: RECORD

- Use a phone to film your performance or record directly on your Zoom or video chat platform.
- Record your performance in well-lit spaces so we can see you clearly but avoid standing right in front of a window on sunny day, and remember to keep private items out of view.
- Try to cut out all background noise by closing windows and doors.

STEP 3: UPLOAD

- We would love to see your performance. To upload your recording to us, click [here](#).
- Please **do not share** your recording on YouTube or other similar platforms. This is so we can keep all the recordings in the same place and to respect and honour our writers' copyright and publication permissions.
- We will be creating a film of each script from the videos submitted.
- We want this to be something everyone can take part in so please do get in touch if you have any access requirements or if there is anything else we might be able to help with.
- If you are having difficulty uploading your recording, please get in touch with us via email: admin@theatre-centre.co.uk or phone: 020 7729 3066.

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD

- Recommend to a friend by inviting those you know to rehearse, record and upload their own performance.
- Encourage others by using [#ImagiNation19](#) on your social platforms. State what play you have performed but remember to not share your recording publicly.
- Thank you for being part of ImagiNation.

The Apple Pickers

I worked in the restaurant industry for nearly a decade, alongside people from all over the world. The Apple Pickers was borne from conversations I had with those people.

While the characters are Romanian, they could well be Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Brazilian or Polish. They could even be British. My intention was to examine how we see others, how others see us, and to celebrate our commonalities. I hope you enjoy the piece and have fun with it.

-

Radu, late twenties

Elena, mid 50's

A Zoom conversation

A dash represents an interruption.

-

Radu: - Ma you've got to, the microphone at the bottom.

He mimes holding a microphone.

Radu: Click on it, CLICK. ON.THE. MIC.RO.PHONE –

She suddenly blasts out of the speakers, halfway through a sentence.

Elena: *(yelling at someone offscreen)* - he's doing karaoke or something I don't know.

Radu: I can hear you now.

Elena: oh! What was wrong?

Radu: Your microphone was muted.

Elena: I don't think so, I could hear you.

Radu: No it's. It doesn't matter, I don't have long, I start my shift in a few minutes.

Elena: How was the flight? Did anyone have it on the plane?

Radu: They turned one woman away because her swab broke and they didn't have spares, but the rest of us were fine.

Elena: Good, good. What's the farm like?

Radu: big! 213 acres. I didn't even know there was countryside in the UK, I never saw it last time. Apparently Kent is the garden of England.

Elena: You become a poet on the flight over?

Radu: That's what they call it! It's where they grow all the fruit and vegetables. They say we're a land army.

Elena: Ugh. Always with the war. They never let anyone forget it. In 2007 we were invaders coming to steal their jobs, but now nobody wants to do the jobs, you're a land army. Sure. Hows the hotel?

Radu: What hotel?

Elena: Where you're staying.

Radu: ...it's a caravan.

Elena: WHAT?!

Radu: It's on a farm, it's standard, why would we be staying in a hotel?

Elena: Because you're picking their apples for them, they can't put you in a hotel?

Radu: Their government flew 400 of us across; they can't afford to put us in hotels.

Elena: May aswell put you in the boot of a car.

Radu: Its fine, its warm, its a minute's walk to work.

Elena: Who's in there with you?

Radu: A guy, Liviu.

Elena: What's his surname?

Radu: I dunno, Romanescu I think.

Elena: I don't know that family.

Radu: You wouldn't, he's from Bucharest.

Elena: (*quietly, leaning into the screen*) Hide your things, you know what they say about boys from the city.

Radu: Ma!

Elena: I'm just saying, Dinisa's boy went to Bucharest for the weekend, had his watch stolen.

Radu: That could have happened anywhere.

Elena: But it happened in Bucharest. So put your watch in your socks, put your socks in your bag, trust me.

Radu: (*trying to change the subject*) How's everything back home?

Elena: Oh y'know, the same, we don't change we just get older.

Radu: it's been three days.

Elena: and we're three days older, How is it being back? Do you feel ok?

Radu: it's different this time.

Elena: yes, now you're their hero. I hope they tell you how thankful they are.

Radu: They're paying me.

Elena: That's money! Value isn't money. You're feeding the nation!

Radu: that's a bit much.

Elena: if you weren't there, who would do it? The British government called on *you* to go back and harvest their apples for them, so people can eat. Your father's very proud of you. He bought new windscreen wipers for the car. When your brother got that job in Canada he bought new hubcaps, you know how he is.

Radu: Fatherly love. Very special.

Elena: So you're all right? Because it's ok if you want to come home.

Radu: I've been here three days.

Elena: I just, I don't want to see you like you were last time.

Radu: I won't be.

Elena: Such a shock to see you at the airport. Your eyes so heavy, your shoes stuck, *stuck*, to heels of your feet. Left with two bags, came back with one. No-one should come back with less than they left with.

Radu: That's not their fault.

Elena: you were there for 18 months, someone did that to you.

Radu: no one did anything to me.

Elena: why are you defending them?

Radu: because you make me sound like a victim! I chose to come to the UK. And then I chose to go back to Romania. I didn't fail.

Elena: You have an engineering degree and they made you clean dishes.

Radu: I wasn't forced.

Elena: so you *chose* to clean dishes? Why didn't you *choose* to become an engineer?

Radu: Why are you being like this?

Elena: Because I don't like you being there. I don't understand what happened to you. Is it because that man called you gypsy boy?

Radu: We get called that everywhere. Someone shouted that at Florin in Toronto.

Elena: Then I don't understand.

Beat. He's trying to figure out how to explain.

Radu: it wasn't just being shouted at. That was part of it, sure, but it's something deeper in. the. I don't know.

A little pause, while he tries to figure out how to explain.

When you move somewhere where everything is different - I mean everything, the plugs, the traffic light noises, the shape of the houses - you need people to help you. To make those differences as

normal for you as they are to them. And look, the majority of people were very nice. Polite, gentle. But they never let me in. I was always from somewhere else. Even the people who took an interest, asked me where I was from, who hoped I enjoyed living here. It was all a reminder that I was an outsider, that I didn't understand the. I don't know, the signals.

A half beat

And then one day, I was walking down the high road, and this van went passed, very slowly, I remember because I thought how strange it was to be going so slow. And on the side it said 'if you're here illegally, go home or we'll arrest you.' And it had a phone number at the bottom, so people could report someone they thought was an illegal immigrant.

Elena: You weren't there illegally.

Radu: but the message was the same. If you are not from here, you shouldn't be here. I worked so hard. But the only signal I ever heard was 'you are an outsider'. In the end it broke me, to hear that every day.

Elena thinks for a few seconds

Elena: They wanted your body, to work, but not *you*.

Radu: But the majority of people are so nice, I...

He shrugs.

Silence.

Elena: And now you're going back because they need your help. In their hour of need, you will stand up and help. You are their hero, whether they say it or not. Maybe they're too private, like you say. But I hope they know.

Radu: It's a lovely country, y'know. You can see why they're all so melancholy. There are no bright colours, everything is a shade of grey, brown, green or blue. The landscape is always a variation on those colours. But it can be very beautiful, at sunset or in the morning, when the colours all blend together. Brooding.

Elena: Now you sound like a fucking poet.

Radu: swearing, ma?

Elena: Well I'm worried that John Keats is going to come home.

Radu: (*offscreen to Liviu*) ok...ok. (to mum) look I've got to go.

Elena: When are you back?

Radu: 4 weeks

Elena: I'll pray for you.

Radu: I love you.

Elena: Don't kiss any English girls, they might have it.

Radu: We have it back home too.

Elena *(with a little chuckle)*: Not like them.

Radu: Why are you smiling?

Elena: I just think it's...interesting.

Radu: I've got to go.

Elena: You are not part of an army. You are heroes. Every one of you. But you more than the others.

Radu: Why me?

Elena: Because you're my son, so you're better.

Radu: *(looking offscreen at Liviu, who's obviously telling him something)* ok, yeah, thanks. *(to Elena)* I love you. Im off.

Elena: when will you call next?

But he's gone. A small pause.

Elena: *(yelling offscreen)* SILVIU! SILVIU, HOW DO I TURN IT OFF?!

She sits there a moment, still thinking about the conversation. She gently pats her chest with satisfaction.

Elena: *(whispering to herself)* My boy.

The end.

ImagiNation is a co-production between Theatre Centre and Theatre503

The Apple Pickers © 2020 Nicholas McQuillan
ImagiNation pack © 2020 Theatre Centre



@TCLive / @theatre503 / #ImagiNation19

T: 020 7729 3066



@theatrecentre / @theatre503

E: admin@theatre-centre.co.uk



@TheatreCentreUK / @theatre503



LOTTERY FUNDED



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

