



Wednesday-Sunday
Sept 16-Oct 17, 8 pm

DANNY CASOLARO DIED FOR YOU

BY DOMINIC ORLANDO
DIRECTED BY JEFF ZINN

**JOINT WORLD PREMIERE WITH
NEXT THEATER - CHICAGO**

Talk Back September 23

Fresh from the National New Play Network in Atlanta, Danny Casolaro is based on a true story about the playwright's cousin, an investigative reporter. A search for a mafia/Hollywood connection led the quirky Casolaro to high level corruption in The Reagan/Bush Justice Department. A year in, he was found dead in a cheap motel. What was the truth Danny died trying expose, and what does his strange journey reveal about the political world we live in now?

"Fantastic! Brilliant dialogue and an amazing, true story." -Tim Bauer, Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco

Playwright Dominic Orlando

An interview by Dan Lombardo,
WHAT Dramaturg

DAN LOMBARDO: How well did you know your cousin Danny Casolaro as you were growing up?

DOMINIC ORLANDO: Very well. I come from a large Italian-American family - my parents are both the youngest of 7 - but everyone tries to stay in touch. There was always a wedding or a funeral and we saw a lot of each other. Danny's family in particular was our regular Thanksgiving

JOSEPH DANIEL CASOLARO was an American freelance writer who came to public attention in 1991 when he was found dead in a bathtub in room 517 of the Sheraton Hotel in Martinsburg, West Virginia, his wrists slashed 10-12 times. A note was found, and the medical examiner ruled the death a suicide. *Casolaro's family argued that he had been murdered. Before he left for Martinsburg, he had apparently told his brother that he had been frequently receiving harassing phone calls late at night, some of them threatening. And that if something were to happen to him while in Martinsburg, it would not be an accident.*

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holiday so if nothing else I saw them all once a year.

DL: Did you know what Danny was working on? Did he talk to you about the depth of government corruption he was finding?

DO: We talked explicitly about it the Thanksgiving before his death. But I was working on a play - a farce, actually, about US policy in Central America, so the conversation was very heady and excited - I was in my 20's and that whole political underworld seemed at the same time fascinating and somewhat unreal.

DL: How did you find out about his death, and what were your first thoughts about why he died?

DO: My mother called me and said, "They got Danny." My brother wanted to drive down immediately and so I went with him. It was crazy and hectic and weird - we really thought there was more violence coming. In the play, Thomas talks about a mysterious soldier at the funeral - I was there, and it really cemented in everyone's mind that however Danny died, he'd obviously been onto something. At that point we were all convinced he was killed - I think in some ways over time this became the more upsetting possibility as it offered no ending to the mystery.

DL: Have you ever been afraid that writing this play might place you in danger?

DO: Not really. Danny was into so many things - if he was killed it was probably over something you only get a glimpse of in the play. Also,

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On August 8, 1991, Casolaro arrived in Martinsburg, West Virginia to meet a source who, he said, had promised to provide an important missing piece of his story.

these people aren't all-powerful - a lot of ugly stuff about the 80's finally did come out in the mid-to-late 90's - though it was downplayed - so he may have been killed in an effort to bury something that ultimately did not stay buried. One of the patterns I noticed researching this world is that when everything finally does come out, there's a flurry of press and pronouncements, but if you keep following the story, very few people go to jail or if they do it's not for very long.

DL: Can political theater have much of a voice amid the din of 21st century political media?

DO: That's a good question. Sometimes I think Jon Stewart is taking care of it so we don't really have to bother - but I do think theater is a more immediate and immersive form. In theatre we try to add the emotional and spiritual dimension, the dimension of grief, maybe, so we're not just learning or becoming "aware" but we're really grieving the choices that have been made in our name. Just as with an individual, this is the first step to real change.