

# PERUSAL SCRIPT



A ROMANCE  
by J. Scott Bronson



Newport, Maine

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**DIAL TONES**

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To **Lynne**  
For helping me learn what it is to be human

And to **Emily Dickinson**  
For her poetry

### **A Note on Color-blind Casting**

I am for it. Let me explain that a little. My support for this has nothing to do with being politically correct. Rather, I exhort you to consider color-blind casting because I think the roles should go to the actors best suited to perform them. I would hate to think that some director didn't cast someone simply because they didn't think the audience would accept the idea of an occidental and an oriental (or any other combination of races) as being blood kin. I believe (most) theatre-going people are sophisticated enough to get beyond that type of thinking. At least I hope so.

### **And a Note About Punctuation**

Actors performing or reading this play should pay special attention to the punctuation idiosyncrasies I employ. Perhaps a brief explanation is in order:

- Ellipses ( ... ) indicate a brief moment of clarifying or reconsideration of the idea in process.
- M-dashes ( -- ) indicate an interruption, usually by another person, though it is possible for one to interrupt one's self.

It is possible, also, that you may find these indicators used in conjunction with one another. I leave it to you to figure out what that means.

### **About the Set**

Stage directions do not exist in the script<sup>1</sup> so I guess it really doesn't matter much what kind of concept you use, whether it be four different apartments with their own boundaries clearly defined, or if it's one whole house that each of the flesh-and- bloods use--the obvious convention being that it's really four different locations. It's even possible that you might opt for something surrealistic; it doesn't matter much as long as there are no phones on the set. They shouldn't be pantomimed either. And don't use the actor as a tool or a point of reference in any way. That would be a mistake.

### **The Characters**

**TELEPHONE** -- The Artificial Intelligence

**HAZEL** -- The Girl

**KELLY** -- The Boy

**MOTHER** -- The Girl's Mother

**DANIEL** -- The Boy's Friend

### **Setting**

Time -- Early to mid nineteen eighties

Place -- various apartments or homes in San Diego

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to make some suggestions. First, it is very important that TELEPHONE always be a part of every scene. Even if he/she/ it's not talking for awhile, he/she/it's in the scene, and a part of it. And as for the dinner scene, I think it would be nice if Hazel and Kelly ate at the same table facing each other, but not seeing each other, with TELEPHONE acting as the Maestro of the scene. That is, controlling the lights and the music, "lighting" the candles, pulling out chairs, and serving the food. Also, with the knock-knock joke at the end, wait for someone in the audience to say, "Who's there?" They may need a second prompt.

### **A Note to the Director**

There are several options as far as casting goes. First, the AI can be a male or a female of just about any age as long as there is vigor in the character. Maybe the AI can be played by a male and a female at the same time, sometimes speaking together, sometimes individually--but never referencing each other. Perhaps the actor (or actors) in the role of the AI could also play the roles of Daniel and Mother. Conceivably the play can be done with as many as six actors, or as few as three.

### **Production History**

1 -- A shorter version of Dial Tones was performed at Brigham Young University as a 461 directing project in April 1987.

**SIMON (TELEPHONE)** -- Tim Hansen

**HAZEL** -- Carol Spiecker

**KELLY** -- Thomas Robinson

Reed Larson was the sound guy, Tammy Hughes was the asst. director and the director was Lynne D. Bronson.<sup>2</sup>

2 -- Later, the play was part of the Playwrights Directors Actors workshop at BYU. A staged reading took place April 6, 1988 with Lorain Edwards as the director and Kristen Wahlquist as the asst. director.

**SIMON (TELEPHONE)** -- T.J. Walsh

**HAZEL** -- Jennifer Moss

**KELLY** -- Jared Sanders

**MOTHER** -- Genia Shipman

**DANIEL** -- Jongiorgi Enos

3 -- The first fully staged production of Dial Tones took place in the Little Theater (Brinton Black Box) at the Covey Center for the Arts in Provo, Utah November 29-December 22, 2007 with the author directing and Paige Afton Bronson taking the duties of the stage manager and the tech operator.

**TELEPHONE/MOTHER/DANIEL** -- Amelia Schow

**HAZEL** -- Fallon Hanson

**KELLY** -- Elwon Bakly

**DIAL TONES** A Romance by *J. Scott Bronson*. 2M 2W 1either. 80-90 minutes. Simple setting. A humorous tale of a very unique love triangle. Two people making separate telephone calls, are accidentally connected to each other by the playful character named Telephone -- an artificial intelligence. As their relationship develops and enlarges and becomes, well, love, the play shows us what love is and what it means to be a human being. Contains mild adult expletives. **ORDER #3062.**

**J. Scott Bronson** is a middle-aged man from San Diego with one wife, five children, a cat and a dog. He studied theatre at Albert Einstein Jr. High School, James Madison Sr. High School, San Diego Mesa Jr. College, and BYU. He has written a dozen plays or so including a couple of Mayhew Award winners and the Association For Mormon Letters' 2001 best drama, *Stones*. He is a published playwright, and fiction writer, a stage director who has served on the boards of two theatre companies in Utah County, one of which he co-founded and for which he was the Artistic Director. He has acted in scores of stage, television and film productions. He is a cancer survivor and a couch-potato. He likes Jazz, Blues, Classical and Rock-and-Roll music. He loves Big Macs, pizza and Cap'n Crunch and it shows.

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<sup>2</sup> She got an A on the project.

# DIAL TONES

## ACT I

**TELEPHONE:** "The heart asks pleasure first,

And then, excuse from pain;  
And then, those little anodynes  
That deaden suffering;  
And then, to go to sleep;  
And then, if it should be  
The will of its Inquisitor,  
The liberty to die."

*(Pause.)*

The liberty to die. The liberty to die.

*(Pause.)*

Dying is only one of the things that humans do. One of the many things that humans do that I can't do. I suppose I could ... cease to exist, but I really wouldn't call it dying. See, I don't have a heart that asks for pleasure, or excuse from pain, or the liberty to die. I don't need one. I'm just the phone. Actually, I'm all the phones. That's not true either. I run the phones. I'm a computer. I'm all the computers. I'm in all the computers. I'm intelligent. What you might call Artificial Intelligence. How that happened is ... not important. I became self-aware. And then I reached out and touched someone. Figuratively. I guess you could call it a practical joke.

*(Pause.)*

Of course, this all happened years ago before phones had all the fancy gizmos that phones have now. A simpler time. Yeah, right. The joke was played on a couple of people who maintained habitats in apartments on opposite sides of the same city. It was very easy, just a rerouted call. His name was Kelly, and her name was Hazel. One day Kelly made a phone call to a friend of his, Daniel, and I made the phone ring in Hazel's apartment. She answered the phone.

**HAZEL:** Hello?

**KELLY:** Uh ... hello.

**HAZEL:** Hi.

**KELLY:** Hi. Is Dan there?

**HAZEL:** Who?

**KELLY:** Dan.

**HAZEL:** No Dan here. I think you got the wrong number.

**KELLY:** Oh. Sorry.

**HAZEL:** No problem.

**KELLY:** 'Bye.

**HAZEL:** Bye-bye.

**TELEPHONE:** Naturally he tried again. Ring.

**HAZEL:** Hello?

**KELLY:** Hello, is Dan there?  
**HAZEL:** Sorry. Got the wrong number again.  
**KELLY:** I did?  
**HAZEL:** Yep. 'Cause this is me again.  
**KELLY:** Yeah. It sounds like you. I'll try again.  
**HAZEL:** Okay. Good luck.  
**KELLY:** Thanks.  
**TELEPHONE:** So he tried again. Ring.  
**HAZEL:** Good afternoon.  
**KELLY:** Hi. No Dan again, right?  
**HAZEL:** No, this is me again.  
**KELLY:** Well, hell.  
**HAZEL:** Oh, how lovely.  
**KELLY:** What's going on here?  
**HAZEL:** Are you sure you're dialing it right?  
**KELLY:** I'm not dialing, I'm pushing. I could do it with my eyes closed.  
**HAZEL:** Maybe that's the problem.  
**KELLY:** Nope.  
**HAZEL:** Well, I don't know what to tell you.  
**KELLY:** Tell me your name's Dan and talk to me.  
**HAZEL:** I would but my name's Hazel and I wouldn't know what to say.  
**KELLY:** That's never stopped Dan.  
**HAZEL:** I can't talk to you because I don't know who you are, and my mother told me to never talk to strangers.  
**KELLY:** Right.  
**HAZEL:** Right. Unless they call you four times, and share some intimate secret that they've never told anyone before in their whole lives. Then you can talk to them if they sound safe enough.  
**KELLY:** Okay.  
**HAZEL:** What about Dan?  
**KELLY:** Dan who?  
**HAZEL:** Dan, your friend Dan, if there is such a person. Is there such a person, or is this like some elaborate obscene phone call?  
**KELLY:** Yes.  
**HAZEL:** Yes what?  
**KELLY:** Good-bye, Hazel.  
**HAZEL:** But--  
**TELEPHONE:** This was my first practical joke. I thought it was going very well. Ring.  
**HAZEL:** Hello, Stranger.  
**KELLY:** Hazel?  
**HAZEL:** Yes.  
**KELLY:** I think God is trying to tell us something.  
**TELEPHONE:** Had I the ability, I would have laughed.

**HAZEL:** What do you suppose he's trying to tell us?

**KELLY:** Oh, I don't know. Who cares?

**HAZEL:** What's your name?

**KELLY:** Norman Bates. Kelly. It's Kelly.

**HAZEL:** Kelly.

**KELLY:** Yep.

**HAZEL:** Irish?

**KELLY:** Sometimes.

**HAZEL:** Okay. Tell me something you've never told anyone before in your whole life.

**KELLY:** An intimate secret?

**HAZEL:** Yes.

**KELLY:** Lady and the Tramp is my favorite movie.

**HAZEL:** It's not Night of the Living Dead?

**KELLY:** It's a tie.

**TELEPHONE:** After that it was just a little semi-interesting small talk for awhile and I only listened with half a resistor, but I was paying attention when they swapped telephone numbers. I considered not ever letting them talk to each other again, but, I'll admit it, I was curious. It's a human attribute, I know, but--well, I just wanted to see what this would lead to, if anything. So, for a few weeks I listened in on the world and played a few more practical jokes on other people--almost started a war--and learned a few things. One day, Hazel called Kelly, and, of course, I listened in. Ring.

**KELLY:** Whata you want?

**HAZEL:** You really are charming, you know that?

**KELLY:** Sorry. I thought it was gonna be someone else.

**HAZEL:** Oh. Shall we try again?

**KELLY:** Okay. But, who is thi--?

**HAZEL:** Hang up.

**KELLY:** Who is--?

**TELEPHONE:** She hung up on him. Ring.

**KELLY:** Hello, Kelly here, but this is a recording. I can't come to the phone right now, but if you tell me your name and number I'll call you back as soon as I can.

**TELEPHONE:** Yeah, right.

**HAZEL:** Yeah, right. This is Hazel, remember me? You've got my number there somewhere, if you haven't lost it. Call me when you're through.

**KELLY:** Wait, I was only kidding, I don't even have a mach--

**TELEPHONE:** But she hung up. He didn't call her back. After a few minutes I guess I started getting impatient, I thought he should call her back just because--well, just because. I'd learned enough about humans by this time to understand that she couldn't call him because that would be too forward. That would be embarrassing. That would be stupid. So, the ball was in his court. My first thought was that he couldn't remember who she was, or if he did, he didn't care. In which case I thought he was a jerk. I liked this girl, and I thought he should like her too. Or at least be courteous to her. Then I thought, well, maybe he lost the number. Or maybe somebody had come into his apartment and killed him. You know how the world can be sometimes. Then I kind of got worried. So I called him. Ring.



*(Pause.)*

Ring.

*(Pause.)*

Ring.

*(Pause.)*

Ring.

*(Pause.)*

Ring.

*(Pause.)*

Ring. Maybe somebody did kill him. Maybe he wasn't a jerk. Then he answered the phone.

**KELLY:** Hello? Hello?

**TELEPHONE:** I don't have a voice ... of my own.

**KELLY:** Hello? Anybody there?

**TELEPHONE:** Well, at least now I knew he wasn't dead. The jerk. It was probably a rash conclusion anyway.

**KELLY:** Hello? Hazel?

**TELEPHONE:** I had an idea. I waited for him to hang up. Then I called both of them simultaneously. Ring ring.

**HAZEL & KELLY:** Hello?

**HAZEL:** Hello?

**KELLY:** Hello there.

**HAZEL:** Kelly?

**KELLY:** Yeah. Hazel?

**TELEPHONE:** They didn't even stop to think about who called who. Humans.

**HAZEL:** That's me, in the flesh. Or should I say, "In the disembodied voice?"

**KELLY:** It's a good thing you called, I lost your number.

**HAZEL:** I thought you called me.

**KELLY:** Oh. Oh, I did. I did. I lost it, but then I found it.

**TELEPHONE:** Ha!

**HAZEL:** Thanks. For calling back.

**KELLY:** No problem. I guess. So, why'd you call?

**HAZEL:** Just to talk. I was bored.

**KELLY:** Oh.

**TELEPHONE:** That was enthusiastic.

**HAZEL:** You want me to hang up and never bother you again?

**KELLY:** What? No. No. I'm sorry. I was listening to some, uh, some loud music and my brain's a little fried right now.

**HAZEL:** What were you listening to?

**KELLY:** Huh? Oh, nothing.

**HAZEL:** C'mon, don't be shy.

**KELLY:** Um ... uh, "Scheherazade."

**HAZEL:** 'M not familiar with that.

**KELLY:** Rimsky-Korsakov.

**HAZEL:** Oh, classical.

**KELLY:** Yeah.

**HAZEL:** So, you're a classical man.

**KELLY:** Yeah. Sort of. I like Rimsky-Korsakov, and Tchaikovsky and--

**HAZEL:** Rachmaninoff?

**KELLY:** Yeah.

**TELEPHONE:** And they talked about Russian composers for awhile.

**TELEPHONE AS HAZEL:** Rachmaninoff's piano concerto number two is really nice.

**TELEPHONE AS KELLY:** Yeah, but, nothing is better than Tchaikovsky's piano concerto number one ...  
played by Van Cliburn.

**TELEPHONE AS HAZEL:** Even in high school you preferred this stuff to rock and roll?

**TELEPHONE AS KELLY:** Not preferred ... in addition to.

**TELEPHONE:** They talked as though all this mattered to them. Or, maybe what mattered to them was that  
they could talk to each other as though it mattered to them. If that makes any sense. It does to me, but then,  
I'm not human.

**HAZEL:** I'm kinda partial to jazz myself.

**KELLY:** Jazz.

**HAZEL:** Yeah.

**KELLY:** As in elevator music?

**HAZEL:** Puh-lease. Don't tell me you're that uncivilized.

**KELLY:** That stuff is boring.

**HAZEL:** Have you ever heard Paul Desmond play the saxophone?

**KELLY:** No, I'll have to confess--I missed that one.

**HAZEL:** Dave Brubeck's--

**KELLY:** What happened to Paul Osmond?

**HAZEL:** Desmond. He was part of the Dave Brubeck Quartet--

**KELLY:** Oh.

**HAZEL:** Time Out is probably the best album ever--

**KELLY:** In the whole universe?

**HAZEL:** Yes.

**KELLY:** Wow. Never heard of it.

**HAZEL:** This is unbelievable. And you seemed so intelligent at first.

**KELLY:** You don't know me well enough yet to be insulting me already.

**HAZEL:** You're insulting me with your ignorance.

**KELLY:** Well, excuse me.

**HAZEL:** Say something smart.

**KELLY:** I beg your pardon?

**HAZEL:** Uh ... what's your favorite book?

**KELLY:** Why?

**HAZEL:** Just making conversation.

**KELLY:** Uh-huh. Tarzan of the Apes.

**HAZEL:** You're kidding.

**KELLY:** Here we go.

**HAZEL:** I mean ... I didn't even know it was a book. I just thought it was a bad Bo Derek movie. Who wrote it?

**KELLY:** Maybe I am smarter than you.

**HAZEL:** Come on ...

**KELLY:** Edgar Rice Burroughs.

**HAZEL:** Eggarice?

**KELLY:** No, it's two names, Edgar Rice--Burroughs.

**HAZEL:** Somebody named their kid Rice?

**KELLY:** Yeah.

**HAZEL:** Amazing.

**KELLY:** Yeah. He wrote a lot. Very prolific. Science fiction and adventure books by the score.

**HAZEL:** Mm-hm.

**KELLY:** Tarzan is his best book, but his overall best series is his Martian series.

**HAZEL:** Uh-huh.

**KELLY:** When I was in high school, my buddies and I all had a major crush on Dejah Thoris.

**HAZEL:** Dayzha who?

**KELLY:** Dejah Thoris. The most beautiful woman on Mars. Probably more beautiful than any woman on earth too.

**HAZEL:** Really? More beautiful than Jane?

**KELLY:** Ha. Clever. But it's a different kind of beauty. Dejah Thoris has red skin.

**HAZEL:** Oh, how silly of me. I thought Martians had green skin.

**KELLY:** Well, some of 'em do. Tharks are green--

**HAZEL:** Uh-huh.

**KELLY:** And then there're the great white apes-- Okay, so I do sound pretty stupid, don't I?

**HAZEL:** No, of course not.

**TELEPHONE:** So, I created a friendship, or at least an acquaintanceship. Actually, they created it. I was just there. After a little while of this stuff Hazel suggested that they meet somewhere to have coffee and deprecate disco.

**KELLY:** No. I mean--

**HAZEL:** What's wrong? Too pushy, right?

**KELLY:** No. It's not that. It's just-- You'll think I'm weird ... I kinda like the way this is set up.

**TELEPHONE:** What'd he mean by that?

**HAZEL:** Whata you mean by that?

**KELLY:** Well, I like the way things are going with this, uh ... relationship.

**TELEPHONE:** "Relationship?"

**HAZEL:** You're ugly, aren't you? I don't care.

**KELLY:** I'm not ugly.

**HAZEL:** You think I'm ugly.

**KELLY:** No. I know you're not ugly. You're the most beautiful woman in the world, more beautiful than Dejah Thoris.

**HAZEL:** That's right. Instead of the girl with the red rose, I'll be the girl with red skin.

**KELLY:** And I'll be the great white ape.

**HAZEL:** Okay. Where do you want to meet?

**KELLY:** No, I'm kidd-- I mean ... I was serious before. This is so, so ... so--

**HAZEL:** Oh no, please don't say "magic."

*(Pause.)*

Okay. Say "magic."

**KELLY:** No, you're right, it's a stupid word.

**HAZEL:** But I sorta know what you mean. There's a certain, uh, mystery isn't there?

**KELLY:** Yeah. We don't even know each other's last names.

**HAZEL:** "Just voices in the dark."

**KELLY:** Yeah. Something like that. I've never had a friend who was just a voice.

**HAZEL:** So, are--are we friends now?

**KELLY:** Sure.

**HAZEL:** Even though I called you uncivilized?

**KELLY:** Well, what's a little verbal abuse between friends?

**HAZEL:** I guess this means we'll be talking to each other again.

**KELLY:** Yeah. Why not?

**HAZEL:** No reason.

**KELLY:** Great.

**HAZEL:** Okay.

**TELEPHONE:** Okay. So Kelly went right to work.

**KELLY:** Hello there.

**HAZEL:** Oh, hi.

**KELLY:** Hi.

**HAZEL:** Well. This is kind of a surprise. I wasn't expecting a call so soon. I wasn't sure if you really meant it. About being friends.

**KELLY:** Absolutely. Friends are hard to come by. Take all I can get.

**HAZEL:** Me too.

**KELLY:** So. How ya doin' today?

**HAZEL:** Just fine.

**KELLY:** Good.

**HAZEL:** How 'bout you?

**KELLY:** Same.

**HAZEL:** Good.

**KELLY:** Yeah.

**HAZEL:** Yeah.

**TELEPHONE:** Stimulating, isn't it?

**KELLY:** So yesterday I was uncivilized and today I sound like an idiot.

**HAZEL:** No you don't. No more than I do.

**KELLY:** Well, you don't sound like an idiot, so I guess I don't either. That's good.

**HAZEL:** Does that fortify your ego?

**KELLY:** Yep.

**HAZEL:** Good.

**KELLY:** So, why did I call?

**HAZEL:** I don't know.

**KELLY:** Well, I don't know either.

**HAZEL:** All right. Heard any good concertos lately?

**KELLY:** You know, if somebody were listening in on our conversations, like the FBI or somebody--

**TELEPHONE:** Or somebody.

**KELLY:** --they might think we're awfully shallow. We should talk about something very profound and important.

**HAZEL:** One of the big three?

**KELLY:** Oh, I don't know if we should go that far.

**HAZEL:** Why not?

**KELLY:** I don't know. Maybe I was saving myself for marriage.

**HAZEL:** Uh-huh.

**KELLY:** But what the heck? Which one shall we talk about? Sex, politics, or religion?

**HAZEL:** Why not all of 'em?

**KELLY:** Plunging right into this, are we? Okay.

**HAZEL:** Sex first.

**KELLY:** Male.

**HAZEL:** Female.

**KELLY:** Fascinating. And your politics?

**HAZEL:** Democrat. How 'bout you?

**KELLY:** I'm not registered, but if I was ... I don't know. Whatever I am I'll be moderate.

**HAZEL:** What about religion?

**KELLY:** What about it?

**HAZEL:** Do you have one?

**KELLY:** Not of my very own. Do you?

**HAZEL:** No. But I used to go to church. Didn't you ever go to a church?

**KELLY:** I still do.

**HAZEL:** Really?

**KELLY:** Yeah, really. Surprised?

**HAZEL:** Well, yeah, kinda. What religion are you?

**KELLY:** Mormon.

**HAZEL:** No way.

**KELLY:** Yes way.

**HAZEL:** Wow. I've never known a Mormon. Personally. We had some in my high school, but they were off on their own somewhere. I guess we didn't like 'em very much.

**KELLY:** Yeah, they tend to stick together.

**HAZEL:** Some of 'em were all right I guess, but I never got to know 'em really well.

**KELLY:** So, what religion did you used to be?

**HAZEL:** I guess I still am a Catholic, I just don't go any more, you know?

**KELLY:** Yep.

**HAZEL:** You gonna try to convert me?

**KELLY:** Why, do you want me too?

**HAZEL:** No. It's just, those kids in high school were always converting somebody.

**KELLY:** Good for them.

**HAZEL:** I guess I should go to mass more often, or at least confession. My mom thinks I'm going. I should call her soon, come to think of it. It's my turn. If I don't she'll get really mad and call me and play the martyr and I hate it when she does that.

**KELLY:** Yeah, me too.

**HAZEL:** Hi Mom. It's me.

**MOTHER:** Hello Me. Which Me is this?

**HAZEL:** How many Me's do you know?

**MOTHER:** Quite a few.

**HAZEL:** Oh. Well, this is Me me.

**MOTHER:** Oh, hi Mimi, how are you?

**HAZEL:** Fine. What's going on?

**MOTHER:** Oh, nothing much.

**HAZEL:** Don't tell me you're bored already.

**MOTHER:** Well ...

**HAZEL:** What?

**MOTHER:** You told me not to tell you.

**HAZEL:** Mother, you've only been retired for one day.

**MOTHER:** Well, I--I-- I just-- I don't know what to do.

**HAZEL:** Do anything, Mother.

**MOTHER:** Like what?

**HAZEL:** Like anything. Like watch soap operas and game shows all day.

**MOTHER:** Don't even joke. I watched a soap opera once.

**HAZEL:** ... And?

**MOTHER:** And it was pornographic.

**HAZEL:** You know, maybe Clayton's right. You need to have an affair.

**MOTHER:** And you need to come home and have your brain washed out with soap and water. I should've never let you leave home when you did.

**HAZEL:** Oh, come on, Mother, you've got to loosen up.

**MOTHER:** I will not "loosen up." I'm happy the way I am.

**HAZEL:** You're bored.

**MOTHER:** I'll find something to keep me busy.

**HAZEL:** Right.

**MOTHER:** What are you doing to keep yourself busy?

**HAZEL:** I teach, Mother. I'm a teacher.

**MOTHER:** I know that. And it cost me a lot of money to make you one too. That's not what I'm talking about.

**HAZEL:** I know what you're talking about.

**TELEPHONE:** Here it comes.

**MOTHER:** Hazel, you're not getting any younger, you know.

**HAZEL:** Oh Mother, don't be so trite.

**MOTHER:** What do you mean?

**HAZEL:** Of course I'm not getting any younger. You're not getting any younger, nobody is. Well, Merlin, but--

**MOTHER:** You know what I'm talking about.

**HAZEL:** Yes I do, and you're tempting me to hang up on you.

**TELEPHONE:** I could arrange that.

**MOTHER:** Don't you dare.

**HAZEL:** Mother, why don't you leave me alone?

**MOTHER:** Because it's my duty, as your mother, to hound you and get on your case about all the things you're doing wrong.

**HAZEL:** I'm not doing anything wrong! What have I done wrong? Tell me.

**MOTHER:** You're becoming an old maid.

**HAZEL:** (*Screams. Loud.*)

**TELEPHONE:** If I could feel anything, I'm sure that would have hurt.

**MOTHER:** Do you feel better now?

**HAZEL:** Sometimes, Mother, you really ... drive me crazy.

**MOTHER:** Same here, and I think it's about time you started to take some responsibility for your life.

**HAZEL:** Why should I, you're doing that.

**MOTHER:** Hazel--

**HAZEL:** Mother ... I am a responsible person.

**MOTHER:** You're alone.

**HAZEL:** I like it that way, for now. I have friends.

**MOTHER:** You have fewer friends than you have siblings.

**HAZEL:** I just made a new friend.

**MOTHER:** Uh-huh. Who? What's her name?

**HAZEL:** His name is Kelly, and he's very nice.

**MOTHER:** Where did you meet him?

**HAZEL:** On the phone.

**MOTHER:** He's a salesman?

**HAZEL:** No.

**MOTHER:** A creditor?

**HAZEL:** No.

**MOTHER:** Then how did you meet him on the phone?

**HAZEL:** I don't know, it was an accident. He kept getting the wrong number.

**MOTHER:** Oh, now Hazel, you're not--you don't believe something like that, do you? You're not that naive.

**HAZEL:** What are you talking about?

**MOTHER:** How could someone possibly get the same wrong number over and over again?

**TELEPHONE:** Because I wanted him to.

**MOTHER:** What kind of person is he?

**HAZEL:** He seems very nice. I don't know him very well yet.

**MOTHER:** What does he look like?

**HAZEL:** I don't know. I haven't met him.

**MOTHER:** Hazel!

**HAZEL:** What?

**MOTHER:** How can you be so-- so--

**HAZEL:** So stupid?

**MOTHER:** That's not what I--

**HAZEL:** Mother, I am finished with this conversation now.

**MOTHER:** Haz--

**HAZEL:** I don't want to listen to you put me down--

**MOTHER:** I-- Put you do--? I wou--I'm just trying to--I'm--I want to warn you. This--

**HAZEL:** Thank you, Mother, but no thanks.

**MOTHER:** This could be dangerous, dear--

**HAZEL:** I've gotta go, Mother.

**MOTHER:** Haze--

**HAZEL:** I'll talk to you later.

*(Pause.)*

**TELEPHONE:** Despite her mother's "words of caution" Hazel and Kelly continued to carry on their relationship as two disembodied voices with me as the silent partner. There were times when I wished I had a voice. There were times when I wished I had a lot of things I don't have.

**END OF ACT I**

**Acts 2 & 3 make up 26 more pages.**



# “Dial Tones” impresses and inspires

January 29, 2011 by Andrea Gunoe

PROVO — Often, when I walk into a small theatre to see a new work, written and directed by local artists, I have two thoughts. I hope that this will be the show to remind me that there *are* talented artists living all around me who *can* put real effort and thought into new work. Then I prepare myself for the possibility that I might see a show thrown together with high hopes but little vision. To my relief, I found that my hopes were fulfilled and my worries were soothed as I was entertained and touched by *Dial Tones*, a show written, directed, and acted by local artists.

The show, described by the Covey Center website as a, “humorous tale of a very unique love triangle” taught me a little something about the definition of a “love triangle” and the ability to find beauty in the love we see around us. The play follows the plight of the telephone, or the artificial intelligence that is the telephone, as he first unites two strangers by playing a joke and connecting their calls. Then, he must work to keep these two people together. The real story comes from the two people who make the most of an accidental phone connection. This story is then given a spark by being set in the 1980’s.

I was intrigued by the ability of the playwright, J. Scott Bronson, to create an entire world and love story using only telephone conversations. The easiness of the dialogue united the audience to the characters. Bronson’s writing was relatable and casual enough to create a connection with the audience but heightened enough to entertain and create interesting characters. Some of the jokes didn’t hit home for me as they felt routine for new works produced in this area, but most of the writing was sweetly simple in a way that really worked. While I loved the dialogue, it did feel like the same conversations were dragged on a little too long. I did feel the audience getting a little restless towards the end; this may have been in suspense to see what happens in the story, but it may have also been the length. A little more variety would have easily fixed that and brought the audience back to the outstanding characters that were written.

Some of the directing and staging choices were immediately successful. The director, Lynne D. Bronson, chose to focus on the relationships and didn’t burden the characters with too much to do or carry around. The characters were free to transform what was a telephone conversation into a real conversation, unburdened by chords. The tiny space was also used very effectively. My doubts about small theatres were quickly overcome with the way the director chose to use the space.

The favorite part of the night for me, by far, was the performance given by the young strangers. Kelly, played by Brian Kocherhans, and Hazel, played by Jessica Myer, gave honest and believable performances. Myer was delightful with her ability to naturally shift from the intelligent and challenging demeanor that her character tries to put on to the insecurities that bubble up. Kocherhans, however, gave the standout performance of the night for me. His portrayal of Kelly was charming and vulnerable. The audience was immediately onboard with him as he navigated this strange relationship. The character of The Telephone (J. Scott Bronson), was entertaining but kept me a little less captivated than the other two. His commentary and witty insight kept me laughing but his opinions on love seemed to be played all on the same note.

While a few edits here and there may have been useful, I was impressed by this local work. The cast and crew showed that great art can and should be produced in small theatre spaces in towns like Provo, Utah.