



Park Songs: A Poem/Play

David Budbill

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A "tale of the tribe" (Ezra Pound's phrase for his own longer work), *Park Songs* is set during a single day in a down-and-out Midwestern city park where people from all walks of life gather. In this small green space amidst a great gray city, the park provides a refuge for its caretaker (and resident poet), street preachers, retirees, moms, hustlers, and teenagers. Interspersed with blues songs, the community speaks through poetic monologues and conversations, while the homeless provide the introductory chorus—and all of their voices become one great epic tale of comedy and tragedy.

Full of unexpected humor, hard-won wisdom, righteous (but sometimes misplaced) anger, and sly tenderness, their stories show us how people learn to live with mistakes and make connections in an antisocial world. As the poem/play engages us in their pain and joy—and the goofy delight of being human—it makes a quietly soulful statement about acceptance and community in our lives.

David Budbill has worked as a carpenter's apprentice, short order cook, day laborer, and occasional commentator on NPR's *All Thing Considered*. His poems can often be heard on Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac* and his books include the best-selling *Happy Life* (Copper Canyon Press) and *Judevine*, a collection of narrative poems that forms the basis for the play *Judevine*, which has been performed in twenty-two states. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Budbill now lives in the mountains of northern Vermont.

R. C. Irwin, whose absurdist and nostalgic work provides the set design for *Park Songs*, teaches at San Francisco City College.

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