

# AMERICAN YOGI

by Sara K. Schneider

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## Production Requirements

Only a minimalistic set is required, as movement carries a great deal of the action. The many changes of location can be achieved quickly with signage, lighting, and mobile set pieces.

## Character Breakdown

*5 male, 3 female principals, plus large ensemble.*

*All of the male actors have to have at least moderately strong yoga practices, except for Dirk, who can be an athlete in some other form with a gift for highly athletic physical comedy. All of the female actors except Eileen will need to be advanced (Level III) practitioners, with Lucia evidently exceptional, even to the untrained eye. Eileen should have athletic grace and build and be at least a Level II practitioner.*

VIJAY SUBRAMANYAM. Male, 24 – 34. Indian, from Kerala. In Act One, manager of Pooja Textiles clothing factory, Bangalore, India, which contracts to American clothing manufacturers. In Act Two, also a self-described social entrepreneur while continuing to work with Pooja Textiles. With his mother a newspaper publisher, he was politically engaged from a young age. Medium-strong yoga practitioner, if a little rough to the American eye.

MEERA MANOJ. Female, 26 – 36. Born in America, of Indian parents, and raised in the tony suburbs of Los Angeles. No accent. In Act One, a junior executive working for Athleisure and one of Josh's early yoga teacher-trainees. In Act Two, one of the Inner Circle of Microcosm Yoga. Very socially oriented, a joiner. Fashion design and fashion business degree from FIT. Has a love for the human form, except her own: earlier in life, she struggled with an eating disorder. Resourceful in making inexpensive clothing and consignment finds her own and could have been a successful designer. Absolutely solid technically as a yoga practitioner; even so, her yoga doesn't have the "natural" look it does on Lucia's body.

JOSH WAGER. Male, 40 – 48, the founder of Microcosm Yoga, though earlier in his life he has bartended, managed nightclubs and golf courses, and played sax in bars. Grew up with a single mother who did yoga with Richard Hittelman on TV. Raised in New Orleans, where as a child he was part of the same play group as Eben Wilder.

EILEEN BROUSSARD. Female, 47 – 54. Longtime yoga teacher, originally Canadian, now living in New Orleans. Calls herself a "yoga grandmother," as she was a very early adopter of yoga in the 1970s, and went through several yoga teacher trainings in all the important styles

that emerged before the yoga boom of the 2000s. Self-effacing, principled, and a steady presence.

LUCIA SEYMOUR. Female, 31 – 38. Pronounced Loo-SEE-uh. In Act One, like Meera, one of Josh’s early yoga teacher-trainees, but with a prior history of teaching yoga. In Act Two, a world-renowned yoga teacher in her own right and, along with Meera and a few others, one of the Inner Circle of Microcosm Yoga. Majored in journalism and attracted to the ideas of Microcosm Yoga. Despite her modesty, the poses have a breathtakingly “perfect” look on her, as if they were built for her unusually elastic and supple body.

EBEN WILDER, PH.D. Male, 38 – 45. Associate Professor, Religious Studies at USC. Scholar of Hinduism and follower of Samuhananda in India. From the same New Orleans childhood play group as Josh: a couple of years younger, he looked up to him.

INDIAN YOGA TEACHER (RAJESH KRISHAN). Male, 49 – 56. A second generation yoga teacher based in a village an hour’s drive outside of Bangalore; also a purveyor in town of office and school supplies after his morning yoga class. Married, with two children. A bit misunderstood by his local peers, as he is unusually open to new ideas.

DIRK ABERNATHY. Male, 42. From Westchester County, New York. An unbelievable talent for forecasting trends in the health and wellness industry, he commands high fees and has changed jobs frequently in order to follow the money. Deducts on his income tax any expenses related to keeping his buff body as his professional, as well as personal, calling card. Polysexual.

ENSEMBLE members play a wide variety of roles: Pooja Textiles managers and assistant; American historical fashion plates and yogis; Josh’s teacher trainees; Josh’s helper; Indian Yoga Teacher’s students; Josh’s New Orleans yoga students; Meera’s assistant; Central Park yogis; members of Josh’s rock band; Athleisure power brokers; Female Voice; Voice of Disaffected Teacher; the Inner Circle of Josh’s senior teachers; Bikram Choudhury and his girlfriend; Lucia’s teacher trainees; hotel cleaning staff; café diners; Indian officials; and Indian widows and son.