

THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE

360° SERIES

VIEWFINDER: FACTS AND PERSPECTIVES
ON THE PLAY, PLAYWRIGHT, AND PRODUCTION

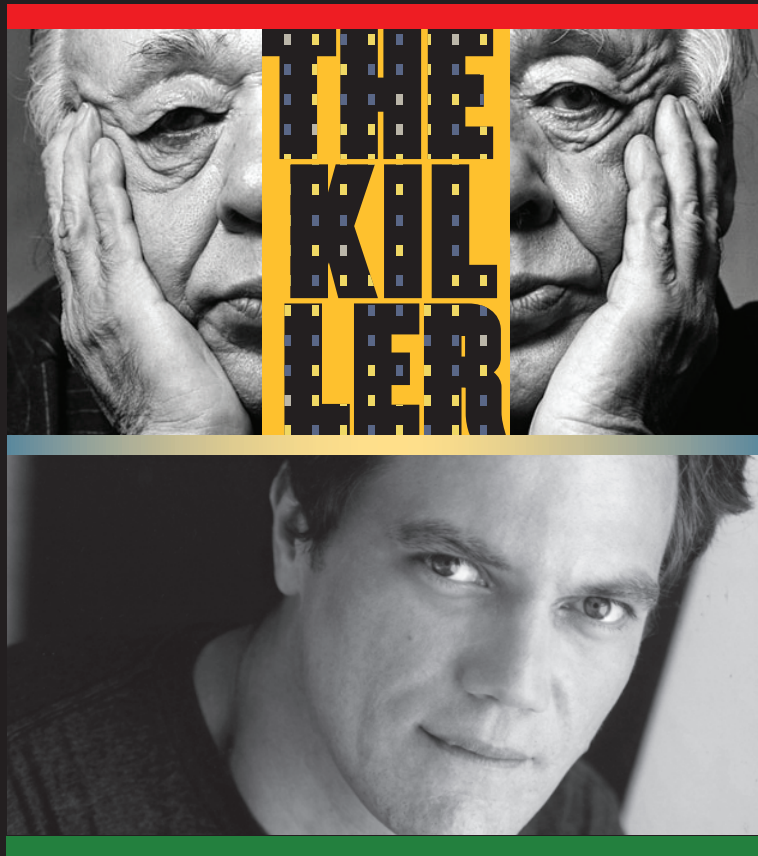


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"Theatre of the Absurd" by Charles Scott Jones, guest contributor.

The Killer 360° | Compiled and edited by: Carie Donnelson | Literary Advisor: Jonathan Kalb | Council of Scholars Chair: Richard C. McCoy | Additional research and editing by: Molly Yarn | Designed by: Milton Glaser, Inc. | Copyright 2014 by Theatre for a New Audience. All rights reserved. With the exception of classroom use by teachers and individual personal use, no part of this Viewfinder may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers. Some materials published herein are written especially for our guide. Others are reprinted by permission of their authors or publishers.

THE PLAY SYNOPSIS AND CHARACTERS

*Editor's note: Interpretations of the plays of Eugene Ionesco can vary widely depending on the translator, the reader, the listener, or the watcher. The following synopsis is a basic guide to the plot of *The Killer* (in French, *Tueur sans gages*), but should not be considered the final word on what actually happens—or does not happen—in the play.*

The Killer opens in the Radiant City, where Berenger, the play's central character, meets the Architect, who designed the City. The Radiant City seems perfect to Berenger, who believes he has found the ideal place that he has been dreaming of all his life. Berenger talks to the increasingly annoyed Architect until the Architect's assistant, Dennie, arrives. Berenger falls in love with Dennie at first sight and implores her to marry him. Dennie, who has just quit her job, ignores both Berenger's proposal and the warnings of the Architect that if she no longer works for the civil service, they will be unable to protect her.

After Dennie leaves, Berenger begins to feel uneasy, and the Architect finally admits that not all is as it seems in the Radiant City. The Architect shows him a beautiful water feature where Berenger sees three dead bodies floating in the water. The city, explains the Architect, is plagued by an unstoppable and indiscriminate killer, known as The Killer. His dreams of the Radiant City crushed, Berenger returns home, but not before learning that Dennie has fallen victim to The Killer.

The play shifts to Berenger's dismal apartment, where his friend Edward awaits his return. While Edward waits, a chorus of city voices, led by Berenger's Concierge, rises up unseen around him. When Berenger finally enters, he discovers, to his shock, that Edward's briefcase contains what seems to be materials from The Killer. Berenger insists that Edward accompany him to turn over what could be crucial evidence to the police, but does not notice that Edward forgets the briefcase in the apartment.

On their way to the police station, they are caught up in a political rally led by Ma Piper. Berenger realizes that Edward does not have the briefcase, and becomes so confused that he imagines every briefcase he sees to be the one containing the evidence. Left alone when Edward leaves, Berenger wanders the city until he encounters The Killer. He desperately tries to convince The Killer to stop murdering people, but gradually becomes overwhelmed by the futility of the argument. Lost in his own words and mired in despair, Berenger drops his own weapon and surrenders. The play closes as The Killer, knife in hand, approaches the defeated Berenger.

Characters, Voices, Shadows

BERENGER, *a middle-aged, middle-class citizen*

THE ARCHITECT, *old like a bureaucrat, old without aging*

DENNIE, *a young typist, conventional pin-up girl*

THE BUM, *a drunk*

BARTENDER, *middle-aged, fat, dark-haired, hairy*

EDWARD, *age 35, thin, feverish temperament, wears dark clothes, in mourning*

CONCIERGE, *a typical concierge (first heard as an offstage voice)*

OFFSTAGE VOICES:

CONCIERGE'S DOG

TWO MEN

CAB DRIVER

TWO OLD MEN

GROCER

OFFSTAGE VOICES

SCHOOLMASTER

1ST VOICE FROM THE STREET

2ND VOICE FROM THE STREET

3RD VOICE FROM THE STREET

4TH VOICE FROM THE STREET

TWO VOICES FROM

DOWNSTAIRS

VOICE FROM RIGHT

VOICE FROM ABOVE

TWO VOICES FROM LEFT

A WOMAN'S VOICE, *in the entrance hall*

SHADOW OF MAN ON

MOTORCYCLE

POSTMAN

MA PIPER [sometimes translated to Ma Peeps]

DRUNK MAN, *in top hat and tailcoat*

OLD GENT, *with a white goatee*

1ST POLICEMAN

YOUNG SOLDIER, *carrying a bouquet of red carnations*

2ND POLICEMAN

THE KILLER

THE PLAY THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

Eugene Ionesco has been aligned with absurdism since the Theatre of the Absurd as a category was popularized by Martin Esslin in his influential critical work of the same name. First published in 1962, with two new editions since then, *The Theatre of the Absurd* is a study of post-World War II dramatists living in France who wrote anti-theatrical plays that defied audience expectations. Its main figures are Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov. Later, Esslin added Harold Pinter to his first tier of absurdists.

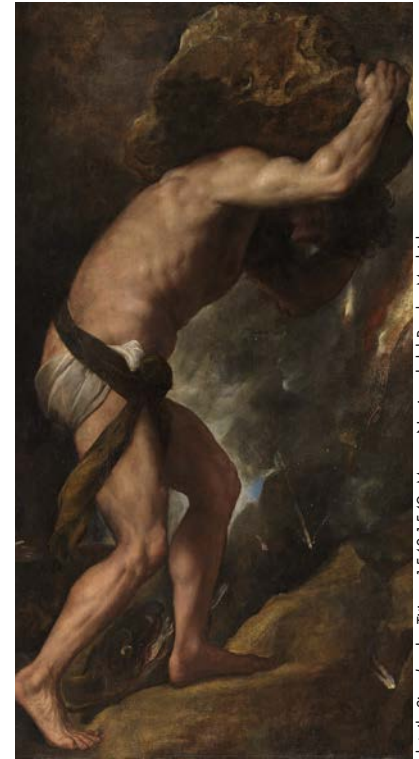
Esslin traces the origins of absurdist theatre to Albert Camus's philosophical treatise, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) written during the Nazi occupation of Paris. Camus equates the human condition with the plight of Sisyphus, his endless struggle to push a boulder uphill only to have it roll back down once he nears the top. In *Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus states:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.¹

The absurdist label, however, was not enjoyed by its alleged practitioners. Ionesco complained that “absurd” was a fashionable term “vague enough to mean nothing anymore and to be an easy definition of anything.” He considered the world “not absurd, but incredible.”² Adamov was even more adamantly opposed to the label and wrote, “Life is not absurd, only difficult, very difficult.”³ Beckett commented that it was “about as vague as Cubism and Fauvism.”⁴ In general, the authors who were deemed absurdists felt that the Theatre of the Absurd was too broad and that it included just about any dramatist of the time whose plays were deemed anti-theatrical. Critic Hugh Kenner objected because the “ad hoc category” didn't align Beckett with any literary tradition.⁵ Esslin, in the revised preface of the 1968 edition of *Theatre of the Absurd*, wonders if he should feel pride, or hide his head in shame.

Still, the label has become part of the popular vocabulary and it is useful. Marvin Carlson points out that Beckett, Ionesco, and the early Adamov were not united by a commonly held attitude toward existence, but by what they rejected in their stage practice: “the accepted conventions of the traditional French theatre, the emphasis upon the word, the linkage of cause and effect, a bias toward realism, and the psychological development of character.”⁶

Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, written in 1948 and produced in 1950, was the first



detail, *Sisyphus* by Titian, 1548-1549; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

1 *The Myth of Sisyphus* quote from Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Third Edition. New York: Vintage Books, 2004. 23.

2 Ionesco, Eugene. *Notes and Counternotes*. trans. Donald Watson. London: John Calder, 1964. 224.

3 Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greek to the Present*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984. 411.

4 Ackerly, C. J. and S. E. Gontarski, eds., *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to his Works, Life, and Thought*. New York: Grove Press, 2004. 3.

5 Ackerly 3.

6 Carlson 412.

THE PLAY THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

important absurdist play produced after the war. About the genesis of *The Bald Soprano*, Ionesco wrote that he did not set out to be a dramatist. He set out to learn English and failed. And out of his failure to learn English, he wrote a play.¹ Unlike the contrite Beckett who almost never gave interviews, Ionesco was no stranger to expounding theatre theory, something he excelled at. Commenting about his process as a dramatist in 1954, he said his goal was to strip the action of “all that is particular to it: the plot, the accidental characteristics of the characters, their names, their social setting and historical background, the apparent reasons for the dramatic conflict.” Freed from the distraction of “social crust and discursive thought,” he could focus on “theatre from within.” This inside-out strategy of writing for the stage is what Beckett pulled off masterfully in his later work.²

The most celebrated play in *The Theatre of the Absurd* is *Waiting for Godot*. Within five years of its modest beginning in 1953 at the small Theatre of Babylon in Paris, it was translated into more than twenty languages and seen by more than a million spectators worldwide. In 1957, the San Francisco Actors’ Workshop performed *Godot* for fourteen hundred convicts at San Quentin Penitentiary. The director Herbert Blau, unsure of how the audience would receive *Godot*, introduced the play by comparing it to jazz, “to which one must listen for whatever one may find in it.” And, as Esslin details in the Introduction of his book, the inmates understood the play from knowing so well what it was to wait and wait and wait.³

Plays with the absurdist label are still popular today. Within recent memory *Waiting for Godot*, Pinter’s *The Homecoming*, and Ionesco’s *Exit the King* have all been on Broadway. To some extent the methods of these three playwrights have been absorbed into contemporary playwriting. What separates the work of Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter from other 20th-century playwrights are their hidden subjects and how they present them. In Pinter’s first play *The Room*, the playwright introduces the Kafka-inspired tension evident in his work: an escalating fear between two people waiting in a room for an outside intruder to enter.⁴ The subject of Beckett’s plays is expressed in the prose-poem “Neither”: our collective identity crisis, the human compulsion for wandering and searching and not quite finding “the unspeakable home.” At age eleven, Ionesco wrote a play about seven or eight children who have tea together, then smash all the cups, the plates, and all the furniture, and finally throw their parents out the windows. Ionesco admitted in an interview that this pattern of acceleration, proliferation, and destruction was a part of a personal rhythm reflected in much of his work.⁵ Darko Tresnjak, director of Theatre for a New Audience’s new production of *The Killer*, admitted on the first day of rehearsal that he had no idea into what genre the play fit. Perhaps this lack of genre—or lack of a feeling of a genre or immediately recognizable conventions—is exactly what Camus’ “feeling of absurdity” is all about.



detail, *Rhinoceros* by George Stubbs, 1790–1792; The Royal College of Surgeons of England, Hunterian Museum, London

1 Ionesco 181.

2 Carlson 412.

3 Esslin 19.

4 Esslin 235.

5 Bonnefoy, Claude. *Conversations with Eugene Ionesco*. Trans. Jan Dawson. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970. 57.

THE PLAY DOUBT AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN POSTWAR FRANCE

In his 1922 modernist masterpiece *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot evoked a powerful sense of uncertainty and desolation:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images...

These lines, born out of the devastation of World War I as well as Eliot's own personal experiences, express a sentiment that only intensified in Europe in the years leading up to and following World War II. In the final act of *The Killer*, written in 1957, Berenger makes a confession during his desperate appeal to the Killer himself:

I myself, very often, doubt everything. Please don't ever tell anybody.
I doubt that life has any purpose, or that it makes any sense, that my morals or politics mean anything at all. I don't know what I have to hold on to any longer, there's no truth and maybe there's no love.

Within the first fifty years of the twentieth century, Europe experienced an influenza pandemic, economic depression, and two wars, the brutality of which undermined even the most basic tenets of justice and human virtue. Many believed that the future held more of the same, that a third world war was just around the corner.¹ The social, political, and economic realities of postwar France shaped the philosophical and literary movements out of which Ionesco's plays emerged.

In material terms, the war left France's infrastructure in ruins. The German occupiers, the French resistance, and the Allied liberators destroyed roads, tracks, bridges, ships, and trains. One historian estimates that in just the last year of the war, 500,000 homes were destroyed.² The number of displaced persons, as they were termed by officials, was staggering. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the survivors of concentration camps, refugees, and homeless citizens had nowhere to go, and there was no money to rebuild. Even so, the very nature of the war caused the most subtle, and perhaps the most pernicious, damage. Tony Judt writes that the occupying Nazis "discouraged not just allegiance to the defunct authority of the previous regime or state, but any sense of civility or bond between individuals, and on the whole they were successful."³ Within occupied France, most of the population cooperated with the Nazis. Many people informed on their neighbors to the authorities, often as retribution for past disagreements or in the hopes of gaining advantages under the new regime. The Vichy government, which oversaw France under Nazi supervision after the German invasion in 1940, passed anti-Semitic laws in keeping with German policies, interning its own citizens and eventually cooperating in the capture and transfer of Jews and other "undesirables" to the extermination camps.⁴

¹ Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005. 326.

² Judt 7.

³ Judt 37.

⁴ Beevor, Anthony, and Artemis Cooper. *Paris: After the Liberation, 1944-1949*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. 12.



detail, *Champs de Mars*: The Red Tower by Robert Delaunay, 1911/23; Chicago Institute of Art, Chicago.

THE PLAY DOUBT AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN POSTWAR FRANCE

In the wake of liberation, an estimated 10,000 people were murdered by their fellow citizens for collaborating with the Nazis.¹ Feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir wrote that “vengeance is pointless, but certain men did not have a place in the world we sought to construct.”² Crowds shaved the heads of women accused of sleeping with Germans, dragging them through their towns for public humiliation and reprisals. The restored French government created a new law with which to charge collaborators which they called *indignité nationale*, or “national unworthiness.” This law stripped the convicted of the major rights of French citizens.³ The news of the concentration camps struck a particularly hard blow. *New Yorker* correspondent Janet Flanner wrote in 1945 that “much of the comfort that should have arrived automatically with the peace has been lost in the news of the German concentration camps, which, arriving near the end of the war, suddenly became the most important news of all its nearly six years of conquests, defeats, campaigns, and final victories. The stench of human wreckage in which the Nazi regime finally sank down to defeat has been the most shocking fact of modern times.”⁴

Despite the initial bloodthirsty vigilante response, wartime collaboration had been so widespread in France that very few people were officially punished, much less executed, for their crimes. Even many of the presiding judges had spotty wartime records, resulting in a sense of hypocrisy surrounding the trials.⁵ How could these few offenders be effectively and justly punished when equally guilty people walked free, and even continued to hold official public office? Whatever the ideological ramifications, pragmatism demanded that every qualified person available be employed to rebuild the state, no matter what their actions had been during the occupation. France’s capitulation to and cooperation with the Nazis left the French population with a lingering and overwhelming sense of shame, and the realities of recovery precluded any opportunity for an effective exorcism of this national guilt.

In 1945, Jean-Paul Sartre explained that “in the space of five years [the French] have acquired a formidable inferiority complex.”⁶ This resulted in a complicated and decidedly mixed attitude towards the economic aid offered by the Marshall plan that ultimately facilitated the country’s economic recovery. The “myth of resistance” became an important rallying point of national pride, despite the extremely low percentage of the population that actually participated in armed resistance.⁷ By 1957, when Ionesco wrote *The Killer*, France’s problems had evolved, but not diminished. The Fourth Republic proved remarkably



Tile Unknown by Max Yves Tanguy, 1926; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

1 Within the general confusion surrounding the Occupation and Liberation periods, a real serial killer emerged in Paris. Dr. Marcel Petiot posed as a member of the Resistance, luring Jewish families in with the promise of escape from France, but killing them instead. Even when the murders were discovered, Petiot insisted that his victims had all been collaborators who deserved their fates. Although the exact numbers are unknown, he probably killed around 60 people. David King chronicled the complete story in his book *Death in the City of Light: The Serial Killer of Nazi-Occupied Paris*.

2 Judt 41-42. Although famous in her own right both then and now as the author of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir was also the longterm partner of Jean-Paul Sartre.

3 Beevor 105.

4 Flanner, Janet. *Paris Journal, 1944-1965*. Ed. Shawn, William. New York: Atheneum, 1965. p 27-28.

5 Judt 46.

6 Judt 100.

7 Judt 41.

THE PLAY DOUBT AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN POSTWAR FRANCE

unstable; scarcely had a new Premier established a government than the General Assembly voted to overturn it.¹ During the 1950s, although the economy had finally entered a postwar boom, France's colonial holdings in Africa and Asia, which had sustained it during the war and continued to bolster a sense of international importance, began to collapse.² Algeria in particular, where the French waged a bloody war against native Algerians who sought independence, became a source of embarrassment for the French government and of shame for many conscientious French citizens. The reality of a state whose rallying cry had long been "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*" refusing to extend those rights to other nations held an undeniable note of absurdity. The tenuous Fourth Republic, having undergone twenty-one official changes of government and now facing a possible military coup, finally collapsed in 1958.

During the post-World War II period, the glamor and mystique of Paris, which had protected it from destruction even by the Nazis, reasserted itself, and the city once more drew intellectuals, artists, writers, and philosophers from all over the world into its orbit.³ In Europe, Russia, and Asia, which bore the brunt of the war's violence and destruction, survivors struggled both materially and psychologically. The continental art, literature, and philosophy of this period reflect a worldview marked by inestimable suffering and unimaginable betrayals of human decency. Janet Flanner described the state of many intellectuals returning to France from the concentration camps: "Some of the best and most highly educated brains of France, after imprisonment in Germany, are now being returned, ripened by isolation, suffering, hope, and misinformation."⁴ No wonder, then, that these minds contributed to the continued evolution of such movements as existentialism, surrealism, and absurdism. France in particular nursed the complicated scars of occupation and collaboration along with the more prosaic costs of war. Absurdist playwright Arthur Adamov wrote that his goal was "to tear way all the dead skin, to strip oneself to the point of finding oneself at the hour of the great nakedness."⁵ Flanner describes, rather simplistically but not unsympathetically, Jean-Paul Sartre's form of existentialism as having been "founded on a disgust for humanity."⁶ How could it not be? World War II, in many ways, had reduced France to that terrifying moment of "great nakedness."

Perhaps more than a disgust for humanity, however, these movements encapsulated a sense of doubt and a questioning of truths that had previously been considered infallible. They involved the breaking down of old establishments. Surrealism, headed by thinkers such as André Breton, Salvador Dali, and Antonin Artaud, explicitly embraced jarring imagery in an effort to



On the Threshold of Liberty by René Magritte, 1937; Chicago Institute of Art, Chicago, © 2014 C. Herscovici, London / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

1 Flanner 299. The Fourth Republic is so named because it was established by the fourth republican constitution adopted by France since the Revolution of the late 18th century. Interspersed among the republics were various empires and restored monarchies. The current government of France is the Fifth Republic. During the Fourth Republic, the president played a largely symbolic role. Just as the Queen of England invites a Prime Minister to form a government, the President of France invited a Premier, chosen by the General Assembly, to create a government.

2 Judt 278.

3 Judt 210.

4 Flanner 29.

5 Gaensbauer, Deborah B. *Eugene Ionesco Revisited*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996. 53.

6 Flanner 49.

THE PLAY DOUBT AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN POSTWAR FRANCE

shake the viewer's complacency. Although Eugène Ionesco identified strongly with the Surrealists, most critics follow the lead of Martin Esslin and group him with the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd.¹ The concept of the absurd dates back to one of existentialism's spiritual predecessors, Søren Kierkegaard. Writer Albert Camus, a central figure in absurdism, sums up the idea in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." Absurdist playwrights attempted to invoke and highlight this paradox; in Ionesco's own words, he "destroys language...with too much language, with characters talking at random, and by inventing words."² By doing so, they force the audience to question their comfortable assumptions.

Just as Shakespearean tragedies often promise a return to order after the bloodshed of Act 5, the liberation of Europe brought with it hope for a new era of peace. In reality, however, life goes on after Act 5, and is often bittersweet. These stories are more rarely told. Poets prefer the drama of war and the glories of prosperity to the disappointments and mundanities of reconstruction. Part of Ionesco's genius lies in the glorification and subversion of the mundane, however, making him the perfect voice for his time. While one should hesitate to take pure, unvarnished truth from an Ionesco quote out of context, the temptation to assign certain sentiments to Ionesco himself feels almost irresistible. In *The Killer*, the only man brave enough to voice dissent at Ma Piper's rally claims that

...science and art have done way more to change how we think than politics has. The real revolution is happening in research labs and in artists' studios. Einstein, Oppenheimer, André Breton, Kandinsky, Picasso, Pavlov – they're the ones who truly altered our lives. They widened the field of our awareness, renewed our vision of the world, they transformed us...Penicillin and the fight against alcoholism are much more effective than changes of government.

For a skeptic like Ionesco, after a lifetime of war and political instability, art, with its irreverence, its doubts, and all its contradictions, provides the only sure way forward in an uncertain world.



Fixed Points by Wassily Kandinsky, 1942; Private Collection

1 Classifying Eugene Ionesco, and indeed many other artists of the period, is complicated by Ionesco's own refusal to be pigeon-holed into one particular philosophy or movement. He specifically rejects existentialism, and suggests that his own work would be better defined as "theatre of derision" rather than "theatre of the absurd." Guppy, Shusha. "Interview: Eugene Ionesco, the Art of Theatre No. 6." *Paris Review*.93 (1984).

2 Guppy, Shusha. "Interview: Eugene Ionesco, the Art of Theatre No. 6." *Paris Review*.93 (1984).

THE PLAY PERSPECTIVES

The following quotes are selected perspectives on the play from notable scholars and artists.

“When a murder is in the paulo-post-futurum tense, and a rumor of it comes to our ears, by all means let us treat it morally. But suppose it over and done, and...suppose the poor murdered man to be out of his pain, and the rascal that did it off like a shot, nobody knows whither; suppose, lastly, that we have done our best, by putting out our legs to trip up the fellow in his flight, but all to no purpose—“abiit, evasit,” &c. [he’s gone, he’s escaped]—why, then, I say, what’s the use of any more virtue? Enough has been given to morality; now comes the turn of Taste and the Fine Arts. A sad thing it was, no doubt, very sad; but we can’t mend it. Therefore let us make the best of a bad matter; and, as it is impossible to hammer anything out of it for moral purposes, let us treat it aesthetically, and see if it will turn to account in that way.”

—THOMAS DE QUINCEY, “MURDER, CONSIDERED AS ONE OF THE FINE ARTS” (1827)

“People like killers. And if one feels sympathy for the victims it’s by way of thanking them for letting themselves be killed.”

—IONESCO, *PRESENT PAST, PAST PRESENT* (1968)

“And what right do you have to get others to incarnate your dreams, to materialize your images; what right do you have to invent characters and worlds? Are fictions ‘true’? They are so true that only literature, poetry, painting, and theater are engaged in down through the ages in all corners of the earth. One speaks only of imaginary characters, one writes a little literature and more literature about literature and literature about the literature of literature. Works on psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, metaphysics, esthetics, of course, and the philosophy of culture are almost all based on works of the imagination.”

—*PRESENT PAST, PAST PRESENT*

“I was about seventeen or eighteen. I was in a provincial town. It was in June, around mid-day. I was walking down one of the streets in this very quiet town. Suddenly it seemed to me that the world was both retreating and moving closer at the same time, or rather that the world had moved away from me, that I was in another world, more mine than the old one, and infinitely more light; the dogs in the courtyards were barking as I passed by in the street, but it was as though their barking had suddenly become melodious, or fainter, as if it were muffled; it seemed to me that the sky had become extremely dense, that the light was almost palpable, that the houses had a brightness I had never seen before, an unaccustomed brightness, free from the weight of custom. It’s very difficult to define it; perhaps the easiest thing to say is that I felt an enormous joy, I felt that I had understood something fundamental; that something very important had happened to me. At that moment, I said to myself ‘I’m not afraid of death any more.’ . . . I remember those moments because I’ve repeated them to myself, wanted to keep them alive in my memory. But I’ve never managed to ‘live’ them again.”

—IONESCO INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDE BONNEFOY (1966)



detail, *He Killed His Father in a Fight* by Walter Sickert, c.1900; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

THE PLAY PERSPECTIVES

“A lot of people have misunderstood *The Killer*. In the first act, Berenger enters a radiant city. In a world that has been disfigured, he discovers a world transformed; he regains paradise after leaving the rainy town, after leaving the world of limbo...It’s degradation, the fall...it’s original sin, in other words, a slackening of attention, of the strength with which one looks at things; or again in other words, it’s losing the faculty of wonderment; oblivion; the paralysis bred by habit. Familiarity is a grey cover beneath which we hide the world’s virginity; that’s what original sin is about—when you know what things are, but can no longer recognize anything, can no longer recognize yourself. It’s also the introduction of evil into the world. Nobody came close to understanding the play in this way. The critics said that it was not in fact about a radiant city, or rather, that this radiant city was the modern city, industrial and technological, probably because of Le Corbusier’s Radiant City in Marseilles. For me, the ‘radiant’ city means a city ‘shining with light.’ Some people also said that this radiant city was not a happy city since a criminal could enter it and flourish in it. That’s quite wrong. It was a very happy city that had been entered by a destructive spirit.”

—INTERVIEW WITH BONNEFOY

“We kill one another because we know that we shall all be killed. It’s out of hatred for death that we kill each other. Socrates’ death, so peaceful and serene, seems to me quite improbable.”

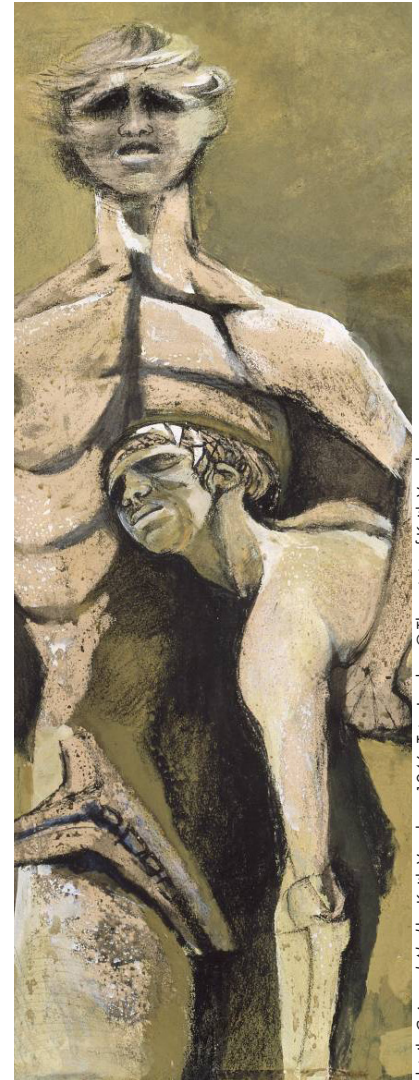
—IONESCO, *FRAGMENTS OF A JOURNAL* (1967)

“The greatest crime of all is homicide. Cain kills Abel. That’s the crime par excellence. And we keep on killing. I have to kill my obvious enemy, the one who is trying to put me to death, in order that he shall not kill me. In killing him I find relief, for I am obscurely aware that I have killed Death. I am not responsible for his death, I can feel no anxiety on that account, if I have killed my adversary with the approval of the community; that’s what wars are for, to enable one to kill with a clear conscience. By killing I exorcise my own death; the act of killing is part of a magic rite.”

—*FRAGMENTS OF A JOURNAL*

“[A dream.] I am a murderer, I have killed children. I am not the only person accused; Beckett, too, is accused, as well as a third dramatist, Pinter maybe or Genet, whom I see melting away and vanishing into a grey cloudless sky. Beckett acknowledges his crimes, he is unrepentant, hard-faced, he will kill more children if no one stops him. But I am seized with remorse, ravaged by an overwhelming sense of guilt. And yet I have killed no children. Or else I have killed them unintentionally. Or else I may have wanted to kill them, for who does not sometimes want to kill children? But I never carried out my intentions. The proof is that each time I felt tempted to kill children, or killed any by mistake, I sent for the police myself.”

—*FRAGMENTS OF A JOURNAL*



detail, *Cain and Abel* by Keith Vaughan, 1946; Tate, London, © The estate of Keith Vaughan

THE PLAY SELECTED PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Editor's note: Since it was written in 1957, The Killer has been performed in France and other European countries, in French and in translation. The following selected performance history is based on "Eugène Ionesco's Theatre: Play by Play - Tueur sans gages [The Killer]" by Søren Olsen¹.

- 1958 World Premiere of "Mörder ohne Bezahlung" (*The Killer*) at Landestheater in Darmstadt, Germany. It is directed by Gustav Rudolf Sellner.
- 1959 Ionesco's full version of *Tueur sans gages* premieres at Théâtre Récamier in Paris. It is directed by José Quaglio, with sets designed by Jacque Noël and costumes designed by Jacques Noël and Rita Bayance. Claude Nicot plays Bérenger, Jean-Marie Serreau plays the Architect.
- 1960 *The Killer* premieres off-Broadway at the Seven Arts Theatre, New York. It is directed by Richard Barr and stars Hiram Sherman as Berenger. The sets are designed by Ilse Getz, music by Allan Kaprow, and movement by Todd Bolender. It receives mixed reviews from critics and closes quickly. Of the production, Barr says:
To begin with, it was the first evening-length Ionesco play produced in the United States; it was the first to use electronic music...it was the first to use the work of a modern sculptor as a backdrop, and it was certainly one of the first to use Artaud's theory that the action of the play should surround the audience.²
- 1961 *The Killer* premieres at Tower Theatre in Canonbury, London. It is directed by Michael Almaz and translated by Donald Watson.
- 1968 "Uciğaș fără simbrie" premieres in Ionesco's native Romania at Teatrul de Comedie, Bucharest. It is directed by Lucian Ghiurchescu.
- 1972 *The Killer* is produced at the University of Notre Dame is directed by Reginald F. Bain, with music by Mark Genero. Christopher Ceraso plays Berenger.
- 1975 *Tueur sans gages* is produced for French television by Jean Paul Roux, and directed by Jacques Mauclair, who also plays Bérenger.
- 1986 A revival of *Tueur sans gages* plays at l' Athletic-Théâtre, Neuilly sur Seine in Paris. It is directed by René Bocquier, with sets and costumes by Alaine Baliteau, lighting design by Remi Larmand, sound design by Pascal Wojciechowski. René Bocquier also performs in the role of Bérenger.
- 1995 EXIT Theatre of San Francisco presents *The Killer* as part of a decades-long presentation of the plays of Ionesco. It is directed by Barbe Stein and features Brian Linden, Andres Miskow, S. Sanders, Larry Spindler.
- 1998 The Red Orchid Theatre in Chicago presents *The Killer*, directed by Danny Torbica. Michael Shannon plays Berenger.
- 2001 Untitled Theater Company produces an Ionesco Festival in which *The Killer* is presented by The Nighthouse Company at The Present Company Theatorium, New York. The play is directed by David Gaard.
- 2014 Theatre for a New Audience commissions a new translation of *The Killer* by Michael Feingold to be directed by Darko Tresnjak at Polonsky Shakespeare Center in Brooklyn. Michael Shannon returns to the role of Berenger.



detail, Original set design by Jacque Noël, *Tours sans gages*, 1959

¹ Olsen, Søren. *Ionesco*. <http://www.ionesco.org/oeuvres-en.html>

² In *Richard Barr: The Playwright's Producer* by David A. Crespy (SIU Press, 2013). Pages 95-96.

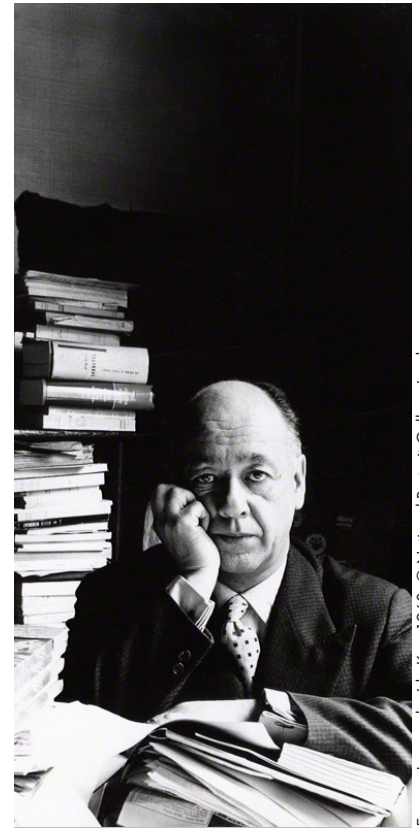
THE PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHY

One of the 20th century's most acclaimed and enduringly mysterious playwrights, Ionesco was a Romanian who spent most of his life in France and wrote mostly in French. Born in the provincial town of Slatina, he was brought to Paris at age 2 when his father enrolled in law school there. His father left for Bucharest in 1916, ostensibly to fight in WW I, and never returned, allowing his family to believe he had been killed. In 1922 he used forged documents to obtain a divorce and legal custody of his children, then insisted that Eugène and his younger sister come live with him and his new wife. Forced to leave his beloved mother and learn Romanian at age 13, Ionesco deeply resented this arrangement. The father's moral cowardice—particularly the later legalistic rationales by which he accommodated himself to the rise of Romanian fascism in the 1930s—would figure importantly in the son's writings.

Ionesco graduated from Bucharest University with a degree in French literature and showed early talent as an arts journalist and literary critic. Yet in the Dadaist spirit of his compatriot Tristan Tzara, he merrily skewered artistic respectability, publishing an essay collection *Nu (No)* at age 21 that described Romania's greatest literary lions as pompous windbags and fools and calling literary criticism “nothing but a game.” This juxtaposition of clownish, nihilistic mockery and sharp, learned seriousness would mark his entire oeuvre. Ionesco returned to France in 1939 to pursue a doctorate in literature (never finished) and settled in Paris after the war with his wife and newborn daughter.

He first burst onto the theater scene in 1950 with a hilarious, aggressively nonrealistic work called *The Bald Soprano*, inspired by the absurdly simple and obvious statements in an English conversation textbook he had used. Together with *The Lesson*, this play has been running continuously at a small Paris theater for more than 60 years. Ionesco wrote four other “anti-plays” in this same vein—*The Chairs*, *Jack*, or *The Submission*, *Victims of Duty*, and *The New Tenant*—all with similarly unexplained cyclical repetitions, accelerating rhythms, and illogical dialogue. *The Killer*, written in 1957, is the first of his four plays featuring the hapless, inadvertently heroic Everyman-character Berenger (the others are *A Stroll in the Air*, *Exit the King* and his most popular play *Rhinoceros*).

Ionesco ultimately wrote 28 plays as well as novels, short stories, and essays. He often said he was haunted by a terror of death and meaninglessness, and was extremely eloquent about that in his extraordinarily moving philosophical memoirs *Fragments of a Journal* and *Present Past, Past Present*. He once described his writing as an effort “not to die completely, not to disappear all at once, although everything must perish in the end.” In old age he turned to painting as his preferred form of “therapeutic” artistic expression.



Eugene Ionesco by Ida Kar, 1960; © National Portrait Gallery, London

DIALOGUES IONESCO

ROSETTE C. LAMONT

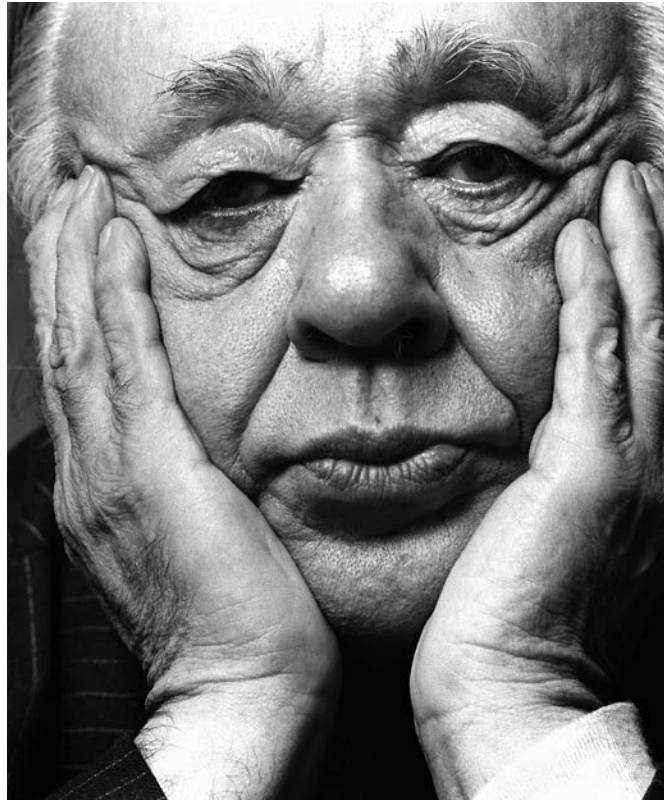
In June 1959 in the course of a talk that inaugurated the *Helsinki Debates on the Avant-Garde Theatre*, Ionesco made the following declaration:

It has been said that what distinguishes man from the other animals is that he is the animal that laughs; he is above all the animal that creates. He introduces into the world things which were not there before: temples and rabbit hutches, wheelbarrows, locomotives, symphonies, poems, cathedrals and cigarettes. The usefulness of all these things is often only a pretext. What is the use of existing? To exist. What is the use of a flower? To be a flower. Of what use is a temple or a cathedral? To house the faithful? I doubt it, since the temples are no longer used and we still admire them. They serve to reveal to us the laws of architecture, and perhaps of universal construction, which are apparently reflected in our mind since the mind discovers these laws within itself.

For the playwright, a work of art is an autonomous universe, governed by its own laws. It is not an imitation of what we call our world, nor is it totally unlike that world; one could say that it is a self-contained construct, parallel to ours.

How do we as readers, or viewers of plays, approach and understand this strange world? It could be said that we are like a person who enters an unfamiliar house. We wander from room to room, floor to floor, sometimes in the dark, till, gradually, we get to know where the hallway leads, what is behind each door, how the architect has apportioned space, and what materials he has used. If this house is well put together we may linger, and if it speaks to us, fills us with its peculiar charm, we may be inclined to dwell there forever, or at least to return to it frequently. If we are teachers, or critics, or both, we will describe this home, lovingly, wishing to draw our friends' attention to cunning detail of the moulding, to a secret passage between rooms, or simply to the soundness of the whole construction.

On the surface Ionescoland is deceptively like our own. The modest clerks, mailmen, police officers, *concierges*, maids, married couples, maidens to marry, and apprehensive bachelors are the very people we see and overhear on the streets of Paris every day. We are lulled into believing there will



Eugene Ionesco; photo by Norman Seeff

be no surprises. One of the creators of Surrealism, Philippe Soupault, writes in a special Ionesco issue of *Les Cahiers des Saisons* (Hiver 1959) of Ionesco's "natural tone." The same Soupault, however, recognizes a younger brother, or an heir, when he suggests: "Eugene Ionesco, perhaps without meaning to, unleashes something scandalous the moment actors agree to speak his lines as he has written them." (p. 230) Is it because of the playwright's inner search for sincerity, his desire to reach a truth beyond that of so-called reality? Is it because, as Pierre-Aime Touchard says in the same issue of the review, Ionesco has re-invented and resurrected myths? At any rate, we realize quite soon that the overstuffed pieces of furniture so much like the ones we inherited from aunt Marie, the clichés which pass for conversation, have deceived us into believing we knew exactly where we were. We are actually on the other side of the looking glass. There, one is condemned to run as fast as one can just to stay in place. Under our feet the earth sinks, the air sucks us up. The low fire we started in the fireplace to warm our bones becomes a conflagration, engulfs our planet. A little affection turns into

an ocean of eros and drowns us. The four elements fuse into “deserts of ice, deserts of fire battling with each other and all coming slowly towards us ...” (*The Stroller in Air*). We have awakened in the world of our private nightmares, issuing from a very ancient deposit to which all mankind may lay claim. This universe of myth, the crystallization of a poet’s meditation, is as intimate as the secret recesses of our bodies, and as wide as the unconfined reaches of our dreams.

It took a while for Eugene Ionesco to become Ionesco. He was thirty-eight years old when his first play, *The Bald Soprano*, was presented to a very small public at the *Noctambules* theatre. It was not written as a play, but as a kind of exercise coming out of the future playwright’s painful attempts to master the English language. Using the *Assimil* conversation method, Ionesco found himself in the company of an English couple, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. The Smiths seemed to find it necessary to inform one another that the ceiling was overhead, the floor underfoot, the week made up of seven days, and that they were having a fine English meal served by their maid Mary. It was at this point in the textbook reading that Ionesco was possessed by a strange excitement, utterly out of proportion either with the discussion held by this dull couple, or the task of learning English. Dizzy, as though he had received a solid knock on the head, the would-be student had to lie down, and not unlike the narrator of Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, turn within in search of reasons for his rapture. Intelligence soon registered that what had happened was a take-over by the characters of *L’Anglais tel qu’on le parle*; the latter were writing their own lines. Thus what had begun as a didactic form of plagiarism obeyed, all of a sudden, mysterious laws surging from some dark night of the soul. Ionesco’s *Discours de la Methode* which he had considered calling *English Made Easy* or *The English Hour* kept on growing into a distorted vision: worthy bourgeois couples, struck with amnesia, failed to recognize one another even upon discovering they shared the same room and bed; inhabitants of a city—“men, women, children, cats and ideologists”—were all called Bobby Watson. To add to this confusion, “a fifth and unexpected character turned up to cause more trouble between the peaceable couples: The Captain of the Fire Brigade.” The announcement of this emergence must have failed to surprise Ionesco’s Italian audience at the French Institute where he was explaining, in 1958, the

genesis of his play. In Italy the Captain of the Fire Brigade has a famous predecessor. Madame Pace, a dressmaker in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* whose shop is also a brothel, appears out of nowhere at the moment the Daughter relives before us the incestuous encounter with the Stepfather. Pirandello’s character “comes to birth,” evoked by the sheer magic of dramatic re-enactment. In *The Bald Soprano*, as in Pirandello’s play, the strange happenings serve to sever the drama and the author from the habitual, an element in which most of us are constantly immersed as in some tepid bath. To be “bludgeoned” (*Notes and Counter Notes*, p. 26) out of our natural mental sloth, we must be ready to endure the dangers of anarchic humor whose cathartic violence mingles with that brought about by the feelings of pity and terror. From then on, Ionesco was committed to the wild exaggerations of parody, for in the creation of what he had assumed was “a comedy on comedy,” he had actually written “the tragedy of language.”

Ionesco’s plays are neither tragedies nor comedies but tragicomedies or cornitragedies. Since 186 B.C., when Plautus spoke of *tragicocomoedia* in his *Amphitryon*, the clearly separated genres began to come together. Till our own era, however, this meant that comic scenes came to relieve tragic events. Today, an interfusion has occurred lending comic coloring to tragic happenings and somber coloring to comic ones. Like Gogol’s *Dead Souls*, the anti-plays of Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, Dubillard, Arrabal, and Weingarten elicit “laughter through tears.” In his essay, “Experience of the Theatre,” published in *Notes and Counter Notes*, Ionesco states:

It seems to me that the comic is tragic, and that the tragedy of man is pure derision. The contemporary critical mind takes nothing too seriously or too lightly. In *Victims of Duty* I tried to sink comedy in tragedy: in *The Chairs* tragedy in comedy, or, if you like, to confront comedy and tragedy in order to link them in a new dramatic synthesis. But it is not a true synthesis for these two elements do not coalesce, they coexist: one constantly repels the other, they show each other up, criticize and deny one another and, thanks to their opposition, thus succeed dynamically in maintaining a balance and creating tension. (p. 27)

It is becoming increasingly evident that this tragicomic mode expresses our ironic age. Comedy, which traditionally involved detachment and even a sense of superiority on the part of the viewer, who was not forced to imagine that such absurd reverses of fortune could happen to him, seems less and less likely to speak to a generation that has witnessed shifts in political ideologies, violent upheavals, the disappearance of societies, the genocidal annihilation of millions. We can no longer afford to be detached from the rest of humanity, though we tend to be detached from ourselves. This brings us closer to tragedy which, traditionally, presents to the viewer the fate of individual human beings, and thus an image of his own destiny. At the same time we are distanced from it by the fact that its usual hero, the personage in high position, is one that our modern era is wary of, seeing in him or her more often than not the destroyer, the embodiment of tyranny. Tragicomedy, on the other hand, presents basically ordinary characters, types we can identify with. Thus when Ionesco writes—“When the fallen Richard II is a prisoner in his cell, abandoned and alone, it is not Richard II I see there, but all the fallen kings of this world; and not only fallen kings, but also our beliefs and values, our unsanctified, corrupt and worn-out truths, the crumbling of civilizations, the march of destiny. When Richard II dies, it is really the death of all I hold most dear that I am watching; it is I who die with Richard II.” (*Notes and Counter Notes*, p. 31)—he gives a perfect definition of the meaning of tragedy. His own dying king, Berenger I, is a mixture of grotesque dignity and clownish fears; he is the common man facing dissolution. We laugh not *at* Berenger but at ourselves; we share his anxieties, his desperate clinging to life; we cry because he must die at the end of the play, and because we must die at the end of the play which is our life.

• • •

There are a number of different Ionescos. The author of *The Bald Soprano*, *The Lesson*, *Jack or Submission* sets in motion the mechanism of the theatre to portray aimless passions. Later in *Amedee*, even in *The Chairs*, metaphysical considerations are expressed by the motion of objects, the proliferation of matter. *Victim of Duty*, Ionesco's favorite drama, is confessional, *Hunger and Thirst*, allegorical. The most philosophic of Ionesco's plays is *Exit the King. Rhinoceros*,

The Killer, and *Macbett* are mostly political. Ionesco says over and over again that he is not a political writer. In “The London Controversy” which opposed Ionesco and Kenneth Tynan, one can follow the outlines of two programs. Tynan expresses fear at the thought that Ionesco's bleak new world may infect the age. An admirer of Brecht's Marxist theories, Tynan believes art and ideology interact and “spring from a common source.” In an answer which was never published by *The Observer* but which appears in *Notes and Counter Notes*, Ionesco makes his position dear: Tynan defends a narrow realism, socialist realism. True society is extrasocial. Socialist paradises have not been able to abolish, or even diminish the pain of living, the pain of death. What we have in common is our human condition. A revolution is a change in mentality; a language must be created to convey this change. Gradually what Tynan “calls anti-reality (becomes) clear, ... the incommunicable (is) communicated.” Man is not a social function; he is a solitude. Only by probing that solitary state, and bringing to the stage some of the images crystallizing at the bottom of the soul, do we rejoin other human beings.

Though Ionesco may not admit to it, he is passionately interested in politics. His view is not narrow; he neither preaches nor teaches, but he is always ready to denounce the cruelties of so-called ideologies, the inhumanity of man to man, in the name of future generations. His *Journals (Fragments of a journal, Present Past Past Present)*, the numerous articles he has written for *Le Figaro*, testify to his gifts as a pamphleteer, and to his commitment to fighting oppression, or the more subtle pressures of cliché opinions. It will become obvious as one looks back upon his body of work that Ionesco has written some of the most potent political satires of the second half of the twentieth century. “My hero, if you can call him that,” says Ionesco in conversation, “is not so much an anti-hero as a hero in spite of himself. When I was a young man in Rumania [*sic*—that was after I left France to spend some time with my father—I remember how everyone around me converted to fascism, till it seemed to me that I was the only one left in the world. My own father had chameleonic gifts, and could always persuade himself that the present government was in the right. After all, History knew where it was going. It seemed to me at the time that although I was the most insignificant of creatures a terrible responsibility had

befallen me, and that, somehow, I would have to do something, or rather *everything*. Isn't this the plight and privilege of the modern hero?"

Ionesco's Berenger, the protagonist of *The Killer* and of *Rhinoceros* is indeed that hero-in-spite-of-himself who has become the central figure of much of our contemporary literature. He is the common man—"Berenger, an average, middle-aged citizen." Unlike Moliere's *raisonneur*, he speaks for unreason; for however modest or even humble he is, he thinks and feels as poets do. Patience, passive resistance, the silent rebellion of the spirit are his virtues.

Rhinoceros shows an entire community afflicted with *rhinocerotitis*, the malady of conformity. Average men and women, but also philosophers, intellectuals, all catch the bug. Only Berenger retains his humanity, and towards the end, when he is all alone, he begins to feel most uncomfortable with his white, human skin covered with light body hair since the brutes around him seem to rejoice in their thick, green hides.

The protagonist of *The Killer* (The French title is *Tueur sans gages* which is a reversal of the expression *tureur à gages*, hired assassin, thus stressing the gratuitous quality of this murder) tries to make his way to the police station through the goose-stepping throngs of Mother Peep's followers. Mother Peep, the new leader, who bears a disturbing resemblance to the *concierge* of Act I, shouts: "We'll replace the myths by slogans." Berenger must reach the police, for he has found in the briefcase of his office friend, Edouard, the plans of the murderer who is destroying the citizens of the "radiant city." A weak, sickly man, Edouard denies any knowledge of the documents found among his papers; the killer's schedule second by second, the colonel's picture the murderer uses as bait, the complete list of his victims—all these have just slipped in among other plans. When Berenger says with some indignation: "After all you don't mean to say that these things got here all by themselves!" Edouard answers, not unlike Eichman at his trial: "I can't explain, I don't understand." Edouard believes that these documents, which were handed to him with a view towards publication, were "only projects, imaginary projects." So was *Mein Kampf*! At the end of the play, in an empty lot, Berenger meets the killer,

face to face. In a soliloquy which seems to be half of a dialogue—but the assassin's only answer is a shrug of the shoulders, a snicker, the flicker of a knife—Berenger attempts to reason with the killer. Does he hate all human beings? Does he have any conception of happiness? Soon, it becomes clear that communication with such a creature is impossible. To take life an absurd action. To argue with absurdity is to deliver oneself to blind forces. Berenger finds that he is driven to argue not against murderer but with him, for him; the more he talks, the more reasons he finds for killing, or rather being killed. Though he is armed, Berenger knows that he, a humanist, will not be able to bring himself to shoot even an enemy who means to destroy him. He says: "And what good are bullets against the resistance of an infinitely stubborn will?" He lays down his pistols, accepting his demise with a strange dignity and despair. In his *Journals* Ionesco writes:

The greatest crime of all is homicide. Cain kills Abel. That's the crime *par excellence*. And we keep on killing. I have to kill my obvious enemy, the one who is trying to put me to death, in order that he shall not kill me. In killing him I find relief, for I am obscurely aware that I have killed death; I am not responsible for his death, I can feel no anxiety on that account, if I have killed my adversary with the approval of the community; that's what wars are for, to enable one to kill with a clear conscience. By killing I exorcize my own death; the act of killing is part of a magic rite. (*Fragments of a Journal*, p. 92)

Does Berenger realize that he is the sacrificial victim of a magic rite? At least, we can say that Ionesco knows that our society is based on the ruthless eradication of individuals, sometimes of a whole class. Yet, "History is shrewd" as Lenin said. This is the *leitmotiv* of many of Ionesco's journal entries. It reappears in his *Macbett*.

• • •

Did Ionesco invent a new language or was he invented by it? The question need not be answered though it must be posited. "I write to know what I am thinking," he likes to proclaim. But the manner in which one writes alters one's thought patterns. "Man is language" affirms the poet Francis Ponge, while the young American poet, Robert Sward writes:

IONESCO ROSETTE C. LAMONT

“A dog is said Dog! Or by name.” Once a writer has given an object a name, the word becomes the thing. Poets knew this before it was stated by the philosopher Wittgenstein, for the poet must constantly give birth to language anew, and thus reinvent his basic tools. Words are charged with previous associations. To free himself of dead images, to fight his way through the tangle of signs, the writer must strip words of the layers of filth which obscure their meaning, lifting the filmy surface as skillfully as a surgeon removes cataracts. In his essay on the poet Ponge, Jean Paul Sartre says that one must learn to “décrasser les mots” (scrub clean). Once this is done a private vocabulary is formed, what call style, or literary form. The reader who is invited to enter a private universe is like the child invited to enter a game the rules of which he must learn. These rules create boundary lines, visible only to the initiate, and serve to isolate the magic world created by the artist-magician. The writer may appear to speak the language of everyday life, but actually he never does; the artist’s vocabulary is always a language within language. •

NOTES

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To be consistent with the rest of this publication, Bérénger has been anglicized to Berenger.

ROSETTE C. LAMONT was a renowned theatre critic, author, professor and authority on Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco. She was born on February 15, 1927 in Paris, France. She earned her BA from Hunter College and Ph.D. from Yale University. She was a Professor of French and Comparative Literature at CUNY Graduate School’s Doctoral Program in theatre. She distinguished herself as an envoy for the State Department’s Scholar Exchange Program to the U.S.S.R in 1974; visiting professor at the Sorbonne in Paris (1985-1986); a Guggenheim Fellow (1973-1974); a Rockefeller Humanities Fellow (1983-1984); Decorated Chevalier, Officier des Palmes Academiques, Officier des Arts et Lettres in France and named to the Hunter College Hall of Fame. She was the author of *The Two Faces of Ionesco* with Melvin J. Friedman (Troy, N.Y.:

Whitston Pub. Co., 1978) and *Ionesco’s Imperatives: The Politics of Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). Later in her career, she joined the Sarah Lawrence College Theatre faculty until her retirement. Professor Lamont passed away in 2012.

THE PLAYWRIGHT TIMELINE

Editor's Note: The following timeline is based on Ionesco: A Collection of Critical Essays edited by Rosette C. Lamont (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), and Eugene Ionesco Revisited by Deborah B. Gaensbauer (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

- 1909 Eugene Ionesco born at Slatina, Romania.
- 1911 Ionesco family moves to Paris.
- 1922 Ionesco returns to Romania.
- 1931 Publishes a book of poetry entitled *Elegy for Minuscule Beings* (original Romanian title: *Elegii pentru ființe mici*).
- 1934 Publishes a collection of essays entitled *No* (original title: *Nu*).
- 1936 Marries Rodica Burileano.
- 1938 Moves with Rodica to France.
- 1940 Forced to move back to Romania.
- 1942 Returns to France and settles with Rodica in Marseille, then Paris.
- 1944 Marie-France born to Eugene and Rodica.
- 1950 *The Bald Soprano (La Cantatrice Chauve)* premieres at the Théâtre des Noctambules, directed by Nicolas Bataille.
Eugene Ionesco becomes a French citizen.
- 1951 *The Lesson (La Leçon)* premieres at the Théâtre de Poche, directed by Sylvain Dhomme.
- 1952 *The Chairs (Les Chaises)* premieres at the Théâtre du Nouveau Lancy.
- 1953 *Victims of Duty (Victimes du devoir)* premieres at the Théâtre du Quartier-Latin.
- 1954 *Amédée, or How to get Rid of It (Amédée ou comment s'en débarrasser)* premieres at the Théâtre du Babylone.
- 1955 *Jack, or the Submission (Jacques ou la soumission)* and *The Picture (Le Tableau)* premiere.
The New Tenant (Le Nouveau Locataire) premieres in Sweden.
- 1956 *Improvisation (L'Impromptu de l'Alma)* premieres at the Studio des Champs-Élysées.
- 1957 *The Future Is In Eggs (L'avenir est dans les œufs)* premieres.
Ionesco writes *The Killer* in London.
- 1958 *The Killer (Mörder ohne Bezahlung)* premieres in Germany.
- 1959 French premiere of *The Killer (Tueur sans gages)*.
- 1960 *Rhinocéros* premieres in France.
- 1961 Broadway premiere of *Rhinoceros*.
- 1962 *Exit the King (Le Roi se Meurt)* premieres in France at the Théâtre de l'Alliance Française.



Eugene Ionesco as a child, Paris, c. 1913; Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Arts du spectacle, fonds

THE PLAYWRIGHT TIMELINE

- 1962 Publication of *Notes and Counternotes (Notes et Contre-notes)* and *The Colonel's Photo (La Photo du Colonel)*, a collection of stories.
- 1963 French premiere of *A Stroll in the Air (Le Piéton de l'Air)* at the Odéon, directed by Jean-Louis Barrault.
- 1964 *Rhinoceros* is performed in Ionesco's native Romania for the first time.
- 1966 *Hunger and Thirst (La Soif et la Faim)* premieres at the Comédie Française.
Premieres of *French Lessons for Americans (Leçons de français pour Américains)* and *The Gap (La Lacune)*.
- 1967 Publication of *Fragments of a Journal (Le Journal en Miettes)*.
- 1968 Publication of *Present Past Past Present (Présent Passé Passé Présent)*.
- 1969 Publication of *Discoveries (Découvertes)*, illustrated by the author.
- 1970 Ionesco is elected to Académie Française.
The Killing Game (Jeux de Massacre), directed by Jorge Lavelli, premieres at the Théâtre Montparnasse.
- 1972 *Macbett* premieres at the Théâtre Rive Gauche, directed by Jacques Mauclair.
- 1973 Premiere of *A Hell of a Mess (Ce Formidable Bordel!)*.
- 1975 *The Man with the Luggage (L'Homme aux Valises)* premieres.
- 1977 Publication of *Antidotes*.
- 1978 "Decade Ionesco," a major conference on the works of Ionesco, takes place at Cérisy-la-Salle.
- 1979 *Exit the King (Le Roi se Meurt)* premieres at the Odéon, directed by Jorge Lavelli.
Publication of *A Man is Questioned (Un homme en question)*.
- 1980 Previews of *Journeys among the Dead (Voyages chez les morts)* at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.
- 1981 Publication of *The Black and the White (Le Blanc et le noir)*.
- 1984 Ionesco exhibits his paintings and lithographs in Europe.
- 1986 *Nu* is translated into French.
- 1987 *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* have their thirtieth anniversary at the Théâtre de la Huchette.
Ionesco receives a medal from the city of Paris.
- 1988 Premiere of *Maximilian Kobe*, an opera.
Ionesco's lithographs are exhibited in Paris.
- 1994 Ionesco dies in Paris at age 85.

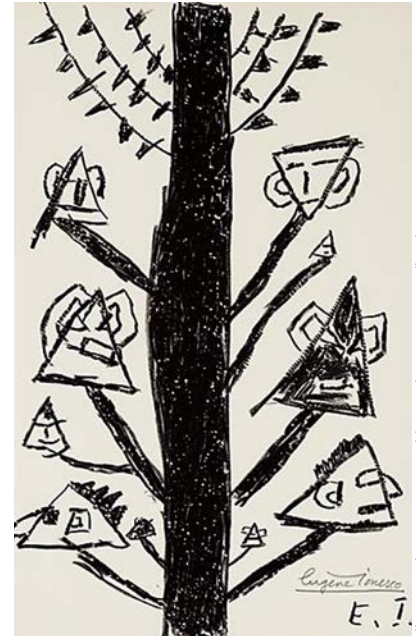


Illustration by Ionesco in *Le blanc et le noir* (Saint Gall: Eriker, 1981)

THE PRODUCTION CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Editor's Note: The images in this section served as inspiration for the director Darko Tresnjak and the set and costume designer Suttirat Larlarb.

BRENDAN AVERETT (*Bartender/First Policeman*).

TFANA: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Off-Broadway: *As You Like It*, Shakespeare in the Park; *Massacre (Sing to Your Children)*, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater; *Passion Play*, Epic Theatre Ensemble. Regional theatre: *Romeo and Juliet*, Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Of Mice and Men*, Cincinnati Playhouse; *Passion Play*, Yale Repertory Theatre; *Hamlet* and *The Chairs*, Court Theatre. Other theatre: *Measure for Measure*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada. Television: "Trapped in the Closet," "Law & Order: SVU," "Blossom."

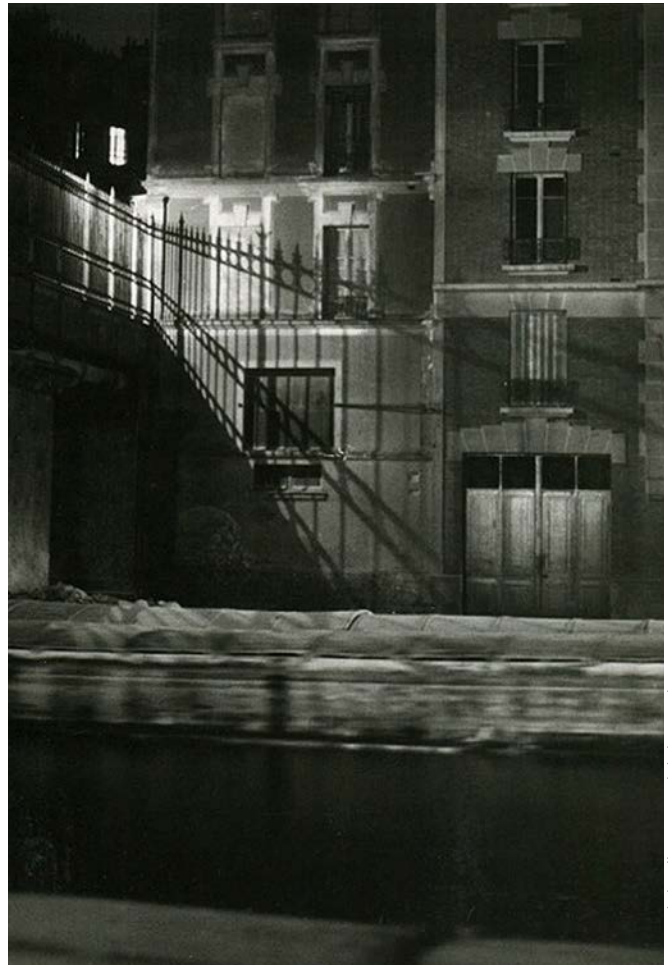
STEPHANIE BUNCH (*Dennie*) is ecstatic to be making her Off-Broadway debut with Theatre for a New Audience. She has completed her M.F.A. at Brooklyn College. Her most recent roles were Bev/Kathy in *Clybourne Park* and Barbara in *The Gingham Dog*. She would like to thank all her family and friends for their endless support.

BENJAMIN COLE (*Ensemble*). This is Ben's second time appearing at TFANA, having appeared as one of the riotous knights in *King Lear*. He has also recently appeared at Hartford Stages as Caliban in *The Tempest* (CT Critic's Circle Award winner) and as Mr. Topper in *A Christmas Carol*. Thanks to his family.

LIAM CRAIG (*The Bum/First Man/The Drunk*). Broadway: *Boeing-Boeing* (u/s: performed as Robert). Off-Broadway: *The Internationalist* (Vineyard Theatre), *Aunt Dan and Lemon* (The New Group), *Two Noble Kinsmen* (The Public Theater), *Don Juan* (TFANA). Regional: *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (Yale Rep, Berkeley Rep), *Servant of Two Masters* (Yale Rep, STC, Guthrie Theater, Seattle Rep), *The Government Inspector* (STC), *The Scene* (Hartford Stage, Alley Theatre). TV: "Unforgettable," "Rescue Me," "Law & Order: SVU." Film: *The Royal Tenenbaums*. M.F.A., NYU Tisch Graduate Acting Program.

ERIC FOLKS (*Ensemble*). Previous credits include *columbinus* (American Theater Company); *Job*, *The Wundelsteipen* (Flea Theater); *Almost Maine*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Fiddler on the Roof* (New London Barn Playhouse); *Don't Dress for Dinner* (Lake Dillion Theater Co); and *Mrs. Mannerly* (Dixie Theater). Eric is a graduate of Otterbein College.

JONATHAN HOOKS (*Ensemble*). Theatre includes *King*



Bassin de la villiette, Canal de l'Ourcq by Brassai, c. 1932

Lear (TFANA), *Julius Caesar* (Royal Shakespeare Company at BAM), *The House of Von Macramé* (The Bushwick Starr), *Richard's Rampage* (BAM), *Torch-Bearers* (Williamstown). Film includes *Haitian Son* (dir. Marc-Eddy Loriston), *I Do?* (dir. Reinaldo Green). Training: The Public Theater's Shakespeare Lab, The University of Oklahoma School of Drama. www.iamjonathanhooks.com

VADIM KROL (*Ensemble*). Russian born. *The Nose*, *Arabella*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Andrea Chenier* (MET); *Crematorium* (Dixon Place Theater); *The Seagull*, *Mr. Puntilla and His Man Matti*, *Master and Margarita*, *Lady with the Lap Dog* and *Happy Ending* (HB Playwrights Foundation Theatre); *Rabid Money* (Cherry Lane); *Winter Tales* (Davidson Radio). Very excited to be part of this production.

KATE LONGAZEL (*Ensemble*) is delighted to join TFANA. Recent credits include *Firework for Real* with True False Theatre and *The Wild Inside* with Primary Stages. She starred in the short film *I Speak, You Understand Me* and

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appeared on Discovery ID series “Frenemies.” She graduated from Fordham University and the London Dramatic Academy.

KRISTINE NIELSEN (*Concierge/Ma Piper*). Broadway: *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Tony nom., Outer Critics Circle Award), *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Green Bird*, *Jackie*, *The Iceman Cometh* and others. TFANA: *Measure for Measure*, *The Green Bird*, *Pericles*. NY productions include *Dog Opera* (Obie Award), *Betty’s Summer Vacation* (Obie Award). Numerous regional productions and television. Film: *Small Time Crooks*, *The Savages* and others. Recently, the NBC live broadcast of “The Sound of Music.”

ANASTASIA OLOWIN (*Ensemble*) is a company member of Theater Reconstruction Ensemble. NY theatre: *Set in the Living Room...* and *Three Seagulls, or MASHAMASHAMASHA!* (TRE), *Plum de Force* (The Bushwick Starr), *Obedient Steel* (Tugboat Collective), *Obscene* (The Talking Band), Target Margin’s Lab Series. Love to my parents and J&M. B.F.A.: NYU Tisch.

www.anastasialowin.com

FRANK PAIVA (*Ensemble*) is thrilled to make his TFANA debut. NY theatre favorites: *The House of Von Macramé* (Bushwick Starr), *The Lily’s Revenge* (HERE Arts Center), *The Walk Across America for Mother Earth* (La MaMa), *Moonbase* (Flea Theater) and *Giant Killer Slugs* (Pipeline Theatre Company). B.A. from NYU Gallatin.

FrankPaiva.net

GREGOR PASLAWSKY (*Second Old Man*). New York: *The Sadness of Others*, *Not Knowing*, *Pegleg!* (Mixed Mess@ge); *Outpost* (Mabou Mines). Regional: *Twelfth Night* (Hartford Stage); *Bell Book and Candle* (Long Wharf); *Pericles*, *Two Noble Kinsman* (Old Globe); *Skin of Our Teeth*, *Travesties* (Williamstown); *Kite Runner* (San Jose Rep); *Waiting for Godot* (North Carolina Shakespeare Festival); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Tempest* (Virginia Stage); *Blood Knot* (New Mexico Rep); *The Ruling Class* (Wilma); *Superior Donuts*, *Tribes* (Studio Theatre D.C.).

RYAN QUINN (*Second Man/Postman/The Killer*). TFANA: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Regional: eight seasons with The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival. *Yellowman*, Milwaukee Rep; *Hamlet*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, The Old Globe; *The King Stag*, Yale Repertory Theatre. New York: *Binibon*, The Kitchen; *Frag*, *The Strang-*

est, HERE Arts. M.F.A.: Yale School of Drama. Much love to Katie, Mom, and Hanna. For Dad, who taught me how to tell stories.

JAMES REES (*Ensemble*). TFANA debut! Off-Broadway: *Measure for Measure* (The Public). NYC: *The Whaleship Essex* (Hudson Guild), *Henry V* (Well Theater). Regional: *A Man for All Seasons* (Virginia Shakes), *Amadeus* (Richmond Shakes). TV: “The Knick,” “Team Toon.” B.F.A.: Shenandoah Conservatory. All thanks to Jess and Orson.

MICHAEL SHANNON (*Berenger*). TFANA debut. Broadway: *Grace*. Off-Broadway: *Mistakes Were Made*, *Our Town*, *Bug* (Barrow St.); *Uncle Vanya* (Soho Rep); *The Little Flower of East Orange* (LAByrinth); *Killer Joe* (SoHo Playhouse). Chicago: founding member, A Red Orchid Theatre, where he first performed *The Killer* as well as *Mistakes Were Made*, *Bug* and many others. Film: *Bug*, *World Trade Center*, *Take Shelter*, *The Iceman*, *Premium Rush*, *Man of Steel*, *My Son My Son What Have You Done*, *Before the Devil*



Coco, Paris by Robert Doisneau, 1952

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Knows You're Dead, Revolutionary Road (Oscar nomination) and more. TV: Nelson Van Alden on HBO's "Boardwalk Empire."

NOBLE SHROPSHIRE (*Old Man*). Broadway: Underling, *The Drowsy Chaperone*; Royal National Theatre production of Tennessee Williams' *Not About Nightingales*. Off-Broadway: Roundabout: Parris in *The Crucible*. CSC (nine seasons): title roles in *Hamlet, Peer Gynt, Tartuffe; Fool, King Lear*; Mephisto, *Faust*; Hummel, *Ghost Sonata*. Hartford Stage: *Macbeth, La Dispute, The Tempest, The 39 Steps, Noises Off, A Christmas Carol*. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, Alley, A.R.T., Arena, Cincinnati Playhouse, City Theatre, Denver Center, Pioneer Theatre, Pittsburgh Public, Rep Theater St. Louis, Westport Country Playhouse.

PAUL SPARKS (*Edward*). Broadway: *Hedda Gabler*. Off-Broadway: *Dusk Rings a Bell, Lady, Pumpgirl, American Slingo, Essential Self-Defense, Finer Noble Gases, Landscape of the Body, Bug, Blackbird, Coyote on the Fence*. Five-time Drama Desk nominee. Film: *Mud* (Independent Spirit Award), *Parkland, Trust Me, Sparrows Dance, Blackbird*. Upcoming: *Midnight Special, Stealing Cars*. Television: series: "Boardwalk Empire" (SAG Award); miniseries: "Mildred Pierce" and many episodes of NYC-based shows.

ROBERT STANTON (*The Architect*). Recent theatre includes *Checkers* (Vineyard), *Strange Interlude* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Love's Labour's Lost* (The Public), Alarm Will Sound's *1969* (Carnegie Hall). Broadway: *A Free Man of Color, Mary Stuart, The Coast of Utopia*. Off-Broadway: *Love Child* (co-written with Daniel Jenkins), *All in the Timing* (Obie, Clarence Derwent awards), many more. Recent film and television: *True Story*, "The Knick," "Elementary," "Orange Is the New Black," "The Good Wife." M.F.A.: NYU.

GORDON TASHJIAN (*Second Policeman*). Gordon Tashjian is an actor, writer and musician based in Brooklyn. He has appeared onstage all over NY and is thrilled to be appearing at TFANA. He enjoys doing readings of new works and staging readings of his own work, as well as building and playing cigar-box guitars.

QUINN WARREN (*Ensemble*). Quinn is overjoyed to be making her Off-Broadway debut with TFANA. She has previously appeared at McCarter Theatre, Kennedy Center, Long Wharf and innumerable productions in NYC. Favor-

ite roles: Betty in the world premiere of Bekah Brunstetter's *You May Go Now*, Dizzie in Wayne Paul Mattingly's *Samaritans* and Myrrha in Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*. B.F.A., Stephens College. www.quinnwarren.com

ARIEL ZUCKERMAN (*Ensemble*) was previously in the ensemble for *King Lear* and is thrilled to join TFANA again. *The Merchant of Venice* (Lorenzo, Worcester Shakespeare Company), *Our Lady of 121st Street* (Edwin Velasquez), *Macbeth* (Banquo, Stella Adler Studio, May, 2013 graduate). To my mom and dad who instilled in me the courage and fortitude to go after what I wanted, and the love and care to cherish it.



Political Rally, Parc des Expositions, Paris 1953 by Henri Cartier-Bresson

MICHAEL FEINGOLD (*Translator*) has translated over 50 plays and operas including the Brecht-Weill *Happy End, The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*, of which his are the standard published versions. A Nathan Award winner and Pulitzer Prize finalist in criticism, he has served as dramaturg or translator for eight previous TFANA productions.

DARKO TRESNJAK (*Director*). Darko Tresnjak directed *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, currently playing at the Walter Kerr Theatre. He is the Artistic Director of Hartford Stage. He staged TFANA productions of *All's Well That Ends Well, Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Merchant of Venice* with F. Murray Abraham, which transferred to the Royal Shakespeare Company. Darko has directed at The Public Theater, Stratford Festival, The Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare, Chicago Shakespeare, Long Wharf, Goodspeed Musicals, Huntington Theatre Company and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Upcoming: *Hamlet* and *Kiss Me Kate* at Hartford Stage and *The Ghosts of Versailles* at L.A. Opera with Patti LuPone.

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SUTTIRAT LARLARB (*Set & Costume Designer*). Select theatre: *Of Mice and Men* (Broadway); *Frankenstein* (National Theatre); *Macbeth* (Hartford Stage); *Tape, No. 11 (Blue and White)*, *The Lively Lad*, *Orange Lemon Egg Canary*, (Humana Festival); *Angels in America* (Actors Theatre). Select TV/film: 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony (Emmy Award, Art Direction), *127 Hours* (Art Directors Guild nomination), *Slumdog Millionaire* (Costume Designers Guild Award), *Sunshine*, *Ten Thousand Saints*, *The Good Lie*, *The American*, “Cinema Verite” (Emmy nom.). Faculty, Carnegie Mellon. M.F.A., Yale.

MATTHEW RICHARDS (*Lighting Designer*). Broadway: *Ann*. Off-Broadway: Atlantic Theater Company, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Lincoln Center, MCC, Playwrights Horizons, Play Company, Primary Stages, Rattlestick, Second Stage, Theatreworks USA. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Baltimore’s CENTERSTAGE, Bay Street, Cincinnati Playhouse, Cleveland Play House, Dallas Theater Center, Ford’s Theatre, Goodman, Hartford Stage, Hangar, Huntington, La Jolla Playhouse, Long Wharf, New York Stage & Film, The Old Globe, Shakespeare Theatre, Studio Theatre, Westport Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Yale Repertory Theatre. Graduate: University of Massachusetts, Yale School of Drama. matthewrichardsdesign.com

JANE SHAW (*Sound Designer & Composer*). With TFANA: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra* (directed by Darko Tresnjak), *The Jew of Malta*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*. Elsewhere: Darko Tresnjak’s *Macbeth*, *La Dispute* (Hartford Stage), *London Wall* (Mint), *The World Is Round* (Ripe Time), *Grounded* (P73), *Jackie* (Women’s Project), *La casa de los Espiritus* (Costa Rica), *Food and Fadwa* (NYTW). Awards: Bessie, Henry, Premios ACE 2012, Meet the Composer grant, TCG’s Career Development Program, nominations for two Lortels.

JONATHAN KALB (*Dramaturg*) is Literary Advisor and Resident Artist at Theatre for a New Audience and Professor of Theatre at Hunter College, CUNY. He has twice won the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism, which he received for his books *Beckett in Performance* (1991) and *Great Lengths: Seven Works of Marathon Theater* (2012). *Great Lengths* also won the Theatre Library Association’s George Freedley Award.

ANDREW WADE (*Vocal Director*) is Resident Director of Voice at Theatre for a New Audience where he has



What Lies Beneath in Love #6 F/W 2011/2012; photo by Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott

coached *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Broken Heart*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Chair and Notes from Underground*. Head of Voice, RSC, 1990–2003. Assistant Voice Director, RSC, 1987–1990. Verse Consultant, *Shakespeare in Love*. Adjunct faculty at Juilliard and Guest Artist at Stella Adler Studio. At Guthrie Theater Andrew has coached *Primrose Path*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. He is Voice Director for *Matilda* and Director of Voice & Speech at The Public Theater.

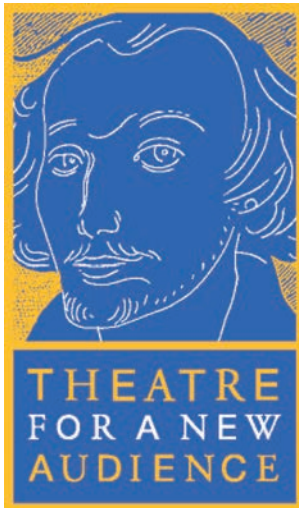
DEBORAH BROWN (*Casting Director*). This is Deborah Brown’s 22nd season with Theatre for a New Audience. She has cast for Broadway, Off-Broadway and many of the leading regional theatres in the country. She shared an Emmy for the HBO series “From the Earth to the Moon.” Other television includes “The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd” and New York casting on “Band of Brothers.”

COLE BONENBERGER (*Production Stage Manager*). Broadway: *Dividing the Estate*. Off-Broadway: *The Comedy of Errors*, The Public’s Shakespeare in the Park; *Stage Kiss*, *The Great God Pan*, Playwrights Horizons; *February House*, *Yellow Face* and *Wrecks*, The Public; *Picked*, Vineyard Theatre; *The Old Friends*, *The Dance and the Railroad*, *The Orphans’ Home Cycle*, *Landscape of the Body* and *The Trip to Bountiful* for Signature Theatre; *Dividing the Estate*, Primary Stages. Tours: *The Comedy of Errors*, *O’ Pioneers*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Pudd’nhead Wilson* for The Acting Company. Regional: Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, Trinity Rep, Westport Playhouse.

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About Theatre for a New Audience

Founded in 1979 by Jeffrey Horowitz, the mission of Theatre for a New Audience is to develop and vitalize the performance and study of Shakespeare and classic drama. Theatre for a New Audience produces for audiences Off-Broadway and has also toured nationally, internationally and to Broadway. We are guided in our work by five core values: a reverence for language, a spirit of adventure, a commitment to diversity, a dedication to learning, and a spirit of service. These values inform what we do with artists, how we interact with audiences, and how we manage our organization.

Theatre for a New Audience Education Programs

Theatre for a New Audience is an award-winning company recognized for artistic excellence. Our education programs introduce students to Shakespeare and other classics with the same artistic integrity that we apply to our productions. Through our unique and exciting methodology, students engage in hands-on learning that involves all aspects of literacy set in the context of theatre education. Our residencies are structured to address City and State Learning Standards both in English Language Arts and the Arts, the New York City DOE's Curriculum Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Theater, and the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts. Begun in 1984, our programs have served over 125,000 students, ages 9 through 18, in New York City Public Schools city-wide.

A New Home in Brooklyn: Theatre for a New Audience's Polonsky Shakespeare Center

After 33 seasons of award-winning and internationally-acclaimed productions, Theatre for a New Audience's Polonsky Shakespeare Center is now open in the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District.

Designed by celebrated architect Hugh Hardy, the Theatre's Polonsky Shakespeare Center is the first theatre in New York designed and built expressly for classic drama since Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont in the 1960s. The 27,500 square-foot facility is a unique performance space in New York. The 299-seat Samuel H. Scripps Mainstage, inspired by the Cottesloe at London's National Theatre, combines an Elizabethan courtyard theatre with modern theatre technology that allows the stage and seating to be arranged in seven configurations. The new facility also includes the Theodore C. Rogers Studio (a 50-seat rehearsal/performance studio), and theatrical support spaces. The City of New York-developed Arts Plaza, designed by landscape architect Ken Smith, creates a natural gathering place around the building. In addition, Polonsky Shakespeare Center is also one of the few sustainable (green) theatres in the country, with an anticipated LEED-NC Silver rating from the United States Green Building Council.

Now with a home of its own, Theatre for a New Audience is contributing to the continued renaissance of Downtown Brooklyn. In addition to its season of plays, the Theatre is expanding its education and humanities offerings to include lectures and activities for families, as well as seminars, workshops, and other activities for artists, scholars, and families. When not in use by the Theatre, its new facility will be available for rental, bringing much needed affordable performing and rehearsal space to the community.

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Even with capacity audiences, box office and other earned income account for only 30% of the Theatre's operating budget. The Theatre expresses its deepest thanks to the following Foundations, Corporations Government Agencies and Individuals for their generous support of the Theatre's Humanities, Education, and Outreach programs.



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Theatre for a New Audience's Humanities programming receives support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these programs do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

A Challenge Grant from the NEH is being matched 3:1 to create a \$1.7 million Humanities endowment fund to support these programs in perpetuity. Leading matching gifts to the NEH grant were provided by Joan and Robert Arnow, Norman and Elaine Brodsky, The Durst Organization, Perry and Marty Granoff, Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia, John J. Kerr & Nora Wren Kerr, Litowitz Foundation, Inc., Robert and Wendy MacDonald, Sandy and Stephen Perl binder, The Prospect Hill Foundation, Inc., and Theodore C. Rogers, and from purchasers in the Theatre's Seat for Shakespeare Campaign.

For more information on naming a seat or making a gift to the NEH match, please contact James Lynes, Director of Institutional Advancement, at 212-229-2819 x29, or by email at jlynes@tfana.org.



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