



PRESENTED BY
The Theater Department
DIRECTED BY
Yuri Kordonsky

By Eugène Ionesco

THE BALD SOPRANO

Wednesday, April 22 through
Saturday, April 25, 2015
CFA Theater

CENTER FOR THE ARTS
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

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AN ANTI-PLAY

Written by Eugène Ionesco
Translated by Tina Howe

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The Bald Soprano is presented by special arrangement with
SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance
by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.

This play will be performed in one act with no intermission.

NOTES

Eugène Ionesco (1912–1994) was born in Slatina, a city near Bucharest, Romania but moved to France for his father's work. At 13, he and his sister were ordered to return to Romania to live with their father. Ionesco was devastated by the move: "my world was shattered. I hated Bucharest, its society, and its mores—its anti-Semitism for example. I was not Jewish, but I pronounced my r's as the French do and was often taken for a Jew, for which I was ruthlessly bullied" (Ionesco, Interview in *The Paris Review*).

At 26, Ionesco moved back to France, where he gained citizenship and began an unanticipated career as a playwright. "The theater chose me...I started with poetry, and I also wrote criticism and dialogue. But I realized that I was most successful at dialogue...I let characters and symbols emerge from me, as if I were dreaming...Dreams are reality at its most profound, and what you invent is truth because invention, by its nature, can't be a lie. Writers who try to prove something are unattractive to me, because there is nothing to prove and everything to imagine" (Ionesco, Interview in *The Paris Review*).

"For me, it is as though at every moment the actual world had completely lost its actuality. As though there was nothing there; as though there were no foundations for anything or as though it escaped us. Only one thing, however, is vividly present: the constant tearing of the veil of appearances; the constant destruction of everything in construction. Nothing holds together, everything falls apart" (Ionesco, *Notes and Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre*). *The New Yorker* picks up on Ionesco's feeling of alienation: "His estrangement from his native tongue gave him a feeling for the confusion created by language and its inadequacy to make sense of reality, and also left him with an exile's rootlessness" (Lahr, "Eugène Ionesco").

This feeling manifests in his first play, *The Bald Soprano*. In 1947, Ionesco was trying to learn English from a French-English phrasebook, *L'Anglais sans Peine [English without Pain]*. However, "A strange phenomenon took place. I don't know how—the text began imperceptibly to change before my eyes. The very simple, luminously clear statements I had copied so diligently into my notebook, left to themselves, fermented after a while, lost their original identity, expanded and overflowed. The clichés and truisms of the conversation primer, which had once made sense...gave way to pseudo-clichés and pseudo-truisms; these disintegrated into wild caricature and parody, and in the end language disintegrated into disjointed fragments of words...While writing this play (for it had become a kind of play or anti-play, that is to say a real parody of a play, a comedy of comedies), I had felt genuinely uneasy, sick and dizzy...I imagined I had written something like the tragedy of language...For me, what had happened was a kind of collapse of reality. The words had turned into sounding shells devoid of meaning, the characters too of course, had been emptied of psychology and the world appeared to me in an unearthly, perhaps its true light, beyond understanding and governed by arbitrary laws" (Ionesco, *Notes and Counter Notes*).

Absurdism is the love child between Existentialism and Surrealism.

This type of theater was coined "Theater of the Absurd" by critic Martin Esslin in his 1960 essay of the same name. "This sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition, is, broadly speaking, the theme of the plays of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Genet, and others]....the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought" (Esslin, "Theater of the Absurd").

Absurdism is the love child between Existentialism and Surrealism. It took from Existentialism the metaphysical anguish that life has no meaning or master plan, that one can believe in nothing. In this way, it reflects the post-war society of the 1950s, which had lost faith in religion, morality, nationalism, progress and totalitarian saviors. However, unlike Existentialists, Absurdists believe that in order to fully understand the meaninglessness of life, the audience cannot simply hear it explained, they must experience it through chaotic forms. Like Surrealists, their works take the form of dream-logic, myth, and fantasy. Absurdism violently shatters the eloquence of Existentialism and the poetry of Surrealism.

Ionesco has his own definition of the Theater of the Absurd: "Oedipus sleeps with his Mummy, kills his Daddy, and breaks the laws of fate. He must pay for it by suffering. It is tragic and absurd, but at the same time it's reassuring and comforting, since the idea is that if we don't break destiny's laws, we should be all right. Not so with our characters. They have no metaphysics, no order, no law. They are miserable and they don't know why. They are puppets, undone. In short, they represent modern man. Their situation is not tragic, since it has no relation to a higher order. Instead, it's ridiculous, laughable, and derisory" (Ionesco, interview in *The Paris Review*).

Baffling

B i z a r r e

CAST

Mr. Smith	Albert Tholen
Mrs. Smith	Grace Nix
Mr. Martin	Edward Archibald
Mrs. Martin	Sara Fayngolz
Mary, the maid	Natalie May
The Fire Captain	Peter McCook



CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Yuri Kordonsky
Scenic Designers	John Carr and April Trovillion
Costume Designer	Leslie Weinberg
Lighting Designer	John Carr
Assistant Director	May Treuhaft-Ali
Stage Manager	Julia Tyminski
Dramaturg	Rachel Sobelsohn
Production Manager	Rebecca Foster
Sound Designer	May Treuhaft-Ali
Costume Shop Manager	Christian Milik
Assistant Technical Director	Charles Carroll
Master Electrician	Suzanne Sadler
Assistant Technical Director/ Sound Specialist	Robert Russo
Assistant Stage Manager	Ali Jamali
Light Board Operator	Mio Magee
Sound Board Operator	Rebecca Hsieh
Publicity	Adam Mirkine
Properties Assistant	Cecilia Cerejido-Bloche
Wardrobe Assistant	Christian Nunez
Hair and Makeup Assistant	Constance Des Marais
Run Crew	Alina Whatley and Adam Mirkine

Cover Photo by John Carr

THEATER DEPARTMENT

FACULTY AND STAFF

Dawn Alger.....	Administrative Assistant
Katherine Brewer Ball.....	Visiting Assistant Professor
John F. Carr.....	Professor, Emeritus
Rebecca Foster.....	Visiting Assistant Professor
Quiara Alegría Hudes.....	Shapiro Distinguished Professor of Writing and Theater
Ronald S. Jenkins.....	Professor
Yuri Kordonsky.....	Chair, Professor
Christian Milik.....	Visiting Instructor of of Costume Construction
Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento.....	Associate Professor
Marcela Oteiza.....	Assistant Professor
Anne K. Swedberg.....	Visiting Assistant Professor
Leslie A. Weinberg.....	Artist-in-Residence

STUDENT STAFF

Theater Office.....	Miranda Haymon, Aileen Lambert
Costume Shop.....	Serena Berry, Anna Flom, Regina Melady, Addie McDowell, Grace Nix, Maia Reumann-Moore, Hanako Rodriguez, Sofie Somoroff

Theater Technicians:

Emma Broder, Brendan Coakley, Anthony Dean, Tom Fischer, Cicily Gruber, Phillip Heilbron, Ari Kaufman, Amanda Larsen, Rachel Leicher, Henry Lombino, Mio Magee, Nicholas Murphy, Madeleine Stern, Daniel Storfer, Cheyanne Williams, Avi Stein, Becky Eder, Brie Mann-Hernandez, Nola Werlinich

THEA 105 PRODUCTION LAB

Joseph Cahn, Jessica Carlson, David Caruso, Maia Nelles-Sager, Jonah Toussaint, Alina Whatley, Rebecca Engle, Russell Goldman, Daniel Maseda, Katherine Paterson, Blake Pritchard, Keyonne Session, Jessica Wolinsky, Lianne Yun

CENTER FOR THE ARTS STAFF

Pamela Tatge	Director
Alecia Goldfarb.....	Business Manager
Barbara Ally	Associate Director for Programs
Hanna Oravec	Assistant Director for Programs
Kyle Beaudette	Box Office Manager
Mark Gawlak.....	Associate Director for Facilities and Technical Operations
Robert Russo	Assistant Technical Director/ Sound and Video Specialist
Suzanne Sadler	Technical Director and Theater Manager for CFA Theater
Charles Carroll	Assistant Technical Director/ Scenery Specialist
John Elmore	Art Director
Ellen Maurer	Freelance Designer
Erinn Roos-Brown	Campus and Community Engagement Manager
Andrew Chatfield.....	Press and Marketing Director
Anya Backlund	Exhibitions Coordinator/ ICPP Coordinator
Lee Berman	Gallery Supervisor
David Shimomura	Program Coordinator

UPCOMING EVENTS

What Happens When We Tell a Story:

Talk by Quiara Alegría Hudes

Monday, April 27, 2015 at 7pm

Memorial Chapel, FREE

Quiara Alegría Hudes is the Shapiro Distinguished Professor of Writing and Theater at Wesleyan University. Her play *Water by the Spoonful* received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. This talk tells the true backstage story of what happened after Ms. Hudes turned her cousin's life into a trilogy of plays. For him, opening night was only the beginning.