



PRESS RELEASE

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Syracuse University Department of Drama presents:

The Bald Soprano* and *The Chairs

Two One-Act Plays by the Master of Absurdism

Written by Eugene Ionesco

Directed by Rodney Hudson

ARTHUR STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE

Opens: November 13 Closes: November 22

(Syracuse, NY)— These master works from theatre of absurd soar to heights of the ridiculous with word-twisting, innovative comedy. Eugene Ionesco is a giant of 20th century playwriting who took all the conventions of the stage and turned them upside down to offer stunning perspectives on theatre and the world it reflects. With a strong sense of the outrageous, Ionesco reminds us that, "The human drama is as absurd as it is painful." Presented by the Department of Drama in The College of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) at Syracuse University, *The Bald Soprano* and *The Chairs* run November 13-22. *Themes and content recommended for ages 16 and up.* For tickets, call 315-443-3275 or visit www.vpa.syr.edu/drama.

Both *The Bald Soprano* and *The Chairs* are considered standards in what has been coined as Theatre of the Absurd. First popular in the 1950s and 1960s, Absurdism reflects a philosophy presented by Albert Camus—that the human condition is basically meaningless, and that explaining the world in a logical manner is not possible. In absurdist plays, there is a comical take on serious topics—death, alienation, and evil—in an effort to understand them better.

"The plays are funny and sad. Experience it. Don't try to think about what it means. Just experience it and then think about it later. If you're trying to make logic out of it you're missing the play," said Director Rodney Hudson.

THE BALD SOPRANO

The Bald Soprano portrays an evening visit between Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Martin. With the Smiths' maid Mary and her lover, the fire chief, the night of nonsensical stories and poems carries the characters right back to the beginning.

The Bald Soprano was Eugene Ionesco's first play, performed in 1950 at the Théâtre des Noctambules. At the time, Ionesco had been learning to speak English by copying sentences from an English primer. As he copied the simple phrases over and over again, the absurdity of language struck him. He translated this experience into *The Bald Soprano*, which satirizes the

deadliness and idiocy of the daily life of a bourgeois society frozen in meaningless formalities. *The Bald Soprano* had a 1987 production in New York City, a production with the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey in 2007, and an Off-Broadway production in the spring of 2009 with the One Year Lease theatre ensemble.

THE CHAIRS

In *The Chairs*, the Old Man and Old Woman are setting up chairs in anticipation of the arrival of a series of guests who are coming to hear an orator reveal the old man's discovery of the meaning of life. Once the couple has convinced themselves that a crowd is assembled (when in fact there are only empty chairs) the evening progresses to a frantic, menacing climax. *The Chairs* was first produced in 1952 at the Théâtre Lancry. After receiving a 1997 London production, *The Chairs* returned to Broadway in 1998 and garnered five Tony nominations.

PLAYWRIGHT

Eugene Ionesco, 1912-1994, is one of the foremost playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd. The son of a Romanian father and a French mother, he settled in France and earned his living as a proofreader for publishers, coming to playwriting almost by chance. Having decided to learn English, he was struck by the emptiness of the clichés of daily conversation that appeared in his phrase book. Out of such nonsensical sentences he constructed his first play, *The Bald Soprano* (1950; Eng. trans., 1958). Greatly surprised by the success of the play, Ionesco embarked on a career as a writer of what he called 'anti-plays', which characteristically combine a dream or nightmare atmosphere with grotesque, bizarre, and whimsical humor. His work includes *The Lesson* (1951), *The Killers* (1958), *Rhinoceros* (1959), *Exit the King* (1962), *Notes and Counternotes* (1962), *A Stroll in the Air* (1963), *Hunger and Thirst* (1964), *Fragments of a Journal* (1966), *Journeys Among the Dead* (1980), theoretical writings, and the novel *Le Solitaire* (1973).

DIRECTOR

As professional actor for over 35 years, **Rodney Hudson** has performed across the country in major regional theatres, and he was a company member with the famed American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, MA. As a soloist, he has performed selections from Broadway with major orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and the Houston Symphony. Rodney is a member of Actors' Equity Association.

CAST - *THE BALD SOPRANO*

Tony Cavallo (*Mr. Smith*) is a junior Acting major from Weymouth, MA. His favorite roles include Sweeney in *Sweeney Todd* and Rooster in *Annie*. His directing credits include *Post-Comment* by Carly Augenstein, *Dog Sees God* by Bert V. Royal, and the upcoming Black Box Players' production of *Revenge of the Space Pandas* by David Mamet.

Kayla Levitt (*Mrs. Smith*) is a senior Acting major from Chatham, NJ. Previous roles include Mrs. Fainall in *The Way of the World* (SU Drama), Agent/Cat/Mom in *The Water Children* (Black Box Players), Sharon in *Nine Stops...*, and Dixie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (SU Drama).

Brad Koed (*Mr. Martin*) is a junior Acting major from Groton, MA. His recent roles include Peter in *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Syracuse Stage), and Walter in *The Rimers of Eldritch* (SU Drama). Additional credits include Petya Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* and 'Steven' in *The Rise and Rise of Daniel Rocket* (Walnut Hill School), and Charlie Gordon in *Flowers for Algernon* (Peacock Players) which earned him a Best Actor nomination at the New Hampshire Theatre Awards.

Kristin Morris (*Mrs. Martin*) is a junior Musical Theater major from Stafford, VA. Syracuse University credits include *Steel Pier* and Koby in *...Or Forever Hold Your Peace*. Also at Syracuse University, she produced and performed *Little Person* in the student-choreographed Winter Dance Concert. Additional credits include Anybodies in *West Side Story*, Jenny in *Shenandoah*, and Rumbleteazer in *CATS*.

Jasmine Thomas (*Mary*) is a sophomore Acting major from Baltimore, MD. Recently she played the role of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Shakespeare Factory Players. This marks her first production with SU Drama.

Michael Owe (*Fire Chief*) is a senior Acting major from Philadelphia, PA. Previously he performed in *Sweat* directed James Miller, and as Action in *West Side Story*. This past summer he was an acting intern at the San Francisco Mime Troupe where he wrote and performed for the workshop of *Proclamation H8*.

CAST - THE CHAIRS

Peter Hourihan Jr. (*Old Man*) is a senior Acting major from Washington, NJ. He was last seen as Nazi 2 in *The Diary of Anne Frank* at Syracuse Stage. Syracuse University credits include Waitwell in *The Way of the World*, Trucker in *The Rimers of Eldritch* roles, and Dr. Scott in the Starving Artists production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. He is a four-year member of Groovestand, a co-ed *a capella* group at SU, and a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon.

Nicholas Petrovich (*Orator*) is a sophomore Musical Theatre major from Newtown, CT. He's performed at numerous venues in the Tri-state area including Ivoryton Playhouse, Warner Theatre, and Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

Kelsey Stalter (*Old Woman*) is a senior Musical Theatre major from Milford, PA. Recent SU Drama credits include Lady Wishfort in *The Way of the World* and Shelby Stevens in *Steel Pier*. Additional credits include *The Fever*, *Harvey Ate the Girls*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Lucky Stiff*.

DESIGNERS

Sang Min Kim (*Scenic Designer*) is a junior Set and Lighting Design major from Inchun, Korea. SU Drama credits include Assistant Scenic Designer for *The World Goes 'Round*, and Assistant Lighting Designer for *The Way of The World*.

Marc Fisher (*Lighting Designer*) is a junior Design and Technology dual major from Potomac, MD. Previous credits include Assistant Lighting Designer for *Steel Pier* (SU Drama), Lighting Designer for *Where's My Money?* (Black Box Players), and Lighting Design Intern for both Montgomery College's Summer Dinner Theatre and CPR MultiMedia.

Devon Ritchie (*Costume Designer*) is a junior Design and Technology major from Lynnfield, MA. Syracuse University credits include Assistant Costume Designer for *Oklahoma!* and *The Way of the World*, Assistant Lighting Designer for *The World Goes 'Round*, and design work for the upcoming Black Box Players' production of *Revenge of the Space Pandas*. Additionally she designed costumes for *Once on This Island* at Marblehead Little Theatre. Currently Devon is Vice President of SU's Black Box Players.

David Huber (*Sound Designer*) is the Assistant Audio Engineer at Syracuse Stage. He has designed for Swine Palace Productions, Hangar Theatre Lab Company, Syracuse University, the Syracuse Stage Children's Tour, and, most recently, Cortland Repertory Theatre. Credits include *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, *The Rimers of Eldritch*, *Home*, *A Thousand Cranes*, *Speak Truth to Power*, *Marisol*, *The Possibilities*, *Tell It Underwater*, *Hair* (Swine Palace), *Steel Pier* (SU Drama), and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Hangar Theatre).

TICKETS

Tickets for the Syracuse University Department of Drama's production of *The Bald Soprano* and *The Chairs* are \$18 for adults and \$16 for students and seniors. \$7 rush tickets are available at the door, one hour before curtain. Wednesday, November 18 is "Pay What You Can" night" for valid SU ID holders. For tickets and more information, contact the Department of Drama box office at 315-443-3275 or visit <http://vpa.syr.edu/drama>.

VPA AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

VPA is committed to the education of cultural leaders who will engage and inspire audiences through performance, visual art, design, scholarship and commentary. It provides the tools for self-discovery and risk-taking in an environment that thrives on critical thought and action.

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STAGE MANAGER

Dana Li

CAST - THE BALD SOPRANO

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Kayla Levitt (*Mrs. Smith*)

Brad Koed (*Mr. Martin*)

Kristin Morris (*Mrs. Martin*)

Jasmine Thomas (*Mary*)

Michael Owe (*Fire Chief*)

CAST - THE CHAIRS

Peter Hourihan Jr. (*Old Man*)

Nicholas Petrovich (*Orator*)

Kelsey Stalter (*Old Woman*)

Performances: November 13 - November 22

November 13 - 8 p.m.

November 14 - 8 p.m.

November 15 - 2 p.m.

November 18 - 8 p.m.

November 19 - 8 p.m.

November 20 - 8 p.m.

November 21 - 3 p.m. & 8 p.m.

November 22 - 2 p.m.

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