

**A STAGED PRODUCTION OF EUGENE IONESCO'S *THE CHAIRS***

by

**Tara Estelle Adelizzi**

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This thesis was presented

by

Tara Estelle Adelizzi

It was defended on

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008

and approved by

Dr. Nancy Lane, Associate Professor, Department of French and Classics

Dr. Bruce Alan McConachie, Professor, Department of Theatre Arts

Dr. Christopher H. Rawson, Lecturer, Department of English Writing

Thesis Advisor: Dr. W. Stephen Coleman, Associate Professor, Department of Theatre Arts

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The subject of this thesis is a theatrical production of the one-act play, *The Chairs*, written by Eugene Ionesco, particularly focusing on the artistic position of the director. The director is the artistic leader of the play, and the material of the thesis deals with all aspects of launching a successful production from the director's perspective. This includes appropriate research for sufficient knowledge of the script, collaboration with other theatre artists in fully realizing the production, and rehearsal with actors in bringing the play to life. The final part of the directorial process includes an evaluation of the play's success.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

*As the world is incomprehensible to me,*

*I am waiting for someone to explain it.* ~ Eugene Ionesco, Notes and Counter Notes

As an aspiring young director, I always have a creative “project” floating around in the back of mind. It comes from the plays I read. Sometimes when I get the right script in my hand, my mind starts filling up with tons of ideas. *This would make a good play. I could do this.* As a director who is still learning and growing, getting the chance to bring one of my own, fully realized plays to life was an amazing experience.

After being given the opportunity to produce a drama of my own choosing, the hardest part was finding the right play to suit the production circumstances of a university lab show. That was the biggest challenge I faced in choosing Eugene Ionesco’s *The Chairs* as the subject matter for my thesis in partial fulfillment of the Honor’s College Bachelor of Philosophy degree; a script that would challenge me on an academic and directorial level, one that would be achievable over a three-week rehearsal period and with minimal production support, and of course, one that I absolutely adored.

I can’t really explain what happened to me the first time I read Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* as a simple homework assignment for my Introduction to Theatre Arts course in my freshman year of college. I knew I had discovered something that I loved to read, something that



was beautiful and phenomenal on the page. But I don't think I quite understood the entire picture, the full nature of the beast I was falling in love with; what theatre scholar Martin Esslin had defined as the Theatre of the Absurd (in his book of that same title).

So that became my starting point. Here was an opportunity to direct something that would be challenging for an undergraduate student, something extremely stylized and different than the average piece of realistic theatre. Here was an opportunity to look that Absurd monster right in the face and wrestle with it. Here was an opportunity to be scholarly about something that I truly loved.

I discovered Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* during the research component for the non-realistic section of my Directing II course last spring. The similarities to Beckett's technical approaches in *Godot* and *Endgame* (my only exposure to Esslin's collection of playwrights at the time) amazed me: the double-act vaudevillian characters, the desolate space, the uncertainty of time and place in relation to our own world... and yet, there were differences too. The stakes felt higher to me because the characters in this world actually choose suicide, as opposed to Didi and Gogo who merely attempt it, or never leave the place where they are located even after they resolve to do so. Instead of forever and continuously existing in my mind as Hamm and Clov or Didi and Gogo do, the Old Man and the Old Woman of *The Chairs* were characters of birth and death each time I encountered them on the page; a melancholy story of life's sad cycle revisited each time in the reading. It was also just as complex and dense as the two acts of *Waiting for Godot* in a significantly shorter space.

The final factor in choosing this piece as the subject matter for my Bachelor of Philosophy thesis was the sheer excitement of rising to the challenge of such a notoriously difficult script. Martin Esslin describes the play as a "tour de force" for all artists involved in

launching a production (Esslin 151). The script had so much to offer in terms of experience and professional growth for the actors playing the Old Man and Old Woman. It was undoubtedly a script that called for the sharp and persistent eye of an informed director if a cohesive production was to be staged.

The majority of my research for the thesis concerned textual analysis of the script, Eugene Ionesco's life and canon of work, and specific production history of *The Chairs*. These findings were then used to inform the artistic and conceptual choices for my own production. The written portion of the thesis also explores the post-production experience in the form of an evaluation of the production's successes and shortcomings.

My greatest anticipation for *The Chairs* was the extreme degree of absurdity suggested in the script (through invisible characters, extreme gesture and pantomime to create the effect of an entirely crowded room with only two actors onstage, old characters required to do acts of physicality impossible given their prescribed age, etc.). In response to Ionesco's stylized writing, it was my wish to have this idea of "the absurd" inform all aspects of staging the production.

Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* was a mountain-of-a-production to launch, but the experience was well worth the proportion of the task. I feel I am stronger in my ability to work and communicate with actors, and am confident that I can someday establish my career as an informed and risk-taking director.

## 2.0 THE CHAIRS ~ PRE-PRODUCTION

*I organize myself. I am the self that organizes myself thus, arranging the same materials in a unique pattern. ~ Eugene Ionesco, Fragments of a Journal*

The “preproduction” phase can be an extremely important tool to the directorial process and never before had I so completely committed myself to this important step. When dealing with realistic plays it is often easy to only scratch the surface of this preparatory work, as the characteristics of realism are more readily understandable than stylized drama. This can be said from the experience of directing my first lab show, *The Death of Bessie Smith*, written by Edward Albee. My preproduction work was mostly spent on reading the script rather than becoming deeply entrenched with production history. When I reflect on the foundation that my preproduction research provided for *The Chairs*’ rehearsal process, it’s hard to see myself ever falling back into that “young” director habit.

After simply reading Ionesco’s script several times (thereby becoming acquainted with my own artistic response and eliminating any possibility of outside influences besides that of the playwright), I moved into the process of preproduction. Preproduction could otherwise be titled “research” as it is a look at anything historically significant concerning Ionesco’s life as a playwright, his canon of work, the history of *The Chairs* itself, or general theatre history during Ionesco’s lifetime. It was my intention to help inform the production choices that I made through exploring the following areas of research.

## 2.1 BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH ON EUGENE IONESCO

Eugene Ionesco was born on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1909 in Slatina, Romania. Son of French woman, Thérèse Ipcar, and Romanian, Eugen Ionescu, he also had two siblings, a sister and a brother. When Ionesco was two his younger sister Marilina was born, and the family moved to Paris. Shortly following, just 18 months after the birth of his younger brother, Mirceau, the child died. Ionesco realized death and mortality at a very young age, and this subject would remain a continual thematic reference point throughout all of his writing; especially apparent in the conclusion of *The Chairs* (Lane 1).

The Ionesco family fought constantly and moved often while residing in the city of Paris, suggesting a turbulent and unfixed childhood for Eugene. In the midst of an otherwise unsettling youth, Ionesco took great pleasure in the Punch and Judy shows along the streets of the city. In his article “Experience in the Theatre” Ionesco recounts these puppets with a sincere clarity. He describes it as “the spectacle of the world itself... presented itself to me in an infinitely simplified and caricatured form, as if to underline its grotesque and brutal truth” (Gussow 1). It is no surprise that characters very similar to these simple puppets appear in the complex and aggressive plays of his later life’s work.

It was in 1916 that Ionesco’s father left the family in Paris under the pretense of returning to Romania for military service. As time passed, his mother came to believe Eugen dead from service in arms. Instead, the father spent his time in Romania studying law. Unknown to Ionesco’s mother, Eugen divorced his wife on grounds of desertion, and remarried.

During a two-year period between 1917 and 1919 Ionesco and his sister studied at a boarding school in La Chapelle-Antheraise, a small village southwest of Paris. This short time was perhaps an oasis in the middle of an otherwise lonely childhood spent drifting about between

children's homes and different flats in Paris with his mother. When he left the school at age eleven, he began writing journals, scripts, and poetry. "The unhappy young boy felt that the streets of Paris had become a prison, and he found some consolation for the first time in literature" (Lane 2).

It was in 1922 that Ionesco's father received custody of the children, forcing both Eugene and Marilina to move back to Romania. Marilina was eventually allowed to move back to Paris, but Ionesco remained in his father's country, a place that was both foreign and isolated to him. "He was something of an outcast in his new family, taking his meals alone in his room. Furthermore, he had to learn a new language, and this experience has left its traces in his work in the form of a certain hostility to and estrangement from language itself" (Lane 2).

This difficult period of his life formed another hallmark theme resonant in Ionesco's work: the opposition to authority figures. Though born in Romania, Ionesco considered French, the spoken word of his mother's country, to be his native language. Identity with his mother's country, resentment about the injustice acted upon her through the divorce, and the usurping of her children caused Ionesco to have a conflicted and troubled relationship with his father. He perceived him as a bigot and an opportunist, and throughout his dramatic career this opposition to paternal figures and authoritative powers would manifest in his plays. Primal maternal desires are made very clear within the first few pages of the Old Man's dialogue in *The Chairs* and the character of the Majesty certainly portrays a certain anxiety about pleasing and submitting to authority figures: "He could have been, he too, Your Majesty, like so many others, a head editor, a head actor, a head doctor, Your Majesty, a head king..." (Old Woman, *The Chairs* 151). Ionesco stopped living with his father in 1926. It was only four years after his father had been

granted custody and two years before he graduated secondary school, but these years were perhaps the most influential to his writing.

In 1934 Eugene Ionesco received a degree in literature from the University of Bucharest. It was also at this time that he began publishing his writing in various literary magazines, including poetry, essays, and criticism. One work he published was a series of essays in a volume titled *Nu*. The collection contained contradictory essays written on the same subject by Ionesco. His intention was to reveal literary criticism as an unfounded subject. He attempted to live in France again between 1939 and 1942 but the German Occupation and World War II led to constant unsettlement and flight about Europe. 1945 was when Ionesco was finally able to reestablish his life in Paris where he worked as a proofreader and freelance writer. In 1950 his first play, *The Bald Soprano*, was produced.

Thus, Eugene Ionesco's life as a playwright began. He went on to write *The Lesson*, *The Chairs* and *Jack, or the Submission* (1952), *Victims of Duty* (1953), *Amédée, or How to Get Rid of It* (1954), *The New Tenant* (1955), *The Killer* (1959), *Rhinoceros* (1959/New York 1961), *Exit the King* and *A Stroll in the Air* (1962), *Hunger and Thirst* (1964), *Killing Game* (1970), *Macbett* (1973), *Man with Bags* (1975), and *Journey Among the Dead* (1980).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1970 Ionesco was elected to the Academie Francaise and admitted on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1971. He also went on to write extensively about the theatre and dramatic theory itself, such as in his work *Notes and Counter Notes* (1962), as well as memoirs, *Present Past Past Present* (1968), and *Fragments of a Journal* (1967).

In his later life, Eugene Ionesco gave up writing altogether, perhaps finally defeated by his struggle with language. His obituary quotes him saying that while writing *The Bald Soprano* "it was a pleasure to destroy language" and by the end of his life "he found 'the disintegration of



boulevard theatre was often associated with melodramatic and domestic conventions. This is why, at curtain rise in *The Bald Soprano*, the setting is a pristine English living room with stereotypical stock characters invading the stage (such as a maid and two pairs of married couples). “The antics going on are, in fact, all the more disorienting just because the outward form looks familiar” (Lane 37). Through this approach Ionesco was able to successfully deconstruct the popular theatre forms of his time and show their inefficiency as compelling dramas. *The Bald Soprano* can perhaps be considered Ionesco’s most concrete example of the theatre of the absurd.

Shortly to follow in 1950 was Ionesco’s second play, *The Lesson*. Once again, language was used as a mechanism for destruction, but in a much different manner for this play. The words used by the Professor in his teachings became clouded with double meanings and self-defeating logic. Notice how he insists that the languages he is teaching to the Pupil are different even though they appear and sound the same: “But it’s so simple! So simple! It’s a matter of having a certain experience and practice in these diverse languages, which are so diverse in spite of the fact that they present wholly identical characteristics” (*The Lesson* 68).

Rather than a world that displayed the anguish and hopelessness of communication, *The Lesson* was an exploration of the power and danger involved in language. “In this play... it is language that drives the action, becoming finally a weapon with which the Professor rapes and murders his Pupil...” (Lane 41). By the conclusion audiences recognize the Professor’s fumbling inability to appropriately use language. It is a weapon of destruction far beyond his control.

The beginning of two important characterization patterns emerged in *The Lesson* as well. First, Ionesco’s obsession with the tyrannical, paternal figure was explored in the cowardly and



murderous actions of the Professor, who traps his Pupil in a vulnerable physical state (her toothache) and then murders her with the word “knife.” Second, the maternal figure is exercised through Marie’s participation in the play’s action:

These women can be nurturing and protective, as is Marie when she plays the part of “good mother,” helping the childlike Professor clean up and cover up after his crime. It is she who makes it possible for him to begin his cycle anew after each murder, taking care of the details and watching out for his health. On the other hand, women are domineering, smothering, “bad mother” figures who stand in the way of the hero’s infantile desires for gratification and are thus hated and feared (Lane 44).

It is important to take note of these two character patterns, as they became important influences to the highly developed relationship between the old couple in *The Chairs*. This is why Semiramis (name of Old Woman, revealed in rehearsal unit 1, Chapter III) and the Old Man are so effective at both hurting and loving one another in various scenes of the play. (Further discussion of the rehearsal unit reference system can be found in Chapter III, section 1.) Rather than appearing to have only just met each other, as the Martins in *The Bald Soprano*, the old couple have known each other since they were 14 and 15 (I’ve worked out the math in rehearsal unit 2, Chapter III).

This emphasis on the behavior and regard toward parental figures, and characters of the opposite-sex was excellent information to utilize in rehearsal. It influenced moments of extreme emotional reciprocation between the actors, such as when Semiramis and the Old Man scream at one another about being orphans, and then comfort each other shortly thereafter (rehearsal unit 3, Chapter III).

As Ionesco’s third play, written in 1951, *The Chairs* still explored his fascination with the limitations of language, but also showed new developments in his approach to dramatic convention. In this script he departed from such a strong nonsensical pretense and experimented

with a more personal and fantastic world. The lighthouse, while displaying an alternate reality, seemed to exist on more coherent terms than the fragmented living room in *The Bald Soprano*.

It is fun to acknowledge that *The Chairs* also contains Ionesco's first glance into the theme of proliferating matter. More and more chairs are brought onto the stage almost self-knowingly hurtling to an end as the open space grows sparser. This theme is suggested and explored in other works such as *Victims of Duty* (coffee cups), *The Lesson* (dead pupils), and *Macbett* (the head-chopping sequence).

The plays Ionesco went on to write from 1957 to 1962 show an even further descent into more structured dramatic frameworks. Language began to make more sense than it had earlier. The writer created the character of Berenger, who appears in a cycle of four plays, the most famous being *Rhinoceros*, written about 1959. "The protagonist is in each case a fully humanized character, and metaphysical anguish in the face of death becomes the central focus" (Lane 99). Berenger is the first Ionesco character to be thrown out into society rather than confined to the vacuum-like reality of a single room, such as the Smith's living room, the lighthouse, and the Professor's classroom. He works a job in an office and has relationships with other members of the community, such as Daisy and Jean. The conflict of the play catalogues Berenger's struggle against a rapidly changing and destructively violent world, but that world is a more recognizable one than in the plays he had previously written.

Allegory emerged as a regular element in Ionesco's writing in *The Chairs* through the recurring image of the old couple as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. *Rhinoceros* became an extremely apparent allegorical tale, reconstructing the rise of fascism and Nazi power in Ionesco's own life. Every character surrounding Berenger eventually joins the "rhinoceritis" movement by the final act, each for his or her own reason. The influence of the rhinoceroses is

clearly a parable to the tyrannical propaganda of the Nazi regime. “Like the Nazis, these are brutal beasts who glory in their strength and trample the weak – the cat, for instance – under foot. They are bullies who rampage through the streets and destroy civilization” (Lane 113). *Rhinoceros* catalogued a shift in thematic interest, emphasizing the shortcomings of authority in society rather than in the family. Jean is arguably the closest character embodying the tyrannical paternal figure, but he is not the main antagonist in this case, and he becomes a victim of the rhinoceros syndrome only halfway through the script.

The plays written in the final phases of Ionesco’s theatre career are works of very different literary approaches than those written at the beginning. Growing academic and artistic fame, climaxing with his election to the Academie francaise in 1970, was coupled with the search for more sophisticated literary narratives. “Having pursued familial obsessions to their conclusion, Ionesco then turned for the first time to others’ works for inspiration... These adaptations can be seen in retrospect as a part of the search for a new tone and form that was to lead to the late dream plays and even later to the abandonment of theatre in favor of drawing” (Lane 150).

*Macbett*, written about 1970, was a retelling of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, a script inspired by the writer’s exposure to other dramatic reconstructions, most notably, Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*. While maintaining a similar plot outline to *Macbeth*, the play had several departures from Shakespeare’s original tale, especially in the exclusion of certain main characters like MacDuff.

In a very similar spirit to Jarry’s thematic implications found in *Ubu*, Ionesco used the dramatic conventions of *Macbett* to show how power and authority inevitably lead to corruption. At the beginning of the play Duncan is a cowardly, power-hungry, and blood-thirsty ruler. He is challenged by the rebellion of Glamiss and Candor, also power-hungry and corrupted in their

schemes of usurpation. Macbett's brief period as king during the middle of the play is riddled with the same injustice of selfish leadership, and Malcol's triumph at the end shows the rise of the most despotic and poetic political dictator of all: "Now I have power, I shall, Pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell, Uproar the universal peace, confound, All unity on earth" (*Macbett* 105).

Throughout all of his plays, Ionesco wrote from an extremely personal place inside of himself. Since childhood he remained obsessed with the role of domineering parents, corrupted authority figures, and grotesque violence, first impressed upon him through the Punch and Judy puppet shows of his childhood. The literary techniques, while displaying a clear development as his dramatic career progressed, consistently embodied similar themes, ideas, and obsessions.

### 2.3 PRODUCTION HISTORY OF *THE CHAIRS*

*The Chairs* was written in 1951, one year after the production of Ionesco's first play, *The Bald Soprano*. It premiered on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1952 at the Theatre du Nouveau-Lancry. Directed by Sylvain Dhomme, who also played the Orator, "it took (him) and the two actors of the old couple, Tsilla Chelton and Paul Chevalier, three months to find the acting style suitable for the play – a mixture of extreme naturalness of detail and the utmost unusualness of the general conception" (Esslin 152). Despite the hard work of the artists involved in this initial production, only eight audience members were in attendance on opening night (Lewis 42). The play had a thirty-day run before closing due to low ticket sales (Hayman xi).

Though the success of *The Chairs* was off to a slow start (as was the case with many other similar playwrights of the time), its sheer aggression against the limitations of theatrical

elements would not let it go unrecognized. In this same 1952 production the actress playing the Old Woman was recorded to have brought twenty chairs onto the stage in the span of one minute and thirty-five seconds (Lane 52). The play did not resonate with the small audiences it received and "...only too often the empty chairs on the stage were matched by the empty seats in the auditorium" (Esslin 153). Nonetheless, the theatrical force and poetic power of *The Chairs* enlightened and interested some goers of the theatre. "Most of the critics slated [sic] the play, but, on the other hand, it did find some distinguished supporters" (Esslin 153). Two of these individuals were Samuel Beckett and Arthur Adamov.

The 1956 revival directed by Jacques Mauclair was received with much more success at the Studio des Champs Elysees (Esslin 153). The growing admiration and acclaim of Ionesco's play also spread to London in a 1957 production directed by Tony Richardson at the Royal Court Theatre. Soon productions spanned across theatres in the Western world. The admiration for absurdist drama grew so popular that audiences could now fill the large theatres of Broadway.

Currently, Ionesco's plays are more often produced to serve academic or cultural purposes. *The Chairs* is still produced in many theatres throughout the nation, largely regional and university settings, and usually on a double-bill with another of the anti-plays, such as *The Lesson* or *The Bald Soprano*.

The most recent big-budget production of *The Chairs* occurred in 1998, Broadway's Golden Theater revival. In the case of this particular show, the script was newly adapted by Martin Crimp and directed by Simon McBurney, who firmly sought to highlight the farcical aspects of this "tragic farce." "Employing a palette of ingenious directorial flourishes, McBurney has turned *The Chairs* – which in appearance resembles a bleak second cousin to Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* – into an uproarious vaudeville routine" (Wallach 2).

Theatre of the Absurd is still a largely popular genre, especially in the education of acting and directing styles. The written techniques of the form have shown a significant influence to the written approaches of postmodern playwrights such as Tom Stoppard and Tina Howe. The significance of the absurd canon is recognized as an inherent part of theatre history, and still today the scripts always make reappearances in the great theatres of New York and throughout the world.

#### **2.4 A UNIQUE CASTING OPPORTUNITY**

There is a certain “expected process” that accompanies the producing of a “lab” show in the Theatre Arts Department at the University of Pittsburgh. Due to a minimal budget, the project is expected to be largely focused on the acting and directing rather than the production values of the design areas. Projects usually consist of the relationships between undergraduate artists: undergraduate directors and actors, with a graduate student or faculty member serving as the advisor.

My trusted directing teacher, Stephen Coleman, offered to be my advisor on the project, and I gladly accepted his help. After submitting the application to direct the play, I was in Stephen’s office to schedule my fall semester classes when he casually mentioned to me that he had been chatting with lecturer, Doug Mertz about my proposal for Ionesco’s *The Chairs* next season. Stephen reported to me that Doug was a big fan of the script, and was interested in perhaps acting as my lead role next semester.

What an opportunity!

As a member of the faculty, Doug is a professional actor who is hired by the university to teach classes and work in the university productions with the student actors. This position is designed to expose younger theatre artists with less experience to professionals in the field. Doug Mertz's influence on many of my fellow undergraduate students' acting skills and professional development has been a very special experience.

This was such an exciting prospect. As a young, twenty-two-year-old director I would maybe have the chance to work with an experienced actor, an artist well-seasoned in developing interesting and precise characters, someone who was professionally trained in acting technique and had experienced success as a result. Having Doug Mertz as the lead role would ensure a successful production, but most importantly of all, it suggested a process in which I could strictly focus on my directing skills, and not worry about "teaching acting" to some undergraduate actor with a limited range of experience and technique.

As faculty, Doug is "older" than most the graduate students in the university's theatre department. If I was going to invite him to play the role, I needed to find a mature actress to play the other role. This proved more difficult, for I considered several women, but the invitations became a collection of single emails with "no thank you" as the consistent reply.

At the time, I was in preproduction for my summer stage-management gig titled, *American Humbug*. The producer of the play, Tavia LaFollette, is a professional designer, puppet-maker, and an extremely experienced older actress. I hesitate to label her a professional since she does not have an Actor's Equity card, but she has worked professionally as a designer, and teaches theatre at Chatam College. I extended the invitation to Tavia, and it turned out she loved Eugene Ionesco just as much as Doug, and was extremely interested.

Many emails ensued between the three of us, and I relentlessly attempted to work out a possible rehearsal schedule between Tavia and Doug's teaching and working careers. Tavia worked at a different university, and therefore, was on a completely different production schedule from my own theatre department's. Doug was acting in the Pittsburgh Public Theater's production of *The Comedy of Errors* about one week into the beginning of my allotted rehearsal time. And then Tavia was scheduled to go away for a few days for her wedding anniversary. While I was willing to make some compromises to the rehearsal schedule, after figuring all the days that Tavia and Doug were not available to work together, we would only have a little less than two weeks of rehearsal time before the technical and dress rehearsals.

This time was too short to keep me comfortable as the director. I simply thought it was not enough to find the proper choices and momentum for the script. While the experience of the actors would be a strength to the process, the precision of theatricality required was too large to risk. Sadly enough, I had to let this wonderful opportunity go. I kindly thanked both Tavia and Doug for their considerations, and I turned my attention back to the undergraduate acting pool. I decided that I would simply wait to see what happened at the fall auditions.



### **3.0 THE CHAIRS ~ SCRIPT ANALYSIS**

*...And indeed my characters are simply people who don't know how to be alone.*

~Eugene Ionesco, *Conversations with Eugene Ionesco*

The playwright's written text is the most important and primary tool to a director's understanding of a play. The nature of the written script will influence how the director communicates to fellow theatre artists and what choices he or she makes. I believe that a good director spends a significant amount of time with the script prior to and after completing research, as well as revisiting the text regularly throughout the rehearsal process. The following annotated script is my process of analyzing Ionesco's text of *The Chairs* prior, throughout, and after the rehearsal and performance process.

#### **3.1 CUTS AND REHEARSAL UNIT BREAKDOWN**

The sections designated by a black line and a scene number represent the rehearsal unit breakdown of the script. These sections were used to understand and define the structure of the play (through units of dramatic action), to facilitate the designing of the rehearsal schedule, and as a reference index throughout the written thesis.

The sections of the text that are boxed and crossed out are the parts of the dialogue that were cut from my production. These decisions to “trim” certain areas of the story were made to facilitate an eighty-minute run time.

### **3.2 ANNOTATED SCRIPT WITH SUPPLEMENTAL RESEARCH**

The annotations made in the margins of the script are anything that may inform analysis: from notes regarding research, to free associative interpretations of some of the images suggested, to simple journal-like passages that explain the discovery of the text’s interpretation as the rehearsal process progressed. I did this type of work with the text to explore and understand the exact details of the story Ionesco is telling about this old couple. I then took what I have discovered through this research and used the knowledge to inform my artistic and directorial choices.

### **3.3 BLOCKING**

The notations that appear on the left side of the page are records of actors’ blocking. The blocking serves almost as a “map” indicating the movement of the actors onstage.

THE CHAIRS

•

*A Tragic Farce*

"Les Chaises

Farce tragique"

- original  
title written  
in French

"Farce in Ionesco's  
theater carries  
on a long  
French tradition  
that runs from  
medieval farces  
to Molière to  
Tarry's Ubu  
Roi" (Lane 22)

blocking

notations:

OM = Old Man

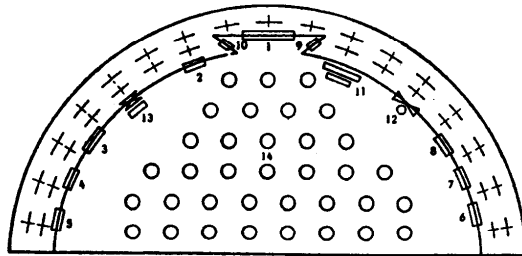
S = Semiramis /  
Old Woman

O = Orator

*The Characters*

OLD MAN, aged 95  
OLD WOMAN, aged 94  
THE ORATOR, aged 45 to 50  
And many other characters

SCENE: Circular walls with a recess upstage center. A large, very sparsely furnished room. To the right, going upstage from the proscenium, three doors. Then a window with a stool in front of it; then another door. In the center of the back wall of the recess, a large double door, and two other doors facing each other and bracketing the main door: these last two doors, or at least one of them, are almost hidden from the audience. To the left, going upstage from the proscenium, there are three doors, a window with a stool in front of it, opposite the window on the right, then a blackboard and a dais. See the plan below. Downstage are two chairs, side by side. A gas lamp hangs from the ceiling.



- 1: Main double door.
- 2, 3, 4, 5: Side doors on the right.
- 6, 7, 8: Side doors on the left.
- 9, 10: Two doors hidden in the recess.
- 11: Dais and blackboard.
- 12, 13: Windows, with stools, left and right.
- 14: Empty chairs.
- XXX Corridor, in wings.

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OM enters upst. R. door,  
X's to st. R. window,  
sits on stool.

S enters str. door,  
x's to ctrl. chair, pushes.

OM x's to ctrl. chair, both push chair ctr.

OM x's to str. window, sits on stool.

S lights  
lamp, picks  
up chair, x's  
ctrl., replaces  
chair, sits.

*The Chairs*  
scene ①

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[The curtain rises. Half-light. The Old man is up on the stool, leaning out the window on the left. The Old Woman lights the gas lamp. Green light. She goes over to the Old Man and takes him by the sleeve.]

OLD WOMAN: Come my darling, close the window. There's a bad smell from that stagnant water, and besides the mosquitoes are coming in.

OLD MAN: Leave me alone!

OLD WOMAN: Come, come, my darling, come sit down. You shouldn't lean out, you might fall into the water. You know what happened to François. You must be careful.

OLD MAN: Still more examples from history! Sweetheart, I'm tired of French history. I want to see—the boats on the water making blots in the sunlight.

OLD WOMAN: You can't see them, there's no sunlight, it's nighttime, my darling.

OLD MAN: There are still shadows. [He leans out very far.]

OLD WOMAN [pulling him in with all her strength]: Oh! . . . you're frightening me, my darling . . . come sit down, you won't be able to see them come, anyway. There's no use trying. It's dark . . .

[The Old Man reluctantly lets himself be pulled in.]

OLD MAN: I wanted to see—you know how much I love to see the water.

OLD WOMAN: How can you, my darling? . . . It makes me dizzy. Ah! this house, this island, I can't get used to it. Water all around us . . . water under the windows, stretching as far as the horizon.

[The Old Woman drags the Old Man down and they move towards the two chairs downstage; the Old Man seats himself quite naturally on the lap of the Old Woman.]

OLD MAN: It's six o'clock in the evening . . . it is dark already. It wasn't like this before. Surely you remember, there was still daylight at nine o'clock in the evening, at ten o'clock, at midnight.

S x's to str.  
window, OM  
pushes S, S  
x's to str.  
window.

OM  
leans  
out window.

S x's to str.  
window, pulls in  
OM. OM falls.

S & OM x to  
ctrl. chair,  
both sit.  
(OM sits on  
S's lap)

⊗ what wikipedia.com  
says about  
François I →  
(over on back...)

## Francis I of France

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
(Redirected from Francois I)

**Francis I** (French: *François I<sup>er</sup>*) (September 12, 1494 – March 31, 1547), was crowned King of France in 1515 in the cathedral at Reims and reigned until 1547.

Francis I is considered to be France's first Renaissance monarch. His reign saw France make immense cultural advances. He was a contemporary of King Henry VIII of England and of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, his great rivals, and Suleiman the Magnificent, his ally.

### Francis I

*King of France, Count of Provence (more...)*



(turn over for more on Semiramis) →

⊕ I first encountered this

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EUGENE IONESCO

OLD WOMAN: Come to think of it, that's very true. What a remarkable memory you have!

OLD MAN: Things have certainly changed.

OLD WOMAN: Why is that, do you think?

OLD MAN: I don't know, Semiramis, sweetheart . . . Perhaps it's because the further one goes, the deeper one sinks. It's because the earth keeps turning around, around, around, around . . .

OLD WOMAN: Around, around, my little pet. [Silence.] Ah! yes, you've certainly a fine intellect. You are very gifted, my darling. You could have been head president, head king, or even head doctor, or head general, if you had wanted to, if only you'd had a little ambition in life . . .

OLD MAN: What good would that have done us? We'd not have lived any better . . . and besides, we have a position here. I am a general, in any case, of the house, since I am the general factotum.

OLD WOMAN [caressing the Old Man as one caresses a child]: My darling, my pet.

OLD MAN: I'm very bored.

OLD WOMAN: You were more cheerful when you were looking at the water . . . Let's amuse ourselves by making believe, the way you did the other evening.

OLD MAN: Make believe yourself, it's your turn.

OLD WOMAN: It's your turn.

OLD MAN: Your turn.

OLD WOMAN: Your turn.

OLD MAN: Your turn.

OLD WOMAN: Your turn.

OLD MAN: Drink your tea, Semiramis.

[Of course there is no tea.]

OLD WOMAN: Come on now, imitate the month of February.

OLD MAN: I don't like the months of the year.

OLD WOMAN: Those are the only ones we have, up till now.

Come on, just to please me . . .

OLD MAN: All right, here's the month of February. [He

name in Titus Andronicus (II.i.22), Aaron compares Tamora to Semiramis, the mythic queen of Assyria, famous for cruelty/love

⊗ the phrase "my little pet" was changed to "mon petit chou" for the production

- French translative equivalent which technically means "my little cabbage"

⊗ the word "factotum" is generally defined as a servant or assistant figure with many responsibilities who serves in a wide

range of capacities. important to note the contradiction in pairing a word that defines a subordinate position with "general."

♥ "Bois ton thé, Sémiramis" is the French translation. Experimented with in rehearsal but discarded before opening.

Om stands, faces S & strikes pose.

Om x's sth., gets dream,

sweeps chl. & stl.

S x's sth. window, x's stl. to Om.

Om pushes S, x's chl. S pushes Om, x's stl. Om x's stl., lifts S & twirls chl.

puts S on ground. S trips Om. Om & S wrestle.

Om stands, x's to stl. window, sits.

S stands, x's to stl. window.

Om stands, x's to chl. S x's chl.

Om scratches head.

What wikipedia.com says about Semiramis

## Semiramis

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Semiramis** was a legendary Assyrian queen, also known as **Semiramide**, **Semiramida**, or **Shamiram** in Aramaic. Many legends have accumulated around her personality. The legends narrated by Diodorus Siculus, Justin and others from Ctesias of Cnidus make a picture of her and her relationship to king Ninus. Various efforts have been made to identify her with real persons.

She is sometimes identified with Shammuramat, the Babylonian wife of Shamshi-Adad V (ruled 811 BC–808 BC).



Semiramis is depicted as an armed Amazon in this eighteenth century Italian illustration.



S x's to OM, hugs him.  
 OM shake S, x's stL., picks  
 up broom, sweeps, pushes away  
 chl. chair, drops broom, sits  
 in stL. chair.

S x's to stL.  
 chair.

S x's stL. of  
 chair, kneels.

S pulls OM chl.

S x's up stL. to  
 coat rack, gets  
 umbrella, x's  
 chl.

*The Chairs*

*scratches his head like Stan Laurel.*

OLD WOMAN [laughing, applauding]: That's just right. Thank you, thank you, you're as cute as can be, my darling. [She hugs him.] Oh, you are so gifted, you could have been at least a head general, if you had wanted to . . .

OLD MAN: I am a general, general factotum. [Silence.]

OLD WOMAN: Tell me the story, you know the story: "Then at last we arrived . . ."

OLD MAN: Again? . . . I'm sick of it . . . "Then at last we arrived"? That again . . . you always ask for the same thing! . . . "Then at last we arrived . . ." But it's monotonous . . .

For all of the seventy-five years that we've been married, every single evening, absolutely every blessed evening, you've made me tell the same story, you've made me imitate the same people, the same months . . . always the same . . . let's talk about something else . . .

OLD WOMAN: My darling, I'm not tired of it . . . it's your life, it fascinates me.

OLD MAN: You know it by heart.

OLD WOMAN: It's as if suddenly I'd forgotten everything . . . it's as though my mind were a clean slate every evening . . . Yes, my darling, I do it on purpose, I take a dose of salts . . . I become new again, for you, my darling, every evening . . . Come on, begin again, please.

OLD MAN: Well, if you want me to.

OLD WOMAN: Come on then, tell your story . . . It's also mine; what is yours is mine! Then at last we arrived . . .

OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived . . . my sweetheart . . .

OLD WOMAN: Then at last we arrived . . . my darling . . .

OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived at a big fence. We were soaked through, frozen to the bone, for hours, for days, for nights, for weeks . . .

OLD WOMAN: For months . . .

OLD MAN: . . . In the rain . . . Our ears, our feet, our knees, our noses, our teeth were chattering . . . that was eighty years ago . . . They wouldn't let us in . . . they might at least

years old (95 - 75 = 20), therefore, Semiramis was married at 19 years of age and the Old Man at 20.

♥ the characters ventured into the garden eighty years ago. (95 - 80 = 15). they were 15 years old in this story.

\* I found some old "Laurel and Hardy" recordings on youtube.com and watched them at this suggestion.

- it's interesting to note that before this Semiramis comments that January and February are "the only two" months they've had; the couple appears to only have experienced the season of winter

\* the characters have been married for seventy-five years and they are 95

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\*

scene 2

♥

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EUGENE IONESCO

OM x's stl.  
around chair,  
x's chl.  
S follows.  
OM x's back stl.  
around chair  
to chl.

have opened the gate of the garden . . . [Silence.]

OLD WOMAN: In the garden the grass was wet.

OLD MAN: There was a path which led to a little square and in the center, a village church . . . Where was this village? Do you recall?

OLD WOMAN: No, my darling, I've forgotten.

OLD MAN: How did we reach it? Where is the road? This place was called Paris, I think . . .

OLD WOMAN: Paris never existed, my little one.

OLD MAN: That city must have existed because it collapsed . . . It was the city of light, but it has been extinguished, extinguished, for four hundred thousand years . . . Nothing remains of it today, except a song.

OLD WOMAN: A real song? That's odd. What song? \*

OLD MAN: A lullaby, an allegory: "Paris will always be Paris."

OLD WOMAN: And the way to it was through the garden? Was it far?

OLD MAN [dreaming, lost]: The song? . . . the rain? . . .

OLD WOMAN: You are very gifted. If you had had a little ambition in life you could have been head king, head journalist, head comedian, head general . . . All that's gone down the drain, alas . . . down the old black drain . . . down the old drain, I tell you. [Silence.]

OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived . . .

OLD WOMAN: Ah! yes, go on . . . tell me . . .

OLD MAN [while the Old Woman begins to laugh softly, senilely, then progressively in great bursts, the Old Man laughs, too, as he continues]: Then at last we arrived, we laughed till we cried, the story was so idiotic . . . the idiot arrived full speed, bare-bellied, the idiot was pot-bellied . . . he arrived with a trunk chock full of rice; the rice spilled out on the ground . . . the idiot on the ground too, belly to ground . . . then at last we laughed, we laughed, we laughed, the idiotic belly, bare with rice on the ground, the trunk, the story of sick from rice belly to ground, bare-bellied, all with rice, at last we laughed, the idiot at last arrived all

S drops  
umbrella,  
takes OM's  
hands. OM  
& S dance &  
twirl.

OM gets umbrella  
x's chl.  
S x's upstr.,  
sits.

OM replaces  
chl. chair,  
x's upstr. to  
S, sits.

OM crawls dist.  
chl. S stands  
& follows.

\* "Paris sera  
toujours Paris"- French  
translation used in  
production

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bare, we laughed . . .

OLD WOMAN [laughing]: At last we laughed like idiots, at last arrived all bare, we laughed, the trunk, the trunk full of rice, the rice on the belly, on the ground . . .

S kneels on ground.

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN [laughing together]: At last we laughed. Ah! . . . laughed . . . arrived . . . arrived . . . Ah! . . . Ah! . . . rived . . . arrived . . . arrived . . . the idiotic bare belly . . . arrived with the rice . . . arrived with the rice . . . [This is all we hear.] At last we . . . bare-bellied . . . arrived . . . the trunk . . . [Then the Old Man and Old Woman calm down little by little.] We lau . . . Ah! . . . aughed . . . Ah! . . . arrived . . . Ah! . . . arrived . . . aughed . . . aughed.

OM & S lay on ground, roll away to sit. & sit, roll toward to ctr.

OM & S crawl ctr., lay on top of one another.

OLD WOMAN: So that's the way it was, your wonderful Paris.

OLD MAN: Who could put it better? scene 3

OM & S sit ctr. S stands, x's ctr.

OLD WOMAN: Oh! my darling, you are so really fine. Oh! so really, you know, so really, so really, you could have been anything in life, a lot more than general factotum.

OLD MAN: Let's be modest . . . we should be content with the little . . .

OLD WOMAN: Perhaps you've spoiled your career?

OM crawls to S, stands, x's to dnstR. door, looks out, x's to dnstL. door, looks out.

OLD MAN [weeping suddenly]: I've spoiled it? I've spilled it? Ah! where are you, Mamma, Mamma, where are you, Mamma? . . . hi, hi, hi, I'm an orphan. [He moans.] . . . an orphan, dwarfan.

OLD WOMAN: Here I am, what are you afraid of?

S follows.

OLD MAN: No, Semiramis, my sweetheart, you're not my mamma . . . orphan, dwarfan, who will protect me?

OM x's to upst. door, sinks to floor.

OLD WOMAN: But I'm here, my darling!

OLD MAN: It's not the same thing . . . I want my mamma, na, you, you're not my mamma, you . . .

S x's to OM, stands over him.

OLD WOMAN [caressing him]: You're breaking my heart, don't cry, my little one.

OLD MAN: Hi, hi, let me go, hi, hi, I'm all spoiled, I'm wet all over, my career is spilled, it's spoiled.

OLD WOMAN: Calm down.

OLD MAN [*sobbing his mouth wide open like a baby*]: I'm an orphan . . . dworfan.

OLD WOMAN [*trying to console him by cajoling him*]: My orphan, my darling, you're breaking my heart, my orphan. [*She rocks the Old Man who is sitting on her knees again.*]

OLD MAN [*sobbing*]: Hi, hi, hi! My mamma! Where is my mamma? I don't have a mamma anymore.

OLD WOMAN: I am your wife, I'm the one who is your mamma now. \*

OLD MAN [*giving in a little*]: That's not true, I'm an orphan, hi, hi.

S x's dnst. chl.

OLD WOMAN [*still rocking him*]: My pet, my orphan, dworfan, worfan, morphan, orphan.

OLD MAN [*still sulky, but giving in more and more*]: No . . . I don't wan't; I don't wa-a-a-ant.

OLD WOMAN [*crooning*]: Orphan-ly, orphan-lay, orphan-lo, orphan-loo.

OLD MAN: No-o-o . . . No-o-o.

OM crawls chl.

OLD WOMAN [*same business*]: Li lon lala, li lon la lay, orphan-ly, orphan-lay, relee-relay, orphan-li-relee-rela . . .

S x's chl., sits.

OLD MAN: Hi, hi, hi, hi. [*He sniffles, calming down little by little.*] Where is she? My mamma.

OLD WOMAN: In heavenly paradise . . . she hears you, she sees you, among the flowers; don't cry anymore, you will only make me weep!

OLD MAN: That's not even true-ue . . . she can't see me . . . she can't hear me. I'm an orphan, on earth, you're not my mamma . . .

OLD WOMAN [*he is almost calm*]: Now, come on, calm down, don't get so upset . . . you have great qualities, my little general . . . dry your tears; the guests are sure to come this evening and they mustn't see you this way . . . all is not lost, all is not spoiled, you'll tell them everything, you will explain, you have a message. \* . . you always say you are going to deliver it . . . you must live, you have to struggle for your message . . .

\* el found another quote

".. all this is touching and funny at the same time because it penetrates into what is rudimentary in almost any situation involving a man and woman. The man needs his wife-mother to make him believe that he has something, a message that is worth passing on to other people, to make him believe (over on back...)

\* "The relationship between the old couple is clearly Oedipal..." (Lane 61)

-I wasn't interested in exploring the Freudian psychology that is implied by this statement, but the distinct nature of the two different approaches to interacting with men (as mother or lover) spoke to me about Semiramis' relationship with the Old Man.

that he is different from the others and has  
greatness within him." (Hayman 30)

OM stands.  
S stands.  
They take  
hands.

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OLD MAN: I have a message, that's God's truth, I struggle, a mission, I have something to say, a message to communicate to humanity, to mankind . . .

OLD WOMAN: To mankind, my darling, your message! . . .

OLD MAN: That's true, yes, it's true . . .

S strikes pose.

OLD WOMAN [she wipes the Old Man's nose, dries his tears]: That's it . . . you're a man, a soldier, a general factotum . . .

OM x's stB.,  
x's chl. to  
S.

OLD MAN [he gets off the Old Woman's lap and walks with short, agitated steps]: I'm not like other people, I have an ideal in life. I am perhaps gifted, as you say, I have some talent, but things aren't easy for me. I've served well in my capacity as general factotum, I've always been in command of the situation, honorably, that should be enough . . .

S takes OM  
chl.

OLD WOMAN: Not for you, you're not like other people, you are much greater, and moreover you'd have done much better if you had got along with other people, like other people do. You've quarreled with all your friends, with all the directors, with all the generals, with your own brother.

OLD MAN: It's not my fault, Semiramis, you know very well what he said.

OLD WOMAN: What did he say?

OLD MAN: He said: "My friends, I've got a flea. I'm going to pay you a visit in the hope of leaving my flea with you."

OLD WOMAN: People say things like that, my dear. You shouldn't have paid any attention to it. But with Carel, why were you so angry with him. Was it his fault too?

OM grabs S's  
face, lets go,  
x's upst. stL.  
chair.

OLD MAN: You're going to make me angry, you're going to make me angry. Na. Of course it was his fault. He came one evening, he said: "I know just the word that fits you. I'm not going to say it, I'll just think it." And he laughed like a fool.

S counters chl.

OLD WOMAN: But he had a warm heart, my darling. In this life, you've got to be less sensitive.

OLD MAN: I don't care for jokes like that.

S x's stL. to  
OM.

OLD WOMAN: You could have been head admiral, head cabinet-maker, head orchestra conductor.

[Long silence. They remain immobile for a time, completely rigid on their chairs.]

OLD MAN [as in a dream]: At the end of the garden there was . . . there was . . . there was . . . there was . . . was what, my dear?

OLD WOMAN: The city of Paris!

OLD MAN: At the end, at the end of the end of the city of Paris, there was, there was, was what?

OLD WOMAN: My darling, was what, my darling, was who?

OLD MAN: The place and the weather were beautiful . . .

OLD WOMAN: The weather was so beautiful, are you sure?

OLD MAN: I don't recall the place . . .

OLD WOMAN: Don't tax your mind then . . .

OLD MAN: It's too far away, I can no longer . . . recall it . . . where was this?

OLD WOMAN: But what?

OLD MAN: What I . . . what I . . . where was this? And who?

OLD WOMAN: No matter where it is—I will follow you anywhere, I'll follow you, my darling.

OLD MAN: Ah! I have so much difficulty expressing myself . . . but I must tell it all.

OLD WOMAN: It's a sacred duty. You've no right to keep your message from the world. You must reveal it to mankind, they're waiting for it . . . the universe waits only for you.

OLD MAN: Yes, yes, I will speak.

OLD WOMAN: Have you really decided? You must.

OLD MAN: Drink your tea. 4

OLD WOMAN: You could have been head orator, if you'd had more will power in life . . . I'm proud, I'm happy that you have at last decided to speak to every country, to Europe, to every continent!

OLD MAN: Unfortunately, I have so much difficulty expressing myself, it isn't easy for me.

OLD WOMAN: It's easy once you begin, like life and death \* it's enough to have your mind made up. It's in speaking that ideas come to us, words, and then we, in our own words,

\* This statement alludes to the image of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. this provides some interpretive suggestions for "the story" described by the couple in previous pages.

I made the decision to cut this first section because I felt it was a small digression from the forward action of the play. It was "trimable" without any major damage to the old couple's story.

Sx's dnst. to  
ctrl. chair,  
Sits.

OM x's stl.,  
faces S.

1

S stands, x's  
sit to dir.  
OM sits stl  
chair.  
S x's chrl-  
chair, knees.

S sits in  
chair.

OM stands,  
x's chrl.

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we find perhaps everything, the city too, the garden, and then we are orphans no longer. \*

OLD MAN: It's not I who's going to speak, I've hired a professional orator, he'll speak in my name, you'll see.

OLD WOMAN: Then, it really is for this evening? And have you invited everyone, all the characters, all the property owners, and all the intellectuals?

OLD MAN: Yes, all the owners and all the intellectuals. [*Silence.*]

OLD WOMAN: The janitors? the bishops? the chemists? the tinsmiths? the violinists? the delegates? the presidents? the police? the merchants? the buildings? the pen holders? the chromosomes? \*

OLD MAN: Yes, yes, and the post-office employees, the innkeepers, and the artists, everybody who is a little intellectual, a little proprietary!

OLD WOMAN: And the bankers?

OLD MAN: Yes, invited.

OLD WOMAN: The proletarians? the functionaries? the militaries? the revolutionaries? the reactionaries? the alienists and their alienated?

OLD MAN: Of course, all of them, all of them, all of them, since actually everyone is either intellectual or proprietary.

OLD WOMAN: Don't get upset, my darling, I don't mean to annoy you, you are so very absent-minded, like all great geniuses. This meeting is important, they must all be here this evening. Can you count on them? Have they promised?

OLD MAN: Drink your tea, Semiramis. [*Silence.*]

OLD WOMAN: The papacy, the papayas, and the papers?

OLD MAN: I've invited them. [*Silence.*] I'm going to communicate the message to them . . . All my life, I've felt that I was suffocating; and now, they will know all, thanks to you and to the Orator, you are the only ones who have understood me.

OLD WOMAN: I'm so proud of you . . .

OLD MAN: The meeting will take place in a few minutes.

\* "Paradoxically, it is

through language itself

that many of Ionesco's

characters try to recover

the lost paradise that

preceded language..."

(Lane 9)

\* "Fanciful lists

occur frequently,

generated and

organized by poetic

rather than prosaic

principles. Some lists

play on associations

of sound..." (Lane 58)



OM x's to S, kisses her.  
 OM x's cbl., stops, x's upst.  
 around stl. chair, x's cbl.  
 OM repeats action twice,  
 stops cbl.

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OLD WOMAN: It's true then, they're going to come, this evening? You won't feel like crying any more, the intellectuals and the proprietors will take the place of papas and mammas? [*Silence.*] Couldn't you put off this meeting? It won't be too tiring for us?

[*More violent agitation. For several moments the Old Man has been turning around the Old Woman with the short, hesitant steps of an old man or of a child. He takes a step or two towards one of the doors, then returns and walks around her again.*]

OLD MAN: You really think this might tire us?  
 OLD WOMAN: You have a slight cold.  
 OLD MAN: How can I call it off?

OM x's dnstl.

OLD WOMAN: Invite them for another evening. You could telephone.  
 OLD MAN: No, my God, I can't do that, it's too late. They've probably already embarked!  
 OLD WOMAN: You should have been more careful.

S x's to stB.

[*We hear the sound of a boat gliding through the water.*]

— window.  
 — OM x's  
 to stl. window.

OLD MAN: I think someone is coming already . . . [*The gliding sound of a boat is heard more clearly.*] . . . Yes, they're coming! . . .

S & OM x cbl.  
 switch windows.

[*The Old Woman gets up also and walks with a hobble.*]  
 OLD WOMAN: Perhaps it's the Orator.  
 OLD MAN: He won't come so soon. This must be somebody else. [*We hear the doorbell ring.*] Ah!  
 OLD WOMAN: Ah!

scene 5

[*Nervously, the Old Man and the Old Woman move towards the concealed door in the recess to the right. As they move upstage, they say:*]

S x's to upstl.  
 frame, OM x's  
 to S, pulls  
 her to stB.  
 door.

OLD MAN: Come on . . .  
 OLD WOMAN: My hair must look a sight . . . wait a moment . . .  
 [*She arranges her hair and her dress as she hobbles along, pulling up her thick red stockings.*]  
 OLD MAN: You should have gotten ready before . . . you had

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plenty of time.  
 OLD WOMAN: I'm so badly dressed . . . I'm wearing an old gown and it's all rumped . . .  
 OLD MAN: All you had to do was to press it . . . hurry up! You're making our guests wait.  
 [The Old Man, followed by the Old woman still grumbling, reaches the door in the recess; we don't see them for a moment; we hear them open the door, then close it again after having shown someone in.]  
 VOICE OF OLD MAN: Good evening, madam, won't you please come in. We're delighted to see you. This is my wife.  
 VOICE OF OLD WOMAN: Good evening, madam, I am very happy to make your acquaintance. Take care, don't ruin your hat. You might take out the hatpin, that will be more comfortable. Oh! no, no one will sit on it.  
 VOICE OF OLD MAN: Put your fur down there. Let me help you. No, nothing will happen to it.  
 VOICE OF OLD WOMAN: Oh! what a pretty suit . . . and such darling colors in your blouse . . . Won't you have some cookies . . . Oh, you're not fat at all . . . no . . . plump . . . Just leave your umbrella there.  
 VOICE OF OLD MAN: Follow me, please.  
 OLD MAN [back view]: I have only a modest position . . .  
 [The Old Man and Old Woman re-enter together, leaving space between them for their guest. She is invisible. The Old Man and Old Woman advance, downstage, facing the audience and speaking to the invisible Lady, who walks between them.]  
 OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: You've had good weather?  
 OLD WOMAN [to the Lady]: You're not too tired? . . . Yes, a little.  
 OLD MAN [to the Lady]: At the edge of the water . . .  
 OLD WOMAN [to the Lady]: It's kind of you to say so.  
 OLD MAN [to the Lady]: Let me get you a chair.  
 [Old Man goes to the left, he exits by door No. 6.]  
 OLD WOMAN [to the Lady]: Take this one, for the moment,

S straightens OM's clothes.  
 S & OM strike pose.  
 S & OM about face to dr.  
 S takes lady's hat.  
 Sx's to stb. table, gets tray.  
 OM take lady's coat, x's to coat rack.  
 S offers tray, throws to ground, gets umbrella, throws to ground.  
 OM x's stb. x's dr. to S and lady.  
 OM exits dnstl. door.  
 S x's to chl. chair, places dnstB., x's to stl. chair, places upstB.

\* "The Bald Prima Donna" is another title frequently used for "The Bald Soprano," Ionesco's first play.

\* "as in" \*

The Bald Prima Donna

there is no-one there, but this time No One comes in, an invisible lady." (Hayman 31)

- When I discovered this quotation I enjoyed how it turned "no one"

into its own distinct character through capitalization. The quotation is intelligent in that it comments on Ionesco's writing methods through his own approaches. Hayman shows the ability to descend into Ionesco's realm of language using highly stylized choices to make his point.

please. *[She indicates one of the two chairs and seats herself on the other, to the right of the invisible Lady.]* It seems rather warm in here, doesn't it? *[She smiles at the Lady.]* What a charming fan you have! My husband . . . *[The Old Man re-enters through door No. 7, carrying a chair.]* . . . gave me one very like it, that must have been seventy-three years ago . . . and I still have it . . . *[The Old Man places the chair to the left of the invisible Lady.]* . . . it was for my birthday! . . .

OM enters  
dnst. door  
w/ chair, x's sit  
OM 3. S switch  
chairs, sit  
facing dnst.  
chair.

*The Old Man sits on the chair that he has just brought on-stage, so that the invisible Lady is between the old couple. The Old Man turns his face towards the Lady, smiles at her, nods his head, softly rubs his hands together, with the air of following what she says. The Old Woman does the same business.]*

OLD MAN: No, madam, life is never cheap.

OLD WOMAN *[to the Lady]*: You are so right . . . *[The Lady speaks.]* As you say, it is about time all that changed . . . *[Changing her tone:]* Perhaps my husband can do something about it . . . he's going to tell you about it.

OLD MAN *[to the Old Woman]*: Hush, hush, Semiramis, the time hasn't come to talk about that yet. *[To the Lady:]* Excuse me, madam, for having aroused your curiosity. *[The Lady reacts.]* Dear madam, don't insist . . .

*[The Old Man and Old Woman smile. They even laugh. They appear to be very amused by the story the invisible Lady tells them. A pause, a moment of silence in the conversation. Their faces lose all expression.]*

OLD MAN *[to the invisible Lady]*: Yes, you're quite right . . .

OLD WOMAN: Yes, yes, yes . . . Oh! surely not.

OLD MAN: Yes, yes, yes. Not at all.

OLD WOMAN: Yes?

OLD MAN: No!?

OLD WOMAN: It's certainly true.

OLD MAN *[laughing]*: It isn't possible.

OLD WOMAN *[laughing]*: Oh! well. *[To the Old Man:]* she's

OLD MAN *[to the Old Woman]*: Madam has made a conquest.  
*[To the invisible Lady:]* my congratulations! . . .  
OLD WOMAN *[to the invisible Lady]*: You're not like the young people today . . .  
OLD MAN *[bending over painfully in order to recover an invisible object that the invisible Lady has dropped]*: Let me . . . don't disturb yourself . . . I'll get it . . . Oh! you're quicker than I . . . *[He straightens up again.]*  
OLD WOMAN *[to the Old Man]*: She's younger than you!  
OLD MAN *[to the invisible Lady]*: Old age is a heavy burden. I can only wish you an eternal youth.  
OLD WOMAN *[to the invisible Lady]*: He's sincere, he speaks from the heart. *[To the Old Man:]* My darling!  
*[Several moments of silence. The Old Man and Old Woman, heads turned in profile, look at the invisible Lady, smiling politely; they then turn their heads towards the audience, then look again at the invisible Lady, answering her smile with their smiles, and her questions with their replies.]*  
OLD WOMAN: It's very kind of you to take such an interest in us.  
OLD MAN: We live a retired life.  
OLD WOMAN: My husband's not really misanthropic, he just loves solitude.  
OLD MAN: We have the radio, I get in some fishing, and then there's fairly regular boat service.  
OLD WOMAN: On Sundays there are two boats in the morning, one in the evening, not to mention privately chartered trips.  
OLD MAN *[to the invisible Lady]*: When the weather's clear, there's a moon.  
OLD WOMAN *[to the invisible Lady]*: He's always concerned with his duties as general factotum . . . they keep him busy . . . On the other hand, at his age, he might very well take it easy.

I wanted to establish the convention of the invisible players immediately and move the story forward. We did not have an off-stage recess as this script suggests so the first invisible woman was brought onstage upon her entrance, not where the stage directions indicate. The action moved more rapidly but the story still remained intact.

~~OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: I'll have plenty of time to take it easy in my grave.~~

~~OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: Don't say that, my little darling . . . [To the invisible Lady:] Our family, what's left of it, my husband's friends, still came to see us, from time to time, ten years ago . . .~~

~~OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: In the winter, a good book, beside the radiator, and the memories of a lifetime.~~

~~OLD WOMAN [to the invisible Lady]: A modest life, but a full one . . . he devotes two hours every day to work on his message.~~

[The doorbell rings. After a short pause, we hear the noise of a boat leaving.] **scene 6**

OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: Someone has come. Go quickly.

OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: Please excuse me, madam. Just a moment! [To the Old Woman:] Hurry and bring some chairs!

[Loud ringing of the doorbell.]

OLD MAN [hastening, all bent over, towards door No. 2 to the right, while the Old Woman goes towards the concealed door on the left, hurrying with difficulty, hobbling along]: It must be someone important. [He hurries, opens door No. 2, and the invisible Colonel enters. Perhaps it would be useful for us to hear discreetly several trumpet notes, several phrases, like "Hail the Chief." When he opens the door and sees the invisible Colonel, the Old Man stiffens into a respectful position of attention.] Ah! . . . Colonel! [He lifts his hand vaguely towards his forehead, so as to roughly sketch a salute.] Good evening, my dear Colonel . . . This is a very great honor for me . . . I . . . I . . . I was not expecting it . . . although . . . indeed . . . in short, I am most proud to welcome you, a hero of your eminence, into my humble dwelling . . . [He presses the invisible hand that the invisible Colonel gives him, bending forward ceremoniously, then straightening up again.] Without false modesty,

S x's to dnst R.  
door, exits

DM x's to stL  
door  
counters  
dnst. to  
face Colonel,  
x's dnst.,  
shakes hand

S enters upstr.  
w/ chair, X's  
dnst. CTR.,  
puts dn.  
chair, X's to  
OM

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nevertheless, I permit myself to confess to you that I do not feel unworthy of the honor of your visit! Proud, yes . . . unworthy, no! . . .

[The Old Woman appears with a chair, entering from the right.]

OLD WOMAN: Oh! What a handsome uniform! What beautiful medals! Who is it, my darling?

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: Can't you see that it's the Colonel?

OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: Ah!

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: Count his stripes! [To the Colonel:] This is my wife, Semiramis. [To the Old Woman:] Come here so that I can introduce you to the Colonel. [The Old Woman approaches, dragging the chair by one hand, and makes a curtsy, without letting go of the chair. To the Colonel:] My wife. [To the Old Woman:] The Colonel.

OLD WOMAN: How do you do, Colonel. Welcome. You're an old comrade of my husband's, he's a general . . .

OLD MAN [annoyed]: factotum, factotum . . .

[The invisible Colonel kisses the hand of the Old Woman. This is apparent from the gesture she makes as she raises her hand toward his lips. Overcome with emotion, the Old Woman lets go of the chair.]

OLD WOMAN: Oh! He's most polite . . . you can see that he's really superior, a superior being! . . . [She takes hold of the chair again. To the Colonel:] This chair is for you . . .

OLD MAN [to the invisible Colonel]: This way, if you please . . . [They move downstage, the Old Woman dragging the chair. To the Colonel:] Yes, one guest has come already. We're expecting a great many more people! . . .

[The Old Woman places the chair to the right.]

OLD WOMAN [to the Colonel]: Sit here, please.

[The Old Man introduces the two invisible guests to each other.]

OLD MAN: A young lady we know . . .

OLD WOMAN: A very dear friend . . .

S steps dnst.,  
holds out her  
hand, X's to  
chair CTR.  
OM X's to  
Colonel dnst.,  
takes str.  
S follows to  
lady's chair

S. places chair  
upst. lady's  
dnst. chair  
OM moves  
chair dnst.  
next to lady's  
OM & S x upst.  
chairs, watch  
Colonel & lady

S paces upst.  
OM x's to  
Colonel's chair,  
X's upst. to  
S, S  
X's  
dnst.  
of Colonel's  
chair. sits  
st. upst.  
chair

OM sits in  
st. upst.  
chair  
S stands, paces  
upst. of chairs

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OLD MAN [*same business*]: The Colonel . . . a famous soldier.  
OLD WOMAN [*indicating the chair she has just brought in to the Colonel*]: Do take this chair . . .  
OLD MAN [*to the Old Woman*]: No, no, can't you see that the Colonel wishes to sit beside the Lady! . . .  
[*The Colonel seats himself invisibly on the third chair from the left; the invisible Lady is supposedly sitting on the second chair; seated next to each other they engage in an inaudible conversation; the Old Woman and Old Man continue to stand behind their chairs, on both sides of their invisible guests; the Old Man to the left of the Lady, the Old Woman to the right of the Colonel.*]  
OLD WOMAN [*listening to the conversation of the two guests*]: Oh! Oh! That's going too far.  
OLD MAN [*same business*]: Perhaps. [*The Old Man and the Old Woman make signs to each other over the heads of their guests, while they follow the inaudible conversation which takes a turn that seems to displease them. Abruptly:*] Yes, Colonel, they are not here yet, but they'll be here. And the Orator will speak in my behalf, he will explain the meaning of my message . . . Take care, Colonel, this Lady's husband may arrive at any moment.  
OLD WOMAN [*to the Old Man*]: Who is this gentleman?  
OLD MAN [*to the Old Woman*]: I've told you, it's the Colonel. [*Some embarrassing things take place, invisibly.*]  
OLD WOMAN [*to the Old Man*]: I knew it. I knew it.  
OLD MAN: Then why are you asking?  
OLD WOMAN: For my information. Colonel, no cigarette butts on the floor!  
OLD MAN [*to Colonel*]: Colonel, Colonel, it's slipped my mind—in the last war did you win or lose?  
OLD WOMAN [*to the invisible Lady*]: But my dear, don't let it happen!  
OLD MAN: Look at me, look at me, do I look like a bad soldier? One time, Colonel, under fire . . .  
OLD WOMAN: He's going too far! It's embarrassing! [*She*

S x's to OM,  
x's upst. of  
chairs, paces

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*seizes the invisible sleeve of the Colonel.] Listen to him!  
My darling, why don't you stop him!*

OLD MAN [*continuing quickly*]: And all on my own, I killed 209 of them; we called them that because they jumped so high to escape, however there weren't so many of them as there were flies; of course it is less amusing, Colonel, but thanks to my strength of character, I have . . . Oh! no, I must, please.

OLD WOMAN [*to Colonel*]: My husband never lies; it may be true that we are old, nevertheless we're respectable.

OLD MAN [*violently, to the Colonel*]: A hero must be a gentleman too, if he hopes to be a complete hero!

OLD WOMAN [*to the Colonel*]: I've known you for many years, but I'd never have believed you were capable of this. [*To the Lady, while we hear the sound of boats:*] I'd never have believed him capable of this. We have our dignity, our self-respect.

OLD MAN [*in a quavering voice*]: I'm still capable of bearing arms. [*Doorbell rings.*] Excuse me, I must go to the door. [*He stumbles and knocks over the chair of the invisible Lady.*] Oh! pardon.

OLD WOMAN [*rushing forward*]: You didn't hurt yourself? [*The Old Man and Old Woman help the invisible Lady onto her feet.*] You've got all dirty, there's some dust. [*She helps brush the Lady. The doorbell rings again.*]

OLD MAN: Forgive me, forgive me. [*To the Old Woman:*] Go bring a chair.

OLD WOMAN [*to the two invisible guests*]: Excuse me for a moment.

[*While the Old Man goes to open door No. 3, the Old Woman exits through door No. 5 to look for a chair, and she re-enters by door No. 8.*]

OLD MAN [*moving towards the door*]: He was trying to get my goat. I'm almost angry. [*He opens the door.*] Oh! madam, you're here! I can scarcely believe my eyes, and yet, nevertheless . . . I didn't really dare to hope . . . really

OM stands, x's  
to S

OM x's dust,  
raises fists  
to Colonel,  
twirls  
& x's

stl., knocks  
over chair,  
S x's (stl.),  
helps Lady  
in chair, x's  
to st. R. door,  
exits.

OM x's to  
dust. door,  
counters dust  
to face Belle,  
goes down to  
knees, crawls  
dust, kisses  
Belle's hands

scene 7



OM stands,  
backs upst.,  
x's dnst &  
examines  
Belle's nose,  
backs upstr.,  
shakes Photo EP's  
hand

S enters str.  
door w/ chair,  
places chl.  
on carpet,  
exits dnstr.  
door.

OM x's str.  
& dnst.  
around chairs  
to upst. of  
chairs

OM chases  
Belle str.  
upst. of chairs,  
x's to upstl.  
wall, removes  
frame & x's  
back to str.

S enters str.  
door w/ chair,  
places chl.  
of upst. chairs

S x's str.  
around chairs  
to chl. of  
chairs

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EUGENE IONESCO

it's . . . Oh! madam, madam . . . I have thought about you, all my life, all my life, madam, they always called you La Belle . . . it's your husband . . . someone told me, certainly . . . you haven't changed a bit . . . Oh! yes, yes, your nose has grown longer, maybe it's a little swollen . . . I didn't notice it when I first saw you, but I see it now . . . a lot longer . . . ah! how unfortunate! You certainly didn't do it on purpose . . . how did it happen? . . . little by little . . . excuse me, sir and dear friend, you'll permit me to call you "dear friend," I knew your wife long before you . . . she was the same, but with a completely different nose . . . I congratulate you, sir, you seem to love each other very much. [The Old Woman re-enters through door No. 8 with a chair.] Semiramis, two guests have arrived, we need one more chair . . . [The Old Woman puts the chair behind the four others, then exits by door No. 8 and re-enters by door No. 5, after a few moments, with another chair that she places beside the one she has just brought in. By this time, the Old Man and the two guests have moved near the Old Woman.] Come this way, please, more guests have arrived. I'm going to introduce you . . . now then, madam . . . Oh! Belle, Belle, Miss Belle, that's what they used to call you . . . now you're all bent over . . . Oh! sir, she is still Belle to me, even so; under her glasses, she still has pretty eyes; her hair is white, but under the white one can see brown, and blue, I'm sure of that . . . come nearer, nearer . . . what is this, sir, a gift, for my wife? [To the Old Woman, who has just come on with the chair:] Semiramis, this is Belle, you know, Belle . . . [To the Colonel and the invisible Lady:] This is Miss, pardon, Mrs. Belle, don't smile . . . and her husband . . . [To the Old Woman:] A childhood friend, I've often spoken of her to you . . . and her husband. [Again to the Colonel and to the invisible Lady:] And her husband . . .

OLD WOMAN [making a little curtsy]: He certainly makes good introductions. He has fine manners. Good evening,

DM hands S  
frame, she  
manipulates,  
places on  
Colonel's chair.  
OM x's stl.  
around chairs  
to ctr. of  
chairs, shows  
(Colonel frame,  
S x's str.  
around chairs  
to ctr. chair,  
removes  
sweater.  
OM stands,  
slaps frame  
to floor, turns  
str. to face  
Belle, pulls  
ctr. chair  
str. for  
her, OM  
sits in  
chair across.

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madam, good evening, sir. [She indicates the two first guests to the newly arrived couple:] Our friends, yes . . .

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: He's brought you a present. [The Old Woman takes the present.]

OLD WOMAN: Is it a flower, sir? or a cradle? a pear tree? or a crow? \*

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: No, no, can't you see that it's a painting?

OLD WOMAN: Oh! how pretty! Thank you, sir . . . [To the invisible Lady:] Would you like to see it, dear friend?

OLD MAN [to the invisible Colonel]: Would you like to see it?

OLD WOMAN [to Belle's husband]: Doctor, Doctor, I feel squeamish, I have hot flashes, I feel sick, I've aches and pains, I haven't any feeling in my feet, I've caught cold in my eyes, I've a cold in my fingers, I'm suffering from liver trouble, Doctor, Doctor! . . .

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: This gentleman is not a doctor, he's a photo-engraver.

OLD WOMAN [to the first invisible Lady]: If you've finished looking at it, you might hang it up. [To the Old Man:] That doesn't matter, he's charming even so, he's dazzling. [To the Photo-engraver:] Without meaning to flatter you . . .

[The Old Man and the Old Woman now move behind the chairs, close to each other, almost touching, but back to back; they talk: the Old Man to Belle, the Old Woman to the Photo-engraver; from time to time their replies, as shown by the way they turn their heads, are addressed to one or the other of the two first guests.]

OLD MAN [to Belle]: I am very touched . . . You're still the same, in spite of everything . . . I've loved you, a hundred years ago . . . But there's been such a change . . . No, you haven't changed a bit . . . I loved you, I love you . . .

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: Oh! Sir, sir, sir . . .

OLD MAN [to the Colonel]: I'm in complete agreement with you on that point.

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: Oh! certainly, sir, cer-

\* notice how the French translation of the dialogue rhymes: "Est-ce une fleur, monsieur? Ou un berceau? Un poirier? Ou un corbeau?" Nancy Lane discusses these moments of wordplay in her book. the actress struggled with the correct pronunciation of the line in rehearsal and the English translation was simply used by production.

tainly, sir, certainly . . . ~~[To the first Lady] Thanks for hanging it up . . . Forgive me if I've inconvenienced you~~  
 [The light grows stronger. It should grow stronger and stronger as the invisible guests continue to arrive.] \*

OLD MAN [almost whimpering to Belle]: Where are the snows of yester year?

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: Oh! Sir, sir, sir . . . Oh! sir . . .

OLD MAN [pointing out the first lady to Belle]: She's a young friend . . . she's very sweet . . .

OLD WOMAN [pointing the Colonel out to the Photo-engraver]: Yes, he's a mounted staff colonel . . . a comrade of my husband . . . a subaltern, my husband's a general . . .

OLD MAN [to Belle]: Your ears were not always so pointed! . . . My Belle, do you remember? \*

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver, simpering grotesquely; she develops this manner more and more in this scene; she shows her thick red stockings, raises her many petticoats, shows an underskirt full of holes, exposes her old breast; then, her hands on her hips, throws her head back, makes little erotic cries, projects her pelvis, her legs spread apart; she laughs like an old prostitute; this business, entirely different from her manner heretofore as well as from that she will have subsequently, and which must reveal the hidden personality of the Old Woman, ceases abruptly]:

So you think I'm too old for that, do you?

OLD MAN [to Belle, very romantically]: When we were young, the moon was a living star, Ah! yes, yes, if only we had dared, but we were only children. Wouldn't you like to recapture those bygone days . . . is it still possible? Is it still possible? Ah! no, no, it is no longer possible. Those days have flown away as fast as a train. Time has left the marks of his wheels on our skin. Do you believe surgeons can perform miracles? [To the Colonel:] I am a soldier, and you too, we soldiers are always young, the generals

move that the actress performed as the "climax" of this sexual behaviour was titled as "the chair mount"

\* "... Famous lines of French poetry appear in incongruous contexts." (Lane 59)

- line of poetry by Francois Villon

- what wikipedia.com says (over on back...)

\* The abrupt sexual behaviour of Semiramis and the romantic

behaviour of the Old Man (both to different party guests) suggests

that some sort of infidelity and past lovers existed in their histories.

- the gymnastic

S backs up to chair, S performs chair dance & falls on floor upst. of OM.  
 OM watches S.

OM turns dist. to Belle's chair, jumps over chair to floor, brings chair on. w/ him.

S watches OM.  
 S x's to chair, fixes it & kneels next to it

# François Villon

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
(Redirected from Francois Villon)

**François Villon** (in modern French, pronounced [fr̥ɑ̃swa viˈljɔ̃]; in fifteenth-century French, [frɑ̃swe viˈlon]) (c. 1431 – after 5 January 1463) was a French poet, thief, and vagabond. He is perhaps best known for his *Testaments* and his *Ballade des Pendus*, written while in prison. The question "*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*", taken from the *Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis* and translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti as "Where are the snows of yesteryear?", is one of the most famous lines of translated secular poetry in the English-speaking world.

Tell me from where I could entice  
Flora the famous Roman whore,  
or Archipiada or Thaïs  
who they say was just as fair;  
or Echo answering everywhere  
across stream and pool and mere,  
whose beauty was like none before -  
*where are the snows of yesteryear?*



Stock woodcut image,  
used to represent  
François Villon in the  
1489 printing of the  
*Grand Testament de  
Maistre François Villon*

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are like gods . . . [To Belle:] It ought to be that way . . .  
Alas! Alas! We have lost everything. We could have been  
so happy, I'm sure of it, we could have been, we could  
have been; perhaps the flowers are budding again beneath  
the snow! . . .

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: Flatterer! Rascal! Ah! Ah!  
I look younger than my years? You're a little savage! You're  
exciting.

~~OLD MAN [to Belle]: Will you be my Isolde and let me be  
your Tristan? Beauty is more than skin deep, it's in the  
heart . . . Do you understand? We could have had the  
pleasure of sharing, joy, beauty, eternity . . . an eternity  
. . . Why didn't we dare? We weren't brave enough . . .  
Everything is lost, lost, lost.~~

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: Oh no, Oh! no, Oh! la la,  
you give me the shivers. You too, are you ticklish? To  
tickle or be tickled? I'm a little embarrassed . . . [She  
laughs.] Do you like my petticoat? Or do you like this skirt  
better?

OLD MAN [to Belle]: A general factotum has a poor life!

OLD WOMAN [turning her head towards the first invisible  
Lady]: In order to make crepes de Chine? A leaf of beef,  
an hour of flour, a little gastric sugar. [To the Photo-  
engraver:] You've got clever fingers, ah . . . all the  
sa-a-a-me! . . . Oh-oh-oh-oh.

OLD MAN [to Belle]: My worthy helpmeet, Semiramis, has  
taken the place of my mother. [He turns towards the  
Colonel:] Colonel, as I've often observed to you, one must  
take the truth as one finds it. [He turns back towards Belle.]

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: Do you really really be-  
lieve that one could have children at any age? Any age  
children?

OLD MAN [to Belle]: It's this alone that has saved me: the  
inner life, peace of mind, austerity, my scientific investiga-  
tions, philosophy, my message . . .

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: I've never yet betrayed my  
where Eve is described as a "help meet" to Adam. (Webster  
Dictionary definition)

\* I watched a film  
version of this  
story after reading  
the allusion (2006  
production directed by  
Kevin Reynolds).

\* "helpmeet" is a  
word that means  
"companion." it derives  
from a misreading  
of a biblical passage

S stands, faces  
lady  
dnst.,  
jumps, x's sth.  
of  
chr. chair,  
sits

OM stands, faces  
Colonel

S stands, x's  
dnst. of chr.  
chair

Photo E. pushes S stl., pushes to ground, S backs away stl., Photo E snatches her, S crawls to upstl. wall & cowers. OM x's upstl., pushes Photo E away from S. OM brings S to stl. chairs. They both sit in upst. chairs facing away from each other.

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EUGENE IONESCO

husband, the general . . . not so hard, you're going to make me fall . . . I'm only his poor mamma! [She sobs.] A great, great [She pushes him back.], great . . . mamma. My conscience causes these tears to flow. For me the branch of the apple tree is broken. Try to find somebody else. I no longer want to gather rosebuds . . . \*

OLD MAN [to Belle]: . . . All the preoccupations of a superior order . . .

[The Old Man and Old Woman lead Belle and the Photo-engraver up alongside the two other invisible guests, and seat them.]

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver and Belle]: Sit down, please sit down.

[The Old Man and Old Woman sit down too, he to the left, she to the right, with the four empty chairs between them. A long mute scene, punctuated at intervals with "no," "yes," "yes." The Old Man and Old Woman listen to the conversation of the invisible guests.] scene 8

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: We had one son . . .

\* of course, he's still alive . . . he's gone away . . . it's a common story . . . or, rather, unusual . . . he abandoned his parents . . . he had a heart of gold . . . that was a long time ago . . . We loved him so much . . . he slammed the door . . . My husband and I tried to hold him back with all our might . . . he was seven years old, the age of reason, I called after him: "My son, my child, my son, my child." . . . He didn't even look back . . .

OLD MAN: Alas, no . . . no, we've never had a child . . . I'd hoped for a son . . . Semiramis, too . . . we did everything . . . and my poor Semiramis is so maternal, too. Perhaps it was better that way . . . As for me I was an ungrateful son myself . . . Ah! . . . grief, regret, remorse, that's all we have . . . that's all we have left . . .

OLD WOMAN: He said to me: "You kill birds! Why do you kill birds?" . . . But we don't kill birds . . . we've never harmed so much as a fly . . . His eyes were full of big tears.

Sequence of events, though the details of the story are different to the characters (a son abandoning his parents and a child leaving his mother alone to die) both things actually describe the same event; some type of abandonment and disloyalty occurred and it was clearly instigated by the Old Man

\* "... a reference to Ronsard's exhortation to 'gather rosebuds while you may.' (Jane 59)

- what wikipedia.com says about Ronsard → (over on back...)

\* building on the details suggested earlier about the couples' relationships to other clowers, the stories told in this scene provide even further clues to understanding the



Pierre de Ronsard

## Pierre de Ronsard

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
(Redirected from Ronsard)

**Pierre de Ronsard** (11 September 1524 – December 1585) was a French poet and "prince of poets" (as his own generation in France called him).

*The Chairs*

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He wouldn't let us dry them. He wouldn't let me come near him. He said: "Yes, you kill all the birds, all the birds." . . . He showed us his little fists . . . "You're lying, you've betrayed me! The streets are full of dead birds, of dying baby birds." It's the song of the birds! . . . "No, it's their death rattle. The sky is red with blood." . . . No, my child, it's blue. He cried again: "You've betrayed me, I adored you, I believed you to be good . . . the streets are full of dead birds, you've torn out their eyes . . . Papa, mamma, you're wicked! . . . I refuse to stay with you." . . . I threw myself at his feet . . . His father was weeping. We couldn't hold him back. As he went we could still hear him calling: "It's you who are responsible" . . . What does that mean, "responsible"?

OLD MAN: I let my mother die all alone in a ditch. She called after me, moaning feebly: "My little child, my beloved son, don't leave me to die all alone . . . Stay with me. I don't have much time left." Don't worry, Mamma, I told her, I'll be back in a moment . . . I was in a hurry . . . I was going to the ball, to dance. I will be back in a minute. But when I returned, she was already dead, and they had buried her deep . . . I broke open the grave, I searched for her . . . I couldn't find her . . . I know, I know, sons, always, abandon their mothers, and they more or less kill their fathers . . . Life is like that . . . but I, I suffer from it . . . and the others, they don't . . .

OLD WOMAN: He cried: "Papa, Mamma, I'll never set eyes on you again."

OLD MAN: I suffer from it, yes, the others don't . . .

OLD WOMAN: Don't speak of him to my husband. He loved his parents so much. He never left them for a single moment. He cared for them, coddled them. And they died in his arms, saying to him: "You have been a perfect son. God will be good to you."

OLD MAN: I can still see her stretched out in the ditch, she was holding lily of the valley in her hand, she cried: "Don't

OM stands, x's  
upst. of  
chairs to S,  
stands over  
her chair.



forget me, don't forget me" . . . her eyes were full of big tears, and she called me by my baby name: "Little Chick," she said, "Little Chick, don't leave me here all alone."

OLD WOMAN [*to the Photo-engraver*]: He has never written to us. From time to time, a friend tells us that he's been seen here or there, that he is well, that he is a good husband . . .

OLD MAN [*to Belle*]: When I got back, she had been buried a long time. [*To the first invisible Lady*:] Oh, yes. Oh! yes, madam, we have a movie theatre in the house, a restaurant, bathrooms . . .

OLD WOMAN [*to the Colonel*]: Yes, Colonel, it is because he . . .

OLD MAN: Basically that's it.

[*Desultory conversation, getting bogged down.*]

OLD WOMAN: If only!

OLD MAN: Thus, I've not . . . I, it . . . certainly . . .

OLD WOMAN [*dislocated dialogue, exhaustion*]: All in all.

OLD MAN: To ours and to theirs.

OLD WOMAN: So that.

OLD MAN: From me to him.

OLD WOMAN: Him, or her?

OLD MAN: Them.

OLD WOMAN: Curl-papers . . . After all.

OLD MAN: It's not that.

OLD WOMAN: Why?

OLD MAN: Yes.

OLD WOMAN: I.

OLD MAN: All in all.

OLD WOMAN: All in all.

OLD MAN [*to the first invisible Lady*]: What was that, madam?

[*A long silence, the Old Man and Old Woman remain rigid on their chairs. Then the doorbell rings.*]

OLD MAN [*with increasing nervousness*]: Someone has come. People. Still more people.

OLD WOMAN: I thought I heard some boats.

S & OM make eye contact, OM x's dnst. to S, kneels, kisses S's hands. OM stands, x's upst. S's chair, faces dnst. chairs

score 9

OM x's to upst<sup>R</sup>.  
 wall, straightens  
 himself by  
 frame.  
 S stands &  
 arranges  
 chairs in rows.  
 OM x's to str.  
 door, x's dnstr.  
 to S. They  
 shake hands  
 w/ news people.  
 S x's to dnstr  
 door, exits.  
 OM x's upst.  
 str. row of  
 chairs, makes  
 introductions.

*The Chairs*

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S. enters str.  
 door w/ chair,  
 places in row,  
 exits str. door,  
 enters w/ chair,  
 places in row.  
 OM x's to S  
 dnstr., S exits  
 str. door

OLD MAN: I'll go to the door. Go bring some chairs. Excuse  
 me, gentlemen, ladies. [*He goes towards door No. 7.*]  
 OLD WOMAN [*to the invisible guests who have already  
 arrived*]: Get up for a moment, please. The Orator will be  
 here soon. We must ready the room for the meeting. [*The  
 Old Woman arranges the chairs, turning their backs towards  
 the audience.*] Lend me a hand, please. Thanks.  
 OLD MAN [*opening door No. 7*]: Good evening, ladies, good  
 evening, gentlemen. Please come in.  
 [*The three or four invisible persons who have arrived are very  
 tall, and the Old Man has to stand on his toes in order to  
 shake hands with them. The Old Woman, after placing  
 the chairs as indicated above, goes over to the Old Man.*]  
 OLD MAN [*making introductions*]: My wife . . . Mr. . . .  
 Mrs. . . . my wife . . . Mr. . . . Mrs. . . . my wife . . .  
 OLD WOMAN: Who are all these people, my darling?  
 OLD MAN [*to Old Woman*]: Go find some chairs, dear.  
 OLD WOMAN: I can't do everything! . . .  
 [*She exits, grumbling, by door No. 6 and re-enters by door  
 No. 7, while the Old Man, with the newly arrived guests,  
 moves downstage.*]  
 OLD MAN: Don't drop your movie camera. [*More introduc-  
 tions.*] The Colonel . . . the Lady . . . Mrs. Belle . . . the  
 Photo-engraver . . . These are the newspaper men, they  
 have come to hear the Orator too, who should be here any  
 minute now . . . Don't be impatient . . . You'll not be  
 bored . . . all together now . . . [*The Old Woman re-enters  
 through door No. 7 with two chairs.*] Come along, bring  
 the chairs more quickly . . . we're still short one.  
 [*The Old Woman goes to find another chair, still grumbling,  
 exiting by door No. 3, and re-entering by door No. 8.*]  
 OLD WOMAN: All right, and so . . . I'm doing as well as I  
 can . . . I'm not a machine, you know . . . Who are all  
 these people? [*She exits.*]  
 OLD MAN: Sit down, sit down, the ladies with the ladies,  
 and the gentlemen with the gentlemen, or vice versa, if

DM x's upst. chlr. of chair rows. S enters stR. door w/ chair, places in row, exits stR. door.

DM x's stR. to sit table, gets fountain pen, x's upst chlr. S enters dnstR. w/ chair, places in row, x's dnstL. door, exits.

DM x's upstL., drops pen, x's upstR. S enters stL. w/ chair, places in row.

DM & S meet upst chlr., S x's dnstR., DM x's dnstL., S exits upstR. door.

DM x's to upstL. door, counters dnst. to face guests. S enters upstL. w/ chair, places in row, x's stL. to OM and guests.

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you prefer . . . We don't have any more nice chairs . . . we have to make do with what we have . . . I'm sorry . . . take the one in the middle . . . does anyone need a fountain pen? Telephone Maillot, you'll get Monique . . . Claude is an angel. I don't have a radio . . . I take all the newspapers . . . that depends on a number of things; I manage these buildings, but I have no help . . . we have to economize . . . no interviews, please, for the moment . . . later, we'll see . . . you'll soon have a place to sit . . . what can she be doing? [The Old Woman enters by door No. 8 with a chair.] Faster, Semiramis . . .

OLD WOMAN: I'm doing my best . . . Who are all these people?

OLD MAN: I'll explain it all to you later.

OLD WOMAN: And that woman? That woman, my darling?

OLD MAN: Don't get upset . . . [To the Colonel:] Colonel, journalism is a profession too, like a fighting man's . . .

[To the Old Woman:] Take care of the ladies, my dear . . . [The doorbell rings. The Old Man hurries towards

scene 10 door No. 8.] Wait a moment . . . [To the Old Woman:] Bring chairs!

OLD WOMAN: Gentlemen, ladies, excuse me . . .

[She exits by door No. 3, re-entering by door No. 2; the Old Man goes to open concealed door No. 9, and disappears at the moment the Old Woman re-enters by door No. 2.]

OLD MAN [out of sight]: Come in . . . come in . . . come in . . . come in . . . [He reappears, leading in a number of invisible people, including one very small child he holds by the hand.] One doesn't bring little children to a scientific lecture . . . the poor little thing is going to be bored . . . if he begins to cry or to peep on the ladies' dresses, that'll be a fine state of affairs! [He conducts them to stage center; the Old Woman comes on with two chairs.] I wish to introduce you to my wife, Semiramis; and these are their children.

<p>OM x's upst. <u>chr.</u>  S x's to children  kneels &amp; pinches cheeks.  S exits stl. door.  OM x's stl., lifts children &amp; places in same chair upst chr.  S enters dnstl. door w/ chair, places in row.  S x's to OM upst. chr.  OM &amp; S weave among chairs to chr.</p>	<p><i>The Chairs</i> 139</p> <p>OLD WOMAN: Ladies, gentlemen . . . Oh! aren't they sweet!</p> <p>OLD MAN: That one is the smallest.</p> <p>OLD WOMAN: Oh, he's so cute . . . so cute . . . so cute!</p> <p>OLD MAN: Not enough chairs.</p> <p>OLD WOMAN: Oh! dear, oh dear, oh dear . . .</p> <p>[<i>She exits, looking for another chair, using now door No. 2 as exit and door No. 3 on the right to re-enter.</i>]</p> <p>OLD MAN: Hold the little boy on your lap . . . The twins can sit together in the same chair. Be careful, they're not very strong . . . they go with the house, they belong to the landlord. Yes, my children, he'd make trouble for us, he's a bad man . . . he wants us to buy them from him, these worthless chairs. [<i>The Old Woman returns as quickly as she can with a chair.</i>] You don't all know each other . . . you're seeing each other for the first time . . . you knew each other by name . . . [<i>To the Old Woman:</i>] Semiramis, help me make the introductions . . .</p> <p>OLD WOMAN: Who are all these people? . . . May I introduce you, excuse me . . . May I introduce you . . . but who are they?</p> <p>OLD MAN: May I introduce you . . . Allow me to introduce you . . . permit me to introduce you . . . Mr., Mrs., Miss . . . Mr. . . . Mrs. . . . Mrs. . . . Mr.</p> <p>OLD WOMAN [<i>to Old Man</i>]: Did you put on your sweater?</p> <p>[<i>To the invisible guests:</i>] Mr., Mrs., Mr. . . .</p> <p>[<i>Doorbell rings again.</i>]</p> <p>OLD MAN: More people!</p> <p>[<i>Another ring of doorbell.</i>]</p> <p>OLD WOMAN: More people!</p> <p>[<i>The doorbell rings again, then several more times, and more times again; the Old Man is beside himself; the chairs, turned towards the dais, with their backs to the audience, form regular rows, each one longer as in a theatre; the Old Man is winded, he mops his brow, goes from one door to another, seats invisible people, while the Old Woman, hob-</i></p>
<p>S x's to dnstl. door, exits.  OM x's to dnstl. door, backs up to dnstl.  S enters dnstl. door w/ chair, places dnstl.  OM flips over S.</p>	

bling along, unable to move any faster, goes as rapidly as she can, from one door to another, hunting for chairs and carrying them in. There are now many invisible people on stage; both the Old Man and Old Woman take care not to bump into people and to thread their way between the rows of chairs. The movement could go like this: the Old Man goes to door No. 4, the Old Woman exits by door No. 3, returns by door No. 2; the Old Man goes to open door No. 7, the Old Woman exits by door No. 8, re-enters by door No. 6 with chairs, etc., in this manner making their way around the stage, using all the doors.]

S exits dnstl. door.  
OM x's to upstr. door, counters dnst. to face guests, takes hats, x's upstr. to coat rack.  
S enters stl. door w/ chair, places in row 3 seats guests.  
OM x's to str. door.  
falls over table.  
S x's upstr., picks up OM, exits upstr. door.  
OM picks up table, x's dnstl., x's dnstl., x's str.  
S enters dnstl. door w/ chair, places in rows, meets OM str. They wrestle w/ table. OM rolls backwards stl., S places table in rows, exits str. door.  
OM x's to stl. doors, x's to str. doors.

OLD WOMAN: Beg pardon . . . excuse me . . . what . . . oh, yes . . . beg pardon . . . excuse me . . .

OLD MAN: Gentlemen . . . come in . . . ladies . . . enter . . . it is Mrs. . . . let me . . . yes . . .

OLD WOMAN [with more chairs]: Oh dear . . . Oh dear . . . there are too many . . . There really are too, too . . . too many, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear . . .

[We hear from outside, louder and louder and approaching nearer and nearer, the sounds of boats moving through the water; all the noises come directly from the wings. The Old Woman and the Old Man continue the business outlined above; they open the doors, they carry in chairs. The doorbell continues to ring.]

OLD MAN: This table is in our way. [He moves a table, or he sketches the business of moving it, without slowing down his rhythm, aided by the Old Woman.] There's scarcely a place left here, excuse us . . .

OLD WOMAN [making a gesture of clearing the table, to the Old Man]: Are you wearing your sweater?

[Doorbell rings.]

OLD MAN: More people! More chairs! More people! More chairs! Come in, come in, ladies and gentlemen . . . Semiramis, faster . . . We'll give you a hand soon . . .

OLD WOMAN: Beg pardon . . . beg pardon . . . good evening, Mrs. . . . Mrs. . . . Mr. . . . Mr. . . . yes, yes, the

OM x's dnstr.,  
rests, x's  
dnstr., x's to  
stl. door.  
S enters stl.  
door w/  
chair, OM  
takes &  
places in rows,  
S exits dnstr.  
door, reenters  
w/ chair,  
places, exits  
stl. door.  
OM weaves  
blw chairs  
to chst. door.  
S enters stl.  
door w/  
chair, places  
in rows.

S exits dnstr.  
door, reenters  
w/ chair &  
places in rows.  
S repeats this  
action w/ all  
doors, working  
counter-clock-  
wise around  
the stage.  
She does  
this twice.  
OM x's to  
stl. door as  
S enters w/  
chair. OM  
lifts S &  
runs chst.,  
drops S &  
chair.  
S continues action.

The Chairs

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chairs . . .  
[The doorbell rings louder and louder and we hear the noises of boats striking the quay very close by, and more and more frequently. The Old Man flounders among the chairs; he has scarcely enough time to go from one door to another, so rapidly do the ringings of the doorbell succeed each other.]

OLD MAN: Yes, right away . . . are you wearing your sweater? Yes, yes . . . immediately, patience, yes, yes . . . patience . . .

OLD WOMAN: Your sweater? My sweater? . . . Beg pardon, beg pardon.

OLD MAN: This way, ladies and gentlemen, I request you . . . I re you . . . pardon . . . quest . . . enter, enter . . . going to show . . . there, the seats . . . dear friend . . . not there . . . take care . . . you, my friend?

[Then a long moment without words. We hear waves, boats, the continuous ringing of the doorbell. The movement culminates in intensity at this point. The doors are now opening and shutting all together ceaselessly. Only the main door in the center of the recess remains closed. The Old Man and Old Woman come and go, without saying a word, from one door to another; they appear to be gliding on roller skates. The Old Man receives the people, accompanies them, but doesn't take them very far, he only indicates seats to them after having taken one or two steps with them; he hasn't enough time. The Old Woman carries in chairs. The Old Man and the Old Woman meet each other and bump into each other, once or twice, without interrupting their rhythm. Then, the Old Man takes a position upstage center, and turns from left to right, from right to left, etc., towards all the doors and indicates the seats with his arms. His arms move very rapidly. Then, finally the Old Woman stops, with a chair in one hand, which she places, takes up again, replaces, looks as though she, too, wants to go from one door to another, from right to left, from left to right, moving her head and neck very rapidly. This must not interrupt

ⓔ "But it was almost this Beckettian image [the action of scene 10] of nothingness which inspired Ionesco to a more imaginative use of the theatre's visual possibilities than he had ever achieved before. The points are no longer being made entirely through dialogue and the physical action of the characters. To fill the stage with emptiness she invents an action in which the dialogue for the first time fuses perfectly with the changing visual background and the sound effects." (Hayman 29)

DM crawls  
dnst. ctr. →  
stands & X's  
to str. doors,  
X's to str.  
windows, pulls  
chair up  
from window.  
DM places chair  
dnst. ctr. row,  
stands ctr. &  
seats guests.  
DM gets tangled  
in rope, works  
upst. ctr.  
S enters str.  
door w/ chair,  
works upst. ctr.  
DM ends up  
upst. B. of  
main door,  
S is upst.  
of same.

S weaves  
b/w chairs  
dnst., gives out  
programs.  
DM weaves  
b/w chairs  
dnst., seats  
guests.

DM & S  
weave ctr.,  
same  
business.

DM weaves  
upstr., ctr.,  
upst.

S weaves  
str.

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*the rhythm; the Old Man and Old Woman must still give the impression of not stopping, even while remaining almost in one place; their hands, their chests, their heads, their eyes are agitated, perhaps moving, in little circles. Finally, there is a progressive slowing down of movement, at first slight: the ringings of the doorbell are less loud, less frequent; the doors open less and less rapidly; the gestures of the Old Man and Old Woman slacken continuously. At the moment when the doors stop opening and closing altogether, and the ringings cease to be heard, we have the impression that the stage is packed with people.]* scene 11

OLD MAN: I'm going to find a place for you . . . patience . . . Semiramis, for the love of . . .

OLD WOMAN [with a large gesture, her hands empty]: There are no more chairs, my darling. [Then, abruptly, she begins to sell invisible programs in a full hall, with the doors closed.] Programs, get your programs here, the program of the evening, buy your program!

OLD MAN: Relax, ladies and gentlemen, we'll take care of you . . . Each in his turn, in the order of your arrival . . . You'll have a seat. I'll take care of you.

OLD WOMAN: Buy your programs! Wait a moment, madam, I cannot take care of everyone at the same time, I haven't got thirty-three hands, you know, I'm not a cow . . . Mister, please be kind enough to pass the program to the lady next to you, thank you . . . my change, my change . . .

OLD MAN: I've told you that I'd find a place for you! Don't get excited! Over here, it's over here, there, take care . . . oh, dear friend . . . dear friends . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . Programs . . . get your grams . . . grams . . .

OLD MAN: Yes, my dear, she's over there, further down, she's selling programs . . . no trade is unworthy . . . that's her . . . do you see her? . . . you have a seat in the second row . . . to the right . . . no, to the left . . . that's it! . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . gram . . . gram . . . program . . . get your program . . .

The Chairs

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OM x's upst. chr., examines chair, x's to sth. window & stands on stool.

S throws candy & programs, S knocked to floor by guests.

S crawls chr.

DM x's to upstr. chair, puts

over his arms,

weaves dist. b/w chairs

& chases

guests out of aisles stl.

& str.

S & OM

meet in chr.

OM x's stl.

again, faces

upst.

Guests push

S & DM

to chr. floor, S stands

& fights off

guests, frees

DM from chair

OLD MAN: What do you expect me to do? I'm doing my best! [To invisible seated people:] Push over a little, if you will please . . . there's still a little room, that will do for you, won't it, Mrs. . . . come here. [He mounts the dais, forced by the pushing of the crowd.] Ladies, gentlemen, please excuse us, there are no more seats available . . .

OLD WOMAN [who is now on the opposite side of the stage, across from the Old Man, between door No. 3 and the window]: Get your programs . . . who wants a program? Eskimo pies, caramels . . . fruit drops . . . [Unable to move, the Old Woman, hemmed in by the crowd, scatters her programs and candies anywhere, above the invisible heads.] Here are some! There they are!

OLD MAN [standing on the dais, very animated; he is jostled as he descends from the dais, remounts it, steps down again, hits someone in the face, is struck by an elbow, says]: Pardon . . . please excuse us . . . take care . . . [Pushed, he staggers, has trouble regaining his equilibrium, clutches at shoulders.]

OLD WOMAN: Why are there so many people? Programs, get your program here, Eskimo pies.

OLD MAN: Ladies, young ladies, gentlemen, a moment of silence, I beg you . . . silence . . . it's very important . . . those people who've no seats are asked to clear the aisles . . . that's it . . . don't stand between the chairs.

OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man, almost screaming]: Who are all these people, my darling? What are they doing here?

OLD MAN: Clear the aisles, ladies and gentlemen. Those who do not have seats must, for the convenience of all, stand against the wall, there, along the right or the left . . . you'll be able to hear everything, you'll see everything, don't worry, you won't miss a thing, all seats are equally good!

[There is a great hullabaloo. Pushed by the crowd, the Old Man makes almost a complete turn around the stage and ends up at the window on the right, near to the stool. The Old Woman makes the same movement in reverse, and ends



Guests push  
S to stl.  
window &  
OM to stR.  
window.

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*up at the window on the left, near the stool there.]*

OLD MAN [*making this movement*]: Don't push, don't push.

OLD WOMAN [*same business*]: Don't push, don't push.

OLD MAN [*same business*]: Don't push, don't push.

OLD WOMAN [*same business*]: Don't push, ladies and gentlemen, don't push.

OLD MAN [*same business*]: Relax . . . take it easy . . . be quiet . . . what's going on here?

OLD WOMAN [*same business*]: There's no need to act like savages, in any case.

[*At last they reach their final positions. Each is near a window. The Old Man to the left, by the window which is beside the dais. The Old Woman on the right. They don't move from these positions until the end.*]

OLD WOMAN [*calling to the Old Man*]: My darling . . . I can't see you, anymore . . . where are you? Who are they? What do all these people want? Who is that man over there?

OLD MAN: Where are you? Where are you, Semiramis?

OLD WOMAN: My darling, where are you?

OLD MAN: Here, beside the window . . . Can you hear me?

OLD WOMAN: Yes, I hear your voice! . . . there are so many . . . but I can make out yours . . .

OLD MAN: And you, where are you?

OLD WOMAN: I'm beside the window too! . . . My dear, I'm frightened, there are too many people . . . we are very far from each other . . . at our age we have to be careful . . . we might get lost . . . we must stay close together, one never knows, my darling, my darling . . .

OLD MAN: Ah! . . . I just caught sight of you . . . Oh! . . . We'll find each other, never fear . . . I'm with friends. [*To the friends:*] I'm happy to shake your hands . . . But of course, I believe in progress, uninterrupted progress, with some jolts, nevertheless . . .

OLD WOMAN: That's fine, thanks . . . What foul weather! Yes, it's been nice! [*Aside:*] I'm afraid, even so . . . What am I doing here? . . . [*She screams:*] My darling, My darling!

OM x's to  
stR.  
Coat  
rack,  
climbs to  
top.

S stands on top of stl. stool

The Chairs

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[The Old Man and Old Woman individually speak to guests near them.]

OLD MAN: In order to prevent the exploitation of man by man, we need money, money, and still more money!

OLD WOMAN: My darling! [Then, hemmed in by friends:] Yes, my husband is here, he's organizing everything . . . over there . . . Oh! you'll never get there . . . you'd have to go across, he's with friends . . .

OLD MAN: Certainly not . . . as I've always said . . . pure logic does not exist . . . all we've got is an imitation.

OLD WOMAN: But you know, there are people who are happy. In the morning they eat breakfast on the plane, at noon they lunch in the pullman, and in the evening they dine aboard the liner. At night they sleep in the trucks that roll, roll, roll . . .

OM falls off coat rack. S climbs down from stool.

OLD MAN: Talk about the dignity of man! At least let's try to save face. Dignity is only skin deep.

OLD WOMAN: Don't slink away into the shadows . . . [She bursts out laughing in conversation.] \*

OLD MAN: Your compatriots ask of me.

OLD WOMAN: Certainly . . . tell me everything.

OLD MAN: I've invited you . . . in order to explain to you . . . that the individual and the person are one and the same.

OLD WOMAN: He has a borrowed look about him. He owes us a lot of money.

OLD MAN: I am not myself. I am another. I am the one in the other.

OLD WOMAN: My children, take care not to trust one another.

OLD MAN: Sometimes I awaken in the midst of absolute silence. It's a perfect circle. There's nothing lacking. But one must be careful, all the same. Its shape might disappear. There are holes through which it can escape.

OM sits & hangs on stl. window ledge.

OLD WOMAN: Ghosts, you know, phantoms, mere nothings . . . The duties my husband fulfills are very important, sublime.

S puts stool on her head.

OLD MAN: Excuse me . . . that's not at all my opinion! At the

proper time, I'll communicate my views on this subject to you . . . I have nothing to say for the present! . . . We're waiting for the Orator, he'll tell you, he'll speak in my behalf, and explain everything that we hold most dear . . . he'll explain everything to you . . . when? . . . when the moment has come . . . the moment will come soon . . .

OLD WOMAN [*on her side to her friends*]: The sooner, the better . . . That's understood . . . [*Aside*]: They're never going to leave us alone. Let them go, why don't they go? . . . My poor darling, where is he? I can't see him any more . . .

OLD MAN [*same business*]: Don't be so impatient. You'll hear my message. In just a moment.

OLD WOMAN [*aside*]: Ah! . . . I hear his voice! . . . [*To her friends*]: Do you know, my husband has never been understood. But at last his hour has come.

OLD MAN: Listen to me, I've had a rich experience of life. In all walks of life, at every level of thought . . . I'm not an egotist: humanity must profit by what I've learned.

OLD WOMAN: Ow! You stepped on my foot . . . I've got chilblains!

OLD MAN: I've perfected a real system. [*Aside*]: The Orator ought to be here. [*Aloud*]: I've suffered enormously.

OLD WOMAN: We have suffered so much. [*Aside*]: The Orator ought to be here. It's certainly time.

OLD MAN: Suffered much, learned much.

OLD WOMAN [*like an echo*]: Suffered much, learned much.

OLD MAN: You'll see for yourselves, my system is perfect.

OLD WOMAN [*like an echo*]: You'll see for yourselves, his system is perfect.

OLD MAN: If only my instructions are carried out.

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: If only his instructions are carried out.

OLD MAN: We'll save the world! . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Saving his own soul by saving the world! . . .

OLD MAN: One truth for all!

OM stands on  
S.H.R. stool.  
S stands on  
J.H.L. stool.

\* "chilblains" - a sore  
resulting from exposure  
to the cold (Webster  
Dictionary definition)

The Chairs

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OLD WOMAN [echo]: One truth for all!

OLD MAN: Follow me! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Follow him! . . .

OLD MAN: For I have absolute certainty! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: He has absolute certainty!

OLD MAN: Never . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Ever and ever . . . scene 12

[Suddenly we hear noises in the wings, fanfares.]

OLD WOMAN: What's going on?

[The noises increase, then the main door opens wide, with a great crash; through the open door we see nothing but a very powerful light which floods onto the stage through the main door and the windows, which at the entrance of the emperor are brightly lighted.]

OLD MAN: I don't know . . . I can scarcely believe . . . is it possible . . . but yes . . . but yes . . . incredible . . . and still it's true . . . yes . . . if . . . yes . . . it is the Emperor! His Majesty the Emperor! \*

[The light reaches its maximum intensity, through the open door and through the windows; but the light is cold, empty; more noises which cease abruptly.]

OLD MAN: Stand up! . . . It's His Majesty the Emperor! The Emperor in my house, in our house . . . Semiramis . . . do you realize what this means?

OLD WOMAN [not understanding]: The Emperor . . . the Emperor? My darling! [Then suddenly she understands.] Ah, yes, the Emperor! Your Majesty! Your Majesty! [She wildly makes countless grotesque curtsies.] In our house! In our house!

OLD MAN [weeping with emotion]: Your Majesty! . . . Oh! Your Majesty! . . . Your little, Your great Majesty! . . . Oh! what a sublime honor . . . it's all a marvelous dream.

OLD WOMAN [like an echo]: A marvelous dream . . . marvelous . . .

OLD MAN [to the invisible crowd]: Ladies, gentlemen, stand up, our beloved sovereign, the Emperor, is among us! Hur-

OM & S get off stools, weave b/w chairs & meet in ctr. (S brings stool w/ her.) OM & S hug, watch main door open up.

OM & S hug, bow, & curtsey.

\* "The futility of the final scene exposes not just the theme of absence but also the failure of the individual in the face of society's [the emperor's] indifference." (Jane 63)

rah! Hurrah!

[*He stands up on the stool; he stands on his toes in order to see the Emperor; the Old Woman does the same on her side.*]

OLD WOMAN: Hurrah! Hurrah!

[*Stamping of feet.*]

OLD MAN: Your Majesty! . . . I'm over here! . . . Your Majesty! Can you hear me? Can you see me? Please tell his Majesty that I'm here! Your Majesty! Your Majesty!!! I'm here, your most faithful servant! . . .

OLD WOMAN [*still echoing*]: Your most faithful servant, Your Majesty!

OLD MAN: Your servant, your slave, your dog, arf, arf, your dog, Your Majesty! . . .

OM & S bark.

OLD WOMAN [*barking loudly like a dog*]: Arf . . . arf . . . arf . . .

OLD MAN [*wringing his hands*]: Can you see me? . . . Answer,

Sire: . . . Ah, I can see you, I've just caught sight of Your Majesty's august face . . . your divine forehead . . . I've seen you, yes, in spite of the screen of courtiers . . .

OLD WOMAN: In spite of the courtiers . . . we're here, Your Majesty!

OLD MAN: Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Ladies, gentlemen, don't keep him—His Majesty standing . . . you see, Your Majesty, I'm truly the only one who cares for you, for your health, I'm the most faithful of all your subjects . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echoing*]: Your Majesty's most faithful subjects!

OLD MAN: Let me through, now, ladies and gentlemen . . . how can I make my way through such a crowd? . . . I must go to present my most humble respects to His Majesty, the Emperor . . . let me pass . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Let him pass . . . let him pass . . . pass . . . ass . . .

OLD MAN: Let me pass, please, let me pass. [*Desperate:*] Ah! Will I ever be able to reach him?

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Reach him . . . reach him . . .

S gives OM stool, OM stands on stool, then kneels.

~~OLD MAN: Nevertheless, my heart and my whole being are at his feet, the crowd of courtiers surrounds him, ah! ah! they want to prevent me from approaching him . . . They know very well that . . . oh! I understand, I understand . . . Court intrigues, I know all about it . . . They hope to separate me from Your Majesty!~~

~~OLD WOMAN: Calm yourself, my darling . . . His Majesty sees you, he's looking at you . . . His Majesty has given me a wink . . . His Majesty is on our side! . . .~~

S. lays on floor & watches blue guest & chair legs, S stands.

OLD MAN: They must give the Emperor the best seat . . . ~~now~~ the ~~chair~~ so that he can hear everything the Orator is going to say.

OLD WOMAN [hoisting herself up on the stool, on her toes, lifting her chin as high as she can, in order to see better]: At last they're taking care of the Emperor.

OLD MAN: Thank heaven for that! [To the Emperor:] Sire . . . Your Majesty may rely on him. It's my friend, it's my representative who is at Your Majesty's side. [On his toes, standing on the stool:] Gentlemen, ladies, young ladies, little children, I implore you.

OLD WOMAN [echoing]: Plore . . . plore . . .

OLD MAN: . . . I want to see . . . move aside . . . I want . . . the celestial gaze, the noble face, the crown, the radiance of His Majesty . . . Sire, deign to turn your illustrious face in my direction, toward your humble servant . . . so humble . . . Oh! I caught sight of him clearly that time . . . I caught sight . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: He caught sight that time . . . he caught sight . . . caught . . . sight . . .

OLD MAN: I'm at the height of joy . . . I've no more words to express my boundless gratitude . . . in my humble dwelling, Oh! Majesty! Oh! radiance! . . . here . . . here . . . in the dwelling where I am, true enough, a general . . . but within the hierarchy of your army, I'm only a simple general factotum . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: General factotum . . .

OM gets down from stool, S kneels on stool.

I found myself making cuts in sections of the script where I felt the grovelling became too extreme and slowing down the action

OLD MAN: I'm proud of it . . . proud and humble, at the same time . . . as I should be . . . alas! certainly, I am a general, I might have been at the imperial court, I have only a little court here to take care of . . . Your Majesty . . . I . . . Your Majesty, I have difficulty expressing myself . . . I might have had . . . many things, not a few possessions if I'd known, if I'd wanted, if I . . . if we . . . Your Majesty, forgive my emotion . . .

OLD WOMAN: Speak in the third person!

OLD MAN [*sniveling*]: May Your Majesty deign to forgive me! You are here at last . . . We had given up hope . . . you might not even have come . . . Oh! Savior, in my life, I have been humiliated . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo, sobbing*]: . . . miliated . . . miliated . . .

OLD MAN: I've suffered much in my life . . . I might have been something, if I could have been sure of the support of Your Majesty . . . I have no other support . . . if you hadn't come, everything would have been too late . . . you are, Sire, my last recourse . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Last recourse . . . Sire . . . ast recourse . . . ire . . . recourse . . .

OLD MAN: I've brought bad luck to my friends, to all those who have helped me . . . Lightning struck the hand which was held out toward me . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: . . . hand that was held out . . . held out . . . out . . .

OLD MAN: They've always had good reasons for hating me, bad reasons for loving me . . .

OLD WOMAN: That's not true, my darling, not true. I love you, I'm your little mother . . .

OLD MAN: All my enemies have been rewarded and my friends have betrayed me . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Friends . . . betrayed . . . betrayed . . .

OLD MAN: They've treated me badly. They've persecuted me. If I complained, it was always they who were in the right . . . Sometimes I've tried to revenge myself . . . I was never

S gets down  
from stool

Originally I cut this entire section but as the relationship between the characters became more solidified through the choices

of the actors, I made the decision to keep these two crucial lines that speak to the love between Semiramis and the Old Man

able to, never able to revenge myself . . . I have too much pity . . . I refused to strike the enemy to the ground, I have always been too good.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: He was too good, good, good, good, good . . .

OLD MAN: It is my pity that has defeated me.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: My pity . . . pity . . . pity . . .

OLD MAN: But they never pitied me. I gave them a pin prick, and they repaid me with club blows, with knife blows, with cannon blows, they've crushed my bones . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . My bones . . . my bones . . . my bones . . .

OLD MAN: They've supplanted me, they've robbed me, they've assassinated me . . . I've been the collector of injustices, the lightning rod of catastrophes . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Lightning rod . . . catastrophe . . . lightning rod . . .

OLD MAN: In order to forget, Your Majesty, I wanted to go in for sports . . . for mountain climbing . . . they pulled my feet and made me slip . . . I wanted to climb stairways, they rotted the steps . . . I fell down . . . I wanted to travel, they refused me a passport . . . I wanted to cross the river, they burnt my bridges . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Burnt my bridges. \*

OLD MAN: I wanted to cross the Pyrenees, and there were no more Pyrenees.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: No more Pyrenees . . . He could have been, he too, Your Majesty, like so many others, a head editor, a head actor, a head doctor, Your Majesty, a head king . . .

OLD MAN: Furthermore, no one has ever shown me due consideration . . . no one has ever sent me invitations . . . However, I, hear me, I say this to you, I alone could have saved humanity, who is so sick. Your Majesty realizes this as do I . . . or, at the least, I could have spared it the evils from which it has suffered so much this last quarter of a

OM tries to climb over S

OM stands on stool

\* what wikipedia.com says about the Pyrenees (over on back...)



# Pyrenees

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Pyrenees** (Spanish: *Pirineos*; French: *Pyrénées*; Catalan: *Pirineus*; Occitan: *Pirenèus*; Aragonese: *Perinés*; Basque: *Pirinioak*) are a range of mountains in southwest Europe that form a natural border between France and Spain. They separate the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of continental Europe, and extend for about 430 km (267 mi) from the Bay of Biscay (Cap Higer) to the Mediterranean Sea (Cap de Creus).

For the most part, the main crest forms a massive frontier, with Andorra sandwiched in between. Catalonia and the Basque Country are the only two territories extending on both sides of the mountain range, with a northern and a southern part on each side.

The Pyrenees are named after Pyrene (*fire* in Greek) who was the daughter of Bebryx and was raped by Herakles. Terrified at giving birth to a serpent, she fled to the mountains and was either buried or eaten by wild animals. Herodotus located this legend in his map of the Oikumene as early as 450 BC.

Coordinates:  42°40'N, 1°00'E


## Pyrenees

Range

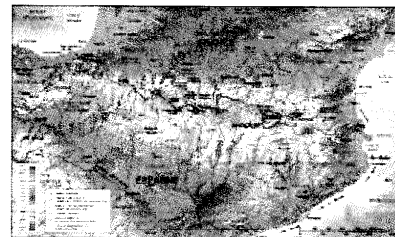


Central Pyrenees

**Named for:** Pyrene

<b>Countries</b>	Spain, France, Andorra
<b>Highest point</b>	Aneto
- elevation	3,404 m (11,168 ft)
- coordinates	 42°37'56"N 00°39'28"E

<b>Geology</b>	granite, gneiss, limestone
<b>Period</b>	Paleozoic, Mesozoic



Topographic map (in French)

OM crouches  
on stool, gets  
down all the  
way.

century, had I had the opportunity to communicate my message; I do not despair of saving it, there is still time, I have a plan . . . alas, I express myself with difficulty . . .

OLD WOMAN [*above the invisible heads*]: The Orator will be here, he'll speak for you. His Majesty is here, thus you'll be heard, you've no reason to despair, you hold all the trumps, everything has changed, everything has changed . . .

OLD MAN: I hope Your Majesty will excuse me . . . I know you have many other worries . . . I've been humiliated . . . Ladies and gentlemen, move aside just a little bit, don't hide His Majesty's nose from me altogether, I want to see the diamonds of the imperial crown glittering . . . But if Your Majesty has deigned to come to our miserable home, it is because you have condescended to take into consideration my wretched self. What an extraordinary reward. Your Majesty, if corporeally I raise myself on my toes, this is not through pride, this is only in order to gaze upon you! . . . morally, I throw myself at your knees.

OLD WOMAN [*sobbing*]: At your knees, Sire, we throw ourselves at your knees, at your feet, at your toes . . .

OLD MAN: I've had scabies. My employer fired me because I did not bow to his baby, to his horse. I've been kicked in the ass, but all this, Sire, no longer has any importance . . . since . . . since . . . Sir . . . Your Majesty . . . look . . . I am here . . . here . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . .

OLD MAN: Since Your Majesty is here . . . since Your Majesty will take my message into consideration . . . But the Orator should be here . . . he's making His Majesty wait . . .

OLD WOMAN: If Your Majesty will forgive him. He's surely coming. He will be here in a moment. They've telephoned us.

OLD MAN: His Majesty is so kind. His Majesty wouldn't depart just like that, without having listened to everything, heard everything.

OM & SX to  
upst. main  
doors, close &  
guard them.

*The Chairs*

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OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Heard everything . . . heard . . . listened to everything . . .

OLD MAN: It is he who will speak in my name . . . I, I cannot . . . I lack the talent . . . he has all the papers, all the documents . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: He has all the documents . . .

OLD MAN: A little patience, Sire, I beg of you . . . he should be coming.

OLD WOMAN: He should be coming in a moment.

OLD MAN [*so that the Emperor will not grow impatient*]: Your Majesty, hear me, a long time ago I had the revelation . . . I was forty years old . . . I say this also to you, ladies and gentlemen . . . one evening, after supper, as was our custom, before going to bed, I seated myself on my father's knees . . . my mustaches were longer than his and more pointed . . . I had more hair on my chest . . . my hair was graying already, but his was still brown . . . There were some guests, grownups, sitting at table, who began to laugh, laugh.

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Laugh . . . laugh . . .

OLD MAN: I'm not joking, I told them, I love my papa very much. Someone replied: It is midnight, a child shouldn't stay up so late. If you don't go beddy-bye, then you're no longer a kid. But I'd still not have believed them if they hadn't addressed me as an adult.

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: An adult.

OLD MAN: Instead of as a child . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: A child.

OLD MAN: Nevertheless, I thought to myself, I'm not married. Hence, I'm still a child. They married me off right then, expressly to prove the contrary to me . . . Fortunately, my wife has been both father and mother to me . . .

OLD WOMAN: The Orator should be here, Your Majesty . . .

OLD MAN: The Orator will come.

OLD WOMAN: He will come.

OLD MAN: He will come.

OM x's to  
str. window,  
S x's to str.  
window, both  
sit on stools.

OLD WOMAN: He will come.

OLD MAN: He will come.

OLD WOMAN: He will come.

OLD MAN: He will come, he will come.

OLD WOMAN: He will come, he will come.

OLD MAN: He will come.

OLD WOMAN: He is coming.

OLD MAN: He is coming.

OLD WOMAN: He is coming, he is here.

OLD MAN: He is coming, he is here.

OLD WOMAN: He is coming, he is here.

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN: He is here . . .

OLD WOMAN: Here he is!

scene 13

[Silence; all movement stops. Petrified, the two old people stare at door No. 5; this immobility lasts rather long—about thirty seconds; very slowly, very slowly the door opens wide, silently; then the Orator appears. He is a real person. He's a typical painter or poet of the nineteenth century; he wears a large black felt hat with a wide brim, loosely tied bow tie, artist's blouse, mustache and goatee, very histrionic in manner, conceited; just as the invisible people must be as real as possible, the Orator must appear unreal. He goes along the wall to the right, gliding, softly, to upstage center, in front of the main door, without turning his head to right or left; he passes close by the Old Woman without appearing to notice her, not even when the Old Woman touches his arm in order to assure herself that he exists. It is at this moment that the Old Woman says: "Here he is!"]

OLD MAN: Here he is!

OLD WOMAN [following the Orator with her eyes and continuing to stare at him]: It's really he, he exists. In flesh and blood.

OLD MAN [following him with his eyes]: He exists. It's really he. This is not a dream!

OLD WOMAN: This is not a dream, I told you so.

O enters dnstl. door, bumps into chairs, X's upst. dbl.

OM & S stand on stools, cheer; they X upst. dbl. to O.

O falls forward, lifeless.

\* appearance of the Orator; "The characters in Ionesco's early plays are often puppet-like, grotesque and violent, strongly reminiscent of guignol (Punch and Judy shows)" (Lane 23)

-influenced costuming choices to make the Orator a mime

"At the heart of Ionesco's work is a fundamental contradiction between astonishment and anguish, between joy and despair" (Lane 19)

"From Apollinaire to the Surrealists and beyond, (over on back...)"

an extremely close link has always existed between the pioneers of painting and sculpture and the avant-garde of poets and dramatists. Beckett has written a sensitive study of the abstract painter Bram van Velde, and Ionesco is a friend of Max Ernst and Dubuffet." (Esslin 391)

The Chairs

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[The Old Man clasps his hands, lifts his eyes to heaven; he exults silently. The Orator, having reached upstage center, lifts his hat, bends forward in silence, saluting the invisible Emperor with his hat with a Musketeer's flourish and somewhat like an automaton. At this moment:]

OM straightens  
O.  
S holds up  
O's hand.

OLD MAN: Your Majesty . . . May I present to you, the Orator . . .

OLD WOMAN: It is he!

[Then the Orator puts his hat back on his head and mounts the dais from which he looks down on the invisible crowd on the stage and at the chairs; he freezes in a solemn pose.]

S x's chair &  
kisses OM, x's  
chair.

OLD MAN [to the invisible crowd]: You may ask him for autographs. [Automatically, silently, the Orator signs and distributes numberless autographs. The Old Man during this time lifts his eyes again to heaven, clasping his hands, and exultantly says:] No man, in his lifetime, could hope for more . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: No man could hope for more.

OLD MAN [to the invisible crowd]: And now, with the permission of Your Majesty, I will address myself to all of you, ladies, young ladies, gentlemen, little children, dear colleagues, dear compatriots, Your Honor the President, dear comrades in arms . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: And little children . . . dren . . . dren . . .

OLD MAN: I address myself to all of you, without distinction of age, sex, civil status, social rank, or business, to thank you, with all my heart.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: To thank you . . .

OLD MAN: As well as the Orator . . . cordially, for having come in such large numbers . . . silence, gentlemen! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . Silence, gentlemen . . .

OLD MAN: I address my thanks also to those who have made possible the meeting this evening, to the organizers . . .

OLD WOMAN: Bravo!

[Meanwhile, the Orator on the dais remains solemn, immobile, except for his hand, which signs autographs . . .]

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EUGENE IONESCO

OLD MAN: To the owners of this building, to the architect, to the masons who were kind enough to erect these walls! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . walls . . .

OLD MAN: To all those who've dug the foundations . . . Silence, ladies and gentlemen . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . 'adies and gentlemen . . .

OLD MAN: Last but not least I address my warmest thanks to the cabinet-makers who have made these chairs on which you have been able to sit, to the master carpenter . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . penter . . .

OLD MAN: . . . Who made the armchair in which Your Majesty is sinking so softly, which does not prevent you, nevertheless, from maintaining a firm and manly attitude . . . Thanks again to all the technicians, machinists, electro-

S checks O.

OLD WOMAN [echoing:] . . . cutioners . . . cutioners . . .

OLD MAN: . . . To the paper manufacturers and the printers, proofreaders, editors to whom we owe the programs, so charmingly decorated, to the universal solidarity of all men, thanks, thanks, to our country, to the State [*He turns toward where the Emperor is sitting:*] whose helm Your Majesty directs with the skill of a true pilot . . . thanks to the usher . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo:] . . . usher . . . rusher . . .

OLD MAN [*pointing to the Old Woman*]: Hawker of Eskimo pies and programs . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . grams . . .

OM x's to S,  
chugs rcr.

OLD MAN: . . . My wife, my helpmeet . . . Semiramis! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . ife . . . meet . . . mis . . . [*Aside:*] The darling, he never forgets to give me credit.

OLD MAN: Thanks to all those who have given me their precious and expert, financial or moral support, thereby contributing to the overwhelming success of this evening's gathering . . . thanks again, thanks above all to our beloved sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor . . .

S bows.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . jesty, the Emperor . . .

The Chairs

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OLD MAN [in a total silence]: . . . A little silence . . . Your Majesty . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . jesty . . . jesty . . .

OM takes  
ctrl., they  
stand  
formally

OLD MAN: Your Majesty, my wife and myself have nothing more to ask of life. Our existence can come to an end in this apotheosis. . . thanks be to heaven who has granted us such long and peaceful years . . . My life has been filled to overflowing. My mission is accomplished. I will not have lived in vain, since my message will be revealed to the world . . . [Gesture towards the Orator, who does not perceive it; the Orator waves off requests for autographs, very dignified and firm.] To the world, or rather to what is left of it! [Wide gesture toward the invisible crowd.] To you, ladies and gentlemen, and dear comrades, who are all that is left from humanity, but with such leftovers one can still make a very good soup. . . Orator, friend . . . [The Orator looks in another direction.] If I have been long unrecognized, underestimated by my contemporaries, it is because

it had to be . . . [The Old Woman sobs.] What matters ~~all that~~ now when I am leaving you, to you, my dear Orator and friend [The Orator rejects a new request for an autograph, then takes an indifferent pose, looking in all directions.] . . . the responsibility of radiating upon posterity the light of my mind . . . thus making known to the universe my philosophy. Neglect none of the details of my private life, some laughable, some painful or heartwarming, of my tastes, my amusing gluttony . . . tell everything . . . speak of my helpmeet . . . [The Old Woman redoubles her sobs.] . . . of the way she prepared those marvelous little Turkish pies, of her potted rabbit à la Normandabbit . . . speak of Berry, my native province . . . I count on you, great master and Orator . . . as for me and my faithful helpmeet, after our long years of labor in behalf of the progress of humanity during which we fought the good fight, nothing remains for us but to withdraw . . . immediately, in order to make the supreme sacrifice which no one

\* "apotheosis"-glorified  
personification of a  
principle or idea  
(Webster Dictionary definition)

\* translation errors

\* what wikipedia.com says about Berry  
(over on back...)

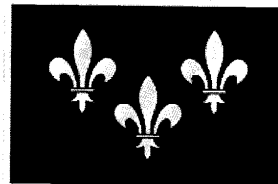


## Berry (province)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Berry** is a region located in the center of France. It was a province of France until the provinces were replaced by *départements* on March 4, 1790.

The Berry region now consists of the *départements* of Cher, Indre and parts of Vienne. The capital of Berry is Bourges. Berry is notable as the birthplace of several kings and other members of the French royal family, as well as of a number of famous writers, including Honoré de Balzac. In the Middle Ages it was the centre of the Duchy of Berry. It is also known for an illuminated manuscript produced in the 14th-15th century called *Les Très riches heures du Duc de Berry*.



Flag of Berry

demands of us but which we will carry out even so . . .

OLD WOMAN [*sobbing*]: Yes, yes, let's die in full glory . . .  
let's die in order to become a legend . . . At least, they'll  
name a street after us . . .

OLD MAN [*to Old Woman*]: O my faithful helpmeet! . . .  
you who have believed in me, unfailingly, during a whole  
century, who have never left me, never . . . alas, today, at  
this supreme moment, the crowd pitilessly separates us . . .

Above all I had hoped  
that together we might lie  
with all our bones together  
within the selfsame skin \*  
within the same sepulchre  
and that the same worms  
might share our old flesh  
that we might rot together . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . Rot together . . .

OLD MAN: Alas! . . . alas! . . .

OLD WOMAN: Alas! . . . alas! . . .

OLD MAN: . . . Our corpses will fall far from each other,  
and we will rot in an aquatic solitude . . . Don't pity us  
over much.

OLD WOMAN: What will be, will be!

OLD MAN: We shall not be forgotten. The eternal Emperor  
will remember us, always.

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Always.

OLD MAN: We will leave some traces, for we are people and  
not cities.

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN [*together*]: We will have a street  
named after us.

OLD MAN: Let us be united in time and in eternity, even if  
we are not together in space, as we were in adversity: let  
us die at the same moment . . . [*To the Orator, who is  
impassive, immobile:*] One last time . . . I place my trust  
in you . . . I count on you. You will tell all . . . bequeath

OM & S  
embrace &  
hold hands

OM x's to str.  
window.  
S x's to str.  
window. They  
stand on the  
stools.

\* sepulchre - a  
tomb; a burial  
vault  
(Webster Dictionary  
definition)

The Chairs

159

my message . . . [To the Emperor:] If Your Majesty will excuse me . . . Farewell to all. Farewell, Semiramis.

OLD WOMAN: Farewell to all! . . . Farewell, my darling!

OLD MAN: Long live the Emperor!

[He throws confetti and paper streamers on the invisible Emperor; we hear fanfares; bright lights like fireworks.]

OLD WOMAN: Long live the Emperor!

[Confetti and streamers thrown in the direction of the Emperor, then on the immobile and impassive Orator, and on the empty chairs.]

OLD MAN [same business]: Long live the Emperor!

OLD WOMAN [same business]: Long live the Emperor!

scene 14

[The Old Woman and Old Man at the same moment throw themselves out the windows, shouting "Long Live the Emperor." Sudden silence; no more fireworks; we hear an "Ah" from both sides of the stage, the sea-green noises of bodies falling into the water. The light coming through the main door and the windows has disappeared; there remains only a weak light as at the beginning of the play; the darkened windows remain wide open; their curtains floating on the wind.]

ORATOR [he has remained immobile and impassive during the scene of the double suicide, and now, after several moments, he decides to speak. He faces the rows of empty chairs; he makes the invisible crowd understand that he is deaf and dumb; he makes the signs of a deafmute; desperate efforts to make himself understood; then he coughs, groans, utters the guttural sounds of a mute]: He, mme, mm, mm. Ju, gou, hou, hou. Heu, heu, gu gou, gueue.

[Helpless, he lets his arms fall down alongside his body; suddenly, his face lights up, he has an idea, he turns toward the blackboard, he takes a piece of chalk out of his pocket, and writes, in large capitals:

ANGELFOOD

then:

NNAA NNM NWNWNW V

OM & S throw confetti & jump out the windows.

O comes to life, gestures to str., str., chr.

O retrieves frame from floor, draws picture & shows guests.

O drops frame & grunts.

O uses nonsense words str., chr.

\* "The futility of life and the inability to communicate have rarely been dramatized so graphically." (Lewis 41)

\* the words and letters written of the chalkboard in

the script are meaningless to the story-telling and therefore unnecessary; this informed the choice to have the actor "draw a painting" on the chalkboard every night in the production, in this way the Orator seems to accept and acknowledge the uselessness of words more directly than using just any old free associative word such as "angelfood"

*He turns around again, towards the invisible crowd on the stage, and points with his finger to what he's written on the blackboard.]*

ORATOR: Mmm, Mmm, Gueue, Gou, Gu. Mmm, Mmm, Mmm, Mmm.

*[Then, not satisfied, with abrupt gestures he wipes out the chalk letters, and replaces them with others, among which we can make out, still in large capitals:*

ΛADIEU ΛDIEU ΛPA

*Again, the Orator turns around to face the crowd; he smiles, questions, with an air of hoping that he's been understood, of having said something; he indicates to the empty chairs what he's just written. He remains immobile for a few seconds, rather satisfied and a little solemn; but then, faced with the absence of the hoped for reaction, little by little his smile disappears, his face darkens; he waits another moment; suddenly he bows petulantly, brusquely, descends from the dais; he goes toward the main door upstage center, gliding like a ghost; before exiting through this door, he bows ceremoniously again to the rows of empty chairs, to the invisible Emperor. The stage remains empty with only the chairs, the dais, the floor covered with streamers and confetti. The main door is wide open onto darkness.*

*We hear for the first time the human noises of the invisible crowd; these are bursts of laughter, murmurs, shh's, ironical coughs; weak at the beginning, these noises grow louder, then, again, progressively they become weaker. All this should last long enough for the audience—the real and visible audience—to leave with this ending firmly impressed on its mind. The curtain falls very slowly.]*

April-June, 1951

\* In the original production the curtain fell on the mumblings of the mute Orator. The blackboard was not used.

O removes hat, bows, exits main upst. doors.

We hear the invisible guests.

finis.

#### 4.0 *THE CHAIRS* ~ PRODUCTION

*There is a magic in nonsense...* ~ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*

The following discussion chronicles the journey of the production process; the four-week adventure of mounting Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* with my fellow theatre artists. The first rehearsal took place on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007, as a simple read-through. The show opened on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007, on a double bill with *The Bald Soprano*. It consisted of three actors, seven designers, one technical director, an eight-manned run crew, and over forty chairs.

I've always regarded directing (and theatre in general) as an extremely collaborative art form. I could not have created the show that went up on November 29<sup>th</sup> without the team of talented, fresh, and dedicated artists helping me. Each artistic designer listened to what I had to say about the play and the feelings I had about each particular design element, and then came back with brilliant new insights. We worked together. I gave them a hard time about what I wanted and they each stood up for what they wanted. The designers came to embrace and own the work they put into my play, and I would not have understood the full extent of Ionesco's powerful language without each of their distinct visions.

The actual execution and day-to-day calling of the show by the stage manager was not as precise as it could have been, but as an undergraduate sophomore he was new to the job, and the script is a monster logistically. This is perhaps the most difficult area for me to objectively evaluate, as I am a working Production Stage Manager myself and any consistent irregularity in

the running life of a show is inconceivable for me to live with when I'm performing the same job.

Because this was the stage manager's first experience calling any show it was understandable why certain doorbells were always a hair-split different in timing each night, why at least one door opening was missed in every show; small stuff to an average audience member, but monumental to the hawk-eye of a director.

In the next few sections I discuss in detail the casting process, different areas of design elements developed and composed for the show, and the stage manager's day-to-day records of launching the production from rehearsals and meetings.

#### 4.1 CASTING

Casting took place within a four-hour period over two days. The University of Pittsburgh's Theatre Arts Department held auditions for the entire semester at once, so seven other directors were casting as well. Over the two-day span, every actor in the Department auditioned, and the process quickly became exhausting. Yet when a potential actor came in with a strong audition, it was a completely refreshing experience.

This is what happened with my two lead roles, Patrick Berger (Old Man) and Ana Noriega (Old Woman). Patrick auditioned with a monologue from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Ana auditioned with Nora's closing monologue from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Both actors were powerful, serious, and yet seemed capable of comedy and lightness as well. Both had strong backgrounds in movement training. Patrick had studied Commedia while abroad in Italy, and

Ana practiced yoga every day. Most importantly, both were truthful in their emotions, and their connection with the audience was a tangible experience.

I requested that both of them attend my callback session and read from the script with each other. What was so surprising was that Ana didn't even have time to read the play before attending the callback (as a blossoming sophomore she was also being considered by nearly all the other directors in the Department at the time), but her reading with Patrick would never have suggested any lack of acquaintance with the script. Patrick, an extremely talented senior, was *only* interested in acting for the Ionesco plays; so I was lucky in that he wasn't being considered by any other directors except for Lily Junker, director of *The Bald Soprano*.

The Orator callback was relaxing and fun compared to the pressure of finding the lead roles. Each considered actor came into the room and performed the Orator's scene for me, each differently from the last. It was fun to watch every different actor plug their own personalities into the scene. I found Brendan Gallagher's callback the most impressive because he was the only actor to boldly enter the callback room with some props (he wore an old hat and used a handkerchief to clear his throat).

By the time I entered the casting meeting on Thursday evening all the callbacks for the semester had been held. It was crystal clear to me which actors would make for the strongest, most well-rounded cast. I was lucky in that needing such a small number of actors, I was able to get all of my first choices. Patrick Berger was cast as the Old Man, Ana Noriega was cast as the Old Woman, and Brendan Gallagher was cast as the Orator.

It's hard for me to fully describe the true intensity and raw talent the actors brought to the process. The influence of their work on the individual characters of the Old Man and Semiramis shaped the story of the play more than any amount of research or readings of the script. I equate

the working process between actors and director almost to that of the relationship between Semiramis and the Old Man: a world that existed separate from the one outside of rehearsal, like the lighthouse, a distinct language and understanding between the three of us as artists, and in the end, a project we truly had difficulty letting go of. I remember that finding the end of the Old Man and Semiramis' lives was the most difficult task for us in rehearsal. Besides the choreographed chair section (rehearsal unit 10), we spent the most amount of rehearsal time on the ending, and I like to believe it's because we didn't want to say goodbye to the reality we had created in this absurdist world. As I described the script in my introduction as an account of life and death, perhaps we did not want to deal with that part of the characters' lives for a long time, even well into technical week (this is further discussed in Chapter V). Even with my past directing experiences in mind, the working relationship I established with these two actors was the strongest and most professional I've had to date. I believe my emotions about the relationship to the actors was a response to the depth and commitment required for creating these two extremely complex characters. Most plays I've directed have always had the attention and focus spread between three to seven characters. I never had to examine two individuals so closely before, that responsibility always fell so much more heavily on the actors.

My relationship with the actor playing the Orator was a little different as this actor did not enter the process until the last week of rehearsal. My communication with him was extremely different from that of the old couple. It was perhaps even minimal. I knew from my preproduction research that I wanted something puppet-like, and I suggested a marionette to him. Evening after evening for a full week the actor tried different marionettes and it simply wasn't working. And then dress rehearsal came; give certain actors a costume and it's simply magic. He went from a slow, regal marionette to an overly grotesque clownish mime rushing onto the



stage and ramming into several chairs. The night he discovered it, I burst out laughing from the audience seats! It was just right for the end.

## 4.2 SET

My first meeting with set designer Tommy Costello took place on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007. He expressed his interest in the script and some initial ideas to me, and I shook his hand agreeing that he would be my set designer for the show. I was the most worried about this area of the design; I had plenty of reasons to be.

An alternate title for this play called *The Chairs* could have been “The Doors.” According to the script, we needed eight doors onstage (which I later changed to seven for sheer downsizing purposes), main double-doors that magically opened on their own, at least forty chairs, and a chalkboard.

Tommy is a Doctoral student with a Masters Degree from Trinity College, Dublin, and I knew he was perfect for the job, especially when he suggested at the first meeting that I stage the play in-the-round. It was a terrifyingly complex and awesome suggestion that I immediately shot down on the grounds of having never directed absurdist drama *or* in-the-round before, and not wanting to mix both risky concoctions. But nonetheless, the suggestion immediately revealed in Tommy a bold desire to make this play entirely unique to my own vision as the director while maintaining a certain adherence to Ionesco’s words as well.

So at my request we staged the play in a proscenium setting in the Studio Theatre so that the louvers (an architectural feature of the room) were on all three sides of the characters’ world. The planks of louvers gave me the feeling of an old water-logged lighthouse, and I wanted to use

the actual space of the Studio Theatre to create the feeling of that world. Tommy designed a continental-audience seating bank, with the entrances to the seats from behind. This configuration had not been used in the Studio Theatre since I've been attending the University of Pittsburgh, and it was exciting to try something new while creating another seating option to the black box repertoire for future directors.

Tommy also had the idea of actually "louvering" the louvers; that is, angling the planks of the stage left and stage right walls to give the appearance of the planks falling out of place, and to provide a fun opportunity for the lighting team. At the request of the lighting team, we put a fresh coat of black paint on the side wall louvers for more "pop" in the colors of the lights, and then I had the idea to paint the upstage wall louvers in a water-wash of black, giving them a water-logged appearance rising from the floor.

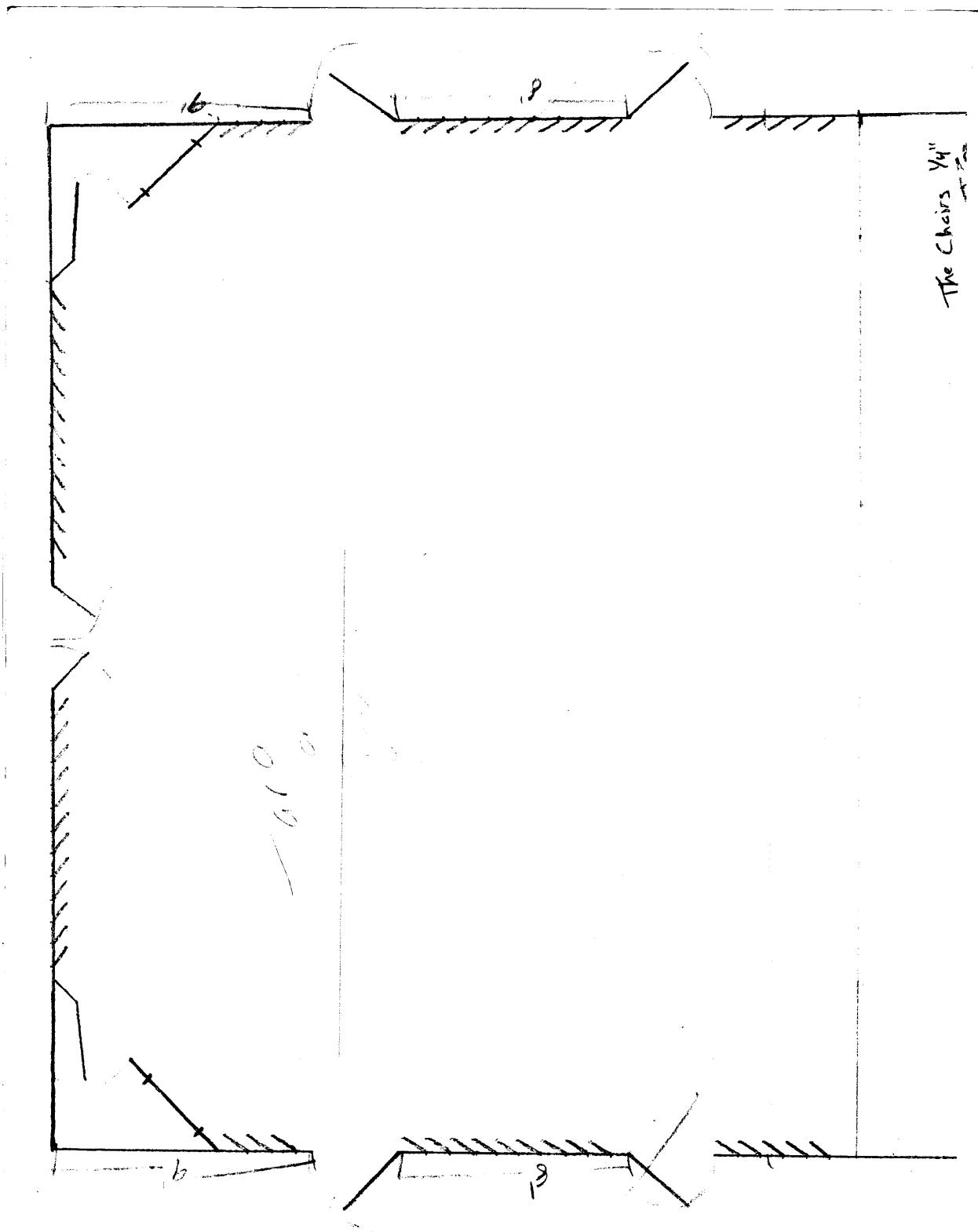
The windows were entirely designed by Tommy, I simply told him how big I wanted them to be and how high I wanted them off the floor. He proposed the idea of "chamfered" corners (see drawings at end of section) to cut down the extreme angle of the black-box walls, using each corner to provide a small door and a large window. The windows were constructed from scrap two-by-fours to match the look of the upstage water-logged wooden planks, and mattresses were placed at the base of them for a safe landing for the actors.

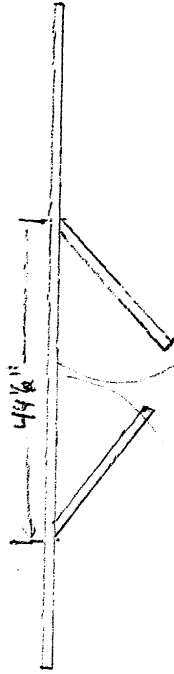
The selection of the doors was made at a meeting between Tommy and me. He knew exactly what main double-doors he wanted to use for the show because the particular doors he had in mind rose above the height of the first level of louvers. It was originally Tommy's idea, but I sincerely agreed that the towering doors gave the character of the Emperor a larger-than-life important presence, especially being that he is invisible when onstage. Personifying objects and

equating them with particular characters in the play became a quick trend between the set and prop designers.

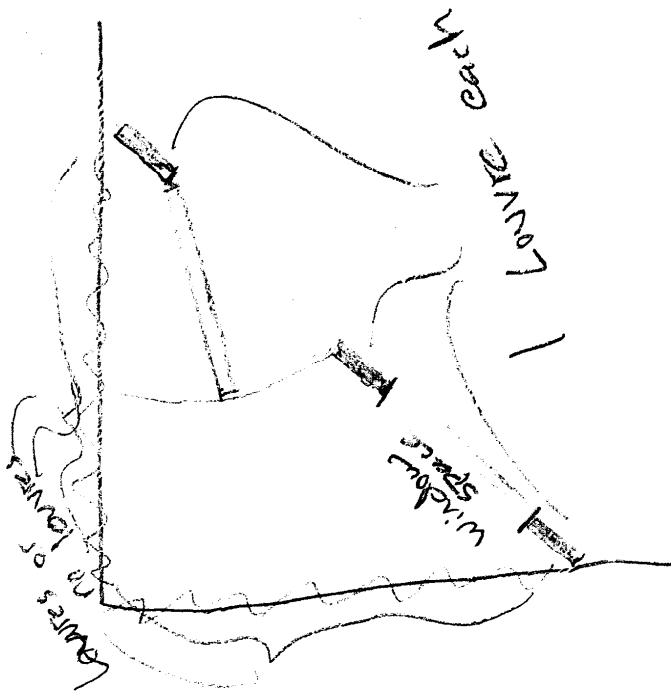
From the very first meeting Tommy and I both agreed that we did not want a giant chalkboard to get wheeled onto the stage by the Orator at the end of the play. Nonetheless, I wanted to keep the idea of the Orator attempting to communicate through written language after his failure at spoken language. The two suggestive frames on the upstage wall that doubled as chalkboards evolved out of a discussion about my concept of using as many real props as possible for the show (discussed in following section). At a weekly production meeting I asked Tommy if I could have the actors use an empty picture frame on the wall as a mirror and a painting. He then suggested buying a bucket of chalkboard paint (it dries into chalkboard material) and building two frames that would also serve as the Orator's chalkboard at the end. It was a brilliant device in my opinion, and the frames really lent themselves to some comical improvisation between the actors during rehearsal.

The following two pages are Tommy's sketches outlining the architectural features and construction details of the set.





Empores Doors  
on center



### 4.3 PROPS

My stage manager, Dale Hess, recruited the props designer, Lizzie Gardner, for the production. I am well aware that the proper term is “prop master,” but I believe when a collaborative artist puts anything onstage, it becomes a visual design, and no artist should suffer a loss of title simply because the visual elements on stage are more often pulled and bought rather than built.

Dale was actually surprised when I told him we needed to bring someone on board the team to deal with props. Most initial impressions of the script suggest that props are simply pantomimed by the actors. I felt that using props could certainly be a risk to the “reality” of the characters of the invisible people, but my instinct to include and dramatically use the props was really where my own personal conception and vision of Ionesco’s script began.

Martin Esslin’s remark about the *The Chairs* became the seed for this idea. “There is also a strong element of the author’s own tragedy in the play – the rows of chairs resemble a theater...” (Esslin 152). Ionesco himself comments on the birth of this image in his own mind by stating, “When I wrote *The Chairs*, I first had the image of chairs, then of someone carrying chairs onto the empty stage at top speed. I had this initial image, but I had no idea at all of what it meant” (Lane 51). Perhaps Ionesco did not really want to acknowledge what it truly meant to him: the loneliness and frustration that occurred during the times of establishing his career as a playwright. In several books I read, his birth date was listed with the incorrect year and his obituary eventually explained that, “... he took three years off his age and claimed 1912 as his birth year, presumably because he wanted to have made his name before the age of 40” (Gussow 1).

What a remarkable image: I could literally see the rows of empty chairs bleeding into the audience chairs in my own production, for the Studio Theatre could not have a true proscenium

configuration being that the stage would be on the ground level and the audience seats would be raked.

With this research and personal image in my own mind, I was not only inspired to explore Ionesco's tragedy as a struggling playwright, but also my own sense of life tragedy as a working stage manager. Perhaps tragedy is a strong word for my own circumstance, but the idea of Ionesco being haunted by nightmarish images in the theatre certainly inspired me to consider what my own theatrical nightmares are. And as a young stage manager without an equity card, I hate nothing more than props. The number of times I've been thrown into ancient backstage theatre storage spaces, wasted hours rifling through piles of dust-covered junk to find the missing tea cup that matches the others onstage, and nearly drew my own blood from the broken and piled-up furniture forgotten in the wings; I've had my own fair share of images that haunt me from the theatre.

These were also images that I could see coming to life before my eyes when I reread the script. What if the actors used real props and simply dropped them to the stage floor after using them? In this way, I discovered entropy infiltrating the action on the stage, culminating in the confetti thrown by Semiramis and the Old Man before their suicides. While it was a bold and risky choice to make in that it was a great departure from the "presence of absence" overtly instilled by Ionesco in the script, I felt that it also emphasized the same idea in many ways. The stage littered in chairs, papers, candies, confetti, etc. was extremely suggestive of the backstage life of a play and the image of an abandoned theatre space, not just the image of an empty auditorium as in Ionesco's case. I liked to think of my own production as containing a strong element of *the theatre's* own sense of entropy and absence.

It was a big idea in my opinion, a large extrapolation from Ionesco's words. I didn't want the concept for the props to become anything too excessive or overbearing on the text, so it was a slow process of adding things we came up with in rehearsal. I felt most comfortable using props that could double in functions (such as the chalkboards/frames formerly mentioned in section A) and the first round of props we came up with were the coat rack, the umbrella placed on the coat rack, the tray of cookies, and the side table on which the tray sat.

The umbrella doubled in functions by serving in the story of "Then at last we arrived..." and giving Semiramis some busy work in hosting the first invisible guest ("Just leave your umbrella there" [*The Chairs* 123]). The tray of cookies just a few lines earlier was also used for improvisational stage business and comedic effect by Semiramis ("Won't you have some cookies... Oh, you're not fat at all... no... plump...") [*The Chairs* 123]). My favorite part about the tray was the clattering sound it made upon the actress tossing it to the ground. If the effect of "trashing" the stage with props was not clear to the audience by this point, I like to believe that this was the moment where the effect really began to establish itself.

The side table later came into play on the Old Man's line, "This table is in our way... There's scarcely a place left here, excuse us..." (*The Chairs* 140), and it became a chair when flipped upside down by Semiramis. What is interesting to note about this moment in the script is that the stage directions do not completely negate the possibility of some real items onstage. The ellipses contained within the former passage of dialogue are followed by the stage directions: "He moves a table, or he sketches the business of moving it, without slowing down his rhythm..." (*The Chairs* 140).

It was in this way that we discovered the relationship between the extreme gesture and pantomime of certain items (such as the first invisible guest's fur coat), and the highly absurd use



of others (like when the Old Man climbed the coat rack as if it were a tree). There were items that I definitely knew I wanted once this relationship between the action, text, and props established itself, like the Jolly Rancher hard candy that functioned as the Eskimo pies; and there were other items that the actors eventually requested, such as Patrick's wish to use a broom in helping the audience understand the idea implied behind the words "general factotum."

My favorite moment of improvisation with props during the rehearsal process came about on the day we added the chair attached to the rope hanging outside the stage right window. Patrick had found the rope lying on the ground backstage, and it was just shortly after the windows were installed in the chamfered corners. During a break he just playfully began to pull the rope up from outside the window in front of me, playing a gag to give the idea of the windows being extremely high up on the lighthouse tower. What began as just a simple joke from the actor actually became a moment in production that did a lot of work in supporting the "reality" of the lighthouse setting, and it was extremely vaudevillian (as when the Old Man became tangled in the rope).

The use and incorporation of props for my production of Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* was one of the dramatic elements in the show that I am most proud of. I felt it was the most distinct feature of this particular conception of the script.

#### **4.4 COSTUMES**

The costumes were an extremely challenging area of design given the extreme movement requirements of the actors. Costume designer, Christon Nicole Herring, while executing her first design position, was extremely patient and supportive of all the actors' needs. I remember

initially telling Nicole that Semiramis could wear nice looking high-heels, but she was quick to change the look to simple black jazz shoes after attending a rehearsal where Ana did the “chair mount” (rehearsal unit 7) during the Photo-Engreaver [sic]/Belle sequence.

Being that this show was Nicole’s very first costume design, I had some unfounded trust issues with her at first. I questioned her decisions for the costumes. Nicole made it very clear to me that she wanted the actor’s wearing super-distressed clothing for she believed it would support the grotesquely suggested old ages of the characters. Yet I consistently asked her, “Are you sure we should distress the costumes?” Perhaps her mistake was bringing me along on the shopping trip to purchase the costume pieces. Maybe as the director I was simply too close to her creative process. No other designers invited me to join them in making artistic decisions for the look of the show (decisions such as the color of Semiramis’ shirt).

In the end, Nicole ended up being correct about her decision to distress the clothing for it significantly amplified the grotesqueness of the characters. Her choices for the make-up and hair arrangements on the actors also supported this appearance. At the first dress rehearsal I was a little frightened because the actors had on so much make-up that they looked more like zombies than old people. Although Nicole’s process began slowly, each evening she simplified the make-up until she had achieved the proper look for the age of the characters.

While I was first a little overly concerned with Nicole’s contribution to my show, I grew to really enjoy and respect the work she did for the production. She put Semiramis in what was once a nice blouse and skirt, and the Old Man in what was also once a decent pair of slacks and a vest. The costumes alluded to the once vibrant and youthful life of the Old Man and Semiramis when they were in the garden of Eden (rehearsal unit 4), but have since started to decompose, like their lives in the lighthouse.

## 4.5 SOUND

The experience of arriving at the proper sound design was one of the more interesting collaborative processes of the production period. I was excited to have Parag Gohel, a responsible undergraduate senior, offer to design the sound for my show. What was especially interesting about working with Parag was that he had a very structured way of building his design: he wanted a general concept for the play and then some specific points of focus from which to hone his design.

I began by explaining to him my most distinct and strong thoughts on the play as a whole, and the things I discovered in research that supported my opinions (see Chapter I). I told him that the elements of sound were responsible for creating the personality of the invisible characters, that the precision of sounds were to almost substitute for these empty characters. I referenced Nancy Lane's discussion of the "presence of absence" in *Understanding Eugene Ionesco* and spoke of how the sound of the play was another dramatic dimension supporting this effect.

Parag attended a few run-throughs in rehearsal and after two weeks he brought to a production meeting his "demo cd." He explained to me that the cd was composed of some initial ideas he arrived at after watching the rehearsals, his sound "palette" if you will. The conversation we had regarding this initial cd was supposed to guide him to the specific "points of focus" he needed.

I probably could not have frustrated my sound designer more if I tried. I didn't like anything on the demo cd; in fact, I told Parag we were on completely different pages. The life of my play was made of doorbells ringing, the slamming of doors, boats, a whispering crowd of invisible guests... but Parag's demo cd was composed of tribal drums and sitars. While I knew

he was aware of the importance of the sound effects, I kindly told him we needed to re-think the music situation. His response was that if none of his ideas for a focal point worked, and if he was really that far off from my feelings in his suggestions, then I needed to provide him with one myself.

I asked Parag if I could have one night to think it over. I needed to find one song that described *The Chairs* for me, that acted as a musical metaphor for the story I was telling on the stage. That was my homework.

When I came home from rehearsal that evening my boyfriend was on the computer writing an article for his internship and listening to *Mozart's Greatest Hits*. His "Piano Sonata #11 in A" came on and I immediately recognized something in the quirky trills and peppy key changes of the piano that reminded me of Semiramis and the Old Man rolling about on the floor, fumbling with an umbrella, and seating invisible guests. I brought the song to Parag. I was careful to explain to him that it wasn't the classic sense of Mozart that attracted me to the song, but the way the sounds of the piano moved with each other. Something about it just felt like my characters.

That was all Parag needed to build the sound design. He didn't need to bring me a second demo cd. He asked me to trust him, and he showed up at dry tech with the completed work. It was brilliant. He took the Piano Sonata suggestion and the notes about the sound effects, and put together an extremely creative and sensual atmosphere.

The preshow design was simply the ambient sounds of waves breaking on the shore below the lighthouse. When the lights faded to black and the play began the sound effects of children playing and birds chirping could be heard while Mozart's "Piano Sonata #18 in D major" underscored it. I remember upon asking Parag why he had chosen birds and children for

the opening sound cues and he answered that these were the sounds of the Old Man and Old Woman's past, the birds used to sing before their son accused them of murdering them, they laughed as children in the Garden of Eden before they cried as orphans. Appropriately enough, "Piano Sonata #11 in A" played for the curtain call.

I was lucky to have such an artistic, passionate, and guideable designer in creating the world of sound for my show. I like to believe that Parag was the one designer who tapped most viscerally into my artistic instincts. His collaborative effort truly enriched the world of the play.

#### 4.6 LIGHTS

The artistic approach to lighting has always been a foreign thing for me. Lights are just so mechanical in my mind. You plug them in, point them at the actors, and the audience can see better. It's such an abstract idea to use lighting as an artistic mechanism for storytelling, and yet it is essential to compelling technical theatre.

I needed a good lighting designer; a talented artist who could really shape the world surrounding the characters through light. I was absolutely thrilled when Nicole Zoellner, undergraduate senior and blossoming lighting designer extraordinaire, offered her services for the project. Nicole had just come from a summer internship at the American Ballet Theatre for the Metropolitan Opera House summer season, and I knew her "pro-bono" gigs were coming to a fast end. I gladly welcomed her and co-designer, Ryan Ben, to the team. (Nicole volunteered to design *The Bald Soprano* as well, so she brought on help to properly manage the work load.)

Ionesco makes some concrete statements about the appearance of the lighting in his stage directions, taking specific moments to notate the fades or increases of intensity in the onstage

lights. He also requests the specific practical of a “gas lamp” that is supposed to hang from the ceiling (*The Chairs* 112).

While some of the stage directions and dialogue in the script seemed to clearly state the lighting look required for each section, the possibilities for artistic interpretation were endless. I didn’t see any need to adhere to all of the effects indicated. For example, on page 113 Semiramis insists to her husband that it is nighttime and too dark for anything to be seen outside. It didn’t feel necessary to have the lights matching the spoken words of the character. If anything, a light outside the window in that instance of speech would only support the absurdist construct I was creating.

Knowing that Nicole was a talented theatre artist with an extremely successful lighting history, I felt comfortable letting her have a certain degree of free reign in her process. I told her the basic information about my artistic instincts, the same information I had given to all of the other designers. I shared a single piece of research with her. Otherwise I left her alone. I didn’t ask her any questions other than, “How’s it going?” And she would always honestly answer “Good,” or “Bad.” (She only once answered my question “Bad,” which is discussed in Chapter V).

The research I provided Nicole with was a small passage by Nancy Lane concerning “Lightness versus Heaviness” under her chapter that discussed *Victims of Duty*. The passage was intriguing in that it didn’t necessarily speak to the use of stage lighting in Ionesco plays, but rather to the “...fundamental tension that informs his theater; it is the opposition between feelings of lightness, euphoria, transparency, and evanescence on one hand and heaviness, despair, denseness, and entombment on the other” (Lane 71). The words of this passage made sense with regard to the action of *The Chairs*. It most strongly reminded me of the emotional

journey between the two very different scenes of laughing in the Garden of Eden and then crying about the loneliness of being an orphan (rehearsal units 2 and 3). The research was insightful in that it spoke to the dramatic action of the play, and to the mood created onstage through design elements.

The lights were beautiful. The backlight was a wash of color called “gaslight green” which was mixed in different degrees with a light, whitish color or a deep magenta, depending on the moments of the story. The light team also rigged up mini-strips (which can hold up to three different colors!) behind the louvered stage left and right walls, which pulsed red and orange through the spaces of the planks creating the effect of an active lighthouse at night guiding boats in the coastline.

If Nicole didn’t agree with something I wanted she would stand by her opinion for as long as I would allow it. In most instances, she was right anyway because her experience as a lighting designer usually meant she knew more about the subject than I did. For example, I insisted up until the dress rehearsals that we needed a practical gas lamp, but Nicole insisted that a match lighting an invisible gas lamp (which was really just a green-colored special) was much cooler for the effect, especially with the smoke from the match swirling in the thick light. I ended up coming to agree with Nicole’s point of view. It felt more absurd to light an invisible prop with a real prop.

Despite the degree of independence I allowed Nicole to have in her process of creating the lighting design, I was firm about my wishes as well, and in one case, I absolutely insisted. For the opening of my show I forced her to include the blue lights from the mini-strips shooting through the louvers in the initial fade to black. Nicole fought me tooth and nail on this request, but I knew it was something I absolutely wanted. I believe even to this day she’s still a little

bothered by my executive decision to tinker with her opening look, but like a professional theatrical designer she followed the artistic leadership of her director. I appreciated Nicole's assertive and mature attitude throughout the entire process. I believe she will be an extremely successful lighting designer in the future, and it was an honor to work with her.

## **4.7 STAGE MANAGEMENT**

The following section contains articles from my stage manager, Dale Hess's, promptbook, which is the equivalent of a production bible on any show. Promptbooks are generally composed of three major parts, the first being the prompt script, which is not included in this thesis. The prompt script is a copy of the play script with the technical cues for sound, lights, and door openings written in the margins. It basically functions as the stage manager's own personal "script" for logistically executing the show each night over the headset, and serves as a complete record of all the technical aspects in a production. I have not included the prompt script section of Dale's promptbook, as it really only pertains to the technical aspects of the production and doesn't relate to any artistic or directorial values.

### **4.7.1 Rehearsal reports**

Rehearsal reports are the main vehicle of communication between the production staff members working outside of the rehearsal process and the director working with the actors in rehearsal. If questions concerning certain design elements come up, or the need for a new prop, this



information is relayed through the rehearsal reports. Rehearsal reports were provided for each day of the rehearsal process and distributed through email to the production staff each evening.

#### **4.7.2 Production meeting minutes**

Similar in function to the rehearsal reports, meeting minutes are basically the vehicle of communication for the weekly production meetings that occurred between designers and director. Minutes consist of the stage manager's notes regarding the events and topics of discussion that arose in each production meeting, which are then distributed through email to the production staff as a summary of the meeting.

**The Chairs**

Rehearsal Report #1 Monday, October 29, 2007

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 6:00pm

Place: CL 1601

In attendance: T Adelizzi, R Ben, P Berger, T Costello, G Eubank, E Gardner, P Gohel,  
N Herring, D Hess, A Noriega, N Zoellner

6:00pm	Introductions	7:03pm	Resume read-thru
6:05pm	Overview of Tara's directorial concept	7:38pm	Break
6:10pm	Designer presentations	7:50pm	Begin blocking section 1
6:30pm	Begin read-thru	8:53pm	Break
6:55pm	Break	9:00pm	Bock section 2
		9:45pm	End rehearsal

**General**

All Designers: Please either e-mail or give me a hard copy or any and all research or info you have about your designs. This is for Tara to help her with her thesis.

Next rehearsal is tomorrow, October 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in the Studio Theatre and will last until 10:00pm. Called are the Old Man and Old Woman. We will finish blocking and working the first three sections of the play.

Production meetings will occur every Thursday (including this week) from 5:20pm until 6:00pm in the Design Suite (CL B20)

**Scenic**

We are going to have to have a clock present somewhere on the stage.

Is there any way we will be able to move the risers into somewhat the correct configuration tomorrow? Possibly before the rehearsal?

Thanks!

**Lighting**

In section 2 of the play, the "And at last we arrived" story, the actors **will** be using an umbrella. I don't know if this will affect your design in any way, I just wanted to give you a heads up.

Also, Nicole, I will have a copy of the script with cuts and section divisions in the green room for you before noon tomorrow.

You guys will be given a few minutes at the beginning of rehearsal on Friday to give your presentation to the cast.

Thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing, thanks!

**Costumes**

Nothing, thanks!

**Props**

We are going to need an umbrella that is able to be thrown around and distressed without completely breaking.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Just a heads up, our read-thru was about 50 minutes. Our show will probably end up being a bit over an hour.

Thanks!

**The Chairs**

Rehearsal Report #2 Tuesday, October 30, 2007

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 6:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

6:00pm	Warm-ups	8:13pm	Break
6:15pm	Run and work sections 1-2	8:18pm	Work and block section 4, into 5
7:10pm	Break		
7:22pm	Work and block section 4	9:34pm	End rehearsal

---

**General**

No rehearsal tomorrow, Happy Halloween!

Next Rehearsal is Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup> in 1601. Called are the Old Man and Old Woman.

Old Man and Old Woman need to be off book for at least sections 5 and 6 for Thursday.

Reminder that there is a production meeting on Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup> in the Design Suite.**Scenic**

We have a lot to talk about at the production meeting. Can you bring dimensions for the windows? There is some concern about the size.

Also, we would like specifics about doors.

Can we have one of those empty frames on Stage Left for the Old Woman to use as a mirror?

The sooner we can get a copy of the ground plan (even a very rough one), the better.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing, thanks!

**Costumes**

Just a heads up, this show is becoming more and more physical at each rehearsal, so while the costumes need to be distressed they also need to be able to hold up to a lot of rolling around on the ground and other physical activities.

Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing, thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

## The Chairs

Rehearsal Report #3 Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup>

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 6:00pm

Place: CL B16-18/Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

6:10pm	Warm-ups	8:40pm	Break
6:20pm	Begin working from top	8:55pm	Work sections 5 & 6
7:20pm	Break	10:08pm	End rehearsal
7:30pm	Continue working spots		

---

## General

CALENDAR CHANGES!!! Saturday, Nov. 3 will be from 2-6pm. And Sunday, Nov 4 will be from 11-3pm.

Laura McCarthy: Is there anyway to get facilities to clean/mop B16-18? And do we have any kind of way to communicate from booth to backstage in the studio? Head-sets or something?

Next rehearsal is tomorrow, Friday Nov. 2 in CL B16-18. Called are the Old Man and Old Woman. Try to be off book as much as you can up until section 9.

Reminder to designers that we will be doing a run of the show for you guys on Wednesday, Nov 7<sup>th</sup> at either 6 or 7pm in the Studio.

## Scenic

The sooner we can get a finalized ground-plan the better.

Also, I will talk to Lou tomorrow and get that list of the materials and cost for the seating banks.

Thanks!

## Lighting

Nothing, thanks!

## Sound

Can we get a rehearsal doorbell? Or some kind of idea so we can get used to it and deal with it in rehearsals?

Thanks!

## Costumes

Can we get knee pads for Ana and Patrick? This show is getting ridiculously physical (we added a wrestling scene). Even if they are just rehearsal knee pads, we need them ASAP. And they will have to wear something during the show.

Thanks!

## Props

Can we get rehearsal chairs (or the real ones) that will be one stage from the top of the show so the actors can figure out what they can and can't do on/with them.

We are also going to need a coat rack, side table, and plate of cookies for when the first invisible Lady arrives.

Thanks!

## Front of House

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 4:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 4:00pm

End: 8:00pm

Breaks 5:20-5:30 & 6:50-7:00

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Sunday, November 4th from 1-5pm in the Studio Theatre.

**Scenic**

The sooner we can get a finalized ground-plan the better.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

When can Tara get a sample CD of sounds?

Thanks!

**Costumes**

The knee pads are great!

Thanks!

**Props**

No notes at this time.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 4:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 1:00pm

End: 5:00pm

Breaks 2:15-2:25 & 3:45-4:00

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Monday, November 5th from 6-10pm in the Studio Theatre.

**Scenic**

The sooner we can get a finalized ground-plan the better.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Can you meet with Lauren Herckis to discuss the practical?

Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

When can Tara get a sample CD of sounds?

Thanks!

**Costumes**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Props**

No notes at this time.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**  
Rehearsal Report Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess  
412.370.8650

Time: 4:00pm  
Place: Studio Theatre  
In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm      End: 10:00pm      Breaks 7:00-7:05 & 8:25-8:40

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Tuesday, November 6th from 6-10pm in the Studio Theatre.

Laura: Can we have two separate programs for each show?

**Scenic**

The sooner we can get a finalized ground-plan the better.  
Thanks!

**Lighting**

Can you meet with Lauren Herckis to discuss the practical?  
Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

When can Tara get a sample CD of sounds?  
Thanks!

**Costumes**

Nothing.  
Thanks!

**Props**

We need at least four umbrellas. These must be able to be destroyed.  
Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**

Rehearsal Report Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess  
412.370.8650

Time: 4:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm

End: 10:00pm

Breaks 7:10-7:20 & 8:30-8:45

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> from 6-10pm in the Studio Theatre.

Next Production Meeting is 5:20 pm Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. In CL B20 (Design Suite)

**Scenic**

Please get in contact with Tim Bagatti.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Costumes**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Props**

We need at least four umbrellas. These must be able to be destroyed.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!



**The Chairs**  
Rehearsal Report Wed., November 7<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess  
412.370.8650

Time: 4:00pm  
Place: Studio Theatre  
In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm      End: 10:00pm      Breaks 7:10-7:20 & 8:30-8:45

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Thursday, November 8th from 6-10pm in the Studio Theatre.

Next Production Meeting is 5:20 pm Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. In CL B20 (Design Suite)

**Scenic**

Please get in contact with Tim Bagatti.  
Thanks!

**Lighting**

Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing.  
Thanks!

**Costumes**

The actors WILL have to wear their kneepads during the run of the show. How can we hide this?  
Thanks!

**Props**

We need at least four umbrellas. These must be able to be destroyed.  
Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Thursday., November 8<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 6:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm

End: 10:00pm

Breaks 7:10-7:20 & 8:30-8:45

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Saturday, November 10th from 5-9pm in the Studio Theatre.

**Scenic**

Please get in contact with Tim Bagatti.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Nothing, thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Costumes**

The actors WILL have to wear their kneepads during the run of the show. How can we hide this?

Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Saturday, November 10<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 5:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 5:00pm

End: 9:00pm

Breaks 6:00-6:05 & 7:30-7:45 & 8:45-8:50

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Sunday, November 11th from 1-5pm in the Studio Theatre.

**Scenic**

Please get in contact with Tim Bagatti.

We still need a to-scale groundplan.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Can we get lights for Patricks window?

Thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Costumes**

The actors WILL have to wear their kneepads during the run of the show. How can we hide this?

Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Sunday, November 11<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 5:00pm

Place: CL B16-18

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 1:00pm

End: 5:00pm

Breaks 2:15-2:25 & 3:45-3:55

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Monday, November 12th from 6-10pm in the Studio Theatre.

**Scenic**

We still need a to-scale groundplan.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Can we get lights for Patrick's window?

Thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Costumes**

The actors WILL have to wear their kneepads during the run of the show. How can we hide this?

Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Monday, November 12<sup>th</sup>SM: Dale Hess  
412.370.8650

Time: 5:00pm

Place: Studio Theatre

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm

End: 10:00pm

Breaks: 7:15-7:25 & 8:30-8:40

---

**General**Next rehearsal is Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup> from 6-10pm in the CL B16-18**Scenic**

We still need a to-scale groundplan.

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Can we get lights for Patrick's window?

Thanks!

**Sound**

When can Tara hear some samples?

Thanks!

**Costumes**

Ana needs some sort of sweater or something that can be taken off for the "strip tease."

Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**Rehearsal Report Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>SM: Dale Hess  
412.370.8650

Time: 5:00pm

Place: CL B16-18

In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm

End: 10:00pm

Breaks: 7:15-7:25 & 8:30-8:40

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Wednesday, November 13th from 6-10pm in the CL B16-18

**Scenic**

We still need a to-scale groundplan.

How big are the windows going to be? Are these the "trifles" windows?

Thanks!

**Lighting**

Can we get lights for Patrick's window?

Thanks!

**Sound**

When can Tara hear some samples?

Thanks!

**Costumes**

Ana needs some sort of sweater or something that can be taken off for the "strip tease."

Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing.

Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

**The Chairs**  
Rehearsal Report Wed., November 14<sup>th</sup>

SM: Dale Hess  
412.370.8650

Time: 5:00pm  
Place: CL B16-18  
In attendance: T Adelizzi, P Berger, G Eubank, D Hess, A Noriega

---

Start: 6:00pm      End: 10:00pm      Breaks: 7:15-7:25 & 8:30-8:40

---

**General**

Next rehearsal is Thursday, November 15th from 6-10pm in the CL B16-18

Dry Tech is Friday!

**Scenic**

Nothing.  
Thanks!

**Lighting**

Nothing.  
Thanks!

**Sound**

Nothing.  
Thanks!

**Costumes**

When will the clothes get distressed? Over break?  
Thanks!

**Props**

Nothing.  
Thanks!

**Front of House**

Nothing, thanks!

## **The Chairs**

Production Meeting Minutes Thursday, November 01, 2007

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 5:20pm

Place: CL B-20 Design Suite

In attendance: T Adelizzi, R Ben, T Costello, P Gohel, E Gardner, N Herring, D Hess, N Zoellner

## **Costumes**

- The sooner we can get show shoes, the better. Need to be more grippy, so the actors don't slip.
- Making a list of things she will be buying, for meeting with the Dean of the Honors College

## **Sound**

- Will be making a CD for Tara, to help get inspiration for the design

## **Props**

- Chairs will be a hodge-podge. Chairs will match personalities of the characters for the first few.
- Umbrella – Beach-ball-esque? Lizzie will be looking at umbrellas tomorrow.
- Finding a gas lamp that will be turned into a practical by Lights.

## **Scenic**

- New configuration of risers- All the way across with one or two aisles.
- Cutting all the stuff on the walls, but "louvering" the louvers all the way around
- Not using the "trifles windows" – Making empty opening on sides, with a frame that will go above the wall and the louver level.

## **Lights**

- We are low on lighting instruments =(
- We will not have lights behind any of the doors—except for the Orator and the Emperor
- Doing research on ordering lighting gels for the show



**The Chairs**

Production Meeting Minutes Thursday, November 08, 2007

SM: Dale Hess

412.370.8650

Time: 5:20pm

Place: CL B-20 Design Suite

In attendance: T Adelizzi, R Ben, T Costello, P Gohel, E Gardner, N  
Herring, D Hess, N Zoellner

**Costumes**

- Will be distressing clothes during Break.

**Sound****Props**

- Cutting the practical lamp.

**Scenic**

- Tara will be in the Studio over Break panting and finishing up loose ends.

**Lights**

- Cutting the practical lamp, but not the effect.

## 4.8 PROGRAM AND POSTER

The following two items are the program and poster used as publicity and informational devices for the production. The poster helped facilitate the advertising of the show's run dates and the program attributed credit and provided biographical information for the artists involved in the production.

The story of the photograph used in both instances is quite interesting. Three years ago when I was still a young undergraduate at the University of Pittsburgh certain areas of the first through third floors in the Cathedral of Learning were being renovated. The photograph is a shot through the window of a classroom on the second floor, taken from the third floor above. It must have been that while the workers were renovating some classrooms, they needed a place to store the chairs and desks, and so they piled all of them on top of one another in one small classroom. I passed the classroom many times in my everyday life when attending classes during the week in the Cathedral. I told my boyfriend (who is a freelance photographer) about the window I had seen, and he went on to use the image for a black and white photography project.

After rehearsal one night it suddenly hit me. I knew exactly what the best image for the poster would be. I asked my boyfriend about the retired photograph. He immediately retrieved it, we scanned it into the computer and photo-shopped the picture until it looked just right for the poster. I love how the photo now has the appearance of being overexposed from above the chairs, with the light source coming from behind the window. The image is extremely evocative

of the Emperor's entrance at the end of the play, where the audience is nearly washed out from the light behind the main double doors.

Nicole Zoellner (Associate LD) is thrilled to finally work on an Ionesco production! Previous lighting credits include: *Vinegar Tom*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *Light Years*, *Southern Belle*, American Ballet Theatre lighting intern at the Metropolitan Opera House. She recently directed *Trifles*, and is currently in production for *SantaLand Diaries*. Before she graduates in April, she will be lighting the upcoming *American Clock* and *Cymbeline*. All the thanks in the world go out to her partner-in-crime, Ryan, who kept her going and added the word "boomskis" to her vocabulary. Also thanks to Earl, Sarah, Lily, Grace, Tara, and Dale for their patience in this crazy, crazy process. Her apologies to Brian for never being available to call him.

**Tommy Costello** (Scenic Designer) is currently a Teaching Fellow with Pitt's Department of Theatre Arts. He has an undergraduate degree in Theatre and Psychology from SUNY Geneseo and he completed his M. Phil in Irish Theatre and Film at Trinity College Dublin. His design and direction have colored the stages of New York, Dublin and Prague, and his most recent design credits include Pitt Rep's *Family Stories*.

**Christon Nichole Herring** (Costume Designer) is excited to do the costumes for both of these very exciting and different shows. Thanks to all who were involved. A special thanks to Lauren, Kait, Cindy and Venise!

**Elizabeth Kate Gardner** (Props Mistress) is a junior Communications major. This is her first "technical" area she has dove into and loves it! Thanks to Lily and Tara for letting her try this, as well as Earl and Dale for all your help. Also thanks to her lovely friends, super cool roomies and family. G <3

**Tim Bagatti** (Technical Director) is a fifth year senior dual majoring in Theatre Arts and Mechanical Engineering. He has twice taken part in the Redeye Theatre Project. He would like to thank the entire Theatre department, students and faculty, for the numerous smiles that they not only have on their faces but are able to produce on his.

*Special thanks to the following*

The University of Pittsburgh Theatre Arts Department, Lou Taylor, Lauren Herkis, The Cast and Crew of *The Bald Soprano*, Earl Haines, Sarah Wolford, the Costume Shop, the Prop Shop, Mattie Moran, John McGurk, Lily Junker, Mary Heyne, The Honors College, The Department of French and Italian, Laura McCarthy, Cory Tاملer, RedEye Theatre Project, Phil Hahn, the Front of House staff, Kristen Beach, LaShawn Keyser, Stephen Coleman, Jack Fordyce and Paris

# *The Chairs*

*by Eugene Ionesco*



*directed by Tara Adelizzi*

*A production of Eugene Ionesco's The Chairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in Theatre Arts and English Writing.*

## *Cast & Crew*

Old Man.....Patrick Berger  
 Old Woman.....Ana Noriega  
 Orator.....Brenden Gallagher

Director.....Tara Adelizzi  
 Stage Manager.....Dale Hess  
 Assistant Stage Manager.....Grace Eubank  
 Associate Lighting Designer.....Ryan Ben  
 Associate Lighting Designer.....Nicole Zoellner  
 Sound Designer.....Parag S. Gohel  
 Scenic Designer.....Tommy Costello  
 Costume Designer.....Christon Nichole Herring  
 Props Mistress.....Elizabeth Kate Gardner  
 Technical Director.....Tim Bagatti  
 Faculty Advisor.....Dr. W. Stephen Coleman  
 Run Crew.....Rachel Morris

Sean Papinchak  
 Matt Russak  
 Molly Bierman

### *The members of the Committee for the Bachelor of Philosophy are:*

Dr. W. Stephen Coleman  
 Bruce Alan McConachie  
 Christopher H. Rawson  
 Dr. Nancy Lane

### *Director's Note*

"As the world is incomprehensible to me,  
 I am waiting for someone to explain it."

-Eugene Ionesco

**Patrick Berger** (Old Man) is a senior Theatre Arts major and is ecstatic to be working on this production. You may have seen him recently as Captain Brazen in the Pitt main stage, *The Recruiting Officer*. Bois ton thé, Tara and Ana.

**Ana Noriega** (Old Woman) would like to thank her ridiculously amazing family (especially for the groceries). Pure admiration for her sister Iris. Thanks to Tara for fabulous opportunities, inspiration, guidance, love and a couch. She would also like to thank meaning, experience and Maritza Patrinos for her constant love, true reflection and magical healing abilities. And Patrick, kiss kiss, mon chéri!

**Brenden Gallagher** (Orator) is in his first senior year as a Film studies/Fiction writing/Theatre arts triple major. This is his seventh production with Pitt Rep. He would like to thank God and his family for their support.

**Tara Adelizzi** (Director) is a lover of the Theatre of the Absurd. She is a graduating senior and hopes to study absurdist drama in more detail upon attending graduate school. She directed Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* last fall and has also participated as a director in PPTCO's Theatre Festival in Black and White and Pride Fest. She is currently the production manager for Prime Stage Theatre, and a freelance stage manager. Thank you to Ana and Patrick, Dale and Grace, Jack, Stephen Coleman, Bruce McConachie, Christopher Rawson, and of course, to Dr. Nancy Lane for making the trip. *Paris sera toujours Paris!*

**Dale Hess** (Stage Manager) is excited to be Stage Managing his first show for Pitt Rep. He has Asst. Stage Managed for *The Real Inspector Hound* and *The Recruiting Officer*. Also, he has Stage Managed for New Play Practicum. Thank you to Tara, Grace, Ana, Patrick and Brenden.

**Grace Eubank** (ASM) is a sophomore Theatre Arts and Art History double major. This is her second time as ASM for Pitt Rep, having previously worked on *The Damask Drum*. Grace is also Publicity Manager for the Redeye Theatre Project, in which she has appeared as an actor, director and special consultant for 6 festivals. Thanks to everyone involved for an incredible learning experience.

**Ryan Ben** (Associate LD) is a senior Theatre Arts major. This is Ryan's second lighting design and he could not have done it without the help of Lauren, Nicole, Lauren H., Parag, Earl, Dale, Tara, Lily and Hemingways. Many thanks goes to these people and many others. Go Big or Go Home.

**Parag S. Gohel** (Sound Designer) has had quite the experience designing an entire lab slot. Previous credits include: RTP: *Helpless Doorknobs*, *Family Stories*, *The Real Inspector Hound* and *The Damask Drum*. He thanks Sarah for being a rock star, Mary, Lily & Tara, Earl & Dale, Ryan & Nicole, Grace, the casts & crews, his L, & favorite C.

*The Chairs*  
*Written by: Eugene Ionesco*  
*Directed by: Tara Adelizzi*



*Nov 28th ~ Dec 2nd Evening shows 8 p.m. Wed - Sat*  
*Matinee shows 2 p.m. Sat & Sun*

## 5.0 THE CHAIRS ~ POST-PRODUCTION

*It's a perfect circle. There's nothing lacking. But one must be careful, all the same. Its shape might disappear. There are holes through which it can escape.* ~ Old Man, *The Chairs*

I'm extremely proud of the learning experience I produced for myself and the actors involved in rehearsing *The Chairs*. Most of my directing experiences before this particular production are largely characterized by very specific blocking and "stage pictures" in my memory. When I directed Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* two years ago I mostly remember telling my actors to do certain things because the image looked pretty on the stage.

*The Chairs* felt like a significant change to my directing technique in that the choices I made felt strongly driven by character development. This was a totally new and exciting approach for me, and two fictional characters on the stage never felt so real or tangible. It was exciting to be experimenting with ways of communication that I had never explored so deeply before. Instead of just making choices because they looked pretty on the stage together, I found myself making decisions based on the truths of the emotional life between the old couple. A cross by an actor did not just happen because "it looked right" at that moment. A cross by an actor would happen because it was irrevocably what the character would do given the circumstance.

Yet this new and exciting experience did not go without hindering some of my other abilities as well. One of my greatest talents as a theatre artist is management. I plan to work in management professionally upon graduation, and I already manage a theatre company as my part-time job. My love for the process of discovering these two characters in rehearsal (and therefore my love for the character's themselves) became blinding and intoxicating in the last useful week of rehearsal. When it came time to solidify the end of the play I found that I didn't know exactly what I wanted, that I didn't even have a single inspiration regarding how I wanted things to draw to a close. Was it because I loved the characters of Semiramis and the Old Man too much? Did my adoration of Ionesco's fictional characters somehow disable my rational and acute managerial senses? Unaware of the danger that my love for this character-driven-process had created, I felt that a few crucial days were lost in rehearsal. While my actors were trying their hardest to make interesting and new character choices for me to work from, it was as if I, as the director, simply did not want to accept their fates of jumping out the windows.

When discussing Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* with faculty, friends, and other theatre artists, it is most often compared to a large mountain (though not Everest which is the eternal metaphor for Shakespeare's *King Lear*). As I said, I had undergone the same lab show production experience two years ago with an Edward Albee script: three weeks of production, minimal monetary support, a one-week run, entirely student-made production staff, etc. Even with this past experience in my history and the many fair warnings offered by theatrical colleagues, nothing could have mentally prepared me for the immensity of the action and drama covered in *The Chairs*. So much rehearsal was required for the actors to be able to settle into a comfortable place with the script. Reading the stage directions that described the scripted action



was extremely deceiving, and these moments of pantomime were perhaps some of the most time consuming of the rehearsal days.

In reflection on this trap of underestimation, I would like to acknowledge how it shows that the “preliminary” production work of researching a dense script such as Eugene Ionesco’s *The Chairs* is actually a process that continues through the production, rather than stopping upon the first day of rehearsal. When I came to these mental road blocks in the last week I had to go right back to the drawing board. I reread the script from beginning to end; I opened up the research books that influenced my initial decisions and reread paragraphs concerning the end of the play after the characters ran out of chairs (this is where the mental block began). Moving back to my research materials really helped me arrive at the right ideas. I felt I had strayed from this idea of “the absurd” and “the eccentric” influencing the stylistic choices. Keeping this in mind as I reread the text, the scene after Semiramis and the Old Man ran out of chairs felt like some sort of important convention hosted in the middle of a three-ring circus. Even though the chairs had run out, materials kept proliferating through props of the programs and “Eskimo pies” (Jolly Rancher hard candy) that Semiramis was handing out. The instant of the “hullabaloo” where the characters began screaming “don’t push” needed to have the effect of a violent, rioting crowd acting out against their two hosts.

I had discovered the appropriate path and pushed through, but only until the next few scenes. The scene of the Emperor’s arrival is really where the quality of my directorial work fell short in my own opinion. I’ll start by honestly stating that, in terms of the script, I never cared much for the ending of *The Chairs* compared to its beginning, and therefore, I believe I never understood it well enough or fully embraced it.

I remember the experience of reading the play for the very first time last year in my Directing II class. The world of the play absolutely fascinated me. I didn't know what to make of it; the anticipation and anxiety that accompanied the arrival of each guest, the mysterious pantomime where the characters bring on arriving guests in a complete frenzy, and all the while, I was so unsure of how the play could possibly end. I never predicted suicide in my very first reading, it was the last thing I expected. I was just disappointed in the morbid fate of the old couple. I wanted more hope for this fantastic and absurd world. Nonetheless, my favorite part about the end was the prompted sound cue of the invisible guests' voices coming from the wings. If not a world of hope, this sound cue at least makes it crystal clear to the audience that the invisible guests are indeed real presences on the stage and the old couple is not suffering from senile delusions.

I didn't completely understand the script upon my first reading, certainly not compared to what I understood it to be by the time rehearsal began. And yet I still found myself underprepared to make the proper directorial decisions from the time the Emperor entered. To me, this section never worked in rehearsal or performance because the pacing and rhythm seemed to slowly wind down and separate itself from the energy created in the first part of the play. It felt almost like the audience could anticipate the suicide ending. By the time Semiramis and the Old Man claim, in complete despair and lack of hope, that the Orator has actually arrived, it was completely obvious that something terrible was going to happen, such as death and suicide.

I know that given one more week of rehearsal, I could have found the proper path for the actors to take. We could have really solidified the ending with more powerful directorial choices, and therefore a different rhythm and energy. Also, giving the actors just a few more

rehearsals to “get it in their bodies,” where the lines and movement literally become a muscle memory inside the actors’ bodies, would have helped the pace in the final moments as well. I don’t like to make excuses for my lack of success in these final scenes, and that’s not what I’m trying to do here. I’m merely stating that I know the ending could have been dealt with in a better manner, and if ever given another opportunity to direct this play, I would probably approach the final scenes with a completely different plan.

There are some other issues that arose in the final rehearsals that are definitely worth mentioning. I often felt that my focus as the artistic leader was spread too thin in the end. I found myself worrying about logistical problems that significantly pulled my attention away from the acting and directing.

For reasons unclear to me, my lighting designer came to me a few days before the weekend of our scheduled tech (Saturday and Sunday, November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>), and informed me that we did not have enough lighting instruments to light the show. Apparently a majority of the Department’s lighting instruments were being rented out by another theatre company, and the lights would not be available to us until late Sunday night. So we had to reschedule our technical rehearsals. Dry tech (when the cues are run without any actors onstage) was changed to early Monday morning, November 26<sup>th</sup>, and wet tech (when the cues are run with the actors) was pushed to that evening’s rehearsal. It was that evening of wet tech when an extremely inconvenient technical difficulty arose, and let it serve as a perfect example of why procrastinating in any theatrical setting will always have a negative effect. In the middle of rehearsal a dimmer pack blew, making it impossible to power up the lights and finish the cues in a timely fashion. This technical meltdown occurred two days prior to our first audience, and so

we were really scrambling to get the technical aspects of the production together in the final days.

It is frustrating for me to have to recount these events, because my lighting designer and I made a sincere effort to prevent this from happening. We spoke to several members of the Department, outlining the situation and calling for help, but in the end I really felt the Department only met us halfway. Being a production manager as my part-time job for a local theatre company, I was well aware of what the rental prices on some extra lighting instruments would have cost the Department for a week, and my hope was that they would simply rent some instruments for us. Yet the Department was unwilling to spend the money and only squeezed two instruments for us from our own inventory. We were otherwise informed that we had to proceed with the Monday tech rehearsals.

The result of these decisions will probably always be a point of frustration for me as the director and as a student of the Theatre Arts Department. While I was aware that making a request for rented instruments was not something common for a lab show, this particular lab was special in that it was affiliated with the Honors College, co-sponsored by the French and Italian Department, and viewed by a specially qualified judicator from another university. I expected a little more support than we were given. The circumstances under which we were forced to hold our tech rehearsals were extremely difficult, and we surely paid the consequences by losing the dimmer pack on that Monday night.

While the production was accompanied by some negative events, and the ending was never properly solidified in my own mind, the experience of directing Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* is primarily positive in my memory and something I will certainly never forget. I feel I grew so much as a director through this process, and gained tools that I will use throughout the

rest of my working life in the theatre. For example, never again will I go into a directing process and leave the development of character entirely to an actor, as I did when directing Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* as my first university lab show. Through this process I discovered that, more than anything else, I'm a director who is interested in helping actors make the strongest, most honest, and vulnerable choices for the most powerful character development.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **DIRECTOR'S REHEARSAL SCRIPT**

The following is my “collage” of personal thoughts, actor notes, and artistic ideas as they came to me day-to-day in the rehearsal room. I was never to be seen without my script and pencil in hand during rehearsal hours.

While I acknowledge that this material may not even be readily accessible (or legible) to the average reader, it is important information because it gives a visual sense of how I organize my thoughts and pursue my artistic agenda during rehearsal.

110

EUGENE IONESCO

I'll marry you . . .

[They put their arms around each other very awkwardly. Jack kisses the noses of Roberta II, one after the other, while Father Jack, Mother Jack, Jacqueline, the Grandparents, Father Robert, and Mother Robert enter without saying a word, one after the other, waddling along, in a sort of ridiculous dance, embarrassing, in a vague circle, around Jack and Roberta II who remain at stage center, awkwardly enlaced. Father Robert silently and slowly strikes his hands together. Mother Robert, her arms clasped behind her neck, makes pirouettes, smiling stupidly. Mother Jack, with an expressionless face, shakes her shoulders in a grotesque fashion. Father Jack pulls up his pants and walks on his heels. Jacqueline nods her head, then they continue to dance, squatting down, while Jack and Roberta II squat down too, and remain motionless. The Grandparents turn around, idionically, looking at each other, and smiling; then they squat down in their turn. All this must produce in the audience a feeling of embarrassment, awkwardness, and shame. The darkness increases. On stage, the actors utter vague miaows while turning around, bizarre moans, croakings. The darkness increases. We can still see the Jacks and Roberts crawling on the stage. We hear their animal noises, then we don't see them any more. We hear only their moans, their sighs, then all fades away, all is extinguished. Again, a gray light comes on. All the characters have disappeared, except Roberta, who is lying down, or rather squatting down, buried beneath her gown. We see only her pale face, with its three noses quivering, and her nine fingers moving like snakes.]

## THE CHAIRS

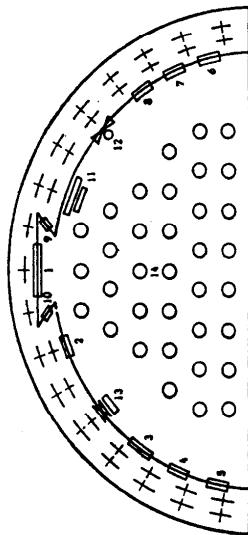
•  
*A Tragic Farce*

Summer, 1950

**The Characters**

- OLD MAN, aged 95
- OLD WOMAN, aged 94
- THE ORATOR, aged 45 to 50
- And many other characters

SCENE: Circular walls with a recess upstage center. A large, very sparsely furnished room. To the right, going upstage from the proscenium, three doors. Then a window with a stool in front of it; then another door. In the center of the back wall of the recess, a large double door, and two other doors facing each other and bracketing the main door: these last two doors, or at least one of them, are almost hidden from the audience. To the left, going upstage from the proscenium, there are three doors, a window with a stool in front of it, opposite the window on the right, then a blackboard and a dais. See the plan below. Downstage are two chairs, side by side. A gas lamp hangs from the ceiling.



- 1: Main double door.
- 2, 3, 4, 5: Side doors on the right.
- 6, 7, 8: Side doors on the left.
- 9, 10: Two doors hidden in the recess.
- 11: Dais and blackboard.
- 12, 13: Windows, with stools, left and right.
- 14: Empty chairs.
- XXX Corridor, in wings.

**The Chairs**

Set Sketches  
 Set 1406

~~The woman rises.~~ *Half-light. The Old man is up on the stool, leaning out the window on the left. The Old Woman lights the gas lamp. Green light. She goes over to the Old Man and takes him by the sleeve.*

OLD WOMAN: Come my darling, close the window. There's a bad smell from that stagnant water, and besides the mosquitoes are coming in.

OLD MAN: Leave me alone!

OLD WOMAN: Come, come, my darling, come sit down. You shouldn't lean out, you might fall into the water. You know what happened to François? You must be careful.

OLD MAN: Still more examples from history! Sweetheart, I'm tired of French history. I want to see—the boats on the water making blots in the sunlight. *wide face picks up book from table*  
 OLD WOMAN: You can't see them, there's no sunlight, it's nighttime, my darling. *pick up dagger. Cries*

OLD MAN: There are still shadows. *[He leans out very far.]*

OLD WOMAN *[pulling him in with all her strength]*: Oh! . . . you're frightening me, my darling . . . come sit down, you won't be able to see them come, anyway. There's no use trying. It's dark . . . *||| 3 | 2 7*

*?* *[The Old Man reluctantly lets himself be pulled in.]* ★  
 OLD MAN: I wanted to see—you know how much I love to see the water.

OLD WOMAN: How can you, my darling? . . . It makes me dizzy. Ah! this house, this island, I can't get used to it. Water all around us . . . water under the windows, stretching as far as the horizon.

*[The Old Woman drags the Old Man down and they move towards the two chairs downstage; the Old Man seats himself quite naturally on the lap of the Old Woman.]*

★ OLD MAN: It's six o'clock in the evening . . . it is dark already. It wasn't like this before. Surely you remember, there was still daylight at nine o'clock in the evening, at ten o'clock, at midnight.

Set Sketches  
 Set 1406



OLD WOMAN: Come to think of it, that's very true. What a remarkable memory you have! *you love so*

OLD MAN: Things have certainly changed.

OLD WOMAN: Why is that, do you think?

OLD MAN: I don't know, Semiramis, sweetheart . . . Perhaps it's because the further one goes, the deeper one sinks. It's because the earth keeps turning around, around, around, around . . .

OLD WOMAN: Around, around, my little pet. *[Silence]* Ah! yes, you've certainly a fine intellect. You are very gifted, my darling. *[You could have been head president, head king, or even head doctor for head general, if you had wanted to, if only you'd had a little ambition in life . . .]*

OLD MAN: What good would that have done us? We'd not have lived any better . . . and besides, we have a position here. I am a general, in any case, of the house, since I am the general factotum. *strikes to pose*

OLD WOMAN *[caring the Old Man as one caresses a child]*: My darling, my pet.

OLD MAN: I'm very bored. *work on 2 different thoughts*

OLD WOMAN: You were more cheerful when you were looking at the water . . . Let's amuse ourselves by making believe, *leave till 2nd thought*

OLD MAN: Make believe yourself, it's your turn.

OLD WOMAN: It's your turn.

OLD MAN: Your turn.

OLD WOMAN: Your turn.

OLD MAN: Drink your tea, Semiramis.

*[Of course there is no tea.]*

OLD WOMAN: Come on now, imitate the month of February.

OLD MAN: I don't like the months of the year.

OLD WOMAN: Those are the only ones we have, up till now. Come on, just to please me . . .

OLD MAN: All right, here's the month of February. *[He*

*i don't like sacrificing moving of chair 115 for sweeping*

The Chairs

*scratches his head like Stan Laurel.*

OLD WOMAN *[laughing, applauding]*: That's just right. Thank you, thank you, you're as cute as can be, my darling. *the*

OLD MAN: Oh, you are so gifted, you could have been at least a head general, if you had wanted to . . .

OLD MAN: I am a general, general factotum. *[Silence.]* *11/3/07*

OLD WOMAN: Tell me the story, you know the story. Then at last we arrived . . . *in your chair you to move 2 chairs*

OLD MAN: Again? . . . I'm sick of it . . . Then at last we arrived? That again . . . you always ask for the same thing!

OLD WOMAN: That again . . . But it's monotonous . . . *not* For all of the seventy-five years that we've been married, every single evening, absolutely every blessed evening, you've made me tell the same story, you've made me imitate the same people, the same months . . . always the same . . . let's talk about something else . . . *sit in the chair*

OLD WOMAN: My darling, I'm not tired of it . . . it's your life, it fascinates me.

OLD MAN: You know it by heart. *work 400*

OLD WOMAN: It's as if suddenly I'd forgotten everything . . . it's as though my mind were a clean slate every evening . . .

Yes, my darling, I do it on purpose, I take a dose of salts . . . I become new again, for you, my darling, every evening . . . Come on, begin again, please.

OLD MAN: Well, if you want me to.

OLD WOMAN: Come on then, tell your story . . . It's also mine, what is yours is mine! Then at last we arrived . . .

OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived . . . my sweetheart . . .

OLD WOMAN: Then at last we arrived . . . my darling.

OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived at a big fence. We were soaked through, frozen to the bone, for hours, for days, for nights, for weeks . . .

OLD WOMAN: For months . . .

OLD MAN: . . . In the rain . . . Our ears, our feet, our knees, our noses, our teeth were chattering . . . that was eighty years ago . . . They wouldn't let us in . . . they might at least

*95-80: 15 years old in this copyrite?*

have opened the gate of the garden . . . [Silence.]

OLD WOMAN: In the garden the grass was wet.

OLD MAN: There was a path which led to a little square and in the center, a village church . . . Where was this village? Do you recall?

★ OLD WOMAN: No, my darling, I've forgotten.

OLD MAN: How did we reach it? Where is the road? This place was called Paris, I think . . .

OLD WOMAN: Paris never existed, my little one.

OLD MAN: That city must have existed because it collapsed . . . It was the city of light, but it has been extinguished, extinguished, for four hundred thousand years . . . Nothing remains of it today, except a song.

OLD WOMAN: A real song? That's odd. What song?

OLD MAN: A lullaby, an allegory: "Paris will always be Paris."

OLD WOMAN: And the way to it was through the garden? Was it far?

OLD MAN [dreaming, lost]: The song? . . . the rain? . . .

OLD WOMAN: You are very gifted. If you had had a little ambition in life you could have been head king, head journalist, head comedian, head general . . . All that's gone down the drain, alas . . . down the old black drain . . . down the old drain, I tell you. [Silence.]

OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived . . .

OLD WOMAN: Ah! yes, go on . . . tell me . . .

OLD MAN [while the Old Woman begins to laugh softly, silently, then progressively in great bursts, the Old Man laughs, too, as he continues]: Then at last we arrived, we laughed till we cried, the story was so idiotic . . . the idiot arrived full speed, bare-bellied, the idiot was pot-bellied . . . he arrived with a trunk chock full of rice; the rice spilled out on the ground . . . the idiot on the ground too, belly to ground . . . then at last we laughed, we laughed, we laughed, the idiotic belly, bare with rice on the ground, the trunk, the story of sick from rice belly to ground, bare-bellied, all with rice, at last we laughed, the idiot at last arrived all

The Chairs

bare, we laughed . . .

OLD WOMAN [laughing]: At last we laughed like idiots, at last arrived all bare, we laughed, the trunk, the trunk full of rice, the rice on the belly, on the ground . . .

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN [laughing together]: At last we laughed. Ah! . . . laughed . . . arrived . . . arrived . . . Ah!

. . . Ah! . . . rived . . . arrived . . . arrived . . . the idiotic

bare belly . . . arrived with the rice . . . arrived with the

rice . . . [This is all we hear.] At last we . . . bare-bellied

. . . arrived . . . the trunk . . . [Then the Old Man and Old

Woman calm down little by little.] We lau . . . Ah! . . . Ah!

laughed . . . Ah! . . . arrived . . . Ah! . . . arrived . . .

laughed . . . Ah! . . . arrived . . . Ah! . . . arrived . . .

. . . laughed.

OLD WOMAN: So that's the way it was, your wonderful Paris.

OLD MAN: Who could put it better?

OLD WOMAN: Oh! my darling, you are so really fine. Oh! so

really, you know, so really, so really, you could have been

anything in life, a lot more than general factotum.

OLD MAN: Let's be modest . . . we should be content with the

little . . .

OLD WOMAN: Perhaps you've spoiled your career? I've spoiled it?

OLD MAN [weeping suddenly]: I've spoiled it? I've spoiled it?

Ah! where are you, Mamma, Mamma, where are you, Mam-

ma? . . . hi, hi, hi, I'm an orphan. [He moans.] . . . an

orphan, dwarfman.

OLD WOMAN: Here I am, what are you afraid of?

OLD MAN: No, Semiramis, my sweetheart, you're not my

mamma . . . orphan, dwarfman, who will protect me?

OLD WOMAN: But I'm here, my darling!

OLD MAN: It's not the same thing . . . I want my mamma,

na, you, you're not my mamma, you . . .

OLD WOMAN [caressing him]: You're breaking my heart, don't

cry, my little one.

OLD MAN: Hi, hi, let me go, hi, hi, I'm all spoiled, I'm wet

all over, my career is spoiled, it's spoiled.

OLD WOMAN: Calm down.

Small corner looks dark on faces

OLD MAN [sobbing his mouth wide open like a baby]: I'm an orphan . . . dwarfan.

OLD WOMAN [trying to console him by cajoling him]: My orphan, my darling, you're breaking my heart, my orphan. [She rocks the Old Man who is sitting on her knees again.]

OLD MAN [sobbing]: Hi, hi, hi! My mamma! Where is my mamma? I don't have a mamma anymore.

OLD WOMAN: I am your wife, I'm the one who is your mamma now.

OLD MAN [giving in a little]: That's not true, I'm an orphan, hi, hi.

OLD WOMAN [still rocking him]: My pet, my orphan, dwarfan, worfan, morphan, orphan.

OLD MAN [still sulky, but giving in more and more]: No . . . I don't want; I don't wa-a-ant.

OLD WOMAN [crouching]: Orphan-ly, orphan-ly, orphan-do, orphan-loo. *One, take the stage w/ your*

OLD MAN: No-o-o . . . No-o-o. *Here's the first*

OLD WOMAN [same business]: Li lon lala, li lon la lay, orphan-ly, orphan-lay, relec-relay, orphan-li-relec-rela . . .

OLD MAN: Hi, hi, hi, hi. [He snuffles, calming down little by little.] Where is she? My mamma.

OLD WOMAN: In heavenly paradise . . . she hears you, she sees you, among the flowers; don't cry anymore, you will only make me weep!

OLD MAN: That's not even true-ue . . . she can't see me . . . she can't hear me. I'm an orphan, on earth, you're not my mamma . . .

OLD WOMAN [he is almost calm]: Now, come on, calm down, don't get so upset . . . you have great qualities, my little

general . . . dry your tears; the guests are sure to come this evening and they mustn't see you this way . . . all is not lost, all is not spoiled, you'll tell them everything, you will explain, you have a message . . . you always say you are going to deliver it . . . you must live, you have to struggle for your message . . .

OLD MAN: I don't care for jokes like that.

OLD WOMAN: You could have been head admiral, head cabi-

net-maker, head orchestra conductor.

maybe look up at the clock face Ann?

Voluntario

Does look like

OLD MAN: I have a message, that's God's truth, I struggle, a mission, I have something to say, a message to communicate to humanity, to mankind . . .

OLD WOMAN: To mankind, my darling, your message! . . .

OLD MAN: That's true, yes, it's true . . .

OLD WOMAN [she wipes the Old Man's nose, dries his tears]: That's it . . . you're a man, a soldier, a general factotum . . .

OLD MAN [he gets off the Old Woman's lap and walks with short, agitated steps]: I'm not like other people, I have an ideal in life. I am perhaps gifted, as you say, I have some talent, but things aren't easy for me. I've served well in my capacity as general factotum, I've always been in command of the situation, honorably, that should be enough . . .

OLD WOMAN: Not for you, you're not like other people, you are much greater, and moreover you'd have done much better if you had got along with other people, like other people do. You've quarreled with all your friends, with all the directors, with all the generals, with your own brother.

OLD MAN: It's not my fault, Semiramis, you know very well what he said.

OLD WOMAN: What did he say?

OLD MAN: He said: "My friends, I've got a flea. I'm going to pay you a visit in the hope of leaving my flea with you."

OLD WOMAN: People say things like that, my dear. You shouldn't have paid any attention to it. But with Carel, why were you so angry with him. Was it his fault too?

OLD MAN: You're going to make me angry, you're going to make me angry. Na. Of course it was his fault. He came one evening, he said: "I know just the word that fits you. I'm not going to say it, I'll just think it." And he laughed like a fool.

OLD WOMAN: But he had a warm heart, my darling. In this life, you've got to be less sensitive.

OLD MAN: I don't care for jokes like that.

OLD WOMAN: You could have been head admiral, head cabi-

net-maker, head orchestra conductor.

change you as you're not interested in my

have you just signed before?

X copy of a chair





Sw. W. up v. d. No. 3. Ped's Chair lost

please. [She indicates one of the two chairs and seats herself on the other, to the right of the invisible Lady.] It seems rather warm in here, doesn't it? [She smiles at the Lady.] What a charming fan you have! My husband . . . [The Old Man re-enters through door No. 7, carrying a chair.] . . . I gave me one very like it, that must have been seventy-three years ago . . . and I still have it . . . [The Old Man places the chair to the left of the invisible Lady.] . . . it was for my birthday!

[The Old Man sits on the chair that he has just brought on stage, so that the invisible Lady is between the old couple. The Old Man turns his face towards the Lady, smiles at her, nods his head, softly rubs his hands together, with the air of following what she says. The Old Woman does the same business.]

OLD MAN: No, madam, life is never cheap.

OLD WOMAN [to the Lady]: You are so right . . . [The Lady speaks.] As you say, it is about time all that changed . . . [Changing her tone:] Perhaps my husband can do something about it . . . he's going to tell you about it.

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: Hush, hush, Semiramis, the time hasn't come to talk about that yet. [To the Lady:] Excuse me, madam, for having aroused your curiosity. [The Lady reacts.] Dear madam, don't insist . . . [The Old Man and Old Woman smile. They even laugh. They appear to be very amused by the story the invisible Lady tells them. A pause, a moment of silence in the conversation. Their faces lose all expression.]

OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: Yes, you're quite right . . .

OLD WOMAN: Yes, yes, yes. . . . Oh! surely not.

OLD MAN: Yes, yes, yes. Not at all.

OLD WOMAN: Yes?

OLD MAN: No!?

OLD WOMAN: It's certainly true.

OLD MAN [laughing]: It isn't possible.

OLD WOMAN [laughing]: Oh! well. [To the Old Man:] she's

charming.

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: Madam has made a conquest. [To the invisible Lady:] my congratulations! . . .

OLD WOMAN [to the invisible Lady]: You're not like the young people today . . .

OLD MAN [bending over painfully in order to recover an invisible object that the invisible Lady has dropped]: Let me . . . don't disturb yourself . . . I'll get it . . . Oh! you're quicker than I . . . [He straightens up again.]

OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: She's younger than you!

OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: Old age is a heavy burden. I can only wish you an eternal youth.

OLD WOMAN [to the invisible Lady]: He's sincere, he speaks from the heart. [To the Old Man:] My darling!

[Several moments of silence. The Old Man and Old Woman, heads turned in profile, look at the invisible Lady, smiling politely; they then turn their heads towards the audience, then look again at the invisible Lady, answering her smile with their smiles, and her questions with their replies.]

OLD WOMAN: It's very kind of you to take such an interest in us.

OLD MAN: We live a retired life.

OLD WOMAN: My husband's not really misanthropic, he just loves solitude.

OLD MAN: We have the radio, I get in some fishing, and then there's fairly regular boat service.

OLD WOMAN: On Sundays there are two boats in the morning, one in the evening, not to mention privately chartered trips.

OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: When the weather's clear, there's a moon.

OLD WOMAN [to the invisible Lady]: He's always concerned with his duties as general factotum . . . they keep him busy . . . On the other hand, at his age, he might very well take it easy.

~~OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: I'll have plenty of time to take it easy in my grave.~~

~~OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: Don't say that, my little darling. . . . [To the invisible Lady:] Our family, what's left of it, my husband's friends, still came to see us, from time to time, ten years ago.~~

~~OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: In the winter, a good book, beside the radiator, and the memories of a lifetime.~~

~~OLD WOMAN [to the invisible Lady]: A modest life but a full one . . . he devotes two hours every day to work on his message.~~

~~[The doorbell rings. After a short pause, we hear the noise of a boat leaving.]~~

~~OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: Someone has come. Go quickly.~~

~~OLD MAN [to the invisible Lady]: Please excuse me, madam. Just a moment! [To the Old Woman:] Hurry and bring some chairs!~~

~~[Loud ringing of the doorbell.]~~

~~OLD MAN [hastening, all bent over, towards door No. 2 to the right, while the Old Woman goes towards the concealed door on the left, hurrying with difficulty, hobbling along]: It must be someone important. [He hurries, opens door No. 2, and the invisible Colonel enters. Perhaps it would be useful for us to hear discreetly several trumpet notes, several phrases, like "Hail the Chief." When he opens the door and sees the invisible Colonel, the Old Man stiffens into a respectful position of attention.] Ah! . . . Colonel! [He lifts his hand vaguely towards his forehead, so as to roughly sketch a salute.] Good evening, my dear Colonel. . . . This is a very great honor for me . . . I . . . I . . . I was not expecting it . . . although . . . indeed . . . in short, I am most proud to welcome you, a hero of your eminence, into my humble dwelling. . . . [He presses the invisible hand that the invisible Colonel gives him, bending forward ceremoniously, then straightening up again.] Without false modesty,~~

2 hrs /  
Old Man  
to  
message  
6

nevertheless, I permit myself to confess to you that I do not feel unworthy of the honor of your visit! Proud, yes . . . unworthy, no! . . .

[The Old Woman appears with a chair, entering from the right.]

OLD WOMAN: Oh! What a handsome uniform! What beautiful medals! Who is it, my darling?

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: Can't you see that it's the Colonel?

OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man]: Ah!

OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: Count his stripes! [To the Colonel:] This is my wife, Semiramis. [To the Old Woman:] Come here so that I can introduce you to the Colonel. [The Old Woman approaches, dragging the chair by one hand, and makes a curtsy, without letting go of the chair. To the Colonel:] My wife. [To the Old Woman:] The Colonel.

OLD WOMAN: How do you do, Colonel. Welcome. You're an old comrade of my husband's, he's a general . . .

OLD MAN [annoyed]: factotum, factotum . . .

[The invisible Colonel kisses the hand of the Old Woman. This is apparent from the gesture she makes as she raises her hand toward his lips. Overcome with emotion, the Old Woman lets go of the chair.]

OLD WOMAN: Oh! He's most polite . . . you can see that he's really superior, a superior being! . . . [She takes hold of the chair again. To the Colonel:] This chair is for you . . .

OLD MAN [to the invisible Colonel]: This way, if you please . . . [They move downstage, the Old Woman dragging the chair. To the Colonel:] Yes, one guest has come already. We're expecting a great many more people! . . .

[The Old Woman places the chair to the right.]

OLD WOMAN [to the Colonel]: Sit here, please.

[The Old Man introduces the two invisible guests to each other.]

OLD MAN: A young lady we know . . .

OLD WOMAN: A very dear friend . . .

OLD MAN [*same business*]: The Colonel . . . a famous soldier.  
 OLD WOMAN [*indicating the chair she has just brought in to the Colonel*]: Do take this chair . . .

OLD MAN [*to the Old Woman*]: No, no, can't you see that the Colonel wishes to sit beside the Lady! . . .  
 [The Colonel seats himself invisibly on the third chair from the left; the invisible Lady is supposedly sitting on the second chair; seated next to each other they engage in an inaudible conversation; the Old Woman and Old Man continue to stand behind their chairs, on both sides of their invisible guests; the Old Man to the left of the Lady, the Old Woman to the right of the Colonel.]

OLD WOMAN [*listening to the conversation of the two guests*]: Oh! Oh! That's going too far.

OLD MAN [*same business*]: Perhaps. [*The Old Man and the Old Woman make signs to each other over the heads of their guests, while they follow the inaudible conversation which takes a turn that seems to displease them. Abruptly:*] Yes, Colonel, they are not here yet, but they'll be here. And the Orator will speak in my behalf, he will explain the meaning of my message . . . Take care, Colonel, this Lady's husband may arrive at any moment.

OLD WOMAN [*to the Old Man*]: Who is this gentleman?

OLD MAN [*to the Old Woman*]: I've told you, it's the Colonel. [*Some embarrassing things take place, invisibly.*]

OLD WOMAN [*to the Old Man*]: I knew it. I knew it.

OLD MAN: Then why are you asking?  
 OLD WOMAN: For my information. Colonel, no cigarette butts on the floor!

OLD MAN [*to Colonel*]: Colonel, Colonel, it's slipped my mind—in the last war did you win or lose?

OLD WOMAN [*to the invisible Lady*]: But my dear, don't let it happen!

OLD MAN: Look at me, look at me, do I look like a bad soldier? One time, Colonel, under fire . . .

OLD WOMAN: He's going too far! It's embarrassing! [*She*

seizes the invisible sleeve of the Colonel.] Listen to him! My darling, why don't you stop him!

OLD MAN [*continuing quickly*]: And all on my own, I killed 209 of them; we called them that because they jumped so high to escape, however there weren't so many of them as there were flies; of course it is less amusing, Colonel, but thanks to my strength of character, I have . . . Oh! no, I must, please.

OLD WOMAN [*to Colonel*]: My husband never lies; it may be true that we are old, nevertheless we're respectable.

OLD MAN [*violently, to the Colonel*]: A hero must be a gentleman too, if he hopes to be a complete hero!

OLD WOMAN [*to the Colonel*]: I've known you for many years, but I'd never have believed you were capable of this. [*To the Lady, while we hear the sound of boats:*] I'd never have believed him capable of this. We have our dignity, our self-respect.

OLD MAN [*in a quavering voice*]: I'm still capable of bearing arms. [*Doorbell rings.*] Excuse me, I must go to the door. [*He stumbles and knocks over the chair of the invisible Lady.*] Oh! pardon.

OLD WOMAN [*rushing forward*]: You didn't hurt yourself?

[*The Old Man and Old Woman help the invisible Lady onto her feet.*] You've got all dirty, there's some dust. [*She helps brush the Lady. The doorbell rings again.*]

OLD MAN: Forgive me, forgive me. [*To the Old Woman:*] Go bring a chair.

OLD WOMAN [*to the two invisible guests*]: Excuse me for a moment.

[*While the Old Man goes to open door No. 3, the Old Woman exits through door No. 5 to look for a chair, and she re-enters by door No. 8.*]

OLD MAN [*moving towards the door*]: He was trying to get my goat. I'm almost angry. [*He opens the door.*] Oh! madam, you're here! I can scarcely believe my eyes, and yet, nevertheless, I didn't really dare to hope you really

you've surprised me  
 to see it  
 think I'd come

be prepared for your  
 SWITZERS.

flushed at touching

to her face

7

the



it's nice to see you  
how's been?  
EUGENE IONESCO

Oh! madam, madam <sup>I have thought about you</sup> you, all my life, all my life, madam, they always called you <sup>La Belle</sup> La Belle . . . it's your husband . . . someone told me, certainly . . . you haven't changed a bit . . . Oh! yes, yes, your nose has grown longer, maybe it's a little swollen now . . . I didn't notice it when I first saw you, but I see it didn't do it on purpose . . . ah! how unfortunate! You certainly didn't do it on purpose . . . how did it happen? . . . little by little . . . excuse me, sir and dear friend, you'll permit me to call you "dear friend." I knew your wife long before you . . . she was the same, but with a completely different nose . . . I congratulate you, sir, you seem to love each other very much. [The Old Woman re-enters through door No. 8 with a chair.] Semiramis, two guests have arrived, we need one more chair . . . [The Old Woman puts the chair behind the four others, then exits by door No. 8 and re-enters by door No. 5, after a few moments, with another chair that she places beside the one she has just brought in. By this time, the Old Man and the two guests have moved near the Old Woman.] Come this way, please, more guests have arrived. I'm going to introduce you . . . now then, madam . . . Oh! Belle, Belle, Miss Belle, that's what they used to call you . . . now you're all bent over . . . Oh! sir, she is still Belle to me, even so; under her glasses, she still has pretty eyes; her hair is white, but under the white one can see brown, and blue, I'm sure of that . . . come nearer, nearer . . . what is this, sir, a gift, for my wife? [To the Old Woman, who has just come on with the chair:] Semiramis, this is Belle, you know, Belle . . . [To the Colonel and the invisible Lady:] This is Miss, pardon, Mrs. Belle, don't smile . . . and her husband . . . [To the Old Woman:] A childhood friend, I've often spoken of her to you . . . and her husband. [Again to the Colonel and to the invisible Lady:] And her husband . . . [How's that?]

OLD WOMAN [making a little curtsy]: He certainly makes good introductions. He has fine manners. Good evening,

Oh! madam, madam  
you, all my life, all my life, madam, they always called you La Belle . . . it's your husband . . . someone told me, certainly . . . you haven't changed a bit . . . Oh! yes, yes, your nose has grown longer, maybe it's a little swollen now . . . I didn't notice it when I first saw you, but I see it didn't do it on purpose . . . ah! how unfortunate! You certainly didn't do it on purpose . . . how did it happen? . . . little by little . . . excuse me, sir and dear friend, you'll permit me to call you "dear friend." I knew your wife long before you . . . she was the same, but with a completely different nose . . . I congratulate you, sir, you seem to love each other very much. [The Old Woman re-enters through door No. 8 with a chair.] Semiramis, two guests have arrived, we need one more chair . . . [The Old Woman puts the chair behind the four others, then exits by door No. 8 and re-enters by door No. 5, after a few moments, with another chair that she places beside the one she has just brought in. By this time, the Old Man and the two guests have moved near the Old Woman.] Come this way, please, more guests have arrived. I'm going to introduce you . . . now then, madam . . . Oh! Belle, Belle, Miss Belle, that's what they used to call you . . . now you're all bent over . . . Oh! sir, she is still Belle to me, even so; under her glasses, she still has pretty eyes; her hair is white, but under the white one can see brown, and blue, I'm sure of that . . . come nearer, nearer . . . what is this, sir, a gift, for my wife? [To the Old Woman, who has just come on with the chair:] Semiramis, this is Belle, you know, Belle . . . [To the Colonel and the invisible Lady:] This is Miss, pardon, Mrs. Belle, don't smile . . . and her husband . . . [To the Old Woman:] A childhood friend, I've often spoken of her to you . . . and her husband. [Again to the Colonel and to the invisible Lady:] And her husband . . . [How's that?]

door closes  
I'm ready to help  
MRS. BELLE

madam, good evening, sir. [She indicates the two first guests to the newly arrived couple:] Our friends, yes . . . OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: He's brought you a present. [The Old Woman takes the present.] OLD WOMAN: Is it a flower, sir? or a cradle? a pear tree? or a crow? <sup>and you be invisible!</sup> OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: No, no, can't you see that it's a painting? OLD WOMAN: Oh! how pretty! Thank you, sir . . . [To the invisible Lady:] Would you like to see it, dear friend? OLD MAN [to the invisible Colonel]: Would you like to see it? OLD WOMAN [to Belle's husband]: Doctor, Doctor, I feel squeamish, I have hot flashes, I feel sick, I've aches and pains, I haven't any feeling in my feet, I've caught cold in my eyes; I've a cold in my fingers, I'm suffering from liver trouble, Doctor, Doctor! . . . OLD MAN [to the Old Woman]: This gentleman is not a doctor, he's a photo-engraver. OLD WOMAN [to the first invisible Lady]: If you've finished looking at it, you might hang it up. [To the Old Man:] That doesn't matter, he's charming even so, he's dazzling. [To the Photo-engraver:] Without meaning to flatter you . . . [The Old Man and the Old Woman now move behind the chairs, close to each other, almost touching, but back to back; they talk: the Old Man to Belle, the Old Woman to the Photo-engraver; from time to time their replies, as shown by the way they turn their heads, are addressed to one or the other of the two first guests.] OLD MAN [to Belle]: I am very touched . . . You're still the same, in spite of everything . . . I've loved you, a hundred years ago . . . But there's been such a change . . . No, you haven't changed a bit . . . I loved you, I love you . . . OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: Oh! Sir, sir . . . OLD MAN [to the Colonel]: I'm in complete agreement with you on that point. OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: Oh! certainly, sir, cer-

Oh! madam, madam  
you, all my life, all my life, madam, they always called you La Belle . . . it's your husband . . . someone told me, certainly . . . you haven't changed a bit . . . Oh! yes, yes, your nose has grown longer, maybe it's a little swollen now . . . I didn't notice it when I first saw you, but I see it didn't do it on purpose . . . ah! how unfortunate! You certainly didn't do it on purpose . . . how did it happen? . . . little by little . . . excuse me, sir and dear friend, you'll permit me to call you "dear friend." I knew your wife long before you . . . she was the same, but with a completely different nose . . . I congratulate you, sir, you seem to love each other very much. [The Old Woman re-enters through door No. 8 with a chair.] Semiramis, two guests have arrived, we need one more chair . . . [The Old Woman puts the chair behind the four others, then exits by door No. 8 and re-enters by door No. 5, after a few moments, with another chair that she places beside the one she has just brought in. By this time, the Old Man and the two guests have moved near the Old Woman.] Come this way, please, more guests have arrived. I'm going to introduce you . . . now then, madam . . . Oh! Belle, Belle, Miss Belle, that's what they used to call you . . . now you're all bent over . . . Oh! sir, she is still Belle to me, even so; under her glasses, she still has pretty eyes; her hair is white, but under the white one can see brown, and blue, I'm sure of that . . . come nearer, nearer . . . what is this, sir, a gift, for my wife? [To the Old Woman, who has just come on with the chair:] Semiramis, this is Belle, you know, Belle . . . [To the Colonel and the invisible Lady:] This is Miss, pardon, Mrs. Belle, don't smile . . . and her husband . . . [To the Old Woman:] A childhood friend, I've often spoken of her to you . . . and her husband. [Again to the Colonel and to the invisible Lady:] And her husband . . . [How's that?]

Oh! madam, madam  
you, all my life, all my life, madam, they always called you La Belle . . . it's your husband . . . someone told me, certainly . . . you haven't changed a bit . . . Oh! yes, yes, your nose has grown longer, maybe it's a little swollen now . . . I didn't notice it when I first saw you, but I see it didn't do it on purpose . . . ah! how unfortunate! You certainly didn't do it on purpose . . . how did it happen? . . . little by little . . . excuse me, sir and dear friend, you'll permit me to call you "dear friend." I knew your wife long before you . . . she was the same, but with a completely different nose . . . I congratulate you, sir, you seem to love each other very much. [The Old Woman re-enters through door No. 8 with a chair.] Semiramis, two guests have arrived, we need one more chair . . . [The Old Woman puts the chair behind the four others, then exits by door No. 8 and re-enters by door No. 5, after a few moments, with another chair that she places beside the one she has just brought in. By this time, the Old Man and the two guests have moved near the Old Woman.] Come this way, please, more guests have arrived. I'm going to introduce you . . . now then, madam . . . Oh! Belle, Belle, Miss Belle, that's what they used to call you . . . now you're all bent over . . . Oh! sir, she is still Belle to me, even so; under her glasses, she still has pretty eyes; her hair is white, but under the white one can see brown, and blue, I'm sure of that . . . come nearer, nearer . . . what is this, sir, a gift, for my wife? [To the Old Woman, who has just come on with the chair:] Semiramis, this is Belle, you know, Belle . . . [To the Colonel and the invisible Lady:] This is Miss, pardon, Mrs. Belle, don't smile . . . and her husband . . . [To the Old Woman:] A childhood friend, I've often spoken of her to you . . . and her husband. [Again to the Colonel and to the invisible Lady:] And her husband . . . [How's that?]

tainly, sir, certainly . . . ~~He has a very strong character~~  
~~beating the other side of the mountain~~  
 [The light grows stronger. It should grow stronger and stronger  
 as the invisible guests continue to arrive.]

OLD MAN [almost whimpering to Belle]: Where are the snows  
 of yester year?

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver]: Oh! Sir, sir, sir . . .  
 Oh! sir . . .

OLD MAN [pointing out the first lady to Belle]: She's a young  
 friend . . . she's very sweet . . .

OLD WOMAN [pointing the Colonel out to the Photo-engraver]:  
 Yes, he's a mounted staff colonel . . . a comrade of my  
 husband . . . a subaltern, my husband's a general

OLD MAN [to Belle]: Your ears were not always so pointed!  
 . . . My Belle, do you remember?

OLD WOMAN [to the Photo-engraver, simpering grotesquely;  
 she develops this manner more and more in this scene; she  
 shows her thick red stockings, raises her many petticoats;  
 then, her hands on her hips, throws her head back, makes  
 little erotic cries, projects her pelvis, her legs spread apart;  
 she laughs like an old prostitute; this business, entirely  
 different from her manner heretofore as well as from that  
 she will have subsequently, and which must reveal the  
 hidden personality of the Old Woman, ceases abruptly]:  
 So you think I'm too old for that, do you?

OLD MAN [to Belle, very romantically]: When we were young,  
 the moon was a living star. Ah! yes, yes, if only we had  
 dared, but we were only children. Wouldn't you like to  
 recapture those bygone days . . . is it still possible? Is it  
 still possible? Ah! no, no, it is no longer possible. Those  
 days have flown away as fast as a train. Time has left the  
 marks of his wheels on our skin. Do you believe surgeons  
 can perform miracles? [To the Colonel:] I am a soldier,  
 and you too, we soldiers are always young, the generals

are like gods . . . [To Belle:] It ought to be that way . . .  
 Alas! Alas! We have lost everything. We could have been  
 so happy. I'm sure of it, we could have been, we could  
 have been; perhaps the flowers are budding again beneath  
 the snow! . . .

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: Flatterer! Rascal! Ah! Ah!  
 I look younger than my years? You're a little savage! You're  
 exciting.

OLD MAN [to Belle]: Will you be my Isolde and let me be  
 your Tristan? Beauty is more than skin deep, it's in the  
 heart . . . Do you understand? We could have had the  
 pleasure of sharing joy, beauty, eternity, an eternity  
 . . . Why didn't we dare? We weren't brave enough . . .  
 Everything is lost, lost, lost!

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: Oh no, Oh! no, Oh! la la,  
 you give me the shivers. You too, are you ticklish? To  
 tickle or be tickled? I'm a little embarrassed . . . [She  
 laughs.] Do you like my petticoat? Or do you like this skirt  
 better?

OLD MAN [to Belle]: A general factotum has a poor life!

OLD WOMAN [turning her head towards the first invisible  
 Lady]: In order to make crepes de Chine? A leaf of beef,  
 an hour of flour, a little gastric sugar. [To the Photo-  
 engraver:] You've got clever fingers, ah . . . all the  
 sa-a-a-me! . . . Oh-oh-oh-oh.

OLD MAN [to Belle]: My worthy helpmeet, Semiramis, has  
 taken the place of my mother. [He turns towards the  
 Colonel:] Colonel, as I've often observed to you, one must  
 take the truth as one finds it. [He turns back towards Belle.]

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: Do you really really be-  
 lieve that one could have children at any age? Any age  
 children? ~~at any age~~

OLD MAN [to Belle]: It's this alone that has saved me: the  
 inner life, peace of mind, austerity, my scientific investiga-  
 tions, philosophy, my message . . .

OLD WOMAN [to Photo-engraver]: I've never yet betrayed my

and says happy in good times!





EUGENE IONESCO

*On stage all the chairs!*

you prefer . . . We don't have any more nice chairs . . . we have to make do with what we have . . . I'm sorry . . . take the one in the middle . . . does anyone need a fountain pen? Telephone Maillot, you'll get Monique . . . Claude is an angel. I don't have a radio . . . I take all the newspapers . . . that depends on a number of things; I manage these buildings, but I have no help . . . we have to economize . . . no interviews, please, for the moment . . . later, we'll see . . . you'll soon have a place to sit . . . what can she be doing? [*The Old Woman enters by door No. 8 with a chair.*] Faster, Semiramis . . .

OLD WOMAN: I'm doing my best . . . Who are all these people?

OLD MAN: I'll explain it all to you later.

OLD WOMAN: And that woman? That woman, my darling?

OLD MAN: Don't get upset . . . [*To the Colonel:*] Colonel, journalism is a profession too, like a fighting man's . . . [*To the Old Woman:*] Take care of the ladies, my dear . . . [*The doorbell rings. The Old Man hurries towards door No. 8.*] Wait a moment . . . [*To the Old Woman:*] Bring chairs!

OLD WOMAN: Gentlemen, ladies, excuse me . . . [*She exits by door No. 3, re-entering by door No. 2; the Old Man goes to open concealed door No. 9, and disappears at the moment the Old Woman re-enters by door No. 2.*]

OLD MAN [*out of sight*]: Come in . . . come in . . . come in . . . come in . . . [*He reappears, leading in a number of invisible people, including one very small child he holds by the hand.*] One doesn't bring little children to a scientific lecture . . . the poor little thing is going to be bored . . . if he begins to cry or to peep on the ladies' dresses, that'll be a fine state of affairs! [*He conducts them to stage center; the Old Woman comes on with two chairs.*] I wish to introduce you to my wife, Semiramis; and these are their children.

The Chairs

*Ana, don't set chairs on Spike mantle!*

OLD WOMAN: Ladies, gentlemen . . . Oh! aren't they sweet! OLD MAN: That one is the smallest.

OLD WOMAN: Oh, he's so cute . . . so cute . . . so cute!

OLD MAN: Not enough chairs.

OLD WOMAN: Oh! dear, oh dear, oh dear . . . [*Ana exits. She enters, looking for another chair, using now door No. 9 as exit and door No. 3 on the right to re-enter.*]

OLD MAN: Hold the little boy on your lap . . . The twins can sit together in the same chair. Be careful, they're not very strong . . . they go with the house, they belong to the landlord. Yes, my children, he'd make trouble for us, he's a bad man . . . he wants us to buy them from him, these worthless chairs. [*The Old Woman returns as quickly as she can with a chair.*] You don't all know each other . . . you're seeing each other for the first time . . . you know each other by name . . . [*To the Old Woman:*] Semiramis, help me make the introductions . . .

OLD WOMAN: Who are all these people? . . . May I introduce you, excuse me . . . May I introduce you . . . but who are they?

OLD MAN: May I introduce you . . . Allow me to introduce you . . . permit me to introduce you . . . Mr., Mrs., Miss . . . Mr. . . . Mrs. . . . Mrs. . . . Mr.

OLD WOMAN [*to Old Man*]: Did you put on your sweater? [*To the invisible guests:*] Mr., Mrs., Mr. . . .

[*Doorbell rings again.*]

OLD MAN: More people!

[*Another ring of doorbell.*]

OLD WOMAN: More people!

[*The doorbell rings again, then several more times, and more times again; the Old Man is beside himself; the chairs, turned towards the dais, with their backs to the audience, form regular rows, each one longer as in a theatre; the Old Man is winded, he mops his brow, goes from one door to another, seats invisible people, while the Old Woman, hob-*

what happened to lift?  
to place for roll?

EUGENE IONESCO

bling along, unable to move any faster, goes as rapidly as she can, from one door to another, hunting for chairs and carrying them in. There are now many invisible people on stage; both the Old Man and Old Woman take care not to bump into people and to thread their way between the rows of chairs. The movement could go like this: the Old Man goes to door No. 4, the Old Woman exits by door No. 3, returns by door No. 2; the Old Man goes to open door No. 7, the Old Woman exits by door No. 8, re-enters by door No. 6 with chairs, etc., in this manner making their way around the stage, using all the doors.]

Old Man  
Old Woman  
Old Man  
Old Woman

OLD WOMAN: Beg pardon . . . excuse me . . . what . . . oh, yes . . . beg pardon . . . excuse me . . . ladies . . . enter . . . it is Mrs. . . . let me . . . yes . . .

OLD WOMAN [with more chairs]: Oh dear . . . Oh dear . . . there are too many . . . There really are too, too . . . too many, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear . . . We hear from outside, louder and louder and approaching nearer and nearer, the sounds of boats moving through the water; all the noises come directly from the wings. The Old Woman and the Old Man continue the business outlined above: they open the doors, they carry in chairs. The door-bell continues to ring.]

OLD MAN: This table is in our way. [He moves a table, or he sketches the business of moving it, without slowing down his rhythm, aided by the Old Woman.] There's scarcely a place left here, excuse us . . .

OLD WOMAN [making a gesture of clearing the table, to the Old Man]: Are you wearing your sweater?

OLD MAN: More people! More chairs! More people! More chairs! Come in, come in, ladies and gentlemen . . . Semiramis, faster . . . We'll give you a hand soon . . .

OLD WOMAN: Beg pardon . . . beg pardon . . . good evening, Mrs. . . . Mrs. . . . Mr. . . . Mr. . . . yes, yes, the

The Chairs

Lost these  
chairs 141

chairs . . . [The doorbell rings louder and louder and we hear the noises of boats striking the quay very close by, and more and more frequently. The Old Man flounders among the chairs; he has scarcely enough time to go from one door to another, so rapidly do the ringings of the doorbell succeed each other.]

OLD MAN: Yes, right away . . . are you wearing your sweater? Yes, yes . . . immediately, patience, yes, yes . . . patience . . . OLD WOMAN: Your sweater? My sweater? . . . Beg pardon, beg pardon.

OLD MAN: This way, ladies and gentlemen, I request you . . . I re you . . . pardon . . . quest . . . enter, enter . . . going to show . . . there, the seats . . . dear friend . . . not there . . . take care . . . you, my friend?

[Then a long moment without words. We hear waves, boats, the continuous ringing of the doorbell. The movement culminates in intensity at this point. The doors are now opening and shutting all together ceaselessly. Only the main door in the center of the recess remains closed. The Old Man and Old Woman come and go, without saying a word, from one door to another; they appear to be gliding on roller skates. The Old Man receives the people, accompanies them, but doesn't take them very far, he only indicates seats to them after having taken one or two steps with them; he hasn't enough time. The Old Woman carries in chairs. The Old Man and the Old Woman meet each other and bump into each other, once or twice, without interrupting their rhythm. Then, the Old Man takes a position upstage center, and turns from left to right, from right to left, etc., towards all the doors and indicates the seats with his arms. His arms move very rapidly. Then, finally the Old Woman stops, with a chair in one hand, which she places, takes up again, replaces, looks as though she, too, wants to go from one door to another, from right to left, from left to right, moving her head and neck very rapidly. This must not interrupt

EUGENE IONESCO

*the rhythm; the Old Man and Old Woman must still give the impression of not stopping, even while remaining almost in one place; their hands, their chests, their heads, their eyes are agitated, perhaps moving in little circles. Finally, there is a progressive slowing down of movement, at first slight; the ringings of the doorbell are less loud, less frequent; the doors open less and less rapidly; the gestures of the Old Man and Old Woman slacken continuously. At the moment when the doors stop opening and closing altogether, and the ringings cease to be heard, we have the impression that the stage is packed with people.]*

OLD MAN: I'm going to find a place for you . . . patience . . . Semiramis, for the love of . . .

OLD WOMAN [with a large gesture, her hands empty]: There are no more chairs, my darling. [Then, abruptly, she begins to sell invisible programs in a full hall, with the doors closed.] Programs, get your programs here, the program of the evening, buy your program!

OLD MAN: Relax, ladies and gentlemen, we'll take care of you . . . Each in his turn, in the order of your arrival . . . You'll have a seat. I'll take care of you.

OLD WOMAN: Buy your programs! Wait a moment, madam, I cannot take care of everyone at the same time, I haven't got thirty-three hands, you know, I'm not a cow . . . Mister, please be kind enough to pass the program to the lady next to you, thank you . . . my change, my change . . .

OLD MAN: I've told you that I'd find a place for you! Don't get excited! Over here, it's over here, there, take care . . . oh, dear friend . . . dear friends . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . Programs . . . get your grams . . . grams . . . OLD MAN: Yes, my dear, she's over there, further down, she's selling programs . . . no trade is unworthy . . . that's her . . . do you see her? . . . you have a seat in the second row . . . to the right . . . no, to the left . . . that's it! . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . gram . . . gram . . . program . . . get your program . . .

don't get on ground fill you me  
pushed, climb under people

## The Chairs

OLD MAN: What do you expect me to do? I'm doing my best! [To invisible seated people:] Push over a little, if you will please . . . there's still a little room, that will do for you, won't it, Mrs. . . . come here. [He mounts the dais, forced by the pushing of the crowd.] Ladies, gentlemen, please excuse us, there are no more seats available . . .

OLD WOMAN [who is now on the opposite side of the stage, across from the Old Man, between door No. 3 and the window]: Get your programs . . . who wants a program? Eskimo pies, caramels . . . fruit drops . . . [Unable to move, the Old Woman, hemmed in by the crowd, scatters her programs and candies anywhere, above the invisible heads.] Here are some! There they are!

OLD MAN [standing on the dais, very animated; he is jostled as he descends from the dais, remounts it, steps down again, hits someone in the face, is struck by an elbow, says]: Pardon . . . please excuse us . . . take care . . . [Pushed, he staggers, has trouble regaining his equilibrium, clutches at shoulders.]

OLD WOMAN: Why are there so many people? Programs, get your program here, Eskimo pies.

OLD MAN: Ladies, young ladies, gentlemen, a moment of silence, I beg you . . . silence . . . it's very important . . . those people who've no seats are asked to clear the aisles . . . that's it . . . don't stand between the chairs.

OLD WOMAN [to the Old Man, almost screaming]: Who are all these people, my darling? What are they doing here?

OLD MAN: Clear the aisles, ladies and gentlemen. Those who do not have seats must, for the convenience of all, stand against the wall, there, along the right or the left . . . you'll be able to hear everything, you'll see everything, don't worry, you won't miss a thing, all seats are equally good!

[There is a great hullabaloo. Pushed by the crowd, the Old Man makes almost a complete turn around the stage and ends up at the window on the right, near to the stool. The Old Woman makes the same movement in reverse, and ends

ing on ground, fill indication of him  
invisible people push meat

MAN  
WOMAN  
you  
on  
ground  
ground

(11)







rahi Hurrahi!

[He stands up on the stool; he stands on his toes in order to see the Emperor; the Old Woman does the same on her side.]

OLD WOMAN: Hurrahi Hurrahi!

[Stamping of feet.]

OLD MAN: Your Majesty! . . . I'm over here! . . . Your Majesty! Can you hear me? Can you see me? Please tell his Majesty that I'm here! Your Majesty! Your Majesty!!! I'm here, your most faithful servant! . . .

OLD WOMAN [still echoing]: Your most faithful servant, Your Majesty!

OLD MAN: Your servant, your slave, your dog, art, art, your dog, Your Majesty! . . .

OLD WOMAN [barking loudly like a dog]: Art . . . art . . . art . . .

OLD MAN [wringing his hands]: Can you see me? . . . ~~Answer~~ Ah, I can see you, I've just caught sight of Your Majesty's august face . . . your ~~high~~ head . . . I've ~~seen you, yes, in spite of the screen of courtiers.~~

OLD WOMAN: In spite of the ~~courtiers~~ ~~to-be-here!~~ ~~Your Majesty!~~

OLD MAN: Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Ladies, gentlemen, don't keep him—His Majesty standing . . . you see, Your Majesty, I'm truly the only one who cares for you, for your health, I'm the most faithful of all your subjects . . .

OLD WOMAN [echoing]: Your Majesty's most faithful subjects!

OLD MAN: Let me through, now, ladies and gentlemen . . . how can I make my way through such a crowd? . . . I must go to present my most humble respects to His Majesty, the Emperor . . . let me pass . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Let him pass . . . let him pass . . . pass . . . ass . . .

OLD MAN: Let me pass, please, let me pass. [Desperate:] Ah! Will I ever be able to reach him?

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Reach him . . . reach him . . .

OLD MAN: Nevertheless, my heart and my whole being are at his feet, the crowd of courtiers surrounds him and ah! they want to prevent me from approaching him . . . They know very well that . . . oh! I understand, I understand . . . Court intrigues, I know all about it . . . They hope to separate me from Your Majesty!

OLD WOMAN: Calm yourself, my darling . . . His Majesty sees you, he's looking at you . . . His Majesty has given me a ~~look~~ . . . His Majesty is on our side! . . .

OLD MAN: They must give the Emperor the best seat . . . ~~near~~ ~~the door~~ . . . so that he can hear everything the Orator is ~~saying~~ going to say.

OLD WOMAN [hoisting herself up on the stool, on her toes, lifting her chin as high as she can, in order to see better]: Before At last they're taking care of the Emperor. ~~you~~ ~~last~~ ~~before~~

OLD MAN: Thank heaven for that! [To the Emperor:] Sire . . . Your Majesty may rely on him. It's my friend, it's my representative who is at Your Majesty's side. [On his toes, standing on the stool:] Gentlemen, ladies, young ladies, little children, I implore you.

OLD WOMAN [echoing]: Plore . . . plore . . .  
 OLD MAN: . . . I want to see . . . move aside . . . I want . . . the celestial gaze, the noble face, the crown, the radiance of His Majesty . . . Sire, deign to turn your illustrious face in my direction, toward your humble servant . . . so humble . . . Oh! I caught sight of him clearly that time . . . I caught sight . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: He caught sight that time . . . he caught sight . . . caught . . . sight . . .

OLD MAN: I'm at the height of joy . . . I've no more words to express my boundless gratitude . . . in my humble dwelling, Oh! Majesty! Oh! radiance! . . . here . . . here . . . in the dwelling where I am, true enough, a general . . . but within the hierarchy of your army, I'm only a simple general factotum . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: General factotum . . .

EUGENE IONESCO

OLD MAN: I'm proud of it . . . proud and humble, at the same time . . . as I should be . . . alas! certainly, I am a general, I might have been at the imperial court, I have only a little court here to take care of . . . Your Majesty . . . I . . . Your Majesty, I have difficulty expressing myself . . . I might have had . . . many things, not a few possessions if I'd known, if I'd wanted, if I . . . if we . . . Your Majesty, forgive my emotion . . .

OLD WOMAN: Speak in the third person!

OLD MAN [sniveling]: May Your Majesty deign to forgive me! You are here at last . . . We had given up hope . . . you might not even have come . . . Oh! Savior, in my life, I have been humiliated . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo, sobbing]: . . . militated . . .

OLD MAN: I've suffered much in my life . . . I might have been something, if I could have been sure of the support of your Majesty . . . I have no other support . . . if you hadn't come, everything would have been too late . . . you are, sire, my last recourse . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Last recourse . . . Sire . . . ast recourse . . .

OLD MAN: I've brought bad luck to my friends, to all those who have helped me . . . Lightning struck the hand which was held out toward me . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . hand that was held out . . . held out out . . .

OLD MAN: They've always had good reasons for hating me, bad reasons for loving me . . .

OLD WOMAN: That's not true, my darling, not true. I love you, I'm your little mother . . .

OLD MAN: All my enemies have been rewarded and my friends have betrayed me . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Frijoles . . . betrayed . . . betrayed . . .

OLD MAN: They've treated me badly. They've persecuted me. If I complained, it was always they who were in the right . . . Sometimes I've tried to revenge myself . . . I was never . . .

Will nothing for I love you

Chairs

about, never able to revenge myself . . . I have too much pity . . . I refused to strike the enemy to the ground, I have always been too good.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: He was too good, good, good, good, good, good . . .

OLD MAN: It is my pity that has defeated me.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: My pity . . . pity . . . pity . . .

OLD MAN: But they never pitied me. I gave them a pin prick, and they repaid me with club blows, with knife blows, with cannon blows, they've crushed my bones . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . My bones . . . my bones . . . my bones . . .

OLD MAN: They've supplanted me, they've robbed me, they've assassinated me . . . I've been the collector of injustices, the lightning rod of catastrophes . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Lightning rod . . . catastrophe . . . lightning rod . . .

OLD MAN: [In order to forget, Your Majesty, I wanted to go in for sports . . . for mountain climbing . . . they pulled my feet and made me slip . . . I wanted to climb stairways, they rotted the steps . . . I fell down . . . I wanted to travel, they refused me a passport . . . I wanted to cross the river, they burnt my bridges . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Burnt my bridges. *Chia up on*

OLD MAN: I wanted to cross the Pyrenees, and there were no more Pyrenees. *Research this! to*

OLD WOMAN [echo]: No more Pyrenees . . . He could have been, he too, Your Majesty, like so many others, a head editor, a head actor, a head doctor, Your Majesty, a head king . . . *not line*

OLD MAN: Furthermore, no one has ever shown me due consideration . . . no one has ever sent me invitations . . . However, I, hear me, I say this to you, I alone could have saved humanity, who is so sick. Your Majesty realizes this as do I . . . or, at the least, I could have spared it the evils from which it has suffered so much this last quarter of a

\* work - 2010

century, had I had the opportunity to communicate my message; I do not despair of saving it, there is still time, I have a plan . . . alas, I express myself with difficulty . . .

OLD WOMAN [*above the invisible heads*]: The Orator will be here, he'll speak for you. His Majesty is here, thus you'll be heard, you've no reason to despair, you hold all the trumps, everything has changed, everything has changed.

OLD MAN: I hope Your Majesty will excuse me . . . I know you have many other worries . . . I've been humiliated . . . Ladies and gentlemen, move aside just a little bit, don't hide His Majesty's nose from me altogether. I want to see the diamonds of the imperial crown glittering . . . But if Your Majesty has deigned to come to our miserable home, it is because you have condescended to take into consideration my wretched self. What an extraordinary reward. Your Majesty, if corporally I raise myself on my toes, this is not through pride, this is only in order to gaze upon you! . . . morally, I throw myself at your knees.

OLD WOMAN [*sobbing*]: At your knees, Sire, we throw ourselves at your knees, at your feet, at your feet.

OLD MAN: I've had scabies. My employer fired me because I did not bow to his baby, to his horse. I've been kicked in the ass, but all this, Sire, no longer has any importance . . . since . . . since . . . Sir . . . Your Majesty . . . look I am here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . . here . . .

OLD MAN: Since Your Majesty is here . . . since Your Majesty will take my message into consideration . . . But the Orator should be here . . . he's making His Majesty wait . . .

OLD WOMAN: If Your Majesty will forgive him. He's surely coming. He will be here in a moment. They've telephoned us.

OLD MAN: His Majesty is so kind. His Majesty wouldn't depart just like that, without having listened to everything, heard everything.

*A just shut doors, sync up*

The Chairs

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Heard everything . . . heard . . . listened to everything . . .

OLD MAN: It is he who will speak in my name . . . I, I cannot . . . I lack the talent . . . he has all the papers, all the documents . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: He has all the documents . . .

OLD MAN: A little patience, Sire, I beg of you . . . he should be coming.

OLD WOMAN: He should be coming in a moment.

OLD MAN [*so that the Emperor will not grow impatient*]: Your Majesty, hear me, a long time ago I had the revelation . . . I was forty years old . . . I say this also to you, ladies and gentlemen . . . one evening, after supper, as was our custom, before going to bed, I seated myself on my father's knees . . . my mustaches were longer than his and more pointed . . . I had more hair on my chest . . . my hair was graying already, but he was still brown . . . There were some guests, grownups, sitting at table, who began to laugh, laugh.

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: Laugh . . . laugh . . .

OLD MAN: I'm not joking. I told them, I love my papa very much. Someone replied: It is midnight, a child shouldn't stay up so late. If you don't go beddy-bye, then you're no longer a kid. But I'd still not have believed them if they hadn't addressed me as an adult.

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: An adult.

OLD MAN: Instead of as a child . . .

OLD WOMAN [*echo*]: A child.

OLD MAN: Nevertheless, I thought to myself, I'm not married. Hence, I'm still a child. They married me off right then, expressly to prove the contrary to me . . . Fortunately, my wife has been both father and mother to me . . .

OLD WOMAN: The Orator should be here, Your Majesty . . .

OLD MAN: The Orator will come.

OLD WOMAN: He will come.

OLD MAN: He will come.

*now to crowd to Majesty*

*signal to crowd  
then wife  
and other*

OLD WOMAN: He will come.

OLD MAN: He will come.

OLD WOMAN: He will come.

OLD MAN: He will come, he will come.

OLD WOMAN: He will come, he will come.

OLD MAN: He will come.

OLD WOMAN: He is coming.

OLD MAN: He is coming.

OLD WOMAN: He is coming, he is here.

OLD MAN: He is coming, he is here.

OLD WOMAN: He is coming, he is here.

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN: He is here . . .

OLD WOMAN: Here he is!

[Silence; all movement stops. Petrified, the two old people stare at door No. 5; this immobility lasts rather long—about thirty seconds; very slowly, very slowly the door opens wide, silently; then the Orator appears. He is a real person. He's a typical painter or poet of the nineteenth century; he wears a large black felt hat with a wide brim, loosely tied bow tie, artist's blouse, mustache and goatee, very histrionic in manner, concealed; just as the invisible people must be as real as possible, the Orator must appear unreal. He goes along the wall to the right, gliding, softly, to upstage center, in front of the main door, without turning his head to right or left; he passes close by the Old Woman without appearing to notice her, not even when the Old Woman touches his arm in order to assure herself that he exists. It is at this moment that the Old Woman says: "Here he is!" ]

OLD MAN: Here he is!

OLD WOMAN [following the Orator with her eyes and continuing to stare at him]: It's really he, he exists. In flesh and blood.

OLD MAN [following him with his eyes]: He exists. It's really he. This is not a dream!

OLD WOMAN: This is not a dream, I told you so.

Stares went very high guys

Work  
5 min  
1 min  
1 min  
1 min  
1 min

[The Old Man clasps his hands, lifts his eyes to heaven; he exults silently. The Orator, having reached upstage center, lifts his hat, bends forward in silence, saluting the invisible Emperor with his hat with a Musketeer's flourish and somewhat like an automaton. At this moment:]

OLD MAN: Your Majesty . . . May I present to you, the Orator . . .

OLD WOMAN: It is he!

[Then the Orator puts his hat back on his head and mounts the dais from which he looks down on the invisible crowd on the stage and at the chairs; he freezes in a solemn pose.]

OLD MAN [to the invisible crowd]: You may ask him for autographs. [Automatically, silently, the Orator signs and distributes numberless autographs. The Old Man during this time lifts his eyes again to heaven, clasping his hands, and exultantly says:] No man, in his lifetime, could hope for more . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: No man could hope for more.

OLD MAN [to the invisible crowd]: And now, with the permission of Your Majesty, I will address myself to all of you, ladies, young ladies, gentlemen, little children, dear colleagues, dear compatriots, Your Honor the President, dear comrades in arms . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: And little children . . . dren . . . dren . . .  
OLD MAN: I address myself to all of you, without distinction of age, sex, civil status, social rank, or business, to thank you, with all my heart.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: To thank you . . .

OLD MAN: As well as the Orator . . . cordially, for having come in such large numbers . . . silence, gentlemen! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . Silence, gentlemen . . .

OLD MAN: I address my thanks also to those who have made possible the meeting this evening, to the organizers . . .

OLD WOMAN: Bravo!

[Meanwhile, the Orator on the dais remains solemn, immobile, except for his hand, which signs autographs . . .

OLD MAN: To the owners of this building, to the architect, to the masons who were kind enough to erect these walls! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . walls . . .

OLD MAN: To all those who've dug the foundations . . . Silence, ladies and gentlemen . . .

OLD WOMAN: . . . 'adies and gentlemen . . .

OLD MAN: Last but not least I address my warmest thanks to the cabinet-makers who have made these chairs on which you have been able to sit, to the master carpenter . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . penter . . .

OLD MAN: . . . Who made the armchair in which Your Majesty is sinking so softly, which does not prevent you, nevertheless, from maintaining a firm and manly attitude . . . Thanks again to all the technicians, machinists, electro-cutioners . . .

OLD WOMAN [echoing:]: . . . cutioners . . . cutioners . . .

OLD MAN: . . . To the paper manufacturers and the printers, proofreaders, editors to whom we owe the programs, so charmingly decorated, to the universal solidarity of all men, thanks, to our country, to the State [*He turns toward where the Emperor is sitting:*] whose helm Your Majesty directs with the skill of a true pilot . . . thanks to the usher . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo:]: . . . usher . . . usher . . .

OLD MAN [*pointing to the Old Woman*]: Hawker of Eskimo pies and programs . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo:]: . . . grams . . .

OLD MAN: . . . My wife, my helpmeet . . . Semiramis! . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo:]: . . . ife . . . meet . . . mis . . . [*Aside:*] The darling, he never forgets to give me credit.

OLD MAN: Thanks to all those who have given me their precious and expert, financial or moral support, thereby contributing to the overwhelming success of this evening's gathering . . . thanks again, thanks above all to our beloved sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor . . .

OLD WOMAN [echo:]: . . . jesty the Emperor . . .

### The Chairs

OLD MAN [*in a total silence*]: . . . A little silence . . . Your Majesty . . . *Ma-jesty?*

OLD WOMAN [echo]: . . . jesty . . . jesty . . .

OLD MAN: Your Majesty, my wife and myself have nothing more to ask of life. Our existence can come to an end in this apotheosis . . . thanks be to heaven who has granted us such long and peaceful years . . . My life has been filled to overflowing. My mission is accomplished. I will not have lived in vain, since my message will be revealed to the world . . . [*Gesture towards the Orator, who does not perceive it; the Orator waves off requests for autographs, very dignified and firm.*] To the world, or rather to what is left of it! [*Wide gesture toward the invisible crowd.*] To you, ladies and gentlemen, and dear comrades, who are all that is left from humanity, but with such leftovers one can still make a very good soup . . . Orator, friend . . . [*The Orator looks in another direction.*] If I have been long unrecognized, underestimated by my contemporaries, it is because it had to be . . . [*The Old Woman sobs.*] What matters ~~at~~ now when I am leaving you, to you, my dear Orator and friend [*The Orator rejects a new request for an autograph, then takes an indifferent pose, looking in all directions.*] . . . the responsibility of radiating upon posterity the light of my mind . . . thus making known to the universe my philosophy. Neglect none of the details of my private life, some laughable, some painful or heartwarming, of my tastes, my amusing gluttony . . . tell everything . . . speak of my helpmeet . . . [*The Old Woman redoubles her sobs.*] . . . of the way she prepared those marvelous little Turkish pies, of her potted rabbit à la Normandabbit . . . speak of Berry, my native province . . . I count on you, great master and Orator . . . as for me and my faithful helpmeet, after our long years of labor in behalf of the progress of humanity during which we fought the good fight, nothing remains for us but to withdraw . . . immediately, in order to make the supreme sacrifice which no one

Everything can speed up!

demands of us but which we will carry out even so . . .  
 OLD WOMAN [sobbing]: Yes, yes, let's die in full glory . . .  
 let's die in order to become a legend . . . At least, they'll  
 name a street after us . . .

OLD MAN [to Old Woman]: O my faithful helpmeet! . . .  
 you who have believed in me, unflinching, during a whole  
 century, who have never left me, never . . . alas, today, at  
 this supreme moment, the crowd pitilessly separates us . . .

they must

be naturally  
 separated by the  
 crowd early

Above all I had hoped  
 that together we might lie  
 with all our bones together  
 within the selfsame skin  
 within the same sepulchre  
 and that the same worms  
 might share our old flesh  
 that we might rot together . . .

what a  
 beautiful  
 girl!

Word forget

OLD WOMAN: . . . Rot together . . .

OLD MAN: Alas! . . . alas! . . .

OLD WOMAN: Alas! . . . alas! . . .

OLD MAN: . . . Our corpses will fall far from each other,  
 and we will rot in an aquatic solitude . . . Don't pity us  
 over much.

OLD WOMAN: What will be, will be!

OLD MAN: We shall not be forgotten. The eternal Emperor  
 will remember us, always.

OLD WOMAN [echo]: Always.

OLD MAN: We will leave some traces, for we are people and  
 not cities.

OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN [together]: We will have a street  
 named after us.

OLD MAN: Let us be united in time and in eternity, even if  
 we are not together in space, as we were in adversity; let  
 us die at the same moment . . . [To the Orator, who is  
 impassive, immobile:] One last time . . . I place my trust  
 in you . . . I count on you. You will tell all . . . bequeath

my message . . . [To the Emperor:] If Your Majesty will  
 excuse me . . . Farewell to all. Farewell, Semiramis.

OLD WOMAN: Farewell to all . . . Farewell, my darling!

OLD MAN: Long live the Emperor!

[He throws confetti and paper streamers on the invisible Em-  
 peror; we hear faintly: bright lights like fireworks.] Why is

OLD WOMAN: Long live the Emperor! Why are you using keys  
 [Confetti and streamers thrown in the direction of the Emperor, say,  
 then on the immobile and impassive Orator, and on the  
 empty chairs.]

OLD MAN [same business]: Long live the Emperor!

OLD WOMAN [same business]: Long live the Emperor!

[The Old Woman and Old Man at the same moment throw  
 themselves out the windows, shouting "Long Live the Em-  
 peror." Sudden silence; no more fireworks; we hear an "Ah"  
 from both sides of the stage, the sea-green noises of bodies  
 falling into the water. The light coming through the main  
 door and the windows has disappeared; there remains only  
 a weak light as at the beginning of the play; the darkened  
 windows remain wide open, their curtains floating on the  
 wind.]

ORATOR [he has remained immobile and impassive during the  
 scene of the double suicide, and now, after several moments,  
 he decides to speak. He faces the rows of empty chairs; he  
 makes the invisible crowd understand that he is deaf and  
 dumb; he makes the signs of a deafmute; desperate efforts  
 to make himself understood; then he coughs, groans, utters  
 the guttural sounds of a mute]: He, mme, mm, mm. Ju, gou,  
 hou, hou. Heu, heu, gu gou, gueue.

[Helpless, he lets his arms fall down alongside his body;  
 suddenly, his face lights up, he has an idea, he turns toward  
 the blackboard, he takes a piece of chalk out of his pocket,  
 and writes, in large capitals:

then:

ANGELFOOD

NNAA NNM NWNWNV V

160

*EUGENE IONESCO*  
He turns around again, towards the invisible crowd on the stage, and points with his finger to what he's written on the blackboard.]

ORATOR: Mmm, Mmm, Gueuc, Gu, Mmm, Mmm, Mmm, Mmm.

[Then, not satisfied, with abrupt gestures he wipes out the chalk letters, and replaces them with others, among which we can make out, still in large capitals:

ΛADIEU ADIEU APA

Again, the Orator turns around to face the crowd; he smiles, questions, with an air of hoping that he's been understood, of having said something; he indicates to the empty chairs what he's just written. He remains immobile for a few seconds, rather satisfied and a little solemn; but then, faced with the absence of the hoped for reaction, little by little his smile disappears, his face darkens; he waits another moment; suddenly he bows petulantly, brusquely, descends from the dais; he goes toward the main door upstage center, gliding like a ghost; before exiting through this door, he bows ceremoniously again to the rows of empty chairs, to the invisible Emperor. The stage remains empty with only the chairs, the dais, the floor covered with streamers and confetti. The main door is wide open onto darkness.

We hear for the first time the human noises of the invisible crowd; these are bursts of laughter, murmurs, shh's, ironical coughs; weak at the beginning, these noises grow louder, then, again, progressively they become weaker. All this should last long enough for the audience—the real and visible audience—to leave with this ending firmly impressed on its mind. The curtain falls very slowly.]

APRIL 1951

April-June, 1951

\* In the original production the curtain fell on the mumbblings of the mute Orator. The blackboard was not used.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **ADVISOR'S NOTES**

Stephen Coleman, my faculty advisor, frequently visited our rehearsals and monitored the progress of the show as it developed over the weeks. With each visit he took a page of notes helping to guide my directorial choices.

While I knew what I *wanted* for the show, Stephen's advice often became the means for achieving what I wanted. Many times, I would have instincts that I didn't know how to articulate correctly, and talking with Stephen would help me discover the means for appropriate communication.

I remember one of the greatest notes I received from my advisor was the distinction of the actors' vocal quality in speaking the dialogue. He said the actors really needed to "bite" into the language of the script, therefore acting as a primary agent in pointing and guiding the audience through an already absurd and illogical story.

## TITE CHAIRS - RUN THROUGH - 1/05/07: JH

Precision of chair moving bits

Ana - Lines at top - clearer.

Tara - More aware of blocking for proscenium

Pat - "... drink your tea"

Ana - "Imitate the month of February." - understating fines like that is a problem

Tara - They always gravitate back to C. - why not use more of the stage - as in d.R. or d.L.

ALL - Have fun but make sure all the lines are clear.

Ana - So truthful! But at times I can't hear her.

Ana - Diction! Diction! Diction!

Tara - Sberiramis - Pr? Meaning? Did you research it?

Tara - Do they need to wait for "replies?"

Tara - Need to clarify where the 1<sup>st</sup> woman is seated & how they both look at her.

Tara - Clear points of focus when they look at an imaginary person - the precision makes it more fun.

Tara - Missing the importance of the "message" - it's being thrown away.

Pat - Clarity of beats around "La Belle" and her husband lacking.

Ana - Pulls chair w/ Madame in it back into line

Tara - Section beginning w/ the arrival of guests 3&4 losing its energy and its shape dramatically - suddenly they both seem at sea about what's going on. Their focus and intensity need to increase - something to where this is in the overall construct of the play.

Ana - "Children at any age; any age children." - not clear on the joke.

Tara - Why are you putting the chairs in a row instead of arranged throughout the space?

Tara - Ana's: child/linda speech & Pat's: mother in the grave

speech - more important.

Tara - Not sure actors are aware of the journey  
their characters are making and how, and  
when their real story peels through the  
absurdist construct of the imaginary guests  
and collecting chairs for them. Are you?

Pat: "Gentlemen" - Kasper, his not from Lgh.

Tara: What's going on w/ the Photographers.

Tara: Clarity of people, who and where they are -  
very important.

THE CHAIRS ~ WORKING REHEARSAL & RUN ~ 11.17.07  
12:00 - 4:00 (1601 CL & STUDIO):

What is the story?

NOTES/OBSERVATIONS

12:00 - 2:30

SECTION IN

1601 CL:

- Refinements to the "chair" dance/sex scene...?
- NOT reclaim - "bits" can afford to be obviously stylized - not too wordy.
- Recovery from "pick-up" / could be funnier.
- Both have a liquid "l" - as in "Gentlemen"
- Really work for tight cue pick-up.
- ANA - vocal energy on line pick-ups very important - we need to know who's speaking!

She also needs to tie lines within speeches together, faster.

"Chippains"

- Work hard for the precision of lines & bits

ANA " • Keep the "ass" to someone - "reach him" should be more directed to Pat; likewise "plove, plove" - these kind of lines are not just sounds - they exist as part of the logic of the arguments within the special world of the play.

- End of the play is a mess tipwise - they have to get cleanly off book.

ANA - There's more to her iterations of those things he "could have been" - more at stake for her - it's not just a repeating list.

- Pay attention to the build before the orator comes on.

"... humanity is so sick" Good - need that level of precision and intent throughout.

- Some of those "He will come" lines could go to the guests OR if you keep it between them, you need to assign more specific contexts to them.

✓ Don't have the orator go the "puppet" until he's X'd C.; then find a place in the lines.

- They need to play the beat when he becomes the puppet - then go on to "overcome" it.
- Not sure I understand the "story" after the orator enters to their "suicide" - there's no choices in the lines to reflect it - just the words spewing out - You have to make a choice about the story here - VERY important.

STUDIO THEATRE:

- Alternating lines (opposite sides of the stage) need more energy at top of each line.
- Why is she looking confused at the entrance of the Emperor? Can't she see him?
- What is she wearing under her skirt? A pair of old-fashioned bloomers would be fun - and she can keep flashing the audience that way.
- \* Be sure you re-inforce those stools they stand on.
- Orator/puppet's face should be seen - not his head hanging down - it's slightly grotesque to see the puppet's dead face contrasting w/ the live action.
- \* Leaping from the top of a stool! - not a good idea! Very dangerous!
- Orator doesn't need to exit! Have him bow V.C., return to "puppet" and blackout!

If you think it's such a good idea, you do it first - I'll come visit you in the hospital.

1/17.07.

(1)

## RUN-THROUGH:

END  
3:17 START

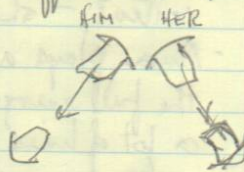
RUN TIME

- Clarity of 1<sup>st</sup> bit pushing chair very important.
- "Come, come my darling" clearer, brighter.
- Her vocal energy is better, though.
- I think they need just a touch more age in their "old" personas - that way we'll get a greater contrast.
- "Come on, now, imitate the mouth of February" is a new idea - she needs to introduce it - not merely say it; it's a new beat.
- ★ She's losing any vestige of the age character - why is that? They need to maintain that as a base so when they break it, it's a distinct change, clear and meaningful.
- Good section from the dance thru "down the drain I tell you" - story (beats) very clear.
- Laughing section still way too long - it's funny at first and then just gets boring - and the "story" of the sequence is not clearly do you/they have one? -
- The next section is good.
- "But I'm here, my darling" has no emotional content - she just says it. What's the context?
- Ana plays a lot of this cinematically, without the full energy she needs for the stage - so a lot of lines feel like they're just being said by the actress, not the character!
- Make more of the word: "message."
- Bigger moment (more important) at her "...put it off?" line - again, it feels like she's just barely acting it!
- Could Ana be getting bored with this - she doesn't seem to be developing in the role - it's almost as though she's "marking" most of it.

②

When they're really solid on the lines and beats, I'd strongly recommend a couple of "speed-throughs!"

- It may be her "acting technique" but it doesn't work all that well for the show.
- Colonel/Lady bit needs to go faster - once we catch on, get on with it!
- His greeting Madame - faster!
- Pick-up the cues just before the "...present for you."
- Are you going to have the mat onstage for the show - you could.
- The story of the "chair sex" is almost there - she doesn't get into well, and the transition into the "chiroactic leap" is awkward - too mechanical.
- Both need to drive these lines more! His talking to the lady and her to the Colonel - this is the first of several "chiroactic" moments and they're not playing it - just passing by casually.
- What kind of shoes is she wearing? Easy to put on, I hope!
- Arrange of chairs when they're sitting next to each other... are they talking to two different people:



or to one person:

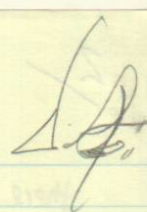


- Lines in this section are more important - I'm losing the story through their casualness.

(3)

- And then it changes  $\Delta$  "The bathroom in the house" hip.
- \* Pace, cue pick-up, energy. The play should continue to intrigue me - now it's just bogging down repeatedly.
- Why does she put the chair down on the tray?
- One chair at a time - quick energy!  
Keep going! one after another!
- Where is the story? Shape!?



THE CHAIRS ~ RUN THROUGH ~ 1/25/07: 

3:24  
2:14  
1:10

Nice moments around all those "What you could have been..." beats.

"Darkest" moments in all the rivalry are really eloquent; they are, after all, the spine of the play.

22 minutes to first guest.  
(2:36)

more panic!

pick up, don't slide

Orgasm.

Work for topping her

first ladies

Chair - Patrick lines earlier

- Clarity of chair bit at top...
- Her first lines...
- No "age" in her voice...
- His lines out the window U.R. - lost.
- His "... general of the house..." important
- "Imitate the mouth of February." - new idea! Needs to discover it, not just say it.
- Laughing bit a lot better - I'd still try to resolve it just a little quicker.
- Diction must be stressed! I'm losing a lot of lines in the casualness of their speech.
- The list of people she rattles off - each of them is important and must be clear - the "joke" is more in who they are, than in how fast she can say them.
- Beat around "Couldn't you put it off" is not clear. What is it in the story?
- When they "talk" to people, they should look at their "eyes", not the seat of the chair.
- Lines lost in chair-swapping bit - Patrick.
- What goes a lot longer? DICTION!
- Do you intend that Semiramis completely loses any age physically by the time she gets the gift? She does.
- The sex with the chair bit is better but it's not filled in enough - still feels like she's just marking it! Each action must have a context!
- The line that tags it needs to be bigger and clearer.
- His conversation with the woman on the floor needs to be bigger - more energetic.
- Lack of symmetry in the dialogue about the child etc, bothers me. It's a "set-piece" in the writing, and needs to be set-off as such.

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2

there is not a line that isn't meaningful!  
- Just the context

where each line fits in your life & how important.

Dale needs to be tighter on his cues - he's hanging them up! Make him drill it!

• They're both guilty of "just saying" a lot of the lines, so I don't understand their context in the story - is that your doing or their inability to "invest" all their moments within this style. The result is that it's harder for me to follow the "story" because a lot of the lines are just words and not statements by the characters within the context of their lives!

• Cue picks up needs tightening. PACE!  
Once you get to the family with all the children, it should get a bit manic until it resolves with them at the wall.  
(unit)

• Pulling the table bit not clear - they need to act it out more - now it's just a bit.

• Avoid any pauses or silences in the long "parto" section - they should be breathing heavily and making little sounds THROUGHOUT! No rests!! Until it resolves with the both of them at the wall. AND then it starts again with the "Programs" bit.

• His "Ladies and gentlemen please excuse us" is the peak. Then, a new phase of the mania starts again.

\* You're not making the units clear!

• Another peak at "there's no need to act like savages in any case!"

\* You and the actors have to review the text to get a better handle on both the significance of the lines and the overall shape of the highs & lows of the story.

• "Absolute certainty" unit, with the two of them on the stocks" - good.

~~did you cut the reporters?~~  
• Bigger joke in "... the cabinet makers who made the chairs..." etc.

finality

- Is his line "... help-meet" - or "... help-mate?"
- From the entrance of the Doctor - lines to be more important & weighted in their resolving effect - it's another unit that needs more attention.
- Have him "acknowledge" the Doctor as he X's past him to the window.

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