

classic acts

from court theatre's
CAST partnership

the chairs

eugene
ionescu

CLASSICS
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STUDENTS
TEACHERS

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The contents of **classic acts** fall into five broad categories:

1. Information and background on Eugene Ionesco.
2. Background information on the play, including a chance to look at clips from silent movies—a major influence on Ionesco.
3. The Play in Production: an insight into the play's transition into a piece of theatre, focusing on Court Theatre's production and the work of the director, the designers and the master electrician.
4. Suggested activities.

Categories 1 & 2 give background information on the play you are to see and on the playwright.

Category 3, The Play in Production gives insight into the process by which a literary text becomes a performance text, the process by which an original and imaginative work of one artist is re-authored—re-imagined—by another artist, the Director, together with her or his collaborators, the dramaturg, the designers and the actors.

Included in **classic acts** are video interviews with Court Master Electrician Carrie Hill, talking about her job and Court Resident Dramaturg and Production Dramaturg for *The Chairs*, Celise Kalke, giving some background on Ionesco and the events surrounding the play.

Category 4, Suggested activities, invites exploration of the themes of the play and creates opportunities for discussion role-play and writing.

These activities encourage the development of an understanding of the work of the theatre artist and of the creative process.



Eugene Ionesco

Celise Kalke is the resident [dramaturg](#) for Court Theatre and the production [dramaturg](#) for *The Chairs*.

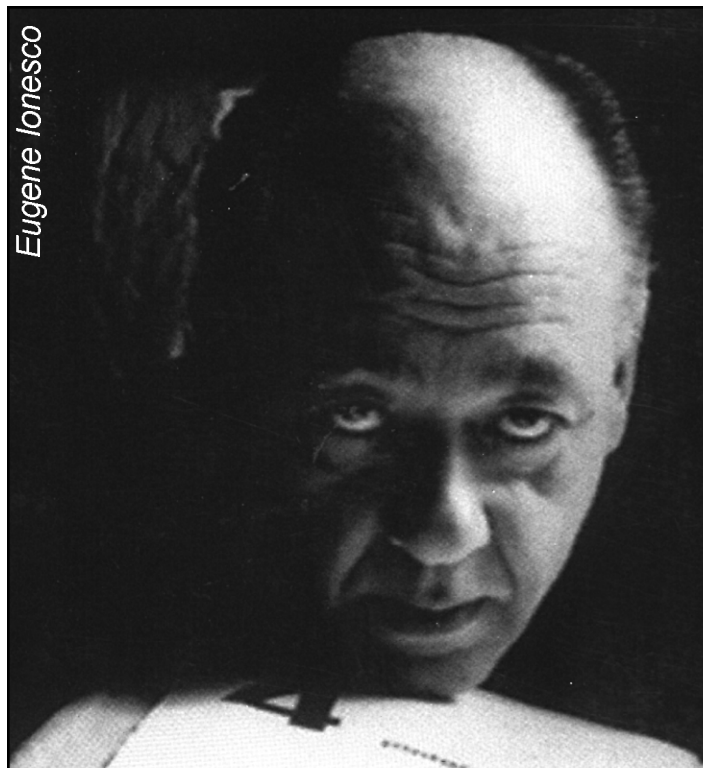
Click on the links below to view video clips of Celise introducing Eugene Ionesco and giving some historical background to the play *The Chairs*.

[Eugene Ionesco](#)

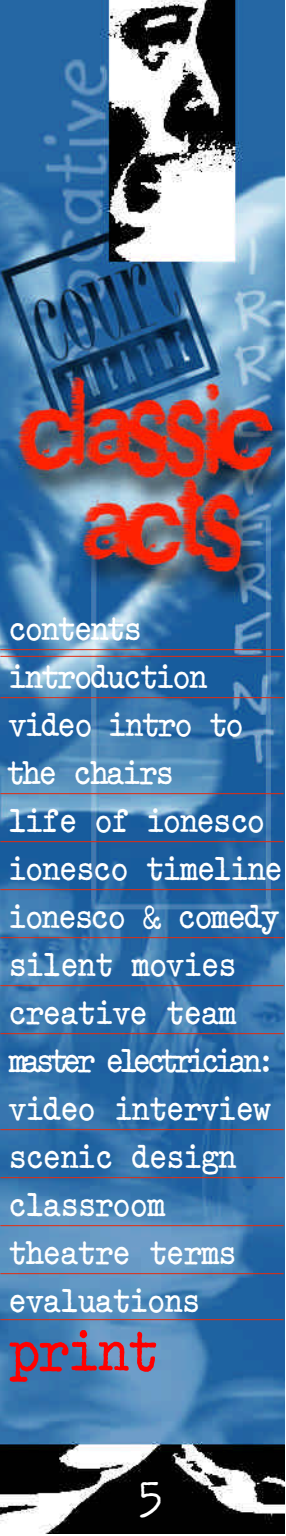
[What is absurdism in theatre](#)

[Historical context for the play](#)

[How to watch an absurdist play](#)



Celise Kalke, Court Theatre Dramaturg



the life of Ionesco

<http://www.levity.com/corduroy/ionesco.htm>

The Romanian-born Eugène Ionesco, b. Nov. 26, 1912 [d. 1994], is one of the foremost playwrights of the Theater of the Absurd. The son of a Romanian father and a French mother, he spent most of his childhood in France, but in his early teenage years returned to Romania, where he qualified as a teacher of French and married in 1936. He returned to France in 1938 to complete his doctoral thesis. Caught by the outbreak of war in 1939, he settled there, earning his living as a proof reader for publishers.

Ionesco came to playwriting almost by chance. Having decided to learn English, he was struck by the emptiness of the clichés of daily conversation that appeared in his phrase book. Out of such non-sensical sentences he constructed his first play, *The Bald Soprano* (1950; Eng. trans., 1958), which satirizes the deadliness and idiocy of the daily life of a bourgeois society frozen in meaningless formalities.

Greatly surprised by the success of the play, Ionesco embarked on a career as a writer of what he called antiplays, which characteristically combine a dream or nightmare atmosphere with grotesque, bizarre, and whimsical humor. In his work the tragic and farcical are fused. In *The Lesson* (1951; Eng. trans., 1958), a teacher gains domination over his pupil through his superior use of language and finally kills her. In *The Chairs* (1952; Eng. trans., 1958), an old couple attempt to pass on their total life experience to humanity by inviting to a gathering a vast crowd of guests who never arrive but whose nonpresence is symbolized by a proliferation of empty chairs.

Having convinced themselves that the crowd is assembled, the old people kill themselves, leaving the revelation of their message to an orator they have engaged who, as an added irony, turns out to be a feeble minded deaf-mute.

The image, typical of Ionesco, shows his frustrations as a dramatist who is trying to convey his life experience to a crowd of vacant chairs through the mediation of actors who do not understand his message. Similar images of despair concerning the isolation of the individual in the universe and the inevitability of death dominate Ionesco's work. His break-through into the English-speaking theater came with *Rhinoceros* (1959; Eng. trans., 1960), in which totalitarianism is depicted as a disease that turns human beings into savage rhinoceroses. The hero of this play, Berenger, a simple sort of Everyman, who is also a self-image of Ionesco, reappears in *The Killer* (1958; Eng. trans., 1960), *Exit the King* (1962; Eng. trans., 1963), *A Stroll in the Air* (1963; Eng. trans., 1965), and *Hunger and Thirst* (1964; Eng. trans., 1966).

Elected a member of the Academie Francaise in 1970, Ionesco has also published theoretical writings, *Notes and Counternotes* (1962; Eng. trans., 1964); *Fragments of a Journal* (1966; Eng. trans., 1968); and a novel, *Le Solitaire* (1973), on which his 1971 film *La Vase* (with Ionesco playing the lead) was based. *Journeys Among the Dead* (1980; Eng. trans., 1984) is a later play.

Martin Esslin

Bibliography: Coe, Richard N., Eugène Ionesco: A Study of His Work (1968); Hayman, Ronald, Eugène Ionesco (1976); Lamont, Rosette C., comp., Ionesco: A Collection of Critical Essays (1973); Lamont, R.C., and Friedman, M.J., eds., The Two Faces of Ionesco (1978); Lazar, Moshe, ed., The Dream and the Play: Ionesco's Theatrical Quest (1982); Lewis, Allan, Ionesco (1972); Pronko, Leonard C., Eugène Ionesco (1965).

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ionesco time-line

Adapted from *Ionesco: A collection of Critical Essays* edited by Rosette C. Lamont

1912 November 16: Eugene Ionesco born in Slatina, Rumania to a Romanian father and French mother.

1913 Ionesco brought to Paris by his parents.

1914-1918 World War I

1921 Ionesco's mother takes Ionesco and his sister to La Chapelle-Anthenaise, a small village in Mayenne which will play an important part in the playwright's private mythology. It is described in his Journals, and appears in some of his plays.

1925 Ionesco returns to Rumania and begins to learn Rumanian.

1929 He is admitted to Bucharest University.

1930 His first article is published in the review Zodiac.

1931 Publication of a volume of poetry, *Elegy of Minuscule Beings*.

1932 Ionesco contributes to Azi, Viata Literara.

1934 Publication of *Nu (No)*, a collection of essays in which one chapter deals with the fusion of opposites.

1936 Ionesco marries Rodica Burileano.

1937 Ionesco teaches French at a school in Bucharest.

1938 Ionesco receives a fellowship from the Rumanian government to write a thesis in Paris on the subject of Dean in Modern French Poetry.

1939 Ionesco and his wife arrive in Paris. World War II begins.

1940-1944 During the occupation of France Ionesco and his family settle in Marseilles.

1944 Ionesco's daughter Marie-France is born.

1945 End of World War II

1949 Ionesco writes *La Cantatrice Chauve (The Bald Soprano)*.

1950 *La Cantatrice Chauve (The Bald Soprano)* is presented on May 11 at the Theatre des Noctambules (directed by Nicolas Bataille). Ionesco writes *La Leçon (The Lesson)* and *Jacques ou la soumission*.

1951 *La Leçon (The Lesson)*, directed by Sylvain Dhomme, is presented at the Théâtre de Poche on February 20.

Ionesco writes *Les Chaises (The Chairs)*. He plays a part in a dramatization of Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*.

1952 Ionesco writes *Victimes du Devoir (Victims of Duty)*.

1953 Jacques Mauclair directs *Victimes du Devoir*. Publication of Volume I of his Theatre, with a preface by J. Lemarchand.

1954 *Amédée ou comment s'en débarrasser*, directed by Jean-Marie Serreau, is presented at the Théâtre de Babylone on April 14. "Oriflamme," the novella on which the play is based, is published in The Nouvelles Revue Française.

1956 Performance of *L'Impromptu de l'Alma* at the Studeio des Champs-Élysées on February 20. Ionesco story *La Vase* (*Slime*) is published by the Cahiers des Saisons.

1957 Ionesco writes *Tuers sans gages* (*The Killer*) in London.

1958 Ionesco writes *Rhinocéros*. The play is first presented at the Schauspielhaus in Düsseldorf.

1962 *Le Roi se Meurt* (*Exit the King*), directed by Jacques Mauclair, is presented at the Théâtre de l'Alliance Française.

1967 The Mercure de France publishes *Fragments of a Journal*.

1968 The Mercure de Frances publishes *Present Past Past Present*, the second volume of Ionesco's Journals.

1969 Skira publishes *Découvertes*, illustrated by the author.

1970 *Jeux de Massacre*, directed by Jorge Lavelli, is given at the Théâtre Montparnasse.

1970 Ionesco addresses the Académie Française as a new member on February 25.

1972 *Macbett*, directed by Jacques Mauclair, is given at the Théâtre Rive Gauche.

1973 *Ce formidable bordel* (*A Hell of a Mess*)

1994 March 28, Paris, France Ionesco dies in Paris



Eugene Ionesco



More information on Ionesco:

<http://www.curtainup.com/chairs.html>

<http://freespace.virgin.net/numb.world/rhino productions.htm>

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/ionesco.htm>

ionesco and comedy

“A writer like Ionesco is basically a dreamer. He daydreams his stories and plays; that is why his night-dreams are so important to him. This also is perhaps the source of the perpetual freshness and childlike penetration of Ionesco’s vision: Every new dream, every new manifestation of his imagination comes to him as something wholly unexpected, delightfully or frighteningly surprising. ‘Insolite’ is the French expression he uses for this quality of his experience.”

Martin Esslin

Marx was wrong: jealousy
and pride, emotional
forces, are just as
responsible as hunger and
economic necessity for our
action; they explain the
whole of History, and the
initial fall of man. The
authors of the Bible were in
possession of a psychological
truth that is both
fundamental and universal.

Ionesco, Fragments from a
Journal

“A theatrical character] must be as comic as he is moving, as distressing as he is ridiculous. Besides, one cannot pull perfect characters out of oneself, for an author is not perfect: he is a fool, like the rest of mankind!”

Eugene Ionesco, Interview, 1949

“It was April 1960. . . .I had asked Ionesco’s agent whether I could meet him. She invited me to a party at her house. . . . It was a very crowded party-Ionesco was surrounded by a crowd-so I was introduced to Mme. Ionesco. . . .a diminutive lady of strikingly Oriental features. (She was actually Romanian.) To start the conversation I made some remarks about the play and the big success that it was. Surely, M. Ionesco must be very happy. ‘Non, monsieur. Il est triste,’ came the surprising reply. But why should he be sad?

‘Il a peur de la mort.’ (He is afraid of death.)”

Martin Esslin

“When I manage to detach myself from the world and feel able to take a good look at it, it seem to me to be comic in its improbability. . . . the absurd is conceived as being in some way an intrinsic part of existence. Now for me, intrinsically, everything that exists is logical, there is nothing absurd about it. It is the consciousness of being and existing that is astonishing. . . . And I believe I am a comic writer thanks to this faculty, not only for observation, but for detachment, for being able to stand outside myself.

“...I think that man must either be unhappy (metaphysically unhappy) or stupid.”

“The human drama is as absurd as it is painful.”

“I have never succeeded in becoming completely used to existence...”

Eugene Ionesco, Interview, 1949

“ I write in order to find
out what I think”

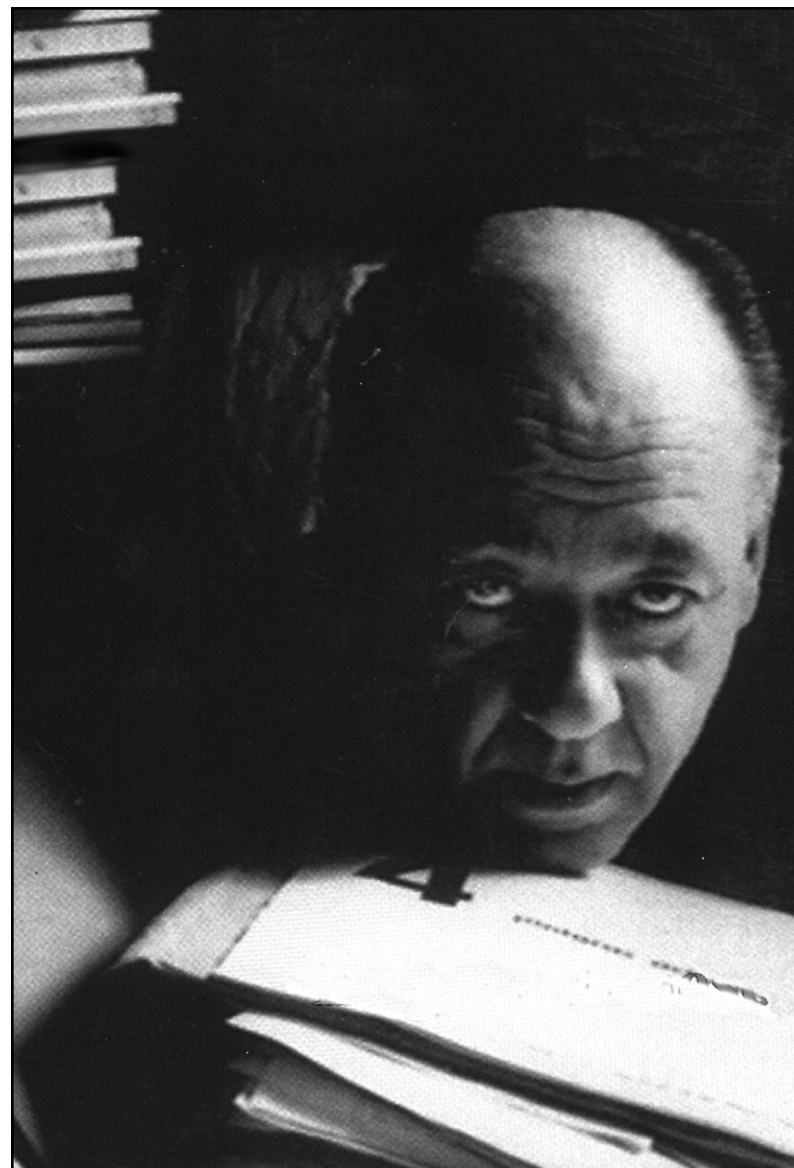
"At certain moments the world seems to be devoid of meaning, and reality seems unreal. It is this feeling of the unreal, the search for an essential reality, forgotten and nameless — apart from which I do not feel that I exist — that I have tried to express through these characters of mine who wander about inarticulately, having nothing of their own aside from their anguish, their remorse, their frustration, the emptiness of their lives. Being submerged in the meaningless cannot be other than grotesque, their tragedy can only excite laughter. Since I find the world incomprehensible, I am waiting for someone to explain it to me..."

"[this play should] convey my own feelings as to the unreality of the world."

"It's not a certain society that seems ridiculous to me, it's mankind."

Eugene Ionesco

Laughter. . . laughter. . . ,
 certainly I cannot say I do
 not try to arouse laughter;
 however, that is not my most
 important object! Laughter
 is merely the by-product of a
 dramatic conflict that one
 sees on the stage, or that
 one does NOT see if the play
 is a comedy, but then it is
 still implied, and laughter
 comes as a reprieve: we laugh
 so as not to cry. . . .
 Eugene Ionesco,
 Interview, 1949



Eugene Ionesco

ionesco and the silent movies

Ionesco once wrote that he considered his literary ancestors to be Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers and the Keystone Cops, while his play *The Chairs* mentions comedic actor Stan Laurel of Laurel and Hardy fame.

Watching these classic silent movies can help in understanding the 'absurd' world of Ionesco's plays.

Click on the pictures to see clips from some of the greats of the silent movies.



See more of these clips at:

<http://silent-stars.com/Slapstick/home.html>



Charlie Chaplin,
A Dog's Life, 1918



Buster Keaton,
Steamboat Bill Jr., 1928



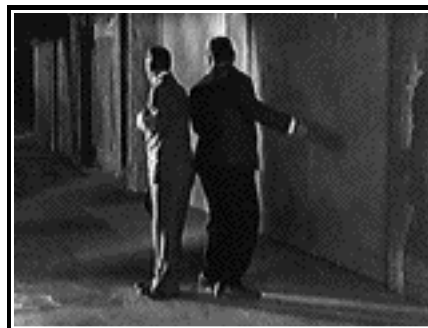
Buster Keaton,
The Scarecrow, 1922



Buster Keaton,
One Week, 1920



Buster Keaton,
My Wife's Relations, 1922



Laurel and Hardy
Do Detectives Think, 1927



Laurel and Hardy
Lucky Dog, 1919

The Director

“The most important thing a director can do for an actor is to awaken the actor’s intuition and assure the intuition that it is going to be witnessed and used.”

“Essentially an actor says, ‘I will trust the director to function in the capacity of my critical brain while I give my intuitive brain full opportunity to express. I will rely on the director to keep me from looking foolish.’”

William Ball

The Director is similar to the captain or coach of a team of talented individuals, all of whom contribute a great deal to a production, and without whom it could never take place. Like a coach, the Director’s job is to get the best out of every individual. She or he will decide on the general game plan and then work with the team to make this vision a reality.



For one of the most insightful and easily read books on directing read William Ball’s *A Sense of Direction: Some Observations of the Art of Directing*. Published by Drama Book Publishers, New York. ISBN 0-89676-082-0

Directors differ widely in their styles as do coaches, but the Director has the ultimate responsibility for determining what happens on stage. Some directors, such as Robert Wilson or Julie Taymor (*The Lion King* or the movie *Titus*), are more particularly visually oriented and have a strong sense of what the production is to look like. They then work with their designers to bring those ideas to the stage. Other directors tend to focus more exclusively on the script and the actors; they will give their designers more general guidance by talking about a mood or tone for each scene and then rely on their designers to originate a larger part of the design ideas.

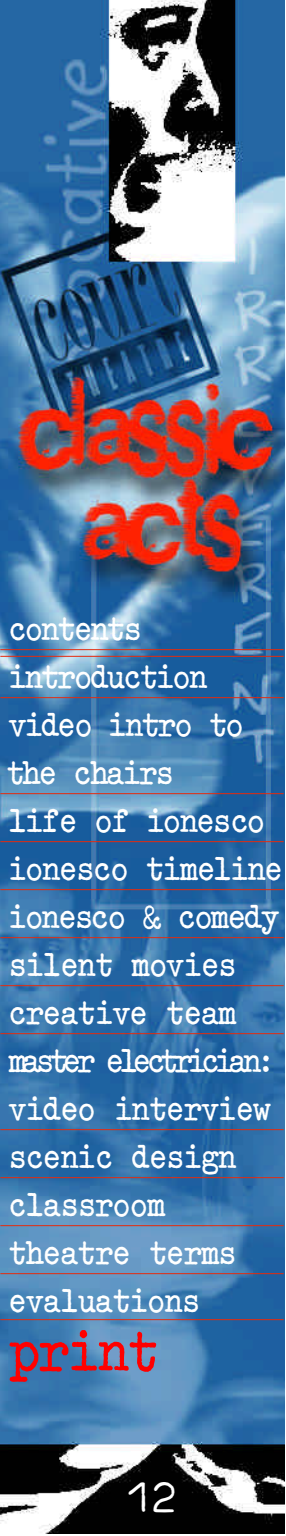
The Scenic Designer

The scenic designer is responsible for envisioning the set, the setting, the place where the action of the play takes place. They may re-create a realistic world, such as a 7-Eleven convenience store, as for Eric Bogosian’s *SubUrbia*, or it may be a very abstract unreal world.

The Scenic designer often begins her or his design process by looking at photographs or paintings. He or she will then produce a series of sketches using pencil or water colors for example. More and more designers are turning to computers and create their sketches in applications such as Photoshop.

In most cases scenic designers will then build a scale model of the set.

Scenic designs then have to draw up plans similar to those created by architects. These plans give the *precise* dimensions for the set, from which the set builders work.



The Costume Designer

The Costume Designer creates the designs for the clothes the actors wear. The designer considers the period of the play, the time in history that the events take place, the character and role in society (Queen, servant, doctor etc.) of the person and whether or not the design team's vision of the production is literal—trying to make everything in the production look as close to the real world as he or she can—or more abstract, metaphorical.

It is possible to mount a production of *Hamlet*, of course, with all the actors in period dress, or with everyone in black polo neck shirts, black pants and black shoes.

The Costume Designer may decide to choose to make subtle choices about the costume design, such as placing people from a specific group in clothes whose colors are drawn from the same color palette.

The Costume Designer will begin by doing a good deal of historical research (if the play is not a contemporary one) and will then produce a series of preliminary sketches. These will be shown to the Director and the rest of the design team and discussed. From this point on the Costume Designer will produce color renderings and will find samples of actual fabric for each costume.

The Sound Designer

The Sound Designer is responsible for what can be the most subtle yet powerful element of the design of a production. As an audience we can be very aware of sound effects such as thunder or a gun shot, but much of the Sound Designer's work goes almost, if not completely, unnoticed. Sound effects and music which help establish a

location or a mood can affect us on an almost subliminal level. Even without a set at all, the right soundscape can help our imaginations create a clear sense of where the action is set. Some sound cues are required by the script, while others are decided upon by the sound designer and the Director where they want to add to what is suggested in the written script.

Sounds can range from the wholly naturalistic to effects that are abstract. The music used may be taken from the period of the play, or from another period—sometimes written especially for the production—but which is intended to create an atmosphere or convey a mood.

The Dramaturg

The Dramaturg is the person responsible for helping the director interpret the play, and for coordinating and doing the research needed to understand the play. The Dramaturg is a member of the Creative team, and also sometimes works closely with the designers as they do their research. The Dramaturg is also responsible for editing the text of the play - comparing different editions and/or deciding on different translations. Finally, the Dramaturg is responsible for writing the program notes and any other articles about the play (including magazine articles) that will be distributed to the audience.

Carrie Hill, Court Theatre's Master Electrician, has the responsibility of looking after all the stage lighting equipment at the theatre, including all the lighting instruments you can see above the audience and the stage, and the computer-driven system that operates them.

Carrie takes the design from the Lighting Designer and makes it a reality, making sure that the lighting instruments are hung in the correct places and that the computer is programmed so that the instruments come on at the appropriate level of brightness for each scene.

Click on the links below to watch video clips of Carrie talking about her job.



Carrie Hill, Master Electrician at Court Theatre



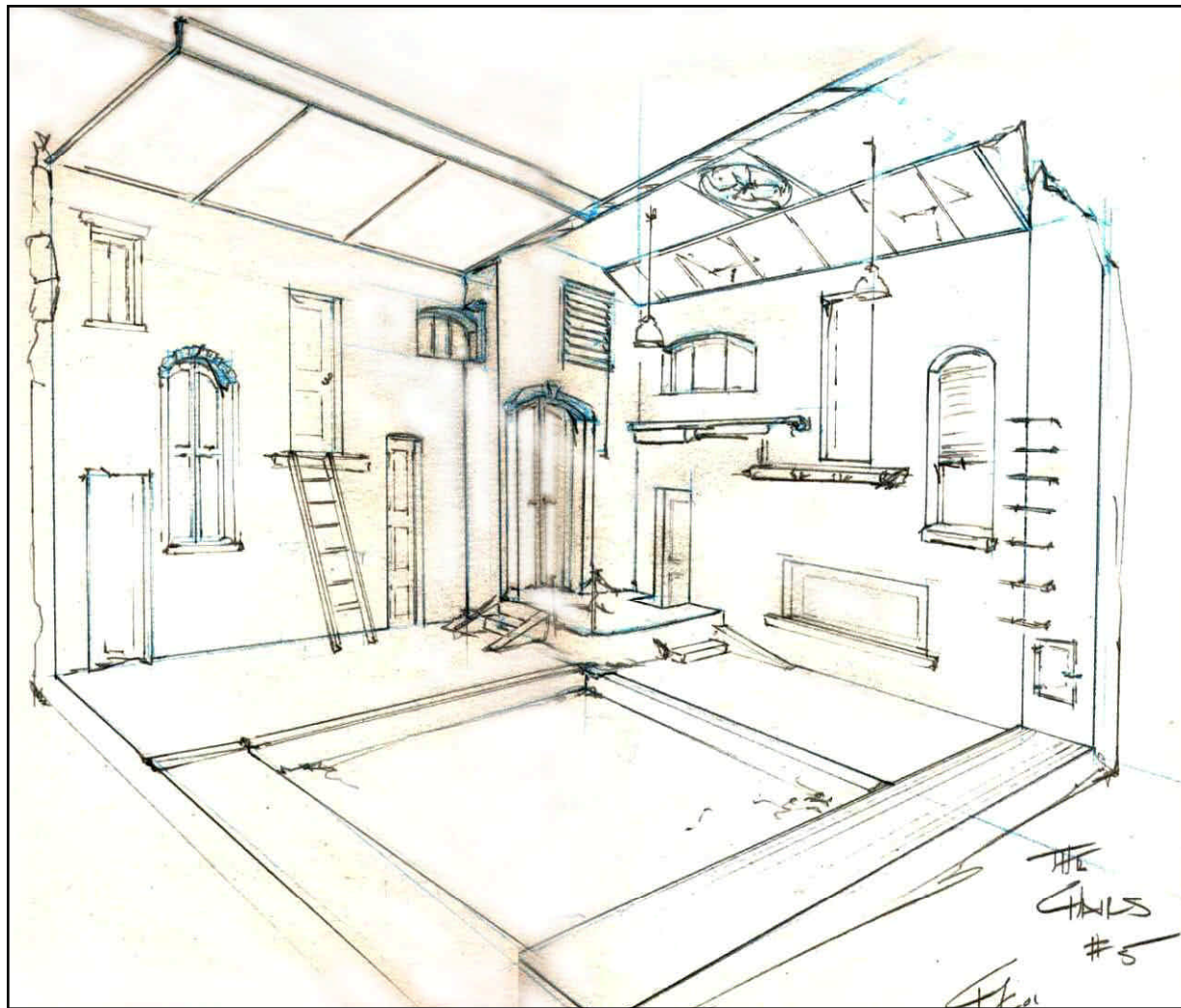
[Carrie talks about her job as master electrician](#)

[An introduction to the lighting instruments used at Court Theatre](#)

[A tour of the lighting control booth](#)

[High above Court's auditorium and stage Carrie explains how lighting instruments are hung and focussed](#)

set design for the chairs



An early drawing of The Chairs set by scenic designer Geoffrey Curley.

How did the set design change during the design process from this early idea?
Look at the set under construction on the next page...



The set for The Chairs, designed by Geoffrey Curley, under construction

classroom activities



The set of The Chairs being painted

1. Choose a TV sitcom you are familiar with, or an episode of *The Simpsons*. What aspects of human behavior do you think these programs draw on for their humor? Are they exaggerated or 'absurd' in any way? Can you see a relation between them and *The Chairs*?
2. Watch a tape of Charlie Chaplin's *Hard Times*, or any other Chaplin movie. What similarities do you see between the films of Chaplin and the writing of Ionesco?
3. World War 2 called into question many assumptions about human nature and society. How might the thinking behind what Martin Esslin termed [absurdism](#), and in particular the thinking of Ionesco, have been shaped by this event?
4. Having watched Court Theatre's production of *The Chairs*, who do you think the Orator really was? Do you believe he was silent because he had nothing to say or because he had been silenced?
5. Think about the set for *The Chairs*. Is the set wholly [realistic](#), or is it a more [symbolic](#) or [stylized](#) version of reality?

From your watching of the play, do you think this is a good setting for the play or not? Think in detail about your reasons.

Using photographs from color magazines, collect images that you think would form the basis of an effective set for the play. If you were the [Scenic Designer](#) how would you explain your choice of images to a [Director](#)?

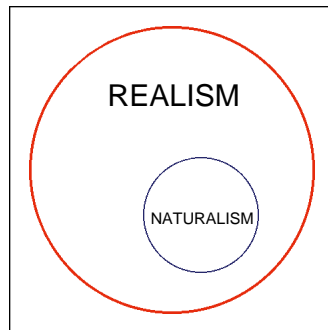


Realism, Naturalism and beyond.

The concepts of REALISM and NATURALISM have specific meanings when related to the theatre, but over the years they have tended to become virtually synonymous and are often used interchangeably. They tend to be linked together in opposition to the notions of expressionism or symbolism.

Realism

Realism is generally considered a broad umbrella of which Naturalism is part. Although Shakespeare talks of “holding a mirror up to nature”, and there are many elements of Shakespeare’s writing that may be said to be realistic, REALISM as a movement emerged between 1830 and 1880.



Realism aims to present an objective view of human psychology and social reality. It does not aim to give us a photographic reproduction of reality—to put reality itself onstage. It aims to give the audience the *illusion* of reality.

Its dialogues, what the characters say to each other, “are drawn from the speech patterns of a period or of a social or occupational group. The acting makes the text (what the actors say) appear natural, downplaying the literary or poetical effects by stressing the spontaneous and psychological aspects of the interaction between the characters.” (*Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*)

In other words, even though the playwright will have spent many hours carefully writing the actors’ speeches and may have consciously included rhetorical devices such as rhythm, alliteration, parallelism or repetition, the actors’ job is to downplay these attempts to make the language engaging and to emphasize the *apparent* REALISM of the scene.

Well known realistic playwrights are Ibsen, Shaw or in the modern era, David Mamet. Realism was the basis of the work of the great acting teacher Stanislavsky.

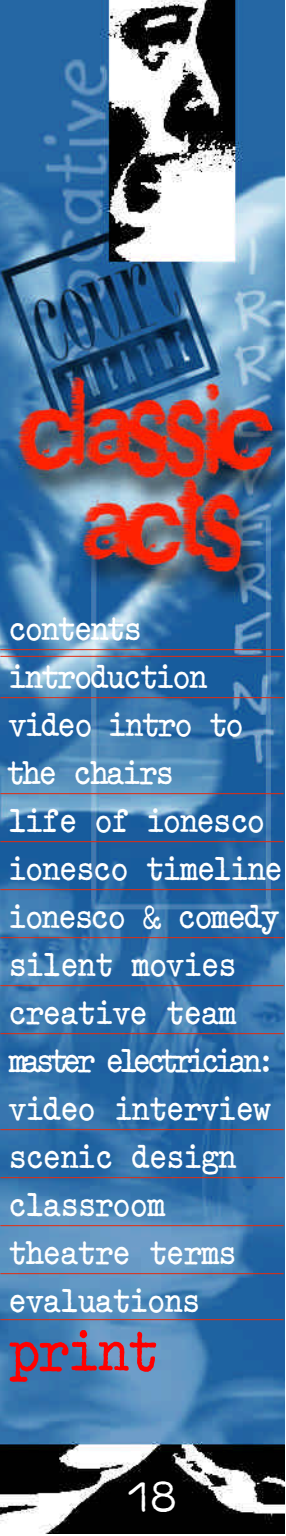
Naturalism

“Historically, NATURALISM is an artistic movement that, around 1880-1890, advocated a total reproduction of...reality, stressing the material aspects of human existence.” (*Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*) NATURALISM aimed to use the rigorous methodology of scientific research to observe and analyse society.

The first notable exponent of NATURALISM in literature was French novelist and playwright Emile Zola. His novel *Therese Raquin*, which he himself then adapted into a play, is one of the best known examples of NATURALISM in literature. Zola believed that nothing should be on stage that did not appear in nature. In the 1880’s at the Théâtre Libre in Paris, Antonin Antoine used bloody quarters of beef and live chickens onstage.

NATURALISM aimed to shatter the world of illusion onstage.

As an artistic movement it was short lived, because short of observing real people in ‘real’ situations, *all* that is placed onstage and watched by an audience is to a degree artificial and relies on creating a believable illusion.



In Roman times sea-battles were staged on lakes or in flooded amphitheatres. It was thought to be slaves who manned the boats and who fought in these 'mock' sea battles, known as *naumachia*. The participants actually died fighting for the entertainment of others. In 52 AD 19,000 men fought on Fucine Lake, east of Rome. Many perished.

Clearly such naturalism is not widely accepted these days, though we are still fascinated by extreme drama in life. We watch "real" court cases on TV; we follow "real" police officers as they chase and engage with "real" villains; we watch "real" people on remote islands.

Symbolism

Most artistic movements begin as a reaction against what has gone before. This seems to be true in every age. SYMBOLISM began as an opposition to naturalism. It began in Paris in the early 1890's. "The essential of symbolism was the abandonment of the appearances of life in favor of its spirit, symbolically represented and in favor of a more *poetic* form of drama." (*The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre*)

Symbol

"A symbol is something which represents something else (often an idea or a quality) by analogy or association. Thus 'white', 'lion', and 'rose' commonly symbolize or represent innocence, courage or beauty. Such symbols exist by convention and tradition. A serpent may stand for evil or wisdom according to different conventions. Writers use these conventional symbols, but also invent and create symbols of their own." (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

In literature and thus in drama, symbols may take the form of similes and metaphors. The theatrical production of a play adds the possibility for visual and auditory symbols.

Stylization

A way of presenting a play or theatrical production that "represents reality in a simplified way, stripped to its essential features, eliminating excess detail." (*Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*)

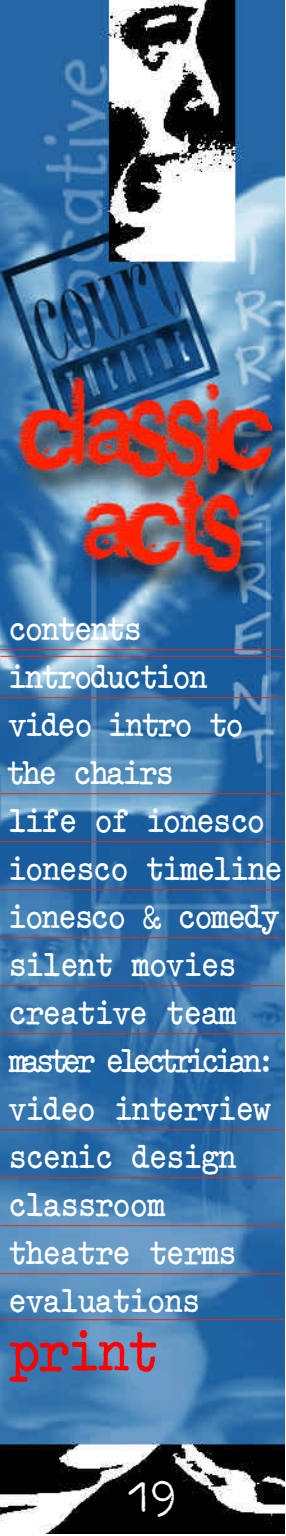
Onstage actors don't die or (usually) eat a full meal. The actor replaces the real act with a *stylized* representation of the act. We are not troubled to even see actors eating from an empty plate—or travelling in a non-existent boat—we accept these things as *signifying*—standing for—the real act by virtue of a *convention*—a rule, or set of rules some of which we already come to the theatre with, because they are part of our culture (we know that anyone who dies in a play will be back for the curtain call), or because the rules are worked out during the performance between the actors and the audience. We can come to understand and accept that actors walking across a certain area of the stage in a certain manner are in actual fact "in a boat".

Surrealism

An artistic and literary movement starting in France in the 1920s. The poet Andre Breton drew up his *Manifeste du Surrealisme* in 1924.

Surrealism was anti-rational and anti-realist. It advocated the liberation of the mind from logic: instead, art should grow out of confrontation with the unconscious mind. Dreams, hallucinating states, automatic writing, and even nonsense are the inspiration and subject matter of art.

Especially in the art world, surrealism has been widely influential.



Absurd, Theatre of the Absurd.

The philosophy of EXISTENTIALISM tends to depict man as isolated in a purposeless and incomprehensible universe of space and time. Lacking any essential motive or guiding principles, or any inherent sense of truth or meaning, man's existence is characterized by anxiety and absurdity.

During the twentieth century many writers have depicted man's absurd status. The European literary movements of EXPRESSIONISM and SURREALISM provided techniques well adapted for elaborating this vision. In prose, works by the German novelist Franz Kafka such as *The Trial* (1925) and *Metamorphosis* (1912) exhibit their protagonists as having to endure bizarre and incomprehensible situations. In the theatre, surrealism and FARCE come together to form a new kind of drama. The label 'Theatre of the Absurd' has been common since Martin Esslin's book of that title, published in 1961.

'Absurd' drama flourished in the 1950s: Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter are notable playwrights whose works have been thus labeled.

Expressionism

"Expressionism originally dominated German theatre for some time during the 1920's. It too was a reaction against theatrical realism, it sought to mirror inner psychological realities rather than physical appearances." (*The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre*)

Expressionism at this time tended to focus on extreme psychological states and explore them "in a bold use of symbolic settings [scenery] and costumes. Expressionism was in many ways primarily a designer's theatre."

Expressionist writers and painters show reality distorted by an emotional or abnormal state of mind, even by

madness. Van Gogh's famous violent landscapes with whirls of thick paint representing cornfields and menacing v-shaped black crows are examples of this kind of distortion.

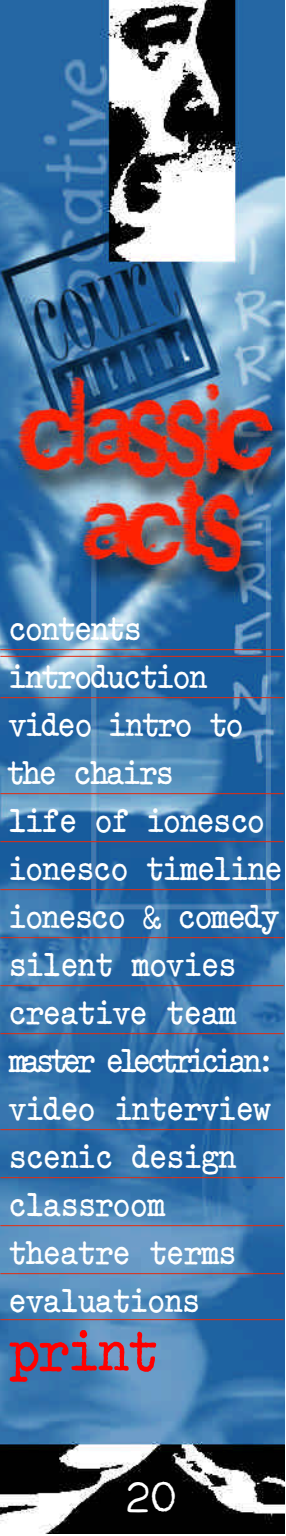
In literature the Swedish dramatist Strindberg is a notable exponent of Expressionism. His *Dream Play* (1901) dislocates the ordinary sequence of time and conveys a view of the unreality of man's existence through a collection of dream-like fragments. This departure from the rigidities of realism in the theatre has been highly influential in twentieth-century dramatic writing, though the Expressionist movement as such was short lived.

Farce

A kind of drama intended primarily to provoke laughter, using exaggerated characters and complicated plots, full of absurd episodes, ludicrous situations and knockabout action. Mistaken identity is frequently an element in the plot.

Farce is obviously related to comedy, but it has no apparent intention other than rumbustious entertainment and the good-natured depiction of folly. Unlike satire, it is not censorious.

Farcical episodes date back to Aristophanes and occur alongside serious drama in all ages. The derivation of the word is suggestive. The Latin term *farsa* was first applied to passages of medieval French inserted in the Latin text of the Mass: then it came to be used to describe impromptu additions to religious plays (INTERLUDES in the English MYSTERY PLAYS) and from this use its modern meaning has developed.



Teacher and Student Evaluations

The feedback you give us on your visit to Court Theater and **classic acts!** will help us to improve both.

You can follow these links to Adobe Acrobat versions of the evaluation forms:

[Teacher Evaluation Form \(.pdf\)](#)

[Student Evaluation Form \(.pdf\)](#)

These forms can be printed out and returned by mail to:

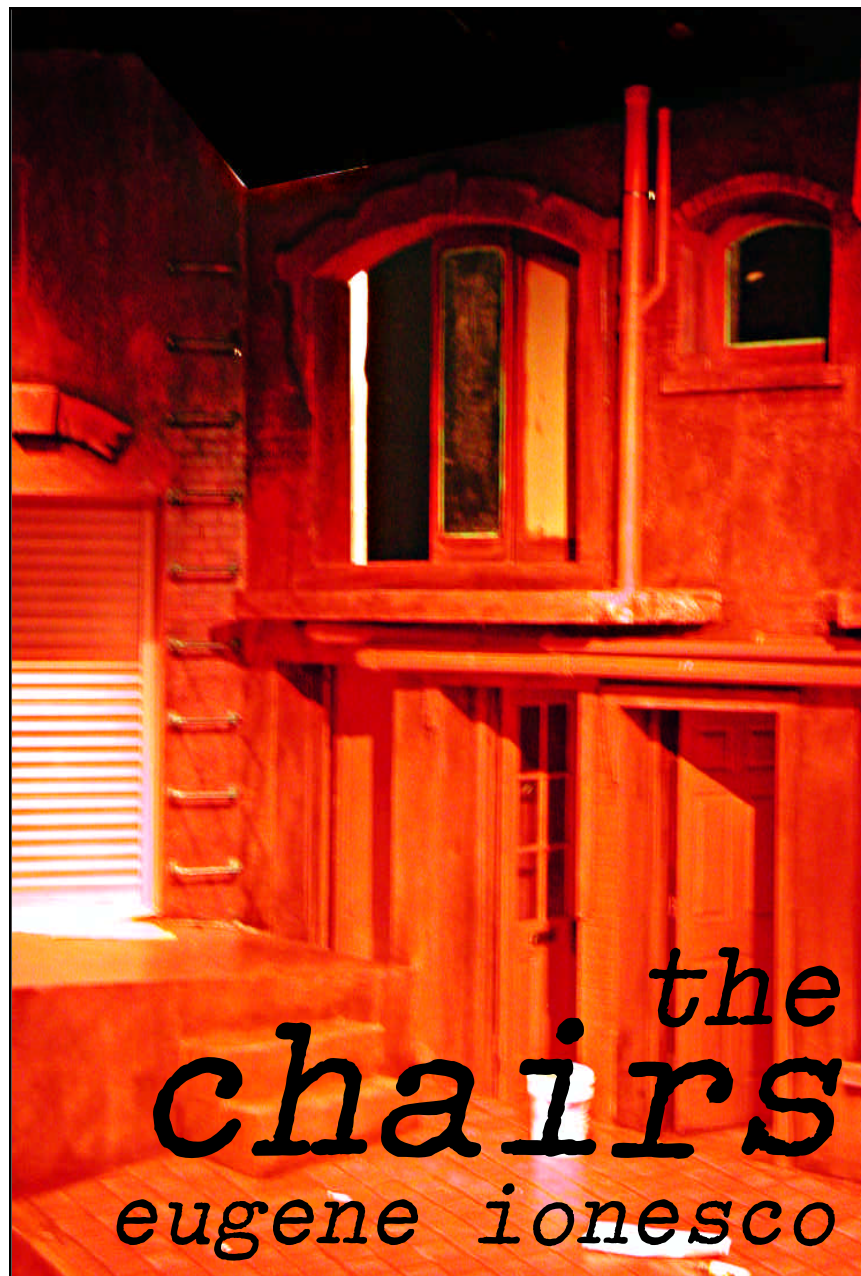
Court Theatre
5535 South Ellis Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

FAX: (773) 834-1897

You will also find **Microsoft Word** versions of these files in the folder named EVALUATIONS, included on the CD.

These can be filled out on the computer and e-mailed as attachments to:

education@courttheatre.org



classic acts

from court theatre's
CAST partnership

classic acts was designed & edited by Roger Smart
with extensive dramaturgical information
compiled and edited by Celise Kalke.
Additional assistance from Charles Newell,
Bill O'Connor and Carrie Hill.

click here
to quit

For technical assistance in the use of
this CD-ROM please call 773.702.8874
or e-mail education@courtheatre.org

Multi-media presentation created using
QuarkXpress, Adobe Acrobat,
Adobe Photoshop, iMovie,
Felt Tip Sound Studio & SoundApp

CLASSICS!
ACTORS!
STUDENTS!
TEACHERS!

Made with
Macintosh

Court Theatre High School Matinee Program
Teacher Evaluation

Name _____
School _____
Department/Subject _____
School Address _____

School Phone _____ Fax _____
Home Address _____

Home Phone _____ e-mail _____
Production _____
Date Attended _____
of Students Participating _____ Grade level _____
Subject of class _____

-
1. Did you enjoy the performance? Yes___ No___
 2. Did your students indicate that they had enjoyed the performance? Yes___ No___
 3. Did you feel the performance was educationally relevant? Yes___ No___
 4. If so, please give some reasons.

5. If not, why not?

6. Did you use the Study Guide that was provided? Yes___ No___

7. If so, what parts did you find useful?

8. If not, why not?

9. What recommendations would you make for improving/updating the Study Guide format?

[illegible]

_(please continue of back of sheet)

10. Did the experience of seeing this live performance stimulate or motivate your students to:

_____ Discuss the play in class _____ Write critical essays

_____Act out scenes from the play

____Act out original skits ____Write original poetry, plays etc.

_____ Draw or create any type of artwork _____ Other

(specify) _____

(please continue on back of sheet)

Please rate the following:

Study Guide:

	Poor-----		Good-----		Excellent
Thoroughness	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to use	1	2	3	4	5
Connected to curricula	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant to students	1	2	3	4	5
Fun	1	2	3	4	5
Prepared Teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Prepared Student	1	2	3	4	5

Post-Show Discussion:

Helped clarify ambiguities	1	2	3	4	5
Gave students voice	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraged varied opinions	1	2	3	4	5
Was educationally relevant	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, how would you describe your experience at Court?

(please continue of back of sheet)

What suggestions would you have for improving the Court experience?

(please continue of back of sheet)

Did you attend the teacher workshop and free preview for this production?

Yes___ No ___

If not, would you like information on the An Audience at Court program? Yes___ No ___

Would you be interested in classroom workshops at your school with Court artists?

Yes___ No ___

Court Theatre High School Matinee Program
Student Evaluation

Name _____ Age _____ Grade _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Name of Show _____

Did you enjoy the performance or not? Please give your reasons.

What did you think about the production values?
(*set design, lights, costumes, sound and props*)

What did you think about the acting? Were there any actors you particularly liked or disliked, and why?

If you could talk to the playwright, the director or the designers of this play or both, what sort of things would you like to say to them?

Did you use the multi-media CD *Classic Acts*? Did you find it interesting, informative and easy to use?

Suggest any improvements you would like to see made to the multi-media CD *Classic Acts*
