

ABSTRACT

THE RHINOCEROS IN 2006: A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS OF EUGENE IONESCO'S *RHINOCEROS*

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This paper supports Miami University's production of Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* by providing a dramaturgical analysis of Ionesco's text, his characters, and his genre of anti-theatre. Through the research, the paper discusses director Dr. William Doan's concept of technology as a modern-day threat of mass conformity, how it was introduced as a metaphor for Ionesco's rhinoceroses, and how it was supported throughout the production process with directorial and design choices. Further, the paper questions whether Ionesco's Theatre of the Absurd and, more specifically, his anti-theatre are effective in 2006.

THE RHINOCEROS IN 2006: A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS
OF EUGENE IONESCO'S *RHINOCEROS*

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Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*:
Analysis of Text and Characters

Originally written as a short story published in *Lettres Nouvelles* in 1957¹ and first performed notably in 1960 in Paris, France at the Odeon Theatre², *Rhinoceros* remains one of his most commonly produced plays. Its world premiere in Germany was given a "ten-minute ovation"³, and its popularity has not since worn off. The absurdity of the plot and the power of his message make *Rhinoceros* one of Ionesco's most meaningful and captivating works.

Later given the title of the Theatre of the Absurd, Ionesco's genre of anti-theatre finds influence in the various historical moments surrounding it. The two world wars and their impact on European civilization sparked a new age in literature and art. Obviously situated in a period of historical strife, the Modernist's anti-theatricality "attacks not the theatre itself, but the value of theatricality"⁴. Ionesco himself credits his ability to be a part of this new genre to the previous movements, including Surrealism and Dadaism, genres also credited to the Modernist period. Ionesco even goes one step further, claiming that Absurdism and its often-considered parallel philosophy, Existentialism, stretch farther into the past:

At first I rejected it, because I thought that everything was absurd, and that the notion of the absurd had become prominent only because of existentialism, because of Sartre and Camus. But then I found ancestors, like Shakespeare, who said, in *Macbeth*, that the world is full of sound and fury, a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. ⁵

Ionesco's plays reflect something timeless: themes that have been and will be analyzed continually. An analysis of any Absurdist playwright, especially the epitome of the Theatre of the Absurd, goes no where without considering Martin Esslin's discussion of the genre. Ionesco rarely claims to label himself anything; in fact, he considered himself so contradictory from week to week, his only claim was that "no statement can be absolute."⁶ It is not surprising he rejects the name given to categorize his drama: "Yes, I find that the name 'theatre of the absurd' which has been glued on to us is

absolutely meaningless. All theater is absurd.”⁷ Again, Ionesco is commenting on his view of anti-theatricality—the theatricality of the Naturalist and Realist periods is something he would consider “absurd” in their attempts to ignore the innate theatricality of trying to represent “real life” on stage. However, categorized it is, in probably one of the most well-known theoretical collections of any genre. This manifesto, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, touts Ionesco as a leading avant-garde playwright, among Beckett, Genet, and Adamov. Esslin describes the goals of this movement: “The Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.”⁸ This sentence briefly sums up a definition of the works of the Theatre of the Absurd—expressing the “senselessness of the human condition” through the “open abandonment of rational devices.” Esslin’s description becomes the perfect starting place for a discussion of Ionesco’s anti-theatre. Esslin historicizes the growth of the Absurdist movement through miming, Shakespeare, and silent-film comedies, as well as some of the more obviously Modernist influences. Esslin agrees with Ionesco’s intimation that literature has long since created absurdity, making the Theatre of the Absurd a long-standing tradition, rather than a new genre. Mapping the history of these artistic movements succeeds in making Ionesco’s theatre less absurd; literature and theatre have long sought to express human emotion and condition—something less than concrete and more than a little absurd. This genre seeks to achieve the same goal of these previous artists, if only in a different style.

It is here that we find Ionesco’s goal—to “explode” the contemporary theatre⁹, which he knew from his work with literature reviews would mean completely reversing the current genre. “I knew very well what I was doing, which was, if not a play, then an anti-play.”¹⁰ Ionesco’s first attempt at playwrighting, *The Bald Soprano*, is subtitled “an Anti-Play,” and although neither the fame of this piece or the adoption of the phrase “anti-theatre” was intentional, both became recognized as something synonymous with Ionesco’s genre of theatre. Instead of creating plot and meaning, he destroys the notion of communication through language, claiming that language is full of clichés and meaningless slogans¹¹; language is unable to fully provide effective communication. The Modernist writers consistently return to the attempt to tell “the untellable, the

unnameable.”¹² Although Ionesco himself claims *The Bald Soprano* is an anti-play and Esslin titles the section of *The Theatre of the Absurd* regarding Ionesco “Eugene Ionesco: Theatre and Anti-Theatre”, neither provide a clear definition of anti-play or anti-theatre. Ionesco often comments on his attempt to distort, question, and push theatre beyond its limits, however:

If the theatre had embarrassed me by enlarging and thereby coarsening nuances, that was merely because it had enlarged them insufficiently. What seemed too crude was not crude enough; what seemed to be not subtle enough was in fact too subtle...¹³

Ionesco’s idea of “enlarging nuances” and being less than subtle comes through in his attempts to break away from Naturalist and Realist conventions common to the theatre before the Modernist movement. Instead of claiming the truth was evident in social situations like the theatre of Ibsen or Chekhov, Ionesco “exploded” these situations, blatantly proving that social and, therefore, theatrical norms were arbitrary.

Understandably, in the explosion of these conventions, Ionesco explored themes of excess and exaggeration; he was very aware of his own obsession with these themes: “There’s something free and unfettered about excess. It’s not eating to live, it’s eating to burst.”¹⁴ In fact, many of his plays revolve around a continual growth or repetition of a specific element, something commonly attributed to the Modernist period. From the beginning, Ionesco attempted to push theatre beyond certain traditional limitations; this is most obviously reflected in *The Bald Soprano* which might hold as a definition for anti-theatre itself. *The Bald Soprano* can be considered the manifesto for anti-theatre—an example of exactly how Ionesco was going to change the scope of the traditional limitations common among other theatrical writers.

Though it might seem hardly absurd on surface levels—its premise of a couple waiting to entertain guests seems as unpeccable as possible (it could be considered completely normal when compared to the Realist’s living room drama settings)—Ionesco’s plot is the beginning of his distortion of the typical theatrical conventions. Though the couple waits for company, no one is actually expected, and curiously, the arriving married couple have no recognition of each other—in fact, they are sometimes even unaware of being in the same room with each other. The plot never leads to a

traditional climax or resolution; effects are not the result of any given cause—rational thinking is thrown out: “verbal nonsense is in the truest sense a metaphysical endeavor, a striving to enlarge and to transcend the limits of the material universe and its logic.”¹⁵ It is circular: the couple that begins the play is interchanged with the visiting couple, who end the play in the same position, as if nothing had happened in the hour in between. There is no designated main character, no overarching moral, and no sense of completion at the end of the play; “the characters themselves do not appear to understand what they are communicating.”¹⁶ The circular quality is also shown through the characters who not only verbally repeat themselves, but also find no developmental change from beginning to end. It is a direct commentary of the banality of parlor plays—mocking social norms and the traditional use of parlor rooms as a setting for the social plays of the Realist and Naturalist theatres—a critique of the “universal petty bourgeoisie.”¹⁷ It is Ionesco’s anti-theatre response to contemporary writers; the circularity and repetitiveness emphasize the excess of his anti-theatre. Many of his following plays continue with these ideas of repetitiveness and circularity, however, it is not until Ionesco begins his trilogy of Berenger plays that the anti-theatre becomes more fully approachable in terms of character and plot.

It is obvious that Ionesco’s anti-theatre was intentional; his knowledge of theatre and literature allowed him insight into his vision of an anti-play. Ionesco’s ruthless criticism of the current theatre propelled him to work against the current ideal, to create a theatre he felt dealt with the human condition and metaphysical anguish¹⁸—things vital to the production of what he considered meaningful theatre. *Rhinoceros* appears later in Ionesco’s career, and it is clear that the time past has had a positive effect on the creation of his anti-plays: “[The Bald Soprano] had a conventional format—scenes, dialogue, characters-but no psychology.”¹⁹ *Rhinoceros* is Ionesco’s creation of an anti-play with psychology. Not only does it continue in his task to question traditional theatrical structure, but also extends the play’s goal to a formalized question of logic all presented in his anti-theatre format. It is Ionesco’s effective use of his anti-play creation to make a larger thematic statement that makes *Rhinoceros* so effective. It is Ionesco’s anti-theatre, but more than that, it has become an art. The blend of an anti-theatre and a meaningful thematic statement has become effortless.

Rhinoceros stands at the beginning of Ionesco's most prolific period of writing²⁰, and continues the Berenger trilogy Ionesco began with *The Killer*, and will later finish with *A Stroll in the Air*²¹. The character appears in these plays as a particularly relatable and empathetic character, perhaps Ionesco's most, and will later be dubbed the anti-hero of Ionesco's anti-theatre, to which Ionesco will protest that he is, rather, "a hero in spite of himself."²² Ionesco's plays remain an intentional attempt to "explode" theatre. Yet *Rhinoceros* shows a more commercially acceptable theatre by reclaiming some of the traditional dramaturgy while still infusing it brilliantly with Absurdist techniques; Ionesco has found a happy medium.

Textually, Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* provides a format typical of his anti-theatre. *Rhinoceros* is anti-theatre; it is also a masterful work of Absurdist theatre with ties to various other Modernist themes, that is shown specifically in the images of overpopulation, fear of a mass ideology, and alienation. The play echoes the work of the Modernist writers that have come before him—the powerful overpopulation images and frightening industrialized societies of Elmer Rice's *Adding Machine* or Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*. It is clear that Ionesco has command of his genre of anti-theatre, so much that it has become more artistic. *Rhinoceros* is not a story of two couples sharing an evening at home—Ionesco has moved beyond the format found in *The Bald Soprano*. *The Bald Soprano* shows an obvious opposition to the traditional Aristotlean conventions, as does *Rhinoceros*, however it differs because Ionesco has moved beyond just blatantly questioning the current theatrical conventions into a thoughtful Absurdist creation.

Rhinoceros plays with typical standards of plot, themes, and character in theatre. In terms of the requirements of the plot, Ionesco allows the extraordinary to occur on stage—the transformation of human beings into animals. The locales change from act to act, causing a stress on any production. The plot is also circular, literally—the first and last images the audience sees are a person alone on stage—as well as metaphorically—Berenger, though the environment around him has changed drastically, finds himself alone and no more integrated into society than at the beginning of the play. Metaphors, emotions, and thematic statements become visual in *Rhinoceros*. Ionesco's consciousness of the overwhelming, burdening presence of humanity (which, for

example, is expressed with the multiplication of chairs in *The Chairs*) is shown through the quick proliferation of rhinos into Berenger's society.

Ionesco expresses emotion through visual images. The imagery in *Rhinoceros*, especially his use of lightness and heaviness, is not something found as often in his earlier plays, but is clearly influenced by his childhood experiences. Ionesco's most joyful period was one spent in the countryside of France²³. There, he cites the beginning of his obsession with lightness, both physically and emotionally: "Really, I don't know what this light corresponds to. Obviously, one mustn't immediately give it a mystical significance, but I should like to know its psychological significance, to know why I need it, to know why, everytime I have a feeling of light, I become happy."²⁴ Ionesco relates this tangible lightness and darkness to an emotional feeling of lightness and heaviness. Ionesco's autobiographical character also shares this sentiment. Berenger relates his own physical feeling of lightness, or lack thereof:

BERENGER: [continuing] I'm conscious of my body all the time, as if it were made of lead, or as if I were carrying another man around on my back. I can't seem to get used to myself. I don't even know if I am me. Then as soon as I take a drink, the lead slips away and I recognize myself, I become me again.²⁵

This sentiment of *Rhinoceros*' Berenger reflects the sentiments of the other Berengers and Ionesco himself—prompting the conclusion of Berenger as an autobiographical character. Most notably, *The Killer*'s Berenger deals with the same feelings of light and dark as he moves into the Radiant City—a city consumed by light. This lightness also corresponds to a sense of openness versus isolation, much like Ionesco relates in *Rhinoceros*. The play begins in an open, public space—a local café in a town square; slowly, each act isolates Berenger more and more until he is alone in the dark confines of his room. In the end, there is a contrast between the play's opening setting and the busy city that closes the play. Akin to an Expressionist's terror of industrialization, Berenger's final moments of the play mimic a surreal, crowded city—the rhinoceroses jam the streets and trumpet, making the city loud and oppressive. Again, Ionesco's idea of excess plays out in the overwhelming presence of the rhinos. Finally, Ionesco's use of physical space highlights the contrast between humans and rhinos while

incorporating this idea of lightness and heaviness. In the second scene, the beasts are separated from the humans by physical elevation²⁶; humanity appears above ground level—a symbolic lightness—and the burden of the beast keeps the rhinos on street level. The rhinos are incapable of ascending the stairs to the humans, and humans must make the conscious decision to descend into the streets to join the herd. The rhinos also inhabit the outside space—they are outside the town square, outside the office, and outside the apartments. While this might be partly due to stage restrictions, it still emphasizes the separation of the beast from humanity. One must *leave* the presence of humanity to become a rhino.

It is *Rhinoceros*' theme of the dangers of collectivized ideologies shown through its protagonist Berenger that makes the play so effective. An autobiographical character²⁷, Ionesco's Berenger appears slovenly, the personification of "negligence."²⁸ However, it is Berenger who remains human in spite of the total conformity occurring around him. Berenger is the "hero in spite of himself"²⁹; he makes no heroic attempts in the traditional sense of the term, yet his human state at the end of the play indicates something innate within him. Again, Berenger represents a shadow of Ionesco in his plight:

When I was a young man in Rumania—that was after I left France to spend some years with my father—I remember how everyone around me converted to fascism, till it seemed to me that I was the only one left in the world. I thought at the time that although I was the most insignificant of creatures a terrible responsibility had befallen me, and that, somehow, I would have to do something, or rather *everything*. Isn't this the plight and privilege of the modern hero?³⁰

Berenger becomes an anti-hero through his passive, or possibly ignorant, stance against the conformity that surrounds him. Unlike the epic or tragic heroes of drama before him, it is Berenger's cowardice, ignorance, and laziness that provide protection from the antagonizing epidemic: "I'm not ambitious at all. I'm content to be what I am."³¹ Despite this insecurity, Berenger stands alone as rejecting a slogan and avoids labeling himself into one specific group, another clue as to his autobiographical nature when considering Ionesco's constant contradictions. Berenger's ignorance of all things

political and inability to stubbornly hold to one mode of thinking allow him to remain human. Flippantly, Berenger battles the various ideologies around him by realizing he cannot discipline himself to anything. Berenger's sensibility and his ability to love and feel for the characters around him become the tools for standing alone amidst the rhinoceroses. In spite of these romantic and quasi-heroic qualities, however, he remains a pathetic character. He wishes to conform, but has no knowledge of political slogan or propaganda as tools. He is weapon-less; this sad state keeps him from transforming. Berenger is Tantalus³²; stuck between two levels of reality, both which he could not understand or relate to—the quintessential Modernist hero³³. Berenger did not fit in his old society and cannot fit in this new society, so he must remain somewhere between, but not of his own will. His final, and perhaps only, heroic action is accepting his fate, refusing to believe that humanity as he knows it is lost: "I am not capitulating."³⁴ Ultimately, Berenger's humanity, which to Ionesco implies his acknowledgment of suffering and therefore is regarded as a pathetic state, is what keeps him away from the herd. Berenger's opposition to a willful, heroic character makes Ionesco's anti-play concrete.

An unlikely couple, Berenger's best friend Jean is an example of a seemingly rational and stoic character. Jean has a logical answer for everything and is satisfied with his answers, however distorted they may be. His insistence on Berenger's cultivation in the first scene makes him a prime candidate for rhinoceritis—who better to conform than a man known for boasting his own cliched understanding of society and its standards?

Rosette Lamont, a leading researcher of Ionesco, considers Jean and Berenger a discussion of East vs. West.³⁵ Indeed, Ionesco's Jean reflects an aggressive Western view—improve oneself by tangible social activity and material quality. Success is a status symbol to Jean; he does not believe in improving himself for the sake of personal enlightenment, but rather, to show others that he is better. Jean reinforces this Western ideal by urging Berenger to fix his physical appearance, attend shows, and visit museums—all outward indications of a culturally and socially adept person. Ionesco even jokes by making Jean reference himself as something socially acceptable: "Have you seen Ionesco's plays?"³⁶ Berenger, on the other hand, floats above society, mainly

due to his alcoholism, but nonetheless avoiding an aggressive standpoint such as Jean's. While not decidedly Eastern (as Berenger's character relies on his neutral state), Berenger's contrast to Jean's obvious Western ideals gives him an Eastern feel; Jean even highlights this further by insulting Berenger as an "Asiatic Mongol!"³⁷ Berenger is "the other"; clearly, this becomes most vivid in the final scene of the play, where Berenger becomes an isolated minority:

BERENGER: ...And to talk to them I'd have to learn their language. Or they'd have to learn mine. But what language do I speak? What is my language? Am I talking English? I can call it English if I want and nobody can say it isn't—I'm the only one who speaks it.³⁸

Berenger has become "other," and is unable to feel comfortable in this foreign environment. The passive aggressive attack on the anti-hero of the play supports Ionesco's anti-hero further. Clearly, Berenger is most affected by Jean's transformation—he is pushed into solitude, barring himself in his apartment. However, Jean is not the typical antagonist. While he rationalizes his own transformation, he never orders Berenger to join him in conforming; surprisingly, he never asks Berenger to even consider it. Again, Berenger's humanity is shown through his emotional response to this event.

Whether East meets West is debatable—Berenger still does not advocate any aspect of Eastern philosophy specifically, as Ionesco himself cannot claim that the East is without its own conformity:

I believe that the reason why people throughout the world have loved this play is that all countries—in the West as well as in the East—are more or less collectivised now. Some what unconsciously I've put my finger on a terrible problem: depersonalization. So, in all modern societies, collectivized people long for solitude, for a personal life.³⁹

However, a question of East and West works especially well in a play focused on an "other", as well as a discussion of an anti-play—a play moving out of a Western tradition of thought. If the standard traditions of play structure are grounded in Western culture, especially in the theories of Aristotle, an anti-play discussing and destructing Western logic might feasibly note a view of East and West in its main characters.

Obviously, Ionesco seems to be critical of his own Western culture, specifically its philosophy—this, after all, is the burden of the Modernist playwright. Ionesco uses archetypes to create pillars for each of the major Western philosophers through his characters.⁴⁰ His use of Western philosophy within each character proves to destroy Western logic and rationalism⁴¹, beginning with Ionesco's distortion of one of the most well-known Western philosophers, Descartes.⁴² Jean's obvious misinterpretation of this reflects Ionesco's intent to demolish Western logic:

JEAN: You don't exist, my dear Berenger, because you don't think. Start thinking, then you will.⁴³

Simply, Ionesco is distorting Descartes famous "I think, therefore I am" theory. By allowing Jean to buy into this illogic, however, Ionesco negates his rationality and, in the same vein, Descartes'. In many ways, Jean appears to be a rational character; his constant critique of Berenger seems founded in the desire, if somewhat selfish, to help Berenger improve himself, and his stubbornness is cause for concern only when his temper becomes violent. Altogether, Jean seems harmless—it is precisely this that makes him such a dangerous character. It is poignant that Ionesco chooses to use him as Berenger's best friend and as the most complete physical transformation on stage. Berenger's loyalty and respect for Jean provide his metamorphosis with an urgency and importance, as the audience watches Berenger realize that this need for metamorphosis is becoming a societal epidemic. Ionesco's personal experience reflects vividly at this point: Berenger's shock, fear, and depression as he watches his close friend submit to the beasts is a direct reflection of Ionesco's autobiographical short story. It is with the same respect that the audience is meant to view the Western philosophy crumbling—Jean's position of authority over Berenger and his Cartesian ideal allows both these themes to shatter as Berenger realizes Jean is succumbing to the herd. Jean's transformation represents the beginning of the downward spiral the audience and Berenger must witness, but he also sets up the major stab at Western philosophy Ionesco has imbedded into his play.

Interestingly, Jean's transformation is the only one physically seen on stage, according to Ionesco's original stage directions. The other characters' transformations are only related to the audience by fellow characters; most notably, these include The

Logician, Botard, and Dudard. Ionesco's archetyped characters personify their ideology and are defined by their "intellectual slogans"⁴⁴; each also adheres to a specific Western philosopher, and each transformation outlines a timeline of a traditional Western ideology. Specifically, each character transforms according to their respective philosopher's place on the timeline of Western history. Here is Ionesco's clear understanding of incorporating a formalized concept statement into his anti-theatre that sets *Rhinoceros* apart from his earlier plays. The first example of Western logic to fall victim to the herd is the beginning of Western logic, the Aristotelean-inspired, syllogist-spouting Logician. Again, Ionesco distorts this logic:

LOGICIAN: [to the Old Gentleman] Here is an example of a syllogism. The cat has four paws. Isidore and Fricot both have four paws. Therefore Isidore and Fricot are cats.

OLD GENTLEMAN: [to the Logician] My dog has got four paws.

LOGICIAN: [to the Old Gentleman] Then it's a cat.⁴⁵

Though the play contains illogical rationalizations before this syllogism, it is obvious by this statement that Ionesco's final goal is to obliterate the glorification of Western logic. The Logician's early introduction and over-emphasis on syllogisms and logic (despite their inaccuracy) create the pillar that is then torn down as The Logician abandons logic to join the herd and its crowd mentality. The Logician transforms sometime between Berenger's visit to Jean in Act I and Dudard's visit to Berenger in Act III. Recalling Aristotelean-guided Greek drama, Berenger recognizes The Logician in the herd and announces his gruesome transformation off-stage:

BERENGER: There's a boater impaled on a rhinoceros horn. Oh, it's the Logician's hat! It's the Logician's! That's the limit! The Logician's turned into a rhinoceros!⁴⁶

He is the first of the minor characters to transform, but not before he has made clear his form of logic in order for it to be destroyed. Representing the early views of Aristotle, The Logician's character begins the timeline of Western philosophy Ionesco aims to question.

Ionesco's own experience in the proof-reading business⁴⁷ provide inspiration for the second scene of *Rhinoceros*, a nondescript legal publishing office.⁴⁸ Political jargon

runs rampant, cynicism and incredulity become commonplace. Here, most clearly, Ionesco portrays the varying ideologies that are rationalized in society, within the characters of Botard and Dudard.

Botard quips a decidedly Marxist attitude⁴⁹, supporting unionization of the workplace as Mrs. Boeuf deals with the untimely transformation of her husband into a rhinoceros:

BOTARD: You can be certain of one thing: I shall report this to my union. I don't desert a colleague in the hour of need. It won't be hushed up.⁵⁰

Botard is the second minor character to succumb to the herd, understanding the need for a community within society, something closely related to his philosophy of Marxism. Botard is very concerned with politics, or at least, is very vocal about his concern for politics. He is constantly pronouncing his commitment to his various communities—the work community, the social community, and the political community. Botard belongs to, and more importantly, *supports* society—whether or not it actually supports him or not. His transformation is without surprise. Again, Ionesco leaves his transformation off-stage, having it related through the arrival of Miss Daisy at Berenger's. She affirms that she has seen him change and that he had seemed comfortable in doing so.⁵¹ Berenger is shocked, slowly justifying Botard's transformation:

BERENGER: He was a good man with a lot of resentment.

...

BERENGER: [continues] He was riddled with hatred for his superiors, and he'd got an inferiority complex.⁵²

Berenger's eulogy for Botard reads as a possible reflection of Ionesco's sentiments towards Marx. Botard's final decision to join the ever-growing community of rhinoceroses reiterates his Marxist connections.

Dudard resembles one of Ionesco's largest foes, Sartre⁵³, touting an Existentialist and Humanist perspective. Dudard succumbs to the beast after a period of reasoning and justification. At first, Dudard hopes to live and let live, not allowing the transformation of others to influence or distress him. Dudard is obviously loyal to his superiors, or people he believes to be superior. At work, he often submits to Papillon's statements and opinions. Dudard avoids conflict in this way, something Sartre also did.

Ionesco often relates his disappointment in “Sartre’s failure to denounce the existence of the gulags”⁵⁴, something that was influenced by his associations at the time.

However, when Dudard realizes the Logician has transformed, his reasoning falters:

DUDARD: If he was a genuine thinker, as you say, he couldn’t have got carried away. He must have weighed all the pros and cons before deciding.⁵⁵

Dudard’s attempt at logic falls prey to the allure of conformity. His justification remains Humanist until the end: “I’m not sure if morally you have the right to butt in...They’re free to do as they like!”⁵⁶ Dudard, like the three philosophies exemplified before him, falls under the pressure to conform.

Though never quite treated as such, an important aspect of Ionesco’s writing is his perception of his female characters.⁵⁷ “Ionesco’s mistrust of women has roots that go extremely deep; nor will it be modified (both by pity and understanding) until after *Rhinoceros*.”⁵⁸ While it seems Ionesco does not write his female characters with a lot of empathy, Mrs. Boeuf is significant. Mrs. Boeuf stands as possibly the most underrated character in the script. It is she who is the first character to opt for transformation.⁵⁹ She bears the news that the rhinoceros that appears in the first scene is not a coincidence, but is the beginning of a horrifying epidemic. Instead of the situation being animals running loose through the town, Mrs. Boeuf is the first to make the connection between her missing husband and the rhinoceros following her; significantly, Mrs. Boeuf makes it known to the audience that all one has to do is *accept* rhinocerotitis to join the herd. Despite this significance in her character, Mrs. Boeuf is still shown as a weak character because she ultimately submits to her husband; in other words, though she is the first character to make this intellectual connection, she does not use this power. Though we never see or hear about her personal transformation, we assume she followed her husband in his conformity, merely because she felt bad deserting him—not the most independent view of women. While both female characters join the herd for more emotional than logical reasons, Mrs. Boeuf’s main justification is that she feels compelled to support her husband’s decision:

MRS. BOEUF: No! Poor thing!...I won’t abandon my husband in such a state!⁶⁰

To this, Botard congratulates her: "You're a good woman."⁶¹ Despite Mrs. Boeuf's strong character, her mindless acceptance of her husband's sudden transformation shows Ionesco's disdain towards women, linking clearly to his own tumultuous experiences with his father and mother: "I must have been absolutely astonished to perceive that [my mother] was only a poor, helpless child, a puppet in my father's hands, and the object of his persecution. Ever since I have pitied all women, rightly or wrongly."⁶² Mrs. Boeuf resembles this "puppet" closely, falling to the control of her husband, and the lack of surprise from the other employers as she jumps to her fate only emphasizes this point.

However, more problematized is Ionesco's Daisy. Daisy, like Berenger, is a repeated character as well. Daisy is strikingly similar to *The Killer's* Berenger's love interest, Dany; both are secretaries who, while showing promise of independence, responsibility and intelligence, still remain open to harassment from their male counterparts. Daisy deals with sexual harassment from Mr. Papillon specifically:

PAPILLON: [*joking amorously and caressing DAISY's cheek*] I'll take you in my arms and we'll float down together.

DAISY: [*rejecting PAPILLON'S advances*] You keep your horny hands off my face, you old pachyderm!⁶³

Despite Daisy's repeat appearances in his plays, it seems Ionesco's feelings on her can be summed up in her character description, which follows a full paragraph of detailed description on her coworkers, Botard and Dudard:

*DAISY: young blonde.*⁶⁴

Clearly, Ionesco assumes that this is enough to describe the object of Berenger's affections. Unlike her male counterparts, Daisy's choice to not transform is based mainly on ambivalence. Daisy is flippant in her choice to become Berenger's mate, and just as quickly as she finds interest, she loses it, running off to join the herd. Daisy's ignorant attempt to please everyone solidifies her eventual transformation:

DAISY: There's no such thing as absolute right. It's the world that's right—not you and me.⁶⁵

Ionesco's female characters are less than kind to women in general, however, they are important to the plot as they make up the first and last characters to join the herd.

Ionesco's odd dichotomy in allowing his female characters to claim intelligence and responsibility, yet continuing to degrade them to objects that are used by the other characters, makes the women in his plays an interesting case study.

Ionesco's characters and the through-line of the destruction of Western philosophy shows Ionesco's intentional use of the anti-play to create a thematic statement. Ionesco's anti-play has grown beyond the nonsense language and circular storyline of *The Bald Soprano*, and has morphed into *Rhinoceros*, the anti-play with thematic depth. Within the text, Ionesco has clearly worked beyond the breakdown of a traditional play structure to create his new anti-theatre—an anti-theatre filled with artistic imagery and thoughtful themes that further his anti-theatre genre and submit *Rhinoceros* as a timeless piece of theatre.

Miami University's *Rhinoceros*: Process of Production

The process of creating a production of *Rhinoceros* is a delicate one, especially considering the multitude of layers Ionesco has included within it. However, its timeless theme of mass conformity lends itself to all countries, all societies— precisely why the play remains effective. Mass hysteria and collectivism finds a place in every generation.

The process of Miami University's production of *Rhinoceros* began with Dr. William Doan's concept. In production meetings, Doan introduced his concept through a thematic question to begin a conversation about current ties to the original concept of the play: "What or who is the rhinoceros?" Simply, the rhinoceros metaphor plays the role of the major thematic statement within the play. While many fads and modern epidemics were considered, Doan's concept answers this question with the metaphor of technology used to fulfill the role of the rhinoceroses. Ionesco had a specific "rhinoceros" in mind while creating the play; Doan expresses this conceptual task as well:

I don't want to reinvent another pseudo-nazi world with jack boots and Hitler banners. On the other hand, I also don't want 'the rhinoceros' to be a totally subjective or abstract thing. Some kind of force needs to be operating on the world of Jean and Berenger—they may not be able to identify exactly what it is, but its presence must be felt.⁶⁶

An understanding of Ionesco's anti-play genre must be considered when choosing a theme. How will a theme affect the original intent of the anti-play structure? Ionesco was most obviously dealing with Nazi fascism, something that many productions attempt to recreate and something, therefore, that Doan wanted to avoid. Dr. Doan decided upon the metaphor of technology to symbolize the conformity within *Rhinoceros* that integrated the themes of mass hysteria, yet updated the play to appeal to a current audience. It also furthered Ionesco's anti-theatre and provided a historical connection between the Modernist's question of the progress of technology to a current one. Though it is long past the start of the Industrial Revolution and the fear that consumed society then, technology is currently progressing at frightening speeds. The Modernist

concern of “man into machine” is still available, which supports the production’s choice of thematic concept.

Rhinoceros has undergone many adaptations. Many American productions have attempted to update the play, mainly by removing traditional French ties. This is most commonly portrayed in the changing of names; “Jean” is usually translated to “John” to become a more familiar American name. It is interesting to note that while Ionesco intended Berenger’s name to be “ordinary and innocuous”⁶⁷, rarely do productions change his name to something Americans would consider as such. “Mrs. Boeuf” is often changed to “Mrs. Beef”, the literal translation to English as well as a name indicative of her character. Other details are translated as well; Jean and Berenger usually drink a more common American drink than “pastis”.

Despite these differences, many productions have tried to reinvent Ionesco’s original concept—an initial terror of Nazi fascism. Some, however, attempt to adapt the themes of the play into a more current moment. And still some others chose to leave Ionesco’s theme as ambiguous as possible. Miami University is not the first production to consider America’s continual obsession with progress and mass hysteria, both technologically and otherwise, as a suitable metaphor for Ionesco’s rhinoceroses. Duncan Mandel’s 1996 production in Brea, CA used similar themes to Miami’s concept—setting the first scene in a strip mall containing a “SOLARBUCK CAFÉ” as well as other familiar trademarked stores.⁶⁸ Some continue to revert to a political or military-infused metaphor, such as Babock Theatre’s production in Utah in 2001.⁶⁹ Admittedly, updating is sometimes problematic. In a 2001 production at Rhinoceros Theatre in San Francisco, Berenger became a “nervous, insecure lesbian” and the characters surrounding her emphasized the fast-paced update by rolling around on scooters and snorting coke.⁷⁰

Miami’s production kept many things in tact within the play. The original character names were kept, and there was only a slight modification to several French references within the script. The most major change was the gender of Dudard’s character. Though this opened casting possibilities considerably, it also problematized Dudard’s character and the characters she related to, particularly in reference to Daisy. Where in the original script Daisy was surrounded by men in the workplace, Dudard’s gender change

dramatically shifted the dynamic of the office. It also changed the effect of the sexual triangle between Dudard, Daisy, and Berenger, which becomes especially apparent in the last scene. Miami's production ignored this sexual tension, and therefore lost an important gender question in the play.

Part of the process of creating the play based around the thematic ideas Dr. Doan had decided on was finding research that supported this creative process; mainly, finding resources that connected the themes of mass conformity and technology to one another. This research was then translated into information for the cast. In terms of the rehearsal process, dramaturgical analysis was used to introduce the cast to the historical moment of Ionesco and *Rhinoceros*. In the form of a handout and a short discussion with the cast, some definitions were introduced pertaining to the play and its themes. Included among these were "the Theatre of the Absurd", "logic", and "Existentialism". A general knowledge of the movements surrounding the Theatre of the Absurd, especially the influences, support the cast in their understanding of the history of the play to allow a relationship between the historical moment and the current production. Through this information, more connections were found between the themes of the original play and technology. Interestingly, the logic definition not only discussed a philosophical view of logic, but also a technological view, stating: "Reasoned and reasonable judgment; the system of operations performed by a computer that underlies the machine's representation of logical operations."⁷¹ This idea of logic in terms of both Ionesco's original intent and the intent of the production specific to Miami University seems to solidify the choice to use technology as the modern-day connection to the script. It also provides a further link between the themes of modernity and the progress of technology evident in the original time period.

The cast was also given a short timeline for Ionesco, as well as some poignant quotes. Most telling of these were quotes pertaining to the idea of mass conformity and Ionesco's idea of this worldwide epidemic of depersonalization: "Guilt is not a collective feeling. A mob that runs riot, a lynch mob, doesn't feel guilty. The individual alone reflects and is capable of feeling or not feeling guilt."⁷² Quotes like this one were meant to inspire the cast to make the connections between Ionesco's world and the current one, as well as considering their characters within the world of the play.

Finally, the cast was introduced to some theories of the characters, including Sartre's influence on the Dudard character and the Marxist influences on Botard, two philosophers Ionesco wished to question in his attack on Western philosophy and logic. Though the discussion was brief, the handout was providing ideas to encourage the cast to research and develop their characters within the context of the concept. These research subjects then went towards creating the program guide for the performance. The timeline and subjects found for research inspired the various articles added to the program guide to inform the audience.

As a final part of the dramaturgical process, the program guide was created to encourage the audience to consider the play with the knowledge available to the production team, and a lobby display was created to supplement this. The program guide includes notes that gave the audience a brief overview of Eugene Ionesco and the Theatre of the Absurd. It provides an abbreviated Ionesco timeline that outlined significant moments in the playwright's life. The program guide only highlights the author and the genre; it was hoped that it would work to provide the audience with a quick description, assuming most of the audience was not familiar with either. Like with the cast, having a context for the play provides a deeper understanding of where the play came from and what Miami University's specific production was hoping to achieve. Finally, it discussed the context of the theme of technology as it pertained to current society and the themes of the play.

While the program guide works to complement the themes of the play by describing the process of the production team, the lobby display sought a more interactive approach to providing knowledge to the audience. The display posed questions such as "What was the exact time of your last phone call?" and "What was the last song played on your iPod?" This was an effort to initiate the audience to think about technology in their lives. The board also held pictures of Ionesco and other artists that influenced the production. Both designers and Ionesco himself were influenced by the artist DeChirico. Gion DeFrancesco's work was influenced by specific DeChirico paintings that featured the progress of industrialization, crowded cities, and industrial buildings overtaking natural landscapes. Lin Conaway's costume design supported the use of green accents to tie the characters to the theme of technology and foreshadow

their impending transformation. And, notably, Leslie Stamoolis' work on constructing the rhinoceros heads combined the natural shape of the rhino with the inherent technology used to create the heads, as well as continuing the color connection between set and costume.⁷³ Finally, the display featured some of Ionesco's quotes that provided insight about the play or added knowledge about Ionesco.

All of these elements surrounding the production were influenced by these first meetings and Dr. Doan's initial concept for the production. Together, the production team worked to convey this message to the audience. The research about the themes of the play Dr. Doan wanted to focus on brought about questions of how these would appear in the actual production. How would technology be involved in the production? How would the metaphor of technology adapt to or take away from Ionesco's original rhinoceros? These questions continued to guide the process of the production.

Ionesco and Technology:

The Mechanized Rhinoceros

Finding commonalities between a fear of mass conformity and technology is not difficult; relating these questions to an audience in the form of an Absurdist play may be considerably more so. How will an audience decipher the difference between the normal, everyday appearance of technology and a terrifying metaphor for mindless conformity?

Luckily, even the play echoes this sentiment of ambiguity and ignorance towards a dangerous epidemic. The play relates a common sentiment of those felt about epidemics today:

BERENGER: If only it had happened somewhere else, in some other country, and we'd just read about it in the papers, one could discuss it quietly, examine the question from all points of view and come to an objective conclusion. We could organize debates with professors and writers and lawyers and blue-stockings and artists and people. And the ordinary man in the street, as well—it would be very interesting and instructive. But when you're involved yourself, when you suddenly find yourself up against the brutal facts—you can't help feeling directly concerned—the shock is too violent for you to stay cool and detached. I'm frankly surprised, I'm very surprised. I can't get over it.⁷⁴

Many epidemics today are ignored, much like Nazism was initially; "it couldn't happen here." Society attempts to separate itself from tragedy, much the way Berenger wishes to dislocate himself from the surrounding epidemic. At the same time, many crazes unconsciously consume society—the rush of drugs and prescription medicines, the paparazzi-cluttered obsession with celebrities. Biological epidemics—AIDS and the threat of disease through biological warfare—have consumed news reports and created support groups worldwide. Conformity in the guise of fads create hysteria—the newest toy, the latest electronic device, or the current miracle medicine. We are overwhelmed by a need to create community—being part of a group—as well as a need to separate ourselves—"I am not them." Society is full of Berengers, Jeans, Dudards, etc.—all

attempting to reconcile oneself with the community surrounding us. Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* has identified a specific hysteria—the surge of the imaginary rhinocerotis—however, the absurdity of this particular type of conformity creates an open-endedness to the extremes mass epidemics can go to. This allows *Rhinoceros* to be adapted to many time periods, especially a current one.

Many people today are completely unaware of how much technology infiltrates their lives. Living without technology is unthinkable, but it is rarely considered what consequences this would truly bring. These common themes of ignorance, restriction, and conformity relate easily to the original intent of the play, making technology a suitable metaphor for the main theme of the play. Technology fits easily into the structure of the play considering its historic situation within the Modernist movement and seems especially applicable considering the audience this production is catering to. Technology has changed society—in many ways for the best. However, technology can be accepted blindly, the main idea Ionesco is trying to warn against in *Rhinoceros*. Technology is considered everyday in society, but the need for more is constant. Commercials encourage consumers to buy bigger, better, and faster forms of technology. Consumers rush to purchase these new forms, which are disposed before long to keep up with even newer products. Society has become disposable, as computer, cell phone and digital camera turnover becomes more and more rapid. The effect of machines on society is felt. Society has become efficient—from quick contact through emails and cell phones to more deadly efficiency like nuclear weapons and advanced target weaponry.

At what price has this efficiency changed society? Has the value of human life diminished? Has technology isolated and dehumanized society? Even Ionesco himself relates a concern, something echoed throughout his writing:

The unpleasant thing about society nowadays is that there's a confusion between people and their functions; or rather, people are tempted to identify completely with the function they perform: instead of a function taking on a human face. This is what is happening, particularly in totalitarian societies.⁷⁵

Though Ionesco's concern relates directly to losing individualism within a fascist government, it still echoes a current concern involving technology. With face-to-face contact becoming almost unnecessary, isolation and dehumanization are real dangers. The use of technology has become thoughtless, something the current production seeks to prove.

Similar to *Rhinoceros*' original intent, different characters conform in a variety of ways to the same ideology—the submission of society to technology. In Miami University's production, technology becomes thoughtless—cell phones, iPods, and other digital luxuries abound. Characters surrounding Berenger are immersed in technology. His interaction with people in the café and market square is shrouded by technology. His co-workers spend the entire time together on their laptops and cell phones. Jean's apartment is covered with technology. Subconsciously, characters adapt their lives to include these devices, much in the way Ionesco portrayed the initial subconscious conformity to various ideologies. By choosing to change the symbol of the rhinoceros, Miami University's production allows a modern-day audience to closely relate with the play. However, the play remains steadfast in its condemnation of one thing, whether the rhinoceros appears as a symbol for fascism or technology: mindless conformity leads to the destruction of humanity. Though the play was written in the late 1950's France, the absurdity lends itself to these adaptations. Ionesco's influences remain prevalent:

The play voiced the angst of Europe at a time of widespread decolonization. Its themes—the individual vs. the group, plus the fear of the other ('do I have to learn their language?') are even more prevalent today, given our trends-dominated world culture and constant waves of immigration.⁷⁶

Currently, the world has become more accessible, yet this idea of "other" still remains. Miami University's production works to emphasize this. Jean, the Western ideal, is laden with technology. His cell phone is up-to-date, his apartment is stocked with a plasma TV, an expensive looking computer, and handheld video games. Berenger is tempted by these objects, but after inspection, cannot assimilate them into his simple life as much as the people around him attempt to make him do so—the plight of the Modernist anti-hero. His own apartment is sparse, if not slightly unkempt; an outdated

telephone and a small TV that lacks a remote are the only vestiges of technology that appear. Jean's achievements—here, his purchases—are a status symbol. Outwardly, Jean appears successful—he must be to be able to live in such luxury. In contrast, Berenger only hopes to keep up, hesitantly interacting with the technology in Jean's apartment. Though East and West are much closer today (made so by technology), the West still exudes an air of conspicuousness. Jean exemplifies a Western ideal because he can afford luxuries and owns them. The audience is not made to believe Berenger is lacking in money, yet his life is much more simplistic—a decidedly Eastern philosophy.

The set and costume choices also worked to emphasize these ideas. Berenger, although sloppy at times, has a much more relaxed wardrobe. Jean is well put together; even his pajamas appear to be designer and expensive. It is not just character traits that are exemplified through costumes, though. Jean and the other characters that are immersed in technology wear hints of green. Easily enough, this mimics a fad of its own, fashion, and also blends the characters surrounding Berenger together—another example of the mass conformity epidemic. This green accent also tied together scenery—places that had been infiltrated with technology were also infiltrated with the green color, bonding these spaces together.

However, in the audience's society, one that has already conformed to the idea of technology as a part of everyday life, how is this danger represented to the audience? How are these themes and images used within a society that is already so obsessed with technology to make a point about the dangers of mindless conformity? Most would consider the electronic devices that are depicted standard within a current context. It is, like Ionesco originally intended, the excess of these elements that highlights their significance. Though Berenger is surrounded by technology in the first scene, it is not until we reach Jean's apartment that it is obvious how much technology has infiltrated this society. This is then contrasted with Berenger's apartment, which is shown in the final scene as having very little technological devices. Excess is also shown through the multiplication of cell phone towers throughout the show. The towers continue to appear as fast as the rhinoceroses themselves.

But was this excess enough? Most audience members would be thrilled to have the amount of technology found in Jean's room, however extreme it may be. To them,

the addition of cell phone towers can only mean better service. Excess was not necessarily an oppressive and fearful thing; it barely caused concern that Berenger was surrounded by a plethora of rhinos. In fact, most audience members seemed unscathed by the danger of this specific rhinoceros and its quick multiplication; many seemed unaware that the rhinoceros and technology were directly connected. In many ways, this could be attributed to the lack of fear the rhinos induced. Audience members witnessed rhinoceroses dancing, they felt close to the comical character of Jean and delighted in his comical transformation, and they saw no reason to fear a transformed Mr. Boeuf when Mrs. Boeuf could dance politely with him. Technology, the rhinoceroses, the fearful epidemic of mindless conformity—these things were not emphasized in the production. There was no immediate connection between technology and the rhinoceros—except in the fact that Berenger, a man without up-to-date technology (but with technology, nonetheless), did not transform. Using technology was comical, but the transformation rarely occurred while a character was in immediate contact with it, causing a gap between the two themes. Berenger was not afraid of technology, he merely could not accept it. He made no attempts to rid himself of it when he was protesting the rhinoceroses in the last scene; instead he attempted to avoid and combat the physical rhinos by barricading himself in with his television and telephone. We can assume he was, perhaps, ignorant to the connection himself, however, this is only more confusing for the audience. It seems the connection between technology and the epidemic of rhinocerotitis was lost in the translation of this production.

Ionesco in 2006:

A Dramaturgical Post Script

Rhinoceros is Ionesco's artful blend of his anti-theater into a formalized attack on logic. Clearly formed in the historical moment in which it is written, anti-logic presents itself in the metaphor of the rhinoceros, which Ionesco uses to question the validity and significance of Western society and, specifically, society's blind acceptance of the ideology of Western logic. Because Ionesco stands at the foreground of the Theater of the Absurd, however, many relate the absurdity of his plays only to the stage spectacle of transforming humans. Thus, the term "absurd" has come to be used to describe theatrical movements beyond the Modernist realm, without recognition of Ionesco's intense work with the destruction of formal logic as a main thematic statement. This, of course, affects the way a current production of *Rhinoceros* is received. Many questions must be considered in the production of Ionesco's play: is Ionesco's original script and thematic statement relevant in a current setting? Have the movements after Absurdism cushioned the shock of his anti-plays? What is Absurdism currently? Can Absurdism exist in 2006—in a society that knows sketch comedy, stand-up comedians, and professional improvisation? Can Absurdist theatre be effective in a period of theatre that cannot be defined and, as a result of, cannot have a defined anti-theatre? These questions only reflect the influence the Modernist period has had on all types of theatre. They also begin to define the problem of attempting to strictly categorize or label movements of theatre and their features.

It is impossible to disconnect the Theater of the Absurd from the historical moment it arose out of. Like the movements closely linked to it, the Theatre of the Absurd distorts Aristotlean requirements, focusing on manifesting the internal and metaphysical struggle of its characters into an outward storyline.⁷⁷ Absurdism is often closely related with other isms of the Modernist period⁷⁸, but remains the lasting genre. In many ways, it is less extreme than its predecessors Expressionism and Dadaism and is far more commercial. The Theatre of the Absurd comes from a movement of anti-reality, but still follows a basic structure of playwriting: "The Modernist theatre—no matter how labyrinthine the route—still believed in beginnings, middles, and ends. These are

the qualities which distinguish Modernist theatre from what we today refer to as "Postmodern Performance."⁷⁹ Absurdism is mainly defined by Martin Esslin's description of the genre in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*, where Esslin describes it as striving "to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition."⁸⁰ Further, "the Theatre of the Absurd has renounced arguing about the absurdity of the human condition; it merely presents it in being—that is, in terms of concrete stage images of the absurdity of existence."⁸¹ Esslin is undoubtedly the major theorist of the genre, becoming the foremost source for description of it. However, Ionesco was also eager to remain open to his public, publishing essays, personal journals, and prose work, as well as granting many interviews throughout his life.⁸² Ionesco's views remain available through his own words in many formats. Ionesco, himself, seems to recognize the need to classify his genre, but refuses to be held to a certain set of standards: "If I write a new play, my point of view may be profoundly modified. I may be obliged to contradict myself and I may no longer know whether I still think what I think."⁸³ Ionesco's anti-theatre relied on this statement. Anti-theatre was a way for Ionesco to explode the theatre, shock conceptions and erase expectations, which was a direct reflection of his personal statement regarding his own point of view. Regarding his theatre without a historical context, as most audiences do today, might soften the blow, especially when he did find a starting point in classical literature and work that came before him. Ionesco often commented on the literature around him, admitting that he found inspiration in past and contemporary authors. His background in literature and criticism give his own critiques resonance. Ionesco's controversial publishing of *No*, a group of essays condemning and then praising the work of Romanian writers shows an early preoccupation with questioning the traditions of language in the literary sense, which translates to his work later with drama.⁸⁴ Ionesco's knowledge of literature and theatre allowed him to create anti-theatre; simply, he knew the rules and, therefore, knew how to break them. Ionesco also reflects upon those writers of his supposed genre, primarily Beckett: "Beckett destroys language with silence. I do it with too much language, with characters talking at random, and by inventing words."⁸⁵ This statement not only shows an astute reflection on Beckett, but also an enlightened sense of his own style of writing. As a critic himself, Ionesco shows patience for those that want to classify his genre.

However, he was quick to rebuke Kenneth Tynan when he classified Ionesco as a "messiah" of the anti-theatre: "...because I do not like messiahs and I certainly do not consider the vocation of the artist or playwright to lie in that direction. I have the distinct impression that it is Mr. Tynan who is in search of messiahs." ⁸⁶ Ionesco's understanding of his genre shows an acknowledgment of his historical place in theatre. While Ionesco did not necessarily mean to become the epitome of a particular style of writing, his comments show an understanding of what it means to be analyzed in both positive and negative ways. Ionesco did hope to "explode" the theatre⁸⁷, so his patience with critics might stem from the recognition that an upset of modern theatre does not come without some controversy.

However, his effort to explain and justify his work may have become his greatest downfall. His constant critique on his own writing may have restricted the shock value of his plays. Ionesco was readily available to make comment on his plays and critics' reviews of his plays. With these publications still available, could this have changed the effectiveness of Ionesco's anti-theatre? Ionesco often contradicted himself in interviews, which led him to state "that no statement can be absolute."⁸⁸ With this mantra, could Ionesco be restricting his own validity and spoiling the moment of his plays?

Since its first appearance on stage in 1959, *Rhinoceros* has had many notable productions. It was well received throughout its first decade of performances. Its world premiere in November 1959 in Dusseldorf received a "ten-minute standing ovation" and "fifty curtain calls"⁸⁹, and was followed the next day by headlines such as, "Ionesco shows us how we become Nazis."⁹⁰ This success was followed closely by a premiere in Paris in January 1960 directed by and starring Jean-Louis Barrault.⁹¹ In 1961, it was the first of Ionesco's plays to reach Broadway with a production directed by Joseph Anthony and starring Zero Mostel.⁹² Later, in 1974, Mostel will appear in the American film version of the same title. *Rhinoceros* is also the first of Ionesco's plays to be produced in Bucharest in 1964 under the direction of Lucian Giurchescu; prior to this, his plays had been banned in his native country.⁹³ Clearly, *Rhinoceros* broke ground in Ionesco's career. However, it was, and perhaps is still, his most misinterpreted play. Many adaptations sought to change the metaphor of the rhinoceros to support a certain ideology—something Ionesco purposefully wrote against: "...in Moscow, they wanted me

to rewrite it and make sure that it dealt with Nazism and not with their kind of totalitarianism. In Buenos Aires, the military government thought it was an attack on Peronism. And in England they accused me of being a petit bourgeois. ⁹⁴

If the play was not being used for a director's personal ideology, it was being grossly misinterpreted as an "absurd" comedy. Ionesco voiced his complaints of America's misinterpretation of the play: "I have read the American critics on the play and noticed that everyone agreed the play was funny. Well it isn't. Although it is a farce, it is above all a tragedy." ⁹⁵ Ionesco felt the initial American production made Jean "comic" and "feeble", while misrepresenting Berenger as "hardheaded" and "resolute."⁹⁶ Ionesco's public commentary on his writing leaves little unspoken about his plays in production during his lifetime. For *Rhinoceros* specifically, Ionesco insists masks are essential to a production.⁹⁷ Ionesco was deeply influenced by shamanism and the rituals encased in this practice, and he felt masks were a part of this serving "sometimes to mask, sometimes to illuminate."⁹⁸ Berenger's obvious autobiographical nature surely had something to do with Ionesco's close attachment to his plays, especially those in the Berenger trilogy. In general, Ionesco's personal attachment to his plays and their production potential are obvious:

I have often been at odds with my producers: either they are not daring enough and reduce the impact of my plays by not exhausting their full potentialities as the stage demands: or else they 'adorn' the text, overloading it with cheap embellishment and decoration, unnecessary and therefore worthless.⁹⁹

According to Ionesco, the Italian production by director Renato Moretti and the original German production remained the most effective.¹⁰⁰ He also comments on Jean-Louis Berrault's production calling it a "terrible farce and fantastic fable."¹⁰¹ These productions seemed to embrace the ambiguity of the totalitarianism Ionesco aimed to attack, while infusing the tragedy with the appropriate amount of sardonic humor.

The fact that these specific ideas are available makes it clear that Ionesco had a certain vision for each of his plays and how they should be produced. Whether because of his personal attachment to them, his need to be understood or the basic concern he had for the production quality of his plays, Ionesco remained prolific in his comments about his

plays in production, giving future productions paradox—are his quotes guidelines or do they lead to certain expectations, perhaps expectations he was hoping to squash himself with his anti-theatre?

Since its initial production, *Rhinoceros* has become a standard in Absurdist theatre. Though *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* can be considered Ionesco's most recognizable plays, *Rhinoceros* remains in the foreground because of its timeless themes and accessibility. Unlike his early works, which almost resist ideology, *Rhinoceros* runs the risk of being emblazoned with a director's personal political themes, becoming less about destroying logic with absurdity, and more about catering to one specific type of logic. The several productions discussed in the process chapter each have their own flaws in the way they have attempted to cater the metaphor of the play to a director's concept. However, is this necessary to combat current standards of production?

A vital aspect to the success of Ionesco's anti-theatre was the expectation the audience had before experiencing it.¹⁰² Obviously, anti-theatre was named as such because of its outward defiance of a theatrical norm in terms of its plot, character, and language.¹⁰³ However, currently speaking, *Rhinoceros* has been in publication and production for almost fifty years, and the movements influenced by Ionesco and his genre of theatre have come and gone. In other words, is Ionesco's anti-theatre so anti-anymore? "The avant-garde [...] can today do little more than impotently express disenchantment with its own ideals, while popular culture is enchanted to assume the once radical positive inventiveness, daring, and difference."¹⁰⁴ Are Ionesco's anti-logic plays more logical now—now that he has become so widely produced and published?

Considering the flux of theatre past the "Modernist" period, it is difficult to define a movement with specificity. With performance art and happenings becoming a part of theatre history, theatre itself sometimes lacks a clearly organized structure. Postmodernism is an amorphous title; in most cases, the term Postmodernism merely reflects an attempt to encompass the vague genre of theatre after the modern period. And for the general public, the popularity of improvisation and sketch comedy in forms such as Second City and Saturday Night Live have made the non-sequitur less unusual.

The Modernist movement has clearly influenced the Postmodern movement—without the break-through of the Absurdist, theatre might still be relying on the rational notions of the Realists and the Naturalists. And the Postmodern movement continues to accept and employ many of the elements of Modernist theatre. However, this is being pushed further, as Postmodernists proceed in their deconstruction of theatre. This is definitely conceived of in the Modernist period and continued in the Postmodern movement: “Postmodern performance is composed in the mode of radical indeterminacy and in the conviction that some things are unrepresentable.”¹⁰⁵ This seems to echo the Modernist’s attempts to “express what is inexpressible.”¹⁰⁶ Many also believe that the Postmodern theatre is one of process rather than product¹⁰⁷; perhaps further proof that current theatre is only a deeper deconstruction of the traditional, Aristotelean approach of creating theatre, something evident in the Modernist movement.

Postmodernism lacks clear definition because of the variety of ways in which this process is fulfilled. Since the theatre’s move past the Modernist period, “Absurdism” and “avant-garde” have been used to represent a myriad of play types, making the terms amorphous. “Absurdity” has become synonymous with a distorted and exaggerated version of Ionesco’s anti-theatre, and anti-theatre has become a norm. Is there a contemporary theatre that is not absurd, if only because it goes against a previous standard? In fact, tenets of Absurdism are now being sought out in past playwright’s work; Ionesco himself cites Shakespeare as one of the founding fathers of Absurdism¹⁰⁸, though most would not initially refer to Shakespeare as such in terms of Ionesco’s genre. With the continued analysis of Absurdist theatre, the genre becomes less absurd, and Ionesco’s original anti-theatre becomes more familiar.

It does seem that there must be more to a contemporary production of *Rhinoceros* than fast-paced wordplay and the spectacle of people morphing into rhinoceroses. In a world of advanced graphics in television and movies, stage spectacle often pales in comparison. What is considered original about a metamorphoses in an age where modern audiences have seen extinct dinosaurs born again, entire forests come to life, and people become superhuman? And special effects are not limited to the silver and small screen. Spectacle has continued to engulf modern-day theatrical productions. Large-scale, large-budget Broadway productions have come to rely on

spectacle alone—Disney productions are often based on the spectacle of the performance, since a majority of the audiences have already seen the movie and, therefore, are familiar with the plot. A current production must work to emphasize another aspect of Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, specifically, the incorporation of a relevant thematic statement within his anti-theatre. *Rhinoceros* is not just entertainment in the form of lyrical word mangling and a shocking twist of reality. It is a form perfected to incorporate something deeper and must be treated with the same respect in a modern-day setting.

What is necessary to achieve Ionesco's anti-theatre in the 21st Century? Ionesco's ultimate goal within *Rhinoceros* was not to shock people with theatrical stage effects and witty dialogue; that was merely the form. *Rhinoceros* is one of Ionesco's most effective anti-plays because of the skill with which he uses that framework. Ionesco's anti-logic is used, not to express the banality of language and parlor-room dialogue, but to deliver a full-on attack of collective ideologies. Unlike plays like *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson*, *Rhinoceros* goes further, to employ the anti-play structure to desecrate modern logic. Though it seems at first that Ionesco's anti-play will not be as effective in the way it was originally intended, *Rhinoceros* can be effective because the primary focus of the play is its theme—a theme that is timeless and can be appreciated in both its historical and current context. It is a “terrible farce and fantastic fable” and can remain as such in a current production. It is a question of and a comment on the ideologies that still plague society. The haunting of the fascist conformity during World War II is perhaps more frightening when a current audience is reminded that these ideologies still exist, that conformity still abounds in society and no one is safe from it. *Rhinoceros* is a warning sign of those who have succumb to the masses of a collective ideology, and it retains its strength because of the continuing epidemic of mass conformity.

NOTES

- ¹ Lane 110
- ² Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 3
- ³ “Drama by Ionesco Opens in Germany” 41
- ⁴ Martin 357
- ⁵ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton 135
- ⁶ Bonnefoy 103
- ⁷ Hayman 13
- ⁸ Esslin xix
- ⁹ Gaensbauer 12
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Esslin 180
- ¹² Martin 356
- ¹³ Esslin 91
- ¹⁴ Ionesco
- ¹⁵ Esslin 241
- ¹⁶ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* xx
- ¹⁷ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* xxxiv
- ¹⁸ Lane 115
- ¹⁹ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton 34
- ²⁰ Gaensbauer 12
- ²¹ Gaensbauer 105
- ²² Lamont, “The Hero in Spite of Himself” 73
- ²³ Bonnefoy 13
- ²⁴ Bonnefoy 28
- ²⁵ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 18
- ²⁶ Lane 120
- ²⁷ Gaensbauer 5
- ²⁸ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 4
- ²⁹ Lamnot, “The Hero in Spite of Himself”
- ³⁰ Lamont, “The Hero in Spite of Himself” 73
- ³¹ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 75
- ³² Hedrick, Reynolds 100
- ³³ Despite Ionesco’s general dislike for Camus and his Existentialism, Berenger seems to be a reflection of Camus’ own ideas of man’s inability to relate to his existence: “Man is forever frustrated by the juxtaposition of his inevitable death and the spectacle of an eternal universe.” (in Bulwa, March, xiv)
- ³⁴ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 107
- ³⁵ Lamont, *Ionesco’s Imperatives* 140
- ³⁶ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 23
- ³⁷ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 30
- ³⁸ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 106
- ³⁹ Lane 115

⁴⁰ Ionesco is, of course, not the first Modernist writer to question or attack logic in his work—this theme is the foundation of the Modernist movement, though it is approached in many different ways. More popular examples include: Jean Tardieu’s *Theatre de Chambre*, Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Breasts of Tiresias*, and Jean Cocteau’s *Marriage on the Eiffel Tower*.

⁴¹ Lamont, *Ionesco’s Imperatives* 145

⁴² Lamont, “The Hero in Spite of Himself” 76

⁴³ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 19

⁴⁴ Ionesco, *Notes and Counternotes* 214

⁴⁵ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 18

⁴⁶ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 86

⁴⁷ Coe 21

⁴⁸ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 38

⁴⁹ Gaensbauer 102

⁵⁰ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 51

⁵¹ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 89

⁵² Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 89

⁵³ Lamont, *Ionesco’s Imperatives* 45

⁵⁴ Lamont, *Ionesco’s Imperatives* 145

⁵⁵ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 87

⁵⁶ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 80

⁵⁷ While two rather major female characters are written into the script, Miami University’s production chose to also adapt Dudard’s character to female. This obviously problematizes her character, but the gender change of this character will not be included in this discussion as she was originally intended by the author to be male.

⁵⁸ Coe 85

⁵⁹ Hayman 107

⁶⁰ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 52

⁶¹ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 52

⁶² Gaensbauer 4

⁶³ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 50

⁶⁴ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 39

⁶⁵ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 103

⁶⁶ Doan handout

⁶⁷ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton, 138

⁶⁸ Marchese

⁶⁹ Johnson

⁷⁰ Hurwitt B3

⁷¹ Wheeler

⁷² Bonnefoy 77

⁷³ These designers’ notes and illustrations can be found in the program guide included as Appendix 1.

⁷⁴ Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* 78

⁷⁵ Bonnefoy 16

⁷⁶ Preston 5B

⁷⁷ Lane 115

⁷⁸ Absurdism almost appears to be the culmination of the Modernist period; the extremist works of early Modernists have foreshadowed Ionesco's own themes, imagery, and style of writing, for example: Jarry's early political battle of *Ubu Roi*, Tzara's alienation in *The Gas Heart*, and the poetic Expressionist mission of *The Beggar* by Sorge.

⁷⁹ Corrigan 159

⁸⁰ Esslin xix

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Gaensbauer 3

⁸³ Gaensbauer 3

⁸⁴ Gaensbauer 8

⁸⁵ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton 130

⁸⁶ Esslin 80

⁸⁷ Gaensbauer 12

⁸⁸ Bonnefoy 103

⁸⁹ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Zolotow 48

⁹² Zolotow 72

⁹³ Ott

⁹⁴ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton

⁹⁵ Lane 121

⁹⁶ Ionesco, *Notes and Counternotes* 216

⁹⁷ Lamont 144

⁹⁸ Gaensbauer 7

⁹⁹ Ionesco, *Notes and Counternotes* 216

¹⁰⁰ Coe 147

¹⁰¹ Gaensbauer 105

¹⁰² Knowlton 57

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Cardullo 35-36

¹⁰⁵ Corrigan 160

¹⁰⁶ Gaensbauer 16

¹⁰⁷ Corrigan 162

¹⁰⁸ Ionesco, ed. Plimpton 135

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2006-2007 MIAMI UNIVERSITY THEATRE



Rhinoceros

By Eugene Ionesco
Translated by Derek Prouse

8:00 p.m. October 4-7, 2006
2:00 pm. October 8, 2006
Gates-Abegglen Theatre

Department of Theatre

MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Theatre is committed to developing passionate, creative thinkers with artistic vision through a program of study that emphasizes the interplay between critical thinking and artistic practice.

- We situate ourselves within a strong liberal arts tradition, celebrate its interdisciplinary resources, and encourage multiple connections to our surrounding communities.
- We enable and require our students to study, test and explore theatrical practice, cultural contexts, and the ethical and social concerns of art makers in a plural and global society.
- We are committed to helping our students identify and develop their own personal strengths, provide them with the tools to realize their potential, and embrace the challenges of independent thinking, global awareness, and artistic and scholarly passion.

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Susan Thomas, Editor

2006-07 MU Theatre Season

MAIN STAGE

Gates-Abegglen Theatre

Rhinoceros

By Eugene Ionesco, Translated by Derek Prouse
Directed by William Doan
October 4–7, 2006 at 8:00 pm
October 8 at 2:00 pm

All's Well That Ends Well

8th Annual John D. Yeck Production
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Roger Bechtel
November 16–18, Nov. 30–Dec. 2, 2006 at 8:00 pm
December 3 at 2:00 pm

Candide

Music by Leonard Bernstein
Book by Hugh Wheeler adapted from Voltaire
Lyrics by Richard Wilbur, John Latouche and Stephen Sondheim
Directed by Gion DeFrancesco, Musical direction by Ben Smolder
A production of the Departments of Theatre and Music
April 5–7, 12–14, 2007 at 8:00 pm
April 15 at 2:00 pm

SECONDSTAGE – Studio 88

The Shadow Box

By Michael Cristofer
Directed by Bianca Siplin
October 25–28, 2006 at 8:00 pm
October 28 & 29 at 2:00 pm

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu

By Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl
Directed by Ann Elizabeth Armstrong
February 21–24, 2007 at 8:00 pm
February 24 & 25 at 2:00 pm

Miami University Department of Theatre presents

Rhinoceros

By Eugene Ionesco

Translated by Derek Prouse

William J. Doan, Director

Gion DeFrancesco, Scenic Designer

Lin Conaway, Costume Designer
assisted by Leslie Stamoolis

Jakyung Seo, Lighting Designer

Jay S. Rozema, Sound Designer

Allison Kunkler, Make-up Designer
advised by Lin Conaway

kClare Kemock, Production Dramaturgy

Daphne McCoy, Ballet Choreographer

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc..

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THEATRE ETIQUETTE

- Please turn off all cell phones and pagers.
- The taking of photographs or use of recording devices is strictly prohibited.
- If you have candy to unwrap, kindly do so before the show begins.
- Please note the closest exit in case of an emergency.
- Smoking is not permitted in the Center for Performing Arts.
- Please discard all food and drinks before entering the theatre.
- As a courtesy to the audience and performers, latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate break in the performance.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Waitress	Maura Person
The Grocer's Wife	Sara Ribar
The Housewife	Laura Ferdinand
Berenger	Justin Baldwin
Jean	Tim Simeone
The Grocer	Matt Salter
The Old Gentleman	Ryan Oder
The Logician	Adam Rinsky
Café Proprietor/Mr. Boeuf	Chris Hodge
Daisy	Jen Leninger
Dudard	Beth Stelling
Botard	Alex Homer
Mr. Papillon	Bryan Schmidt
Mrs. Boeuf	Rosemary Marston
The Cat	Him/Herself

*(No cats were harmed in the making of this play.
The rhinos, however, are on their own.)*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I
Scene One: A local marketplace
Scene Two: The office

INTERMISSION

Act II
Jean's apartment

Act III
Berenger's apartment

A SPECIAL THANKS to:

Ellen Miller, Department of Philosophy, Luis Fernando Midence, Dr. Paul Jackson & ANYA, the cat

DIRECTOR'S NOTES/QUOTES

collected by Bill Doan

They have computers, and they may have other weapons of mass destruction. *(Janet Reno, US Attorney General, 02-27-98)*

That artifacts have politics is unquestionable. As products of particular segments of society, technologies reflect the values of their creators and are thus loaded with ideological implications. *(Merritt Roe Smith)*

It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity. *(Albert Einstein)*

Use of advanced messaging technology does not imply an endorsement of western industrial civilization. *(Anonymous email sig line)*

The proper artistic response to digital technology is to embrace it as a new window on everything that's eternally human, and to use it with passion, wisdom, fearlessness and joy.

(Ralph Lombreglia)

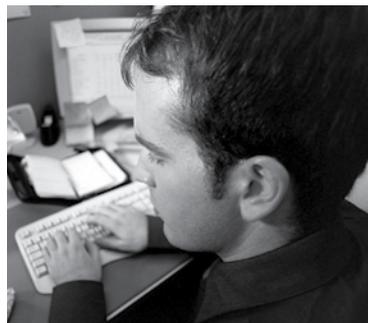
For a list of all the ways technology has failed to improve the quality of life, please press three. *(Alice Kahn)*

One day soon the Gillette company will announce the development of a razor that, thanks to a computer microchip, can actually travel ahead in time and shave beard hairs that don't even exist yet. *(Dave Barry)*

Soon silence will have passed into legend. Man has turned his back on silence. Day after day he invents machines and devices that increase noise and distract humanity from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation...tooting, howling, screeching, booming, crashing, whistling, grinding, and trilling bolster his ego. His anxiety subsides. His inhuman void spreads monstrously like a gray vegetation. *(Jean Arp)*

Western society has accepted as unquestionable a technological imperative that is quite as arbitrary as the most primitive taboo: not merely the duty to foster invention and constantly to create technological novelties, but equally the duty to surrender to these novelties unconditionally, just because they are offered, without respect to their human consequences. *(Lewis Mumford)*

The drive toward complex technical achievement offers a clue to why the U.S. is good at space gadgetry and bad at slum problems. *(John Kenneth Galbraith)*



Where there is the necessary technical skill to move mountains, there is no need for the faith that moves mountains. *(Eric Hoffer)*

A computer terminal is not some clunky old television with a typewriter in front of it. It is an interface where the mind and body can connect with the universe and move bits of it about. *(Douglas Adams)*

... We need to rekindle the Jeffersonian ideal of the 'middle landscape' with its sensitivity to the necessity for balance between nature and civilization. In the process, we have to be willing to ask, debate, repeat, and hope to resolve without recrimination or reprisal the hard questions: Progress for whom? Progress for what? What kind of progress do we, as a society, really need? *(Merritt Roe Smith)*

If not doing what is rational is a sign of faulty thinking, how do we think properly? ... It appears that our brains are burdened with a sociobiological albatross that deflects rational thought. Must we then cultivate an emotionless, more computer like function of the brain? *(Eric Harth)*

"The Smiths, the Martins can no longer talk because they can no longer think; they can no longer think because they can no longer be moved, can no longer feel passions. They can no longer be; they can 'become' anybody, anything, for, having lost their identity, they assume the identity of others.....they are interchangeable."

(Ionesco, The Tragedy of Language, Tulane Drama Review, Spring, 1960.)



THE "LOGIC OF TECHNOLOGY"

by Elaine Miller, Philosophy Department

Traditionally, the word 'logic' is thought to refer to the science or art of reasoning. However, philosophers of the past used 'logic' or logos to denote the divine intelligence ordering all of being. We can also think of each era as having its own logic, or order, based on the predominant values of a culture. The logic of modernity is deeply informed by technology and mass marketing and production. Since the emergence of modernity logic has become increasingly associated with justifying certain power relations and presenting them as neutral. Like assembly line production or virtual reproduction, the logic of technology posits objects and subjects merely in relation to possibility rather than actuality. This possibility may be tied equally to any of a series of identical, replaceable things.

DRAMATURGY NOTES

by KClare Kemock

Berenger finds himself alone in a dehumanized world where each person tried to be just like all the others. It's just because they all tried to be like each other that they became dehumanized, or rather depersonalized, which is after all the same thing.

Eugene Ionesco

EUGENE IONESCO and THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

In a time of depression after the first world war, art reflected the uneasiness of the society in which it was created. In a world that created the Lost Generation of novelists, dramatic literature was evolving into something new as well, something which would later be coined the Theatre of the Absurd. Fed by the future devastation of World War II, a genre of dramatic literature found inspiration in the uncertainty of life, mostly through playwrights like Eugene Ionesco, a Romanian native who expatriated to Paris, France during the second World War. Though Ionesco is often considered the epitome of the Theatre of the Absurd, the term used to describe the genre of his writing was not conceived until much later by Martin Esslin:

...the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.

Compared to writers such as Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet, Ionesco began writing after a long struggle with the reality of human mortality and the senselessness of language. While trying to teach himself English, Ionesco was struck by the absurdity of language itself: "How...can I express everything that words hide? How can I express what is inexpressible?" While watching the world succumb to the totalitarianism of World War II, Ionesco realized a foe beyond the surface level of language: logic. Ionesco's dealings with death and logic in his everyday life were reflected directly into his writing, and his observation of the irrational was dramatized in plays such as *The Bald Soprano*, *The Chairs*, and *Rhinoceros*.

Esslin, M. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. New York: Anchor Books, 1961.
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IONESCO: A LIFE ABSURD

29 November 1909

Born in Slatina, Romania; son of Romanian Eugen Ionescu and French Therese Ipcar



1911	Family moves to Paris	1958	London, Controversy with Kenneth Tynan
1916	Father deserts family, returns to Romania		
1917	Father marries Helene Buruiana		
1917-1919	Years at La Chapelle-Anthenaise; will later connect his obsession with both light and darkness to these years	1959	Premiere of <i>Rhinoceros</i> (1958); premiere of <i>The Killer</i> (1957)
1920-1922	Lives in Paris with mother, discovers literature and writes first plays		
1922	Father claims custody of children, returns unhappily to Romania; the rest of his life will consist of attempts to return to Paris	1962	Premiere of <i>Exit the King</i> (1962); Notes and Counter Notes; The Colonel's Photograph; premiere of <i>A Stroll in the Air</i>
		1964	Premiere of <i>Hunger and Thirst</i>
1926	Leaves father's home	1967	Fragments of a Journal
1929	Enrolls in Bucharest University	1968	Present Past Past Present
1930	Publishes first article in magazine Zodiac	1969	Decouvertes; receives two literary prizes (Grand Prix litteraire Prince Pierre de Monaco, Grand Prix National du theatre)
1931	Publishes <i>Elegies for Minuscule Beings</i> , a volume of poetry		
1932-1935	Contributes to <i>Azi</i> , <i>Viata literara</i> , and other literary magazines; military service	1970	Premiere of <i>The Killing Game</i> ; <i>The Mire</i> (film for German television); elected to Academie francaise; receives Austrian State Prize for European literature; awarded Legion of Honor
1934	Receives degree from Bucharest University; publishes first book of essays, <i>No</i>	1971	Awarded honorary doctorate from NYU
1936	Marries Rodica Burileanu; death of mother	1972	Premiere of <i>Macbett</i>
1936-1938	Works as French teacher in Cernavada; becomes literary critic for magazine Facla	1973	<i>The Hermit</i> ; premiere of <i>A Hell of a Mess!</i> ; receives Jerusalem Prize
1939	Leaves Romania and arrives in Paris with wife	1974	Receives International Writer's Prize
1940-1941	Forced exile to Romania	1975	Premiere of <i>Man With Bags</i> ; awarded honorary doctorate from University of Tel Aviv
1942-1944	Lives in Marseille during war; birth of daughter Marie-France		
1945	Returns to Paris	1977	Antidotes
1945-1950	Works as proofreader, translator, free-lance writer	1978	International Colloquium at Cerisy-la-Salle devoted to Ionesco
1948	Death of father	1979	Un Homme en question
1950	Premiere of <i>The Bald Soprano</i> (written 1948); becomes French citizen	1980	Artist in residence at University of Southern California; premiere of <i>Journeys Among the Dead</i>
1951	Premiere of <i>The Lesson</i> (1950)	1981	<i>Le Noir et le blanc</i> ; paintings, drawings, and prints exhibited around the world
1952	Premiere of <i>The Chairs</i> (1951)		
1953	Premiere of <i>Victims of Duty</i> (1952)	1982	Hugoliade
1954	Premiere of <i>Amedee, or How to Get Rid of it</i> (1953)	1985	Receives Ingersoll Prize
1955	Premiere of <i>Jack, or The Submission</i> (1950)	1987	La Quete intermittente
1956	Premiere of <i>Improvisation, or The Shepherd's Chameleon</i> (1955)	1988	Premiere of opera <i>Maximilien Kolbe</i>
		1989	Receives a Moliere
1957	Premiere of <i>The New Tenant</i> ; premiere of <i>The Future is in the Eggs</i> (1951)	1991	Gallimard publishes Theatre complet in Pleiades version
		1994	Dies in Paris, May 28, buried in the Cemetery of Montparnasse

Lane, N. *Understanding Eugene Ionesco*. South Carolina: U of SC, 1994.
Gaensbauer, D.B. *Eugene Ionesco Revisited*. New York:

RHINOCEROS

Are you under the impression that our way of life is superior?
Jean (Act II)

When Ionesco wrote *Rhinoceros* in 1958, he was clearly influenced by the war that surrounded him only years before and by the mob mentality war creates. As more people joined the NAZI party, a majority was born. Those people who stood against it often succumbed to the debased morals of the organization. Ionesco describes his feeling of wonder at how easily his own friends acquiesced to the herd through the metaphor of a human transforming into a rhinoceros:



"I spoke to him. He was still a man. Suddenly beneath my very eyes, I saw his skin get hard and thicken in a terrifying way. His gloves, his shoes, became hoofs; his hands became paws, a horn began to grow out of his forehead, he became ferocious, he attacked furiously. He was no longer intelligent, he could no longer talk. He had become a rhinoceros."



Ionesco chose the metaphor of a rhinoceros because of its thick armor, its ruthlessness, and, most importantly, its herd mentality. Ionesco's genius lies in his ability to craft a play that shows the dichotomy between mindless mass conformity, and the overwhelming allure of this mentality.

In creating the play, Ionesco also improved upon a returning character from his previous play, *The Killer*. The character, Berenger, became the standard for the absurdist anti-hero.

Berenger's lack of confidence, lack of bravery, and lack of organization do nothing to stifle the fact that he is still, at heart, a character with a grasp of basic humanity, something the other characters within the play lack immensely. As for Ionesco's other characters, the people surrounding Berenger brilliantly reflect the numerous ideologies swarming Ionesco during the rise of facism and Nazism in his country. Each character almost clearly resembles a school of thought and that school's particular logic, all varying the way they succumb to the majority of the herd.

Rhinoceros is often considered Ionesco's most accessible play, and it remains the most widely produced. Ionesco's wordplay and imagery, his obvious analysis of the dogmatic practices of the day, and his questioning of logic and crowd mentality make *Rhinoceros* poignant in any society in which collective truths run rampant.

Lane, Nancy. *Understanding Eugene Ionesco*. South Carolina: U of SC, 1994.

TRIVIA

iPod volumes can reach up to 130 dB level – equivalent to that of a jackhammer. Sources say 110 dB is a level which is only safe for about half an hour before hearing damage begins.
-*Rolling Stone Magazine*

In 1984, 8.2% of American homes had a computer, all without internet access. In 2003, 61.3% of American homes had computers, with 54.7% using internet.
-*U.S. Census Bureau*

Cell phone users in the United States have increased from 34 million a decade ago to more than 203 million...
-*Post-Gazette, Pittsburgh, PA*

68% of Americans who see a TV commercial for a computer processor (such as a Pentium III) believe that it will speed up their internet connection—however, it's the modem that does that.
-*Internet source*

To play *Mary Had a Little Lamb* on your phone:
3-2-1-2-3-3-3 2-2-2 3-9-9 3-2-1-2-3-3-3 3-2-3-2-1
-*Years of Practice*

In 1992, only 5 million Americans did not have telephones.
In 1995, 34 million did not have health insurance.
- *Useless Facts*

The telephone has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.
-*Western Union internal memo, 1876*

The average American household today contains more computer power than existed in the world before 1965.
- *Internet source*

Black rhinos can run at rates of up to 40 miles an hour!
- *Animal Corner*

A group of rhinos is called a "crash."
- *Animal Corner*

Only 7500 white rhinos and 2500 black rhinos exist in the world today.
- *Animal Corner*

TOP TEN SIGNS YOU'RE ADDICTED TO THE INTERNET:

1. You wake up at 3 a.m. to go to the bathroom and stop and check your e-mail on the way back to bed.
2. You get a tattoo that reads "This body best viewed with Netscape Navigator 1.1 or higher."
3. You name your children Eudora, Mozilla and Dotcom.
4. You turn off your modem and get this awful empty feeling, like you just pulled the plug on a loved one.
5. You spend half of the plane trip with your laptop on your lap...and your child in the overhead compartment.
6. You decide to stay in college for an additional year or two, just for the free Internet access.
7. You laugh at people with 28.800-baud modems.
8. You start using smileys in your snail mail.
9. The last mate you picked up was a JPEG.
10. Your hard drive crashes. You haven't logged in for two hours. You start to twitch. You pick up the phone and manually dial your ISP's access number. You try to hum to communicate with the modem. YOU SUCCEED!

- *The World Headquarters of Netaholics Anonymous*

THE RHINO IN OUR MIDST?

Technology...the knack of so arranging the world that we don't have to experience it.

Max Frisch



Cell phones, iPods, email, Myspace, Facebook: things every college student, or rather, every American citizen can hardly live without. Society has adopted technology into its every day, in both minor and major roles, but have we reached the point where we are unable to know how this technology affects us on a daily basis? Has technology come to unconsciously engulf our every moment? Where is the line between luxury and harmful dependency? When is it too much?

Technology is not without its benefits. From convenience oriented inventions, such as the washing machine, to complex and life-changing innovations, such as x-ray machines and pacemakers, technology has definitely made life more efficient and more fulfilling in many ways. No more suffering through painful medical conditions when machines help

to relieve symptoms and medicine has been produced to cure diseases. No more waiting for snail mail to deliver letters when email sends information in under one minute. No more waiting for food to cook in an oven when the microwave zaps it in less than a minute. Society takes advantage of being able to swipe a card as payment, or rush through a checkout line by having a machine scan their groceries for them. The advancement of these things has truly given life a sense of luxury, while also making human life span longer.

Technology has become a way of life. Unfortunately, our dependency on that lifestyle is of concern. Nothing is sacred it seems. Online confessionals prove that even religion is being consumed by the increase of technology. And yet, while the internet and other forms of daily technology claim to bring the world closer together, face-to-face contact has become a rare commodity. Internet dating and networking sites are becoming more and more popular, but human contact, a considerably important aspect of relationships, is in danger of becoming less and less common. With over six million members and more than two hundred thousand new members registering a day, it can hardly be argued that *myspace.com* is not impacting the modern public. The site's motto: "a place for friends," indicates a feeling of social gathering and of personal relationships, however, these sites only serve to separate people from reality. Technology allows us to be reachable anywhere, but also gives us a sense of instability. Having a cell phone erases the necessity of having a house phone, giving a feeling of constant transition; in the most obvious terms, society is purely "mobile." Technology keeps us entertained through a constant update of webpages, increasingly graphic video games, and the ability to mass produce media. However, it can addict people to feeling impatient and instill a need to know things immediately.



Probably most distressing of all, technology encourages the herd mentality that Ionesco so clearly warns against— join this group, buy this phone. Media and advertising make the need to indulge in this obsession with technology almost unconscious. People lose themselves in the rush to advance and progress in the technological world. The more a crowd mentality penetrates a community, the less the individual exists, thus, the more the herd mentality is accepted, and so on. The cycle feeds itself through acceptance and ignorance to the severe consequences it creates. Our problem, then, is to allow technology to help and not hinder us; allow it to afford our lives luxury, but not take over our lives completely by replacing human thought and emotion: We may look forward to increasing reliance on computers in all kinds of decision making, in place of intuition, instinct or judgments based on custom or emotions. This will mean a check on some of our so-called better instincts like compassion, which may seem a high price to pay. But compassion is a capricious virtue. The Palestinian elicits little compassion from the Israeli settler and vice versa. Compassion can become infectious, as when a whole nation anxiously followed the fate of two whales trapped in arctic ice, or it can vanish without a trace when one ethnic group slaughters another "for a cause."

Technology itself is not the rhinoceros. Any one aspect of technology is not something to be avoided, and technology, in and of itself, is truly a thing to be appreciated in our modern world. But what are the ideologies associated with technology? In the end, what Ionesco wants to relate is not that any one ideology is right or wrong, but that conforming to one thing without thought is a certain death to individualism and, therefore, humanity.

Always question, above all question.

Eugene Ionesco



Gaensbauer, D. B. *Eugene Ionesco Revisited*. New York: Twayne, 1996. Harth, E. *Perspectives in Scanning the Future: 20 Eminent Thinkers on the World of Tomorrow*. ed. Yorick Blumenfeld. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999.

Further reading:

Bonnefoy, C. *Conversations with Ionesco*. Trans. Jan Dawson. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1966.

Esslin, M. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. New York: Anchor Books, 1961.

Lane, N. *Understanding Eugene Ionesco*. South Carolina: U of SC, 1994.

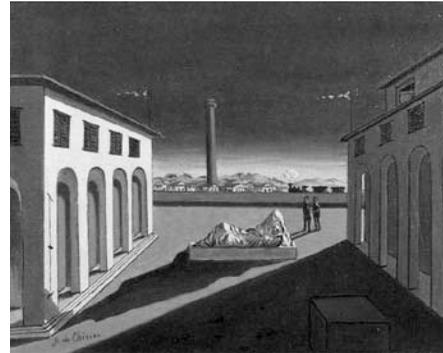
SCENIC DESIGN

by Gion DeFrancesco

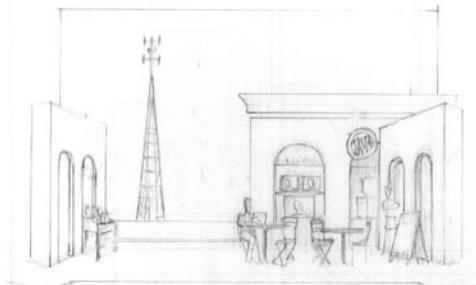
Design Approach

Poor Berenger. He is isolated in a world that is losing its humanity. All the precepts on which we as humans create order and understanding are gone. How can he survive? This existential questioning is not unique to the work of Ionesco. It recurs in many of the plays of a group of writers who, seeing the devastation wrought by man in two world wars, began to question long accepted notions of humanity. Their work is often filled with quirky but bleak images, struggles between the individual and the machinery of society, and little if any resolution to conflict.

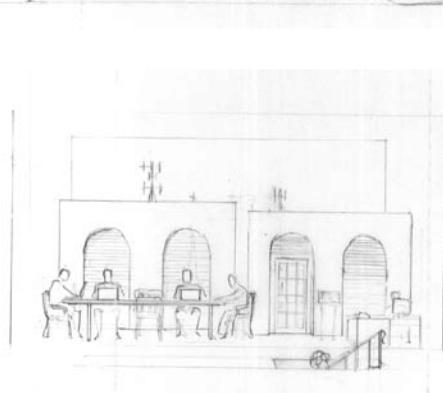
Early in my design process I try to find visual analogs to the text of the playwright. After reading *Rhinoceros*, I found the painting of Giorgio de Chirico a powerful inspiration. De Chirico is often associated with the school of Dada, described by Horst De la Croix and Richard Tansey as a movement which "reinforced a trend ... toward a spontaneous, intuitive expression of the whimsical, fantastic, humorous, sardonic, and absurd" (Gardener's Art Through the Ages, 8th ed.).



In many of de Chirico's canvases, we see city plazas – arched facades arranged in careful strict rectilinear geometry, open and devoid of human presence. In the distance we often see some symbol of the menace of technology (a clock, a smokestack). The settings are cold, full of stark shadow and impersonal. They are places made by man but uninhabitable.



So back to the settings for *Rhinoceros*. If Berenger is our "everyman," Ionesco has created a world around him which has at the onset already made him an outsider. Jean questions his behavior, gives him tips on how to be a proper member of society. Can Berenger live within these constructs? Is he still less than human when he is in fact the only human left? Berenger lives in de Chirico's world as much as in Ionesco's.



I've designed the four spaces using compositional elements and principles of de Chirico's world – obviously planned geometric alignments, cold and uninviting. In place of the clocks and smokestacks, more contemporary analogies of dehumanization – technology and technology towers. As our society "progresses" we move ever more towards a uniform blandness – the same Starbucks on every street corner in America. Only in the last scene do we see how really out of the mainstream Berenger is, as nothing in his flat conforms to the norms established in the first three scenes.

TECHNOLOGY-BASED MARKETING

by Luis Fernando Midence

*Did this image capture your attention?
Good, then I have 30 seconds to sell you my idea.
No. Wait. Make that 15 seconds... oh, wait.
It's actually... OK, moment's gone.
Next article!*

It would appear that our average attention span has diminished to literally flashes of images and sounds. There used to be a time when 30 seconds felt like an eternity and you could sell just about anything. But in today's technologically conglomerated world, advertisers are banging their heads against each other trying to find the best and the fastest way to reach their audience... an audience... make that: a-n-y-o-n-e.

Earlier this year, Warner Bros. Pictures invested close to \$40 million trying to convince us to go see their big budget movie-adventure "Poseidon." What? They made a movie about the Greek god of the sea? Not exactly. But imagine if \$40 million could not draw enough interest to get people into a movie theater and watch a sinking ship (wait, didn't we see that before?), you can imagine how much more difficult it is to convince people to come see a theatre show in Oxford, OH.

Yes, it is quiet ridiculous to compare a major motion picture made in Hollywood with a student-performed show at a public university; even comparing a film to a play might be insulting to some, nevertheless, the dynamics of getting people to purchase a ticket is very much alike.

In the case of *Rhinoceros*, a show about technology, we had to bang our heads together (I like that image) and find a way to reach the biggest audience possible through the very means we are analyzing / criticizing / highlighting (you decide). Sure, you can decorate the campus with posters, hang up banners, hand out flyers, even dress up students as rhinoceros (oh yeah, we did that), but even all that does not guarantee attendance to your performance. We had to get our audience where it matters the most: on their computers.

Over 8 million high school and college aged students subscribe currently to "Facebook," a sort of social networking over the internet. The site provides you the chance to announce upcoming events, parties or performances, and distribute invitations to your friends, to which they can invite their own friends, and their friends, and the friends of friends, and... you get the idea. However, instead of just sending out a simple event announcement over Facebook, we invited students to get a taste of what the show would be like.

Taking a note from the movie business, we decided to create a teaser trailer for the show; 30 seconds to get your senses involved and make you curious about the show. The trailer was embedded on multiple websites: the Theatre department's homepage, YouTube, Yahoo! Video and Google Video, with the intention of creating an awareness of something involving technology and rhinoceros... go figure. The same teaser was shown on MUTV (the university's television channel) and video-captures could be seen on the plasma screens in King Library and Shriver Center. *Rhinoceros* was seen anywhere technology would allow it on this campus.

Granted we didn't spend \$40 million in our marketing campaign. Technology became a key instrument in helping us develop our advertising efforts for the show (hopefully, that is why you are reading this). With technology changing every day, next time around we might as well just hack into people iPods and Blackberries, and add subliminal messages... wait, did I just write that? It sounds funny, but it wouldn't surprise me if advertisers, in their desperate need to reach you, or anyone for that matter, go to such extremes. Two words people: Anti-hacker software.



COSTUME AND MAKEUP DESIGN

by Leslie Stamooolis

Although Ionesco worked in the absurd, our design goals for *Rhinoceros* include emphasizing the humanity of people in a very real, naturalistic style and making the human being recognizable – even a priority – in today’s world of increasingly depersonalizing technologies. It is through this natural look that one truly perceives the absurdity the play portrays. In order to achieve the goal, designs are based on real people of the urban neighborhood setting, like those found around New York City or Chicago—a small-town feel in a big-city atmosphere. The cafes, the grocery stores, the offices, and the parks that make up such a setting are filled with people we all know: a frenzied, bedraggled housewife, the sleek and smooth lawyer, a nonchalant waitress working through school, a gruff, seen-it-all café proprietor. The folks you see on stage are the same you see around you everyday.

However, these individuals are indeed functioning in the technological world of sameness and conformity, and cannot escape from that influence. It becomes manifest in subtle ways, such as people in an office beginning to dress similarly to one another, stereotypes like a stuffy professor or “working girl” career woman, or older generations clinging to yesterday’s styles even while trying out the newest invention of convenience. To visually interpret these phenomena, the design features clean lines and little patterning, and color palettes that are unique-to-the-character. And, not to be ignored, the rhinoceros itself influences these choices—such as blocks of color mimicking its armor-like hide. Of course, while the rhinoceros is the very height of conformity, it is therefore also the symbol of unity among all the citizens—or almost all. Can you find how that unity is depicted?

The makeup design completes the look of these everyday people in an ordinary town. Following the notion of the clean, smooth look of today’s fashionable technology, we employed the concept of “sleek vs. scruffy”. For example, women use the technology of hair dryers and flat irons to make their hair sleek and straight; men use gels and other products to slick their hair into different styles. The amount of technology in the life of a character directly corresponds to that character’s level of sleekness; for example, Jean has all the latest stuff, so he is very sleek. Most of the characters in the world of *Rhinoceros* are generally up to date and fashionable, except for Berenger. He is not technologically advanced and this aspect of his character is reflected in his scruffy look.

The rhinoceros image creates a unique opportunity to further enact the design goals. Though absurdism traditionally deals in the “unseen force” imposing something on society, our current world is quite comfortable with the unseen —with cell phone signals and wi-fi. Therefore it becomes much more menacing to see the force, to see the sameness that people adopt. How terrifying and Twilight Zone-esque if, suddenly, the whole human population looks like rhinoceroses!

The rhinoceros belongs to a primitive line; some scientists believe they are near the end of their natural evolutionary cycle. How ironic, then, to align the rhino with the newest and latest technology. To represent this primordial figure, the basic outline of the rhino’s brutish head was simplified down to its smoothest shapes—a form that looks very like the slick angles and curves of a Mac computer or tiny camera phone. Popular perception states that rhinos are green; white and black are the technical definitions, but the dirtiness of rhinos does make their skin appear muddy green. Using this perception, the color for the rhinos takes on a technological slant by adding metallic pigments. Rhinos can be six feet tall at the shoulder, shadowing the idea of technology’s imposing presence on us all. The idea becomes visual by placing the rhino head high on the actor’s skull, creating a very menacing and arresting figure. Faced with such a force, according to media and culture critics like Susan Bordo and Douglas Kellner, becomes all the more compelling: you’re either following culture, or you’re fighting against it—but no one can choose to ignore it.



A Note of Gratitude from Lin Conaway, Costume Designer:

Rhinoceros offered several interesting and delightful challenges for the costume and makeup production team - the design and construction of rhino head pieces. Design students Leslie Stamooolis, Assistant to the Costume Designer, and, Allie Kunkler, make up designer, undertook this daunting task. Leslie’s challenge was in the actual design and construction of heads and Allie’s was how to approach the issues of color palette and use of materials. This was not an easy. Exploring numerous ideas and construction methods, the team has designed and reached a solution that has accomplished their design goals and that contributes to the total “look” of the characters you will see on stage. Enjoy!

SOUND DESIGN

by Jay Rozema

Picture the scene; Captain Picard and the Enterprise have been transported to the delta quadrant and come face to face with the Borg. "We are the Borg. Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated." The electronic voices from the communicator strikes fear into the hearts of the crew. When assimilated by the Borg the line between man and machine is non-existent.

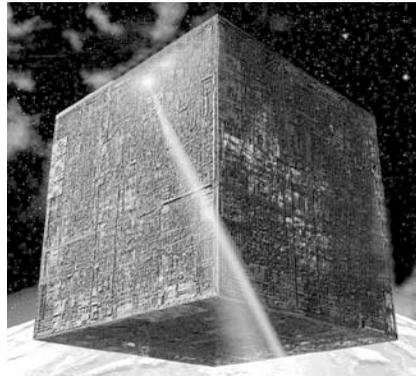
Is this science fiction or is it real? The Borg used a collective mind as a way to be more efficient. The many voices of the Borg drove the actions of the drones. Today we may not actually use a collective mind, but our world is becoming smaller and smaller, making us one large collective, due to technology. In a matter of minutes everyone with a computer and Internet access knows of a suicide bomber in Iraq. Osama Bin Ladin can be buried in a cave amongst the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan and yet he still knows what happened in the United States. Money transfers from back account to bank account by the billions every day via electronic transfers. A cell phone can be used to blow up busses or trains, and yet you can use it to keep in touch with your family.

Look around you. The technology that is used to make our lives easier is surrounding us. We can't live without our cell phones or Blackberry. (*I wonder how many audience members will check their cell phone for messages at intermission? Please, turn it off before the show starts again.*) Even if I choose not to be assimilated, your technology invades me. Not by how it is used or how I interact with it, but instead by how I hear it. The sound of technology is around us. While we try to ignore it we cannot escape the noise. Sitting in a coffee shop we may hear a computer start up or a phone ring. A bar will have a TV playing, if not hundreds, that share the latest sports scores or world news. A woman in the supermarket has her cell phone ring, and then we might get the pleasure of hearing about how her mother-in-law upset her the night before. You pull the ear bud from your iPod out of your ear and we get to listen to your music too. The sounds of technology are everywhere.

For many years I resisted, even though it was futile. I did not have a cell phone because I did not need one, but I wanted one. I questioned if I wanted the cell phone because I really could use it to better my life, or if it was cool to have one. The longer I went without a cell phone the more I thought it would be cool to have one. The voice in my head telling me to buy it was getting louder and louder. Eventually I did get a cell phone, and no I do not have a "cool" one. I got it because events in my life determined that I would benefit from having it.

The sound design for Rhinoceros is driven by three primary issues: 1) because of technology our world has become smaller and smaller; 2) technology is surrounding us every day and we can't help but hear it; and 3) the more technology is developed the louder it speaks to us and might possibly disrupt our lives.

Only you can determine if you will be assimilated and by how much. Am I a rhinoceros because I got a cell phone?



WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY

Darren Bailey (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is a sixth year Theatre major. He was last seen as Marco in *A View from the Bridge*. He has also appeared in three shows at the Hamilton campus, as Pvt. Wykowski in the Greater Hamilton Civic Theatre's *Biloxi Blues*, and as the Cowardly Lion in the Cincinnati Young People's Theatre's *The Wizard of Oz*. He holds advanced film and television training from Cincinnati's Playhouse in the Park, is a member of the Miami Men's Glee Club, The Cheezies a cappella group, and the Miami Association of Filmmakers and Independent Actors. He co-founded Two Screws Loose Productions with friend Vonzell Carter. He thanks his family, friends and Nicole for their support.

Justin Baldwin (*Berenger*) is a junior theatre major returning to Miami's stage for his fourth main stage performance. Previous productions include *Pentecost*, *Scapin*, and *The Good Person of Setzuan*. Justin wishes to thank The Fellas for their encouragement, Allie for her amazingness, the theatre kids of Miami University past and present for their guidance and Dr. Doan for his knowledge and for giving him the opportunity to work with such amazing people, Vicky Packard-Cooper for opening the door to the path he's chosen in life, and most of all his parents for their never-ending love and support.

Lin Conaway (*Costume Designer*) is a faculty member at Miami who specializes in costume design and movement for the actor. She is a member of United Scenic Artists and the United States Institute for Theatre Technology. She is a charter member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) on which board of governors she served as chair of the Theatre Movement Program. She has been chair of the Association of Theatre Movement Professionals and has served as conference planner and editor for this group both for the University/College Theatre Association and ATHE. She is a former regional chair and member of the national committee for the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival (KC/ACTF) and served as a member of a National Selection Team for the National KC/ACTF Festival in Washington, DC. Lin served on the Executive Committee of KC/ACTF Region III for more than a decade. Lin was honored for outstanding contribution to theatre education as a recipient of the Kennedy Center Gold Medallion. Currently she is the Regional Representative to the National Partners of the American Theatre, (NAPAT). Lin was instrumental, with the help of Prof. Howard Blanning, in establishing an award for designers including a residency at the Korean National University of the Arts (KNUA) sponsored by KNUA and NAPAT.

Gion DeFrancesco (*Scene Designer*) joined the faculty of Miami University in the fall of 2001 and teaches courses in scene design, design communication skills, scene painting and American musical theatre. He also designs scenery and serves as scenic charge artist for MU Theatre productions. Favorite designs at Miami include *Pentecost*, *In Quest of Love*, *As Bees in Honey Drown*, *A View From the Bridge*, and *The Good Person of Setzuan*. Regionally he has designed and painted at a number of theatres including *Big River* at the Gallery Players of Brooklyn, *I Love You! You're Perfect! Now Change!* at the Florida Repertory Theatre, and *The Magic Flute* at the Illinois Opera Theatre. His 2006 design for Ovation Theatre's production of *The Little Foxes* earned a Cincinnati Enquirer Acclaim Award.

William J. Doan (*Director*) holds a BA from Gannon University, an MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Doan is known nationally in professional theatre and higher education organizations, and serves as Treasurer and Chair of Finance for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, and as the Associate Dean of the School of Fine Arts. His theatre productions have been recognized with numerous certificates of merit by the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival, and he has been honored for outstanding teaching.

Laura Jeanne Ferdinand (*Housewife*) a sophomore, is proud to be a part of her second main stage production at Miami. She recently performed as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* at the Ernst Nature Theatre and Lucy in Stage Left's *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. She would like to thank every one who made this production possible, especially the director, stage managers, and techies. She hopes you enjoy this show (in your human form.)

Alex Homer (*Botard*) is a sophomore theatre major from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This is Alex's second appearance on Miami's MainStage. Alex was last seen as Paris in *Romeo and Juliet* performed in the Ernst Nature Theatre. Alex would like to thank his parents for all their support, the cast and crew for their hard work, and finally Dr. Doan for giving him another opportunity to act.

kClare Kemock (*Dramaturg*) is a second-year graduate student in the Theatre Department who finished her undergraduate career at Ashland University with degrees in English and Theatre Education. She has worked at several theatres in Northeast Ohio, as well as at the Johnny Appleseed Outdoor Drama, and, most recently, in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado at the Rocky Mountain Repertory Theatre. It has been a thrill for kClare to work on this absurdist piece with Dr. Doan, and she is excited to have been given this opportunity to fulfill her thesis requirement with a play as incredible as *Rhinoceros*. Ionesco continues to be one of her favorite playwrights, providing ways to express those things which are inexpressible about humanity: "I have never quite succeeded in getting used to existence, whether it be the existence of the world or of other people, or above all myself."

Lizz Keo (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is a sophomore Theatre Major at Miami University. She is making her debut on the Stage Management team, as an ASM, and hopes to eventually hold the title of Stage Manager. Lizz has been fairly active in the department and was first seen on stage in *A View from the Bridge* and then behind the scenes in *The Good Person of Setzuan*. She just recently portrayed Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*. Keep an eye out for her in *All's Well that Ends Well*. Lizz would like to pay a special thanks to Emily Ruth Williams, Darrin Bailey, Jeff Goins, Dr. Doan, and the amazing cast of *Rhinoceros* for making her first ASMing experience memorable.

Allie Kunkler (*Makeup Designer*) is a junior theatre major and is very excited to be designing the makeup for *Rhinoceros*. This is her first time designing for Miami. She would like to thank her parents, brother and sister, friends, and Justin for their continual support. She would also like to thank Lin Conaway and Dr. Doan for giving her this great opportunity!

Jennifer Leininger (*Daisy*) is a senior majoring in theatre and marketing. While at Miami she has been seen in *The Genesis Project*, *The Devils*, *Scapin* and *The Good Person of Setzuan*. She does not have any concrete post graduation plans but is currently thinking about moving to Chicago to pursue theatre there. She would like to thank her family and friends especially those who made a special trip to come and see this show. She truly appreciates all of their love and support. Jennifer would also like to thank Dr. Doan for this wonderful opportunity.

Daphne McCoy (*Choreographer*) received her BA in Music Theatre from the University of Central Oklahoma, her MFA in Modern Dance from the University of Illinois, and her Alexander Technique certification from the Urbana Center for the Alexander Technique. She was an assistant professor of Dance at Illinois State University where she taught all dance techniques as well as Dance History. She has choreographed many collegiate and professional theatre productions including *Good Person of Szechwan*, *View from A Bridge*, *Cabaret*, *Once on this Island*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Three Sisters*, *42nd Street*, *Big Love*, *Life is a Dream*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Crazy for You*, to name a few.

Rosemary Marston (*Mrs. Beouff*) is a sophomore theatre major and entrepreneurship minor. She makes her debut on the MainStage this year after several smaller productions at Miami including *Connect Me* and *A More Perfect Union*. Rosemary is an executive for The Walking Theatre Project, a social activist theatre company on campus, and plans to open her own political theatre company in the future. She is especially interested in directing and hopes to make that an important part of her career. Some of her favorite productions she has been in include *Godspell*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *The Wiz*, and *A Day in Hollywood A Night in the Ukraine*. She would like to thank everyone involved in making this show a success!

Ryan Oder (*Old Gentleman*) is a second year Theatre major hailing from the petite town of Heath, Ohio. He was recently seen in the Ernst Nature Theatre production of *Romeo and Juliet* as Benvolio. He had been praying and wishing to be cast in *Rhinoceros*, to have an opportunity to work with Dr. Doan again. He is excited to be a part of this show with this amazing theatre department and very talented cast. He would like to say thanks to his grandparents for supporting him, Emily Williams, Dr. Doan, and especially his parents and close friends (you know who you are) for putting up with him and always being there through thin and thinner.

Maura Person (*Waitress*) is a junior theatre major from New Orleans, LA and this is her first time performing in a Miami production. She has a deep love for the theatre and hopes to see it through in the future. She wants to thank all her friends in the cast and crew, new and old, for making this experience so worth while. To Dr. Doan, it's truly been a pleasure getting to work with you and thanks! To my family for all their support, and to my favorites, yall know who you are; I'm so glad I found you and thank you a million times for your friendship and guidance.

Sara Ribar (*Grocer's Wife*) is a professional college student because she doesn't really know what she wants to do with her life. She is an American Studies major with a minor in Theatre Arts. Last spring she was seen in the *Vagina Monologues* and also did an improvisational comedy show with Bekka Eaton. She has been seen in past productions on the Hamilton Campus including *Gint* and *Our Town*. Sara is very excited to make her debut here in the Gates Theatre. Sara would like to thank the wonderful cast and crew, Dr. Doan for being an amazing director, Bekka Eaton for inspiring her to pursue comedic acting, her mom for supporting her crazy life, and her radical friends who keep her sane and insane.

Adam "Action Jack" Rinsky (*Logician*) got his start in this town as part of a large chorus of birds. Then he was upgraded to one of two porters. Now, in his last role as a senior, he is the ONLY Logician. He has also done improvised comedy, movies, standup, and rap. After graduation, he wants to become either a comedian or a ninja. So for his sake, he hopes you think he is either funny or difficult to see.

Jay S. Rozema (*Sound Design*) is the resident Lighting and Sound Designer and Assistant Professor for the Department of Theatre at Miami. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts degree in lighting design from The Florida State University School of Theatre and a BFA from the University of Arizona. Jay has designed and worked for numerous regional theatres, performing arts centers, and summer stock companies. As a member of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology Jay frequently presents at the annual conference and leads the institute's Creative Teaching on the Web, an online jury publication. Jay is also active on campus as a member of University Senate and Student Affairs Council.

Matthew Salter (*Grocer*) is a junior Western and English literature major. He has been involved in theatre in various forms throughout his time at Miami, but this is his first MainStage performance. *Rhinoceros* has been an inspiring experience for him, and He expects to use what He has learned in this production in college and beyond. He would like to thank his parents for their constant support, Dr. William Doan for the opportunity to take part in this amazing show, and the crew for making it all possible.

Bryan Schmidt (*Papillon*) This will be Bryan's third Main Stage show at Miami after *Pentecost* (Czaba) and *The Good Person of Setzuan*. He has been seen recently in *Romeo and Juliet* (Romeo) and in Ionesco's *The Chairs*. Favorite past roles include Boxler in *In the Heart of America* and Rick in *Courting Prometheus*. Bryan is the treasurer for The Walking Theatre Project and works for the Know Theatre of Cincinnati. He is a certified actor-combatant by the Society of American Fight Directors.

Jakyung Seo (*Lighting Designer*) MFA, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) is beginning her first year as an Assistant Professor of Lighting Design & Technology at the University of Cincinnati. She has taught lighting, sound design and various computer programs at California State University-Fresno, University of Toledo and at Kyung Sung University in Korea. While teaching, she has also worked as a professional lighting designer and assistant lighting designer in regional theatres including Steppenwolf, Congo Square, New World and Lodestone Theatre in LA. Ms. Seo has numerous professional design credits in South Korea and Japan such as *Medusacus*, *The Can*, *Spring My Hometown* and *What We Want*, which was awarded the best prize at The International Dance Festival in Saitama, Japan.

Tim Simeone (*Jean*) is a senior theatre major at Miami. He was last seen in *Sisters 3.0* in Chicago. He will be producing his own clown show next semester entitled, "Clown Logic." He thanks: God for all his blessings, his parents for saying "heck yes!" to clown school, Pete and Jo for all their love and support, Dr. Doan for sharing a love of comedy, The cast and production crew, RJ, JT, Lang, and Megan for always coming to the show, OPC crew, Oxford Physical Therapy for getting me on my feet. . . again. "I remain just one thing and one thing only – a clown. It places me on a far higher plane than any politician." –Charlie Chaplin

Leslie Stamoilis (*Asst. Costume Designer*) is a second year graduate student in Miami's Department of Theatre. She graduated from Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, with a BA in Communications and a minor in Music and Voice. While in college, she was active in the Taylor Chorale, a 60-voice auditioned group, as well as the theatre department, serving as the makeup chair for one year, costume designer and chair for one year, and occasionally acting, stage managing, and assistant directing. As her MA thesis project, Leslie will be designing costumes for *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* in February for MU Theatre's Second Stage series. Leslie and her husband Josh, an actor with the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, are members of Theatre Communications Group and proud supporters of regional and not-for-profit theatre.

Beth Stelling (*Dudard*) is a senior Theatre major. You may have last seen her as Wang in *The Good Person of Setzuan* or as Beatrice in *A View from the Bridge*. She wants to thank all of her theatre professors that she loves, her supportive family, theatre friends, her future roommate, WTP crew, Tequila Mockingbird, all who participated in the Class of 2007ish Shot Wars, Collins Hall 04-05, AOPi, Club Field Hockey and her Bagel and Deli family. When asked, "Boyfriend or theatre?" Her answer is: "When do we rehearse?" She'll be in Chicago next year if you need her.

Emily Ruth Williams (*Stage Manager*) is a senior Theatre major and Arts Management minor. She previously stage managed *Bourbon at the Border* and *In the Heart of America* and is looking forward to stage managing *All's Well that Ends Well* in the second half of the semester. She has been seen performing on the Miami stage in *The Devils*, *Seussical*, and *How I Learned to Drive*. She is looking forward to being in next semester's musical *Candide*. She would like to thank Dr. Doan, the cast and crew for their hard work and the entire theatre faculty for their faith and confidence in her abilities (Especially Gion and Jay). She also thanks her family and friends for being continually supportive and Vonzell for his love and support, even from California.

COMPANY CREDITS

MU Theatre

Artistic Director/Producer	Elizabeth Reitz-Mullenix
Production Manager	Gion DeFrancesco
Technical Director	Steven Pauna
Scene Shop Supervisor	Tom Featherstone
Scene Shop Staff	Justin Baldwin, Shiree Campbell, Brandon Cirillo, Brian Farkas, Scott Jewell, Travis Kopp, Caroline Kristofferson, Allison Kunkler, Katherine Paddock, David Strife
Scenery Construction	Christine Alaimo, Richard Boonstra, Daniella Briseno, Joshua Clabaugh, Katie Collins, Derek Garner, Megan Haven, Christopher Heiden, Kerri Heidkamp, Lisa Hirtzel, Alex Homer, Derek Kaufman, Chanmolyvan Lizz Keo, Marissa Lunt, Philip Nelson, Ryan Oder, Andrew Oxley, Amanda Robles, Laura Schleder, Jennifer Singer, Emily Skow, Valerie Stone, Derek Thomas, Catherine Turco
Electrics Supervisor	Jay Rozema
Electrics Staff	Brian Farkas, Josh Schroder, Berni Warden
Electrics Crew	Alex Bozworth, Mia DeNardi, Bryan Dukes, Sam Evans, Ben Feltoon, Kelsey Fenn, Matt Harr, Chris Hickerson, Scott Hoskins, Jason Howard, James Lees, Jamie Lipps, Marie Maloney, Carolyn McCarthy, Stephen Murray, Adam Ring, Adam Rinsky, Christopher Smith, Andrew Strack, Emily Williams, Henry Veit
Property Master	Steven Pauna
Property Construction Crew	Melissa Anderson, Julie Lemieux
Scenic Charge Artist	Gion DeFrancesco
Scenic Artist	Tyler French
Paint Crew	Kate Beiter
Costume Shop Supervisor	Meggan Peters
Costume Shop Staff	Cheryl Barto, Shiree Campbell, Shannon McGill, Rose Reynolds
Costume Construction	Hannah Blurton, Jessica Brohard, Andrea Caralis, Lauren Chapman, Lia Chonko, Nina Dadlez, Erin Detty, Angela Diss, Tommy Dooley, David Frost, Whitney Graham, Olivia Ifregan, Stephanie Irby, Erica Kempf, Sean Lair, Jasmine Longshore, Andrea Medaas, Gracie Miller, Kate Morgan, Kelly Morton, Matt Mumford, Jacki Permann, Bradley Shaver, Rebecca Spaeth, Camille Sylvester, Nidhi Subbaraman, Maggie Taylor, Madeline Tebon. Amanda Wilczynski, Scott Wiley
Director of Marketing	Jeanne Harmeyer
Curriculat Connections	Susan Thomas
Poster Design and Video promo	Luis Fernando Midence
House Manager	Darcy Little
Audience Development Crew	Cameron Berner, Rosemary Marston, Brent McCreary
Administrative Assistant	Karen Smith
Senior Accounting Assistant	Angela Clark
Vocal Coach	Julia Guichard

For This Production

Stage Manager	Emily Ruth Williams
Asst. Stage Managers	Darren Bailey, Jeff Goins, Chanmolyvan Lizz Keo

RUNNING CREWS

Deck/Fly Crew	Mandy Robles, Berni Warden, Megan Miller, Joseph Polzin, Stephanie Ried, Kyle Wonser
Property Supervisor	Cameron Berner
Wardrobe Supervisor	Shannon McGill
Wardrobe Crew	Emily La Fratta, Christine Hajdin, Kelsey Anagnos
Light Board Operator	Laura Schleder
Sound Operator	Alex Bozworth



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Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2007.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

