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UR INTERNATIONAL THEATRE PROGRAM PRESENTS

6 CHARACTERS
IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR
BY LUIGI PIRANDELLO
ADAPTED & DIRECTED BY MICHAEL BARAKIVA

HAMLET

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Production Note

The UR International Theatre Program's production of Luigi Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author is the result of the collaborative work of many 'authors.' Guest Artist Michael Barakiva has adapted various translations of the original text. Introductions from both Eric Bentley's and Mark Musa's translations have illuminated our re-telling of Pirandello's masterpiece; the fruits of additional scholarly research conducted by the cast also allowed us a glimpse of the socio-political arena of 1920s Italy that haunted the writer. The actors, assistant directors, and dramaturg all played a vital part in bringing the text into its present state.

The process of rehearsing and reworking the adapted text has been a formidable one, requiring the cast to carry Pirandello's pregnant philosophies to term. Delicate negotiations and subtle reasoning of the author's meaning required two weeks worth of script analysis. Our slow and methodical reading of the adaptation changed the text with each revisiting. Working on their feet, the company recomposed the final text with the discovery of minor turns of phrases, textual cuts, and major editions to a number of lines.

At times consecrating, at other times defamatory, the robust language in the rehearsal room has been a testament to the lasting impression of Pirandello's words. From esoteric close readings to the practical strains of the 'stageable,' Pirandello has forced us to seek out the recondite knowledge of his literary imagination. We gained further insight through readings of his little-known, however all-the-same astonishing one-acts: theatrical time-capsules confirming the inimitable mark the playwright has left on the body of modern drama.

A final note on the text in performance: snippets of Italian have been reinstated into the dramatic narrative, when English address simply does not do justice to the impassioned pleas of the characters.

- Erez Solomon, Assistant Director
six characters in search of an author

CAST

The Company

Director
Female Lead
Male Lead
Ingenue
Juvenile
Second Female Lead
Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Understudy

Amanda Goff
Robyn Gonzales
Matthew Wolfe
Kelly Smith
Nels Youngborg
Aadika Singh
Jamie Delman
Allison Dorsey
Margaret Coit

The Characters

Father
Mother
Stepdaughter
Son
Girl
Boy
Madame Pace

Noshir Dalal
Mina Gokal
Kali Quinn
Eric Hoffman
Maggie Rosen
David Kier
Christopher Harrington

Artist Biographies

Michael Barakiva (Director) spent the summer as the Phil Killian Directing Fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, where he directed workshops of Racine's Phedre and Len Jenkin's Dark Ride. In New York, he has directed award-winning playwright Brooke Berman's Defusion and A Free Man in Paris, as well as Stephen Belber's Steak Knife and Through Fred (Urban Empire), Emily Jenkin's Animal Shelter (Soho Rep) and Ms. Berman's Bloody Thanksgiving (Ohio Theatre). In the Summer of 2001, he received the Drama League Summer Fellowship at the Hangar Theatre, where he directed The Rabbit Project, Berman's The Liddy Plays (which he also workshoped at Walkerspace with Rising Phoenix Repertory, and again at the Rattlestick Theater). In the Fall of 2000, he was Artist in Residence at Bard College, where he directed the East Coast premiere of Victor Kaufold's The Why. As an assistant director, he has worked on the National Tour of Sousassical: The Musical (dir. Chris Ashley), Saturday, Sunday, Monday at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (dir. Libby Appel), and The Bombitry of Errors (dir. Andy Goldberg). In addition, Mr. Barakiva is a two-time recipient of the David Merrick Prize in Drama, received a Ford Foundation Grant for Summer Research, and is an alumnus of the Lincoln Center Directors' Lab.

Kris Stone (Set Designer) designs primarily for New York City theatre, but also works regionally and internationally. Recent productions include: LoLife (The Abbey Theatre, Dublin), Wonton Destruction (3 Legged Dog, NYC), and Kurt Weill's Seven Deadly Sins (Powerhouse Theatre, NY). Regional credits include: Collected Stories (Portland Stage, Maine), Burning Bright and Orfeo Ed Euridice (Opera Festival of New Jersey, McCarter), A Midsummer Night's Dream (Yale Rep), Ibsen's Ghosts, and a new play, The Moving of Lilla Barton (The Clarence Brown Theatre, Knoxville). Other credits include: The Tempest and Twelfth Night (Shakespeare and Company, MA), and 3 new musicals Off Broadway: Suburb, A Child's Garden, and Splendora. Productions designed with director Michael Barakiva: Fortune (Juilliard), Pains of Youth (Juilliard), and The Why (Bard College). Kris was also the New York unit's set designer for the film K-Pax, and was recently nominated for "Best Set Designer for 2001" by the Irish Theatre Awards for her work on Equivalents at The Project Theatre in Dublin. Kris has taught set design at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Vassar College. She is a graduate of The Yale School of Drama.

Robin L. Shane (Costume Designer) is thrilled to be working at the University of Rochester, and with Michael, Kris, and Jane again. Previous collaborations with Michael include Pains of Youth and Fortune at the Juilliard School, and The Why at Bard College. Recent projects include The Importance of Being Earnest, Arms and the Man, and Dance of Death (Jean Cocteau Rep), Just Us Boys (Chernuchin/ATA Theater), and Twelfth Night (Manhattanville College). Robin has designed costumes for Mac Wellman's Cat's-Paw and The Communist Dracula Pageant (SoHo Rep), The Breakout (Flea), The Marriages of Figaro and La Traviata (Harrisburg Opera), and Wuthering Heights: The Musical (Mint). Robin has also designed costumes for film and television, having recently completed the pilot of The Mecky Stecky Show, and designed the costumes for Chutney Popcorn, a feature film starring TV's Jill Henssey. Robin holds an MFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Jane Cox (Light Designer) has previous Rochester experience with Convenience at Geva and Peter Pan and Laramie Project at NTID. New York theatre includes: True Love (Zipper), Ell's Coming (Vineyard), Enter the Night, Lesson Before Dying, Urban Zulu Mambo (Signature), In the Blood (NYSF/Public), House, Cowboys and Indians, and Joe by Richard Maxwell. Regional theatre includes: Loot (McCarter), Hearts and Arms and the Man (Long Wharf), Thiel River (Guthrie), Charlotte (Prince Music Theatre), Equivalents (Projects Theatre, Dublin), and Lessness (National Theatre, London). Lighting includes: Approaching Something Higher and Agora for Doug Varone (Jacob's Pillow, Joyce), Subverse and To Lie Tenderly for David Dorfman (MassMoca, B.A.M.). Jane is resident lighting designer for the O'Neill Playwrights Conference, and received her MFA from NYU. She is the recipient of a 2001-3 TCG/NEA Development Grant.

Jason Price (Sound Designer) was born in Virginia and currently works and teaches at the Eastman Computer Music Center at the Eastman School of Music where he is a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance and Literature in Trumpet. As a composer he has written for electronic and acoustic media, as well as for dance, film, and commercial television, radio, and multimedia. As a sound designer he most recently created the interactive electronics for the Ossia production of John Cage's Song Books (dir. Nigel Maister). He performs regularly with Alarm Will Sound, Ensemble Medusa, Ossia, God Bless America, and the Pendulum Quartet. As a soloist and trumpeter he has performed concerts, concertos with orchestras, and solo recitals in North America, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, the U.K., Japan, and Taiwan. He won 1st Prize in the 2001 National Trumpet Competition. He can be heard on the Nonesuch, Warner Brothers, Cantaloupe, and Hossman record labels.

Beatrice Basso (Dramaturg) has worked as freelance dramaturg and translator at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, American Conservatory Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, Berkeley Opera, and the Bay Area Playwrights' Festival. Based in San Francisco, she is a consultant in the organization of cultural events promoting Italian language and culture at the Instituto Italiano di Cultura. Her articles have appeared in various publications, including the leading Italian theatre magazine, Primafila. She was selected for the ATHE 2002 Young Dramaturgs' Panel.
Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore

Written in 1921, Six Characters in Search of an Author is a synthesis of some of the most relevant themes in Pirandello’s oeuvre: the emptiness of family and love relationships due to the impossibility of communication, the multiple, infinite masks we are bound to wear, the void behind them. These fundamental elements are entrenched in a new structure that broke theatre conventions up to that point and established the beginning of a non-mimetic type of theatre that would influence authors from Beckett to Pinter.

In a perfect orchestration of incongruities, Pirandello brings on stage a group of people refused by the writer who conceived them. They are looking for a new author, one who would let them act out their passions. As Pirandello puts it, once characters are conceived, they “start to take up a life of their own”. The playwright allows the audience into the mechanisms of an author’s imagination, while at the same time making them feel that those mechanisms are happening by accident.

That is probably what the original spectators of Six Characters… weren’t prepared for. The play had a controversial opening at the Teatro Valle in Rome in the Spring of 1921. The audience was violently split between supporters and denigrators of the novelty and audacity of the new piece, and the verbal battle continued on the streets around the theater.

Now the revolutionary play has become a classic. But while Pirandello seemed to be obliterating the “rules of the game” in the theatre, he was in fact celebrating illusion, the essence of any game in the theatre.

— Beatrice Basso, dramaturg

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) Italian dramatist, short story writer, and novelist, was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1934. He exercised a pervasive influence on European drama by challenging the conventions of Naturalism. Among his plays, ten of which he published as Maschere nude (Naked Masks, 1918-22), the best known are: Così è (se vi pare) (Right You Are, If You Think You Are, 1917), Sei personaggi in cerca di autore (Six Characters in Search of an Author, 1921), and Enrico IV (Henry IV, 1922). In these plays he anticipated the anti-illusionist theatre of Brecht, Wilder, and Peter Weiss; his exploration of the disintegration of personality foreshadowed Beckett; his probing of the conflict between reality and appearance has echoes in the work of O’Neill, and his examination of the relationship between self and persona, actor and character, face and mask, is a precursor of the work of Anouilh, Giraudoux and Genet. Yet much of Pirandello’s best work is to be found in his very short stories (28 of which were dramatized), where themes in common with his plays are more deeply explored. His main full-length novels are: L’esclusa (The Outcast, 1901), which deals with a woman’s desire for independence within patriarchal Sicilian society; Il fu Mattia Pascal (The Late Mattia Pascal, 1904), where Pascal goes home to discover it is impossible to alter his status as “deceased”; and I vecchi e i giovani (The Old and The Young, 1909), dealing with the effects of the unification of Italy on Sicily at the turn of the century.