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though Jarry also created a notorious absurd science known as 'pataphysics (the apostrophe before the word is intentional)—see the note on p.9. His works all contributed heavily to the movements of Surrealism and Dadaism that were to emerge shortly after WWI, and later were included with what became known as the Theatre of the Absurd.

Jarry’s wild bohemian lifestyle soon depleted his inheritance. He drank excessively and neglected his health, developing tuberculosis of the brain. He spent his last days, penniless, in a charity hospital. He died on November 1, 1907. He was only 34 years old. Quite fittingly, his final request was for a toothpick.

Nihilism argues that existence is useless and senseless and that society should be destroyed simply because it is too bad to be saved.

SURREALISM attempts to illustrate the workings of the subconscious using juxtaposition and fantastic imagery.

EXISTENTIALISM claims philosophy begins with the individual and his experience in a hostile universe; that human existence is unexplainable.

DADAISM creates works of nonsense, incongruity, and travesty; proposes an aesthetic world view.

I’ve changed the government and I’ve had it announced in all the newspapers that all the taxes have to be paid twice… With this system I’ll make my fortune in a hurry; then I’ll kill everybody and leave.

Ubu Roi, Act III, scene iv

Jan Sobieski
(1629-1696)

is one of the original characters in Jarry’s play. He was based on one of the most influential rulers in Poland who expelled all of the Turks from Polish lands.

Stanislas Leczinski
(1677-1766)

is another character in Jarry’s play and is based upon one of the kings of Poland during the partitioning.
Alfred Jarry was born on September 8, 1873 in Laval, Mayenne, France, the son of a cloth merchant, Anselme Jarry and his wife, Caroline, née Quernest. Jarry was educated in a number of schools, the main one being Lycée de Rennes. It was here, at age 15, that Jarry first began to write. His first written sketches constituted a childish prank (created with two of his classmates) mocking their physics teacher, Monsieur Herbert. Despite the seemingly innocent nature of these early satires, they eventually became the foundation for Jarry's plays.

After his parents' deaths when he was 17, Jarry moved to Paris with a small inheritance. The character of Monsieur Herbert had morphed into Père Ubu (Papa Ubu), and was never seen without his large green umbrella, which was inspired by H.G. Wells' novel. But it is Ubu Roi (King Ubu) that Jarry's fame principally rests, with the play, and Jarry remained quite popular when it was first performed in 1896.

Jarry instantly began to gather a following, becoming an established figure in the literary circles of Paris. He was also becoming a recognizable figure around Paris. His contemporaries describe him as an eccentrist: he rode a bicycle everywhere, and was never seen without his large green umbrella and a pair of revolvers. It is rumored that he used to shoot them off to announce his presence. Jarry convinced his mentor to produce Ubu Roi in his theatre. The work would play for two nights only: December 9th and December 10th of 1896. The first show was an invited dress rehearsal before a few select audience members, all of whom had read the play. It was preceded by what was to become known as an infamous curtain speech by Jarry in which he both apologized for the state of the play and commented on the absurdity of life. The second and last performance was opening night. The audience was not familiar with the play, and Jarry rode out personally. The first word, the audience rose in uproar, some cheering Jarry and others outraged. The play was not performed again in Jarry's lifetime.

Jarry's writing did not stop at Ubu Roi. He wrote two other plays to create an Ubu trilogy in -formed again in Jarry's lifetime. The audience was not familiar with the play, and Jarry rode out personally. The first word, the audience rose in uproar, some cheering Jarry and others outraged. The play was not performed again in Jarry's lifetime.

Jarry's writing did not stop at Ubu Roi. He wrote two other plays to create an Ubu trilogy including Ubu Enchâiné (Ubu Enchained) and Ubu Cacaudé (Ubu Cuckolded). He published a number of other plays, a collection of writings entitled Minutes de sable memorial, three novels: Les jours et les nuits, Le sumak, Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien, and an essay “How to Construct a Time Machine,” which was inspired by H.G. Wells’ novel. But it is with Ubu Roi that Jarry’s fame principally rests, continued on p.13, in Kazanluk in 1978. She went on to receive her Master's degree in Fashion and Set Design from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia, Bulgaria. Her career spans production design for 50 movies and 10 theatrical productions, and performances in several roles in cinema and TV (for none of which she has been nominated for an award—but the best is still to come). Bobi is an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Cinema at the New Bulgarian University.

In 2010, Bobi was nominated for the best costume design by the Bulgarian Movie Academy, and in 2011 received nominations for best costume and set design. She received an award from the Independent Movie Festival in Los Angeles for best costume and set design. She has received numerous awards from the Bulgarian Movie Academy, including best costume design (2009 & 2006), and best costume and set design (2008). In 2000, she was nominated for an Oscar and Golden Globe in best foreign language film. Allen Hahn (lighting design) Regional theater credits include Three Tall Women for Seattle Rep, The Lady with all the Answers for Pittsburgh Public Theatre, The Front Page for Playmakers Rep, Ghosts for Geva Theatre, and numerous productions in New York City. His work in opera has been seen at the Lincoln Center Festival, New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Glimmerglass, and the Spoleto USA Festival, and several festivals in Europe. He has also designed world premiere operas for Juilliard and the Royal Danish Opera. Allen has worked with the performance company, The Builders Association, since its inception in 1994 and has also worked with artist Tony Oursler on installations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and AROs Kunst-museum in Denmark. His design work for several productions was selected for exhibition in the 2007 Prague Quadrennial of stage design and he served as Lighting Design Curator for the American exhibit at the 2011 Quadrennial. His previous UR International Theatre Program credits include The Iliad, Exquisite Torture, and Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom.
Peter K. Karapetkov (director) is a Bulgarian theatre director currently based in Arlington, VA. He has directed in his native Bulgaria, Russia, the Republic of Georgia, Austria, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Poland, and throughout the United States, where he has been based since 1990. After receiving his BFA in Acting from the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA), he appeared in numerous theatre, film and television productions, winning national and international awards. After receiving an MFA in Directing from NATFA, Peter became the youngest Artistic Director in Bulgaria, receiving an MFA in Directing from NATFA, Peter won national and international awards. After numerous theatre, film and television productions, he appeared in his BFA in Acting from the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts, he directed in Bulgaria, Russia, the Republic of Georgia, Austria, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Poland, and throughout the United States, where he has been based since 1990. After receiving an MFA in Directing from NATFA, Peter became the youngest Artistic Director in Bulgaria, leading the City Theatre Dimitrovgrad to tour extensively throughout Eastern Europe. In addition to serving as the Director of PURE International in Charleston, South Carolina, he is the Producing Artistic Director of the Leon Katz Rhodopi International Theatre Laboratory (RITL), which he co-founded in 2005. Along with Jared J. Stein, he has overseen collaborations with partners from throughout the world—resulting in work performed in the United States at theaters including La MaMa E.T.C. (New York), Mixed Blood Theatre (Minneapolis), the McCarter Theatre Center (Princeton), and the Long Wharf Theatre (New Haven). He has directed or co-directed international summer theatre programs for Trinity College in Hartford, La MaMa E.T.C. in New York, and New York University’s “Summer Study Abroad”, and has taught and/or directed at Carnegie Melon, Trinity College in Dublin, Trinity College Hartford, Connecticut, Rice University, NYU, Xavier University, American University, and Marymount University.

Krasi Valkanov (set design) was born in October 1949. In 1975 he received his MFA in Set Design from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia, Bulgaria, under the direction of Prof. Asen Stoichev. His thesis (later published) was on “scenic design in motion”. In 1977 he received a second MFA from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Poland, under Jozef Szajna. From 1987-88 Valkanov specialized in set design at La Cambre, the renowned school for visual arts and architecture, in Brussels, Belgium, under the mentorship of Serge Cereuz.

In 1980, Valkanov was hired as an Assistant Professor of Scenic Design at the Bulgarian National Academy of Arts. At the same time, he also taught visual art to undergraduates. In 2000, he was appointed a full professor, his research focusing on set design for alternative spaces. That same year he inaugurated a special MFA program exploring 3D modeling and animation—an innovative program uniting computer technology and the stage and screen arts. His designs have been recognized at the Prague Biennale, and in Warsaw, Tokyo, Moscow, and Novi Sad. His productions have been seen at numerous international festivals, including Paris (1993), Vienna (1993), Apollonia Sozopol (1994), and Bogota (1996), amongst many others.

Valkanov has been honored with eight national awards for set design, three national awards for costume design, and two international awards for set design. He has created over 59 set designs and 58 costume designs in theatre, film, and opera.

Boryana (Bori) Semerdjieva (co-set & costume design) was born in 1959 and had a happy childhood and a moderately rebellious adolescence before graduating from the Gymnasium of Fine Arts and 58 costume designs in theatre, film, and opera.

Orchestra
When it comes to the Theatre of the Absurd, the name really says it all: the setting, text, characters, and plot of absurdist plays defy logic, sequence, and causality. Their structural absurdity is aimed at explaining and exploring the human condition as one that can be viewed as being essentially meaningless. The term itself was not coined until 1960 by the critic Martin Esslin. Esslin applied the label of absurdism to the work of many European playwrights in the 1950s. That being said, the Theatre of the Absurd has roots long before that.

The movement, fueled by the philosophy of existentialism, began directly after World War II when the constant threat of annihilation by the bomb reminded the population just how precarious life can be. Allied to this was the decrease in religiosity in common life. Absurdism sought to recreate that sense of meaningless suffering that artists saw as central to humanity's existence. Absurdism was a movement that touched, not only theatre, but also the worlds of film and literature.

Perhaps the earliest precursor of a kind of absurd theatre is the Italian commedia dell'arte in which all of the actors play stock characters and stereotypes. Though commedia storylines often followed a specific plot, no two stories were the same. Many times the productions included masked characters and settings that the audience knew nothing about. Along with this, there were several other influences that led to the development of the Theatre of the Absurd. Among them were the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism. Along with this, there were several other influences that led to the development of the Theatre of the Absurd. Among them were the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism.

More immediately, however, absurdist theatre grew out of the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism. Among them were the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism. More immediately, however, absurdist theatre grew out of the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism. Among them were the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism. More immediately, however, absurdist theatre grew out of the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism. Among them were the visual and performative elements of Surrealism and Dadaism, and the philosophical movements of existentialism and nihilism.
What is ‘pataphysics? In short, it is a science, but not any kind you will find in a typical curriculum. It is a term coined by Jarry most easily understood as “that which lies beyond the realm of metaphysics,” with a mixture of science, technology, science fiction, and art (the apostrophe before the word was intentional to avoid any “simple puns,” as Jarry explained). Jarry himself defined it as “the science of imaginary solutions,” and freely used it in his writings.

Jarry’s new science sparked considerable interest. In 1948 a group of artists and writers formed the Collège de ‘Pataphysique, which included many leading artists and writers. Eugene Ionesco was one of the key members and together they published a series of papers following the “pataphysical tradition.”

‘Pataphysics still draws a great interest today. Many countries around the world, from England to Mongolia, have formed organization based on ‘pataphysics. It even makes an appearance in the Beatles’ song “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer” with the line “Joan was quizzical; Studied pataphysical science in the home…”

In 2011, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles showed a series of exhibits of ‘pataphysical experiments.
In what ways is Bulgarian and American theatre different?

PK: The most substantial difference is that American theatres are only repertory in theory. Most of the time the actors, designers, directors are hired for that particular show. Bulgarian theatres have permanent companies. As a style of theatre, the American trend is predominantly realistic. In Bulgaria, this was the case many years ago. Part of the reason for the difference is that most of Eastern Europe was under a totalitarian system. No contemporary western plays were allowed, only classical plays. It provided the perfect opportunity for directors to interpret these plays to say things otherwise not allowed. The other option was to write or produce a forbidden play and be sent to jail, and Bulgarians have a genetic predisposition against jail.

BS: Theatre is theatre, European or American. To be honest, I haven't seen many American performances. One I remember well is a production of A Streetcar Named Desire at the Alley Theatre in Houston. It was a wonderful production, but aesthetically it seemed more like a movie to me. I'm not sure how to explain that, but I think many American productions have that element.

Where did you get your ideas for the costumes in Ubu?

BS: Well the first set of ideas comes from the text, next from the director, third from the actors, and finally something from the sky. My job is to keep the balance between all of these. For Ubu, in the original, there are many drawings of the costume for Papa Turd as very round and fat with targets. That was one clear idea. However, trying to explain emotions and ideas about art isn't practical. I could draw you something, but words cannot explain it. It just comes. The talent is to be open to it and to get the ideas, because they always come from somewhere.

What made you decide on this specific color design?

BS: Well the black, white, and red seemed to be the easiest way to keep everything stylish. The idea Krasi had was to make everything look stylish, to make "pshit" look elegant. Our civilization is really full of shit, but we try to keep our shit looking nice. In fact we spend a lot of money trying to do that. This was a way to keep that idea.

How did the two of you work together to plan the set and costumes?

PK: In general, productions vary based on what is chosen to be highlighted. I have been working with Bobi for years, so in this production it was Bobi, myself, and Krasi making the decisions. Krasi came up with set, color, form, and the environment. Bobi and I started eliminating. In Bulgaria, design tries not to be illustrative, but to reflect the evolution of the characters. But in Ubu the characters are static, which causes limitations. Dealing with grotesque material, the set represents more than one environment, rather a general idea: the flashiness of contemporary life. It is there to express power; it isn't Bulgarian and American that determines the way you work. (Laughing) Of course, in Bulgaria

BS: (Laughing) Working with a director is always a problem. They always want everything to be to their way of thinking. Artists have their own personal way. But Peter and I have known each other a long time, and relationships like that mean people don't always have to talk. That is the good part. The bad part is you know everything about someone and can easily get into conflict with them.

Why was Ubu Roi a play that you wanted to do?

PK: Ubu Roi is a play that is seriously relevant to today and to this world. The greatest danger to our world is ignorance combined with arrogance. Jarry represented this 115 years ago and it is still valid today. If not more so than then. Ubu represents that very significant part of our society that is uniquely unequipped to deal with predicaments such as war, poverty and, most importantly, greed. The social fervor of today's society is profoundly damaged by the massive greed that exists, the power of money. That rat race is more vivid today than at any other time. So, staging Ubu is both a warning and a signal. It illustrates a world where the powerful can have everything and where the less fortunate have only one choice: to die.

How is Ubu related to an American audience?

PK: What struck me was that a couple years ago, under the banner of freedom of speech, there came into existence a tremendous threat to society in the form of the Tea Party. It occurred to me that their ignorance could slip through the cracks of one of the greatest systems ever created and put the most inept people into positions of power. So, both Ubu the character and the play are uniquely valid to the American political kaleidoscope.

If you were doing this production in Bulgaria, what would have been different?

BS: I don't know really, because it is always about the art. The most important part is the personality of the people you work with, not the nationality. It isn't Bulgarian and American that determines the way you work. (Laughing) Of course, in Bulgaria there aren't as many meetings or emails. It seems as though people are always looking for the difference in art. But like our pshit, the difference is on the top, deep down we are all the same.