The Lesson

Eugene Ionesco

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LTS presents 

The Lesson
  - by Eugene Ionesco

AND

The Zoo Story
  - by Edward Albee

in the Little Theatre

Nov. 13, 14, 15, 16
  20, 21, 22, 23

8:30 P.M.

John Carroll University - Speech Dept.
OUR NEW LITTLE THEATRE

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to our new Little Theatre, the permanent home of the LTS. It is here that we will stage our major plays, the Readers Theatre programs, the workshop and experimental productions. Additionally, the entire theatre complex is designed to accommodate teaching the theatre courses of the Speech Department.

The facilities include: separate dressing rooms, a Green Room, a storage and work area, an observation classroom, a technical room, the house and the stage.

The house seats 108 comfortably. The chairs are portable, allowing us to arrange them to suit the individual play. Because the seating capacity is limited, we increased the number of performances to eight—with a Thursday through Sunday run of two weeks. Admission is still free, and all seats are available on a first-come basis.

The stage is an open platform without a curtain. Both it and the house comprise an organic unit, the walls of the house merging with those of the stage. The sides and back of the stage are framed in with a permanent architectural redwood facade with eleven openings for variety and fluidity of action. The spotlights are hung openly from the light bridge and side poles in the house.

If you feel that you are in an authentic theatre, then we have achieved our goal.

The Spring play will be one of the following: THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER AND HIS WIFE by Peter Ustinov; PANTAGEIZE by Michel de Ghelderode; CORRUPTION IN THE PALACE OF JUSTICE by Ugo Betti.
Ionesco's plays are written for the theatre. His program has been set down by him in a few forthright sentences. "Contemporary theatre has been spoiled by the literati. It has become a kind of second-rate literature... Theatre is not literature... It is simply what cannot be expressed by any other means."

It is the theatricality of the dramatic action that makes Ionesco a formidable avant-gardist capable of challenging as well as irritating us, and there are times indeed when we can be challenged only by being irritated or affronted.

Unlike THE BALD SOPRANO—a play in which no soprano appeared, and no bald person either—THE LESSON does indeed concern itself with a lesson, an unusual one, but a lesson never the less.

THE LESSON, like THE BALD SOPRANO, is concerned with language and the basic impossibility of communication. Thus, if one man says "Grandmother" and another man says "Grandmother", they seem to be saying the same thing, but are in fact talking about vastly different people. So, as the professor learnedly points out, if an Italian says "my country," he means Italy, but if an Oriental says "my country," he means the Orient. To Ionesco, this demonstrates that words cannot convey meanings because they leave out of account the personal associations they carry for each individual.

But there is more about language in THE LESSON than a demonstration of the difficulties of communication. Here language is also shown as an instrument of power. It is clear that the professor derives his progressive increase of power from his role as a giver, a very arbitrary prescriber, of meanings. Because words must have the significance he decided to give them, the pupil comes under his dominance. THE LESSON expresses in caricatured form the spirit of domination always present in teacher-pupil relationships.

2.
Scene: The office of the old professor, which also serves as a dining room.

INTERMISSION of FIFTEEN MINUTES

Pupil: ... My parents also want me to get an education. They want me to specialize. They consider a little general culture, even if it is solid, is no longer enough, in these times.

Professor: Your parents, miss, are perfectly right. You must go on with your studies. ... Our contemporary life has become most complex ... And you wish to qualify for ... ?

Pupil: Just as soon as possible, for the first doctor's orals. They're in three weeks time.

Professor: ... And which doctorate do you wish to qualify for? In the physical sciences or in moral philosophy?

Pupil: My parents are very much hoping ... that I can qualify for the total doctorate.

Professor: The total doctorate? ... You have great courage, young lady, I congratulate you sincerely.
Edward Albee comes into the category of the Theatre of the Absurd precisely because his work attacks the very foundations of American optimism. THE ZOO STORY, his first play, shows the forcefulness and bitter irony of his approach. In the realism of its dialogue and in its subject matter—a outsider's inability to establish genuine contact with a dog, let alone any human being—THE ZOO STORY is closely akin to the work of Harold Pinter.

Jerry, the outcast, and Peter, the conformist bourgeois, sum up all the contrast between lives of desperation and placidity. Though sophisticated, Peter accepts the norms and judgements of his middle-class society, and there is no room in that respectable universe for the experience contained in the poor and lonely Jerry, who lives across the hall from a Puerto Rican family and next door to a homosexual.

In his sojourn among society's outcasts, in society's underworld, Jerry has learned something Peter does not know, or has forgotten. For "sometimes," according to Jerry, "a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly." Jerry has come back to an understanding of man's savage nature. And Jerry knows, too, that any genuine communication, any real contact, requires an appeal to the lower as well as the upper being.

For the half-man to achieve wholeness, in Albee's world, often requires something of an explosion. So, Jerry can make contact only by deliberately awakening the slumbering animal in Peter—pushing him, insulting him, slapping him, forcing him to fight. The beast in Peter, and, by implication, the carefully penned "animals" in society at large, can no longer be disowned. Thus, between the two men contact is established unforgettably.
THE CHARACTERS

JERRY. . . . . . . . . . . . JON MCKENZIE

PETER. . . . . . . . . . . . MIKE SCHMITTDL

Scene: The story is laid in Central Park,
New York City.
A Sunday afternoon.

Jerry: It's just . . . it's just that . . .
it's just that if you can't deal with people, you
have to start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! Don't
you see? A person has to have some way of dealing
with SOMETHING. If not with people . . . if not
with people . . . SOMETHING. With a bed, with a
cockroach, with a mirror . . . no, that's too hard,
that's one of the last steps. With a . . . with
a . . . with a carpet, a roll of toilet paper . . .
no, not that, either . . . that's a mirror, too;
always check bleeding. You see how hard it is to
find things? With a street corner, and too many
lights, all colors reflecting on oily-wet streets
. . . with a wisp of smoke, a wisp . . . of smoke
. . . with . . . pornographic playing cards, with
a strong box . . . WITHOUT A LOCK . . . with love,
with vomiting, with crying, with fury because the
pretty little ladies aren't pretty little ladies,
with making money with your body which is an act
of love and I could prove it, with howling because
you're alive; with God. How about that? WITH GOD
WHO IS A COLORED QUEEN WHO WEARS A KIMONO AND PLUCKS
HIS EYEBROWS, WHO IS A WOMAN WHO CRIES WITH DETER-
MINATION BEHIND HER CLOSED-DOOR ROOM . . . with God
who, I'm told, turned his back on the whole thing
some time ago . . . with . . . some day, with people.
People . . .
PRODUCTION STAFF

Director. Leone J. Marinello
Stage Manager. John E. Schlosser
Properties. Mary Ann Momich
Costumes. Maureen Powers
Make-Up. Marie D'Amico
House Managers. Pam Dolney
Kathleen McWilliams
Bookholder. Cindi Seman
Set Construction. Bill Simmer,
Bill Shipley, Tom McGarrill, Mike Donovan,
Richard Dillon Embreus, Jerry Egan
Lighting. Mary Beth Reilley,
Frank Widynski, John Malone, Greg Knittel
Gen. Tech Assist. Nora Kovacs,
Tom Beljan, Roz Rettman, Bill Belknap,
Jack Mannen, Allana Fallon, Jan Amano,
Kathy Sharky
Publicity. Gerry Novak,
Lisa Dreussi, Cindy Sopko, Elaine Gorski
Special Technical Advisor. Mike Mancino
Theatre Maintenance. Jon McKenzie
Ed Joseph

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President. Michelle Reilley
Publicity Dir. Ed Joseph
MEET THE CAST

MICHELLE REILLEY, President of the LTS, will receive her degree in Speech next May. She has appeared in LTS productions of Pirandello’s SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR, Pagnol’s TOPAZE, and, most recently, as Kassandra in Aeschylus’ AGAMEMNON. She has worked with the Cleveland Playhouse, both locally in children’s theatre and as a scholarship student at Chatauqua, New York. THE LESSON is her first acting endeavor since ending her summer’s residency as a member of the ensemble at Thunder Bay Summer Theatre in Alpena, Michigan. There her credits included lead roles in STAR-SPANGLED GIRL, GYPSY, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF and SOUTH PACIFIC. She intends to pursue a career in musical theatre.

ED JOSEPH, another Senior Speech major, takes his fourth LTS assignment as Ionesco’s manacal professor. He has previously performed in SIX CHARACTERS, TOPAZE, and AGAMEMNON. He has been affiliated with the Ursuline College Drama Club in productions of Tennessee Williams’ TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN and LET ME LISTEN, and Dylan Thomas’ UNDER MILKWOOD. Last Spring he produced and directed Jean Paul Sartre’s NO EXIT. He also plans a career in the theatre.

MIKE SCHMITTIEL, former Publicity Director for the LTS, has been with the Society since his freshman year. He has appeared in SIX CHARACTERS and TOPAZE, and has served on the technical staff. After his graduation in May, Mike plans graduate studies in Speech and Communications theory.
JON MCKENZIE, a Junior Psychology major, has appeared at Carroll in AGAMEMNON, and at Ursuline College in UNDER MILKWOOD. He has also been featured in Room 1.

CHRISTINE MOWER is a Freshman Philosophy major making her first appearance with the LTS as the Maid in Ionesco's THE LESSON. She performed in numerous productions at Regina High School prior to attending Carroll.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Little Theatre Society extends its warmest thanks to all those departments and individuals--too numerous to list here--who assisted us in presenting this production.

THE LESSON is produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

THE ZOO STORY is produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc. In accordance with the instructions of the author, THE ZOO STORY is staged only on the understanding that it will be presented before a non-segregated audience.

Program cover design by ELAINE GORSKI.