

City Garage presents

**The Bald Soprano**  
**by Eugene Ionesco**  
**translated by Donald M. Allen**

Directed & Adapted by Frédérique Michel  
Production Design by Charles A. Duncombe



November 9—December 16, 2007

# The Bald Soprano

By Eugène Ionesco  
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Directed & Adapted by Frédérique Michel  
Production Design by Charles A. Duncombe

## Cast

Jeff Atik ..... Mr Smith  
David E Frank ..... Mrs Smith  
Cynthia Mance ..... Mrs Martin  
Maximiliano Molina ..... Fire Chief  
Alisha Nichols ..... Marie, the maid  
Bo Roberts ..... Mr Martin

## Production Staff

Set and Lighting Design ..... Charles A Duncombe  
Assistant Director ..... Martha Duncan  
Costume Design ..... Josephine Poinot  
Sound Design ..... Paul M Rubenstein  
Light/Sound Operator ..... Irene Casarez

## Setting

An apartment in the suburbs of Paris, France.

**The play runs approximately 70 minutes  
without intermission.**

## Special Thanks to:

The Santa Monica Fire Department  
and Justin Yoffee

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Rocket Science Laboratories,  
the Los Angeles County Arts Commission  
and the Santa Monica Arts Commission.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Romanian-born French dramatist Eugène Ionesco (1909–1994) began his career with a one-act “antiplay” *La Cantatrice chauve* (1949; *The Bald Soprano*) that inspired a revolution in dramatic techniques and helped inaugurate the Theatre of the Absurd.

Ionesco was taken to France as an infant but returned to Romania in 1925. After obtaining a degree in French at the University of Bucharest, he worked for a doctorate in Paris (1939), where, after 1945, he made his home. While working as a proofreader, he decided to learn English; the formal, stilted commonplaces of his textbook inspired the masterly catalog of senseless platitudes that constitutes *The Bald Soprano*. In its most famous scene, two strangers—who are exchanging banalities about traveling, where they live, and how many children they have—stumble upon the astonishing discovery that they are indeed man and wife; it is a brilliant example of Ionesco’s recurrent themes of self-estrangement and the difficulty of communication.

In rapid succession Ionesco wrote a number of plays, all developing the “antilogical” ideas of *The Bald Soprano*; these included brief and violently irrational sketches and also a series of more elaborate one-act plays in which many of his later themes—especially the fear and horror of death—begin to make their appearance. Among them, *La Leçon* (1951; *The Lesson*), *Les Chaises* (1952; *The Chairs*), and *Le Nouveau Locataire* (1955; *The New Tenant*) stand out.

After these successes, Ionesco mastered the full-length play with *Amédée* (1954), *Tueur sans gages* (1959; *The Killer*), and *Le Rhinocéros* (1959; *Rhinoceros*) before creating his masterpiece *Le Roi se meurt* (1962; *Exit the King*). The character of Bérenger recurs throughout Ionesco’s work as a semi-autobiographical figure expressing the author’s wonderment and anguish at the strangeness of reality. *Rhinoceros*, produced by City Garage earlier this year, represents Ionesco’s most forceful expression of the horrors of orthodoxy, as Berenger watches his friends turn into rhinoceroses one by one, until he alone stands unchanged against the relentless tide of conformity.

Ionesco’s primary achievement lies in having popularized a wide variety of nonrepresentational and surrealistic techniques and in having made them acceptable to audiences conditioned to naturalistic conventions in the theatre. As Ionesco aged, he grew less concerned with witty intellectual paradox and more interested in dreams, visions, and exploration of the subconscious; Ionesco’s final completed full-length play, *Voyage chez les morts* (1980, *Journeys among the Dead*), exemplified this tendency. It had its U.S. premier at City Garage in 1999.

But the common thread uniting all his plays is that they build on bizarrely illogical or fantastic situations using such devices as the humorous multiplication of objects on stage until they overwhelm the actors. The clichés and tedious maxims of polite conversation surface in improbable or inappropriate contexts to expose the deadening futility of most human communication. His plays continue to effectively dramatize the absurdity and meaninglessness of social conventions as they expose the futile and mechanical nature of modern civilization.

## CAST PROFILES

### Jeff Atik

Mr. Smith

Jeff Atik is delighted to be a member of City Garage. After assisting directing last year's *Agamemnon* and *Iphigenia*, he recently made his debut with the company in Suzan-Lori Parks' *365 Plays/365 Days* (Week 45). He is a former company member of Milan's Teatro i. As an actor, Jeff has appeared in films including *Sailor's Girl* (Sundance 2005).

### David E. Frank

Mrs. Smith

David is originally from Muncie, Indiana, where he received his degree in Theatre Performance from Ball State University. In addition to his work at BSU, he also appeared with the Vagabond Players and the Third Age Theatre Company. His credits at City Garage include *MedeaText: Los Angeles Despoiled Shore*, *Atrocities: Meetings With Monstrous Men*, *The Skriker*, *Frederick of Prussia/GeorgeW's Dream of Sleep*, *The Gertrude Stein Project*, *Katzelmacher*, *OedipusText: Los Angeles*, *La Leçon*, *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream*, *The Battle: ABC* (which won the Best Ensemble award at the 2006 LA Weekly Theatre Awards), *Agamemnon*, *The Bacchae*, *Rhinoceros*, and *Quartet*.

### Cynthia Mance

Mrs. Martin

This marks Cynthia's return to City Garage after a long absence. She previously appeared here in *Wantons, Rogues, and Libertines*; *Mariage Blanc*; *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore*; *The Presidents*; *The Skriker*; *The Queens*; *The Sweet Madness*; and *Ceremonies of Unendurable Bonadage*. She also produced and performed in *Birdbath* at the Sierra Stage. Cynthia received a BFA in Theater from the University of Florida.

### Maximiliano Molina

Fire Chief

Maximiliano is happy to have found City Garage. He previously appeared in last year's *Three by Mee* productions *Agamemnon* and *Iphigenia* as well as *Rhinoceros* earlier this year. A graduate of Cal Poly Pomona and the Actors Studio Drama School in New York, he is glad to be back in California. He has been affiliated with such companies as the Zoo District in L.A., Campos Santos in San Francisco, and was a founding member of MMM... Comedy in New York.

### Alisha Nichols

Marie, the maid

Alisha is happy to be working at City Garage. She attended California State University Northridge and received her B.A. in theatre arts. She also studied with the Steppenwolf Theatre Company at summer arts. She previously appeared at City Garage in *Iphigenia*, *Rhinoceros*, and *365 Plays/365* (Week 45). Some of her other credits included *The Lesson*, *Balm in Gilead*, and *Polaroid Stories*.

### Bo Roberts

Mr. Martin

Bo has previously performed at City Garage in *Blood On*

*A Cat's Neck*; *The Universal Wolf*; *Wantons, Rogues and Libertines*; *George Sand: An Erotic Odyssey in Seven Tableaux*; *Journeys Among the Dead*; *Pre-Paradise*, *Sorry Now*; *Manage Blanc*; *The Fetishist*; *Katzelmacher*; *The Empire Builders*; *Patriot Act: A Reality Show*; *The Battle: ABC* (which won the Best Ensemble award at the 2006 LA Weekly Theatre Awards), *Agamemnon*, *The Bacchae*, and *Rhinoceros*.

## STAFF PROFILES

### Frederique Michel, Artistic Director

Director

Frederique was born in Paris and studied theatre at the Conservatoire. She has led the company as Artistic Director since its founding in 1987. She received a Dramalogue Award for her direction of *Dissident*. Her 1998 production of *George Sand: An Erotic Odyssey in Seven Tableaux* was nominated for four L.A. Weekly Theater Awards, including Best Director. She was nominated again for Best Director for *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore* (2000). In 2005 she won the LA Weekly Award for Best Direction (one-act) for *La Leçon*. Her production of *The Battle: ABC* was nominated for Best Direction and received the 2006 LA Weekly Award for Best Ensemble.

### Charles A. Duncombe, Managing Director

Production Designer

Charles is a writer, director and designer. He began his partnership with Frederique Michel in 1985, and he has designed all of her work since then. He has won two Dramalogue awards for production design and in 1999 won the L.A. Weekly Theater Award for Best Lighting Design for *George Sand: An Erotic Odyssey in Seven Tableaux* (1998). He was nominated for two L.A. Weekly awards for *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore* (2000): Best Adaptation, and Best Set. He was nominated again for two L.A. Weekly awards for *Frederick of Prussia/GeorgeW's Dream of Sleep* (2001): Best Adaptation, and Production Design. His play *Patriot Act* won the Fratti/Newman Award for Political Playwriting in 2005 and will open in New York at the Castillo Theater this June as part of their 2007 season. At the 2007 LA Weekly Theatre Awards, Charles won Best Production Design for the entire *Three by Mee* season.

### Martha Duncan

Assistant Director

This is Martha's fourth time assisting Frederique, having worked with her on *Titus Tartar*, *Agamemnon*, and *Iphigenia*. Martha is very active on stage in the South Bay area, having recently appeared in four productions at The Long Beach Playhouse.

### Irene Casarez

Light/Sound Operator

Irene appeared in *The Gertrude Stein Project*, and was last seen on stage at City Garage in *The Bacchae*. She worked in the booth for *Iphigenia*, *Rhinoceros*, and *Quartet* and is delighted to be working with the company again.

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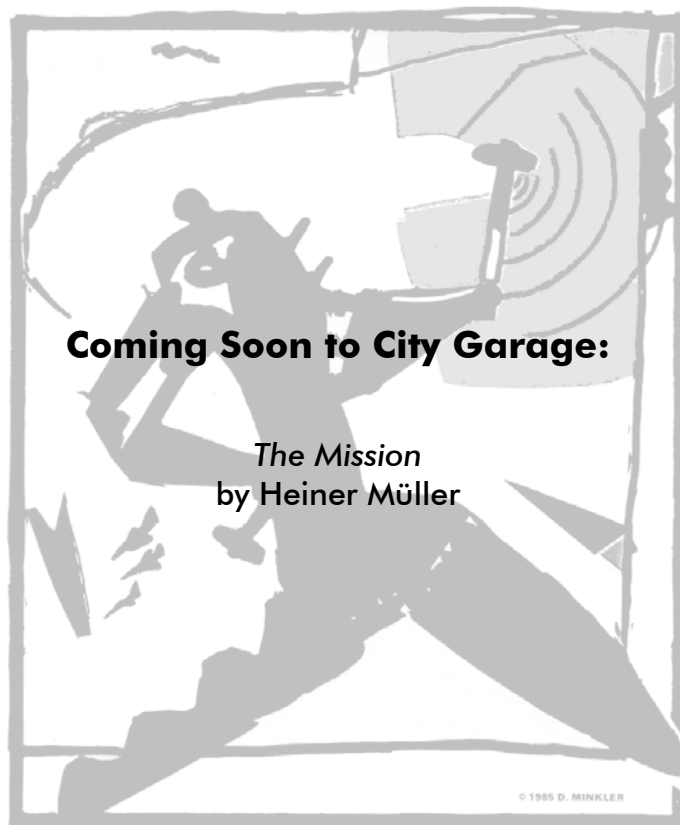
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