

City Garage presents

Quartet
by Heiner Müller
translated by Marc von Henning

Directed by Frédérique Michel
Production Design by Charles A. Duncombe



August 17—September 23, 2007

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Cast

Troy Dunn Valmont
David E. Frank.....Player
Sharon GardnerMerteuil
Mariko Oka.....Player

Production Staff

Set and Lighting Design Charles A Duncombe
Assistant Director Kenneth Rudnicki
Costume Design Josephine Poinso
Light/Sound Operator..... Irene Casarez
Still Production Photography Paul Rubenstein

Place & Time

A drawing room, now.

**The play runs approximately 75 minutes
and is performed without intermission.**

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the Wells Fargo Foundation,
Rocket Science Laboratories,
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heiner Müller (1929-1995) was widely regarded, internationally and in both German states, as the most important German dramatist since Brecht. The extended public wake held upon his death on December 30, 1995 gave expression to a deep sense of loss in the vibrant East Berlin cultural scene that persisted during the communist German Democratic Republic's (GDR) existence, of which he was the most brilliant protagonist.

Müller's work traverses the entire possible and impossible spectrum, from an avant-garde implementation of the Brechtian Lehrstück (learning play), through the increasingly radical deconstruction of classic texts from the broader European and socialist traditions, to an apparent "split" between plays like *Hamletmaschine* [1977] and *Quartet* (1980), which offer themselves to the West with the deadly assurance of the wind that sweeps through Brecht's dead cities in "Of Poor B.B.," as well as one-offs like *Mauser* [1970/1976] and *Der Auftrag* [*The Mission*, 1979], which can justly claim to mark the end-point of a revolutionary avant-garde, spreadeagled across the yawning gap between present and future.

Müller encapsulates the paradox of a GDR avant-garde. A paradox, first, in the most obvious sense of all: the GDR did not want an avant-garde, it ruled it out, as Goebbels opposed the development of a "National Socialist art", as an annoying disturbance of the "normality" the regime wished so desperately to project, as a safeguard against the erosion of a position it always knew to be vulnerable. To occupy the avant-garde was to lay claim to a position the party itself had long since vacated, an ethically and politically troubling vacuum. But in another sense as well: for Müller, as for many other GDR writers of good faith, this paradox was only sustainable within the broader paradox of "socialism as it existed in reality"; it disintegrated on contact with the West. As long as the ultimate contradiction between socialist ideal and reality persisted, the compulsion, both ethical and aesthetic, to bridge the gap could triumph fitfully over the insights of "historical materialism." But when the black hole which promised to generate new worlds but did not contain them itself was finally closed, the paradox perished with it.

An early poem by Müller, *Bilder* [*Images*, 1955], provides a fitting epitaph for his life and work:

*Images mean everything, at first. They're stable and roomy.
But dreams coagulate, form shapes and disappointments.
No image can hold the sky any more. The clouds from a plane*

*Only a vapour that hides the view. The heron just a bird.
Even communism, the final image, always renewed
Because it's washed over and over in blood—daily life
Doles it out in small change, tarnished and blind with sweat.*

*The great poems: ruins, like bodies long loved, but no longer
Needed, border the path of our finite,
voracious species*

Between their lines the laments, their ecstasies built

over labourers' bones

For the beautiful means the possible ending of horrors.

—John Milfull, University of New South Wales

CAST PROFILES

Troy Dunn

Valmot

Troy was last seen at City Garage as Berenger in *Rhinoceros*. Last year he appeared here as Agamemnon in *Iphigenia* and *Agamemnon* and as Pentheus in *The Bacchae*. He hails from the Midwest and spent most of his professional career in Milwaukee working with the MRT, Theatre X, and Chamber Theatre to name a few. Notable roles include Ariel in *The Tempest*, John Oleanna, Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband*, Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Barnum in *Barnum*, and Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha*.

David E. Frank

Player

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*, and *Rhinoceros*.

Sharon Gardner

Merteuil

Sharon is delighted to be working with City Garage for the second time after appearing in *The Battle: ABC* (which won the Best Ensemble award at the 2006 LA Weekly Theatre Awards). Recent appearances include a guest star on *Passions*, an ambitious American musician new to the London Philharmonic in *The Object*, and a heartbroken-but-moving-on real estate agent in the feature *Kissing Cousins*. Sharon starred as the News Woman in the critically-praised *A New War* at 68 Cent Crew Theatre and the taboo-breaking socialite in *Prove It On Me* at the Fountain Theatre. On stage in New York, Sharon has portrayed expat writer Isabelle Eberhardt in *New Anatomies*, wounded idealist Thyona in *Big Love*, New Age spiritualist Meggie in *A Summer Share*, Helen in *Baby With the Bathwater* and Shakespeare's ladies Juliet, Regan, and Lady Macbeth, among many other roles.

Mariko Oka

Player

Born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, Mariko Oka graduated with high honors from Gakushuin University with a B.A. degree in American and English Literature. Upon graduation, she immediately pursued her career in acting in the U.S. by attending the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York. Her credits include Himiko in the play "TEA" by Velina Hasu Houston at Theatre of Arts. She also has been featured internationally in various commercials throughout the US and Asia. She has appeared at City Garage in *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 Frattii/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 (2006).

Kenneth Rudnicki

Assistant Director

Kenneth most recently appeared onstage at City Garage in *Iphigenia*. He is also a member of Moving Arts, where he is involved with the ongoing site-specific piece *The Car Plays*, which are written to be performed in automobiles before a limited audience. Kenneth may have been involved with the underground, guerilla theatre production *I'm Going To Kill the President*. He currently teaches acting and playwriting for various Los Angeles based theatre companies including East LA Classic Theatre, Greenway Arts Alliance, and LA Women's Theatre Festival. Kenneth's most recent film project, *Change Your Life!* (starring *Ugly Betty* star Tony Plana) is in post-production with an expected release in October.

Irene Casarez

Light/Sound Operator

Irene made her City Garage debut in *The Gertrude Stein Project*, and was last seen on stage in *The Bacchae*. She worked in the booth for *Iphigenia* and *Rhinoceros*, and is delighted to be here again.

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