

City Garage presents

# **The Chairs** **by Eugene Ionesco**

**Translated by Donald Allen**

Directed by Frédérique Michel  
Production Design by Charles Duncombe



July 24—September 13, 2009

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**by Eugene Ionesco**

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Directed by Frédérique Michel  
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## **Cast**

Cynthia Mance ..... *Wife, 50 to 100 years old*  
Bo Roberts ..... *Husband, 50 to 100 years old*  
Garth Whitten ..... *Orator*

## **Production Staff**

Set and Lighting Design ..... Charles Duncombe  
Assistant Director ..... Trace Taylor  
Second Assistant Director ..... Evan Roufeh  
Costume Design ..... Josephine Poinot  
Sound Design/Publicity Photography ..... Paul Rubenstein  
Light/Sound Operator ..... Irene Casarez  
Master Carpenter ..... Troy Dunn

Performed by special arrangement with Samuel French.

## **Place & Time**

A home on an island in France  
The Present

***The play runs approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.***

## CAST PROFILES



### **Cynthia Mance**

*Wife, 50 to 100 years old*

This marks Cynthia's 14th play over ten years at City Garage. She just finished playing the roles of Nicole in *The Bourgeois Gentleman* and Georgette in *The School for Wives*. Other recent roles here include Woman One in *Bad Penny*, First Love in the *The Mission (Accomplished)* [nominated for a 2009 LA Weekly Theatre Award for Best Ensemble] and Mrs. Martin in the LA Weekly Theatre Award-nominated *The Bald Soprano*.



### **Bo Roberts**

*Husband, 50 to 100 years old*

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*; *Mariage 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*; *Rhinoceros*; *The Bald Soprano*, *The Mission (Accomplished)* [nominated for a 2009 LA Weekly Theatre Award for Best Ensemble], and *The School for Wives*.



### **Garth Whitten**

*Orator*

Garth is happily to be appearing once again at City Garage after making his debut here in *The Bourgeois Gentleman*. He received his theatre training from Boston University's College of Fine Arts, as well as recently training and developing performance pieces with members of ARTEL and Teatr-Piesn-Kozla. Select roles include Hamlet in *Hamlet*, Joe in *Angels in America* and Marty in *The House of Yes*.

If you would like to contact one of these performers for professional purposes, please email us: [citygarage@citygarage.org](mailto:citygarage@citygarage.org)

## **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. She once again won Best Direction (one-act) for *Quartet* at the 2008 LA Weekly Theater Awards and was also nominated for her direction of *The Bald Soprano*. At the 2009 LA Weekly Theater Awards, she received (along with Charles Duncombe) the "Queen of the Angels Award" for "decades of directing and producing scintillating, politically charged theater that challenges audiences to reconsider their assumptions about the nature of politics and the nature of theater itself."

### **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 opened in New York at the Castillo Theater as part of their 2008 season. He won the 2006 LA Weekly Theatre Award for Best Production Design for the entire *Three by Mee* season and was nominated again in 2007 for Production Design for *Quartet*. In 2009 he was nominated for Best Adaptation for *The Mission (Accomplished)*. At the 2009 LA Weekly Theater Awards, he received (along with Frederique Michel) the "Queen of the Angels Award" for their contributions to Los Angeles theater.

## **Josephone Poincot**

### *Costume Design*

Josephine was born in Paris. She has been working with City Garage since 1987 as a costumer designer and won the 2008 LA Weekly Theater Award for Costume Design for her work here on *The Bourgeois Gentlehomme* by Moliere.

## **Irene Casarez**

### *Light/Sound Operator*

Irene appeared at City Garage as the Flutist in *The Gertrude Stein Project* and *The Bacchae*. She was the board operator for *Iphigenia*, *Rhinoceros*, *Quartet*, *The Bald Soprano*, *The Mission (Accomplished)*, *Bad Penny*, and *The Bourgeois Gentlehomme*. She also performs with the Culver City Flute Choir and other local ensembles.

## **Paul Rubenstein, General Manager**

### *Sound Design, Publicity Photography*

Paul has performed in 10 productions at City Garage. His turn as Jean in Ionesco's haunting valedictory *Journeys Among the Dead* recived a Backstage Garlands Honorable Mention. He most recently appeared in *The Battle: ABC*, "Best Ensemble" winner at the 2006 LA Weekly Theater Awards. In 2009 he won the LA Weekly Theater Award for Sound Design for his work on *The Mission: Accomplished* here at City Garage.

## **Evan Roufeh**

### *2nd Assistant Director*

Evan is a recent arrival to Los Angeles. He is very excited to be working with City Garage for the first time.

## **Trace Taylor**

### *Assistant Director*

Trace began acting at 12 years old in Cheltenham Glos, UK and continued professionally in regional theatres and PBS in Florida and New York. Off, Off Broadway and Broadway credits include *Mary Poppins*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Mamet Woman*, Cabaret Show performances, and production work with Susannah York's *The Loves of Shakespeare's Women*. Film includes German voice over for Deniro's *The Good Shepherd*. Trace has appeared at City Garage in *The Bourgeois Gentlehomme* and *The School for Wives*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND TEXT

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. City Garage’s production of *The Bald Soprano* ran four months in 2007–08 and was nominated by the LA Weekly for Best Ensemble.

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 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*), and *Les Chaises* (1952; *The Chairs*) stand out.

In *The Chairs*, a couple of indeterminate age prepare for an evening event in which after a lifetime of preparation, the husband will at last deliver his “message” to an invited audience. The couple slowly fills the room with empty chairs as they being to receive visitors just as empty, while waiting for an orator to arrive. The piece—both comic and melancholy—hauntingly explores the ideas of love, loss, and empty ambition.

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 three years ago, 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 surrealist 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.

### **Ensemble Staff**

Artistic Director  
Frederique Michel

Managing Director  
Charles Duncombe

General Manager  
Paul Rubenstein

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**Please visit our website:**  
**[www.citygarage.org](http://www.citygarage.org)**

## **ABOUT CITY GARAGE**

The company at City Garage consists of about twenty actors, a director, a general manager, and a dramaturg/designer. All casting is done within the company. The idea is to do interesting theater that makes people think.

City Garage has had a couple dozen "Critic's Choice" or "Pick of the Week" productions. It received four L.A. Weekly Theatre Award nominations for its production *George Sand: An Erotic Odyssey in Seven Tableaux*, and four more for *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore*, and another two for *Frederick of Prussia/George W's Dream of Sleep*. Its staging of *The Empire Builders* by Boris Vian was nominated for Production of the Year, while its revival of Ionesco's *The Lesson* received nominations in both direction and performance categories, winning the award for Best Direction. Heiner Müller's *The Battle: ABC* was nominated for Best Direction and Best Ensemble in 2006 and won the Ensemble award. In 2007, its *Three by Mee* season received four *LA Weekly* nominations, including Production of the Year for *Agamemnon*. The season as a whole won in the Production Design category. In 2008, the company received seven nominations in six categories, including Best Ensemble (one-act) and Best Comedy Ensemble, and took home awards for Best Direction (one-act) and Best Performance (one-act). In 2009, the company earned six nominations including one for Best Ensemble and Best Adaptation for *The Mission (Accomplished)*. In that same year, company founders Frédérique Michel and Charles Duncombe won the *LA Weekly's* "Queen of the Angles" award for decades of contributions to L.A. theater.

The company's work with Fassbinder texts has been featured in two German documentaries: *Fassbinder in Hollywood*, and *Fassbinder: Love, Life, and Celluloid*. Three of its Heiner Müller productions have been discussed in the book *Müller in America* published in New York in 2003. In the summer of 2004 in New York City, the company received an Otto, a national award for political theatre (past recipients include Laurie Anderson, Bread and Puppets Theater, Steppenwolf Theater, and Heiner Müller). It was honored that year alongside Robert Wilson, El Teatro Campesino, and Charles Mee.



## **Directing Workshop**

*With award-winning director Frédérique Michél*

What is the art of directing for the theatre? Learn to open your imagination to the magical world of the stage by working one-on-one with multiple award-winner Frédérique Michel, Artistic Director of City Garage. Intense once a week sessions working with challenging texts, actors, and blocking, European-style choreography with precise movement, and benefiting from her unique and critically-acclaimed vision for the stage. Selected students will have the opportunity to present their work to an invited audience at an annual special performance.

Open registration for this ongoing, year-round workshop. After the initial eight weeks, participants may sign up in four-week increments to continue the program.

The cost for the first eight weeks is \$650; for students invited to continue, each additional four weeks will be \$250. Enrollment is now open. Class sizes are limited. Those who are accepted will be contacted by Ms. Michel.

*Submit inquiry with resume to:  
directingworkshop@citygarage.org*

# THE CITY GARAGE PASSPORT

Come and be a part of the most exciting theater company in Los Angeles! Buy a passport today and receive four discounted admissions to any City Garage productions.

If you're looking for truly alternative theater, City Garage is where you'll find it. Provocative. Political. Outrageous. Out of the mainstream.

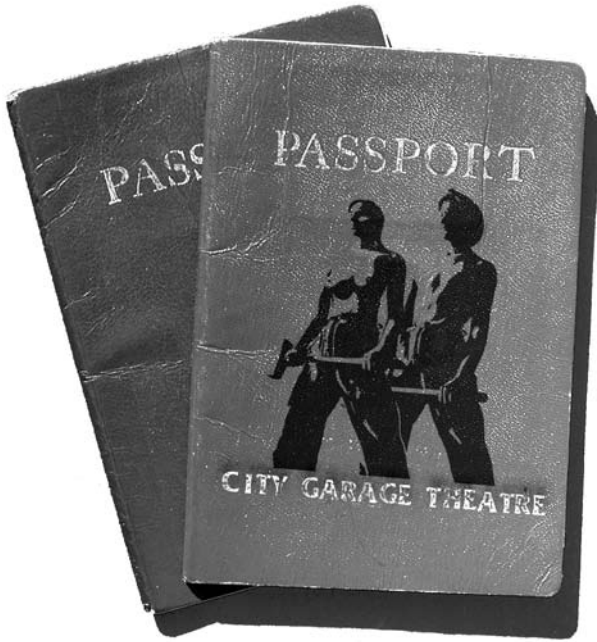
City Garage has been consistently recognized as a unique voice in the landscape of LA theater. A place for new plays from the international theatre, challenging contemporary drama, and hard-hitting original pieces that train an unflinching eye on the community of Los Angeles and on the world at large. It's here audiences are inspired to think about the issues that confront a changing society and challenged to question what they find. Nothing is predictable here except the energy and excellence on stage.

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the Santa Monica Arts Commission, and the Wells Fargo  
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# COMING SUMMER 2010

## YOUTH THEATRE WORKSHOPS AT CITY GARAGE

Nationally recognized progressive arts theater City Garage is for the first time offering summer classes for student-aged talents. Study with three of the company's long-time members in three different disciplines:

### Masks & Movement:

Instructor: David E. Frank  
Ages: 14 -18  
Dates: June –July (5 weeks)  
Tuition: \$400

This workshop is open to students between the ages of 14-18, and will explore physicality in the process of building a character through the use of masks. Particular emphasis will be placed on the study of stock characters from Italian Commedia, many of which have been familiar since Roman times and continue to appear in our modern-day sitcoms.

### Introductory Stage Technique:

Instructor: Ruthie Crossley  
Ages: 6 - 9  
Dates: July – August (4 weeks)  
Tuition: \$350

An introductory course for younger children that teaches the use of their voice, body, and emotions in elementary stage work. Instruction will help them explore their developing instruments in stage movement, physicality, simple textual interpretation, and interaction with others. Focused on early development of performance tools, this class helps the child build his or her confidence in a safe, enjoyable, and educational environment. Parents of children with mild to moderate special needs are encouraged to apply for a placement within this class.

### Introduction to Playwriting:

Instructor: Kenneth Rudnicki  
Ages: 11 - 14  
Dates: June –July (5 weeks)  
Tuition: \$450

The class will focus on developing and refining the tools of creative writing and is open to students between the ages of 11-14. Through group and individual exercises, young writers will learn how to productively explore their imaginations, harness their creativity, and discover a personal writing process. Over the five weeks of the class students will write individual monologues, and dialogue pieces as well as collaborating as a group in the creation of a one act play. The workshop will culminate in a staged reading of this work in progress for an invited audience.

# Award-Winning City Garage Productions



Top: *The Battle*: ABC (Justin Davanzo, David E. Frank, Bo Roberts); LA Weekly "Best Ensemble" 2006.

Middle: *Iphigenia* (Kenneth Rudnicki, Maximiliano Molina, Ed Baccari); LA Weekly "Best Production Design" (Three by Mee Season) 2007.

Bottom: *Quartet* (Sharon Gardner, Troy Dunn); LA Weekly "Best Direction [one-act]" and "Best Performance [one-act]" 2008.





**Coming Soon to City Garage**

Fall 2009:

*The Trojan Women*

A new version for City Garage  
by Charles Duncombe

Winter 2010:

*Moliere*

by Mikhail Bulgakov