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Into the Absurd:
Readings and Conversation

The American Dream
by
Edward Albee
The American Dream that you will see tonight was conceived not only as a reaction to a generational shift of values but also as a means of coping with an intense hardship. With a play that is so rooted in the family structure, it is hard not to acknowledge the familial trauma Albee personally experienced in his youth and the incidents leading up to his writing of this play.

Edward Albee was adopted by his parents, Reed and Frances Albee, in 1928, and was raised in a well-established American family. Edward Franklin Albee II, Albee's grandfather, ran the Keith-Albee Circuit, a successful string of Vaudeville Theater Companies that eventually merged with other theater companies to become the RKO Corporation. The inherited wealth from the grandfather's fortune provided the Albees with more than enough to live comfortably and to expose the young Edward Albee to an abundance of Broadway productions.

Much like the family in The American Dream, Albee often described his own family unit as distant, concerned with appearances, and emotionally cold. The closest thing to a mother that Albee had was his Grandmother Cotter. As he grew older, Albee continued to feel like an outsider within his family unit.

He continuously rebelled against his parents until one fateful night, after he had been drinking heavily, they confronted him and forced him to leave their house. Albee cut ties with his family and travelled around the world for years. His parents, who strongly disapproved of his homosexuality and of his decision to pursue a writing career, remained estranged from him. They did not even tell Edward when his grandmother died; they held her funeral without him.

The news of Grandmother Cotter's death reached Edward in 1960. The American Dream premiered in New York in 1961. There is much sympathy, tenderness, and respect in this play for the character of Grandma, whose real life counterpart meant so much to Edward Albee.

It is no surprise, then, that Grandma is the hero of this story. She is also a representative of an earlier era of the American Dream. There are references in the play to her being of pioneer stock, rural. She resembles those adventurous people who set out to make a new life for themselves in the wilderness through ingenuity, courage, and hard work. This spirit lives on in the play through her initiatives that move the story forward.

As you enjoy this reading of The American Dream, please think about other ways the title resonates. What other characters and circumstances reflect or embody notions of the American Dream?

We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Greg Nanni and Larry Wilkins
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PO Box 63872
Philadelphia, PA 19147

www.IdiopathicRidiculopathyConsortium.org

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by
Edward Albee

Tina Brock.........................................................Mommy
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CAST

Andrew Carroll (The Young Man) is no stranger to the IRC. He’s loved fairies in Ondine, had a dalliance or two with Durang, thrown a good handful of fits in Misalliance, munched on a Raw Onion, delivered delicious deadpan with Ives, and fleeced Russians in The Government Inspector. If you find his work groovy, come check out The Cripple of Inishmaan at Curio, where he is a proud company member. Love to Tina, Bob, Jenn, and the kitties. For Peanut, always.

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SPECIAL THANKS
Ben Doranz
Leslie and the staff of L’Etage
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For more information about PASC, visit our website http://www.pasc-arts.org. If you are interested in participating in PASC or would like to recommend individuals or institutions to be included, please email us at pascinitiative@gmail.com.

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**Kirsten Quinn (Mrs. Barker)** is thrilled to be working with the IRC again after appearing in *Madwoman of Chaillot*, *The Empire Builders*, *The Arsonists*, *The Castle*, and *Rhinoceros*. Quinn holds an M.F.A. in acting from The University of Pittsburgh. She has worked with the Wilma, the Lantern, InterAct, Luna Theater, Isis Productions, Montgomery Theatre, Theatre Catalyst’s ESP (co-founder), Center City Theatre Works, various Fringe companies, The Irish Heritage Theatre, B.Someday, New City Stage, The Pittsburgh Public Theatre, City Theatre of Pittsburgh, and many others. Favorite roles she has performed include Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Lady Macbeth, Juno in *Juny and the Paycock*, Julie in *Miss Julie*, Daisy in *Rhinoceros*, Bunny in *House of Blue Leaves*, Anna in *Closer*, and Belinda Blair in *Noises Off*. Next up: *Our Town* with the Eagle Theatre. Thank you to Tina and this ridiculously talented group of IRC folks. Kirsten would like to send love to Mom, Tom and all her friends and family for all of their love and support. Ari, you are the best husband in the world. For Daddy.

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CREW

Greg Nanni (Co-Curator Into the Absurd, IRC Literary Manager) is a playwright, comic book writer, and marketer living in the Philadelphia area. He is a member of Passage Play Lab, a former PDC Playwright in Residence at Plays & Players, and the Co-Founder and Co-Moderator of the PDC Playwrights’ Happy Hour. He is the Co-Writer of the Youtube Series Bar-N-Tavern. He is currently commissioned to write the play The Traveler for Equity Actor Corbin Abernathy. His One Act plays have been featured in 24 Hour festivals and readings throughout the Greater Philadelphia Area. His One Act plays Scream in America II and The Complete Western History of the Human Race were produced by Magnetic Theatre Company and Madlab Theatre respectively. Up next: his one act play Scream in America IV will be appearing at the Ritz Theater Company from June 3rd - June 5th.

Bob Schmidt (Stage Manager, IRC Ways and Means Coordinator) is a founding member of the IRC and has appeared in many productions since the company's inception in 2006. Favorite IRC roles and productions: The Guard in Eugène Ionesco’s Exit the King, Botard in Ionesco’s Rhinoceros and Old Man in Ionesco’s The Chairs (returning in September!). Many thanks to this wonderful bunch of performers who graciously donated their time and talent to make tonight possible, and to our hardcore IRC audience (you know who you are) for their humbling support these past ten years!

Larry Wilkins (Co-Curator Into the Absurd, IRC Board Member) joined the board of IRC this year and is happy to be working with the company on Into the Absurd. After twenty years of schooling in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, Larry enjoyed a long, satisfying career teaching English and French language and literature. Currently retired, he returns often for lengthy stays in cities where he has lived abroad: Sydney, Paris, and Rio. His only childhood regret is that he did not run away and join the circus. Or a theater troupe. He is so glad to finally be part of one.

Follow The IRC on Facebook and Twitter

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The Chairs
by
Eugène Ionesco

“They’re Back!”

Mark your calendars for the return of Eugene Ionesco’s The Chairs, which played to sold-out houses at the 2009 Fringe Festival. Come with us to a lighthouse at the edge of a night time watery universe” for this classic farce, featuring an elderly couple engaging in painstaking theatrical preparations to share their lifelong message. This extraordinary comedy showcases the physical slapstick and dazzling language that made Ionesco one of the most beloved playwrights of the modern experimental theater.

Directed by Tina Brock
Set Design: Lisi Stoessel
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Philadelphia FringeArts Festival
September 6 – 25, 2016
Walnut Street Theatre, Studio 5
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