

# The Lesson

by Eugene Ionesco

Eugene Ionesco was born in 1909 in Romania and spent most of his childhood in France. He wrote almost entirely in French. He did not start writing his first play until he was 39 and it was far from a success until later. He was made a member of the Académie Française in 1970 and won numerous awards for his literary success.

*The Lesson* was written in 1951 (La Leçon) and forms part of his earliest and most progressive works. A teenage pupil arrives at the home of a Professor for a private lesson; she is ready to learn and eager to please. But as she struggles to keep up it is clear that the Professor has something far more sinister in mind.

In this play, Ionesco tries to convey a sense of alienation and breakdowns in communication within a surreally comic context. "Disintegration" is a major theme which is used to depict a dehumanised world with mechanical, puppet-like characters. Words gain a life of their own and language becomes tyrannical and fatal, overwhelming and destroying the characters.

Ionesco died in 1994 and is buried in the Cimetière de Montparnasse.

## Cast

The Maid	Gill Stratford
The Pupil	Emma Cunliffe
The Professor	Tim Hoyle

Directed By  
**Jo Emery**

# **A Slight Accident**

## **by James Saunders**

James Saunders was born on January 8<sup>th</sup> 1925 in Islington and grew up in what he described as “class enmity, unemployment and poverty”. He went to Wembley Community School and at 18 went into the navy and served in the Artic and the Pacific on torpedo boats. After the war he went to Southampton University to study physics and chemistry. He became a teacher by day and a playwright by night. Most of his early works were one act plays for the radio which is how he developed his verbal style and his ability to write imaginative and evocative dialogue.

Saunders became a full time writer in 1964 and enjoyed a number of successes although his plays were not always well received by critics or audiences. His best known plays are probably *Next Time I'll Sing to You*, *Scent of Flowers* and *Bodies*. He died at the age of 79 in January 2004.

*A Slight Accident* was written in 1961 for the Nottingham Playhouse and was presented as a double bill with *Alas Poor Fred*.

The play is a combination of verbal and situation comedy sometimes verging on vaudeville, with an element of suspense thrown in for good measure. Something very unusual has happened but the characters, bound by the middle class conventions of politeness and adherence to routine are unable to bring themselves to discuss the problem leading to a dramatic but inevitable outcome.

### **Cast**

Penelope	Fenella Adams
Harry	Tim Hoyle
Camilla	Harriet Rowlands
Rodger	David Berryman

Directed By  
**Val Male**



**Eugene Ionesco**



**James Saunders**

**CREW**

**Stage Manager**

Set  
Lighting  
Sound  
Sound Editor  
Prompters  
Properties  
Wardrobe

Dave Townsend

Anna Barrett

Lesley Ivinson

**Chris Male**

Vivian Meazza  
Dorian Brook  
Peter Hale  
Janice Cole  
Jan Hayward  
Judith Goodban  
Gill Stratford

## **The Producer Writes...**

When Steve Cunningham and I were asked to devise “something” for the last slot in the CoT 2006/7 season, we both independently lit on the idea of presenting plays by authors who do not often get an airing, plays which the Company of Ten, with its seventy-plus years of experience, would be the poorer if it overlooked. And it was very swiftly afterwards that we identified the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd as fitting that category. Among them we remembered Ionesco and Saunders, who are just as worthy of production as their better known colleagues Beckett and Pinter.

So what is the Theatre of the Absurd? This is best left to the doyen of the genre, Martin Esslin, who wrote: “The basis of the well-made play is the implicit assumption that the world does make sense, that reality is solid and secure, all outlines clear, all ends apparent. The plays that we have classed under the label of the Theatre of the Absurd, on the other hand, express a sense of shock at the absence, the loss, of any such clear and well-defined systems of beliefs or values.”

But, please note: *“The shedding of easy solutions, of comforting illusions, may be painful, but it leaves behind it a sense of freedom and relief. And that is why, in the last resort, the Theatre of the Absurd does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation.”*

Which was justification itself for putting them on, we thought.

**Peter Hale**  
**Producer**