March 28 - 31, April 4 - 7, 2002
Trueblood Theatre
UM School of Music
Department of Theatre and Drama
The University of Michigan
Department of Theatre and Drama
presents

The Balcony
by Jean Genet
translated by Bernard Frechtman

Director Mbala Nkanga
Scenic/Lighting Designer Gary Decker
Costume Designer Jessica Gorchow
Dramaturg D. Ross
Stage Manager Alix Malloy

Setting:
A brothel.

There will be one intermission.

The Balcony is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change. As a courtesy to others, please set pagers to silent mode. Cellular phones should be deactivated. Please deactivate your electronic watch alarm so it will not interrupt the performance.

Special thanks to the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies for their assistance.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC/ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater productions. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC/ACTF representative, and certain students are selected to participate in KC/ACTF programs involving awards, scholarships, and special grants for actors, playwrights, designers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.
Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

The Bishop ........................................................................... Kevin Bradley, Jr.
Irma ..................................................................................... Sandra Abrevaya
The Woman (Penitent) .......................................................... Anathea Alberda
The Thief ........................................................................... Maureen Sebastian
The Judge ........................................................................... Jason Smith
The Executioner/Arthur ........................................................ Dan Granke
The General ........................................................................ Brad Fraizer
The Girl ............................................................................... Joanna Fetter
Carmen ............................................................................... Meghan Powe
The Chief of Police ............................................................ Brian Luskey
Chantal ............................................................................... Joanna Spanos
Roger .................................................................................. Joshua Lefkowitz
Rebel/The First Photographer ............................................. Lauren Roberts
Rebel/The Second Photographer ......................................... Sean Ward
Rebel/The Third Photographer ........................................... Ashley Michael
The Court Envoy ................................................................. David Jones
The Slave ............................................................................. Jonathan Rosen

From the Director

Seventeen young actors are gathered tonight on this Trueblood Stage to perform Jean Genet’s The Balcony. This is a challenge. And it has been one throughout the staging process of this “mythology of the whorehouse.” Genet wrote a mythology in which abstraction of reality became the leit-motiv of his artistic creation. The plot, the characters, the space, time, everything is an abstraction in this play. The abstraction attains the point of confusion, of bewilderment, and of embarrassment. The kind of embarrassment and uneasiness, but also the kind of self-enjoyment one feels when facing their own image reflected by the mirror. It can be an enormous mirror. It can also be a distorted mirror that reflects a twisted, deformed, and why not, tainted image of the individual.

This situation becomes more confusing when power and sex get involved with the mirror of a brothel. Thus, the individual character loses its individuality to encompass that of the others, those we dream of all the time of becoming. Sex... power ... domination... possession... The individual, the actor for the matter, becomes possessed by those wandering spirits of vice and virtue. The mirror... the mirror... always the mirror reflects that change of status. Who are we? Who are they? This mythology poses the issue of our identity as a question of being or doing, and as a mode of existence or a function to fulfill.
About Jean Genet

“Among other things, the goal of the theatre is to take us outside the limits of what is generally referred to as “historical time.”
- Jean Genet, “Reflections on the Theatre”

Jean Genet was born in Paris in 1910 to an unwed mother who abandoned him at the age of eight months. Placed in the care of a foster family, Genet attended primary school with high grades and there committed his first petty thefts. At 19, he enlisted in the army to escape his assignment as a farmhand and was sent to Syria - his first contact with the Arab world, to which he remained loyal throughout his life. A later enlistment would place him in the Algerian war, and he traveled numerous times to the Middle East and Africa until his death in 1986. It was his habitual thieving, however, which landed him in prison several times, and which in 1948 inspired a group of French artists and intellectuals led by Jean-Paul Sartre to petition for a definitive pardon on his behalf. They succeeded

The Balcony, written in 1955, holds true to Genet’s idea of exceeding the limits of “historical time.” Its shapes and characters are drawn from the Spanish Civil War, the Algerian conflict, the French Revolution, Ghanaian spirit possession rituals, Genet’s own experiences as a gay prostitute, and the timeless dynamic between power and sexuality. The ever deepening levels of illusion constructed in these studios not only echo an array of historical moments but suggest that they are linked through the human sense of fantasy.
- D. Ross, Dramaturg

About the Cast

Sandra Abrevaya (Irma) senior, BFA Perf./BA English, Chicago, IL
Anathea Alberda (The Woman (Penitent)) senior, BFA Perf., Gladwin, MI
Kevin Bradley Jr. (The Bishop) sophomore, BFA Perf./BA Communication Studies, Southfield, MI
Joanna Fetter (The Girl) first-year, BFA Perf./BA English, Highland Park, IL
Brad Fraizer (The General) sophomore, BFA Perf., Saginaw, MI
Dan Granke (The Executioner/Arthur) junior, BFA Performance, Ann Arbor, MI
David Jones (The Court Envoy) junior, BFA Perf., Beverly Hills, MI
Joshua Lefkowitz (Roger) junior, BFA Perf., West Bloomfield, MI
Brian Luskey (The Police Chief) junior, BFA Perf., Saratoga, CA
Ashley Michael (The Third Photographer) sophomore, BFA Perf., Louisville, KY
Meghan Powe (Carmen) sophomore, BFA Perf., Mount Clemens, MI
Lauren Roberts (The First Photographer) first-year, BFA Perf., Port Huron, MI
Jonathan Rosen (The Slave) junior, BFA Perf., Los Angeles, CA
About the Cast (con’t)

Maureen Sebastian (*The Thief*) first-year, BFA Perf., Novi, MI  
Jason Smith (*The Judge*) junior, BFA Perf., Cadillac, MI  
JoAnna Spanos (*Chantal*) sophomore, BFA Perf., Bloomfield Hills, MI  
Sean Ward (*The Second Photographer*) sophomore, BFA Perf., Ann Arbor, MI

About the Artists

Mbala Nkanga (*Director*), a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a visiting assistant professor in the Dept. of Theatre and Drama. Since 1979, he has taught and headed the research center in performing arts and music (CEDAR) at Institut National des Arts in Kinshasa (DRC). UM: *Liyanja*. **International Theatre:** Bernard Dadié’s *Béatrice du Congo*, Wole Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forests*, Réné Kalisky’s *Aïda Vaincue*. **Other Theatre:** Diur Ntumb’s *Zaina*, which he brought to the stage and screen for Concours Théâtral Interafricain out of his work directing for Radio France-Internationale. **Awards:** Fulbright scholar, Northwestern University’s Gwendolyn Carter Award for Academic Excellence. **Other:** PhD, Northwestern Univ.; MA, Indiana Univ.; BA, Institut National des Arts.


Alix Malloy (*Stage Manager*) is a BFA theatre design and production major focusing on stage management. UM: Assistant stage manager: *Good News!, The Heiress*; stage manager: *Chicago, Evita, MUSKET*. **Regional Theatre:** UM Festival of New Works, assistant stage manager: *Broadway Joe, Jingles in a Broken Tongue, Love Songs, Divided*. 

Book by Alfred Uhry • Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

UM School of Music Musical Theatre Department
April 11 – 13 at 8pm • April 14 at 2pm • Power Center
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