

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
Selwyn House School

Senior Players Present

The Selwyn House



Rosencrantz &
Guildenstern
Are Dead

Directed by
Alex Ivanovici

ABOUT THE PLAY

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

SYNOPSIS

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, having forgotten their summons to Hamlet's castle at Elsinore, are passing the time tossing coins and musing over a continuous and seemingly impossible run of heads over tails. As they remember their task, they are approached by a band of tragedians led by the Player, who offers them a "private" performance with Alfred, a boy actor. After some wagering with the Player, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern request a play but are quickly transported to Elsinore before it begins.

At the castle they are greeted by Claudius and Gertrude who tell them of Hamlet's "transformation" and their wish that the two attend him and find the cause. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play a game of questions with each other to prepare for the task but when they encounter Hamlet they become frustrated by his answers.

With Rosencrantz and Guildenstern looking on, Hamlet commands the Player to perform a play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, "to catch the conscience of the King". Gertrude enters and questions them about their conversation with Hamlet and they report his interest in the players. Claudius tells them to encourage him in that pursuit.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern watch the tragedians' dress rehearsal of *The Murder of Gonzago*, replete with alterations. The play now includes two Spies who are executed in the final scene.

Claudius tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that Polonius has been slain by Hamlet. He orders them to bring Hamlet and the body of Polonius to the chapel. They encounter Hamlet but he escapes, dragging the dead body with him. When Hamlet is found again, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are ordered by Claudius to accompany him on a ship bound for England and to deliver a letter to the English King. On Board, they discover the letter orders Hamlet's death.

When pirates attack the ship, Hamlet escapes. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discover that Claudius' letter has been switched by Hamlet. The letter that should have brought them favor now orders their deaths. As they contemplate their situation, the action switches to Denmark where an Ambassador brings the news that "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead."

THE PLAY'S ORIGIN AND PRODUCTION HISTORY

The origin of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* dates back to 1963 when Stoppard's agent suggested that he write a comedy about what might happen if Rosencrantz and Guildenstern went to England and encountered a raving mad King Lear at Dover. The original version, written in 1964, was a one-act farce, whose failure Stoppard readily admits to.

Stoppard reworked the play by returning to the framework of Hamlet, and, in 1965, a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company who had heard about the play, requested the first two acts and commissioned a third. The RSC's twelve month option on the play expired, so the play was presented by Oxford students as part of the Fringe of the Edinburgh Festival in August of 1966. Ronald Bryden's review for *The Observer* called it "the most brilliant debut by a young playwright since John Arden's erudite comedy, punning, far-fetched, leaping from depth to dizziness." This glowing review prompted The National to buy the rights to the play and, in April of 1967, the play was presented in a revised version at the Old Vic Theatre.

Including radio plays, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was the eleventh play written by Stoppard but the first to gain great success, acclaim, and a wide audience.

CAST

Act One

Rosencrantz
Guildenstern

Basil Karim
Theo McLaughlin

Act Two

Rosencrantz
Guildenstern

Justin Greenberg
Alexis Asselin

Act Three

Rosencrantz
Guildenstern

Sean McKinnon
Gabriel Brown

The Player

Mark Turetsky

Hamlet

Ian Ratzer

Ophelia

Lauren Brownstein
(Trafalgar School)

Claudius

Jordan Goldwarg

Gertrude

Tegan Webster
(Trafalgar School)

Polonius

Chris Sakara

Horatio

Hans Black

Alfred

Zaven Gunjian

Soldier

Alex Black

Ambassadors

Anuraag Saksena
Clifford Adelman

Tragedians

Pablo Durana
Jaimie Finkelstein
(Trafalgar School)
Mohammed Mahayni
Vidal Sadaka
Gabriel Taraboulsy

Pirates

Mary Ellen Viau's Drama Club

Music

The Trouba-Doors:
Jeremy Baskin
Matthew Busbridge
Tim Dobby
David Knecht

PRODUCTION CREW

<i>Director</i>	Alex Ivanovici
<i>Assistant Director & Stage Manager</i>	Hans Black
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Ned Maloney
<i>Stage Crew</i>	Michael O’Gorman (chief) Stephane Azoulay Caleb Bouharie Asim Khan Shoaib Rabani Yousef Rehman Alex Tsoukas
<i>Set Design</i>	Mark Buntrock
<i>Lighting Design</i>	Duncan Morgan
<i>Costume Design</i>	Heidi Van Regan
<i>Lighting Board Operator</i>	Michael O’Gorman
<i>Make-up</i>	Virginia Ferguson Kathy Funamoto, Irene Lunt, Pina Salusbury Maria Tratt, Mary Ellen Viau, Lorayne Winn
<i>Programme, Ticket & Poster Design, and Photography</i>	Maria Tratt
<i>Poster & Ticket Design</i>	Mark Turetsky
<i>Tickets & House Management</i>	Brenda Montgomery Jennifer Wells

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANKS

Stephanie Baptist
Centaur Theatre
Marc Krushelnyski
Christine Krushelnyski
George Diaz
Mardo Hernandez
William Mitchell
Robin Paterson
Annabel Soutar
Mary Thomas
Simplicio Urgel
Jim Cousins
Jean Baillorgeon
Maria Tratt
Jaime McMillan
Mary Ellen Viau
Virginia Ferguson & her make-up team
Rob Wearing
Trafalgar School
Pat Shannon
Kathy Biggs
Brian Aucoin
Sue-Anne Pham
Brenda Montgomery
Jennifer Wells

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When I first considered directing *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* it occurred to me that this would suit both Dr. Byron Harker's heralded Shakespearean tradition and my personal penchant for the absurd and abstract. I was also drawn in by Tom Stoppard's witty existential repartee and a pair of lovable clowns. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern question who, what, why, when and how they are, with such humour and confused precision that I deemed it an interesting challenge for the Senior students of Selwyn House. Beyond philosophical provocation, this play offers an alluring perspective on theatre itself, defending its finer points; using the "play within a play, within a play" convention to explore the need for theatre. Ask yourself the questions, as we did, and watch as we try to communicate our answers.

