

= THE IN/SOMNIAES Present =  
Eugène Ionesco's

# RAHINO CEROS

directed by Taylor Wuthrich



## **PRODUCTION TEAM:**

**Director** – Taylor Wuthrich

**Executive Producer** – Liam Blaney

**Dramaturgs** – Alice Pinon & Ai Ebashi

**Movement Director** – Marie Osterman

**Stage Manager** – Jennifer Strom

**Assistant Stage Manager** – Samantha Emmer-Fink

**Costume Design** – Ashley McLaughlin

**Scenic Design** – Matthew Herman

**Sound Design** – Andy Walsh

**Lighting Design** – Taylor Wuthrich

**Prop Coordinator** – Mandi Thomas

**Marketing Coordinator** – Nika Belinsky

**French Consultant** – Alice Highman

**Puppet Maker / Illustrator** – Ai Ebashi

**Mask Maker** – Jonathan Becker

**Co-Producers** – Wyatt Crosswhite, Ai Ebashi, Neal Honda, Erin Wuthrich



## **CAST:**

**Berenger** – Neal Honda

**Jean** – Nick Scutti

**Daisy** – Sadie Sieroty

**Dudard** – Ari Wojciech

**Papillon** – Ruchi Kishore

**Botard** – Mandi Thomas

**Logician** – Nika Belinsky

**Gentleman** – Carl Lyons

**Housewife** – Brandy Lamkin

**Mrs. Boeuf** – Sarah Galarneau



## **SPECIAL THANKS:**

*San Diego New Verbal Workshop* (experimental choir), Hunter Ridenour (photographer), Devon deGroot, Tyler Manley (videographer), Taylor Fjellstrom (add'l. choreo), John-Jack Rodgers, Omer Mansano, Stan Harrington, Carlo Figlio, Andrew Garrett, Maura Daly Phinney, Andy Trimlett, Alden Phinney, Katie Foggiano, Max Havas, Bethany Allen, Mike Stallings, the Knoll family, Cindy & Max Wuthrich, Katie Wilson, Casey Robbins, Stacia Stitt, Sara Carr, Caitlin Burke, Casey Franco, Uncorked Wine Shop, Jonathan Becker's theater-masks.com, Concordia University, UC Berkeley, Betty Mae Inc., and The Stella Adler Academy of Acting.

**“Ideologies . . . and their congealed language must be relentlessly split apart in order to find the living sap beneath.”**

- Eugène Ionesco

Ionesco's plays are imbued with the playwright's deep suspicion of accepted slogans, ideologies, and language in general. But in lieu of a better form of communication, I will have to write this in English.

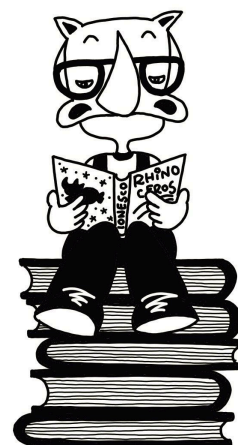
For our production of *Rhinoceros*, we've chosen to present Ionesco's famous play in a cabaret format that combines elements from both American and European popular art forms: vaudeville / silent-film, French music hall, and modern dance. To those who may find the combination of musical revue and a play about fascism incongruous, I'll say this: traditional French cabaret (not to mention Zürich's Cabaret Voltaire, which helped give birth to surrealism and Dada) is very much a political art.

I knew I wanted to produce this play after visiting my late grandpa's 99 year old partner, Betty, at her home in East Hollywood last year. To my surprise I learned that Betty, a Swiss immigrant, grew up in Nazi Germany. Betty told me about the carpet bombings she survived as a young girl, and looking out her window she said "I was thinking about it this morning. I just can't stop thinking about it."

We talked about my grandpa, Max Wüthrich, another child of Swiss immigrants who grew up in Nazi-occupied Paris. Betty and Max, and my Ashkenazi Jewish relatives who fled Frankfurt, Germany, experienced something most of us cannot even fathom; their shared past brought them together and also created a very real divide between themselves and their neighbors / relatives in the U.S.

With *Rhinoceros*, while not an "anti-war play" per se, Ionesco explores the kind of dangerous groupthink that often *leads* to war, and the play critiques certain viewpoints (tolerance, apologism, etc). And yet, in its own strange, nightmarish way, *Rhinoceros* has a lot of heart, too. It champions empathy, compassion, individuality, and humanism. What better antidote for a polarized and war-torn 2024?

- Taylor Wuthrich, director



## ***A little background . . .***

In the 1950's, as Europe was rebuilding from the Second World War, French theater director Jean Villar created a "théâtre populaire" that aimed to reach as many spectators as possible, and unite audiences around joyful and optimistic messaging. In opposition, a counter-current emerged, an "anti-theater" with Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett as its pillars; a destructive, pessimistic, solitary theater that illustrated the collapse of all Enlightenment values.

Ionesco and Beckett broke with Western theatrical conventions by refusing to tell a story with realistic characters. They invented a theater of inaction and anonymity that reached an absurd and tragic conclusion: the impossibility of acting in the face of global change.

Eugène Ionesco was born in Romania to a Romanian father and a French-Jewish mother. The family soon moved to Paris, but the parents split up and Ionesco's father returned to Bucharest. Torn between his two countries, his two parents, and his two languages, the inherent duality of Ionesco's upbringing was to mark his personality and is evident in his work: at once comic and tragic, anarchist and humanist, avant-garde and classical.

In 1930's Romania, Ionesco personally experienced the rise of fascism as the anti semitic Iron Guard, or Legionary Movement, came to power. Ionesco watched his father and his intellectual circle of friends gradually succumb to the virulent philosophy of the Iron Guard. In Vichy France, Ionesco's friends and neighbors lived under a collaborationist French government that aided Nazi Germany in the deportation of at least 72,000 French Jews. And finally, after the war was over, he witnessed the establishment of totalitarian communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

In much of Ionesco's work there is a pervasive critique of totalitarianism, and *Rhinoceros* of course is no exception. In the original French, Ionesco uses the pronoun "on" in speeches made by Jean and Botard. Since this "on" in French is used to make statements more general, the sentences spoken by Jean and Botard in the play sound more like slogans, absolutes that cannot be contested.

In contrast, *Rhinoceros'* antihero and everyman, Berenger, is constantly riddled with doubt, fear and guilt. At the start of the play he is uncharismatic and doesn't have any firm ideas about the world. This uncertainty makes him the most human of characters and someone we can easily identify with. His weakness is his strength, his powerlessness is his humanity; the ambivalent and sensitive Berenger is the *real* resistance fighter.

- *Alice Pinon, dramaturg*

## The CAST . . .



**Neal Honda (Berenger)** is a Japanese-American actor from the San Francisco Bay Area. He is stoked to be making his LA stage-debut with *Rhinoceros*. Thank you Taylor Wuthrich, and every talented individual involved in this production! Other acting credits include: *Better Call Saul* (AMC), *Not Dead Yet* (ABC), *Daisy Jones & the Six* (Amazon), *American Crime Story* (FX), and *G.I. Origins: Snake Eyes*..



**Nick Scutti (Jean)** As a writer and performer, Nick has graced the stages of La Jolla Playhouse, North Coast Repertory, San Diego International Fringe, and World Comedy Expo. He's working towards teaching high school history to prevent the further spread of rhinoceroses. BA in Theatre from Concordia University Irvine. Improv training from UCB, iO Chicago, and The Second City. Instagram: @nscutti

**Sadie Sieroty (Daisy)** is thrilled to be a part of this brilliant cast playing the role of Daisy. Recent credits include *Pam & Tommy* (Hulu), *Are We Lost*, and the upcoming *Interior Chinatown* (Hulu). She earned her BFA in Acting from Roosevelt University, and is grateful for her incredible friends and family.

**Ari Wojciech (Dudard / Grocer)** In 2023 Ari acted in Theatre West's *Moose on the Loose* and Veil Theatre's production of *The Nether* while co-producing the LA premier of Lisa D'Amour's *Detroit*. 2023 ended with his first live tap performance. He continues to write, act, and produce while dreaming of someday rescuing a kitten.

**Ruchi Kishore (Papillon / Proprietor)** As a breakout playwright, Ruchi starred in her award-winning musical, *Dirty Chai* directed by *Jason Goes to Hell's* Adam Marcus. Ruchi's been in TV shows like *The League & Equal Justice* and indie films like Calcutta Film Festival selection, *Bluish Grey*. Also, she's obsessed with tigers and spreading joy.

**Mandi Thomas (Botard / Waitress)** has been involved in theater productions from a young age and is so excited to be back on the stage again. Since 2020, Mandi has been teaching, particularly finding a love for teaching outdoors and theater. Also assisting with prop coordinating for *Rhinoceros*, she is so thrilled for you to see the show!

**Nika Belinsky (Logician)**, a seasoned performer and marketing strategist, merges her lifelong dedication to theater with a PR degree from Penn State.

As an actor, musician, and social media maven, she deftly navigates both the stage and digital sphere, crafting compelling narratives that captivate audiences everywhere.

**Brandy Lamkin (Housewife)** was born in Corpus Christi, Texas, but raised in Los Angeles, California. Brandy began her journey into the arts through dance. At the age of 12 she became a professional dancer performing in music videos, on Award Shows, and World Tours with Mariah Carey, Shakira, Chris Brown, Usher, Pharrell Williams and many others. She also appeared in the *Step Up* franchise films. Brandy has trained as an actor with Joe Salazar at the Actor's Company, The Groundlings, and master class studies with Ivana Chubbuck at The Ivana Chubbuck Studio.

**Carl Lyons (Gentleman / Fireman)** is excited to be a part of *Rhinoceros*. He is currently an educator and avid lover of theater. He is grateful to his loving friends and family for their support. He's happy to have the chance to perform this show, and share its message. Beware abuse of logic.

**Sarah Galarneau (Mrs. Boeuf / Grocer's Wife)** studied theatre at San Francisco State University and is excited to be returning to the stage in *Rhinoceros*. In recent years she has focused on acting, writing and producing, including her own comedy series *Two Girls One Love* that can be found streaming on TVHi.



## **The CREW . . .**

**Taylor Wuthrich (Director / Lighting Designer)** has worked in the SF Bay Area as an actor, director, designer, artistic director, and director's assistant, and was a co-founder of SF's Troupe Theatre. Directing credits include: *Sondheim "Miscast," Hoax* (dance), *The Precious Damsels* by Molière, *Folk Stories*, *The Future is in Eggs* by Eugène Ionesco, *The Misanthrope* by Molière, *Puppet Show* by Ai Ebashi, and *Three (very!) Short Stories* by Anton Chekhov (audio drama).

**Liam Blaney (Executive Producer)** is a long time collaborator with Taylor, having co-founded Troupe Theatre together; he produced over a dozen shows with the company wearing two dozen hats. He is an actor, director, music director, and producer, and that's just in his free time. Credits include *Three Sisters*, *Cymbeline*, *One Day, You the Accused*, and *Sondheim "Miscast"*.

**Alice Pinon (Dramaturg)** was born and raised in Paris, France. She studied and worked as a theatre actress for a few years in France before going to San Francisco State University to complete her studies. She has previously worked with Taylor as a dramaturg for Molière's *The Precious Damsels*.

**Alice Highman (French Consultant)** is thrilled to be part of this production of *Rhinoceros*. When she's not translating classic French love songs, Alice is a New York-based actor and writer. She holds a BA in film and international relations from USC and a JD from Harvard Law School.

**Ai Ebashi (Visual Designer / Dramaturg / Puppet Maker)** is a playwright, illustrator and multidisciplinary theater-maker. Ai's plays have been produced or stage-read at theaters in San Francisco and Los Angeles, including the Aurora, Brava, Exit, Shelton, PianoFight, Potrero Stage, Theatre of Yugen, Z-Space and Little Fish Theater. Ai is a finalist of the Eugene O'Neill National Playwright Conference and co-founder of Kunoichi Productions.

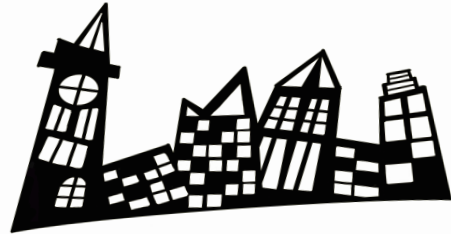
**Marie Osterman (Movement Director)** (they/she) is a performer/director/teaching artist with a passion for community, chaos, physical theatre and birds. They also teach and host Contact Improvisation events at Pieter Performance Space, you're invited! Recent choreography credits include: *Kentucky* (Pomona College), *Parthenos* (Project Nongenue), *Mycelial Movement* (Heidi Duckler Dance). Website: [marieandreibvnaosterman.com](http://marieandreibvnaosterman.com).

**Jennifer Strom (Stage Manager)** Jenn's passion for musical theatre and the arts sparked at an early age. She eagerly took part in as many productions as she could, both as a performer and behind the scenes. All her years of experience have proven invaluable in her transition to the role of stage manager, blending her love for theatre with her organizational skills and attention to detail. She is proud and honored to be working alongside the talented artists involved in bringing *Rhinoceros* to life!

**Matthew Herman (Scenic Designer)** Select credits include: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *Witnesses (World Premiere)*, *Once*, *Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Chess*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *On the Town (Projection Design)*. Off-Broadway/Regional Assistant credits include: *Escape to Margaritaville* (La Jolla Playhouse-Walt Spangler), *Ain't Too Proud* (Berkeley Rep.-Robert Brill), *Emojiland* (National Tour/The Duke), and *Sunset Boulevard* (ACT of Connecticut).

**Ashley McLaughlin (Costume Designer)** Ashley is eager to be working with The Insomniacs to help tell the story of Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. Through costume and creative collaboration, she's interested in exploring the ways in which clothing informs our perception of time, space, and character.

**Andy Walsh (Sound Designer)** is a multi-instrumentalist, producer, and audio engineer based in San Diego. This production has been a wonderful experience, tapping into the niche skills he's developed as an audio professional as well as a proud member of the *San Diego New Verbal Workshop*.



***THANK YOU to our donors!***

Teri Zinn, Christy Shannon, Tracy Scutti, Chris Williams, Beth Mercer, Bari Thomas, Julie Eisele, Cinda Lucas, Beth Galanty Blaney, B+W Architects, Geoff Hoefler, Bobbie Hanousek, Maureen Goodwin, Evan Blaney, Zoey Zimmerman, Phil Hoefler, Dana Blaney, Alden Phinney, Fred Deni, Michelle Dowler, Danuta Janiszewski, Adriana Vecchioli, Patricia Knoll, Parker Wuthrich, Lindsey Clifford, Greg Dunham, Allie Kent, Marcella Johnson, Roy Conboy, Stanley Williams, Kathy Knoll, Jackie Cuccaro, Paulette Britton, Tracy McDowell, Lori Strom, Jodi Kennedy, Lynn Kosar, Ned Hawley, Danny Ford, Anastasia Crosswhite, Kierney Loucas, Casey Franco, Illona Crosswhite, Wyatt Crosswhite, Shane Moylan, Mike Stallings and Craig Belinsky.

***Rhinoceros*** is presented by arrangement with *Concord Theatricals* on behalf of *Samuel French, Inc.* [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com).