The BALTIMORE WALTZ

by Paula Vogel

Directed by Suzanne Beal

AUGUST 26 - SEPTEMBER 13, 2015
When Joseph and I decided to dedicate this season to the work of contemporary women playwrights, Paula Vogel came immediately to our minds as one of the most celebrated and original voices in contemporary theatre. Both as a teacher and dramatist, Vogel has influenced a generation of emerging playwrights. So it is fitting that we inaugurate our season with the play that catapulted her to national recognition. *The Baltimore Waltz* established Paula Vogel as an important American playwright.

I first saw *The Baltimore Waltz* at Center Stage in 1992, and the play has remained in my memory for its dramatic inventiveness as well as its poignant meditation on love and loss. The imagined European adventure that Carl and Anna take in search of a cure for her ATD (Acquired Toilet Disease) employs a dizzying array of theatrical styles and Hollywood tropes. It is both satire and farce, a biting critique of the medical establishment, and an anarchic, sexual romp. At its heart, however, is a sister’s attempt to come to terms with a beloved brother’s death. Emily Dickinson’s admonition to “Tell All the Truth but tell it Slant” seems to have informed Vogel’s method. For her, comedy is not a diversion from the excruciating death vigil but a way through the pain. That moment of letting go, the whispered goodbye, the permission we grant our loved ones to die brings us face to face with the existential absurdity of existence – what the ancients called the tragedy of life. Paula Vogel understands that moment. As theatre artists, our challenge is to capture the play’s contrapuntal character – to both recreate the zany ride and to honor the playwright’s delicate love letter to her brother.

- Suzanne Beal, Director

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About the Playwright

BIOGRAPHY

Paula Vogel is an American playwright and professor. During her two decades leading the graduate playwriting program and new play festival at Brown University, Vogel helped develop a nationally recognized center for educational theatre, culminating in the creation of the Brown/Trinity Repertory Company Consortium. Vogel’s Baltimore Waltz won an Obie award for Best Play and her play How I Learned to Drive received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Works include: Swan Song of Sir Henry (1974); Meg (1977); Apple-Brown Betty (1979); Desdemona, A Play about a Handkerchief (1979); Bertha in Blue (1981); The Oldest Profession (1981); And Baby Makes Seven (1984); The Baltimore Waltz (1992); Hot 'N Throbbing (1994); The Mineola Twins (1996); How I Learned to Drive (1997); The Long Christmas Ride Home (2004); Civil War Christmas (2008); Don Juan Comes Home from the Wars (2014).

Paula Vogel grew up in Silver Spring Maryland. She would come to Baltimore to escape suburbia and enjoy John Waters’ films and good restaurants while visiting her brother Carl, a student at Johns Hopkins. She and her brother share a very close sibling bond and she explores that bond and his loss in several of her plays.


PAULA VOGEL’S NOTES

The following excerpt is from her introduction to The Baltimore Waltz:

In 1986, my brother Carl invited me to join him in a joint excursion to Europe. Due to pressures of time and money, I declined, never dreaming that he was HIV positive. This is the letter he wrote me after his first bout with pneumonia at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. He died on January 9, 1988.

As executor of his estate, I give permission to all future productions to reprint Carl’s letter in the accompanying program. I would appreciate letting him speak to us in his own words.

The Baltimore Waltz – a journey with Carl to a Europe that exists only in the imagination – was written during the summer of 1989 at the MacDowell Colony, New Hampshire.

- Paula Vogel
March 1987

Dear Paula:
I thought I would jot down some of my thoughts about the (shall we say) production values of my ceremony. Oh God – I can hear you groaning – everybody wants to direct. Well, I want a good show, even though my role has been reduced involuntarily from player to prop.

First, concerning the choice between a religious ceremony and a memorial service. I know the family considers my Anglican observances as irrelevant as Shinto. However, I wish prayers in some recognizably traditional form to be said, prayers that give thanks to the Creator for the gift of life and the hope of reunion. For reasons which you appreciate, I prefer a woman cleric, if possible, to lead the prayers. Here are two names: Phebe Coe, Epiphany Church; the Rev. Doris Mote, Holy Evangelists. Be sure to make a generous contribution from the estate for the cleric.

As for the piece of me I leave behind, here are your options:
1) Open casket, full drag.
2) Open casket, bum up (you’ll know where to place the calla lilies, won’t you?).
3) Closed casket, interment with the grandparents.
4) Cremation and burial of my ashes.
5) Cremation and dispersion of my ashes in some sylvan spot.

I would really like good music. My tastes in these matters run to the highbrow: Fauré’s “Pie Jesu” from his Requiem, Gluck’s “Dance of the Blessed Spirits” from Orfeo, “La Vergine degli Angeli” from Verdi’s Forza. But my favorite song is “I Dream of Jeannie,” and I wouldn’t mind a spiritual like “Steal Away.” Also perhaps “Nearer My God to Thee.” Didn’t Jeannette MacDonald sing that divinely in San Francisco?

Finally, would you read or have read A.E. Housman’s “Loveliest of Trees”?

Well, my dear, that’s that. Should I be lain with Grandma and Papa Ben, do stop by for a visit from year to year. And feel free to chat. You’ll find me a good listener.

Love, Brother

INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT PAULA VOGEL
By Mary-Louise Parker/Bomb Magazine Fall 1997

Mary Louise Parker: How do things first appear to you? Baltimore Waltz has the most brilliant construction.

Paula Vogel: You know where it comes from? I stole. It’s an Ambrose Bearce short story that got turned into this great movie about a Civil War soldier who’s about to be hung. Everything great is stolen.

Did the structure come to you first or did you start by hearing the words?

I started writing it in my head while I was waiting in the hospital halls for my brother. The play was a way of coping with, “How much time do I have, and when does he die?”

I love that letter from him in the introduction.

That letter is the essence of my brother. But to go back to being as emotionally naked and visible as we possibly can, whether it’s this play or in Baltimore Waltz, I believe that the things we don’t express will kill us. Kill us as a country, kill us as people.

Do you hear yourself speaking the words?

I hear voices.
You see specific people?
Yeah, sometimes.

Do you remember where you were when you wrote certain things?

I was writing *Baltimore Waltz* in my head as I was waiting for my brother to die. I was spending all that time in these hospital rooms, and when there’s such sickness and death, you look for the healthy body near you and you project fantasies onto it. So, I was sleeping with every doctor and nurse in the room. I was unzipping his trousers, I was lifting her blouse, and the thing is I knew my brother was doing it at the same time, my living brother and my father, that we were actually having fantasies about the same people. And the one thing that may be specific to me is that I fantasize about people of both sexes.

I remember you’ve said that before. You’re attracted to both, right?

Yes, I’m attracted to both. So there’s a kind of amorphous sexuality when I’m writing something. Maybe it was being a bored school child and being a little too sexually precocious through junior high and high school, but I thought of every single teacher that I ever had in bed. I thought of every classmate in bed. What do they look like with their knickers down? And I think it probably has enabled me to write male characters in a different way. Like in *Baltimore Waltz*, I wanted to make a male body so beautiful and so desirable that when you see a man on stage half-naked, who wouldn’t want to touch that? Because if I could make a male body beautiful, not only heterosexual women, but homosexual men would also have to say, “The male body is beautiful,” and then they’re halfway to understanding homosexuality. So, with women as writers, and songwriters and lyricists, we’re starting to make male bodies desirable. And that’s making a huge shift in gender. It’s no longer just women who are beautiful to look at. So half the audience every night in some way or other has to experience the other sexuality, if they’re straight. Women do this all the time. I don’t think women are homophobic the way men are, because we are always looking at each other’s bodies. It’s on T.V., film, it’s on the street, in fashion shows, we’re trained to look at and eroticize each other’s body. But as writers, we can eroticize male bodies. And it’s important for me, as an out lesbian to do this. To make men see how we see them, that’s going to shift what we think of as male and female.

And in *How I Learned to Drive*, there’s something about Uncle Peck, as damaged as he is, that is tender and erotic. This is something I have wondered about, the fishing monologue, is that meant to be a direct metaphor for incest? Because it’s learned behavior, incest, it’s something that is passed down.

Well, there are two functions. One is it’s the metaphor for incest and child molestation. But it’s also political. It may not come through, but it was important to me that we think of pedophiles – as they are statistically – as married men who are pillars of society, not gay men preying on young boys. This myth is the whole reason why homosexuals aren’t supposed to teach in schools or be priests, or be this, or that…it drives me insane. In every play, there are a couple of places where I send a message to my late brother Carl. Just a little something in the atmosphere of every play to try and change the homophobia in our world. And I wanted to say about pedophilia: It’s not gay men who are out there molesting kids.

And you don’t come out and say it. You show it. What’s wonderful about your writing is that you don’t tell and you don’t answer; you offer and you ask. But that’s what dramatists do.

Well, good ones.

And there are lots of really great ones. Right now, in this country it’s an amazing time. There’s John Guare, who’s one of my heroes, and Suzan-Lori Parks, Connie Congdon, Elizabeth Egloff. There’s Caryl Churchill and Timberlake Wertenbaker, Mac Wellman, Maria Irene Fornes, Craig Lucas, and Tony Kushner. On and on and on – We’ve got manuscripts passing from hand to hand like the monks used to pass the Bible. I am constantly reading a stack of plays that aren’t published and aren’t produced – that’s where the frustration is. Playwrights basically have one of two choices, either you teach or you write screenplays and T.V. You’ve got to make a choice. You’ve
got to pay the rent.

Why is it, do you think, your students at Brown love you? Before I worked with you, so many people said, “Oh, I love Paula Vogel, she’s my teacher.”

For a long time my playwriting career was going nowhere, and I felt very bitter and very angry. I thought I was losing my mind. So I said, “Okay Vogel, this is a choice that you’re writing plays, nobody’s making you do it. Get out of New York and go and teach, and find out if you believe in it anymore.” And when I went into the classroom, there were these amazing, talented young artists, all of whom had the future before them. I believed in all of them, and they gave me back an idealism. It was a huge gift.

For years, that was my emotional vent. Because I wasn’t being produced, I wasn’t being listened to. But my students listened, and I listened to them. It was like being in a rehearsal room. I took them very seriously, because I wanted to be taken seriously when I was eighteen. I basically said, there’s one thing that a teacher does: you come in as my student, you leave as my peer. I want you in my world. I want to audition you. I want you to direct my work. If you’re taking this route with me, it’s my duty as a teacher to take the student and turn them into a colleague.

This painter I love, Jules Olitski has written a couple of essays about inspiration, about what it feels like. He says, “Inspiration, like love, cannot be induced.” And he talks about this experience of losing yourself, losing your ego.

One of the most important things we have to do for younger artists is point it out to them – this is really all I did. An eighteen-year-old steps on stage and they light up. There’s a look on their face, they’re so happy. When they get off stage I say, “There was a light in your face, there was a light in your eyes.” And then I talk to them about the pleasure principle. “You were happy then, go in the direction of your happiness.” That’s all you have to do as a teacher.

Okay. If you could have a dinner party and invite five people, living or dead, who would you invite?

I would invite Carl, he’d make it a great dinner party. Oh, this is probably cliché, Eleanor Roosevelt. And Toni Morrison. Beloved was such an inspiration. All right, who else? Aphra Behn.

I don’t know who that is.

She’s the first professional playwright in England during the Restoration. She wrote plays, but they were all condemned by the critics. Finally she wrote this angry manifesto saying, “I had writ plays as good as any man, but the woman damns the poet.” So she decided to write something that wasn’t for the public eye. And it became what we now know as the novel.

Your people are good, you can invite more people if you want.

Oh God, I have a huge list. I have a lot of heroes.

The classic, dramatic hero is something that you don’t do. You let your characters be ridiculous, and needy, and even mean. The woman in Hot and Throbbing, she’s just fractured.

Oh man, I love her. I could tell you, it is just eating me up day and night that I can’t get that play into New York.

All right, I want to ask you one more question. If you could, as in the words of e. e. cummings, “Stand with your lover on the ending earth…,” what would you like to see laid out before you?

What a great question. I would like to see my life with her in Provincetown. I would like to see our old age together. I would like to see the children in our families as adults. I would like to see my friends in a community together. I would like to see that future as not a possibility, but having happened.

Mary-Louise Parker is an actress who lives in New York City. She played L’il Bit in Paula Vogel’s How I Learned to Drive. She has also appeared on stage in Craig Lucas’s Prelude to a Kiss and John Patrick Shanley’s Four Dogs and a Bone, and in Herb Ross’s film, Boys on the Side, Laurence Kasden’s Grand Canyon, and upcoming in Roland Joffe’s Goodbye Lover.
The Play

Themes and Issues

STRUCTURE

Circular Structure: Paula Vogel has written that one of her inspirations for the play's structure is Ambrose Bierce's short story, *The Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* which has a circular or even noose-like structure, occurring at the moment of a soldier's execution by hanging. The end of the story returns to the moment of the noose dropping and we realize that the intervening events have been a moment of imagined escape.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEvпалbk2TA The Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge on The Twilight Zone.

Expressionism and Epic Theater: Another inspiration for Vogel was the work of Brecht and the influence of German Expressionism (which also affected film noir below). This style of theater is marked by short episodic scenes which are often not causally linked, an awareness of the play as a theatrical work rather than a reflection of photographic reality and the emblematic rather than fully rounded characters. The aim of this theater is to provoke critical thought and social change rather than emotional identification and cathartic release.

Film Noir (black film) was a term coined by French film critic Nino Frank in 1946 to describe Classic *film noir* developed during and after World War II, taking advantage of the post-war ambience of anxiety, pessimism, and suspicion. It was a style of black and white American films that first evolved in the 1940s, became prominent in the post-war era, and lasted in a classic “Golden Age” period until about 1960. Heroes (or anti-heroes), corrupt characters and villains included down-and-out, conflicted hard-boiled detectives or private eyes, cops, gangsters, government agents, a lone wolf, socio-paths or killers, crooks, war veterans, politicians, petty criminals, murderers, or just plain Joes. These protagonists were often morally-ambiguous low-lifes from the dark and gloomy underworld of violent crime and corruption. Distinctively, they were cynical, tarnished, obsessive (sexual or otherwise), brooding, menacing, sinister, sardonic, disillusioned, frightened and insecure loners (usually men), struggling to survive – and in the end, ultimately losing.

Storylines were often elliptical, non-linear and twisting. Narratives were frequently complex, maze-like and convoluted, and typically told with foreboding background music, flashbacks (or a series of flashbacks), witty, razor-sharp and acerbic dialogue, and/or reflective and confessional, first-person voice-over narration. Amnesia suffered by the protagonist was a common plot device, as was the downfall of an innocent Everyman who fell victim to temptation or was framed. Revelations regarding the hero were made to explain/justify the hero’s own cynical perspective on life. These films were always black and white using shadows and skewed camera angles. Story locations were often in murky and dark streets, dimly-lit and low-rent apartments and hotel rooms of big cities, or abandoned warehouses. [Often-times, war-time scarcities were the reason for the reduced budgets and shadowy, stark sets of B-pictures and film noirs.]

(filmcite.org)

*The Third Man* is certainly a film noir and thus the play takes on many shadings of these films.
THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

The history of HIV/AIDS in the United States began in about 1969, when HIV likely entered the United States through a single infected immigrant. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, doctors in Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco began seeing young men with Kaposi's Sarcoma, a cancer. As the knowledge that men who had sex with men were dying of an otherwise rare cancer began to spread throughout the medical communities, the syndrome began to be called by the colloquialism “gay cancer.” As medical scientists discovered that the syndrome included other manifestations, such as pneumocystis pneumonia, a rare form of fungal pneumonia, its name was changed to “GRID,” or Gay Related Immune Deficiency. This had an effect of boosting homophobia and adding stigma to homosexuality in the general public. For a while the American government completely ignored the emerging AIDS epidemic. In a press briefing at the White House in 1982, a journalist asked a spokesperson for President Reagan “…does the President have any reaction to the announcement — the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, that AIDS is now an epidemic and have over 600 cases?” The spokesperson responded – “What’s AIDS?”

Because AIDS attacks the immune system patients with AIDS are susceptible to a variety of unusual infections and conditions that those with healthy immune systems fight off without realizing they’ve been exposed. People don’t die from AIDS, but from AIDS-related illnesses.

Because the illness was associated with homosexual men at the beginning, many of those infected were ostracized or perceived as suffering from or being punished for their lifestyle. Vogel chooses to invert that perception by having a most innocuous of characters, a kindergarten teacher, be the patient. In this funhouse mirror version she has ATD Acquired Toilet Disease, not AIDS and she chooses promiscuity after being diagnosed. The Nazis forced homosexual men to wear pink triangles as a stigma. Carl wears a pink triangle in the play to represent the stigmatization of being HIV positive.

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there were approximately 35 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS in 2013. Of these, 3.2 million were children (<15 years old).
- A UNAIDS report shows that 19 million of the 35 million people living with HIV today do not know that they have the virus.
- The vast majority of people living with HIV are in low- and middle-income countries. According to WHO, sub-Saharan Africa is the most affected region, with 24.7 million people living with HIV in 2013. Seventy-one percent of all people who are living with HIV in the world live in this region.
- HIV is the world’s leading infectious killer. According to WHO, an estimated 39 million people have died since the first cases were reported in 1981 and 1.5 million people died of AIDS-related causes in 2013.
Medical terms associated with AIDS from scene one:

**Exudative and proliferative inflammation of endocardium:** oozing of tissues and/or blood and growth of cells (perhaps cancerous) on lining of heart.

**Necrotic:** dying tissue.

**Fibroblastic:** spindle-shaped cells associated with connective tissue.

**Metastases:** Tumor growths or deposits that have spread via lymph or blood to an area of the body remote from the primary tumor.

**Löffler's syndrome or Loeffler's syndrome** is a disease in which white blood cells (eosinophilia) accumulate in the lung (pulmonary) in response to a parasitic infection.

**Tachycardia:** rapid heart rate.

**Hepatomegaly:** enlarged liver.

**Splenomegaly:** enlarged spleen.

**Pleural Cavity:** an area between the layers of tissue that line the lungs and the chest cavity.

**Weingarten's syndrome** is a term used to describe a group of disorders in which calcium deposits form in the skin of the male genitals.
STAGES OF GRIEF (scene 14)

In the 1960s, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss psychiatrist studied terminally ill patients and found that they went through a grieving process that encompassed six stages. These stages are also known as the grief cycle. Anna experiences these stages in The Baltimore Waltz.

**Denial** — As the reality of loss is hard to face, one of the first reactions to follow the loss is Denial. The person is trying to shut out the reality or magnitude of his/her situation, and begins to develop a false, preferable reality.

**Anger** — Once in the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue. Because of anger, the person is difficult to care for due to misplaced feelings of rage and envy. Certain psychological responses of a person undergoing this phase would be: “Why me? It’s not fair!”; “How can this happen to me?”; “Who is to blame?”

**Bargaining** — The third stage involves the hope that the individual can somehow undo or avoid a cause of grief. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made with a higher power in exchange for a reformed lifestyle. Other times, they will use anything valuable as a bargaining chip against another human agency to extend or prolong the life they live.

**Depression** — During the fourth stage, the grieving person begins to understand the certainty of death. The idea of living becomes pointless, things begin to lose meaning to the griever. Depression could be referred to as the dress rehearsal for the ‘aftermath’. It is a kind of acceptance with emotional attachment.

**Acceptance** — In this stage, individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality or inevitable future. This typically comes with a calm, retrospective view for the individual, and a stable mindset. In addition to the 5 stages that Kubler-Ross addresses in On Death and Dying, Vogel adds two additional stages to the mix: Hope and Lust.

HEALTH CARE

The basic plot of the play follows Anna and Carl’s quest to find a miracle cure for her ATD in The European black market. This search leads them to Dr. Todesrocheln and his urine elixir. At the time of Paula Vogel’s brother Carl’s death, he was being treated with AZT, at the time considered an experimental drug. AZT went on to become one of an early-generation combination of antiretroviral drugs (the “cocktail”) that turned HIV infection into a manageable chronic disease in the U.S. In the 1980s, however, AZT was still being tested by the FDA, and many, frustrated by the slow pace, went abroad to find other medications not approved by the FDA (see the film “Dallas Buyers Club”).

The Center for Disease Control states “Historically, people living with HIV and AIDS have had a difficult time obtaining private health insurance and have been particularly vulnerable to insurance industry abuses. Consistent with the goals of the President’s National HIV/AIDS Strategy, the Affordable Care Act makes considerable strides in addressing these concerns and advancing equality for people living with HIV and AIDS. Currently, fewer than one in five (17%) people living with HIV has private insurance and nearly 30% do not have any coverage. Medicaid, the Federal-state program that provides health care benefits to people with low incomes and those living with disabilities, is a major source of coverage for people living with HIV/AIDS, as is Medicare, the Federal program for seniors and people with disabilities. The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program is another key source of funding for health and social services for this population. The Affordable Care Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation in the fight against HIV/AIDS in our history. As of September 23, 2010, insurers are no longer able to deny coverage to children living with HIV or AIDS.”

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, as of 2012, The United States spends an estimated $2 trillion annually on healthcare expenses, more than any other industrialized country. According to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United States spends two-and-a-half times more than the OECD average, and yet ranks with Turkey and Mexico as the only OECD countries without universal health coverage.
The Play

References

The play contains many film references, often black and white films with heightened emotions, such as the tragic love story of Heathcliff and Cathy in Wuthering Heights.


Merle Oberon’s death scene as Cathy (with Laurence Olivier) (scene 3)

The Third Man

The play uses several conventions including the third man as the actor playing multiple characters, black market medications, character names, and even entire scenes from this film noir.

The 1949 film is considered one of the greatest films of all time, celebrated for its atmospheric cinematography, performances by Orson Welles, Joseph Cotton and Alida Valli, and musical score by zither player Anton Karas. In the film, the unemployed pulp fiction writer Holly Martins arrives in post-WWII Vienna to meet with his old friend from school, Harry Lime, who has offered him a job. Upon arrival, he learns that Harry has just died, having been hit by a car in front of his building. Martins attends Lime’s funeral and meets Anna, who he learns was Harry’s lover. Having been told conflicting stories
about the circumstances surrounding Lime’s death, Martins decides to investigate further and discovers that Harry Lime was the leader of a gang that robbed penicillin from the military hospital to dilute and resell it on the black market and he had faked his death to go underground. Martins meets up with a very much alive Lime at an old amusement park and, in one of the films most iconic scenes, they ride the Ferris Wheel, the Wiener Riesenrad. Lime threatens Martins, and delivers a monologue on the insignificance of his victims. He offers a job to Martins and leaves. Exasperated, Martins decides to leave but changes his mind after he sees the children who are victims of Lime’s diluted penicillin, now dying of meningitis.

Lime arrives at his rendezvous with Martins, but Anna warns Lime. He tries again to escape through the sewers and drags himself up a ladder to a street grating exit but cannot lift it. Martins picks up Paine’s revolver, follows Lime, reaches him, but hesitates. Lime looks at him and nods. A shot is heard. Later, Martins attends Lime’s second funeral.

*Here is the famous ferris wheel scene from The Third Man: https://vimeo.com/76843899*
Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (scene 29)

More commonly known as Dr. Strangelove, is a 1964 political satire film that satirizes the Cold War fears of a nuclear conflict between the USSR and the US. The film was directed, produced, and co-written by Stanley Kubrick and stars Peter Sellers and George C. Scott. Peter Sellers plays four characters, most notably Dr. Strangelove, a crazed wheelchair-bound ex-Nazi scientist with a gloved hand that has a mind of its own. He is the inspiration for the play’s Dr. Todesrolchen.

*Dr. Strangelove glove scene. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzddAYDZkk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzddAYDZkk)*

THE GRAND TOUR

Carl and Anna take an imaginary and mythic tour of France, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany in search of a miracle cure for Anna’s ATD but their stops are based more on glossy travel poster images and iconic movie and folklore settings than actual locations.
At the Louvre, Paris: *The Bridge at Narni* Jean –Baptiste Corot 1825 (scene 12)

**In the Netherlands: The Little Dutch Boy (scene 16): the original version**

Far away, in the north-west corner of Europe, lie the Netherlands, the lands which are now to play a large part in the world’s history. The Low Countries they were called by the men of old time; and with good reason too, for many parts were actually below the level of the sea. Spongy and marshy, bleak and cold, was this corner of the European continent in the olden days.

Winds and waves had wrought sad havoc with the coast. The rough North Sea was ever encroaching on the low-lying land, breaking over the shores with its never-ceasing roar and tumble. Not only had the people of this country to contend with wind and wave, but from the other side many great rivers rolled through the land, to empty their waters into the North Sea, overflowing their low banks and flooding the surrounding neighborhood.
The largest of these was the Rhine. Rising amid the snowy Alps, leaping joyously over the famous falls of Schaffhausen, flowing in majesty right through Germany, the Rhine at last reached the Netherlands. The mouth of this famous river gave some trouble to the Hollanders. They made colossal pumps and locks, by which they lifted the water and lowered it into the sea. There was no rest for a lazy river in these parts. They erected great mounds or dykes to keep out the North Sea; they dug canals to direct course of their sluggish rivers and to keep them within bounds.

A little Dutch boy was returning from school in the late afternoon, with his bag of books hanging over his shoulder, when he thought he heard the sound of running water. He stood still and listened. Like all other little boys in the Netherlands, he knew that the least crack in a dyke would soon let in the water, that it would cover the land and bring ruin to the people. He ran to the mound and looked about. There he saw a small hole, through which the water had already begun to trickle. He was some way from his home yet. Suppose he were to run on fast and tell some one to come. It might already be too late – the water might even then be rushing over the land. He stooped down on the cold damp ground and put his fat little hand into the hole where the water was running out. It was just big enough to stop up the hole and prevent the water from escaping any more.

His mind was made up; he must stop there till some one came to relieve him. He grew cold and hungry, but no one passed that lonely way. The sun set, the night grew dark, and the cold winds began to blow. Still the little boy kept his hand in the hole. Hour after hour passed away, and he grew more and more cold and frightened as the night advanced. At last he saw little streaks of light across the sky; the dawn was coming. By-and-by the sun rose, and the boy knew his long lonely watch must soon be over. He was right. Some workmen going early to work found him crouched on the ground with his little cold hand still thrust into the hole. But the large tears were on his cheeks, and his piteous cries showed how hard he had found it to keep faithful all through the long dark night. The boy was at once set free and the hole was mended. And so it depends on each man to watch the dykes, though there are now bands of watchers appointed by the State for this purpose.

So these people have, as the poet says, “scooped out an empire” for themselves, and kept it by their never-ceasing vigilance and industry.
The Student Prince is an operetta in four acts with music by Sigmund Romberg and book and lyrics by Dorothy Donnelly. It is based on Wilhelm Meyer-Förster’s play Old Heidelberg. It follows the exploits of the young prince Franze as a student at Heidelberg where he falls in love with a local girl. Ultimately he gives up his friends and his true love to become king and marry his promised bride.

It opened on December 2, 1924, at Jolson’s 59th Street Theatre on Broadway. Its “Drinking Song”, with its rousing chorus of “Drink! Drink! Drink!” was especially popular with theatergoers in 1924, as the United States was in the midst of Prohibition. The operetta contains the challenging tenor aria “The Serenade” (“Overhead the moon is beaming”).
Ernst Lubitsch made a silent film also based on Förster’s work, titled *The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg* starring Ramón Novarro and Norma Shearer. Mario Lanza’s performance on the soundtrack of the 1954 MGM film *The Student Prince* renewed the popularity of many of the songs.

King Ludwig’s castle

### SYMBOLISM IN THE BUNNY...

Carl carries a stuffed rabbit with him and the bunny often seems to serve as a signal of some sort to the Third Man. Vogel uses this symbol to represent a number of themes in the play.

ANNA. What is a grown man like you doing with a stuffed rabbit?
CARL. I can’t sleep without bunny.
ANNA. I didn’t know you slept with … stuffed animals.
CARL. There’s a lot you don’t know about me.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the play’s structure and what kind of reaction – intellectual or emotional – does it provoke in you?
2. What characteristics does the play share with film noir? In what ways was the United States in 1980 similar to post World War II, Cold War America? What do these shared characteristics suggest about the play’s view of the culture’s initial response to AIDS or the characters’ responses to “Anna’s” illness?
3. How might you use your responses to the first two questions in designing the set, sound and lights for the play?
4. What are the arguments for and against government-subsidized universal health care?
5. What does the rabbit mean to you? Sexuality? Innocence? Secrets? Black market drugs?
Design

SET DESIGN, By Collin Ranney
The Baltimore Waltz Cast

Ben Cunis (CARL)++
Michelle Eugene (ANNA)++
Sasha Olinick (THIRD MAN)++

Denotes Member of Actors’ Equity Association
++ Equity Membership Candidate
Theater Etiquette

Attending the theater will be a positive experience for everyone if you observe a few simple courtesies:

- Turn off and put away all electronic devices prior to entering the theater.
- Taking photographs and video recording in the theater is prohibited.
- Do not place your feet on the seat in front of you.
- The actors onstage can see and hear the audience just as well as the audience can see and hear them. Please refrain from talking or moving around during the performance as it can be distracting to the actors, as well as to other audience members.
- Feel free to respond to the action of the play through appropriate laughter and applause. The actors enjoy this type of communication from the audience!
- Have fun! Attending theater should be an enjoyable experience.