

**Hadivadlo in Chattanooga:  
A Critical Assessment of the Process of Producing *School for Fools***

by

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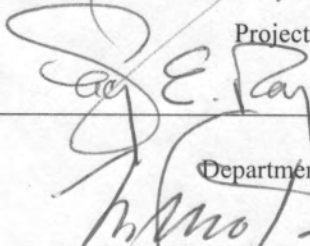
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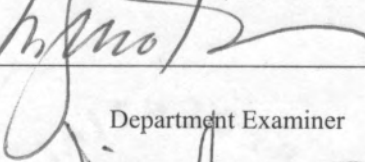
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The goal of this project was to create an experimental theatre production called *School for Fools* in the Studio Theatre of the UTC Fine Arts Center in February of 2003. Spanning nearly an entire year, the process for me was one of compiling a dramaturg's notebook of research and materials related to the play, adapting and revising the text from the original, written by Belgian playwright Michel de Ghelderode in 1937, creating costume and set designs, appropriating a cast, raising funds for the production, and then directing the play.

Particularly important to this production was the idea of style. In essence, I was trying to create a production-based, rather than text-based, performance, using the Hadivadlo company of Brno, Czech Republic, as a primary stylistic reference, but also exploring the alternative perspectives and techniques of directors such as Charles Marowitz and Jerzy Grotowski.

Because the UTC Theatre Department was simultaneously producing another play in the Ward Theatre, my production incorporated a number of different artists from outside the department who served in several capacities: volunteers from the Association for Visual Artists provided assistance on both a conceptual level and then in the actual construction of costumes and set; the Shaking Ray Levis provided resource materials that I used in rehearsals to help actors with physicalization and stylized movement; and Jeff Atkins and Liz Duncan (both UTC alumni) played the lead roles.

We had a total of five shows, nearly all of which sold out. After the run of the show, I wrote an assessment of the process, critiquing the strengths and weaknesses of the production.

**Hadivadlo in Chattanooga**  
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“Edgar [Allan] Poe in one of his short stories speaks of a book which cannot be read: this is true. And I know that there are plays which cannot be performed. This was the case of *School of Buffoons*... I certainly think that such a play could never be done, and for good reason. The theatre is supposed to please and this play displeases; the theatre caresses and this play flagellates....”

from a letter by Michel de Ghelderode to  
actor Marcel Lupovici, Brussels, December 21, 1952

This project attempted to realize on stage the bizarre dreams of an obscure Belgian playwright named Michel de Ghelderode—or perhaps, to use his work to facilitate my own vision of what the theatre should be. Such wrangling of intentions and the compromises that follow are the basic task accepted by any contemporary director; only in this case, given the inadequacies of the playwright and the ambitions of the director, it was necessary to combine the two roles and expand them even further to incorporate production and design. By examining my roles as author, designer, director, and quasi-producer, it is possible to qualify the strengths and weaknesses of the actual theatre event.

Before looking at individual components of the process, it would be helpful to say a few words about style. From the beginning, I knew that style would be one of the most crucial aspects of the production—it was perhaps the single thing about which I felt the strongest and knew the least. But, as actress Fiona Shaw says, and as I frequently told my cast, “I’m more interested in doing things that I can’t do than things that I can.” (*NYTimes*, 1) In many ways, this project was a means of determining what I was personally capable of accomplishing in the theatre, an experiment with the goal of finding my own sense of style, my own directorial voice. Since the most influential experience

I've had in theatre up to this point was as a witness to the great experimental theatre in the Czech Republic and Eastern Europe three years ago, I knew that my voice would understandably contain a certain Czech accent—and the more I could implement an Eastern European dramaturgy, the more I would find to make the play (which is quite uniquely European) work.

One way to begin examining the process of adapting the text is to attempt to give it some kind of historical context, that is, in terms of the style of production that I had in mind. Stanislavski, of course, would argue that the text should be the focus of everything: that the “core” of the play lies within the text, and that rehearsals should focus on getting the actors to find this core through the text. I knew from the beginning that this would not be the case with this play, that this would be a style of theatre originating not from Stanislavski and Chekhov, but from their contemporary at the Moscow Art Theatre, Vsevolod Meyerhold. For the sake of this argument we can say that the dichotomy within MAT at the turn of the century was one of two distinct styles of creating theatre, one focusing on the text, the other on production. The former was quickly packaged off to the West, where it was reborn as American Realism, which, again very broadly speaking, became the dominant aesthetic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The latter lingered around Europe, where it manifested in a variety of forms such as Dadaism, Surrealism, Expressionism, etc. But the production-based approach to theatre took particular hold in Paris in the 1920s and 30s, where Antonin Artaud, trying to expound on the example set three decades earlier by Alfred Jarry, developed his ideas for the Theatre of Cruelty. “There is an idea of total spectacle that must

be revived,” Artaud says in his *First Manifesto for the Theatre of Cruelty*. “The problem is to make space speak.” (Sontag, 250) In more specific terms, his vision was for a “total” theatre, an event that affected all the senses, rendering the audience to a point of vulnerability so that they could then collectively experience something profoundly spiritual. Rather ambitious, but considering the popular view of art at the time, Artaud felt that he had no other choice, certainly as he would if he were alive today: “This idea of a detached art, of poetry as something charming that exists only to beguile our leisure time, is a decadent idea, and it demonstrates loudly our capacity for castration.” (Sontag, 255) It wasn’t until decades after his death that the abstract concepts of his manifestos were realized, most prominently by directors like Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, and Charles Marowitz, all of whose work has dealt largely with some degree of adapted text. For the last twenty years or so in New York, the Wooster Group has been exploring the “total” theatre in their own style, which director Peter Sellars describes as, “a really sophisticated way to create this *Gesamkunstwerk* [total art work] where the text is as important as the video image is as important as the sound, and nothing has dominance although the words are very powerful.”

([thewoostergroup.org](http://thewoostergroup.org))

In this vein, my model for doing theatre is that of the Hadivadlo theatre in Brno, Czech Republic—both in the way they produce plays and their style of productions. A core of three actors has been with the company since its beginnings twenty-five years ago out in the provinces of Moravia. They now have a resident company of about a dozen actors, many of them rather young,

who perform all their plays, though they are constantly working with other people from different groups. If actors from a nearby theatre want to collaborate with members of Hadivadlo, which they frequently do, then they produce something that plays on a dark-night somewhere in town. The company performs anywhere from nine to fifteen plays in rep, with at least two or three different plays per week. They also travel to Prague, Olomouc, or other towns every month for various performances and frequently participate in various theatre festivals. Perhaps most importantly to their artistic success is that they constantly work with different directors, mostly from the Czech Republic, but occasionally from Russia or somewhere else; they also change artistic directors more frequently than most companies. And all of this provides for a uniquely experimental and constantly changing approach to creating theatre; their productions are highly stylized, frequently working with very subjective adaptations (e.g. *Job*, *Oedipus*, *Three Sisters*) or original works, and always extremely challenging, both to the performers and to the audience.

This was my premise for the style of *School for Fools*, and so I set about re-writing the script. I first began talking with Robert Duffy about approaching the script around a year ago, the end of the Spring semester 2002. I had been researching the play in his Conceptual Foundations of Modern Theatre course, with the goal of compiling a dramaturg's notebook. The materials included scores of interviews with Ghelderode, letters to actors and directors, photos and reviews of previous productions (though there weren't many at all), including detailed information about a production of the play that I had seen in the Czech

Republic by the Divadlo Husa na Provazku (Goose on a String Theatre) of Brno. Their production was very straightforward, sticking closely to the text (though they did edit a substantial amount, and I had a copy of their cuts to work with on this project) and staging it mostly in accordance with Ghelderode's own stage directions, which I considered to be the biggest drawback to their production. Here I think is the root of an adaptor's evil in dealing with Ghelderode. Instead of expressing his dreams through dramatic action and stage metaphor, as a better playwright might have done, Ghelderode tried to communicate by painting a picture with words—usually quite a detailed and fascinating picture, but nonetheless a picture and not action. Like a dyslexic secretary, Ghelderode inverted the messages of his mind into useless heaps on the page. He wrote stage descriptions, not directions; the dreams were lost in the process of writing, so that what should have been metaphor resulted only in opaque verbage. My task as adaptor was compounded, but in a way that directed the play very clearly toward a production-based style. The process of adaptation was one not only of making sense of the story, but of creating stage metaphors, or at least allowing spaces in the text for various music/dance actions to be created in rehearsals. Robert was quite uncertain as to how those segments would work out, but so was I, so we focused on the narrative.

Cleaning up Ghelderode's story was mostly a matter of getting to the point: identifying the sequence of events and then *trying to figure out why they happened that way*. This was a significant problem; at times it seemed as though all I had was a tangled ball of storylines with nothing in the middle. So I cut

characters (e.g. the Prince; the number and names of the actual class of fools) and streamlined the plot (see Ghelderode's original, particularly the play within the play, in Appendix I). The story became focused on fools' desire to get the Secret, and Folia's desire to be rid of it all. The hodge-podge of mythological references was eliminated; the scatological allusions were cut out of the text and, through rehearsals, recreated and made more obscene into actual events on the stage; we physicalized Folia's guilt and inner torment by having his daughter's ghost haunt him throughout the play, and so on. Again, as Artaud says about the language of the stage: "It is not a question of eliminating spoken language but of giving words something of the importance they have in dreams." (Sontag, 246) The text was in a workable position after at least three major revisions, the final revision coming from the realization that Ghelderode's words were simply getting in the way—in order for the play to work, I would have to rewrite almost the entire thing. By the first week of January, 2003, I had a very good foundation of a text that actors could use in rehearsals and that still had a few structured "gaps" to allow for improvisation and experiments in design.

More so than with the text, the design for *School for Fools* necessitated a sense of plasticity. "If it takes approximately four weeks for an actor to figure out a character's nature and psychology, how can a designer decide what clothes he should be wearing months in advance?" (Marowitz, 159) Nonetheless, I attempted to outline designs for the costumes, set, and sound several months before rehearsals began. A preliminary groundplan was essential, both for the sake of the company's scene shop and also to configure an appropriate actor/audience

relationship, again following Artaud's idea of "a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will itself become the theatre of the action." (Sontag, 248) My initial idea was to create the atmosphere of an underground vault, a cabalistic chapel, having the audience sit in church pews, with great gothic arches suspended overhead (see App. III). In the end I was able to keep most of this: we had a few arches on the ground to indicate entranceways, and the overhead effect was created through lighting, though, had I had more time and more technical skills as a designer (beyond my hastily-rendered sketches which then had to be performed extempore in order to communicate their general concept) I would have liked to have created more of a ceiling for the space. Regardless, I was thankful to be working in the studio theatre for its intimacy and acoustics, unlike the Ward, which I find to be, for the record, a rather bad place to do theatre.

Essentially, the set needed to be a playground: trapdoors, movable platforms and furniture, multiple levels and entrances/exits, curtains—all the things that mostly young and inexperienced actors could easily work with and not feel as if they were placed on any kind of formal stage, though initially it became just that. With various feedback from the actors and Robert, it was brought to my attention that the groundplan was far too shallow and the levels were too high; so I opened up the first rows of the audience risers, shortened the altar, combined the chorus's platforms into one, and, in a moment of sheer spontaneity, decided to add a confessional off to the side of stage-left with, at Robert's heartlessly atheistic suggestion, a toilet inside. A curtain across the back of the stage would

be used for a dumb-show in the Prelude. All the other set pieces (benches, chairs, pedestals) were pulled from the prop loft.

Knowing that this would be a very challenging project, I solicited the help of my neighbor, Helen Johnson, who is a talented painter and coordinator for the Association for Visual Artists. After meeting with her several times throughout the process, I had a much better perspective of the visual possibilities with both the set and the costumes—I was also able to enlist some of her colleagues to help with the division of labor/talent to make things look the way they should. She was of particular help with the costumes. We would look at my initial stimuli for the characters—a mix between the palette and textures of Ensor, the bawdiness and deformity of Brughel, the grotesqueness of Bosch and Honza Wolf, the absurdity of *Rolling Stone* and *US Weekly*, the profanity of Aubrey Beardsley, the tradition of van der Weyden, and the symbolism of the National Ballet of Zaire's production of the play in the 1980s (see App. V)—and select which elements of each would work best for the play. I had a difficult time balancing them all, though I always knew what Folial would look like. By the time I first showed my sketches to Sydney Roberts (who was my official costume supervisor), I had slightly less than the confluence of styles for which I had hoped. However, with her suggestion, I began to simplify the designs and attempted to make them more abstract and nightmarish (some, she said and I agreed, were too literal), again trying to capture the essence of what worked in the visual resources. Eventually, I had something that worked in theory, though when the crew actually started pulling and creating the costumes, I had reservations. After three weeks of

rehearsal, the costumes were not working at all, except for Foliol, and one of my actors, Jeff Atkins, called me in the middle of the night, asking me what happened to the ideas I had told him about three months ago. The ideas had been much more satirical, playing off of contemporary stereotypes and political motives—the ideas that originally had been discounted as too literal. In all the painful reality of my rehearsals, the current designs were actually too literal (I had created a bunch of medieval fools) and subsequently abstract to the point that the Royal Shakespeare Company would have found it challenging to create individual characters using them.

So, in the third week of rehearsals, I scratched six and a half of my original eleven designs, and created new ones, basing them on what I was seeing from each individual actor and with which I knew they could work. Zech became a parody of John Ashcroft, mixing hyper-patriotism with religion; Ashanti the pop-icon; Nathan the name-brand guy; Jon the radical leftist; David the militant servant of the media; and James the cellophane transvestite. Again, Artaud was becoming more and more practical:

“The nightmares of Flemish painting make an impression on us because of the juxtaposition to the real world of what has become a caricature of this world. They present us with phantoms which we might have encountered in our dreams.” (Sontag, 270)

I had also been determined to make Galgut have a snare drum for a head but ditched this in the end as well. After Laura McKee, ever my best critic, saw a dress rehearsal, we added garish face-paint to finish the effect. (see App. IV)

Less convoluted than the costume design process, the sound design came entirely from my personal cd collection, with a few effects and all of the technical wizardry created by Rhys Dawson. From the beginning I knew that music would serve a critical role in the production, though I wasn't sure how much of it would be pre-recorded. After several weeks of experimenting in rehearsals with everything from *NWA* to the Kronos Quartet, we decided on using it all. A friend of Rhys let us borrow his rather hefty sound system (two SP100s, two 15" subs, one 18" sub, and plenty of amps) which we dispersed throughout the theatre, underneath and behind the audience risers and beside and underneath the stage. Throughout the process, I felt the music to be one of the strongest elements of the play and one of the most powerful tools for the actors to work with, whether it was rap, Yugoslav gypsy music, or Polish opera. They were mostly pieces that I had known for a long time and with which I had a deep, personal connection. Several times in the process when I was feeling less than confident about my choices, my advisor Stacy Ray would ask me what had personally moved me the most in recent weeks—the answer was usually the music, and so I tried to bring as much of it as I could into the play, as much an inspiration for myself as for the actors.

Originally, I had planned for my friend Adam Cofer to design my lights—I had worked with him before on independent projects, and he seemed interested in this one. Unfortunately, he had to back out a week or so into rehearsals because of schedule conflicts (he, too, was completing his *DHON*), and so my director Robert Duffy said that he would do a basic plot for me, about which I

was covertly ecstatic. Over the course of several afternoons and a weekend, we had agreed upon a rather sensational lighting design.

Throughout all of this, and from the very beginning, I constantly asked myself, “What do I need to make this happen? What resources, both material and human, have to be in place to make this play work?” The degree to which I controlled these factors constituted my role as producer. First, there were the church pews, which I tracked down in university storage after Chris Sommers, the technical director for the Hayes theatre, overheard me thinking aloud to Larry Brick, our shop foreman, about what I could do with the audience. Bringing in volunteers from AVA to help in the construction of costumes and painting the set would be the next big factor on the production end—also, one of the volunteers, Jaime McDaniel, a professional photographer, did my production photos.

But the main issue, of course, was my cast. I knew that I would need at least four and no less than two exceptionally talented actors to make the play work, and I also knew that the theatre company would be split for the first show of the spring semester because of the other show going on in the Ward, which I also knew would acquire most of the in-house talent and resources. After hoping that Mac Smotherman, my acting professor, would play the lead, I realized that he would be too busy preparing to direct the show immediately following to be able work on mine. So I turned to people I knew outside the department and found Jeff Atkins and Liz Duncan, both UTC alumni who had continued to work in the theatre in various capacities and both of whom I had known for some time. I had acted with Liz in UTC’s production of *Vinegar Tom*, and I had worked with Jeff

some five years earlier in an audition workshop that he conducted. Jeff had also worked as a professional actor for six years in Chicago, where he worked on a good deal of new scripts and won the Jefferson Award for Best Actor. I knew that if I were to have them working with me on this play for six weeks then I would want to pay them, and, considering the production constraints of doing two shows simultaneously in a small theatre at a public university in Tennessee, that I would also need to cover some of my own production costs. So, for about four months, I arranged meetings with various organizations on campus, filled out numerous applications for funding, and petitioned other potential sources off campus. In the end, I collected \$1000 from the office of Chancellor Bill Stacy, \$1000 from Dean Burhenn and the College of Arts and Sciences, \$500 from the Provost John Friedl, \$350 from the Association for Campus Entertainment, \$250 from Student Government Association, and \$200 from the University Honors Program, for a total of \$3300. After persuading a couple of students not active in the department at the time (Zech Hook and Michael Persad) into joining the cast (though Mike had never really acted before) and convincing a third (James Campbell) that he should wait before he took a semester off, and then insisting that a fourth (Nathan Gebele) read the script several months in advance and rejoin the department that semester, I had the makings of a cast. After a slight change in the structure of my DHON committee and an episode of running around in the middle of the night mending fences, I had everyone I wanted.

The other component I needed for the show to happen was an audience. Other than the traditional advertising that the department does for its shows

(posters, fliers, email, the *Chattanooga TimesFreePress* if we're lucky), I had a friend in the Graphic Design department create a full color professional poster for the show, based on some initial sketches I had done of Folia. I had the posters, which were quite striking, printed at Ideagraphx next to campus. Also, the week that the show opened I was able to land a twenty-minute radio interview with local NPR 88.1FM WUTC, during which I ranted about my own visions of the theatre, the sorry state of the arts in this country and region, and all the crap I had to put up with from people too young and inexperienced to be giving me crap about my art to get money for the show. I was also able to thoroughly solicit the email listservs for the Honors program and the Shaking Ray Levis audience. It also helped that I told many people that students would somehow get in for free, either through purchasing a lab-pass for the other show in the Ward, or by my doling out tickets at the door.

From there, I could actually get to the heart of the project: directing the play. I was confident going into auditions that I would have a competent group of artists to do the play, and although Gaye Jeffers, the director of UTC's other show in the Ward, and I had to share a casting pool, we never had any disagreements over who we wanted.

For me, the first day of auditions was a kind of testing ground to see who would explore the farthest physically. After a moment of ice-breaking exhibitionism demonstrated by Liz, everyone else quickly caught on with an explosive and very funny energy. Those who didn't catch on were left standing in shock and were not called back. The following day, I wanted to see who could

change gears, how they could adapt to the radically different tone and style of the chorus sections. Knowing that it would be a difficult transition, and also knowing that I wouldn't be able to cast our three strongest actors, I had Andrew Zimmerman and Casey Clark read the roles of Folia and Galgut, while Kelly Evans served as the chorus leader, to set some kind of precedent for the direction the scene should take. Afterwards, I saw that only a select few could handle the role of chorus leader, and even fewer could respond to my directions, though I, too, was uncertain of exactly what would work. After an hour and a half of auditions on the first day, about forty minutes more on the second, and a brief phone call that night to confirm things with Gaye, I had my cast. (see Appendix VI) With all the production demands between casts and crews of the two shows, I ended up with one more cast member than the eight that I had anticipated. That Friday night, before rehearsals began the following week, I assembled everyone involved on my production—actors, designers, crew heads, AVA volunteers— together in the studio to introduce themselves and to briefly talk about the nature of the production. The main ideas I wanted to communicate were that this would be a process that would work only if everyone brought something to the table, that this was very much an experiment, and, therefore, anything goes.

Early rehearsals involved a lot of group warm-ups and exercises, usually based on something prescribed by Marowitz or Grotowski, including extended sessions of relaxation techniques. I knew that many of my actors, being college students from the provinces of Tennessee, had not been exposed to various styles of theatre, much less been expected to roles in new, experimental plays. So, on

some nights we would watch video recordings of different productions to give the younger actors a sense of what is possible in theatre, and to give the older ones an idea of how far they could go as well. For example, we watched Grotowski's production of *Akropolis* and the Hadivadlo company's *Kral Oidipus*, then we discussed what inspired us from each one. In subsequent rehearsals, I had them imitate certain physicalizations they had seen, first as exercises, then applying them to the play, particularly as the chorus. Other nights would be less structured; I would dim the lights and play music, encouraging everyone to relax and let the music affect them emotionally and, later, to explore different rhythmic moving, with the goal of applying what they found to the play. Frequently, I had the cast look at paintings by Ghelderode's fellow countryman, artist James Ensor, for ways to communicate the sense of style and tone for specific scenes. This was quite successful and evolved into my showing them all of my visual resources, including the designs I had sketched.

After three weeks of these types of rehearsals, I had not made much headway in the realm of run-throughs, which Robert would frequently bring to my attention. We tried to do one every Friday or so, and as the weeks progressed, so did the run-throughs. But it wasn't until a kind of sweeping reassessment of things (changing two-thirds of the costume designs, and subsequently the characters themselves) that the show really took off. I explained to Jeff and Liz one afternoon that they were essentially the pilots of a plane that, at any given moment, would suddenly have wings of paper and that, instead of 1) pilot A, seeing that the wings are made of paper, freaks out and forgets how to fly the

plane, or 2) pilot B climbs to the back to try to act like a wing, that they should just concentrate on flying the plane and let me work on the technical problems. The problem, for the most part, was a matter of focus: it was difficult, if not impossible, for all of the younger actors listen and respond in the extreme manner that I was asking of them, and also to get Jeff to really take charge in a way that would ultimately drive the play from beginning to end. I had given Liz a video-recording of three performances by Min Tanaka, a Japanese Butoh dancer/performance artist, which she used to great effect, so I was not worried about her. Things came to a bit of a boiling point one night in rehearsals when, in the middle of running a scene that consisted mostly of Galgut's monologue, Jeff stopped and demanded that everyone look at him when he was talking to them. I agreed with him, and we continued running the scene: it proved to be a useful shock to everyone, and the scene played like it never had before. Afterwards, one of my cast members expressed their concerns that my having condoned the outburst would split the cast, so I addressed the issue in notes. I explained that everyone had different ways of working and that we were all moving towards the same goal. I told Jeff that I wouldn't let him do that again, but I also quoted Marowitz: "A rehearsal that doesn't begin in the boiler room will never make it to the penthouse." (Marowitz, 156) Eventually, as the students found ways to enrich and solidify their new characters, Jeff's performance gained strength as well, until, during the week of dress rehearsals, they all reached a point where they were genuinely playing with each other every night. By the time all the design elements were in place, the show had really come together.

One of the biggest challenges I faced as a director, and more generally as the creator of this production, was being able to stay true to my instincts and then communicate them to other people. As a writer, I was able to overcome my inevitable and debilitating skepticism by relying on my instincts as an actor—if I was stuck on a particular monologue, I would imagine myself on a bare stage performing the scene and eventually something would come out. But this came around to haunt me as I tried to direct an actor in creating a character from which I could not separate myself. For instance, it was extremely difficult for me to communicate to Jeff what I wanted to see from the character of Galgut—this was the single character on which I had spent the most time adapting from the original, and, as a result, the rhythms of that character’s language were the rhythms of my own mind. I am forever grateful that Jeff recognized the problem and was able to work with me on distancing myself from the character enough to justifiably critique his portrayal of him. We would discuss at some length the various archetypes that I had suggested for him, how images that resonated very clearly for me would conjure distinctly different associations for him, until eventually a compromise was reached that usually involved some minor editing of the phrasing and rhythms of Galgut’s speech. In the end I felt this was successful: my authorship was still there, and it was articulated in a way more confluent with the *mise-en-scene* (“putting on the stage”).

It was also invaluable to have as many different opinions as I did from more experienced and dissimilar-minded people throughout rehearsals: Michael Persad (the Virgin Mary) was the most immediate outlet of directorial

sensibilities, as were all the departmental members of my DHON committee. For example, it wasn't until after Stacy emphasized the incongruence of Jeff's physicality with the rest of the show that I was able to actually see it in the production photos, which I was then able to show to Jeff, who quickly responded. Although had I been able to address this problem earlier, I think Jeff could have developed his physicality much further and in a much more integrated way. Also had I had more time, I would like to have been able to experiment more with the transition into scene 5, making a more elaborate ritual of the fools' entrance.

All in all, I was very pleased with the actual performances; we sold out nearly every show and even did a Friday night performance at 11PM, which also sold out and was definitely our best show—a matter of having the right audience at the right time in the run of the production. The final show on the following Saturday afternoon was still very strong, but the audience consisted mostly of the cast's family members, many of whom found the sacrilegious tones and rap music, if not the style of the production altogether, to be a little overwhelming—at least this was the case with my own family. However, most of the responses that I received, other than the music being too loud, expressed the audience's appreciation for the immediacy of the play, both in theme and style—and I think this mix of responses can be seen as representative of the process as a whole.

From the very beginning, this was a process of communicating my vision of a work of art to other people, and in some of the most crucial aspects of the production, I could not see what I wanted, but I could feel it, and I would know it when I saw it. I received much more skepticism throughout the project than I

have mentioned here, and I have omitted it here as I did when I experienced it—and the same can be said about the many frustrations inherent in a collaborative work. I tried to fairly consider all criticism, doubt, dissuasion, and outright rejection with some degree of perspective and then, ultimately, stick to the vision, because I knew that in art as in politics, everything is a compromise. One year ago, when my directing professor Fred Behringer told me, “You don’t know how to read that play,” I decided to stick to my vision and to work with Robert Duffy, who entertained my ideas, still with much skepticism, though more constructive in nature. In the following year, as life in Chattanooga became more saturated with politics and, if it is possible, religion, I learned that again, in art as in politics, criticism is important, but nothing new ever comes from being conservative. I allowed myself to be indulgent with stage-time (the extended dance scenes, etc.), and I allowed my actors to be indulgent in working out for themselves the unactable ideas I was proposing; and the result was what I considered to be some of the strongest moments of the play. I focused on what made the play work for me—the music, the raw vulgarity, the sense of the sacred—and tried to give it to the actors to make it come alive for them, that they in turn could then give it to an audience.

To conclude, I think that the most important response came after the show on opening night: I was a nervous wreck, completely uncertain about absolutely everything, and my friend Brian Cagle, who had also studied in the Czech Republic some years before I did, said to me, “Congratulations—you’ve brought Hadivadlo to Chattanooga.”

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**Appendix I:**  
**Original Text**

A note about the original text...

The English translation of Michel de Ghelderode's *School for Buffoons* only exists in a bound facsimile format, published by Chandler Publishing in 1943, translated by Kenneth S. White. After an extensive search to observe all copyrights in the reproducing and adapting of the text, I could not find a single authority (that still exists) to provide any kind of definite rules in the matter. The play is anthologized in the French but not in English, and for all I know the facsimile copy that I used is the only one in the universe. So, as a tribute to the much overlooked playwright, I have included in this project a copy of the English translation in an effort to save it from oblivion.

**Appendix II:**

**Adapted Text**

**School for Fools**  
an adaptation by Ben Williams  
based on Michel de Ghelderode's *L'Ecole des Bouffons*.

Characters:

Folial, the Master Fool

Galgut, his protégé

Fool 1 (later as Folial the Second)

Fool 2 (later as Veneranda)

at least 4 other fools: all are incomplete mentally and physically, deformed

Note: The fools are always onstage—when they are not onstage as characters, they appear somewhere onstage in the convention of the Greek chorus, reacting (mostly without sound) to the ongoing scene. They should do this as clever, mocking, satirical fools.

**Prelude**

*In a former convent now secularized. The atmosphere of an underground vault. Steps leading to a pulpit which has been transformed into a stage. An open curtain in front of the baptistry, which has been covered. A throne. A catafalque. Clutter of fools' musical instruments and tools.*

*Light is very dim. We hear Folial moaning in his sleep—the sounds echo and reverberate through the old convent. Echoes of Folial's voice as he talks in his sleep, which is harsh and nightmared, and shadows of Folial's restless sleep fill the room.*

*By shadow, we see Galgut watching Folial sleep, then stealthily approaching his shadow, searching him up and down. Galgut finds a letter and reads it. Folial stirs, and Galgut freezes. He tries to slowly slip away, but is caught by Folial's disembodied voice, which grows and echoes within Galgut's head. Galgut enters the room under Folial's control.*

Folial's voice: Listen....listen to the *lesson*—no no no...stay in line....you'll never learn—you'll never learn the Secret—never be *real*—that's not the Art—you must *suffer*... That's it—Yes—No—you're fooling yourself—*fooling yourself*—stay in line— nothing... What?... Ve...Veneranda... Veneranda... No—no, that's not the secret—Back to work!—Formation! Posture—form—*technique*—you'll learn! Heh heh—you'll learn, Galgut! Ha ha—The King's fool—heh heh heh—you'll learn the Secret...

*The echo stops. Galgut is released, disoriented.. He looks around very slowly, resolved to kill. He calls in the fools.*

### **Scene 1**

Galgut:       Fools! Fall in!

*A single fool literally falls in (Galgut slaps forehead) and runs off again. Immediately, Galgut signals for the music to begin as the fools enter from all directions.*

Fools:       For the dead, money—  
              For the slut, holy wafers—  
              For the poor, condoms—  
              For the criminal, an army—  
  
              For the sick, a crayon—  
              For the bishop, a little boy—  
              For the King, the clap—  
              For the drunk, holy water—

*Galgut halts the music. They continue on.*

Galgut:       About, face!

*They obey. He tests them.*

Galgut:       For the Jew?

Fool:         A mosque!

Galgut:       For the Muslim?

Fool:         Bacon!

Galgut:       For the scholar?

Fool:         A hand rattle!

Galgut:       And for simple fools?

*Silence, confusion. They snicker.*

Quiet! I'll tell you. Fools like you still get two things in life, and the two resemble each other. Both are hairy, and both make juice. One in time of grace, the other in time of disgrace. First: that part of their persons granted to you by the ladies for being a good fool!

*Fools laugh.*

The other: the executioner's claws, ready to squeeze the blood out of you for being a bad fool!

*Fools wail.*

There you are! Your share of love and death, as for any living creature. But for you it's just a parody. Real fools never love, only pretend, and they're never loved in return, only mocked. This is the life of a real fool, the life of your Art. So why live it, you ask? Why not surrender to the church, the custodians of morality, and strangle yourselves now? Because we have the Secret, the Secret of our Art, the Secret that makes us real fools. And real fools don't die.

Now, since this is the last night of your confinement in the seminary, the Secret of your profession must soon be revealed to you. So, I'll tell you what I've learned of our species before the Master teaches you his final lesson. (*Silence*) My little swans, your race is royalty!

Fool: What do you mean?

Galgut: I mean you to bear yourselves proudly, as rich lords do! For you are their peers! What do I mean? These noblemen are your fathers, or else their wives are your mothers, and you breathe with the bodies they procreated! Only, you don't inherit their names, their reputations.

*Dumb show begins.*

Why, my worthy bastards, why are you kicked out of their high society? Because they can't stand to see their own flesh and blood turn so ugly! All the ladies at Court claim they can piss and give birth standing up—but when they realize that the fruit of their entrails is damned, then they want to get rid of it. They cry for help. And who answers the call? Our own Master Folia, who tells them that this counterfeit mankind, this lump of anatomy, has no right to baptism, but should be drowned in a toilet! But he's too smart to let you drown. Once he's out of sight, he takes you here to his convent and nurses you in his practice. And here you are turned into working fools. He can sell you for a fortune! Look at you! You ought to be satisfied—tomorrow you apprentices will become masters! You will go back to the world where you began, where you belong: beneath the thrones, beside the footstools. That's justice! You can taunt your makers—and swell your sisters' bellies, if not your mothers'!

*Cheering.*

Fool: Let's do it!

Galgut: Wait! Not yet. First we must graduate from this school, and to do that we must learn the Secret, the great Secret of a fool's art.

Fool: We don't need a secret—we're already fools!

Galgut: You'll be nothing without the Secret. Carnival clowns.

*Fools moan.*

Listen. I have a plan to get all of us out this prison, and I'll need your help. But to do it you must pass a test, a test much harder than anything your Master could give you. You must fool the old man himself. You must fool your Master Foliai.

Fool: But how? He's the King's fool!

Galgut: He *was*. But he fell from His Grace.

Fool: Why?

Galgut: You remember the ghost, up by the clerestory at night? I know who she is... Now you'll have to fool for your lives—for if you fail, we all die.

Fool: Why wouldn't Master Foliai tell us the Secret?

Galgut: Foliai's old. He's forgetting what he *is*.

Fool: He's our Master—he saved us!

Galgut: He's dying because he's not *real*. There's icewater in his veins, and he's ready to leave us as carnival clowns. But this way we can force him to give us the Secret—but he mustn't suspect.

Fool: What do we do?

Galgut: We must take our Master's hand and gently lead him back through the past, through the mockery of his fool's life, to the ghosts and corpses he sleeps with every night. You two... (*He selects two fools.*) You're going to be my confederates tonight. I've just read parts of a letter from the King's court. Cousins, tonight you will be avenged for years of wandering and shameful subjection. And you must fool, or die.

*A door creaks open.*

The sleeper is awake again. Form ranks! In file! Forward, march!

*The fools, in formation, exit in song.*

Fools: For the bull, a maiden—  
For the believer, the gallows—

*Galgut disappears into the shadows, watching his Master from a distance.*

## Scene Two

Folial's voice: Galgut?

*Galgut does not answer. Folial looms up, holding a candle. He is old and hunchbacked, arthritic—his gait wavers from a creeping, Charlie Chaplin-esque snoop of a bloodhound, to the thick, tottering labors of a dying man. At this moment he is the latter, moving like a sleepwalker.*

Folial: Galgut? We need more light.

*The fools appear elsewhere on the stage, perhaps above and behind Folial, as the chorus.*

More light.

*Galgut does not light any candles, instead he tests his master's vision, taunting him in the dark. Folial suddenly turns around.*

Galgut: My lord! Did you sleep well?

Folial: I'm not certain I've slept—but I have dreamed. Yes. I was surrounded by a great black pond. You were there, floating around me. I could sense that you were coming to rob me.

Galgut: Rob you? What could I steal from a man asleep?

Folial: The weight on his mind, a few words, a sigh? Give them back!

*Galgut is not sure how to respond—he at once pities and is wary of the old man. Folial tastes the air.*

Tonight will be ceremonious. *(He holds out the candle)* Give us light!

Galgut: These last hours creep and crawl...

Folial: Yes! If only I could boot those steeple clocks a good one in the ass. I'm in a hurry to be done with it, just as you are.

Galgut: With what?

Folial: My teaching, this imposture, the folly befitting by name, the madness of believing that anyone can teach anyone else!

Galgut: (*obsequious*) Master, without your whiplashes, your insults and instructions, we'd have been nobodies, nowhere. But now, all of us, your disciples, trained in your skills, will swarm over the empires to glitter in the shadows of thrones! We'll perpetuate your style. The whole universe will learn that the only good fools are made here. Everywhere they'll acclaim us as creations of the great Folial, Folial the First, the fool of the King!

Folial: Marvelous, your flattery. But your technique is lacking. And I'm not the fool of the King.

Galgut: But you were, for many years. And you've spawned this school so that you can teach us the art of our race—and also so that your most prodigious student will be the fool of the King!

Folial: You don't want to be that.

Galgut: Why not, Master? Why not be the celebrity fool and inherit your name?

Folial: Folial the Third... No. You can fool without the folly.

Galgut: Why did you leave, Master? Why did you resign from the King's service?

Folial: It was time for another fool.

Galgut: Your student.

Folial: Yes.

Galgut: Folial the Second.

Folial: Yes.

Galgut: And did you warn *him* not to go?

Folial: I don't know.

Galgut: What happened to him?

Folial: What do you mean?

Galgut: He learned the Secret, didn't he?

Folial: Yes. Yes, he did.

*Pause.*

Galgut: But I shouldn't be the fool of the King.

Folial: No—Galgut. You don't understand yet-

Galgut: I do understand! I understand your whip! I know what I am!

Folial: You don't know what a fool's art is.

Galgut: Is it not what you teach us?

Folial: You don't listen to what I teach you.

Galgut: Listen, Master—the ghost. The maiden. She walks around, up by the clerestory.

*They look around. Folial is worried, unsure if Galgut is telling the truth.*

She curses us. She curses our race.

Folial: Galgut.

Galgut: Do you know who she is, Master?

Folial: Galgut... you'll learn. It's the King—he's the Fool. He'll write you a letter...

Galgut: What letter is that, Master?

Folial: Nothing, nevermind.

Galgut: This requires some light.

*He lights other candles.*

Folial: Where are you? Galgut—let's make it ceremonious!

Galgut: What, Master?

Folial: Our last lesson—a ceremony!

Galgut: Funeral ceremony—

Folial: That's it.

Galgut: Attuned to your soul.

Folial: What was that? What do you know of a soul when you haven't got one? You're nothing without me, without my Art. You're castoffs from Heaven *and* Hell, the miscarried dead. You all should find another profession.

*He smells the air.*

You know I can't see you, Galgut, but I can smell the poison inside you. I put it there.

*He propels Galgut towards him.*

Come closer, Galgut. I meant to tell you some good news.... Come closer. To the King, I give my finest fool. Be worthy of the name. Closer...disgusting...

*He seizes Galgut and throughout the next passage manhandles him, moving around the room.*

I can't trust you. You've whiffed the truth. You think you know, but I saw it coming—I saw far beyond these walls the tragedy in this letter. The same mockery. Since that vision, my eye has lost its luster, my body's power gone, and my buffoons know it. You're leading their plot, I know. Don't deny it—you like the power it gives you? To lead a chain of fools? But I know—I know from premonition. You'll choose your time, when I'm worn out. Tonight. You'll kill me. You'll let me die, then you'll escape. I could defend myself—my eyes aren't as sharp anymore, but my whip is. What's more, I'm not afraid of your traps. I'd be smarter if I let you go right now and renege on my lesson? No. I'll give it—come what may.

*He releases him. Folial collapses into his throne. Galgut, regaining his senses, steals his Master's whip and strangles him..*

Just help me this last time—help me to finish it alive. Or else you'll be nothing at all. Only carnival clowns. You think you've learned everything—except one thing, the secret of my career, my art, the secret of any art to be remembered.

*Pause.*

You can kill me, and never learn the Secret.

*Galgut releases the whip from around Folial's neck. Folial senses something else in the air and leans from his throne. He sees Veneranda's ghost up above.*

Listen....

*Folial mumbles to himself, and then to the vision:*

Veneranda?

*He suddenly rises, looking around.*

These letters...I'll have to hide them. The King's letter...they mustn't see...

*He disappears to his door.*

### Scene 3

*Galgut, alone, throws the whip down again and kicks the throne. He quickly runs to the side and whistles for the two selected fools to come—they run in and huddle around him.*

Galgut: Get to work! (*He gives each a paper.*) Here's the outline for a play—it's short and stark and ends with a spasm. You'll have to invent words, a lot of words, enough to explain the plot. But you'll have help. And you'll have to wear false faces.

Fool 1: No! We'll have to go in the room where they store the masks?

Galgut: Come off it—they're just a bunch of wax impressions!

Fool 2: Molded from dead people! Horrible—they give me the creeps.

Galgut: Morons! It's only Folial's library. Just imagine working in there alone every night as he does.

*They moan.*

You'll be in and out fast. Once you're there, in a glass case, you'll find the two masks for your parts in the play—very true to life, since they were cast on living persons, not on the dead.

Fool 2: And you? Will *you* go? Why do *we*? Everyone's heard that our Master collects faces taken from cadavers—why?

Galgut: That's what artists do—they imitate life.

Fool 1: But he's imitating *death*!

Galgut: I don't know—don't question your Master's Art.

Fool 2: Then what are *you* doing?

Fool 1: We thought you hated him.

Galgut: Do you want your freedom, or do you want to stay under his whip? Even though you may hate him, and I do, Folia is unrivalled. He lifted our art to the heights of religion. He turned the work of a simple fool into the faith of the King. But now he's forgotten his lesson. You've got to be hard! You've got to suffer! Go get the faces, then to the theatre and set the stage, but quietly. The instant the music ends, the play begins.

Fool 2: But I'm afraid Folia has sniffed our plot—it reeks and-

Fool 1: And we won't have surprise on our side. He sees everything. He knows what we're thinking before we think it.

Galgut: I'm sure he smells a conspiracy. But his sight has lost its edge. This time we can catch him off guard, and kill him—not with our fists, but with our tongues, like worthy fools. That will prove the value of his teaching!

Fool 1: And what if he doesn't tell us the Secret?

Galgut: Then we tell him ours. (*Holds out the scripts*)

Fool 2: What is ours?

Galgut: A few memories that Folia would die to forget.

Fool 1: Suppose we only cut him to the quick-

Galgut: It would be worth it.

Fool 2: I don't want to do it.

Galgut: (*Attacks him*) What do you want? You want to be a *clown* in the *carnival*? You want to fool *yourself*? That's nothing! That's death! You want to die? Is that what you want?

*Folia's door creaks open again. Galgut releases the fool.*

Galgut: The play will end with Folia lashing his own back, I swear it!

*Folia enters.*

Quick, under there!

*He hastily pushes the two underneath the catafalque and exits.*

#### Scene 4

Folial: Veh...Veneranda? Hallo? Just the echoes of useless confessions coming back to haunt the chapel. *(He slumps into chair)* Silence, gift from Heaven, can I ever have you? And you, solitude, holy solitude, let me suffer expansively, not shrunken like a spider numb with cold. Let me die alone, while you watch me, not in pathos or ridicule, but in this twilight sleep—for night is climbing inside me, seeping toward my heart. I want only to forget, and escape these dreams. *(laughs softly)* When your holy monks return, they'll find my skeleton right here, meditating the misery of things. And they'll fix my bones, then slide them under this catafalque *(deep sigh)* Even it whispers to me of dreams.

*The fools peek from underneath the catafalque and eventually move around, but staying in the shadows and leading Folial on.*

Fool 1: Listen to him—our Master's crazy!

Fool 2: Why?

Fool 1: He thinks we're ghosts!

Folial *(pursuing the voices)* Is it possible a chapel can be haunted? Hello—you voices, from beyond the grave?

Fool 1: *(in a deep voice)* Yes.

Folial: You know me.

Fool 1: Yes.

Folial: I'll be with you soon enough.

Fool 2: Where is that?

Fool 1: *(elbows Fool 2)* Yes.

Folial: But they mustn't find out... *(He pulls out the letters.)* I can trust you with these. You know what they say. You can see her, I know—my daughter, my Veneranda, I know. Keep these safe with her. Help me.

Fool 2: *(in falsetto)* Father! Folial! It's me Veneranda!

Folial: Veneranda!

Fool 1: Yes, and someone else.

Folial: Who?

Fool 1: Your pupil, Folia the Second.

Fool 2: Yes, he can't keep his hands off me! He wants to rape me!

Fool 1: Shut up!

Fool 2: He wants me to call him daddy!

Fool 1: Do not!

*The two fools begin bickering and fighting. Folia discovers them, seizes them, and drags them to the center.*

Fool 1: Master, you're mistaken. We're pure!

Folia: Fuck the pure. Do you know from whence comes and whither goeth all flesh?

Fools 1 and 2: (*in unison*) From one cavity into another cavity.

Folia: Yes. That's right. Nothing's pure. Now tell me—what were you saying?

Fool 1: Master, we didn't know what we were saying. We're not pure—it's unknown to us, or at least we know it's unknown-

Fool 2: Or there's absence of evidence, or there's evidence of absence-

Folia: Absence... absence of what?

Fool 1: Purity! At least, for *us*, that is, it's absent—but *you*, Master, you *know*. The King's fool—you are known everywhere! You are *evidence* of purity. And you can teach us to know our unknowns and absences.

Folia: Hmf.

Fool 2: Yes, Master.

Fool 1: You can tell us, Master—tell us the Secret. We won't say a word

Fool 2: No one will know a thing,

Fool 1: We'll know it, then leave, and be absent.

Fool 2: And unknown.

Fool 1: Are you feeling well, Master?

Folia: Listen... Go ponder your profession. Get out of here.

*They scamper away. Foliol is left alone, unstable, fading fast. He exits.*

## **Scene Five**

*Dusk falls. Music as the fools enter, led by Galgut. They prepare for the ceremony.*

Galgut: Halt! About, face! My fine buffoons, every farce has an end. On this, our final night together, we shall dance in celebration, for at dawn, you'll take to the road. You'll be on your way, someplace or other, ready for gilded slavery—the way of the wise.

Fool: Why do we have to slave?

Galgut: Why do we have to slave...?

*(cue NWA "Approach to Danger" and Public Enemy throughout)*

Look outside: we, as artists, can survive in the world in only two ways. We can go on wandering and rejoin the rabble—the way of fools. Or we can fool for the courts—the way of professionals. My swans, the King's throne is a seat of lies, and all we have to do is fool them into believing their lies are truth, as we've always done, as all artists do. We learn to watch our rulers' whims and moods, their ailments, their vices. We learn to watch and keep our mouths shut—learn to suffer with a smile. We sharpen our memories to sniff out every possible secret—for rulers, when they're overwrought, will ask you questions: and they'll tell all their hidden disappointments to *you*. And you give them what they want: if they want plastic flags, give it to them, if they want a song and a navel, give it to them. We mask our emotions, our disgust, our spite—we pretend we're only simulating feelings. Not for a second must they suspect that we could be anything more than a buffoon. If they did, our presence would be a menace. Once you've fooled *for* them, you fool *within* them. Fool with their sight, their ears, deceive their noses, trick their tongues—for then, you will rule the rulers. But even if you succeed in fooling the rulers of our world, you're still left to fool yourselves. You're marked men. You'll buffoon, and whether you choose epigrams or turds, buffooning fools you shall be. Whatever your style, literal or fancy, you'll never escape what you are. But all in all, we're the ones to be envied, for in our world, you alone can thumb your noses on the sidelines, and revel in your own brands of pleasure.

*Foliol enters.*

So for now, we shall dance—in celebration of your past and future foolery, and in reverence to your Master, even if he can't see you. Remember what you will, and while it lasts, you can fool yourselves.

*As Foliol enters, they perform a dance, each fool paying reverence to Foliol, one at a time, in his own manner—most are profane. Foliol is dressed in ceremonial garb, a large robe, a tall hat, and he carries his whip and a small bag. His health is much deteriorated. As the dance ends, Foliol falls into his throne. Everyone eagerly waits for him to announce the Secret. After a tense silence, he speaks.*

Foliol: My ass aches.

*Fools are very uncertain. Galgut unrolls a parchment.*

Galgut: Your Lordship, venerated Master-

Foliol: What's this?

Galgut: In heartfelt gratitude, after having licked at the fragrant flower of your sweet wisdom-

Foliol: You can't flatter the dead.

*Awkward silence.*

Galgut: Well, uh, before starting to, uh, taste the fruits of the, ah, banquet, brimful with affection...er... That will do for my speech.

*The fools laugh and hiss.*

Anyway, you know our feelings. Master, I thought you doted on this ceremony.

Foliol: Yes, I did. My entire life, and yours, owe it to themselves to be ceremonious... Get rid of those banners now. I'll get along without them. You see, my pets, (*he stands before them*) age has become a weight on me, all of a sudden. That's why I'm setting you free. Not tomorrow—this very night.

*The fools stir.*

And afterwards, forget me. They claim that buffoons escape the outrages of Time. Don't believe a word of it. Look at me now, gnawed away by the disease of it...

*Foliol tries to exit, but collapses in a faint. The buffoons, excited and uncertain, watch as Galgut carefully climbs up next to his master's ear.*

Galgut: We sympathize, Master! A long life of success, burdensome honors. Enough speeches. We admire you, Master, and we pity you! So we'll leave you discreetly. May God do something good for you.

*He hides Foliol's whip behind his chair.*

So be it. Now, Master, your pets are eager to have what you've promised them. In their name, if it is granted they deserve any identity except that of a fool, I implore you—tell us the Secret.

Fools: (*echo*) The secret...

Galgut: Of your art...

Fools: Of your art...

Galgut: I mean, of great art...

Fools: Of great art...

Galgut: I mean, our lives!

Fools: I mean, our lives!

Folial: (*coming to, very confused*) What're you asking? The secret...of my art...of great art...your lives?

Galgut: We beseech you...

Folial: Ah! Yes. I remember that. I promised... The Secret... My lifetime's experience...

*Silence. Folial feigns forgetfulness. The fools try to help.*

Wait! The Secret? My head's fuzzy.... But it was a single word... Excuse me one second... I'll find it...

Galgut: The Secret?

Fools: The Secret?

*Folial hears the ghost up by the clerestory. He indicates that he doesn't know. The fools riot. Folial sinks into his chair. Galgut calls them back to order.*

Galgut: Forgive them, Master. Christ couldn't teach them charity. He didn't die for their species. Rest now. We were asking too much of you. (*to the fools*) Watch out! He may croak too soon. Restrain yourselves, or we've got nothing! (*back to Folial*) Master? Wake up! Your disciples have practiced a play! Perhaps it will help you remember the Secret.

*Folial comes to.*

Look! You're at the theatre. You must consent and approve of our skill—it's mature at last. Don't try to think any more, just watch.

*Galgut orders the fools to take their places.*

First, the prelude.

## **Scene Six**

*At Galgut's command, music begins—a crashing and chanting that turns into a solemn hymn. It entrances Folia, who rises and slowly dances—a swansong, during which Folia again sees Veneranda's ghost. The fools watch in awe and admiration. As the music ends, the fools applaud, and Galgut quickly assists Folia back into his chair.*

Galgut: We're grateful, Master. You see—in your honor we started a play, but you're acting it now. We're sorry, Master. We will suffer for you, for we can never leave mediocrity. We'll always be fools, the sorry slaves of laughter. The show is finished. You gave it in our place. So I implore you, give us the signal to send us away.

Folia: No, my friend. I command that the comedy continue.

Galgut: Tragedy, if you please.

Folia: I do please. I didn't dance to bewilder you—it was to prove what inspiration can do.

Galgut: Inspiration? What's that?

Folia: How should I know? It's beyond our understanding.

Galgut: But then-

Folia: Agh! On with the play! Comedy, tragedy, or masquerade—are you sure what you're staging?

Galgut: Yes, just as you taught us. It will astound you.

Folia: Astound me? You? Oh yes—ha! Let's see this masterpiece. What's it called?

Galgut: *A Fool's Wedding!* Dedicated humbly to you, in honor of your fond memories of the royal court.

Folia: Who says I like to remember that? What's the plot?

Galgut: I beg your pardon. I reserve the right-

Folia: Babble! That's what I predict.

Galgut: It's a drama, one genuine act, the truth warm as life. I didn't invent a thing.

Folial: Then where did you get it? You've never gone to the King's court. You don't know what really happens there.

Galgut: It's my secret. May I begin the play?

Folial: No. First, I'd like to know-

Galgut: To take away my surprise? Too late now, your Grace!

*Galgut moves away and signals the fools to assume their places. The baptistry curtains are pulled open, revealing the scene—an alcove, a statue of the Virgin Mary (played by a fool), and a doorway hidden by a drape. Folial starts to interrupt, but sits down. Fool I (as Folial II) enters, wearing a mask, a goblet of wine in hand, a dagger at his side, and much inebriated. He addresses the fools, who have assembled as the wedding crowd.*

Folial II: Thanks, thank you, gentlemen, for showing me to my nuptial bedroom—but respect, please! You want to see too much! Haven't I presented you good people of the court with the wondrous spectacle of my marriage? What more could you ask? A close-up view of the Beast's and Beauty's love-play? Woah-ho, just imagine! You can be sure I'll perform as well as you would in my place. Tonight, there'll be no fooling around—I'll be a *man* like all of you! Hey—who needs your advice, you rich prick! Huh? Hasn't God endowed me with the talent? Now let me handle the conquest. Oh, and don't bother to say goodnight—I won't have a wink of sleep before sunrise!

*He waves them off, looks at the door, and drinks.*

To Love! And to my old Master Folial—it's his daughter I've married, beautiful Veneranda, locked away in all her purity all her life, and now just for me. Oh, and to my colleagues in the convent, who better get something out of all this!

*Fools cheer. Fool I bows quickly.*

Alone! Finally! And what a marriage it was, huh? Who'd believe it? A hunchbacked fool and the King's daughter... I mean, the Queen's daughter, whatever, she's royalty right? God bless our old master Folial.

*Folial grumbles from his chair. Galgut restrains him.*

But screw you fucks—watch me! What's accomplished in there is not going to be a fool's strut, that's for sure!

It's a mockery, right? No! She's real. Flesh and blood. Right in there. You see, she's weary from a long wait, but I'm coming!

*The fools laugh. Folial II drinks more wine and is suddenly sober.*

Still, I'm not blind. I don't forget what I am.

It's quiet in there. Not a breath. Has she been kidnapped? That's been done before, jokes like that, when the groom was a fool.

*He moves close to the door.*

Veneranda? Wife? Hey, are you asleep? Veneranda, I'm on my way, stiff and aflame all over. No mother to console you now—and your father, Sir Folial, must curse you as he curses me, but what's that to us? Come on, call me, say my name, just like daddy, let me come in.

*He opens a curtain: the Holy Virgin enters.*

Mary mother of God, help me! I'm expecting to see some tits here! Veneranda? Veneranda? Veneranda?! (*he kneels, clutching the "statue" of the Virgin*) O Holy Virgin, illumine me. (*Virgin lights a match, then slowly lights a cigarette*) Thank you. Oh! Oh! Oh! Now I see! Now I understand why she's locked herself in there! She's ashamed—to marry a fool! But what the hell is she thinking? I mean what the fuck does she think she is—a princess? She's a bastard! Or a daughter-bastard—whatever! She came from the loins of a fool! She's not *pure*! Fuck this monologue, a bridal night takes two players! Hey! Back there behind the door! Wife!

*He walks to the curtains and throws them open. He recoils at the sight of Fool 2, as Veneranda, wearing a beautiful mask, clutching a rosary and a bouquet of lilies, praying fervently. Fool 1 and the others burst into laughter. Folial starts towards the stage, but Galgut rushes to restrain him.*

Folial:           What kind of sorry joke is this?

Galgut:           Don't interrupt it, Master, it will be wonderful.

Folial II: (*resuming*) Wife! What is this! Do you think you're still at Mass? (*rips away the rosary*) Hey! What about these burial flowers? (*he stomps the flowers*) What do you think about that? I'm the master now! Hey—watch this!

*He pulls out his dagger, decorated with ribbons—its shadow giant on the wall. Fools titter in excitement.*

It's my graduation present from the convent. All the ladies in the court were battling to touch it—you like the ribbons? Huh? Come on! It's our honeymoon! I'm in pain here!

*Offers her wine.*

Come on, have a drink. Seal the contract! *(She drops the wine)* Hey, what the fuck? You think I need any more derision in my life? Harpie! That's it—strip! I have marital powers!

Veneranda: No!

Folial: Don't you love me?

Veneranda: No!

Folial II: Ok, how about friendship?

Veneranda: No!

Folial II: Esteem at least?

Veneranda: No!

Folial II: Fuck *me!*

Veneranda: No!

Folial II: Do you hate me?

Veneranda: Just leave me here alone!

Folial II: Tonight? Are you mad! At least let me see what's under that dress!

Veneranda: No, you don't want to see!

*He pulls open her dress, exposing her hastily-rendered hermaphroditic body.*

Folial II: What the fuck is that?

Veneranda: My father's inheritance.

Folial II: What the fuck is *that!*

Veneranda: It's yours to take, this miserable body-

Folial II: I'll take it, but you're not *giving* it! I must be cursed!

Veneranda: No, you're not cursed. I'm the one who's cursed. I'm the one who spent my life locked away in the attic of your master's school!

Folial II: You could have climbed out! Just let me-

Veneranda: No! I was locked away because my parents were ashamed of me!

Folial: (*from throne*) No-

Veneranda: They tried to pretend I didn't exist! My mother was too ashamed!

Folial: It was her!

Veneranda: And my father, your master, used me to save his own life!

Folial: I saved us!

Veneranda: The King would have killed us both, but my father fooled him into letting us go.

Folial: I saved us!

Veneranda: The King spared my father's life, on the condition that I would be locked away!

Folial: No—I saved you!

Veneranda: So he could have his little school for fools-

Folial: I'm a *fool!* You're all *fools!*

Veneranda: And this is what I get! This is my father's way of making it up to me! By having me marry his fool student!

Folial II: Hey, I graduated! I learned the Secret!

Veneranda: You even have his name!

Folial II: So wait—you were locked up in the school? How come I never saw you?

Veneranda: You were too busy pleasing your Master to hear me cursing you. Too busy trying to earn my father's name so you could carry on his madness!

Folial II: Hey, what do you know about being a fool? You were locked up in the attic!

Veneranda: You *chose* to be a fool! I was *born* this way!

Folial II: So what—are you just leading me on here? What about the marriage?

Veneranda: (*kneeling before the statue*) Forgive me, Holy Virgin, pure amid the impure. Forgive me for leading on this fool. I had prayed that when my mother and the King saw me in their court, that they would stop the marriage, that they would take me back-

Folial II: But you're a *fool*!

Veneranda: No! I hate you! I hate you all!

Folial II: Fuck you you freak!

Veneranda: I'm not one of you!

Folial II: I don't care—I'll have you anyway! Look, our friends gave this as a wedding present. (*picks up Folial's whip*) Here! Please! I'll be *your fool*! You can do what you want with me! Your father taught me well!

Veneranda: (*throws the whip aside*) Folial!

(*Folial I writhes in pain. Galgut watches vengefully.*)

Folial II: My name! She's pronounced it at last! I'm your slave, your fool. I'll give you what you want!

Veneranda: You'll never have me. (*She steals his dagger from his belt*) Mary, Mother of God, you are a woman—understand and intercede-

*The Virgin takes the dagger from her and gives it to Folial II.*

Folial II: Who's the fool now!

*He rushes at her. Folial leaps from his chair. Galgut tries to stop him but his thrown back. Everyone panics. Folial jumps to the stage and seizes Fool 1.*

Folial: Murderer! You killed your Master's daughter!

*Folial throws Fool 1 aside and embraces Fool 2, then realizes his error and throws him aside, too. Folial smashes the stage, sobbing. The fools applaud their actors and hiss at Folial. Galgut tries to restrain them. Finally, Folial collapses, rolls on the floor, and is still. Galgut checks the body. Silence.*

Galgut: He's dead. The great buffoon has passed away. The farce can go on!  
Everyone will be promoted to Master! Grant him your tears.

*The buffoons parody grief.*

And now acclaim the actors, who have defeated the greatest comedian of all!

*The two remove their masks and receive their acclaim.*

Free!

*Great cheering and celebration—cut short by the crack of Folia's whip. Folia, revived, reigns them all in as they try to escape. He laughs harshly.*

Folia: The interlude is over—but the lesson continues! You two—you tried to show tragedy, and unleashed laughter. You tried to eliminate me, but your performance has awakened me! Not easy to kill, a pedigree buffoon! Now we can celebrate! We'll finish your play, for there's been no final curtain! (*cracks whip—He pulls out a letter*) On your knees—it is the King who speaks!

*The fools kneel.*

*This is the work of a Master Fool! Here! Here is the last laugh! (He reaches into the canvas bag lying on the floor and reads) "In thanks for serving as my greatest fool, here— (He takes out two masks) here are the death masks of your daughter Veneranda and your pupil who killed her. May such a great fool as yourself find a good use for them!"*

*Moment of silence, Folia frozen with laughter.*

Thank you. Thank you my fools. Let's finish the play.

*Folia speaks as he forces the masks onto the faces of the two actors. The fools moan, then shriek. Folia cracks his whip.*

Put that catafalque in the middle of the room! You two! Here are your roles—two cadavers! And you'll finish your wedding night stiff and cold—get into the catafalque, rot! (*They do so*) Funeral service! Sing, Galgut! Fools, formation! March!

*The fools, holding candles, slowly parade around, chanting as music plays.*

Folia: Don't fool yourselves! You're professionals now! Speed it up!

*He lashes them. They go faster.*

Folial:           Faster!

*He continues to lash them. They scream, frenzied. Galgut begs for mercy. Folial joins the chorus.*

Don't fool yourself, Galgut! Now listen—listen to your old Master... I remember the Secret! The Secret of our art, of our race, of any art that hopes to endure... but you already know it. You've learned well, my fools. The secret is Cruelty!

*Silence. All stage and house lights come up. Folial cries with joy. He takes off his ceremonial hat and shoves it onto Galgut's head. The fools have learned their secret and so they leave individually, uncertain—all but Galgut who remains, stunned. Folial laughs. Blackout.*

**Appendix III:**

**Set Designs**

**Appendix IV:**  
**Costume Designs**

**Appendix V:**  
**Design Resources**

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**Appendix VI:**  
**Program Notes**

**Appendix VII:**  
**Written Preparation**

Preparation for *School for Fools*  
Ben Williams

I. Given Circumstances

Environmental facts

summary: inside an abandoned convent; atmosphere of an underground vault, whispers echoing everywhere, sweat, paranoia, a prison, sharp Gothic arches point in different directions—God is not there: a hallowed place that has been hollowed out, abandoned, empty, hard cold heavy stones, decay, mold, architecture of bones, pain, rhythmic exercises, abortions, outcasts, lowest of the low, suffused light through caked windows, candles, smoke, desiccation, cobwebs, dust, a medieval barrenness and simplicity, very private, hidden-away, very secluded, very still

Geographical location:

- an abandoned convent—otherwise unspecified. The original text set the play in Flanders, with the King’s court being in Escorial, Spain, but this has no significant influence on the current text. Ghelderode chose these places for their romantic and historical associations (in his mind), but they mean nothing to contemporary audiences.

Date:

- The date is not specified. The original text was set sometime in the fifteenth century, but it might as well be the present. The medieval dynamic is important, but the references to King, Court, etc. are obvious parallels to the money-brokers who run our current government. To use the cliché, the play is “timeless.”
  - it is the night of the fools’ graduation
- significant dates: (in history of fools)
- Late Gothic period 1200-1350
  - Renaissance 1350-1700 (approximately)
  - NWA releases second album 1991
  - Donald Rumsfeld as Sec’y Defense 2000

Economic Environment

- The economic environment has very little bearing on the action of the play
- only hope for earning a living is to fool, to slave for the upper class
- King and Court are centers of wealth
- The fools must perform or die—their professional skills are their livelihood
- Folia is able to provide them with what they need while in the convent

Political Environment

- King and court rule everything outside the convent—never seen within convent, only rumored, but the King’s status is still recognized
- Outside, the nobility has power over the lower class
- The fools are powerless, in a sense—therefore they must fool the higher powers to get what they want, i.e. to rule the rulers, as Galgut puts it
- Folia, once the fool for the King, is the authority within the school
- Folia’s prodigy students then go to the Court to fool for the King and gain respect among other fools

### Social Environment

- Nobility—at the top
- Fools—in the middle
- Carnival clowns—at the bottom
- A danger exists in the possibility of falling into a lower class
- It is nearly impossible to rise to a higher class
- Noblewomen have affairs then attempt to abort the offspring—creating the race of fools
- Fools place tremendous value on their racial identity—it unites them against the nobility and differentiates them from the lowest form, the carnival clowns
- The King’s Court is the most important society outside the convent—all fools aspire to get into the Court, but only one does, and he is held in high regard by all the other fools
- There is little competition from the other fools to replace Galgut, who will be chosen as the King’s fool, only for them to get into the court somehow
- Folia’s legacy as King’s fool—the goal of each student is to become the prodigy student and inherit Folia’s name and title to serve the King
- the fools value their professional skills, learning the skills and secrets of their art in order to trick others to get what they want—they must fool or join the circus, which is similar to death for the fools
- their art, race, and revenge motivate the fools
- the fools place in life is beneath the thrones, beside the footstools, but they perceive that as a position from which they can then rule their masters

### Manners

- Fools show reverence to Folia, move in formations at Galgut’s command
- their art teaches them to deceive, masking their true emotions—they have their stock shtick, dances, gestures, etc., but, as Folia shows them, their movements can also be sublime

### Physical environment

- Gothic architecture
- Folia has a library where he stores death masks in a glass case
- Catafalque—an altar for funeral ceremonies
- Capucin monastery—architecture of bones
- chamber pots
- church pews, altar, baptistry, pulpit transformed into makeshift stage
- hard cold stone walls
- secluded from the world—no threats from outside, no one would want to come near the convent

### Religious Environment

- the sacred has been overcome by the profane in order to find a new sacred
- medieval sense of religion for those outside the convent—heaven above, hell below, earth in between—Jesus is savior, all must be baptized and practice the doctrine of the Bible in order to go to heaven
- within the convent art has become religion
- Cruelty is secret of art—being brutally honest with oneself equals spiritual purity, being a real, professional artist
- Any deviation from cruelty, e.g. trying to forget the past or one's status in life as a fool, leads to the only real sense of sin and self-degradation, an insult to the art and race of fools
- the fools have been rejected by both heaven and hell—spiritually incomplete
- they convert the convent into their school
- everyone believes in ghosts, very superstitious
- the fools are failed abortions, baptized in toilets, saved by Folia, but in order to learn the secret they must kill their savior, who is reborn through cruelty, and they themselves gain spiritual completion and enter into the world
- for Galgut, Folia is a kind of God-figure with whom he becomes very disillusioned and disappointed, but in whom he still believes is some way of touching the sacred
- the fools are taught that much suffering is necessary in order to be true to the art

### Previous Action

- Folia was the fool for the King
- He cuckolded the King
- The King and Queen wanted to kill the bastard child and Folia, but Folia pleaded/fooled for mercy, and they spared their lives, on the condition that Folia must take the child and leave the Court, never to return
- Folia started a school for fools

- He kept his daughter, Veneranda, locked away in the attic of the school—she would walk around near the clerestory at night and curse the fools: they thought she was a ghost
- Folia's prodigy student at the time inherited his master's name and became Folia II, and he went to serve as fool for the King
- Folia had his daughter marry Folia II, thinking it would be a way of giving her a new and better life
- Veneranda hated all the fools and refused Folia II's advances, so he killed her
- The King found out about the crime and had Folia II executed—he then had death masks made of the two victims and sent them back to Folia, along with a letter explaining what had happened
- All the other fools who are now in the school were attempted to be aborted by their parents, but Folia rescued them all and took them here to his convent and taught them how to become professional fools
- They have been in the school for quite some time—long enough to graduate
- Folia dreamed that Galgut was coming to rob him—he had a vision that tragedy would befall him and that Galgut would lead a plot to kill him
- Folia has influenced his students into seeing their art as a religion
- Folia's physical and mental condition have deteriorated since he's left the King
- Veneranda inherited a horribly deformed body from her father
- She knew that her mother was ashamed of her and tried to hide her

#### Polar Attitudes

Folia: >My teaching is useless. I'm forgetting it all and dying.  
>My teaching succeeded. I remember the secret and am very much alive.

Galgut:>I don't need Folia. I trust my powers enough to challenge him.  
>I do need Folia. He is much greater and more powerful than I am.

## II. Dialogue

summary:

- language varies from poetic and lyrical to vulgar and burlesque
- very colorful, Folia is a master of language—Galgut is learning it, but still uncomfortable at times in speaking, especially around Folia
- lot of surprise
- very playful

- they talk around things, as fools do—a lot of careful consideration, but much more spontaneous and immediate in the play w/in play
- Folia, Galgut, and Veneranda are much more educated than the others
- Language works best in contradictions and juxtaposition of ideas and images, especially in Galgut's speeches to the fools
- A lot of questioning and repetition, especially with Fools 1 and 2
- Language starts and stops with abrupt and incomplete trains of thought, especially with Folia's voice in Galgut's head at beginning of play
- For the most part, the characters really do listen and respond to each other
- Very high degree of violence in the language
- Some alliteration
- very rough in play w/in play
- refined in Folia, for the most part, and in Galgut's bigger speeches to the fools
- not very refined at all in fools
- not too much challenge in the language itself—the words come easily for these characters, only a few stumbling blocks, e.g. Galgut around Folia
- Folia uses a more poetic and ceremonious language, if not at times antiquated
- Galgut is more demonstrative, rhetorical, and proselytizing
- Language can be compared somewhat to Brecht's—a blend of politics, poetry, and humor, though here, perhaps, a wee bit more profane
- Speech of Fools 1 and 2 w/ Folia is directly quoted from press conference of Donald Rumsfeld
- Other language influenced by hip-hop groups like NWA, Public Enemy, Tricky
- A lot is hidden in Folia's speech w/ Galgut and the fools, and in Galgut's speech w/ Folia, not much else hidden, especially in play w/in play
- Galgut, Folia, Folia II, and Veneranda become very engaged w/ their speech

kinds of words:

- Secret
- Veneranda
- Formation, lesson, listen, posture, line
- Slut
- The clap
- Love
- Art

- Real—mockery—parody—imposture—folly
- Confinement
- Seminary
- Swans
- Bastards
- Procreated
- Counterfeit mankind
- Lump of anatomy
- Baptism—toilet
- Apprentices—masters
- Carnival clowns
- Fell from His Grace
- Clerestory
- Corpses
- Confederates
- Light
- Weight
- Whiplashes
- Style
- Flattery
- Prodigious
- Race
- Ceremony
- Soul
- Premonition—memory—forget
- Traps
- Kill
- Career
- False faces
- Creeps
- Morons
- Cadavers
- Life-death
- Unrivalled
- Religion—faith
- Kill him with our tongues
- Theatre, stage
- Conspiracy
- Edge
- Memories
- Confessions
- Gift from Heaven
- Holy solitude
- Pathos, ridicule

- Twilight sleep
- Catafalque
- Crazy
- Trust
- Pupil
- Rape
- Daddy
- Cavity
- Fuck the pure
- Absence, evidence, know, unknowns
- Profession
- Celebration
- Artists, rabble, courts, deceive, trick, marked, disgust, spite, dance, reverence
- Gratitude
- Ass
- Gnawed away by disease
- Burdensome honors
- Experience
- Christ
- Species
- Croak
- Prelude
- Slaves
- Inspiration
- Comedy, tragedy, Masquerade
- Babble
- Nuptial, spectacle, beauty and beast, love-play, rich prick, endowed, conquest, purity, colleagues, convent, royalty, screw you fucks, fool's strut, blind, vision, sight, curse, daughter-bastard, monologue
- Sorry joke
- Master, contract, derision, harpie, honeymoon
- Inheritance, locked away, freak, May, Mother of God, intercede
- Buffoon
- Comedian
- Interlude
- Pedigree
- Awakened
- Cadavers, funeral, march
- cruelty

Summary: the focus should be on contradictions and juxtaposing the sacred with the profane: sharp-soft, awake-sleep, baptism-toilet, pure-impure, love-death, known-unknown, memory-forgetting, Heaven-Hell, etc.

- all are vulgar at some point, Folia II more than anyone else, Folia the most reserved

kinds of images:

- dead, money, slut, holy wafers, poor, condoms, criminal, army, sick, crayon, bishop, little boy, king, clap, drunk, holy water, jew, mosque, muslim, bacon, scholar, hand rattle
- hairy, juice, ladies, executioner's claws, blood, swans, abortions, baptized in a toilet, thrones, footstools
- prison
- icewater in his veins
- ghosts and corpses he sleeps with every night
- bull, maiden, believer, gallows
- light
- black pond
- steeple clocks
- whiplashes
- ghost, maiden walking around by the clerestory
- funeral ceremony
- miscarried dead
- poison
- eye lost its luster
- carnival clowns
- hands round the neck of the man with the whip
- death masks in a glass case
- shrunken spider numb with cold
- skeleton under the catafalque
- cavities
- plastic flags, song and navel, suffer with a smile, epigrams or turds
- fragrant flower
- sorry slaves of laughter
- flesh and blood
- Holy Virgin
- Miserable body
- Death masks

summary: again, the focus should be on contradictions and juxtaposing the sacred with the profane—very much about truth/reality and deception/performance, death and resurrection, remembering and forgetting

### III. Dramatic Action

summary:

- Galgut leads the fools in a revolt to try to overthrow their master Folia because they feel that he has betrayed them, that he is not being true to the art that he is teaching them, and so they have lost faith in him. Folia

himself is torn between trying to continue to teach or giving up and dying. Folia does not want to face his personal ghosts, his past—he is old and has been avoiding it, wanting to die in peace—and therefore, he is forgetting the secret of his art, that is, cruelty, brutal honesty. So the fools, led by Galgut, force Folia to face his past by putting on a play about the death of his daughter. But in doing so, they revive him: the act of cruelty precipitates a spiritual rebirth for Folia, and he teaches them their final lesson, which they already know but didn't know they knew. The fools celebrate and leave the convent—all but Galgut, who is stunned, having been so obsessed with overthrowing Folia that he missed the bigger idea, his purpose in being in the school, and subsequently he inherits his master's title, becoming the next Folia.

- Galgut's desire for revenge drives the play up until Folia's rebirth, then Folia finishes it in delivering the final lesson
- Folia is the protagonist
- Galgut is the antagonist

shape of the action:

- Galgut discovers the letter that the King sent to Folia, thus discovering Folia's weakness, but he is overcome by his sense of duty and regimen
- He calls the fools together and persuades them to join his plot to overthrow Folia
- Folia disrupts the meeting and intimidates Galgut into helping him finish the graduation ceremony. Then Folia senses the ghost of his daughter Veneranda and, in a moment of vulnerability, runs off.
- Galgut meets with two fools to finalize the plot. They hear Folia returning and hide.
- Folia longs for death in a reverie. He catches the fools hiding. They try to fool him into revealing the secret, but he resists and leaves.
- Galgut calls the fools together a final time and preps them for the graduation ceremony
- Folia enters and they perform for him
- Folia attempts to release the fools and reveal the secret, but he is scared by his daughter's ghost and withholds the secret
- The fools begin their play about the death of Folia's daughter
- Folia becomes entranced by their music and performs a dance for them. The fools are all amazed, and Galgut is stricken with guilt over the deed he is about to commit.
- They continue with the play, which shows Folia II trying and failing to woo Veneranda who rejects and derides him. As Veneranda lashes out against the race of fools and in particular her father, Folia is wracked with guilt. When Folia II moves to kill Veneranda, Folia rushes the stage and collapses.
- The fools think they have succeeded and begin to celebrate.

- Folia revives and makes them all finish the play in a funeral procession. He reveals the secret to them. He then passes his title on to Galgut and releases the fools.

Climax: the fools overthrow Folia, who then resurrects himself and reveals the secret of their art

breakdown:

#### Unit 1 The Beating

Folia commands; Galgut obeys

G: inspects

F: punishes

G: obeys

#### Unit 2 The Test

Galgut instructs; Fools affirm

G: commands, prompts

F: affirms

G: prompts

F: affirms

G: prompts

F: affirms

G: tests, instructs, entertains, scares, exhorts

#### Unit 3 The Prep

Galgut rouses; Fools join

#### Unit 4 The Plot

Galgut incites; Fools join

G: restrains

F: protests

G: warns, scares

F: obeys

G: encourages, incites

F: questions, resists

G: corrects

F: prompts

G: lures

F: resists

G: exhorts

F: yields

G: entices, instructs, warns

#### Unit 5 Interrupted

Galgut orders, Fools obey

Unit 6 The First Test

Galgut probes, Foliol evades

F: beckons, commands

G: assuages

F: tests

G: evades

F: needles, commands

G: assuages

F: resists

G: prompts

F: evades

G: flatters

F: chastises

G: flatters

F: resists

G: probes

F: evades

G: probes

F: evades

G: cajoles

F: ignores

G: prompts

F: resists

G: interrogates

F: evades

G: needles

F: suspects

G: probes

F: affirms

G: interrogates

F: resists, ignores

Unit 7 The Trick

Galgut scares, Foliol warns

G: scares, intimidates

F: pleads

G: needles

F: warns

G: elicits

F: dismisses, evades

G: scares

F: pleads

G: interrogates

Unit 8 Tables Turn

Folial bullies, intimidates, Galgut resists

F: diverts

G: amuses

F: affirms

G: jibes

F: admonishes

G: resists

F: bullies, intimidates, punishes,

G: attacks

F: silences, evades

Unit 9 Finalize the Plot

Galgut instructs, Fool 1 criticizes, Fool 2 resists

G: instructs

F2: refuses

G: coerces

F1: criticizes

G: admonishes, instructs, lures

F2: dares

G: ignores

F1: criticizes

G: evades

F1: questions

F2: resists

G: exhorts, orders

F1: resists

F2: pleads

G: reassures

F1: resists

G: orders

F2: resists

G: instructs

F1: checks

G: reaffirms, promises, orders

Unit 10 The Reverie

Folial prays

Unit 11 The Deception

Fool 1 lures, Folial pleads, Fool 2 questions

F1: ridicules

F2: questions

F: doubts, beckons

F1: lures

F: begs

F1: reassures

F: pleads  
F2: questions  
F1: lures  
F: implores  
F2: entices  
F: disbelieves  
F1: lures  
F: follows  
F1: lures  
F2: jibes  
F1: admonishes  
F2: teases  
F1: admonishes

Unit 12          Caught  
                    Folial doubts, Fool 1 and 2 deceive

F1: begs  
F: corrects, chastises  
F2: obeys  
F: chastises  
F1: pleads, evades  
F2: evades, deceives  
F: scorns  
F1: evades, deceives  
F: doubts  
F2: reassures  
F1: lures  
F2: reassures  
F1: cajoles  
F2: reassures  
F1: needles  
F: evades, dismisses, orders

Unit 13          Final Lesson  
                    Galgut orders, instructs, entertains, rouses, Fools accept

Unit 14          The Ceremony  
                    Folial teaches, Galgut flatters

F: evades  
G: flatters  
F: resists  
G: flatters  
F: criticizes  
G: evades  
F: teaches, blesses, ignores  
G: reassures, pities

Unit 15            The Bait  
                      Fools and Galgut implore, Foliol resists  
G: implores  
Fools: implore, prompt, etc.  
F: criticizes  
G: beseeches  
F: resists  
G: begs  
F: deters  
G: reassures

Unit 16            The Dance  
                      Foliol amazes, Fools and Galgut revere  
G: thanks  
F: dismisses  
G: corrects  
F: exhorts  
G: questions  
F: evades  
G: criticizes

Unit 17            The Set-up  
                      Galgut reassures, Foliol doubts  
F: orders  
G: reassures  
F: ridicules  
G: cajoles, needles  
F: evades, criticizes  
G: resists  
F: insults, bullies  
G: challenges  
F: interrogates  
G: resists, dares  
F: evades  
G: trumps

Unit 18            First Round  
Foliol II: boasts, entertains, rouses, doubts, beckons  
F: criticizes  
G: reassures

Unit 19            Upping the Ante  
                      FII: pleads, Veneranda refuses  
FII: begs  
V: refuses

FII: pleads  
V: refuses  
FII: implores  
V: refuses  
FII: beseeches  
V: refuses  
FII: scorns  
V: refuses  
FII: begs  
V: refuses, begs  
FII: admonishes, begs  
V: refuses

Unit 20          The Attack

FII implores, Veneranda attacks, Foliai pleads

FII: demands  
V: scorns  
FII: berates  
V: ignores  
FII: pleads  
V: admonishes  
FII: doubts, entices  
V: refuses, admonishes  
F: begs  
V: attacks  
F: pleads  
V: exhorts, admonishes  
F: implores  
V: insults  
F: pleads, berates  
V: attacks  
FII: impresses  
V: rejects

Unit 21          The Final Push

FII: attacks, Veneranda rejects, Foliai attacks

FII: questions  
V: admonishes  
FII: scorns  
V: insults  
FII: berates  
V: ignores  
FII: demands  
V: refuses  
FII: attacks  
V: rejects

FII: pleads, berates, implores  
V: pleads  
FII: begs, pleads  
V: rejects  
FII: attacks  
F: attacks

Unit 22          Celebration  
                    Galgut and Fools celebrate

Unit 23          The Finale  
                    Folial reigns, Galgut obeys, Fools obey  
F: interrupts, instructs, commands, lures, releases

#### IV. Characters

summary: The pattern is that Galgut effectively turns into Folial. He becomes the cruel master that he tried to destroy. He moves from rage, to power, then to disenchantment, ending the play where Folial was at the beginning.

Galgut is the leader of the fools, he gains power over them by questioning Folial's power.

Fools begin as individuals, hapless, incomplete, disorganized—they unite into an organized collective mass in producing the play for Folial—they leave as individuals, complete, self-sufficient. They are the gang, a gangmentality, sense of loyalty.

Folial moves from sleep and near death to full life and awake.

The fools' professions are at stake, their futures, their sense of self-worth and respect, which is essentially life or death.

Folial and Galgut are in a bid for power.

#### Folial

objective: to teach his students their final lesson

obstacle: his desire to give up and die, his lack of faith in them

will: strong in the end, but falters throughout

moral stance: values the sublime possibilities of his art, discipline, control, not honest with himself until very end of play, stricken with guilt about the death of his daughter, haunted by it and wants to atone, tries to be honest with the fools, more honest with Galgut, values his art more than anything

decorum: varies between trance of a sleepwalker, to a nimble Charlie Chaplin-esque gait, very expressive hands, hunchback, stiff and slow moving, body is in state of decay, easily exhausted, full of blood and energy at end of play, swift and hard, raggedy raspy voice, scary sick laugh

adjectives: haunted, cruel, old, dying, hard, soft, weak-kneed, nimble, haggard, tired, exhausted, cunning, genius, inspiring, traditional, immortal, cold, savage,

bullying, owl-like, bullish, giddy, astonishing, impeccable, impenetrable, scared, lonely, guilt-ridden, tormented, devilish, paranoid, delusional, raving, lucid, light,

Galgut

objective: to overthrow Folia

obstacle: his respect for Folia as a great artist

will: obsessively strong when alone, but not so much in the presence of Folia

moral stance: values power, discipline, suffering, self-flagellation, regimen, honest with himself, honest with others, not honest with Folia, values the fools as a race, obsessed with revenge to get back at Folia because he (Galgut) values the art so much

decorum: stern face, a great performer, very captivating and expressive, powerful voice, young powerful body, high energy, very nimble, overstrained a lot of the time, fiery tongue

adjectives: raging, dangerous, wrathful, diligent, rebellious, subservient, self-flagellating, calculating, methodic, spontaneous, rousing, raucous, proud, determined, self-doubting, unsteady, green, powerful, youthful, insistent, obedient, loud, abrasive, coercive, manipulative, certain, unyielding, restrained, controlled, lost, betrayed, jaded, vengeful, obsessive, compulsive, entertaining, flattering

Folia II

objective: to woo Veneranda, to get laid

obstacle: his desperation

will: quite determined, but has keen moments of self-doubt

moral stance: values attention, public acknowledgement, values conquests of any sort, particularly sexual, values wit and language, values sexual prowess, honest with himself, honest with others

decorum: swaggers instead of walks, always plays to his audience, puffy chest, scrawny frame, smiles and laughs a lot, very loud abrasive annoying cutting voice and laughter, knobby knees

adjectives: braggadocious, loud, cock-strong, unsure, childish, giddy, bi-polar, desperate, insulted,

flamboyant, proud, confident, timid, jock-ish, bigheaded, impenetrable, sappy, horny, predatory, hapless, misinformed, unstable, spontaneous, improvisational, terrified

Veneranda

objective: to deter Folia II and prove him wrong

obstacle: her guilt and rage

will: iron

moral stance: values truth, despises the race of fools as being dishonest, mean, and useless, values faith in herself, very honest with herself and others, not ashamed to bring the dark things out into the light, values purgation and atonement, unforgiving to those who have betrayed her

decorum: savage anger, hot fiery attitude, strong hard voice, body is bound in braces but still very strong and rigid, doesn't let anyone speak over her, doesn't move around very easily, solid

adjectives: bitter, betrayed, violent, broken, defeated, acidic, harsh, cruel, harpie-esque, jaded,

demonstrative, stentorian, vociferous, sad, cold, heartbroken, pained, devout, pure, fragmented, used, fiery, hemorrhaging, overflowing, acerbic, chaste,

Fools

objective: to obey Galgut, to impress Folia, to learn the Secret, to graduate

obstacle: their fear of Folia, fear of failure

will: generally shaky, must be coaxed and commanded

moral stance: value regimen, obedience, the art, value their Master and Galgut as leaders, very proud of themselves as a race

decorum: full of energy, very responsive vocally and physically to everything around them, fast, high bubbly voices, lots of giggling and laughter, constantly taunting and pinching each other, moans and cries, big distended grins and frowns, quick in formations, dances

adjectives: incomplete, herd-like, individual, collective, uncertain, vocal, unified, aborted,

abandoned, useless, amoeba-like, responsive, timid, wild, untamed, raw, willing, eager, stubborn,

dumb, clever, brainless, feisty, torrential, repulsive, charming, naïve, relentless

V. Idea

meaning of the title:

a contradiction, an oxymoron—teaching someone to deceive, which turns out to be much more difficult and complex than it would seem: in order to deceive, one must not deceive oneself—in a sense, they are trying to learn something that cannot be taught

philosophical statements:

- The fools' first song
- Real fools never love, only pretend, and they're never loved in return, only mocked. This is the life of a real fool, the life of your Art. So why live it, you ask? Why not surrender to the custodians of morality and strangle yourselves now? Because we have the Secret, the Secret of our Art, the Secret that makes us real fools. And real fools don't die.
- Tomorrow you apprentices will become masters! You will go back into the world where you began, where you belong: beneath the thrones, beside the footstools. That's justice!
- You'll be nothing without the Secret. Carnival clowns.
- He's forgetting what he is.
- My teaching, this imposture, the folly befitting my name, the madness of believing that anyone can teach anyone else
- You can fool without the folly

- It's the King—he's the fool
- That's what artists do—they imitate life. But he's imitating death!
- He lifted our art to the heights of religion. He turned the work of a simple fool into the faith of the King. But now he's forgotten his lesson.
- We can kill him—not with our fists, but with our tongues, like worthy fools.
- Do you know whence comes and whither goeth all flesh? From one cavity into another cavity.
- Look outside: we, as artists, can survive in the world in only two ways. We can go on wandering and rejoin the rabble—the way of fools. Or we can fool for the courts—the way of professionals—and in this way, we slowly regain the shadow of a life we would have had, with the families from which we were cast out.....But all in all, we're the ones to be envied, for in our world, you alone can thumb your noses on the sidelines, and revel in your own brands of pleasure.
- My entire life, and yours, owe it to themselves to be ceremonious.
- The claim that buffoons escape the outrages of time. Don't believe a word of it. Look at me now, gnawed away by the disease of it
- Forgive them, Master. Christ couldn't teach them charity. He didn't die for their species.
- We will suffer for you, for we can never leave mediocrity. We'll always be fools, the sorry slaves of laughter.
- I'm a *fool*. You're all *fools*.
- Not easy to kill, a pedigree buffoon.
- The Secret of our art, of our race, of any art that hopes to endure...but you already know it. You've learned well, my fools. The secret is Cruelty!

implications of the action:

This play is about Folia, an old Master fool, who is torn between the desire to give up and die, or to teach his students their final lesson, the secret of a fool's art. When his students, in a plot to overthrow him, put on a play about the death of his daughter, Folia is driven to reveal the Secret and sends them out into the world.

VI. Moods

1. nightmare
2. rap concert
3. gospel revival
4. spy game
5. waking the dead
6. tug of war with a wall
7. haunting
8. beating a dog
9. rousing the troops
10. praying for release
11. teasing the sick

12. Donald Rumsfeld press conference
13. Malcolm X speech
14. Transcendental orgy
15. extracting teeth
16. Religious experience
17. shutting up my grandmother
18. bawdy stand-up
19. watching a pig try to fuck a lamb
20. claws in guts
21. disembowelment
22. new years eve
23. pin drop

VII. Tempo/Rhythm

1. slow
2. very fast
3. moderate
4. faster
5. slow
6. moderate
7. slow
8. methodically slow
9. fast
10. slow
11. faster
12. much faster
13. moderate
14. fast
15. moderate
16. very slow
17. faster
18. fast
19. faster still
20. faster still
21. very fast
22. fast
23. moderately fast, then slow

**Archetypes**

Folial is        the father  
                      the teacher  
                      the master  
                      the sage  
                      the dying old man  
                      the amnesiac

the savior  
the redeemer  
the dictator  
the tyrant  
the last of his kind  
the old school  
the experienced  
the pope  
the fool  
the trickster  
the greatest performer

Galgut is the leader of the street gang  
The pupil  
the son  
the servant  
the novice  
the rebellious youth  
the sinner  
the plebian  
the new school  
the first of his kind  
the trickster  
the foil  
the adolescent  
the jealous rival  
the ringleader

Folial II is the braggart  
the virgin groom  
the jealous child  
the rapist

Veneranda is the voice of reason  
the victim  
the judge  
the accuser  
the cursed  
the protestor  
the female

What type of play is this?

A grotesque tragicomedy.

What is this play about?

The paradoxical nature of art. For the fools, it is about forming an identity and discovering the power and meaning of their art.

What is the intent of the play?

To show the cruelty, the brutal honesty and discord, inherent in art.

With what feeling should the audience leave?

Peter Brook, commenting on Grotowski's production of *Akropolis*, says he left with the impression of having experienced something "rather nasty."

What is the world-view of the play?

Art is a very contradictory thing—it questions and deceives, while at the same time asserting certain truths and dogmas. The world operates on dualities and paradoxes. The world does not care about artists. In order to survive, artists must deceive, while at the same time they must be brutally honest with themselves, never fooling themselves into thinking that they are something more than what they are. They must be cruel in order to be real, to be professional—if they were to fool themselves, they would become mere clowns.