

KULUNKA  
THEATRE COMPANY

# André & Dorine

TEACHING  
GUIDE

André  
&  
Dorine



30  
countries  
500  
shows  
over  
200.000  
spectators



BEST  
ENSEMBLE  
Los Angeles



BEST  
SPECIALITY  
Los Angeles



AUDIENCE  
PRIZE  
UK



BEST  
DRAMATURGY  
UK



BEST  
FOREIGN  
SHOW  
La Habana

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# André & Dorine

## INTRODUCTION

Theatre and education, *that is the question*. Our modern-day obsession with constantly keeping abreast of the very latest technological and teaching trends often prompts us to assume that no theatre play is complete without *tablets*, *PPTs*, *moodle*, *e-learning*, *Dropbox*, *P2P*, *blogs* and *webs* (among other ICT innovations). But why don't we just take our students to the theatre instead? Because theatre is one of the literary genres that has most contributed to transmitting culture; because it is a reflection (*mimesis*) of human life; because at the theatre, human beings (in this case students) look at themselves from a myriad of different points of view, and this in turn has a necessary effect (*catharsis*) on their emotions, imagination and ethical awareness. And because art education should play a crucial role at school.

The advantage of theatre over television and film lies in its immediacy. Theatre is a living organism of which the audience is a vital part: spectators merge with the actors, becoming wit-

nesses to their personifications and accomplices in the story being told - a story that unfolds right in front of their very eyes and which goes far beyond the imaginary limits of the proscenium.

This is exactly what is in store for students who go to see *André & Dorine*. In addition to the experience of seeing (many of them probably for the first time) a silent, masked performance, they will also be drawn into a story about human beings, a story about love, old age, illness, time, forgetfulness, memory, art, joy and sadness, the tender and the terrible. All these aspects are represented on stage through the fusion of resources, motifs, techniques, elements and visual impact which leave spoken words aside in search of a universal language capable of overcoming all barriers and achieving a single, unifying goal: the evocation of an entire life.

To aid understanding and render the play accessible in all its complexity, we propose that you complete the activities outlined

in this teaching guide. Thinking about and discussing certain issues before coming to see the play will help students understand better what it is they are witnessing once the lights go out. Then, all that is left is to go with the flow and laugh and cry your hearts out. The guide also contains a wide range of instructions, general activities and scene-specific clarifications and exercises designed for after students have seen the performance, to further aid their analysis and understanding. The list of activities included here is not meant to be exhaustive (indeed, how could it be?).

The guide is simply designed to present a series of ideas and suggestions from which each person can choose those that best suit them in accordance with their students' interests, the characteristics of each individual group and the time available. We sincerely hope you find it useful.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

# WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SEE?

*André & Dorine* is a love story involving two elderly people who, after having lived together for many years, have fallen into a rut and treat each other with indifference. Or at least they do until an unexpected turn of events disrupts their monotonous relationship: illness rears its ugly head. Alzheimer's disease, the devourer of memory and identity, becomes the main antagonist and the protagonists have to struggle to remember who they were in order to understand who they are now.

The play takes the form of a masked performance, enabling three actors to play over fifteen different characters. They do not utter a single word, but you won't miss the sound of spoken speech because their gestures are so eloquent and their masks so expressive and

full of life that they create a new language which transcends the spoken word and is more than capable of narrating, moving and entertaining. The masks act as a bridge to an intimate, poetic world, taking us on a journey through memory back to the origins of the love that André and Dorine once felt so keenly for each other. And thanks to a bitter-sweet mixture of humour and emotion, they help us find ourselves in their story.

**'Record** comes from the Latin *recordari* (re "again" and *cors*, *cordis* "heart"): return through the heart.'

**ANDRÉ GORZ**



# Letter to D.

You may be interested to know that the play is inspired by the lives of two real people. 'They were the seed from which the idea of the play sprung,' explains Garbiñe Insausti, one of the actresses and founders of the theatre company, 'and we kept their names as a tribute to them.' On 23 October 1947, André Gorz (an Austrian journalist and philosopher, founder of the weekly publication *Le Nouvel Observateur* and regular contributor to the philosophical journal *Les Temps Modernes*, alongside Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir) met Dorine Keir, an English traveller from a family broken apart by World War I, while they were playing cards at a party in Paris.

*We were both children of precariousness and conflict. We were made to protect each other. We needed to create together, by being together, the place in the world that we'd originally been denied. But, for that, our love also had to be a pact for life.*

At the age of 60, Dorine was diagnosed with a degenerative disease and Gorz decid-

ed to retire and dedicate himself fully to looking after her. So they moved to the country.

*You've just turned eighty-two. You've shrunk six centimetres, you only weigh forty-five kilos yet you're still beautiful, graceful and desirable. We've lived together for fifty-two years and I'm writing to you now to understand what my life has been, what our life together has meant, because I love you more than ever.*

So begins *Letter to D. A love story* (2006). It is a letter covering almost ninety pages written by André Gorz when he was an old man, dedicated to the woman who had been his life-long companion. The letter charts the love he shared with his personal and intellectual partner for almost six decades. Gorz the philosopher and journalist always wrote about human issues. But in *Letter to D.* he went one step further: *What I wanted to highlight is that the only human wealth is sensitivity. When this is eliminated, then there is only nonsense, only material wealth, instrumental, but not human. Dorine taught me that.*

They always wanted to die together, on the same day and in the same way. And they did. On 22 September 2007, they in-

jected themselves with a lethal substance. They died in each other's arms in their bed at their house in Vosnon (France).

The book ends as it began:

*You've just turned 82. You're still beautiful, graceful and desirable. We've lived together now for 58 years and I love you more than ever. Lately, I've fallen in love with you all over again and I once more feel a gnawing emptiness inside that can only be filled when your body is pressed against mine. At night I sometimes see the figure of a man, on an empty road in a deserted landscape, walking behind a hearse. I am that man. It's you the hearse is taking away. I don't want to be there for your cremation; I don't want to be given an urn with your ashes in it. I hear the voice of Kathleen Ferrier singing, 'Die Welt ist leer, Ich will nicht leben mehr' (the world is empty. I don't want to go on living) and I wake up. I check your breathing, my hand brushes over you. Neither of us wants to outlive the other. We've often said to ourselves that if, by some miracle, we were to have a second life, we'd like to spend it together.*

## ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Our commitment to reality is one of the hallmarks of the Kulunka Theatre Company. We have adopted Cervantes' view of theatre as 'a mirror for life, an example of customs and an image of truth' and have placed Alzheimer's disease at the centre of our story.

Alzheimer's is a neurodegenerative disease that results in cognitive impairment and behavioural disorders. Scientists have still not discovered what causes the onset of the disease and it is, at present, incurable and fatal and occurs most frequently in those aged 65 and over. As the disease progresses, symptoms include memory loss, mental confusion, irritability and aggressiveness, language impairment, disorientation, difficulties completing familiar tasks or resolving problems and a predisposition to isolation. In Spain alone, Alzheimer's currently affects over 650,000 people.

The role of those who care for Alzheimer's patients is not a simple one. The task often falls to close family members and requires a huge amount of time and energy. We can all imagine how hard it must be to witness the gradual deterioration of a loved one, and this is further exacerbated by relatives' difficulty understanding what exactly is happening, a situation which takes a heavy emotional toll, often resulting in exhaustion, anxiety and frustration.

André and Dorine must therefore come to terms with the changes imposed by the disease. Acceptance of their situation finally arrives in the most marvellous way: in their battle against Dorine's loss of memory and identity (a loss which goes beyond the disease itself), love, generosity and, above all, playfulness and imagination offer them a whole arsenal of resources which enable them to find one another again, and in doing so, to find themselves.



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF MASKS

The word **mask** has a very remote and very interesting etymological origin: it comes from the Arabic word *masjara* or *mashara*, meaning 'buffoon' or 'man with a mask', which in turn derives from *sahara* or *sahir*, meaning 'to mock or ridicule someone'. In (non-classical) Latin, one possible forebear may be *mascus*, *masca*, meaning 'ghost'. In Europe, the term may have been influenced by the Italian dialects or the Occitan term *masca*, meaning 'witch', of Germanic or Celtic origin, which eventually gave rise to the French *masque* and the Italian *maschera*, used to refer to the beautiful creations of the Venice Carnival. According to Joan Corominas, author of the critical etymological dictionary of the Spanish and Hispanic languages, the modern Spanish word for mask, *máscara*, comes from the Catalanian term *màscara*. Ridicule, buffoons, ghosts and witches all indicate a close connection with deception, fiction and mockery of reality.

As you will see, there are many different reasons why people wear masks.

The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) once said that in ancient times, masks were believed to have sacrificial powers and to absorb the identify not only of the actors who wore them, but

Masks have been used since ancient times and in all civilisations and cultures for ceremonial, festive, magical and practical purposes. They have been used to invoke good fortune before a hunt, to perpetuate or remember the faces of those who have passed away, to represent other people, to hide one's face, to protect oneself and even as a form of punishment.

Masks may protect, but they may also attract danger. They are a manifestation of duality: between the self and the other, between human beings and deities. They are a representation, charged with intentions and symbolism that become archetypes, part of the collective and individual unconscious, reflecting the fears and aspirations of an entire civilisation. Their purpose is therefore both social and cathartic.

- What do you think is the purpose of the following masks? If you are unfamiliar with any of them, look them up on the Internet: the zoomorphic masks of prehistoric peoples; the mask of Tutankhamun; the harlequin mask; the tournament mask of a medieval knight; the mask worn by the Phantom of the Opera; the masks worn by the Orcs in the Lord of the Rings films; Mexican wrestling masks; the Guy Fawkes mask; the iron mask; sporting masks (fencing or hockey masks, for example).
- What other famous characters can you think of who wear masks? Why do they wear them?

of the audience also, thereby generating a 'kind of vertigo'. The decidedly poetic nature of masks has provided inspiration to many different poets. For instance, Juan Eduardo Cirlot (Barcelona, 1916-1973) once said that 'the purpose of a mask is to serve as an ally in the transformation of reality for the mysterious or the shameful.' Octavio Paz (Mexico, 1914-1998) pointed out that masks constitute a way of avoiding

the condition of being, since he who hides does not represent, but rather seeks to become invisible. The following are a couple of lines written on this very theme by Mario Benedetti (Uruguay, 1920-2009): *Masks do not serve as a second face / they do not sweat, they do not become flustered, and they never flush.*



## MASKED THEATRE

Theatre and masks have always been closely intertwined. The best example of this is the fact that the symbol of the theatre is a pair of masks, one smiling and the other sad. These masks represent Thalia and Melpomene, the ancient Greek Muses of comedy and tragedy (respectively).



1

### THE ORIGINS OF THEATRE

The most primitive forms of theatre used masks. During the Palaeolithic era, masks were used in magic rituals linked to hunting. In Africa, they were used in ritual or religious ceremonies which were designed and experienced as true performances. The ancient Egyptians used masks in short dramatisations of the death and resurrection of Osiris, as well as (like the Phoenicians) to perpetuate the faces of the dead.

2

### IN GREEK THEATRE

During the Dionysia (a harvest festival in honour of the god Dionysus), in which scenes from the lives of the gods were played out to hymns (*dithyrambs*), the Greeks used masks or (in their absence) applied mud or saffron to their faces to hide them. This concealing of the face symbolised the new as opposed to the commonplace and was an essential part of the ceremony.

The rituals gradually evolved towards increasingly theatrical forms until, during the 5th century BC, with the establishment of the traditional mod-

els of tragedy and comedy, the dramatic innovations introduced by Aeschylus and Sophocles and the construction of the great Theatres of Epidaurus and Dionysus, the foundations of Western theatre drama were finally laid. Masks then became the element that transformed the actor into one or various different characters (youth, old man, woman, etc.). Moreover, masks were generally very large in order to render them more visible to the audience and, alongside *buskins* (high heeled boots), were used to ensure the actors were seen in the correct proportion by those sitting in the different rows. Masks also served as

'loudspeakers', helping actors to project their voices further.

In ancient Greek, a mask was known as a *prosopon* (pros: 'in front of' and opos: 'face'). This meaning is similar to one of the Spanish words for mask: *antifaz* (anti: 'in front of', faz: 'face') and is the origin of the term **prosopo-peia** meaning 'personification'.

3

## IN ROMAN THEATRE

Roman actors continued the tradition of using masks. During the performance of *fabulas palliatis* (Romanised versions of Greek comedies), the masks used were similar to Greek ones with one notable difference: they were two-sided (smiling or angry) and were held with a rod to enable actors to show the



audience the appropriate face at any given moment. In *Atellan Farce* (popular farces with a satirical tone), fixed masks were used always to represent stock characters (Dossennus, Maccus, Buccus and Manducus, among others). This type of theatre was an early form of *Commedia dell'arte*.

In Latin, the term for mask was *personae* (from *per sonare*: 'sounding through'). This is logical given that masks were used not only to express emotions, but also to help amplify actors' voices, due to the special shape of the mouth opening. This is the origin of the words **persona** in English and **personaje** (character) in Spanish.

## IN MEDIEVAL THEATRE

In the Middle Ages, the use of masks during theatrical performances was condemned by the Church and the tradition only persisted in some scenes from mystery plays (medieval religious dramas portraying passages from the holy scriptures) and (in its most grotesque form) in spectacles staged for public amusement. In his study on folk culture during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1875) defined the theme of the mask as *'the most complex theme of folk culture ... Of course it would be impossible to exhaust the intricate multiform symbolism of the mask. Let us point out that such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures are per se derived from the mask. It reveals the essence of the grotesque.'*

## DURING THE RENAISSANCE

*Commedia dell'arte*, born in Italy, is the genre that best represents the use of masks during this period. It blends different elements of Italian



MASKS USED IN *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE*

Renaissance literary theatre with carnival traditions. The actors were professional performers, dedicated to turning theatre into a profitable business enterprise. They usually played the same character throughout the entire course of their lives, in a myriad of different ways, performing both on the streets and in palaces. They had an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of maxims, jokes and declarations of undying love. In addition to being acrobats, musicians and orators, the actors were also masters of improvisation, although certain written documents have survived that set out the main plots (these are known as *canovaccios* or lists of different acts and scenes).

They would wander all over Europe in stable troupes. The plots of the plays they performed were fairly simple, using featuring a pair of star-crossed lov-

ers who draw the disapproval of their families or society. Characters included the *innamorati* (lovers), such as Lucio and Rosaura, who did not usually wear masks, the *vecchi* (elders or masters), such as Pantaleone, Il Capitano, Il Dottore and Tartaglia, and the *zanni* (eccentric servants), usually stock characters such as Harlequin and his mistress Colombina, the sly Brighella, the clumsy Pulcinella and the rustic Trufaldino. In addition to their use of masks (often half-masks to facilitate speech), which enabled them to be easily identified, part of the success of these characters lay in their linguistic characterisation: each character spoke a specific Italian dialect in keeping with their individual characteristics, which added extra flavour to their portrayed personalities.



## ORIENTAL THEATRE

Masks are an intrinsic part of the oriental theatre tradition.

The masks used in Japanese theatre (called *omo-te* or *nohmen*: Noh theatre masks) are unique within their genre. Masks differ in accordance with, for example, the type of character be-

ing portrayed (Gods, Warriors, Women, Lunatics and Demons), although some transcend established categories. They are usually very small, with tiny eye holes (hence the importance of the pillars on the stage, since they help the actors find their bearings). Noh masks can be made to represent different emotions through head posture and lighting.

Face-changing or *bian lian* is part of the more general Chi-

nese Sichuan opera. With just a wave of their hands or a turn of their heads, the artists can change their masks (which are made of cloth) in a fraction of a second. Their technique is a secret that has been passed down from one generation to the next within certain families



瘦男 Yase-otoko



若い女 Wakaonna



八仙 Fudo



猿 Saru



生剥 Namahage



釣眼 Tsurimanako

### ORIENTAL MASKS ●

#### WOMEN, MASKS AND THEATRE

-

The history of masks is also linked to the role of women in theatre throughout history. Masks helped men play female roles, since women were forbidden from acting, both in classical and in medieval theatre. During the Renaissance, theatre troupes continued to be all-male, with the exception of *Commedia dell'arte*, in which actresses sometimes gave their name to female characters (such as 'Isabella', named after Isabella Andreini). In Spain, the authorisation of 1587 fi-

nally allowed women to tread the boards, although their appearance on stage was subject to two conditions: firstly, actresses had to be married and accompanied by their husbands, and secondly, they were only allowed to play female characters. Although the prohibition against women participating in theatre performances was maintained in some countries, such as England, the presence of women in other theatrical activities gradually increased during the sixteen-hundreds, gaining momentum towards the end of that century. Oriental theatre also discriminated against women. In *bian lian*, for example,

they were traditionally not allowed to learn the secrets of the mask changing techniques, which were passed down from father to son. Women were excluded from this cultural inheritance since it was feared they would reveal the secrets to another family when they married out. Although this taboo was removed in 1998, when *bian lian* master Peng accepted eight female students, the majority of masters within this art form continue to be men and the only known female performer is Candy Chong, who learned from her father.

## IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

From the 19th century onwards, the use of masks decreased and these elements were only used occasionally at the playwright's or director's discretion.

Nevertheless, masks have since recovered some of their popularity as the result of the direction taken by theatre languages during the 20th and

21st centuries, mainly due to figures such as Grotowski, Meyerhold, Craig, Copeau, Brecht, Kantor, Barba, Brook, Mnouchkine, Wilson and, principally, Lecoq, who were inspired by oriental theatre (Noh, Kabuki and Kathakali, the ancient dance-theatre from southern India), Saltimbanco (clown and circus) and Commedia dell'arte.

These are all references to traditions outside of Western culture which reject the notion of naturalism and psychologism and are based on

prioritising the actor over the text and the body over the spoken word. In this context, masks become a vital instrument in the recovery of the figure of the actor as a key element in theatre and of the body as the main channel for communication.

This particular theatre tradition sees the body as a living, alert entity which listens with all five senses in order to rediscover its capacity for expression.

NOTES:

# ABOUT THE COMPANY

*Kulunka Teatro* (the **Kulunka Theatre Company**) was founded in the Basque Country (Spain) in 2010. It is made up of young artists with extensive theatre experience who share an interest in experimenting with different performance languages and artistic disciplines. We are also united by our desire to make theatre accessible, vital, current, committed and connected to reality, and our determination to break down existing barriers.

To do this, it is necessary to find a language that goes beyond words, a language capable of narrating a story while at the same time moving and entertaining the audience. Or as our artistic director Iñaki Rikarte puts it: 'at the end of the day, it's about telling a universal story using a universal language.' We found what we were looking for in gestural theatre and the use of masks, which act as a bridge towards visual poetry and a plethora of different possible worlds.

## HOW DO WE WORK?

Most people rarely have the opportunity to see how a the-

atrical production is created and developed, and yet this process is often just as interesting as the end result. You now have the opportunity to explore the basic ideas underpinning Kulunka's development of *André & Dorine*, and the different phases which together make up the creative process.

Everything started with the establishment of the team and a period of research and awareness-raising regarding Alzheimer's disease. Next came a long period (around two months) of daily work at the studio.

This work focused on the following premises:

- A love story during old age.
- Alzheimer's as the antagonist that disrupts this relationship and forces change.
- The different phases of the disease as the backbone of the plot.
- The relationship between past and present.
- The use of masks (and the rejection of a spoken script).
- Three actors on stage (with the dramatic constraints that this entails).





## DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW THESE MASKS ARE MADE?

The process is divided into the following steps:

1

A clay sculpture is made, which is the basis of the future mask

2

A flexible silicon mould is manufactured

3

A plaster cast is used to support the mould.

4

A positive impression of the mould is then taken with various layers of polyurethane resin  
*(a liquid made up of two elements that dry within five minutes of coming into contact with each other).*

5

The positive impression is removed from the mould and prepared for support and subsequent decoration.

6

The mask is decorated: primer, base coat, details and eyebrow, beard and hair colouring, etc.

During the creative process, we worked simultaneously on the different areas which together make up the show (creating the script, mastering the language of the masks, creating the space, building the masks, etc.).

It was an endless task involving a great deal of ongoing experimentation, trial and error, improvement and perfecting, but it ended up turning into a true love story. One of the actors, Edu Cárcamo, talks about his relationship with the masks: 'We never want to take them off. When we go over the scenes without them, af-

ter having done them previously from the privacy of the mask, it's really embarrassing.

You make such a huge effort to connect with the audience, you pull some really funny faces...' 'You don't really play a character; it's more like there's a character that you share with a colleague. Wearing a mask helps you let go of your ego. The only thing that matters is telling the story,' adds actor José Dault.

# The members of the kulunka theatre company

*Director*

**IÑAKI RIKARTE**

*Cast*

**EDU CÁRCAMO  
GARBIÑE INSAUSTI  
JOSÉ DAULT**

*Original music*

**YAYO CÁCERES**

*Set design*

**LAURA ELISEVA GÓMEZ**

*Lighting design*

**CARLOS SAMANIEGO 'SAMA'**

*Masks*

**GARBIÑE INSAUSTI**

*Photography*

**GONZALO JEREZ AND MANUEL D.**

*Video*

**AITOR DE KINTANA**

*Assistant director*

**ROLANDO SAN MARTÍN**

DATA  
SHEET



# André & Dorine

## PUBLIC, CRITICAL RESPONSE AND DISSEMINATION

Proof of the success of this difficult endeavour is the enormous amount of international acclaim it has garnered. During an intense, ten-year national and international tour covering thirty different countries on three different continents (USA, England, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, China, Turkey, Nepal, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, Fin-

land, Norway, Malaysia, Taiwan, Russia, Poland, and those yet to come!), André and Dorine's wordless story has made audiences everywhere laugh and cry, demonstrating that the language of theatre is universal and that human emotion recognises no borders. One good example of this is this anecdote told by the artistic director: 'The second country we visited was Nepal, and we were very concerned because we thought the show was really targeted at a Western audience. Alzheimer's still hasn't been diagnosed in

Nepal. Moreover, the story takes place in a middle-class household, which is very different from the households in that country. But the audience found a reflection of their own lives in the scenes portrayed. From that moment on we felt confident about taking the show anywhere in the world.'

The following excerpts aim to give you an idea of the critical response prompted by the performance:

### Love and forgetfulness.

'[...] the three actors from Kullunka, who are worth twelve (when they come out at the end to take their bows we all asked ourselves: "Hang on, where are the others?"), [...] take the audience from one emotional extreme to the other, provoking helpless laughter one minute and a lump in your throat the next. It's been years since I have felt any-

thing remotely similar. [...] Everything adds up in *André & Dorine*. Iñaki Rikarte's inspired directing, the sparkling, lively music by Yayo Cáceres (nominated for the Max Awards), Laura Gómez's simple set design, the lighting by Carlos Samaniego, and, above all, the exquisite performance by José Dault, Edu Cárcamo and Garbiñe Insausti, who is also the artist responsible for those masks which are so wonderfully expressive, es-

pecially the one worn by Dorine which seems to become more and more wrinkled as the Alzheimer's eats away at her, like a new portrait of Dorian Gray.'

(Javier Vallejo  
in *El País*, 15  
March 2013)

'[...] I have no idea to what marvellous genre *André & Dorine* belongs - perhaps it falls into the category of silent masked tragicomedy - but I do know that it is as truly moving as any masterpiece.'

(*La Rioja* newspaper)

'[...] *André & Dorine* is a moving blend of tenderness, hurt and song. A pleasure that seemed lost, but which has been rediscovered.'

(*Málaga Hoy* newspaper)

**Internal consistency.** '[...] A huge effort, a constant changing of character, mask, costume and physical attitude, which are woven together seamlessly to create a magnificent theatre play. It is one of those plays that achieves a perfect state of grace.

Everything is perfectly placed, nothing is lacking and nothing is superfluous. It moves, entertains and prompts you to identify with the

masks and think about the issue being dealt with. A magnificent spectacle that has toured half the world and deserves to tour the other half and to feature in all theatrical programmes everywhere, due to its outstanding theatrical quality.'

(Carlos Ruiz Zamora  
in *Artezblai*, 14  
January 2014)

Kulunka  
TEATRO

# André & Dorine



AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

# REFLEXIONS AND QUESTIONS

Now you have seen the play. The following are a series of reflections and questions that will help you gain more insight into what you have just experienced.



## SCENIC ELEMENTS

In any play, although particularly in one with no words, all the elements on stage are vital to the audience's understanding. They all have something to say and they all complement each other. To start with, try to remember how the following elements function:

### THE STAGE AREA

Although this does not change during the course of the play, the actors make it come alive, transforming it and attaching different meanings to it. It is a single space (a living room in a house) divided into two parts - two worlds - which are apparently irreconcilable.

*Which ones are they?*

*Does this separation remain throughout the play or do the two parts merge together at any point?*

*In the theatre, breaks with convention pose no problems. Into what other spaces (and other times) is the living room transformed?*

*What is required for this?*

### THE PROPS

Like the masks, the objects used on stage take on a life of their own in the actors' hands. They sometimes even take on a **symbolic** meaning (i.e., they are physical realities that refer the audience to a non-physical reality).

*Explain the importance of the following objects: the cello, the cello case, the typewriter, the photos, the desk drawer, the pink sweater.*

### THE SOUND SPACE

Given the absence of words, both music and sound effects (the slamming of a door, the sound of cello music, the clicking of a typewriter) are potential allies for the narrative.

*What structural role is played by music?*

*Do you remember any scene in which the cello and the typewriter could be heard at the same time?*

*What was the aim of this?*

## THE LIGHTING

Lighting changes fulfil a twofold function: they structure the narrative and evoke certain feelings.

At which moments is the lighting particularly significant?

## THE COSTUMES

These are vital for bringing the characters to life. They also play a key role in evoking the past.

What clothes do the older André and Dorine usually wear? And what about when they were younger?

Clothes also play an important symbolic and poetic role: is a badly done up cardigan the first symptom of Dorine's disease?

One of the most beautiful (and gruelling) scenes of the play is also linked to clothing. Can you remember which one it is?

The infamous pink sweater serves not only as a recurring comic resource, it is also a beautiful symbol of a son's love for his mother. Can you explain why?

## THE MASKS

What did you think of them?

Were you surprised by their expressiveness?

Can you remember how many masks appeared on stage? And to which characters they belonged?

To conclude, the poetic quality of the space, objects and masks, the actors' gestures and interpretation of their role and the sound space (*all the sounds, including the eloquent*

*silences*) are all orchestrated by the pace or rhythm (*the play is like a musical score, over which the events take place in a very precise and dynamic way, just like music*).

Thus, the play establishes an ongoing dialogue with the true protagonist of any theatre performance from any era: **the audience.**





## THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE PLAY

The play is divided into ten scenes, over the course of which the plot gradually unfolds. Let's see what happens in each:



"The sound of a typewriter can be heard. André is typing. He is alone on the stage and seems happy.

Dorine comes in and starts playing the cello. Both seem annoyed with the other and a sound battle commences. The doorbell rings.

Dorine opens the door and their son comes in with a suitcase. Both André and Dorine try separately to attract their son's attention, she with a pink sweater and he with the book he is writing.

The son has brought them both a present. Faced with the impossibility of paying each the attention they crave, the son leaves and André and Dorine return to their separate worlds."

*What does this first scene tell us about the relationship between André and Dorine?*

*At first we do not know who the newcomer is. What gestures does Dorine make that help us quickly understand that he is her son?*

*What sort of relationship does the son have with his parents? How does each one try to attract his attention? What is the result of their efforts?*



"André is typing. The doorbell rings. Again it is Dorine who has to answer it. It's their son.

He points out to his mother that her cardigan is done up wrong. Once again André and Dorine compete for their son's attention.

André shows him the manuscript of his recently-finished book, Dorine gets the sweater out again. Dorine sits down to play the cello, holding the bow backwards.

Her son watches her play. He looks thoughtful. André gets angry and leaves, slamming the door behind him. Dorine plays and her son watches her. "

*The second scene is, to a certain extent, very similar to the first one. How are they similar? How are they different?*

*The **repetition** of elements is a useful resource to aid understanding, and moreover, helps make those elements which are different stand out more strongly. The badly buttoned up cardigan, the bow held the wrong way round and André's anger acquire special relevance. Why?*

## #SCENE III

"Doctor's waiting room. Dorine and her son are waiting their turn, along with an unpleasant third character.

Finally, they are called in, and after a while, the doctor gives the son his diagnosis. They leave."

*In theatre, "less is more" works brilliantly. A single element is enough to transform an entire space, atmosphere or character. How is André and Dorine's living room transformed into a waiting room?*

*For this transformation to take place, there must be what is known as a **fictional pact**, i.e., the viewer's implicit acceptance that what they are seeing constitutes a reality - fictitious yes, but a reality nonetheless - and functions according to its own rules. For their part, creators must offer a **plausible** (although not necessarily true) fiction and ensure a consistent set of rules within the world they have built.*

*This scene contains a number of comic gags. What disturbing action does the new character repeat, time and time again? What effect does this have on the son? What happens with the newspaper and cigarettes?*

*The scene also contains some new indications of Dorine's illness. She is disoriented in the waiting room, she has trouble recognising her son after he steps out for a moment, she refuses to give him her coat when called in to see the doctor and she leaves through the wrong door. Dorine responds to these (as yet) small slips with a sweet characteristic gesture. What is it?*

*When the doctor hands the son his report, some notes played on the cello sound and the son slowly raises his gaze from the page. These two simple elements are enough to convey the content of the diagnosis to the audience. What is the diagnosis?*

## #SCENE IV

"The scene takes place in André and Dorine's house. The doorbell rings. André goes to answer it and sees a courier with a package. It is a set of his published books. He arranges them on a shelf. Dorine comes in with their son. André signs one of the books for him.

The son hands André the diagnosis. André puts the piece of paper down without looking at it. His son insists that he read it. André flings it away. Dorine hangs up her coat on her cello and goes into the bathroom. André hangs the coat up on the coat rack and tears the doctor's report up into tiny pieces. The son leaves, slamming the door behind him.

Dorine sits down to play. Under the spotlight, André gazes at Dorine as she plays her cello."

*Despite being a fairly hard-hitting scene, it nevertheless has a few humorous elements, particularly the moment at which the courier enters.*

*This scene is also an outstanding example of how to convey all the necessary information to the audience without words. How does the fact that all the books in the package are his change our view of André? How do we know that the pen doesn't write? What tip does André give the courier? How do we learn his name?*

*Often, the process of accepting that a loved one has Alzheimer's is very difficult. Do you think that André initially refuses to accept it? Is there a point in the scene when he appears to finally do so? Is the end of this scene the same as the end of a previous one?*



## #SCENE V

"Dorine is alone. She is standing with her back to the audience, looking at something. André comes in and discovers the doctor's report on the table, stuck together with sellotape. Dorine goes into the bedroom and shuts the door. André realises she was looking at a photo of herself with her son, when he was a baby. André starts to remember."

### MINI-FLASHBACK I

We see a young André waiting impatiently and trying out different postures. Dorine comes in with her cello and André asks for her autograph. Dorine's boyfriend arrives and she leaves with him, but she forgets her instrument. She comes back for it and, before leaving, tenderly kisses André.

André (now an old man) finds the autograph tucked in behind the photo. He knocks on the bedroom door and shows it to Dorine, who lets him in.

*What information can we deduce from what happens at the beginning of this scene? What seems to be the thing Dorine is most afraid of?*

*From this moment on, André begins a series of reminiscences about the past. Do you know what this theatrical resource is called? How does the theatre company make us understand that the scenes we see from the past are actually happening inside André's head? Can you explain what role lights and music play in this convention?*

*The first mini-flashback constitutes a wonderful opportunity for humour. Do you remember what gags are used in this scene? Many of the resources use repetition to heighten the humour: the pen again doesn't write, the cello knocking against André's knees, André's twirls ... the accumulation is funny in itself, but it is always important to add new elements. What difference is there between the pen scenes featuring old André and young André? How would you describe André's final twirl after the kiss and the cello case's last knock against his knees?*

*This scene reveals that - contrary to what is suggested by the sound battle and the fact that old André starts every time he hears the cello - young André fell in love with Dorine precisely because of her talent as a cellist. Do you think that routine can turn the characteristic which initially made you fall in love with someone into the very quality that makes you detest them? Or is it that André no longer even remembers why he first fell in love with Dorine? Dorine is only now starting to forget things, but it seems that André forgot many others a long time ago. Thus, voluntary forgetfulness is revealed as the other main antagonist of the couple's story.*

*What changes from this moment on inside André? And between the two of them? How do you know?*

## #SCENE VI

"Dorine tries to play her cello, but she can't remember how. André walks into the room backwards. When he turns round, we see that he has no face. Dorine gets scared. André tries to calm her down but she shrinks away from him and ends up huddled on the floor. André goes out to get a cup of tea and comes back wearing his usual face. This prompts a moment of shared tenderness. Dorine gets to her feet and starts collecting up all the photos in the room. She gives them to André, and he writes down where, when and why they were taken on his typewriter. Dorine reads what he writes and remembers.

### MINI-FLASHBACK II

Young André is lying in bed with his typewriter. He is dirty and unkempt. There's a knock on the door. It's Dorine! In a panic, André starts tidying up and airing out the room. Then he opens the door. Dorine strides in, although his greeting to her is 'cool'. André hurries out of the room. Dorine discovers a cuddly toy, some underpants and, finally, the typewriter with a piece of paper still in it. She reads it. When André returns after having washed and changed into clean clothes, he sees with horror that Dorine has discovered his secret. She reads page after page, and the more she reads the more excited she gets. They end up in bed and Dorine becomes pregnant.

*This scene contains a mixture of the horrendous and the hilarious. The beginning could well be a scene from a nightmare, and the great thing about it is that the audience experiences it from Dorine's perspective. How is this achieved?*

*A new relationship begins to be established between André and Dorine. For the first time we see them display affection towards one another instead of purposefully nettling each other as they have done until now. For the first time André uses his typewriter to write something that is not just for himself or to annoy Dorine. What does he use it for? What undertaking do they embark on together, and to what end?*

*In the flashback, we discover that it was André's writing that first caused Dorine to fall in love with him, thereby very neatly closing the circle that began in the previous scene. What initially seemed to be two totally separate and incompatible worlds are in fact revealed as the same world.*



## #SCENE VII

"André is writing. Dorine comes out of the bathroom with her underwear around her ankles. She's left the bathroom a mess, and while André tries to clean up, Dorine puts her coat on back to front, her handbag on her head and pulls her socks onto her hands like gloves. André tries to put each garment in its proper place but she doesn't let him. Eventually André loses his temper and shoves her so hard she falls. She huddles on the floor. André tries to help her up but Dorine pushes him away. Finally, he too puts some socks on his hands and his coat on back to front, and they end up hugging. They are just about to go out when their son arrives. He helps his mother get dressed properly. He goes into the bedroom with Dorine. André picks up the last photo and sits down at his desk to type.."

### MINI-FLASHBACK III

We see André and Dorine's wedding. Then they arrive home. Unbeknown to each other, they have each left the other a surprise present: a cello and a typewriter. Delighted, they sit down to type and play. And that's when the noise problem begins. There is another moment of happiness when their son is born. We watch him grow, and see the origin of his parents' fights over him.

*The scene starts with another typical Alzheimer's episode. We witness the frustration and desperation of both characters, who are initially unable to understand each other and make themselves understood in turn. How do they manage to overcome this problem?*

*Is there something revolutionary about going out with one's coat on backwards and one's handbag on one's head? Do you think there is only one correct way of putting on a coat or doing anything in fact? Do you think we sometimes fixate too much on doing things 'correctly' and forget about what is really important? And is it not all too often the grinding routine of daily life that is responsible for this? What role does the son play at this point? Do you think he is 'saner' than his parents?*

*Saint Teresa of Jesus (Ávila, 1115-1582) called imagination 'the family madman'. Although today madness is defined in clinical terms, we often use the term in everyday situations to refer to someone who does things that surprise us or which go against the established social norm. In this sense then, madness equates with freedom, since it gives you the possibility of acting without constraint. Dorine's actions are the result of her disease, but André's decision to accept this new reality is a choice made with complete freedom. It is similar to what happened when another great madman, Don Quixote of La Mancha, decided to make his doublet his armour and to replace reason (what should be) for intuition (what worked at any given moment). Freedom, the subversion of established norms, imagination and playfulness are also the foundations of art.*

The scenes from the present and the past are structured so as to form a counterpoint to each other (**counterpoint**, 'point against point', was originally a musical composition technique which took advantage of the relationship between two or more independent voices in order to attain a certain balanced harmony). There is always a link between what happens in the present and what happened in the past, with the flashbacks sometimes adding to the audience's existing knowledge and sometimes providing a new (or ironic) take on things.

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After the wedding (which is full of comic moments, such as the part with the bouquet) and their exciting homecoming, the flashback shows us a situation very similar to the one portrayed in the first scene, thus revealing, to a certain extent at least, the origin of the problems André and Dorine experienced during their married life. What elements are repeated?

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Thanks to this scene, the audience feels they are remembering alongside the characters, they feel they know them better and have seen how they have changed. We discover that the prickly, resigned old lady was once a young, energetic artist with a strong and lively nature. And we see how André, who was (at the beginning of the play) incapable of even answering the door, is able to forget about himself and throw himself into the task of looking after Dorine. And in these characters, who show us their strengths and weakness, who transform the world around them and let themselves be transformed in turn, we recognise ourselves.

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"The couple have hired a young woman to look after Dorine. The son arrives and seems to find the carer quite appealing. Dorine doesn't recognise her son and, saddened, he leaves. Before he goes, André lovingly straightens his clothes, just as his mother used to. André sits down next to Dorine and hands her a new chapter of her life. She crumbles it into a ball. André puts all the written memories into a drawer.

*Dorine's condition worsens. She no longer recognises her own son - her worst fear - and doesn't even remember that she and André were trying so hard to stop her memories slipping away. Stripped of everything else, all that remains are feelings and intuitions, this other form of intelligence which is nevertheless able to give meaning to her world.*

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He removes the towel from her hair and starts tidying up. She follows him around like a puppy. He brushes her hair and she brushes him. They caress tenderly. Dorine picks up her cello bow and tries to play her arm. They hold each other and start to dance. She plays André as if he were a cello. The scene ends with Dorine alone on the stage, playing the air cello."

*The poetry of the scene is unquestionable. Dorine may have forgotten everything, but she has remembered everything too. Her emotional rediscovery of her love for André has also helped her find herself once again. What images are used to symbolise this in the scene?*

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## #SCENE IX



"The son and the carer help Dorine to her armchair. They seem to have fallen in love. André washes Dorine. Darkness. André drags the cello case into the middle of a bed of flowers and opens it. The son comes in. They are both dressed in black.

The carer enters too. She is pregnant. They place flowers on the cello case. Under his overcoat, we see that the son is wearing his mother's pink sweater. André puts the bow inside the case and closes the lid.."

*Symbolism and poetic imagery are techniques used to enhance the expressiveness of a work of art. These resources imbue reality (**denotation**) with new meanings and interpretations (**connotations**). What are we being told in this scene? What do the symbols contribute?*

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*Traditionally, comedy and tragedy were considered to be two opposing ways of approaching and dealing with human issues. Do you agree with this outlook? Or do you think that, in this play at least, they emerge as two sides of the same coin? Where does the comedy lie? And the tragedy?*

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## #SCENE X



"A song is playing. André and Dorine's son enters his parents' house with a cardboard box and starts packing up. In the desk drawer, he finds a stack of his father's papers. He sits down to read them. "

*Art flourishes in moments of human crisis. Given the unstable nature of reality, the absence of certainty, illness, the nearness of death and precariousness, art emerges as a powerful force for shaking up sensitivities and awareness. André used writing to review, relive and gain a new awareness of his life and his relationship with Dorine. And to a certain extent, in doing so he managed to vanquish the disease that devas-*

*tated his life, ensuring that memory and immortality prevailed thanks to the written word.*

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*Humour plays a role too. When taken seriously and imbued with poetry, humour also enables us to get to know people from another era, in other circumstances, who at the end of the day, we realise, are only human, just like us. The aim is not to provide answers, but rather to ask questions; to let each individual discover, in their laughter and their tears, that which makes them think and feel.*

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NOTES:

# The song

LYRICS

YAYO CÁCERES

*I am the autumn  
That fades now, bereft of its leaves  
I am the words that are lost with no story*

*I am the sea  
Which ebbs and flows in your memory  
I am the blue with which you  
looked at my things.*

*What shall I do  
With our cardboard history  
With our timid corner  
With this type of yesterday?*

*Where shall I go  
Now I no longer have a heart  
Now that it has stripped me of  
all memories of you, my love?*

ANDRÉ  
& DORINE







## THE THEATRE AND YOU

To recap, let's do a little dramaturgical analysis. The basis of any story which unfolds (or is told) on the stage is **conflict**: a problem (internal or external) involving opposing forces. In relation to this conflict, the **characters** pursue an **aim** (a desire they want to fulfil), and in the course of this come across a series of **obstacles**. The main obstacle is usually represented by the **antagonist**, who opposes the **protagonist's** aim (the antagonist may be another character, an object, a situation, etc.). The **dramatic actions** are happenings: the events which take place and the strategies adopted by characters to overcome obstacles and achieve their aims. Underpinning all this is the **dramatic question**. Sometimes this question is answered (either negatively or positively) and sometimes it is not. Occasionally it is answered by means of **dramatic irony**. All these elements provide the story being told with a **structure**.

*On the basis of this very brief overview, can you analyse the components which make up André & Dorine?*

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*What did you think of the staging and scenes: what did and didn't you like about the performance, the set design, the wardrobe, the music and the lighting, etc.?*

*Was the fact that the play was silent a problem at any point? Did you understand what was happening?*

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*Just as we saw the characters change during the course of the show, one of theatre's aims is to elicit an emotional response from spectators and to change them in some way. Has anything in you changed as a result of going to see this play?*

*Can you explain what?*

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NOTES:

TEACHING  
GUIDE {

# André & Dorine

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