



The Madwoman of Chailot

by Jean Giradoux (1943)

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I directed this show at Kalamazoo College as part of my one-year post-doctoral teaching fellowship. I had gotten to teach modernist drama with many of these students the previous term, so it was a lot of fun to be able to take the stylistic and historical considerations from page to stage.



Two of the students from that seminar expressed an interest in dramaturgy, so I invited them to work with me as I prepared to direct the production. In their dramaturgical research, they discovered that during WWII, women who were thought to be sympathizing with the occupying forces had their heads forcibly shaved. We used this idea to anchor this 'fable' in its historical context and provide a framework for the audience to understand Aurelia, the madwoman.



The student dramaturgs also designed a lobby display.



The modernist style of the drama allowed us to make creative use of some of the specialized performance skills the students had or wanted to develop: physical comedy, caricature, instrumental music, and circus skills.



The students and I also got to experiment with incorporating oratorical and melodramatic styles into our performance.



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