

Rhinoceros is a play by Eugène Ionesco, written in 1959. Over the course of three acts, the inhabitants of a small, provincial French town turn into rhinoceroses; ultimately the only human who does not succumb to this mass metamorphosis is the central character, Bérenger, a flustered everyman figure who is initially criticized in the play for his drinking, tardiness, and slovenly lifestyle and then, later, for his increasing paranoia and obsession with the rhinoceroses. The play is often read as a response and criticism to the sudden upsurge of Fascism and Nazism during the events preceding World War II, and explores the themes of conformity, culture, fascism, responsibility, logic, mass movements, mob mentality, philosophy and morality.

[Here](#) is a wonderful performance on YouTube.

Character Descriptions

Berenger

a flustered everyman figure who is initially criticized in the play for his drinking, tardiness, and slovenly lifestyle and then, later, for his increasing paranoia and obsession with the rhinoceroses. The lead role.

Jean

Berenger's friend; eloquent, intellectual and prideful. Jean proclaims that rhinoceroses have just as much of a right to life as humans, then says that "Humanism is dead, those who follow it are just old sentimentalists", before transforming into a rhino.

Daisy

Daisy is Berenger's love interest. She is fairly uncommitted to anything and does not mind the presence of the rhinoceroses. She is a strong character, and many in the play (especially Berenger and Dudard) are attracted to her.

Dudard

Dudard is a co-worker of Berenger's and a rival for Daisy's affections. He prides himself on his intellect and rationality.

Logician

The Logician is a highly rational man. He believes strictly in the laws of logic, though his attempts to prove anything often collapse.

Waitress

A humorous small role with lots of simple lines and expression.

Housewife

The housewife has a cat who is trampled by the rhino in the first act, and she overdramatically grieves for her lost feline.

Old Gentleman

Very determined to learn from the logician, but very bad at it.

Mrs. Boeuf

Mrs. Boeuf remains committed to her husband in his animal form.

Mr. Papillon

Papillon is the head of Berenger's office. He privileges work above his employees.