

Every now and then a delightful little literary nugget appears from a writer whose work was presumably fully ascertained. Thus *Perchè?* or *Why?*, translated from the Italian and given a staged reading by Jane House Productions at the Italian Cultural Institute of New York, provided the audience with a petit four of early Pirandello. The finder's fee should go to Daniel Gerould, Distinguished Professor of Theatre and Comparative Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center, who happened to come upon the play by accident and passed it on to Dr. House.

The play is a crisp one act about the anguish of a young couple; a jealous husband tortures a testy young wife as both are chafing at the chains of love. The dialogue is alternately recriminatory and conciliatory, typical of immature and insecure lovers; the male wishes to enter terra nova while the female feigns prior amorous experience. Both drive each other crazy with suppositions, premonitions, assumptions and accusations. Bare faces of true despair alternate with elaborate masks of bravado to confound the characters in their search for the truth in their relationship.

The salon environment of the Italian Cultural Institute provided the appropriate backdrop according to Pirandello's own set requirements of an elegantly furnished drawing room. The cast included the couple, Enrico and Giulia, played by Oscar De La Fe Colon and Carolina McNeely, and, as the unflappable Maid, Kathleen Stolarski. Dr. House directed the young cast with just enough movement to suggest the temperament of each character. Above all, she was sensitive to the musical structure of the play manifested in the varied dynamics of the text, at times delivered con brio, at times largo or andante. The husband's lines were given with great passion by Oscar De La Fe Colon; by contrast Carolina McNeely's sensitive rendering showed a woman who refused to be fettered by jealous all-consuming love. Her charming red and white feather hat suggested late 19th-century coquette elegance, enough to drive a husband to distraction. The presentation showed Pirandello's own wavering between rendering the condition of human miscommunication as tragicomedy or as satire. It is clearly an early exercise in liberation from the sophistication of French farce and plumbs the psychology of erotic attachments. The first vestiges of *Right You Are If You Think You Are* can be detected in this short scene.

The evening was enriched for the audience by Marvin Carlson's introductory lecture on the Italian theatrical and literary context in which Pirandello created his early work. Distinguished Professor Carlson teaches theatre at the CUNY Graduate Center. After the presentation of the play, Jane House provided additional insight about the dramatic work of young Pirandello. Jane House Productions, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of New York, the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center of the CUNY Graduate Center, and the Pirandello Society of America, as well as the actors are to be thanked for a generous, delightful evening.

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