

A **H**elme**t**

Is A **H**el**me**t

Is a **H**elm**e**t

You got that?

By

Katrin Arefy

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JOHN SULLIVAN writes...This short play barrels through its paces like a tricked out Formula 1, twisting and turning through complex linguistic alleys and byways until it is hard to pin where we've been and how we arrived at the finish. Identity is a mutable phenomenon here: hence the joke encoded the title. The playwright deftly juggles the language, pace and shape-shifting characters with aplomb and ingenuity—no small accomplishment as the more or less anonymous human cast includes a female Don Quixote and her faithful steed, Rocinante. This piece calls to mind the diabolically funny work of David Ives, especially his collection of shorts, All in the Timing, which also incorporates and current personages like the Trotsky family, Phillip Glass etc. into a similar hyper-speed Gordian Knot of words, actions and amazement. (Spacing is playwright's own.)*

Five stars

A Helmet Is a Helmet Is a
Helmet

A play in one act
By Katrin Arefy

Cast of Characters

WOMAN

MAN 1

MAN 2

MAN 3

DON QUIXOTE (played by a female actor)

ROCINANTE, a horse.

Scene One

WOMAN
(Sitting)

MAN 1
(Enters right.)

MAN 2
(Enters left, to MAN 1.)
Are you Jonathan?

MAN 1
No.

WOMAN
I am Jonathan!

MAN 2
(to WOMAN)
Hi Jonathan.

MAN 1
(Exits left and reenters left.)

MAN 2
(Exits right and reenters right.)

WOMAN
Where is Jonathan?

(MAN 1 and MAN 2 shrug their shoulders and sit.)

(MAN 3 enters, holding a picture in his hands.)
I found him!

WOMAN
You found whom?

MAN 3
The thief of the mail. The person who breaks into our mailboxes.

MAN 1
How do you know this is him?

MAN 3
By looking.

MAN 2
(Looks at the picture.)
It is Jonathan.

WOMAN
I am Jonathan.

MAN 1
(To woman)
You are a liar.

MAN 3
She can be a liar and still be Jonathan.

MAN 1
But she is not Jonathan.

MAN 3
How do you know?

MAN 1
By looking.

(They all get up and exit at the same time.)

MAN 1
(Enters and sits.)

MAN 2

(Enters right.)

WOMAN

(Enters left. To MAN 2)

Are you Jonathan?

MAN 2

No.

MAN 1

I am Jonathan!

WOMAN

(To MAN 1)

Hi Jonathan.

MAN 3

(Enters holding a picture in his hands.)

I found him!

MAN 1

You found whom?

MAN 3

I found Jonathan.

WOMAN

Is he Jewish?

MAN 1

If his father is Jewish, he is Jewish.

MAN 2

Mother.

WOMAN

Mother what?

MAN 2

If his mother is Jewish, he is Jewish.

MAN 3

It's not the mother. It's the penis.

(Confusion. Pause)

You have to check his penis. If he is not circumcised, he is not Jewish.

WOMAN

Even if his father is Jewish?

MAN 2

Mother.

WOMAN

Mother what?

MAN 2

Not father--mother!

WOMAN

So, it is the mother or the penis.

MAN 3

The penis.

MAN 1

And how do you know?

MAN 2

By looking.

WOMAN

That's inappropriate guys!

MAN 2

But it is important.

WOMAN

Why?

MAN 2

Because you can't bury a non-Jew in a Jewish cemetery.

WOMAN

Even if his father was a Jew?

MAN 3

Mother.

WOMAN

Even if his mother was a Jew?

MAN 2

Yes, and even if he lost his life to protect the Holy Land.

WOMAN

Holy...

So, then, how do you...

MAN 2

By looking. The authorities look at the corps
and...then...yeah.

DON QUIXOTE

(Enters on a horse.)

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

(To DON QUIXOTE.)

Are you Jonathan?

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

He is not. He is Alonso.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

Alonso?

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

Alonso Quijano. A poor village gentleman in Cervantes's
novel.

WOMAN

Don Quixote! He is Don Quixote.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

Or she.

WOMAN

He.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

How do you know?

DON QUIXOTE

(Holds a shaving basin up.)

I am Don Quixote de la Mancha. A knight-errant. This is
ROCINANTE, and this is my helmet.

(Everyone laughs at him.)

DON QUIXOTE

Which one of you is Jonathan?

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

(Pointing at WOMAN.)

She is Jonathan.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

That's what she says. But we don't believe her.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

I do.

MAN 3

(To DON QUIXOTE)

And I don't believe you! You are Alonso Quijada, and that is a shaving basin.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

No he is not. He is Don Quixote.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

He is the man. He is not.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

Is he Jewish?

WOMAN

I don't want to know that guys!

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

And you will not.

WOMAN

How about the thing.

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

What thing?

MAN 1 or 2 or 3

The penis?

WOMAN

No! The helmet.

MAN 1
Looks like a shaving basin to me.

MAN 2
It's a helmet.

MAN 3
How do you know?

MAN 2
By looking.

DON QUIXOTE
It is a helmet!

MAN 3
We don't know yet.

WOMAN
Where did you get it?

DON QUIXOTE
I got it.

MAN 1
We have to vote.

MAN 2
It's not about the vote. If it is a helmet, then it is perhaps a shaving basin.

WOMAN
But what if it is not?

MAN 1
I say we vote.

(Takes the object in his hand and holds it high.)

MAN 2
Can ROCINANTE also vote?

MAN 1
No, only humans can vote.

MAN 3
Can I vote?

MAN 1
Yes.

MAN 3
But I identify myself as a cat.

MAN 1
We will deal with that later.

If you identify this subject as a shaving basin, sit down.

(Everyone continues standing. Pause)

If you identify this subject as a helmet, stand up.

(Everyone continues standing. The horse sits down.)

MAN 1
(Continues.)
And therefore, the subject is now identified as a helmet.

MAN 2
A helmet.

MAN 3
A helmet is a helmet.

WOMAN
A helmet is a helmet is a helmet.

The End

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *A Helmet Is a Helmet Is a Helmet is a ten-minute play that explores the subject of identity. The play touches on Jewish identity, sexual identity, Don Quixote's identity, as well as Jonathan's identity.*

After a few years of working on this subject in a form of an essay, revisiting and revising and not being totally happy with the result, I sat and shaped it all in a short play while on a long flight to Europe. The play was completed before the plane had landed.

The title was inspired by a line from Gertrude Stein's poem "Sacred Emily," which famously points to the question of identity. Gertrude Stein's line is "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."

To answer your question about my stylistic and/or literary influences, in a way my writing is more influenced by visual art and classical music than any particular writer.

AUTHOR BIO: Katrin Arefy is an essayist and playwright who examines the many absurd realities that we experience in our daily lives in her writing.

Her essays and playscripts have appeared in numerous literary magazines, including *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Water~Stone Review*, *Fleas on the Dog*, *Free State Review*, and *Meat for Tea: The Valley Review*, *The Tusculum Review* and *Some Scripts Literary Magazine*.

Her plays have been premiered in New York City, performed in California, reached the semifinalist round at Ivoryton Playhouse's inaugural Women Playwright's Initiative, selected for inclusion at the Iranian Drama Festival in Heidelberg, Germany, and Funny Shorts in Florida. Her latest theatre work, *The Portrait of an Angel, a Lion, a Monster* was premiered in Manhattan, NY in January 2022 The play was well received by the audience and NY critics in a review on [The Theatre Times](#).

You may see samples of Katrin Arefy's plays at New Play Exchange or on her website www.katrinarefy.com