



Quetzal

Version 3.1

A Full Length Play to be revised into a Musical

September 2020

By Joseph Osborne

Inspired by a Buddhist Death Meditation and set in the bizarre Fluxus-Art milieu in New York's 1980 SOHO. A rich, egocentric art collector re-encounters the woman he thought he lost and the daughter he didn't know he had. Through a series of fantastical events engineered by a character who may or may not be Death, he slowly learns how to become a responsible father and to regain his lost passion for art...and artists.

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Characters:

CHAT-Chatsworth Hodgkiss, Jr. 30 years old. Male. Dresses In suits/sport-jackets and always wears a tie until late in the play.

A NOTE: about Chat's visible age: it should be consistent with the time showing on his clock. It is important that he gain and lose age visually before our eyes

LUZ- Elizabeth Luz Choob. Female. 40. Half European-American, half Mayan Guatemaltecan. Wears her long dark hair in a single braid and dresses Indigino (Mayan Guatemaltecan). New York accent- Queens/Brooklyn

SEVEN- (Seven Death) Femme d'une certaine age. Dresses in striking black & white costumes and changes appearance frequently, but always in black and white. Perhaps her hair is white or a long black wig, and perhaps there are a few white accents to set off the black. She has an odd tic, physical and verbal which should be subtly unnerving. Wierd in a strange, digital way, as if she might be an AI. Her actual identity remains ambiguous throughout. See this Max Headroom video for an example of another digitally strange character: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYdpOjletnc>.

QUETZAL- Quetzal Kisa Choob. Female, 10. Luz's daughter.

JON and JAN, male, a couple JON is a composer in the traditions of John Cage and George Brecht, JAN does performance scripts. They collaborate a lot.

BUDDHA BRENDA- Female. Buddhist nun. Has a rolling, infectious laugh.

ONE DEATH- Female, played by the same actor as Buddha Brenda. Dressed in garb of the Lords of Xibalba



NOTE- there is possible issue of cultural appropriation here. One-Death and Seven Death are characters in the Popul Vuh, a book of Mayan mythology. I prefer not to address that for now.

SHIGEKO- Shigeko Kubota- female, Japanese *NOTE- She is the only actual historical person in the play.*

GEORGE II- male, very nerdy..

MRS. FUTZ- Female. Chat's attorney.

ENSEMBLE- other artists, street passers-by

EMT

BILL COLLECTOR

BUILDING INSPECTOR

ANNOUNCER

ARTIST

Sets:

FluxSeers Concert Venue- a SOHO NYC loft building. We are in the auditorium and the theatre stage is the venue stage. The theatre audience is the venue audience. The stage is bare except for items mentioned in the script.

Chat's Gallery- first floor sales room of an art gallery next door to the FluxSeers Concert Venu. White walls, counters. Sparse furnishings. Room to hang paintings as needed

FluxSeers Loft Studios- Described in script

Chat's Gallery Loft- Described in script

Props, Etc.

NOTE- Difficult props can be supplied by the playwright. If any prove impractical I am happy to entertain other ideas.

1954 Coup painting- Image of male Resplendent Quetzal glued/painted/silkscreened onto metal thin enough to be easily bent up

Clock- should have numbers large enough to be clearly visible in the back of the house. Perhaps it could



look like this:

Bald Eagle/Bananas- a statuette of an American eagle preferably with wings outspread, with wooden/plastic/metal bananas somehow attached to each talon

Seven's Portfolio- should look like a large artwork-carrying portfolio. It needs to be expandable large enough that a wheelchair could roll into it.



Wiesbaden 1962 Concert Piece- should be loosely based on the beginning of this video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YibFHWZ66GQ> Instruments should include a violin (but nobody needs to know how to play it), a slide whistle, a shaker. Performers also make odd noises with their bodies, tip their hat, jump up and down and may even spit. This carefully follows a script, not yet written.



ACT I

SCENE 1

FluxSeers Concert Venue. Darkened stage, one light downstage center. Seated to either side and/or behind are LUZ, QUETZAL, JON, JAN, BUDDHA BRENDA, SHIGEKO and other artists (ENSEMBLE)

ANNOUNCER

Lighting Piece, by Yoko Ono, performed by Buddha Brenda. Yoko was planning to be here herself but she and John had an unexpected trip to London on the Concorde.

BUDDHA BRENDA stiffly stands, walks into the light, puts down an ashtray, takes a deep breath, does other self-preparation and lights a match. She holds it, watching it burn. CHAT enters the rear of the auditorium and noisily makes his way to the front of the house, bumping into people. People on stage shush him.

CHAT

Oops. Sorry. Sorry. Oops. (Beat) Oh, sorry. (bumps into something) Owwww!

JON

Shussh

CHAT

(Chiding) It hasn't started yet.

JON

Yes it has. Shush

CHAT

(Just as loud as before) Oh. OK. Sorry

Finds seat, sits. The match has finished. BUDDHA BRENDA puts it into the ashtray and bows. Applause

ANNOUNCER

The 1954 CIA Guatemala Coup by Luz Choob, assisted by Quetzal Choob.

Lights up. LUZ and QUETZAL carry out an easel holding the quetzal painting. They reverently lay it on a soft surface, then take a Bald Eagle statue and some wooden or metal bananas and batter it. It emerges distorted hopefully showing an impression of eagle and bananas. They bow. Applause from the Ensemble.

ANNOUNCER

Wiesbaden Concert Piece by George Brecht.

Six of the actors, fairly formally dressed with bowler hats roll a counter or table onstage on which are the “instruments” for this piece. They stand behind the counter and follow the performance script. About 90 seconds. Applause. They bow and follow up.

ANNOUNCER

And that concludes our performance. Thank you for coming. As you know the FluxSeers are chronically underfunded. Please be kind enough to drop something into the...

CHAT

...and this could/should become a patter song with some rework.

SONG SKETCH

...Excuse me. MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION. Hi, I'm Chatsworth Hodgkiss, Junior. I just bought the building next door for my new art gallery. I'm looking for artwork to buy. Artwork that will appreciate in value and make me, and you, the artist, rich! And famous! Just come up and introduce yourself. Let's get to know each other. I'm Chatsworth Hodgkiss Junior and I'm looking to buy I'm Chatsworth Hodgkiss Junior and I've got the eye For art that will appreciate, that will gain in worth So show me what you've got and we'll see if it makes the grade I'm going to be a power in the art world, with the collection I'll assemble You'll see my name on a wing of MoMA one day, you will see I'll be really big one day Buy low, sell high. Buy low, sell high I'll buy art that's really cheap today 'cause people just can't see how good it's going to be...once the price goes up. And as my reputation grows, yours grows along with me. You will see, just you wait, you will see. I'll be the king of the art world that's the way it's going to be Cause I'm Chatsworth Hodgkiss Junior and I have the money and I have the eye and I will turn the art world upside down.

Anybody have anything you want to show me? I pay cash. Cash on the counter. If it's something I can sell or something that will gain in value, that's what I'm looking for.

FluxSeers are standing Stage Left and Stage Right. JON walks up to CHAT

JON

Well that's very nice Mr. Hatchpiss (deliberately getting name wrong) but let me tell you who we are because our work does not fit into your preconceived ideas of what art is and what art should be. We are the FLUXSEERS.

JAN

We are the FLUXSEERS!

GEORGE II

We are the FLUXSEERS!

JON

And we do street art and happenings and electronic music and sound poetry and concerts like the one you saw tonight. We think Art should be free and available to all, that everyone is an artist...

CHAT

Really? How is that possible

JON

That a Tuna Fish Sandwich is art

CHAT

It will rot before it appreciates.

JON

And burning a match is art

CHAT

But there's nothing left to sell

JON

That art does not...

CHAT

...It's just a burnt match

JON

...have to be in a museum

CHAT

...I can pick up burnt matches in the street

GEORGE II

You really don't understand, do you? Well, this is our manifesto. George Maciunas' manifesto. It was George who brought us together and this is what he wrote:

SONG

The Manifesto Song- chanted

JON

WE ARE THE FLUXSEERS

GEORGE II

Gathering their attention, gesticulating

WE ARE THE FLUXSEERS

ALL

WE ARE THE FLUXSEERS
AND WE ARE HERE TO PURGE

JON

PURGE THE WORLD OF DEAD ART

LUZ

PURGE THE WORLD OF IMITATION

FLUXSEERS

PURGE THE ARTIFICIAL ART, ABSTRACT ART, ILLUSIONISM

JON

ART SHOULD BE LIVING

FLUXSEERS

LIVING, LIVING, LIVING ART

JON

WE BELIEVE IN ANTI-ART

FLUXSEERS

ANTI, ANTI, ANTI ART

JON

WE BELIEVE IN NON-ART REALITY FOR ALL

LUZ

FOR EVERYONE, FOR ANYONE

FLUXSEERS

FOR EVERYONE, FOR ANYONE
NON-ART REALITY, REALITY FOR ALL

JON

ART IS A RECIPE
FOR A TUNA SANDWICH
ART IS PERFORMANCE
PERFORMANCE IN THE STREET

FLUXSEERS

TUNA SANDWICH, TUNA SANDWICH
TUNA SANDWICH, TUNA SANDWICH
MAKING TUNA SANDWICHES
SITTING IN THE STREET

LUZ

ART IS MUNSTER CHEESE, ROTTING IN A SUITCASE

JON

ART IS A WRITTEN SCRIPT YOU'RE FOLLOWING WITH FRIENDS

BUDDHA BRENDA

ART IS A ROOM FULL OF JARS AND HANGING PAPER

LUZ

ART IS A MEAL WHERE EVERY FOOD IS BLUE

SHIGEKO

ART IS HEBREW LETTERS, CARVED INTO CONCRETE

FLUXSEERS

ART IS A SOCCER MATCH, PLAYED BY TEAMS ON STILTS

JON

ART IS PREPLANNED ORCHESTRATED NOISES

1 Measure orchestrated noises

LUZ

ART IS PREPLANNED ORCHESTRATED NOISES

1 Measure orchestrated noises

FLUXSEERS

ART IS PREPLANNED ORCHESTRATED NOISES

1 Measure orchestrated noises

JON

ART IS ART, IS ART, IS ART

FLUXSEERS

BECAUSE AN ARTIST SAYS IT'S ART

SHIGEKO

ART IS ART, IS ART, IS ART

FLUXSEERS

BECAUSE AN ARTIST SAYS THAT'S WHAT IT IS

Big Flourish to end the song. CHAT is unfazed, grinning.

CHAT

Well, that's right! Art is art is art is art, and art is what I'm buying. I got the money and I got the eye. And maybe your art will meet my eye. I'm looking for unknown artists to get in on the ground floor. And the sky's the limit, I mean look at Warhol. Look at him! He hit the sky So stop by my new gallery. It's so new it doesn't even have a sign up, but it's right next door. Seeeeeeeeeya!

CHAT exits

LUZ

What part of the manifesto do you think he understood?

JON

None of it, donchathink?

BUDDHA BRENDA

Yesss. None of it. (Laugh) I do not think that man understood one single, not one single word.

Lights

SCENE 2

Chat's gallery, next door to the Fluxseer building. There is a counter and a few pieces of art - painting & sculpture, bare walls, also cardboard boxes and trash and other signs of someone moving in. Chat is hanging a painting- neo-expressionist or abstract impressionist. SEVEN enters, carrying a large portfolio.

SEVEN

(tic) Excuse me.

CHAT turns around. He brightens up on seeing her.

CHAT

Why yes. Hello. And who do we have here? (seeing the portfolio) Are you an artist?

SEVEN

(tic) Yes. Yes. Mr. Hodgkiss, I (tic)...I yam an artist

CHAT

Walking over, extending hand. She does not take it and seems unaware of the gesture.

Chatsworth Hodgkiss. Junior. Nice to make your acquaintaince, Miss...

SEVEN

Yes Mr. Hodgkiss

CHAT

Oh, call me Chat. And you are...

SEVEN

I am Seven. Seven Death.

Beat

CHAT

Seven, uh...

SEVEN

Seven Death

CHAT

Uh, Oh. Seven Death. Your street name...What A great street name! And what is in the portfolio?

She pulls her hand out of his to gesture toward the portfolio

SEVEN

Seven Death is my (tic) real name...

(tic) You are looking for art to...(tic) to buy?

CHAT

And that's absolutely right. I am looking for art. Unknown artists with potential. Best kind. Buy low, sell high. Trade up. Create a world class collection. And do you have something to show me?

SEVEN

Yes, (tic) yes I have something ...

CHAT

Well let's see it. Sliiiiiiiiiide it right on out of that *gi-normous* portfolio of yours.

She pulls out a large painting. It is dark and dense but clearly visible is a large number 7 with dark, threatening shapes around it. She puts it up on the counter. He steps back to regard it.

Hmmm....Ahhhh.... Hmmm.... Rather dark, don't you think? Rather dark?

SEVEN

(tic) Dark. Yesssss. Dark Do you wish to purchase?

He looks at her and the painting and back and forth a few times. He seems much more attracted to her than to the painting.

CHAT

Hmmm....Ahhhh.... Hmmm.... Ah, well, uh, what do you want for it?

SEVEN

(tic) Five... hundred.... Doll...

CHAT

(Rapid fire, cutting her off) I'll give you fifty. Cash. Now. Take it or leave it.

SEVEN

(tic) That is the best you can do?

CHAT

Final offer.

Pulls out a cash box from under the counter, extracts a bill. Slaps it on the counter.

SEVEN

This painting could be worth a lot to you some day. You ought to pay more for it.

CHAT

Look, sweetie...uh...uh... Seven. Look, Seven. You're an unknown artist. Give it some time. Then you can start looking for the big bucks. Now. Do you want to sell or not?

SEVEN

(tic) Yes.

Picks up the bill from the counter, puts it in a pocket or purse. He reaches for her hand.

CHAT

Great. Say, how'd you like to have dinner

SEVEN, making eye contact, makes a large (tic)

Uhhhh... lunch?

Another (tic)

Uhhhh... coffee?

She gently withdraws her hand, then leans over and kisses (Kiss #1 Seven Minutes) him on the cheek

SEVEN

(tic)Some other time. I have...much (tic) painting to do!

SEVEN exits, leaving her portfolio leaning against the counter. CHAT picks up the painting, regards it happily and hangs it on the wall behind the counter. He jerks and suddenly grabs some part of his anatomy, makes some distress noises and collapses, unmoving. (He is dead until she puts the clock on him).

SEVEN enters and yells, seeing nobody there.

(tic) 'scuse me. I forgot my portfolio. Anybody here?...Oh. There it is.

She enters the gallery, then sees Chat on the floor

Oh no! Are you all right?

She checks for a pulse

Oh (tic) no! Dead. This is bad

She gets her portfolio, and sets it next to his chair and expands it. It now stands up by itself. She gets on her hands and knees behind it and crawls inside. It has telescoped UpStage/DownStage to allow her to enter. Her voice while inside the portfolio has reverb as if she is in a very large space

Now let me see if I can find...

Sounds of objects being tossed/pushed around accompanied by a yelled exchange in an unintelligible language. If this could be a Mayan dialect, great, but any gibberish will do.

No, not that. No. No. (Another gibberish exchange) Here (tic) here it is.

She crawls out. She is holding a digital clock (see picture of possible appearance) with a strap attached. The digital display is set to 7 minutes

She lifts his head and hangs it around his neck. Immediately he starts to move.

Here is your clock. It says you have seven minutes left.

As in a dream he takes the clock and looks at it. The numbers start scrolling/flashing, winding down toward zero. He becomes agitated but very weak barely able to move.

CHAT

Ohmigod. Ohmigod. What am I going to do? An ambulance. I need an ambulance.

SEVEN

(tic) Yes. I will call. Where is phone?

CHAT

Ohmigod. Oh no. It's not hooked up yet. I just moved in. Ohmigod. No. No. Maybe there's one next door? At the FluxSeer building next door? Please! Go check. Go call an ambulance. Please. PLEASE!!

She exits in a hurry. He lies there looking dumbly at the clock.