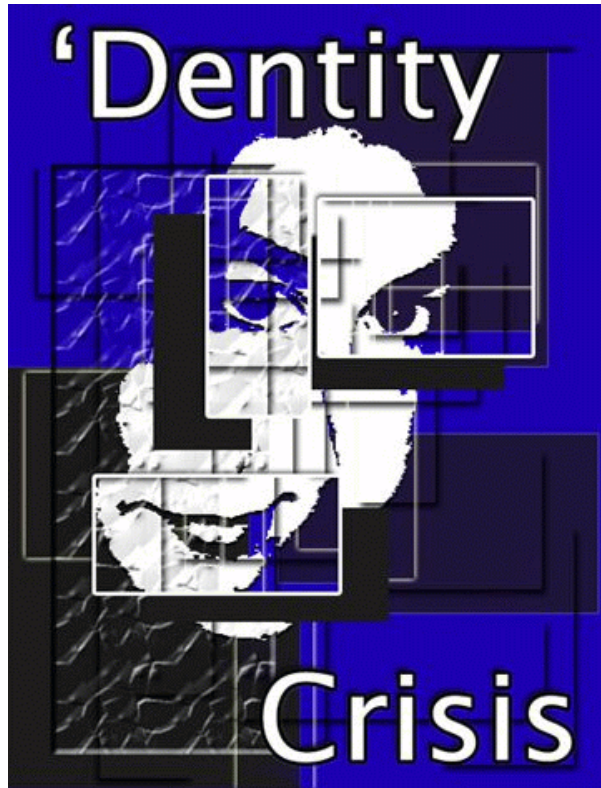


Christopher Durang's



A Playgoer's Guide

"... nothing seems worth trying
if Tinkerbell is just going to die."

Christopher Durang



An alumnus of both Harvard and Yale, Christopher Durang is a captivating actor and playwright. Since the late 1970's, Durang has written dozens of stage plays, has been in movies and off-Broadway musicals, and his plays have been seen around the United States as well as abroad. A member of the Dramatists Guild Council since 1981, Durang has been the co-chair of the playwriting program at the Julliard School in Manhattan since

1994. He usually writes comedy, whether it be satire, dark comedy, parody or absurdist.

Early in his career, Durang won a Guggenheim, a Rockefeller, the CBS Playwriting Fellowship, the Lecompte du Nouy Foundation grant, and the Kenyon Festival Theatre Playwriting Prize. In 1995 he won the prestigious three year Lila Wallace Readers Digest Award. As part of his grant, he ran a writing workshop for adult children of alcoholics. In 2000 he won the Sidney Kingsley Playwriting Award.

Other Works

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You (1979)

Beyond Therapy (1982)

Baby With The Bathwater (1983)

The Marriage of Bette and Boo (1985)

Sex and Longing (1985)

Betty's Summer Vacation (1999)

Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge (2002)

The Crisis

Recovering from a nervous breakdown, Jane is nursed and nagged by her energetic and overwhelming mother, Edith Fromage, the self-proclaimed inventor of cheese. We soon meet Jane's brother, or father, or grandfather, Dwayne, who may be having an affair with Edith and Jane is left wondering who he really is. Her psychiatrist makes a house call and listens sympathetically to Jane's recurring memory of attending a nightmarish production of "Peter Pan" in her youth. He then goes off and has a sex change, returning as a woman, and Jane has trouble recognizing him. His wife also has a sex change, and the wife now looks like the psychiatrist. Jane feels crazier still, even though Edith and Dwayne, father/grandfather/count, think the new company is great fun, and everybody ends by conjugating the verb "dentity": I dentity, you dentity, he/she/it dentities. According to Jack Neal's theatre reviews, *'Dentity Crisis* is "enough to push the sanest of playgoers into schizophrenia."

'Dentity Crisis had its professional premiere at the Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut, on a double bill with Robert Auletta's *Guess Work*, on October 13, 1978. It has been frequently produced for almost thirty years, and Jane's "Peter Pan" monologue has become famous through much use in high school forensics and as an audition piece.



"I think I'm more unusual as a writer than I am as an actor. Also, the playwright really creates the whole event. It's a bit scarier, because the whole endeavor becomes your personal expression – and when it's successful it's very exciting, and when it's perceived to be a failure, the blame is usually placed at your door." – Christopher Durang

Absurdist Theatre

The most popular and influential non-realistic genre of the 20th century was absurdism. Absurdist dramatists saw, in the words of the Romanian-French playwright Eugène Ionesco, "man as lost in the world, all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless". Absurdist drama tends to eliminate much of the cause-and-effect relationship among incidents, reduce language to a game and minimize its communicative power, reduce characters to archetypes, make place nonspecific, and view the world as alienating and incomprehensible. Absurdism was at its peak in the 1950s, but continued to influence drama through the 1970s. The American playwright Edward Albee's early dramas were classified as absurd because of the seemingly illogical or irrational elements that defined his characters' world of actions. Pinter was also classed with the absurdists; however, he explained that they are realistic because they resemble the everyday world in which only fragments of unexplained activity and dialogue are seen and heard.

This guide was researched by
The *'Dentity Crisis* Task Force
Rebecca Tremblay, Scott Keenan

and assembled and edited by
Courtney DeWare, Marg Craig, Kyle Smith,
and Russ Hunt

St. Thomas University English 2223:
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