



Brigham Young University

Department of Theatre and Cinematic Arts



presents

# THE VISIT

by Friedrich Duerrenmatt



In the  
Margetts Arena Theatre

October 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27,

28, 29, 30, 31 at 8 p.m.

Matinee October 26 at 4:30 p.m.

directed by  
Marion J. Bentley



1981





# The Visit adapted by MAURICE VALENCY

## Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

The First Man	David Taylor
The Second Man	Larry Steele
The Third Man	Zeric Smith
The Fourth Man	Joe Wegescheide
The Painter	Kim Colton
The Station Master	Donald Dolenc
The Burgermeister	Randy King
The Teacher (Oct. 15,17,21,23,26,28)	Greg Peters
(Oct. 16,20,22,24,27,29,30,31)	Christopher Scadden
The Pastor	J. Omar Hanson
Anton Schill	Peter Balogh
Claire Zachanassian	Suzann Utke
The Conductor	J.P. Croft
Pedro Cabral	Alan Ririe Stark
Bobby	Jeff Combe
The Policeman	David Shepherd
The Grandson	Justin Bentley
The Granddaughter	Guisseppa Ann King
Mike	Roger L. Bean
Max	Bruce Bredeson
First Blind Man	Val Olds
Second Blind Man	Richard Slawson
The Athlete	David Taylor
Frau Burgermeister	Mary Claire Dawson
Frau Schill	Julie G. Preece
The Daughter	Leslie Smith
The Son	Richard Bon
The Doctor	Mitchell Hudson
The First Woman	April Black
The Second Woman	Ruth Razanas
The Truck Driver	Richard Anderson
The Cameraman	Richard Anderson
The First Reporter	Blaine Mero
The Second Reporter	Ann Heileman

The action of the play takes place in and around  
the little town of Güllen, somewhere in Europe.

There are three acts.

There will be a five-minute intermission  
between acts two and three

## Production Staff

Director	Marion J. Bentley
Production Design	Bill Demos
Technical Director	O. Lee Walker
Assistant Directors	Wade Fransen Dan Baldwin
Assistant Technical Director	Don Wilson
Lighting	Kent Sheranian
Costumer	Roberta Bailey
Costume Crew	Lisa Park Cindy Combe Linda Redford
Resident Stage Manager	Kent Sheranian
Production Stage Manager	Wade Fransen
Lighting Technician	Katy Davis
Scene Shop Foremen	Russell Lowder Richard Stella
Scene Painter	Robert Saxon
Property Mistress	Ann Heileman
Property Assistants	Vicky Valley Jane Irey Linda Nauman Susan Nickerson Lisa Meece
Sound (BYU Sound Services)	David Wilbur
Ticket Office Manager	Colleen Bird
House Manager	Robert Hoopes
Publicity Director	D. Terry Petrie
Publicity Photographer	Mark Philbrick
Make-Up	Jan Broberg Jody Ross Roberta Bailey Ann Heileman
Signs	Varlo Davenport







# THE VISIT

Friedrich Duerrenmatt was born in Konolfingen, near Bern, Switzerland, on January 5, 1921. His father was a Lutheran minister, and his grandfather was a well-known political satirist and poet. In fact, Duerrenmatt's grandfather was once jailed for a poem he had written. Duerrenmatt said he learned early on from his grandfather that "writing can be a way of doing battle."

As a young boy, Friedrich enjoyed painting. After one semester at the university in Zurich he abandoned his painting pursuits, and gave in to an insatiable desire to write. His painting became merely a hobby. "The things we like best are not always the things we do best," says Duerrenmatt. "For me writing is far more difficult than painting."

After six plays had reached the boards and Duerrenmatt had married and matured as a writer, his masterpiece, Der Besuch der alten Dame, premiered in the Zurich Schauspielhaus in 1956. The critics acclaimed the formerly promising writer, Friedrich Duerrenmatt, as an established voice in the theater. The Visit of the old Lady,

soon shortened to The Visit, rapidly gained an international reputation.

In 1957, the British produced a translation of The Visit under the title Time and Again. The work was adapted by Maurice Valency and, though it achieved only nominal success in England, when it opened in New York the next spring it was immediately hailed as "magnificent!"

The American version starred the Broadway veterans, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. And the changes made with Valency's translation and adaptation made it a stronger play for American audiences.

The Visit concerns the story of a woman, Claire, who returns to the village of her girlhood to get revenge upon the boy who seduced her and apparently ruined her life. She, in the meantime, has become the world's richest woman. With her money she sets out to prove that she can achieve anything she desires. As one citizen after another sells his integrity for a material possession we begin to wonder about our ability to tell right from wrong.

Many questions have arisen concerning the theme of The Visit. Is it the consuming nature of a drive for revenge? Is it man's obsession for material things? Is it the inhumanness of hopeless poverty? Most certainly it is a tribute to the playwright's skill that not only are all such ideas valid ones, but the discussion has raged for twenty-five years without a definitive answer. Duerrenmatt himself,

when approached for the answer, enigmatically replied, "People should accept my fancies and ignore the deeper meaning. . . ."

As a stylist Duerrenmatt is seen by critic Randolph Goodman in this way: "Duerrenmatt's position in the total pattern of postwar drama is somewhere in the middle field. He is neither an absurdist nor an epic playwright." He neither sees the world as completely senseless nor very rational. For this reason he has been termed a "tragic-comedian." His play contains the grotesqueness of the absurdist--the leading lady has a wooden leg and an ivory arm; simultaneously, the remembered relationship between Claire and Anton, and the passage of time are seen as if through a romantic cinematic filter. Duerrenmatt combines the stylized human forms of trees with the realism of hunting down a man to murder him. He imposes a gallows humor on the audience as Claire arrives with a coffin for the body of her former lover. In the English version Duerrenmatt has allowed Valency to replace the wooden leg and ivory arm with the normal living appendages, but has re-endowed the woman with a will of iron. Duerrenmatt also allowed Valency to replace emphasis on the age and strength of the old woman with an awareness of the love and pain Claire had both endured and inflicted.

Other changes in the English language version include the renaming of several men. ("Alfred Ill" carries a much weaker connotation in English than does Anton Schill.) Claire's age was reduced from sixty-three to fifty to heighten the romantic vulnerability;



two husbands were eliminated; an idyllic motor car ride that Herr Ill took with his family is not in the English version; and two act endings are dramatically changed to make them more poignant and in some cases more puzzling. At the end of Act II, instead of Herr Schill's lamenting "I'm lost!" as he sees the forces against him, he says "I'm staying!" and thereby strengthens his own character as an individual against the town's citizens now led by Claire. And at the end of Act III the German version has Claire's sedan chair being carried out followed by Schill's coffin. In the English version the coffin is carried out first followed by Claire, mourning. Then instead of striking up the band in victory, as in the German version, the English version ends quietly, with the town perhaps wondering if all that they have given up is worth what they have gained.

By 1961, The Visit had been translated into more than fifteen languages and had been produced in more than twenty-five countries including Japan and Israel. In April of 1959 the play won the Drama Critics Circle Award in New York City, and later that year, in Mannheim, Germany, won the prestigious Schiller Prize.

It has been said that Friedrich Duerrenmatt's plays make the audience unbequem--uncomfortable. Duerrenmatt defends the disquieting effect of his plays: "The tyrants of this planet are not moved by the works of poets. . . . Tyrants fear only one thing, a writer's mockery." The Visit may make us uncomfortable enough to face the tyrant within us all.

--Kaye T. Hanson





## Director's Note

According to critic Randolph Goodman, "The theme of The Visit is difficult to pinpoint; some critics have seen it as the mercilessness of revenge, others as the ravaging force of greed, and still others as the brutalizing effect of grinding poverty; it is all of these things and, like life, much more, including the dire results of frustrated love, the ruthless drive for power, the fruitless search for justice, and the importance of human dignity."

The multifaceted work draws from the simple structure and generic characters of a medieval morality play while simultaneously suggesting overtones of Greek tragedy. As the complex threads of conscience, justice, mercy, and materialism are interwoven in the tapestry of this production, it is hoped that an illuminating pattern will emerge that may provide insight, enlightenment, and inspiration.

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