

# The Magnificent Cuckold – Ο Μεγαλοπρεπής Κερατάς

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Francesco Chiaro

January 27,  
2020



## Of Horns and Other Demons

The National Theatre of Northern Greece presents its new big production **The Magnificent Cuckold** by Fernand Crommelynck, from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January at the Royal Theatre of Thessaloniki, for the translation of Efi Giannopoulou and the direction of Eleana Tsihli

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Το Κρατικό Θέατρο Βορείου Ελλάδος παρουσιάζει τη νέα μεγάλη παραγωγή, **Ο μεγαλοπρεπής κερατάς** του Φερνάν Κρομλένκ, από την Παρασκευή 17 Ιανουαρίου 2020, στο Βασιλικό Θέατρο. Η Έφη Γιαννοπούλου υπογράφει τη μετάφραση του έργου του Κρομλένκ, το οποίο σκηνοθετεί η Ελεάνα Τσίχλη, που επιστρέφει στο ΚΘΒΕ μετά τη μεγάλη επιτυχία της παράστασης «Ποιος σκότωσε το σκύλο τα μεσάνυχτα»

[riduci]

Il Teatro nazionale della Grecia settentrionale presenta la sua nuova, grande produzione, **Il magnifico cornuto** di Fernand Crommelynck, a partire da venerdì 17 gennaio 2020 presso il Teatro reale di Salonicco, per la traduzione di Efi Giannopoulou e la regia di Eleana Tsichili

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The love between Bruno and Stella is so powerful and shared that it leaves everyone around them deliriously happy. But everything suddenly changes when the suspicion of infidelity worms its way into Bruno's thoughts and he follows the dark passageways of jealousy to madness.

**The Magnificent Cuckold** teeters between farce and tragedy. Characters are in love and having fun one moment, wounding and being hurt the next. And we find ourselves spirited out of the initial refreshing, light-hearted, comic environment into a nightmarish place of no return, in the grip of obsessions and passions with nothing rational about them. An endless game of *reductio ad absurdum*... in which, ultimately, the protagonist's real enemy is himself.

Born in France into a family of actors, Fernand Crommelynck wrote **The Magnificent Cuckold** in 1920. Influenced by iconic classic works and equipped with an excellent knowledge of theatrical writing and the theatrical act, he left us a lyrical and grotesque text on jealousy in its most sickening—and simultaneously comic (or ridiculous)—form.

As director Eleana Tsichli herself comments: «Reading the "**Magnificent Cuckold**", I felt I had a rare treasure in my hands, a work emblematic of its era. The plot but also Crommelynck's style were a catalyst: it was as though I was holding a time bomb that could explode at any moment. And the longer it didn't explode, the more the work challenged me to probe deep into the provincial house in which it's set, to observe, almost through the keyhole, everything taking place in there behind closed doors, to eavesdrop on private conversations, to sneak a peek at all the "goings on". Without wanting to, I started to turn into a real voyeur, and ever so slowly—consciously embracing my voyeuristic tendencies now—to strive ever more to be present, to not miss a word of what was said (never in public), to not let any of the things happening (always in private) to escape me.

And yes! The events taking place in that private space did shatter "morality", they did breach the social conventions, subvert the imposed model of a "quiet life". That's the sort of world Crommelynck creates: a dramatic universe which isn't powered by fixed ideas, a world which spontaneously combusts, fuelling a subversive morality, a society which provides a reflection of our own—or at least a reflection of each of us, while simultaneously highlighting human flaws and removing the stigma from shared weaknesses. However "magnificent" the world of this "cuckold" may be, it forces you to look the Medusa in her face—which is also your face, and the sight moves you to weep and laugh at the sight of yourself.

That Crommelynck could bring such a light touch to his **Magnificent Cuckold**, a work which is anything but light, reveals how profoundly and sincerely he, the playwright, loves people. The world of his play is inhabited by roles that call upon stereotypical characters from the theatre tradition, but they are stereotypes with cracks and vulnerabilities. By illuminating these, Crommelynck creates characters who are very much alive; who start out as figures from farce only to end up conversing with archetypes from tragedy. Which is how and why the play seems to verify the nature of farce as tragedy turned on its head.

For instance, we see the village Mayor constantly fussing over his public image, though he knows full well that he needs to purchase the help of other, more capable, people to cover for his own inadequacies; the Nurse who, though she seems like a staunch supporter of married life, actually plants the idea of divorce by juxtaposing her will and opinions onto religious ethics; the coarse and uneducated Cattleman who stays away from village social life and, though imperfectly familiar with the rules of behaviour, nonetheless harbours the most noble and sincere feelings; the obedient Scribe who obeys his master's every word but is ultimately undone, betrayed by his faith and devotion.

At the heart of this world is Bruno, the unrepentant jealous husband, a man who in essence engineers his own ruin, the destruction of his personal happiness and peace of mind. But Crommelynck treats him, too, with compassion and understanding, underscoring the humanity of passion.

And yet, in this world full of lonely people who never cease to doubt themselves and others, in this atmosphere of distrust and inflated personal passions, an unstated demand is ever present, muted at first, but getting louder and more strident as the play proceeds. A howl of resistance against individualism and alienation, a hope expressed of actual, practicable happiness, a movement towards the light which may—who knows?—bring our despairing and desperately lonely progress to a halt. A demand as topical as it is imperative, and well worth straining our ears to hear and consider.

«Love is a... farce» —sometimes very good, at other times far from good... it's up to us to choose the prism through which we view our lives.»

## **The show is still playing**

### **Royal Theatre of Thessaloniki**

30is Oktovriou 2 – Thessaloniki

from 17 January to 12 April 2020

Wednesday at 18:00

Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 21:00

Sunday at 19:00

the National Theatre of Northern Greece presents

The Magnificent Cuckold – **Ο Μεγαλοπρεπής κερατάς**

by Fernand Crommelynck

translation Efi Giannopoulou

direction Eleana Tsichli

sets-costumes Konstantinos Skourletis

music Thodoris Ampazis

movement Sofia Papanikandrou

lighting Nikos Sotiropoulos

music instruction Panagiotis Barlas

director's assistant Eleni-Marina Tzigertzi

set-costume designer's assistant Elli Nalmpanti

production photography Tasos Thomoglou

production coordinator Athanasia Androni

second director's assistant (intern) Maria Tetou

second set-costume designer's assistant (intern) Lydia Lefkopoulou

cast Nikos Ortetzatos, Efstathia Lagiokappa, Maria Bagana, Melina Apostolidou,

Efi Drosou, Thanasis Raftopoulos, Dimitris Siakaras, Giorgos Stamos,

Nikolas Maragkopoulos, Panagiotis Papaioannou, Alkiviadis Spyropoulos,

Giorgos Dimitriadis, Christos Diamantoudis

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