

Bennington College Drama Presents

THE SPRING FACULTY PRODUCTION OF

new anatomies

by timberlake wertenbaker



Friday, Saturday & Sunday, May 17, 18 & 19, 1996
8:00PM • Lester Martin Theater

new anatomies

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director
Janis Young

set design
Tony Carruthers

lighting design
Megan Peti

costume design
Julia Chmaj

cultural consultant
Fatima Chajia

musical director
Tom Farrell

sound design
John Kube

stage manager
Dan Levitis

Cast

Hilary Redmon Isabelle Eberhardt

Melanie Plaza Severine - Parisian journalist
Antoine - Isabelle's brother
Si Lachmi - Sufi Sheikh

Magdalena Abramson Verda Miles - English performer
Saleh - desert nomad
Colonel Lyautey - French Commander

Tara Soro Anna - Isabelle's mother
Yasmina - Berber servant
Judge - French Colonial official
Lydia - Parisian salon hostess

Allison Mitchell Natalie - Isabelle's sister
Bou Saadi - desert nomad
Eugenie - Parisian lady

Jessie Weber Jenny - Antoine's wife
Captain Soubiel - French Colonial soldier
Pasha - Parisian waiter
Abdullah - Muslim Fundamentalist

Musicians

Cybele Paschke Voice
Sarangi

Doug Ryan Percussion

Gary Sojkowski Gungon
Tamale
Percussion



Part I

scene 1 Ain Sefra: Arab Quarters, 1904
scene 2 Geneva, 1890
scene 3 Geneva, 1893
scene 4 Algiers, 1898
scene 5 Algiers: Kasbah, 1898
scene 6 Desert, 1900

Part II

scene 1 Paris Salon, 1901
scene 2 Sufi Monastery in the desert, 1901
scene 3 Constantine Courtroom, 1901
scene 4 Ain Sefra: Military Barracks, 1903
scene 5 Ain Sefra: Arab Quarters 1904

"I have been happy in my simplicity."
- Isabelle Eberhardt



Isabelle Chronology

1877 Geneva

Born of Russian parents: Madame Nathalie de Moerder, nee Korff-Eberhardt, wife of a Russian general, and Alexander Trophimowsky, her (older) children's tutor and Russian anarchist. Madam de Moerder ran off with her children's tutor to live in 'Villa Neuve' outside Geneva, where Trophimowsky refuses to allow the sanctity of marriage or parental recognition, causing Isabelle to refer to her father simply as 'Vava' or great uncle, and home teaches the children- studies which involve learning six languages including Greek, Latin, and Arabic, literature, and the new ideas of Russian revolutionary leaders such as Bakunin. Isabelle forms a close relationship with her brother Augustin, soul mate and probable son of Trophimowsky, who, in accordance with new ideas, insists that Isabelle wear boys clothing and do 'male' chores:

Geneva

Nathalie oldest daughter, walks out of the villa to marry a local shopkeeper, rocking the family. Augustin, in a fit of desperation, leaves the Villa, flinging himself into the French Foreign Legion at Sidi Be Abbes. Isabelle forms Moslem friendships in Geneva that lead to her eventual departure to northern Africa.

1897 Algeria and Caligari

Isabelle arrives first in Bone to live in the border between the colonial French and Arab quarters, grieving for the death of her mother, the white spirit as she calls her, and converting to Islam. Isabelle, dressed as an Arab student from Tunisia and calling herself Si Mahmoud, buys a horse and begins the first in a series of forays into the Sahara. Augustin in Caligari marries 'Jenny l'ouvriere', as Isabelle calls her; Isabelle joins them for a stormy year. She finally returns to Algeria, at the south eastern town of El-Oued, where she experiences one of the happiest years of her life.

1899-1900 Paris and Algeria

In need of money and desiring to launch a writing career Isabelle visits France and makes connections through the help of Lydia Paschkoff, Russian explorer and writer, who introduces Isabelle, exotic in her 'Oriental' garb, to the widow of Marquise de Mores, recently slain in northern Africa, who pays Isabelle to find the assassin (which does not happen). With new funding, Isabelle returns to Algeria.

1900-1904 Algeria

The most intense years of her nomad life, Isabelle travels an overwhelming range of distance, telescoped between one pin-point and the next, in the desert, oasis, high plateaux, sleeping on mud floors, following marauding tribes, with Berbers, with Arabs, spending days immobile in contemplation of the Great Desert and nights in squalid brothels with the Spahis, Algerian-French troops. She is integrated into one of the religious Sufi societies, the Kadryas, swears obedience to its Sheikh, Si Lachmi, and dreams of becoming a woman priestess, a marabout, like Lallah Zeyneb, famous female marabout. On her horse Souf, her journals record the intoxication of these days, drawn further and further into limitless distances. She falls deeply in love with and eventually marries, Slimene Ehnni, an Arab quartermaster of the French garrison. At Behima, a religious fanatic from a rival sect, the Tidjanis, attempts to kill her. The trial that follows the attempted assassination is closely followed by a French colony already aware of this fabled Amazon of the desert and scandalized by her eccentric behavior. Isabelle, a Russian, is exiled from Algeria.

1904 Algeria and Morocco

Married to Slimene and thus a French citizen, Isabelle returns to Algeria. She is drawn to Sud-Oranais, on the borders of Morocco, where Colonel Lyautey, French visionary, military leader, and instigator of the French 'digestion of Morocco', commissions Si Mahmoud to report on the borders of Morocco from a famous monastery led by Sidi Brahim. As Lyautey's friend and protector her reportages now attract much attention. Ill with malaria, drink, and other diseases, Isabelle, at 27, dies in a freak accident at Ain Sefra, last French outpost on the Moroccan border, October 21, 1904.

Berber History

Since the beginning of the 5th century BC, the Berbers, the indigenous tribes of northern Africa, have been pushed back from the coast by successive waves of invaders, including Romans. The Arab invasions of the 8th and 11th centuries A.D. had the greatest cultural impact, introducing the Arabic language and the Islamic religion.

The borders of modern Algeria were established by the French in the 19th century. Algeria is the 11th largest country in the world. It is situated between Morocco and Tunisia with a Mediterranean coastline of nearly 1,000 kilometers. South of the fertile lands on the coast lie the Tellian and Saharan Atlas mountain ranges. Further south is the Sahara desert, rich in oil, natural gas and iron deposits. The capital of Algeria is Algiers and other major cities include Oran, Constantine, Annaba, TiziOuzou, Tlemcen and Bejaia. Algerians number around 28 million people and are mostly Arabs and Berbers, which makes Arabic and Berber the spoken languages of the country. French is also widely known. The prevailing religion is Islam.

Algeria was annexed to France in 1830. Resettlement programs were implemented using land-owning incentives to draw French citizens to the new colony. The French modernized Algeria, imposing European-style culture, infrastructure, economics, education and government on the country. The concept of French Algeria became ingrained in the French collective mind.

The French colonials looked upon the Muslim Algerians as an inferior underclass that had to be tightly controlled. They were not allowed to hold public meetings, bear arms or leave their districts or villages without government permission. The French regime alienated the vast majority of Algerians. The French attempt at acculturating an Algerian elite backfired badly. Those few educated in French schools and infused with French values suffered the inherent racism of their French overlords and constituted the nucleus of the Algerian nationalist movement.

The Algerian nationalist movement emerged between the two World Wars, first simply demanding civil rights for the Algerian people. The French government proposed concessions to the nationalists but these were blocked by French colonial reactionaries in the National Assembly. In the aftermath of World War II, the French government revived attempts to bring Muslim Algerians into the decision-making process but these were too little and too late to offset deep-rooted colonial attitudes and a growing mutual hatred between the French and their Muslim subjects.

In March 1954, Ben Bella and 8 other Algerians in exile formed a revolutionary committee which became the nucleus of the National Liberation Front (FLN). On November 1, 1954, the FLN declared war on the French through spectacular attacks on government buildings. The populist guerrilla war paralyzed the country and forced the French government to send 400,000 troops to try to put down the uprising. What followed was a bloody war which left more than a million Algerians dead and caused an exodus of skilled European workers. After a cease-fire was reached in March 1962, a referendum on self-determination was held in July, and Algeria became independent.

Muhammed said, "The bowl fell from the roof,
and I understood this bodily-existence.

- Rumi

Isabelle Eberhardt

"If only we could foretell, at each hour, the vital importance of certain actions, even words, which appear of no consequence at the time... There are no moments of our life that are without consequence of significance for the future... Mektoub! It is written..."

"I wanted to possess this country, and this country has possessed me."

"the long hours with neither sadness nor boredom - nothingness- where one is nourished by silence... I have never regretted one of those lost hours... I felt myself immortal, and so rich, in my poverty"

"No one has ever understood that even though I may seem to be driven by the senses alone, my heart is in fact a pure one filled with love and tenderness... a heart both proud and unswerving in its commitment to Islam, a cause for which I long to give my life some day."

"I shall dig in my heels and go on acting the lunatic in the intoxicating expanse of desert... or go on galloping through olive groves in the Tunisian Sahel, as I did in the autumn."

"In this country without vegetation, this country of stones, one thing exists - the hours. Here, sunrise and sunset are each a drama in themselves."

Through the shrewed manipulation of borders, identity papers, names and rules, Eberhardt displaced and out of place in Geneva, became ...in effect a spirit of place in North Africa. The figure of clothing was for her a palpable sign: on January 1, 1900 she wrote in her diary that she wanted 'to reclothe myself in that cherished personality, which in reality in the true one, and to go back to Africa again.' Her critics tend to read her transvestism as the most vivid evidence that Eberhardt was 'matter out of place', pollution or dirt, in Mary Douglas's classic formulation, but by animating the trope of displacement she reversed the paradigm.

True Hunger
is not easy to have
when fodder is always being set
in front of you with the invitation,
Eat. You're not a waterbird
that eats air.
You're a bread-bird. Eat!
- Rumi: Mathnawi V

Her disguise endeared her to no one. Arab women must have thought her a pitiful and uncouth creature for mixing in male circles which were better left alone; Arab men must have found her ambivalent persona rather trying and her sexual presumptions perverse. French women would have been contemptuous of her for having de-classed and de-sexed and de-raced herself. She was untouchable as far as they were concerned. French men would have shared the view of their women, while also perceiving her as a dangerous symbol of female rebellion; her taking Arab lovers would have galled them too, for in a colonial society, miscegenation -if it occurred between a white woman and a non-white man- was considered a deadly sin.

- Rana Kabbani

There are many guises for intelligence
One part of you is gliding in a high windstream,
while you more ordinary notions
take little steps and peck at the ground.

Run from what's profitable and comfortable.
If you drink those liquors, you'll spill
the springwater of your real life.
- Rumi: Mathnawi II

Production Crew



assistant stage managers

James Cairl
Ellen Whitman

technical director

Alan Del Vecchio

master carpenter
master electrician

Paul Olmer
Joel Garland

costume advisor
set design assistant
fight choreographer

Terry Teitelbaum
Pete Seward
James Cairl

light board operator
sound board operator
follow spot operator

Erica Maurais
L.A. Schildt
Burcu Cavus

make-up
make-up assistant

Hank Corlett
Renee LaFerriere

wigs

Rebecca Viale

wardrobe

Nida Haider

floor crew

Doug Ryan

set construction

Vrinda Condillac
Jessica Cook
Pablo De Ocampo
Margaret Eisenberg
Courtney Haynes
David Karavicius
Aleandra Serrano

set decoration

Cemre Durusoy
Doug Palardy

upholstry

Hank Corlett

light hang and focus

Michael Buhl
Eliza Glynn
Jason Kingsley
John Kube
Tim McCarthy
Allison Mitchell
Roger Silva

costume construction

Julia Chmaj
Crystal Dirx
Hilary Gordon
Rebecca Zafonte

props

Rachel Whitman

poster and program design

Michael Buhl

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The stage manager would like to thank Descartes. Mummy and the Fam and the Dollar Store. He wishes to express the opinion that the cast, the crews, the designers, the musicians and the directors are all pretty nifty. Infinite thanks to the following letters: ELM, JC, EW, JK, EB, AW, VP, C, JS, SH, SL, EW, PS, LZ, AD, JG, MB, JCSS, ELF and the number 23. Oxen to Rachel.

Bennington College Scene Shop Staff

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Stephen Howard • Sara Jacobson • Dan Levitis • Jessica Peck
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