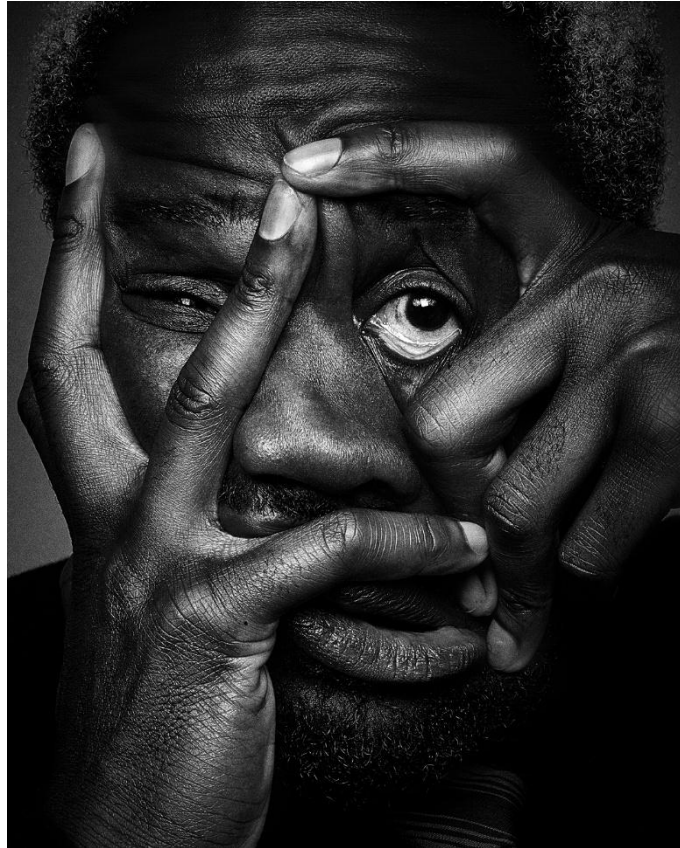


**ALMEIDA  
THEATRE**

**Access Information Pack**



**Rhinoceros**

**By Eugène Ionesco**

**Translated and Directed by Omar Elerian**

# Contents

This document is a visual guide to support your visit to the Almeida Theatre. There are three sections:

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# About the Almeida Theatre

## How to get here

The Almeida Theatre is on Almeida Street in Islington. The post code is N1 1TA. It is a large, white concrete building and it is situated halfway up the road.

The outside of the theatre looks like this:



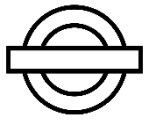
## Journey to the theatre

The nearest underground stations are **Angel** on the Northern line or **Highbury & Islington** on the Victoria line, and London Overground.



You can find more information on our website here:

[almeida.co.uk/your-visit/getting-here/](http://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/getting-here/)



## Highbury & Islington Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what Highbury and Islington station looks like outside.



Follow the path out of the station to the right onto Upper Street.  
The theatre is about 1 kilometre down the road on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Highbury, you will pass these landmarks:

This is Union Chapel.

It is near bus stop G.



If you don't want to walk, you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at St Mary's church - bus stop N – for the theatre.

This is where Upper Street crosses Islington Park Street and Canonbury Lane.

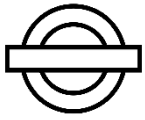


This is Islington Town Hall.



This is what Almeida Street looks like as you arrive at the theatre.





## Angel Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what **Angel** station looks like outside.



From Angel station, turn right onto Upper Street and cross the busy road at the pedestrian crossing.

Continue along Upper Street for about 1 kilometre.  
The theatre is on the left on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Angel, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is the main bus stop across the road from Angel station – bus stop Y.





If you don't want to walk you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at bus stop P, opposite St Mary's church.

This is Islington Green.



This is St. Mary's Church.



This is what Almeida Street looks like as you arrive at the theatre.



# About the Almeida Theatre

## Information about the theatre

You can watch a video tour of the building on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/access/>

Inside the main entrance of the theatre, there is a foyer where people can wait. This is what the foyer looks like.



It can get quite busy here before the start of the play.





When you arrive, the front of house team will greet you.



There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. They are very happy to help you.

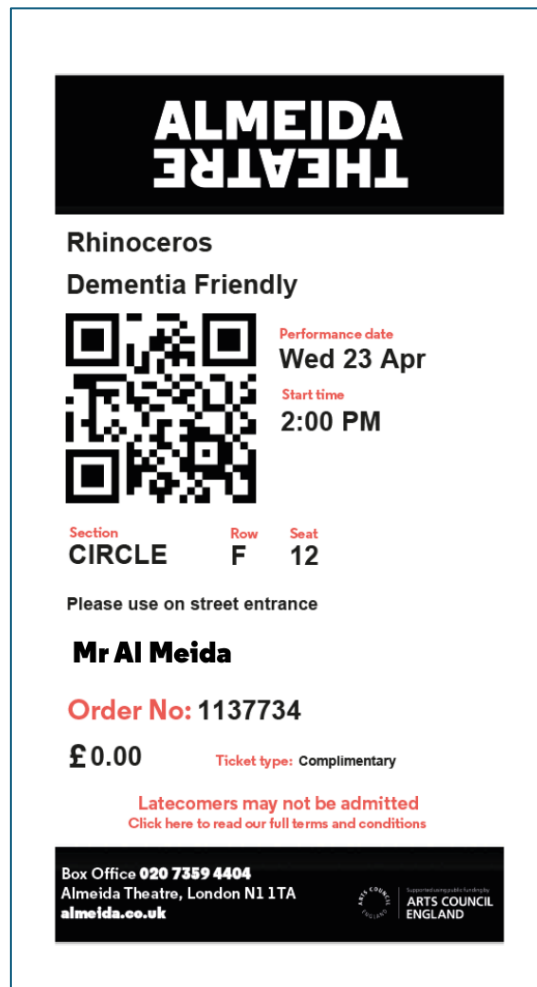
Almeida Theatre staff wear black t-shirts with white writing.



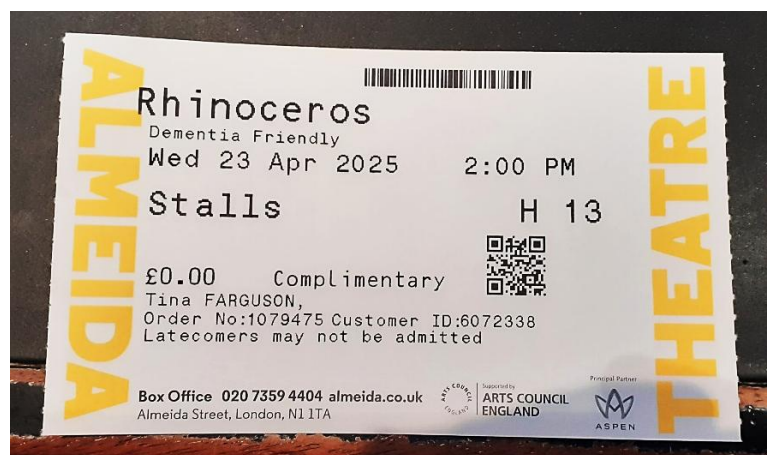
If you need help with your ticket, you can speak to the box office team. It can be quite noisy at the box office, and you may have to wait in a queue. Their desk looks like this.



If you have a digital ticket, you can find it in your email inbox and it will look like this.



Or if you have a printed ticket, it will look like this.



The Front of House assistants will scan your ticket as you enter the auditorium.



The entrance to the stalls is via the ramp to the right of the foyer.



The entrance to the circle is on the outside of the building located to the right of the main entrance.



There is step-free access to the foyer and stalls. There is one accessible toilet at the back of the foyer.

This is the café and bar, where you can buy hot and cold drinks and food.





If you have any questions or feel worried about your visit, please do contact us at [access@almeida.co.uk](mailto:access@almeida.co.uk) or call our box office on 020 7359 4404.

## **Opening Hours**

You can find our Box Office opening hours on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/booking-information/>








The Almeida Café & Bar opens two hours before every performance and remains open until 11 pm, with the kitchen closing 30 minutes before the show starts.

The auditorium opens 30 minutes before the performance begins – you are welcome to take your seats from then.

# The Production

## Content Guidance

*Rhinoceros* contains:

	<b>Bright lights</b>		<b>Haze</b>
	<b>Loud music</b>		<b>Strong language</b>
	<b>Shouting</b>		<b>Replica gun and a loud, sudden gun shot</b>
	<b>Audience interaction</b>		

# The Production

## Performance Conditions:

### Relaxed Environment and Dementia Friendly Performances

The duty manager will make an onstage announcement before the performance to explain what a Relaxed Environment or Dementia Friendly performance is. They will explain:

- The house lights will remain at a low level throughout the performance.
- Audience members are free to make noise, move about or come and go to take breaks and access the facilities as needed.
- If you need to step out of the auditorium for a break, there is also a TV monitor in the foyer to watch the performance from so you don't miss **any** of the action.

## Kazoos



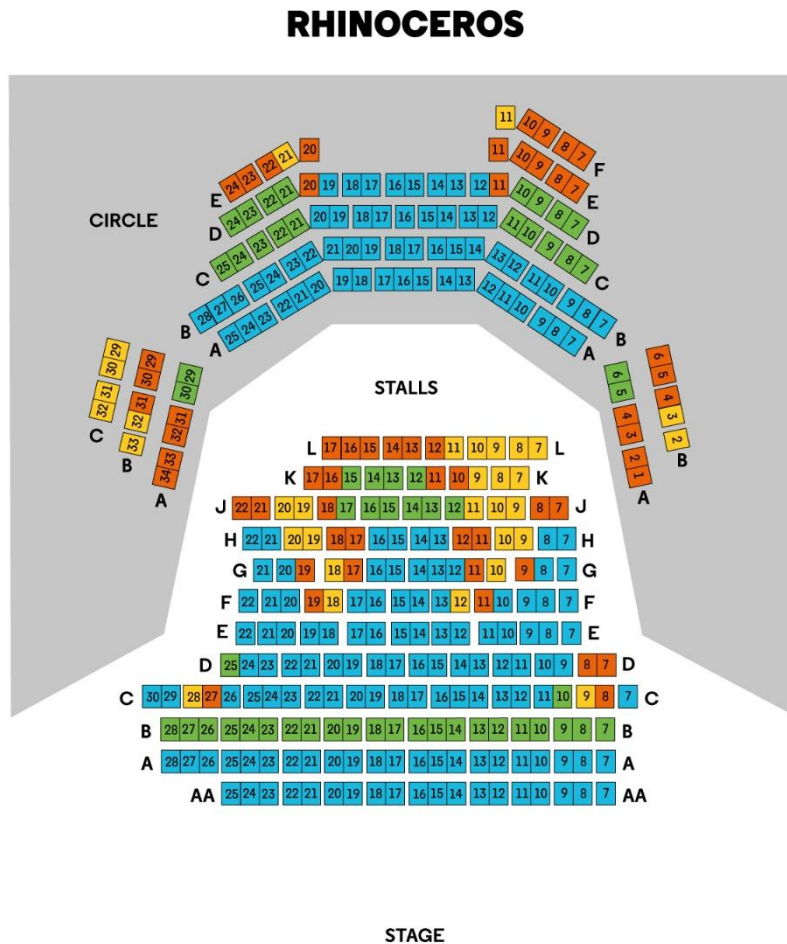
In the first half, just before the interval, an audience member is asked to play the character 'Mr Boeuf'. The actors will choose someone from the front of the stalls. They are instructed to play the kazoo in different ways.

In the second half of the play, lots of audience members are given kazoos to play. The Narrator will tell you when to play. If you do not wish to participate, you can say no or let a member of staff know.



## Seating

Seating for this production is arranged in the stalls in long rows of approximately 20 seats, with aisles at either end of the rows. Further seating is available in the circle level above.



## Running time and interval

There are four acts in the play with an interval between acts two and three – at around 1 hour and 5 minutes. The total running time including the interval is 2 hours and 35 minutes.

# What Happens in the Play?

## The Set

The action takes place in a non-naturalistic setting painted a stark white and uses minimal props. The stage is a step up from the seats in the front stalls. There's a low rectangular platform in the centre with two tall tables at the far sides with microphones angled over them where foley sound effects are made. At the back is a raised stage that's covered by a thin white curtain. There are 4 different locations: the Town Square, the Office, Jean's flat and Berenger's flat.



**The Town Square**



**The Office**



**Jean's house**

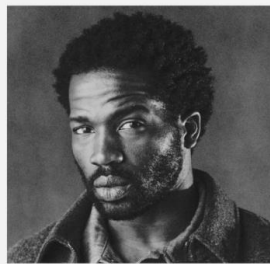


**Berenger's house**

# What Happens in the Play?

## The Characters

In this production, there are eight actors including a narrator that speaks the stage directions, and a chorus that assists in the setup of locations as well as playing different characters in the story. The chorus all have exaggerated cartoonish hairstyles and wear long white lab-style overcoats over their other costumes. As a chorus they help define locations by miming the Narrator's stage directions and creating foley sound effects. Occasionally French language is used to translate some of the English words used in location descriptions.



**Berenger**



**Daisy**



**Jean**



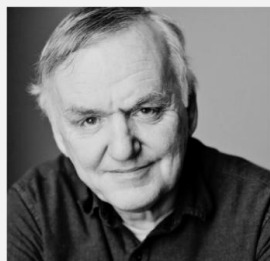
**Narrator/ Botard**



**Dudard/ Logician**



**Firefighter/ Lady**



**Old Gent/  
Papillon/ Old Man**



**Grocer/ Mrs Boeuf/  
Old Woman**

# What Happens in the Play?

## Short Synopsis

In Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, a small town in France is shaken when its inhabitants begin transforming into rhinoceroses. Bérenger, the main character, refuses to conform to this bizarre and unsettling trend.

## Themes

**Resistance:** Berenger refuses to conform despite pressure.

**Conformity:** The play critiques mass thinking and societal pressure.

**Fascism:** The play is often interpreted as an allegory for the rise of fascist ideologies, with the rhinoceros representing dehumanization.

**Isolation:** Berenger becomes increasingly isolated and alone in his humanity as others around him transform into rhinoceroses.

## Style

The play is rooted in Theatre of the Absurd, a style characterised by surreal imagery, disjointed dialogue, and unconventional plotlines, which deliberately creates a disjointed and disorienting theatrical experience. The audience is central to the experience, with performers frequently breaking the fourth wall to engage and interact directly with them.

## Sensory Overview

If you are affected by any of these elements, you are welcome to take breaks at any time.

### Lights

- Flashing lights
- Snap lighting changes
- Some dark lighting states

### Sound

- Loud sound effects including a sudden gunshot
- Underscore using low tones
- Moments of shouting and screaming
- One moment of potential auditory overload with overlapping dialogue of two separate conversations
- Use of kazoos (optional audience participation)

### Triggers

- Depictions of high emotion including panic, distress, aggression and discomfort
- A depiction of death by gunshot
- Surreal and absurdist moments throughout including a surreal depiction of a slap
- References to alcoholism
- Actors will occasionally use the aisles in the auditorium to enter and leave
- Use of haze and stage blood.

# Plot Synopsis

## Pre-Show

There is a radio style soundtrack where French is spoken, whilst the audience are coming into the auditorium. The French spoken is not clearly audible.

## Act One: Introduction & The Town Square

The Narrator welcomes audience and leads a light movement game involving simple arm movements. He speaks about the rules of society and the rules of theatre and how we conform in different situations. The Narrator relays stage directions to the actors to describe the town square in a small village. The actors set the scene miming tables, trees and windows to create the town square.

## Scene: Town Square

The Narrator introduces us to old friends Berenger and Jean.

### References to alcoholism

Bérenger and Jean meet at a café to discuss an important matter and Jean criticises Bérenger's appearance, his lack of wearing a tie and for looking hungover.

Daisy, a secretary at Berenger's workplace, walks by and he hides under the table because he fancies her. Jean criticises him for this saying he should be more like him.

### Sudden, loud noises

The sudden arrival of the first rhinoceros is indicated by the sound of the actors stomping feet.

### **Auditory overload from multiple conversations**

The Logician and Old Man arrive at the café and talk about logic and cats at the same time as Jean debates with Berenger about his shortcomings.

### **Sudden, loud noises, high emotion and screaming**

Second rhinoceros tramples a woman's cat. The woman shouts in distress then brings on her dead cat represented by a crushed watermelon.

The townspeople debate hold a funeral procession for the cat and debate the difference between Asiatic and African rhinoceroses. Berenger and Jean join the debate. Jean insults Berenger who storms off.

The townspeople ask the Logician to explain the rhinoceroses debate. He gives a long, and confusing speech about horns and numbers, but it doesn't help.

The townspeople vow to stop the rhinoceroses regardless.

### **False Interval**

The Narrator checks in with the audience and offers a break but this is a joke as the interval is scheduled at the end of Act Two.

## Act Two: The Office

The Narrator describes a new setting The Office run by Mr Papillon, Berenger's boss, which is again mimed by the actors with foley sound effects.

Also there is Daisy with Botard and Dudarad, who are all engaged in a debate about whether the rhinoceroses are real. Berenger arrives late and the debate continues.

### High emotion

Mrs Boeuf arrives and is highly agitated, claiming that she has been chased by a rhinoceros.

### Shouting, loud sound effects, audience participation, lighting effects and haze and brief darkened lighting state

The rhinoceros arrives and destroys the office staircase trapping the workers. An audience member is handed a kazoo and asked to play it in order to represent the rhinoceros. Mrs Boeuf recognises the audience rhinoceros as her husband and then leads the audience member out.

Daisy calls the fire station and they are eventually rescued by a fireman. One by one they all leave down a ladder at the back.

The scene ends with Berenger confused and doubting reality.

### Blackout



## **Interval**

Recorded operatic vocal music will play during the interval. During the interval the audience is offered kazoos. Participation using them is entirely optional.

## **Introduction following interval**

The Narrator returns and teaches the audience how to play the kazoos in unison.

## **Act Three: Jean's House**

**Low tones underscore throughout, building to the end of the act.**

Jean is asleep in his apartment – the actors pretend to be his bed.

Bérenger visits Jean to apologise and give details of Mr Boeuf's transformation into a rhinoceros. Jean and Berenger argue about whether this kind of transformation is possible.

**Shouting, loud sound effects and lighting effects, depiction of discomfort, distorted facial projections**

Jean transforms into a rhinoceros. As Jean checks his face in a mirror projections of human faces being poked and prodded by hands appear at the back.

In a dream-like sequence Berenger alerts the neighbours but they too have transformed. He then looks out and sees a herd of rhinoceroses marching through the streets depicted by the rhythmic movement of actors circling the stage. Daisy wraps a bandage around Berenger's head and the space transforms into Berenger's flat represented by a large leather armchair.

**Delayed sound of coughing, heard as an echo. Actor accesses the stage via the auditorium.**

### **Act Four: Bérenger's House**

Described by the Narrator, Bérenger wakes in the armchair from a nightmare and falls to the floor, fearful that he might also turn into a rhinoceros.

Dudard his colleague who is in favour of the transformation of the townspeople pays him a visit. More actors dressed identically to Dudard arrive. They tell Berenger that Mr Papillon is also now a rhinoceros and debate with him about joining the rhinoceros movement.

Daisy brings crushed watermelon to eat, she announces that everyone, even Mr Botard is turning into a rhinoceros. Hearing this news Berenger becomes more anxious.

### **Projections of distorted faces**

The Dudards leave to become rhinoceroses, the projections of distorted faces at the back return briefly.

When Berenger is alone with Daisy he tells her she is beautiful, but she is unimpressed. She unwraps his bandaged head and tells him he hasn't got a rhinoceros horn.

Daisy sings in Italian using a microphone. English subtitles appear at the back that comment on the song.

**Loud persistent shouting, sudden gunshot, snap lighting change, depiction of death and use of stage blood**

An actor pretends to be a phone ringing by shouting 'Ring', the shouting builds and becomes more persistent. Daisy shoots the actor to stop the noise, light snaps to bright white, he dies in a pool of black blood and is dragged off.

**Shouting and a surreal depiction of a slap, house lights on audience**

Berenger tries to calm Daisy she screams in frustration and they argue. The Narrator suggests to Berenger that he slaps her and orchestrates the audience to clap to replicate the slap, during this house lights brighten.

**Loud crash, loud stomping and sound effects, haze and smoke effects, lights snap out briefly as black rubber debris dropped on stage**

Loud rhino stomping and debris drop simulates rhinos destroying the town. Each time Berenger and Daisy look out to check the Narrator orchestrates the audience to play their kazoos.

Daisy begins to calm down and tries to reassure Berenger who remains distressed. Berenger suggests that as the last humans they have children in

order to repopulate but Daisy rejects this idea. Wrapped up in his own thoughts Berenger calls Daisy stupid and she decides to leave.

Berenger remains debating with himself. He tries to make the rhino sound with the kazoo but fails.

### **Shouting and depiction of distress and desperation, distorted projections**

Berenger declares resistance, repeating the line 'I will not surrender.' The Narrator tries to end the play. Berenger continues shouting the phrase in protest. Distorted projections of Berenger's face appear at the back.

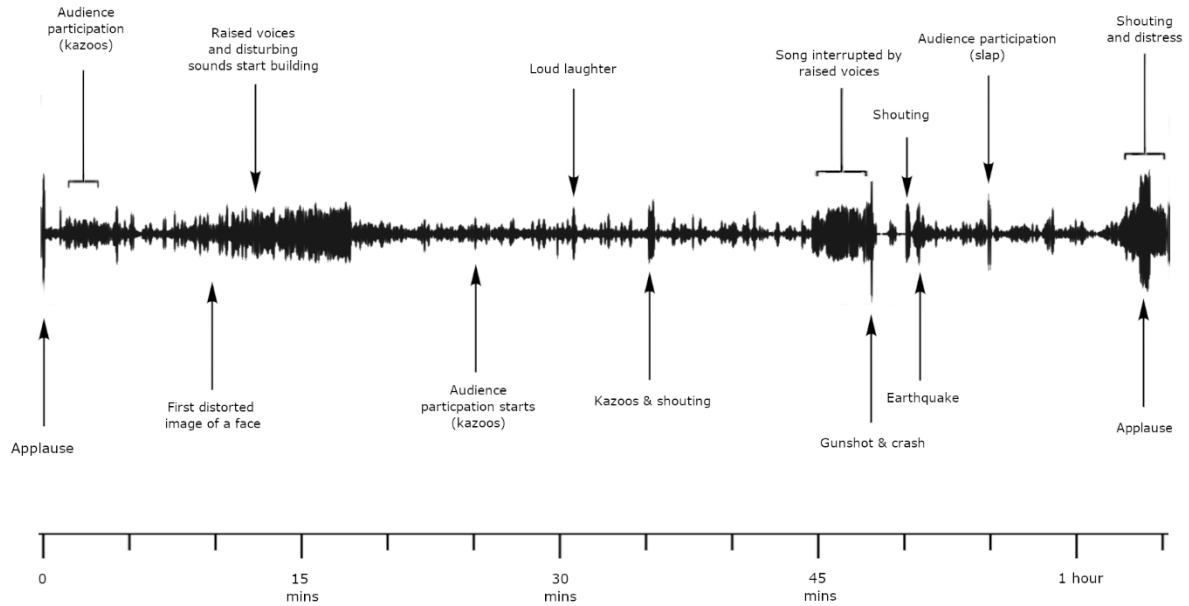
He continues as the lights brighten and the rest of the company come back and take a bow. The company finish bowing and leave whilst Berenger remains shouting 'I will not surrender'. He gets exhausted by this, and periodically pauses to gather himself, he goes to speak his line and the lights snap to black, ending the play.

**The full company return to take their bow and the performance concludes.**

**The end.**

# Sonic Story

## Act One & Act Two



## Act Three & Act Four

