

Register Number:

Date:

**ST. JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU -27**

**B.A THEATRE & PERFORMANCE STUDIES –4th SEMESTER**

**END SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY 2024**

**TS 422: THEATRE & PERFORMANCE STUDIES- IV**

**Time: 2 Hours Max Marks: 60**

**Instructions:**

1. **This question paper has TWO pages and THREE sections.**
2. **You will lose marks for exceeding the suggested word limit.**

**A.** **Read the following excerpt from an interview with Eugene Ionesco published in The Massachusetts Review and answer the questions below.**

**The Massachusetts Review:** Another important feature of your early plays is the awareness you show of the problem of language. The first play was derived from a conversation manual - the second is also full of references to vocabulary and pronunciation since it deals with the difficulties of teaching foreign languages, or even speaking one's own. It is quite true that the writer invents a new language, and in a sense invents his world. What do you think?

**Ionesco**: I'll give you an example. If a character in one of my plays says, "I've got rheumatism!" it sounds funny and everyone laughs, but if the same pronouncement is made by a character in a play by that second- or third -rate American writer Arthur Miller, it makes people cry.

**The Massachusetts Review**: Sometimes language seems to invent the writer. For example, the title of *The Bald Soprano* was the result of the slip of the tongue of one of the actors, wasn't it?

**Ionesco**: One can say that the universality of my masterpiece comes from the fact that you can give it any tide. It isn't the title that gives meaning to the text, but the text which lends an orientation to the title. However, we can also say that in a way the actor simply had to make that particular slip of the tongue. He couldn't make any other, or perhaps, more accurately, he could have made only those which belong to a group of verbal expressions, an indefinite number of expressions that can be used to express a certain thing. There is also an indefinite number of expressions which cannot be used to express that thing. Thus, instead of *The Bald Soprano,* my play might have been called . . . let's see . . . The Bottle Upside Down, The Submerged Rat, The Discolored Fountain Pen. It probably could not have been called Vitamin C Is Good for the Flu. Although even this might be a possibility. You see everything lies in how you say a thing.

**The Massachusetts Review**: Why did you decide to study a third language, English, a study which led you to write what you have termed "the tragedy of language"?

**Ionesco**: I am not gifted in languages. I know only French. Later I learned Rumanian. Later I fell in love with French. But I wanted to know an additional language. It could not be German since that was the language of Hitler. I decided on English. I started in '38, and a month later we had Munich, so I began to think that English brought ill-luck. Then I said to myself that this was stupid, and started in again in '39. Three weeks later, war was declared. I stopped, let a few years pass, and then I thought that since everything was quiet, I'd go back to English. That's when we had the atom bomb. Then I really knew it was a dangerous matter, but after a number of years I gathered enough courage to start in again, so of course we had the Chinese and Korea. That put a final stop to my studies, but since I had made so many attempts, I decided that they must not be wasted and I wrote a play.

1. **Answer the following questions in FIVE-EIGHT sentences each. (3x5=15)**
2. The interviewer says—

a. “The writer invents a new language, and in a sense invents his world”

b. “Sometimes language seems to invent the writer”

Use one instance from any of the Ionesco plays you read this semester to support either of the above statements.

1. As an Indian reader with access to at least 3 or 4 languages in the city, what do you have to say about Ionesco’s depiction of the “problem of language” in his plays.
2. Pick any one of the alternative titles suggested by Ionesco instead of *The Bald Soprano* and explain why that works better. You can also suggest any other title of your choice. Substantiate your response with instances from your reading of the play.
3. **Answer the following questions in 150-200 words each. (3x10=30)**
4. "Absurd" originally means "out of harmony," in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: "out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical." In common usage, "absurd" may simply mean "ridiculous," but this is not the sense in which Camus uses the word, and in which it is used when we speak of the Theatre of the Absurd.
5. How might Sisyphus escape the absurdity of his task? Does Camus’ answer sound convincing to you? Explain.
6. What kind of demands would having to play Mr. Smith place on you in physical terms? What are some of the ways in which you would need to prepare to play such a role?

**C. Compose a short scene in response to the following prompt in not more than TWO pages. (15 marks)**

1. Waiting for Godot at Roll’s Kitchen

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