

SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S

# FEAR AND TREMBLING

A DRAMATIC ADAPTATION

written / directed / BRENNAN COLUMBIA-WALSH

produced / EMMA FUSCO / CUATRO VILLAREAL

stage managed / NNEKA MOWETA



NOV. 7 8:00pm / NOV.8 8:00pm / NOV.9 2:00pm / NOV.9 8:00pm

# ***FEAR AND TREMBLING***

## ***A Dramatic Adaptation***

### **Audition Packet for the Play**

**Adapted from Søren Kierkegaard**

**Written by Brennan Columbia-Walsh '26**

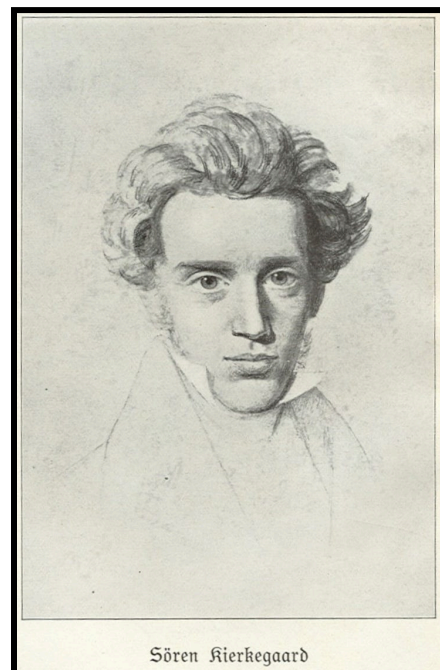
**Directed by Brennan Columbia-Walsh '26**

**Produced by Emma Fusco '26 & Cuatro Villareal '26**

**Stage Managed by Nneka Moweta '27**

**Lights Designed by Lucy Xiao '26**

Thank you for your interest in auditioning for *Fear and Trembling*. In this packet, you will find a brief breakdown of the book and adaptation, as well as the details and sides for the audition. We welcome actors of all walks and levels of experience to audition. We are specifically looking for four actors (m/f) to complete the cast. Only three roles are precast, which will be played by Alik Osadolor-Hernandez '25, Emma Fusco '26, and Cuatro Villareal '26.



### ***About Fear and Trembling***

The book, published by Søren Kierkegaard in 1843, provides a dialectical account of faith and “the absurd” as alternatives to Enlightenment morality and medieval scholasticism by telling and retelling a paragon of Abraham’s binding of his son, Isaac, in Genesis 22. An epigraph reads:

*“And God tempted Abraham and said unto him, Take Isaac, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon the mountain which I will show thee.” (22:2)*

Kierkegaard’s challenging attempt to reconcile existentialism and faith with the modern man brings this trial — claimed by many world religions — to philosophy, and the result complexes the reader, though it is the lack of understanding with which the author admires Abraham and the knight of faith that makes the book as seductive as it remains today. Kierkegaard provides four depictions of Abraham throughout the text, as well as several *problemata* — inquiries into the nature of the absurd story [for

reference, the third *problema* reads: “Was Abraham ethically defensible in keeping silent about his purpose before Sarah, before Eliezer, before Isaac?”].

For all its focus on faith and religion, the book does not proselytize, nor does it preach. And it is much more than a retelling of Abraham’s plight. It is a literary theory of the tragic hero [Agamemnon makes his appearance], it is a reaction to the rational morality of our day, and it is a shocking polemic on the nihilism and anxiety which characterized Kierkegaard’s age. *Fear and Trembling* remains a staple of existential philosophy, and for these reasons and more, Kierkegaard hailed it to be his most perfect text.

### **About the *Dramatic Adaptation***

The adaptation of the text marries the challenge of the treatise with the sensation of the stage. Convened to discuss some existential philosophy, three professors swiftly attempt to derive an exegesis of the story of Abraham and Isaac. Their ideological entry points could not be more distinct, and their relationships with love and faith are as diverse as their ideas. Soon, the spirit of the debate sweeps them away, and before we know it, we find ourselves no longer in a stuffy academic scene, but in the land of Hebron, in Canaan, 2000 years before the birth of Christ.

In the center of the earth, wherein religious conflict will soon transpire for millennia to come, mankind is simpler, and a strange zeal for a singular, omniscient God divorces itself from its pagan ancestry in the minds of the Canaanites. War with Gerar and cruel King Abimelech haunt the land, and the acolytes of Hebron have their master to protect them. But Abraham is missing, and has been for some time. In his absence, Lot, his purulent nephew, commands the kingdom with an iron fist, while Sarah, his mortified and age-whipped wife, feuds with Hagar, his slave, and Ishmael, Hagar and Abraham’s bastard son.

The return of the king promises prosperity, until the venerable father receives a harrowing call: to sacrifice Isaac, his only son with Sarah, for whom they waited a century, upon the looming monstrosity of Mount Moriah. His response to the call — and his action upon the mount — will define faith for ever more — but it’s almost impossible to tell just what that harrowing action will be.

The play **cycles** between these worlds as each academic takes a turn at telling and retelling the awful tale according to his view. The time they spend in Hebron demonstrates their ideologies manifest, as well as the best and worst of their personal virtues. As the professors confront their relationships with love and faith in the first world, the family of Abraham are put to the test in the second, and the audience is asked to perpetually grapple with the absurd display before them. The movement is as

tragic as a sacrifice — but the play, at heart, is a tragic comedy, and the witty machinations of the professors keeps the sacred task afloat. Throughout this madness, the torturous question strikes us over and over: “*Venerable Father Abraham. Who could understand him?*”

### Character Breakdown

The play uses seven actors, and most play within both worlds. Each academic exists both within the world of the college and the world of Canaan. Their dramatic transformations provide a steep challenge for the actor — and a lot of fun. Doubling is listed below.

**Dr. Ezekiel Young.** Associate professor of philosophy. A young and passionate thinker, and a thoroughly modern man, both in his philosophy and demeanor, who must come to grapple with the absurdity of the ancient.

**Father Caesar Mendoza.** College chaplain and professor of theology. A gray-haired Cuban, and a Catholic priest, with all the wit and gusto that a priest should have. He thinks himself a learned exegete and is a powerful and conservative orator — but his outward flair may just conceal a false prophet.

**Prof. Gustav Spengler.** Chair of the history department. A large, balding, German man, with an appetite for biscuits, brandy, and the tragic and powerful spirit which guides the march of history. He is infatuated with the armed prophets, the pagan, the ancient, and the strong; but his tragic sensibilities must soon confront whether Abraham is the hero he seeks.

**Matilda.** A maid-servant. Witty, but thick-headed.

**Abraham.** Father of all nations. An old, towering, and storied devotee, whose trial defines the play.

**Sarah.** His wife — a cold, commanding matriarch. A weary, gray, and bewitched mother, who for a century tried and failed to provide the king with posterity, and who now bears the burden and mortification of those years in her every day.

**Isaac.** Son of Abraham by Sarah. A near-perfect boy-king.

**Ishmael** [Doubles with Dr. Ezekiel Young]. Son of Abraham by Hagar. A “wild donkey of a man,” blessed not with the mindless bliss of his brother, but with the inquisitive torment of a dark Socrates.

**Hagar** [Doubles with Matilda]. Slave of Abraham, and mother of Ishmael. A beautiful woman, with all the primitive grace of the mother of the earth, but maligned and cast aside within her own house.

**Eliezer** [Doubles with Fr. Caesar Mendoza]. Chief servant to Abraham, and formerly his heir. An emerald-eyed zealot, and a public showman and barker, who follows his master to the ends of the earth.

**Lot** [Doubles with Prof. Gustav Spengler]. Nephew to Abraham, and general to his army. A fattened, purulent, and wicked man, who laughs at the zeal of his peers but surfeits on their every resource.

**The Angel of the Lord** [Doubles with Hagar and Matilda / elsewhere with Sarah]. God’s one messenger — but does she look only a tad like Hagar in a mask?

**Agamemnon** [Doubles with Abraham]. King of Mycenae, and commander of the Aegeans at Troy.

**Iphigenia** [Doubles with Hagar, Matilda, and the Angel of the Lord]. Daughter of Agamemnon.

### **The Cast**

The doubled parts are listed above, but for an easier view, here is the cast as it stands. Roles marked “TBD” are vacant, and we urge actors of **any gender** to audition for them.

**Dr. Ezekiel Young / Ishmael** ..... TBD

**Fr. Caesar Mendoza / Eliezer** ..... TBD

**Prof. Gustav Spengler / Lot** ..... TBD

**Sarah / The Angel of the Lord** ..... Alika Osadolor-Hernandez ‘25

**Hagar / Matilda / Iphigenia / The Angel of the Lord** ..... Emma Fusco ‘26

**Isaac** ..... Cuatro Villareal ‘26

**Abraham / Agamemnon** ..... TBD

### **Timeline and Commitment**

The show will be performed on November 7th at 8:00pm / November 8th at 8:00pm / November 9th at 2:00pm / and November 9th at 8:00pm. The table-read will occur in the middle of September, and rehearsals will begin at the end of the month. The design for the play has begun. The first three weeks of the rehearsal process will be dedicated to character development and blocking, and actors should expect to be called 2-3 times a week for 2-3 hour rehearsal slots, as well as for individual calls with the director and designers. The final weeks of October until Tech-Week will consist of more intensive rehearsals and run-throughs, and actors should expect to be called 4-5 times a week for 2-3 hour rehearsal slots in the week before Tech-Week. Finally, Tech-Week begins November 3rd, and actors should expect to be on call for multiple hours every evening.

The process will be carefully designed, but it will evidently allow for flexibility. The team seeks a process in which the challenging nature of the text can be learned well, characters can be thoroughly developed, and the cast can build a great and lasting relationship before the production. Should actors wish to perform in multiple projects this semester, that is suitable with this process but should be mentioned to the production team.

## **A Note on Fight / Intimacy Coordination**

The play does not utilize intimacy, but there are a few moments which utilize brief physicality. Actors should discuss their comfort with the team in the audition room. This will not affect casting.

## **Parameters of the Audition**

Auditions will be held on **Friday, August 30th; Saturday, August 31st; and Sunday, September 1st**. The times are below, and locations will be disseminated upon sign-up:

Friday, August 30th: 1:00pm-3:00pm; 5:00pm-8:00pm

Saturday, August 31st: 12:00pm-3:00pm; 4:00pm-6:00pm

Sunday, September 1st: 4:00pm-6:00pm

The audition will consist of the preparation and reading of a monologue of your choice, chosen from the sides below. The director will provide notes after your first recitation, after which the actor will read once or twice more. Actors may be asked to read another monologue in the audition room, but actors are not expected nor encouraged to have prepared more than one monologue. Auditions will take place over the course of twenty minutes. Actors need not memorize.

Callback times will be disseminated to selected actors on the afternoon of September 2nd.

We ask that you select the monologue which best suits your preference; do not feel as though you are auditioning for that role in particular [as a reminder, most actors play multiple roles in the play].

Auditions will be free-flowing and relaxed; it will be a joy for the team to get to know you and to hear you recite this work!

## **Thank You!**

**Thank you** for your interest in auditioning for *Fear and Trembling*! We are incredibly excited to see your auditions, and we encourage you to tell your friends to sign-up. In the meantime, please enjoy the transition back to Yale!

*Audition Sides provided below!*

## MONOLOGUE ONE

*Fr. Mendoza preaches to his interlocutors.*

**Fr. Mendoza.**

Maybe we're hypocrites. Maybe you're right. I mean, hey, all the glory to you: at least the atheists are consistent. But is it really worse to love God with all your heart and fall short of His command... than it is to believe in nothing at all? I can understand most things... But this new crap? This doctrine which says, "out with the old?" This code of morality which says, "anyone who came before, anyone with authority, you are the oppressor and all who are weak and poor and stupid are the oppressed — and they are the good, and you are the evil!" This morality which demands that we must turn the other cheek and turn up the nose against bigots and evangelists and that Christ is one of them... To them, to this sect of every generation who always lose to the wise and the old, but who have somehow won over this generation... To them who cry, "Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth!" To them I say, those are the words of *Christ* before you! And it was Christ who told you to turn your cheeks in the first place! And it was He who loved the poor and the stupid and hated oppression and was himself oppressed! And it was He who was crucified for it, and you crucified Him! So shut your mouths before you throw Him out to preach His doctrine! I turn my cheek to thee! *God damnit!*

I... I need a smoke. I gotta get some air.

## MONOLOGUE TWO

*Lot, nephew to Abraham and commander of his army, has just learned that Abraham will return. He moves about the stage, sentries and soldiers aswarm.*

**Lot.**

He's not coming back. He's abandoned us all. And I have, in his hiatus, led our city prosperously, without the shadow of a doubt. Now feed me my reports! What's in this stack? Scribbled nonsense — nonsense, and drivel! I've seen these maps a thousand times before. Damn reporters, damn soldiers! Hasn't any man an idea? Not since the deluge has dust made men so dull. Every animal was sent to the depth, and which vermin bubbled up? Tadpoles! Tadpoles, in twos! Male and female — well I don't see any men! Just tadpoles, without legs to jump to orders or minds to guess our gambit. Where are my spies? Are they swimming to Gerar?

Don't tell me he's coming back. Is he really coming back? Puny, zealous, obedient soldiers! You are worse than the pagans! But you, you punies, thou shalt inherit the earth, I'm told, and Lot shall inherit the dearth. Phah! There's no room for strongmen in the sky no-more. Only one tyrant, the all-knowing monolith, who rains on the strong and shines on the weak to keep us flaccid and dull and dumb and damned. *"But the Angel spoke to Abraham."* Abram the Hebrew? The thick-headed goatherd? She spoke to *him*? Well, well, of course she did! For haven't you heard, my tadpoles, that every conqueror speaks to a god?

Oh, God! You stupid, weak, and made-up God! Is he really coming back?



### MONOLOGUE THREE

*Dr. Young recounts a tale of love and faith.*

**Dr. Young.**

I am a young swain, fell in love with a princess. The slaves of class, the frogs of life's swamp, they croak to me, "*Such a love is foolishness. The rich brewer's widow is a match fully as good and respectable.*" I do not hear them. I love only my beloved. I feel a blissful rapture in letting it tingle through my every nerve, the juice of love permeates every drop of blood — the instant I see her is life and death.

Love for that princess became for me the singular expression of an eternal love, and was transfigured into a love for the Eternal Being. But it could not be. For when all the messengers of sorrow returned and declared to me that it was an impossibility, I knew it to be true.

You want me to love her still; how could I ever stop? But you want me to expect her nonetheless; that I cannot. I am too sapped with the cunning of oblivion; I lack the faith. You see, I feel sometimes that I was not made for the world; that I came into it unfinished, not wanted. That I have no belief in it because... because no one ever took the time to inspire it in me.

There are perhaps many men in every generation who reach faith. But for the man who does not so much as reach faith, life has tasks enough. And if he loves them sincerely, life will by no means be wasted. That man... might still... be saved.

## MONOLOGUE FOUR

*Agamemnon stands, knife unsheathed, next to his daughter, Iphigenia. His fleet cannot reach Troy without wind, and the gods will not give it without Iphigenia.*

### **Agamemnon.**

Iphigenia. I love you more than life itself, more than the wind and the sea. I wept at your birth, and I see still all the beauty of the world in your eyes, ever-growing. O, charming bosom! O, beautiful cheeks! O, bright golden hair! I cannot bear to look at you, I love you so. I love you. I love you.

*He stabs her.*

But I love my country more.

*She drops.*

Oh, you gods of war, look upon what you have made me do, and *blow!* You terrible gods, weep for me! Then carry swift my fleet to Troy, and crush that city beneath my feet for what you have made me do. I hate you for it but heed your promise, for the good of all my people and my home.