

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Mule's Foal

by Alan Becher & Fotini Epanomitis

EXTRACT

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CAST

Agape
Pourthitsa
Apeface
Pappatkas
Meta
Pappous Yiorgos
Papa
Doctor
Stefanos
Villagers 1-8
Mercenaries 1-2
Turkish Crier
1st Old Man
2nd Old Man
Priest of Casia
Pale Millionaire
Koulousios
Theodosios
Yiayia Stella
Vaia
Stefanos' Mother
Blind Traveller

In the original production of *The Mule's Foal* there were 8 performers. The doubling was as follows:

Agape/Pourthitsa/Villager 2
Apeface/ Pappatkas/ Villager 3
Meta/ Blind Traveller/ Mercenary 2/ Villager 1
Pappous Yiorgos/ Papa/ Turkish Crier/ 2nd Old Man/ Blind Traveller/ Doctor/
Villager 4
Stefanos/ Priest of Casia/ 1st Old Man / Pale Millionaire/ Villager 6/
Koulousios
Theodosios/ Villager 7
Yiayia Stella/ Villager 5
Vaia/ Stefanos' Mother/ Blind Traveller/ Villager 8.

THE MULE'S FOAL

Part One

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOUNG FEET HAVE WALKED THE COBBLED STREETS OF THIS VILLAGE.

Darkness. Music.

*Lights gradually reveal two figures in silhouette at the top of the rake. They move together (Stylised dance) More figures in silhouette appear, one is veiled - their gestures, postures are looped in a dance-like movement. (Over the following, the movements of the figures slow down gradually and eventually freeze forming a tableau around **Mirella**) Music fades. Somewhere, someone is singing an indistinct melody. A figure slowly emerges from the darkness.*

Mirella: It's been a while since young feet have walked the cobbled streets of this village. Do not ask the old lady why she walks across the bridge or while she veils her face. She does not know. Do not ask the weary man what he is singing about. He does not know.

Mirella moves towards the veiled figure now frozen in the form of a fountain.

Mirella: This is the holy fountain of Saint Vaia. The legend says Saint Vaia would not abandon her faith for the Turks. So they cut off her breasts and she bled to death.

Water is pouring from the fountain's hands.

Mirella: This is Saint Vaia's holy water.

The light on the fountain dims.

Mirella: This is a village of amnesiacs, whereas once it was the village of gossips. Where once an extraordinary child was born bringing with it such life, vivid and rich, as had never been seen in the village before.

I, Mirella, will tell you their story. And you must take my word for it.

THE SHRIVELLED OLD WOMAN WHO VEILS HER FACE WAS ONCE A YOUNG GIRL.

*Music. Lights change. The figures move around, change positions facing upstage around **Mirella** who does not move. **Vaia** moves slowly to downstage centre.*

Mirella: The shrivelled old woman who veils her face was once a young girl.

Villager 6: Not a particularly beautiful one.

Mirella: In this village, most people were ugly,

Villagers: What?

Mirella: But no one particularly cared.

Villagers: True.

Villager 5: Vaia had a longing.

Villager 4: Not a longing for ordinary things like love or money.

Villager 7: It was a longing that no one talked about.

Villager 1: Fancy walking around with a face like that!

Villager 2: An unmarried woman!

Villager 3: Terrible!

Villager 4: Shame on her!

Villager 5: Disgusting!

Priest of Casia: It is unseemly for an unmarried girl to walk around with a face like that.

Villager 1: Who's going to marry her with that look on her face?

Villager5: What's to be done?

Villager 4: Pourthitsa!

Villager 1: Send for Pourthitsa, the matchmaker!

Villager 5: So Pourthitsa, the Matchmaker was commissioned.

Music. Villager 2 now becomes Pourthitsa who sashays over to examine Vaia. She lifts Vaia's veil

Pourthitsa: Ugh!

Pourthitsa drops the veil back down.

Pourthitsa: Finding a match for this girl will be no easy task. Who's going to marry a girl with a face like that, mm? Who?

***Pourthitsa** examines **Villager 4**, feeling his behind. She rejects him. She turns to another figure but it's the **Priest**. She moves along the line to examine **Villager 3** who for a moment seems promising.*

Villager 3: Married. Remember?

***Pourthitsa**, disappointed moves to the least likely looking prospect, **Theodosios**. She examines him and looks at his teeth and other parts. She moves back beside **Vaia**, centre.*

Pourthitsa: Theodosios!

***Pourthitsa** beckons **Theodosios** forward. He stands beside her.*

Pourthitsa: No one else wanted to marry this ugly young man on account of a dark secret about his mother, Meta.

Villager 5: Which we'll reveal to you later.

Mirella: Theodosios had six brothers and seven sisters who were brought up mostly by their father, Stefanos.

Villager 4: They were wild.

Villager 1: Terrible children.

Villager 2: Disgusting.

Villager 6: Couldn't trust any of them.

Villager 4: Wild, wild animals...

Villager 5: I heard the youngest daughter's pregnant...

Villager 1: No! To whom?

Villager 3: Her big brother!

Villagers: No! Never! Lies, lies! No, true!

Mirella: Anyway, children brought up without the love and guidance of their mother must be judged by different laws.

Priest: So the marriage of Vaia and Theodosios was contracted.

***Theodosios** extends his hand formally. **Vaia** places her hand on his. **Vaia** and **Theodosios** make love, indifferently, while the **Villagers** eavesdrop.*

Villager 5: But the longing in Vaia's face did not go away.

Villager 1: And if they found this longing offensive in the unmarried girl's face, it was even more so in the married woman's.

Villager 4: But then the marriage itself was certainly no ordinary marriage.

Villager 2: It was not that the couple hated each other, but rather that they began their married life totally indifferent to each other.

Priest: As Yiayia Stella pointed out –

Yiayia Stella: Most marriages were like this.

Villager 3: However, what was particularly odd was that after the wedding night the groom never again spent a night in his wife's bed.

Theodosios extricates himself from the lovemaking tableau and walks away.

Mirella: When his work was done, he would set off for his father's house, and he would spend every night in his father's house.

Villager 2: The longing in Vaia's face grew worse and worse till it became obscene.

Vaia turns back towards the villagers who one by one are shocked by her appearance. Vaia lies down. The Villagers begin working in the fields. The news of Vaia's illness and progress is passed down the line and back again.

Villager 5: She's ill.

Villager 4: She's sick.

Villager 3: Fetch a doctor.

Villager 6: Get the quack.

Villager 2: It's a chill.

Villager 7: It's the fever.

Villager 1: She's dying!

Mirella: She's pregnant.

The news travels back the way it came.

Villager 1: Knocked up.

Villager 2: A bun in the oven.

Villager 3: Up the duff.

Villager 5: She's expecting!

The Villagers pause to appreciate this news and look expectantly to Theodosios.

Villagers: Ah! Oh. That's good. Ah!

Theodosios helps Vaia to her feet.

Theodosios: Until the baby comes you must work beside me.

They begin working in the fields together.

Vaia: I've decided the baby shall be named Yiorgos, after my father.

Theodosios: You've decided, woman? The first born should be named after the father's family. That's the way it is done and that's the way we're going to do it!

Vaia: Your family, hah! What claims has your family got? Your mother was a whore –

Theodosios: A whore? My mother a whore?

Theodosios pushes Vaia. She is caught by a Villager who returns her to the upright position.

Vaia: A Turkish whore at that!

Theodosios: A Whore?

Theodosios pushes her again. The Villager catches her.

Vaia: And your father, he's nothing but a common...

Theodosios pushes Vaia again, the Villager catches her and the movement is repeated. The other Villagers form a moving chain of gossips.

Villagers: He pushed her. He pushed her. He pushed her. He pushed her.

The movement ceases. Vaia lies, holding her stomach. The Villagers stare at her.

Mirella: And maybe that's why the baby turned out to be hairy like a gorilla.

The Villagers cross themselves and move away, whispering.

Villagers: It's very sad. Very sad. Very, very, sad.

Villager 2: By the afternoon of that very same day every man, woman and child of the village had heard of the baby gorilla.