



2003

Alphonse

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Mouawad, Wajdi. Translated by Shelley Tepperman. *Alphonse*. Playwrights Canada Press, 2002. ISBN 0887546323. Contact publisher regarding price. 43 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Young adult;

Rating: Significant shortcomings;

Genre: Fantasy Plays; Adventure Plays; Folklore

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Friendship--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama;

Theme: People only believe what they can see and touch.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30 min

Characters: 21 - all played by the same person

Cast: 1M adult

Time Period: Present day

Alphonse has disappeared. His family sits up late worrying about him and trying to find a logical explanation for his absence. His brother reflects on Alphonse and tells a story about how Alphonse would get up in the middle of the night and have great adventures with his imaginary friend, Pierre-Paul-René. One night they were given a mission to go to the evil Flupan's castle in Pastryburg and bring back all of the stolen pastry recipes. What his family didn't know, when they phone the police was that earlier that night, Alphonse had actually set off for this mission. The police Investigator, Victor takes the case. He goes to Alphonse's school and finds that the faculty thinks Alphonse is strange and the kids all call him a liar. The only person to stand up for Alphonse is his best friend, Walter who admits that Alphonse likes to make up stories. Victor meets Judith, Alphonse's supposed girlfriend who shares a love letter with him. Meanwhile, a policeman finds Alphonse walking down a country road and picks him up. Alphonse had been missing for over two weeks. On the car ride home, Alphonse goes back into his imagination to find Pierre-Paul-René hiding in a cave. He continues his journey until he reaches Fulpan's castle. He opens the gate to find himself sitting next to Alphonse. They decide that they would rather live each other's life, and switch roles. No one in the real world, could tell the difference.

There is no character development in this play. The actor goes from character to character so often that it is hard to discern who is speaking sometimes. The pace is very slow. There is no high point or climax that is easily seen because the plot is very sporadic. Following this story is difficult because scenes jump from one place to the next in just one line. There is no smoothness to the storyline. Transitions are sparadic and don't make sense. For example at one point Judith introduces herself just to say that she'll be appearing later and then she isn't seen for several scenes. There is no reason for her to have done that. Another example is that at one point in the story Pierre-Paul-Rene' is suddenly talking to a cave about why it weeps. It is difficult for there to be any significant action or confrontation in a one man show like this one. According to the synopsis on the back of the script, this play is supposed to be about the old Alphonse meeting up with his young self. No where in the play was this clearly articulated. This confusion may be accounted for because this play was originally written in French for French children (perhaps)who have their own folk tales and understanding of the ideas behind this play that American's do not. This may not be appropriate for younger audiences.