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Why Are You Here?

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Characters

PSYCHIATRIST—Woman in her forties

SAMUEL—Teenage boy, musically gifted, scholarship winner

ROBERT—A doctor, late thirties, wearing a white coat

ABIGAIL—Business woman, early forties, power dresser

Mo—Runaway teenaged boy

PATSY—Teenage girl with an eating disorder

JUDITH—Housewife

APHRICA—Teenage girl, hippie, drug user

DAVID—Teenage boy, Mr Average

EXTRAS—At least 10 players, who perform a number of roles. They wear black clothes and half-masks, either neutral or grotesque clown masks. The roles they play are:

ROSS

TWO FRIENDS

SAMUEL'S MOTHER

ANTON

MO'S FAMILY, TEACHERS AND FRIENDS

10 PINBALL MACHINE COMPONENTS

JUDITH'S MOTHER

JUDITH'S FATHER

SICK PEOPLE

TWO HOSPITAL ORDERLIES

Setting

The stage is bare except for a row of eight chairs upstage, with a ninth chair stage right, facing them. This is written for a proscenium arch stage, but could work well as a piece for theatre in the round.

Note: Various sound effects are used in this play. These are indicated by the use of 'SFX' in the stage directions.

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The PATIENTS believe they are the only one with the PSYCHIATRIST, and that she is downstage. The PATIENTS do not react to the dialogue and/or actions of other characters, or of the PSYCHIATRIST, unless they have been directly addressed. The rest of the time they sit, in character, thinking their own thoughts.

The curtains open on the PSYCHIATRIST in her seat. Her hair is in a bun, which becomes messier and messier during the play. She wears a huge white coat, out of which she pulls various props. She should be played with very high energy and almost exaggerated movements. She is reading a gunlovers' magazine. She continues to flip through this as the PATIENTS enter, ignoring them.

The PATIENTS enter in order, one after the other, in character. Once they are seated, the PSYCHIATRIST snaps shut her magazine, pulls out a large hourglass and turns it over, putting it on the floor next to her chair. She stares at the row of PATIENTS for a moment.

- PSYCHIATRIST:** [Barks] Name?
- SAMUEL:** Samuel. Or Sam.
- ROBERT:** [Mock offended] It hasn't been that long, has it?
- ABIGAIL:** Abigail. Not Abbie. Abigail.
- MO:** [Angrily] Guess.
- PATSY:** [Whispers] Patsy.
- JUDITH:** Judith, Judy, Jude, Mummy—depends.
- APHRICA:** Aphrica, with a 'ph'.
- DAVID:** [Laughing as if it is a game] David.
- PSYCHIATRIST:** [Very gently] So, why are you here?
- SAMUEL:** Why? My piano teacher suggested it.
- ROBERT:** Why? To catch up with you—long time no see and all that.
- ABIGAIL:** Why? To be tested for promotion.
- MO:** [Shrugs] Dunno.
- PATSY:** Why? Mum and Dad made me.
- JUDITH:** Why? For my headaches.
- APHRICA:** Why? My caseworker insisted.
- DAVID:** Why? Why not?