

THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

Based on the book by Ursula K. LeGuin

Produced by Untitled Theater Company No. 61 with additional support by Yara Arts Group

Produced with the permission of the Ursula K. LeGuin Literary Trust

Created by Edward Einhorn and Tom Lee

Adapted by Edward Einhorn

Directed by Edward Einhorn and Tom Lee

Puppeteers: Chih-Jou Cheng, Gandul Gandulero, Tom Lee, Justin Otaki Perkins, Fletcher Pierson (understudy), Emma Wiseman

Actors: Winter Jones (Estraven), Miguel Long (Genly) **Intro/Docent:** Edward Einhorn

Composer/musician: Michael Zerang

Designers: Tom Lee (lead), Daphne Agosin (lighting), Chris Carcione (video), Jacky Kelsey (costumes and puppets), Grace Needlman (set and puppets), Averly Sheltraw (puppets), Linda Wingerter (shadow puppets)

Technical director/sound operator: Dylan Reyno; Video operator: Avery Sheltraw; Musical support & fabrication: August Boyne, Erik Neuman; Sound support: Damian Wiseman; Curtain creation: Riley Lynch; Rigging: Michael Reed; Fabrication support: Caitlin McLeod, Abby Palen, Fletcher Pierson (shadow puppet filming). Richie Schiraldi, Zachary Sun, Olenka Tsyhankova, Douglas Ward, Chris Wych, Aidan Vogel (puppet hair)

Stage Manager: Berit Johnson

This production is supported by the Astere E. Claeysens Artist-in-Residence program of Northwestern University School of Communication. Tom Lee, 2025-2026 artist.

Thanks to Dr. Carol Farver & Dr. Robert Needlman, The Morris & Alma Schapiro Foundation, the Jim Henson Foundation, Chicago DCASE, Chicago Puppet Festival and Virlana Tkacz for their support.

Running time: 2 hours

Ursula K. Le Guin (1929 – 2018) was one of the most influential American authors, with a vast body of work of fiction and poetry, encompassing 23 novels and hundreds of short stories, poems, essays, and children's books. She won six Hugo and seven Nebula Awards for her contributions to speculative fiction, among other honors. Some of her best-known work includes the Earthsea series books (original trilogy 1968 – 1972), which have sold millions of copies; *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971), adapted multiple times for film and television; and *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969). The latter work is part of her Hainish worlds, a series of interconnected books set in a universe where various human cultures on different planets are connected via a confederacy called the Ekumen. Her work was often influenced by Taoism, feminism, and the field of cultural anthropology, and it anticipated some of the major issues of our day in the way it addressed climate change and gender identity.

Untitled Theater Company No. 61 was founded by Edward and David Einhorn in 1995 in New York City as a Theater of Ideas: scientific, political, philosophical, and above all theatrical. Our shows mix tragedy and comedy in a manner inspired by classic absurdism, while often incorporating music, puppetry, technology, and physical theater. We also have a long-standing connection to Czech theater, starting with our collaborations with Václav Havel and continuing with our work with the Czech Center and The Václav Havel Center. Previous science fiction adaptations include Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven*. untitledtheater.com

Yara Arts Group creates original theatre that explores contemporary and traditional cultures of the East through translated texts, evocative imagery, song and movement. yaraartsgroup.net

**Read Artist
Bios Online**



Scan Here

Co - Director/Adaptor's Note (Edward Einhorn):

I first had the honor of creating a work based on Ursula Le Guin's writing in 2012, when I adapted/directed her book *The Lathe of Heaven* in 2012, using video and opera as two of our main tools to convey the rich complexity of the original material. One of the highlights of the process was spending a day with Ursula in Portland: visiting her house, walking with her in the Japanese gardens, and sharing a meal with her and her son Theo. At the time, I mentioned my desire to one day adapt *The Left Hand of Darkness*. It has always been one of my favorite books, since I was young, for its poetry, its intriguing gender themes, and the compelling story of love and loyalty that formed the emotional bed of the work.

Ursula seemed skeptical of an adaptation, but when I mentioned the idea of using puppets, she was more open to the idea. Puppets of course are innately genderless. It is the clothing and presentation that gives the audience the perception of gender. I was intrigued by the way we could look at both gender and the performance of gender by utilizing the blank slate they give us.

I started to talk to Tom Lee about the project six or seven years ago, since he was also a fan of Ursula's work and I was eager for an opportunity to work with him. Since Ursula passed away in 2018, we approached Theo, who was open to the idea. And the last four years have been devoted to creating this challengingly complex work. Tom's background in traditional Japanese puppet theater and its strongly gendered figurative representations, deeply influenced and informed our presentation.

A lot of my recent work has been exploring these questions of gender, and of course Ursula was prescient in her work when envisioning a world where no one (except the rare "pervert") has an innate gender. But most of all, this is a work about connection between people, no matter who they are, where they are from, or what their gender presentation is.

Puppetry note (Tom Lee):

It has been the joy of a lifetime to work on this adaptation of *The Left Hand of Darkness* with Edward and our remarkable company. Ursula Le Guin's book is beloved because it invites us to consider gender identity in a profound, human way. Puppetry offers us a door to enter this world, to question how and what we perceive when we see the human figure onstage. The conventions of Bunraku theater, the connection between the voice of the storyteller and the puppet and the ritual of performance have all found their way into this work which at the time of its writing was so prescient and now feels timeless.