

Machinations

A Play in One Act by Reid Conrad

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DEDICATION

*To Zontar, who captured a boy's imagination
many, many years ago.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

The game of "Machine" is a staple of drama classes, but in this 1950s sci-fi flavored one act the Machine, played by a group of actors, becomes a character itself. Professor Chester Pochesnik has been laboring over his Machine in the lab. He and Team Leader Osten are happy to announce to the Board that the Machine has reached its potential. Board Leader Evens is thrilled and awards Professor Pochesnik the apprentice he has longed for. Apprentice Timothy Albright, however, not only circumvents the Professor's ideas and authority, he steals the Professor's girl, Daisy Mithers! But the adventure does not stop there, as a newer, faster Machine vies against the original for fame, power and love!

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This play premiered at the District III Florida Thespian One-Act Festival in 2011 where the cast and crew received straight superiors.

Professor Chester Pochesnik: Christopher T. Rhodes

Team Leader Janet Osten: Caterina Duffy

Assistant Daisy Mithers: Milena Canete

Board Leader Evens: Kevin Serrano

Apprentice Timothy Albright: Robert Gunn

Omega Two Thousand: Joseph Warren

Members of the Machine: Kristin Bibby, Jacinda Cruz, Leah Dall, Christen Daniels, Ashia Diaz, Jessica Harper, Lena Kees, Mackensie Porter, Ali Schmitz, Joseph Warren

The Board: Tim Buchner, Dalton Heller, Eli Sfassie, Virginia Tilley

Members of the New Machine: Laura Degrenia, Bailey Green, Madison Marion, Shantal Mendoza, Jennifer Morales, Sarah Mullens, Isabella Piparo, Nicole Pucci, Emily Putnam, Samantha Siler

Stage Manager: Bernadette Gorman

Booth Technician: Sierra Schuler

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Flexible cast. Approx. 4 m, 2 w, 20 flexible.

Professor Chester Pochesnik: Older man, invents first machine.

Team Leader Janet Osten: Oversees Pochesnik's work.

Assistant Daisy Mithers: Somewhat awkward young woman.

Board Leader Evens: Finances are his bottom line.

Apprentice Timothy Albright: Younger inventor.

Omega Two Thousand: The answer, the culmination of two machines.

The Board: A small group of important-looking people in business attire.

Members of the Machine: 6 to 10 actors who work in sync.

Members of the New Machine: 6 to 10 actors who work in sync.

SETTING: The play has a 1950s sci-fi atmosphere. Attire and hairstyles should reflect this era. All the action takes place in Pochesnik's laboratory.

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(AT RISE: Blue warmers up revealing an empty stage. One MEMBER of the MACHINE enters, assumes a position and begins a repetitious movement and noise. Another MEMBER enters and joins the first. This continues until ALL MEMBERS of the MACHINE, clothed in black, are in place and the MACHINE is running. Lights come up as blue warmers fade and PROFESSOR POCHESENIK enters. PROFESSOR POCHESENIK, in lab coat and clipboard in hand, examines the MACHINE, checking components, making slight adjustments, and marking on his clipboard. HE hums to himself, radiating an aura of calm confidence and satisfaction. TEAM LEADER OSTEN enters. SHE is visibly excited and marvels at the MACHINE, working away onstage.)

OSTEN: Good morning, Professor!

POCHESNIK: Good morning, Team Leader Osten.

OSTEN: I imagine you were here all night, as usual.

POCHESNIK: As usual, Team Leader Osten.

OSTEN: You were able to get away for a bit, I hope.

POCHESNIK: I did catch a few winks on the cot in the office, Team Leader Osten.

OSTEN: Professor. *(Slight pause of anticipation.)* Are we ready?

POCHESNIK: I think you will be most pleased with the results, Team –

OSTEN: I notice something different, Professor, about... the Machine.

POCHESNIK: *(Smiling.)* Do you?

OSTEN: *(Examining.)* You did something with the *(Unsure.)* modulator, didn't you?

POCHESNIK: It *affects* the modulator, yes. But the small adjustment I made was with the fluctuance regulator.

OSTEN: And what was gained by this small adjustment?

POCHESNIK: *(Casually.)* An additional two-point-eight percent.

OSTEN: *(With dawning amazement.)* An additional two-point-eight?

POCHESNIK: *(Proudly.)* That is correct!

OSTEN: Oh, Professor! The strides you have made in the last seven years – Professor, this is indeed cause for celebration! Are you certain?

POCHESNIK: Team Leader, do you doubt me?

OSTEN: Oh, Professor! We will at last prove our worth to the board! I have fought tooth-and-nail for our department, for you and this Machine. I have battled the board for every penny, justified every expense, and met their every objection and doubt with resolve. And now this! Your Machine is complete! It is complete?

POCHESNIK: the Machine will always be a work in progress, Team Leader, as all things mechanical are. But I have taken it as far as I am able, with our present funding and technology. So, yes, it is complete and I have no doubt the board will be quite satisfied.

OSTEN: I know you are not a drinking man, Professor, but I've had a bottle of champagne in the fridge for the past month now. Shall we toast our success?

POCHESNIK: When is the board expected?

OSTEN: Oh my, yes. The board. Wouldn't be a very good showing if we were all a bit loopy when they arrived. *(Looking at watch.)* Momentarily, Professor, I see. We'll just have to keep that champagne on ice for a little longer. You will join me later, won't you?

POCHESNIK: It will be and honor, and a pleasure, Team Leader.

OSTEN: Call me Janet.

(ASSISTANT MITHERS enters. SHE is the type whose nervousness spreads like the wind. SHE stumbles forward in a rush.)

MITHERS: They're here!

OSTEN: *Who* are here, Mithers?

MITHERS: *They* are! The board! In the next room! What do we do?

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OSTEN: We invite them in, girl. No, *I'll* invite them in. You – go make coffee. (*Smiling broadly.*) Professor, put on your dancing shoes. Time to “wow” the enemy. (*Exits.*)

MITHERS: (*Turning quickly back to PROFESSOR.*) I've never been so nervous! My hands are shaking! (*Drops folder and bends to pick up papers.*)

POCHESNIK: Keep your mind on your work, Daisy. Now is not the time to fall to pieces.

MITHERS: (*Showing hands.*) I'll never be able to make coffee!

POCHESNIK: (*Bending and taking MITHERS' hands.*) Daisy. Relax. We're almost through this. You haven't fallen to pieces yet and you're not about to. Take a deep breath. (*SHE does.*) Look at me. (*SHE does. HE sings.*) “Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do –”

MITHERS: (*Singing.*) “I'm half crazy all for the love of you –”

POCHESNIK: “It won't be a stylish marriage –”

MITHERS: “We can't afford a carriage –”

POCHESNIK: “But you'll look sweet –”

MITHERS: “Upon the seat –

POCHESNIK: “Of a bicycle built for two.”

MITHERS: Oh, Chester, you do have a way of calming a girl down.

POCHESNIK: Now you run along and make some coffee for the board.

MITHERS: Kiss for luck?

(*TEAM LEADER OSTEN enters with THE BOARD – a small group of important-looking people in business attire. PROFESSOR and MITHERS stand quickly.*)

OSTEN: Ah! Ladies and gentlemen! Here is our very own Professor Chester Pochesnik! (*Seeing MITHERS and smiling hard.*) And this is our very own Assistant Mithers – Mithers, what are you still doing here? To your work, child!

MITHERS: Going, going. (*Rushing and stumbling on way out.*)

End of Freeview

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