

Historical Context:

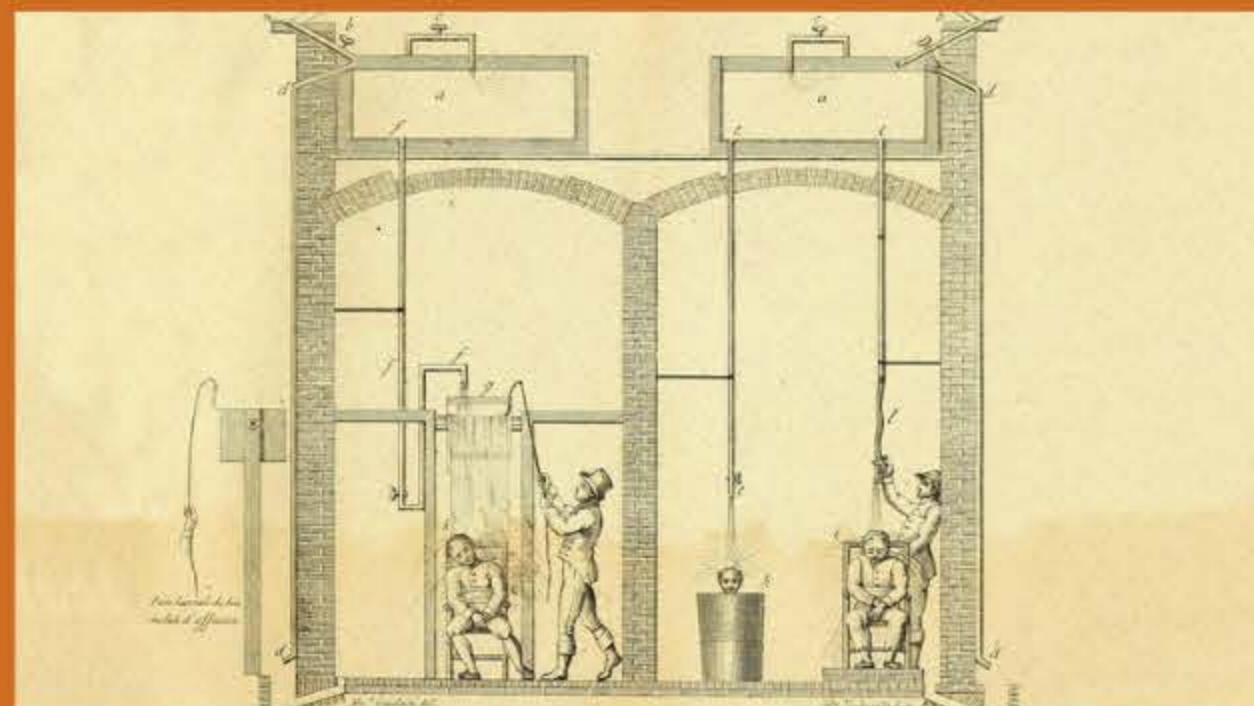
Northwestern College's Production of "Harvey", as intended by the playwright will take place in the 1940's. After being given this time period, I dove into the human experience of this era and came to the following conclusions about the world at this time:

HYdrotherapy

Hydrotherapy was a method of using consistent bathing and/or showering to calm mental institution patients. Sometimes this treatment was used for things like insomnia, but in other scenarios, it is used to aid cases of suicidal/depressive states, and states of madness or delusion, like we're dealing with in "Harvey".

So how was it done?

In one source, this practice dates back to the 17th century, where a physician would dunk his patients in a lake or pond. He said his reasoning for doing this was because he had once heard of a "lunatic" escaping and running into a pond; he almost drowned in the process, but when he recovered, he was seemingly cured of his mental illnesses as well. This physician, Jan Baptist van Helmont, is quoted saying this use of water must be able to cease "the too violent and exorbitant Operation of the fiery life". Naturally, this dunking method was not exactly safe, and never really became popular because of the numerous amount of people that did, indeed, drown and die from it.

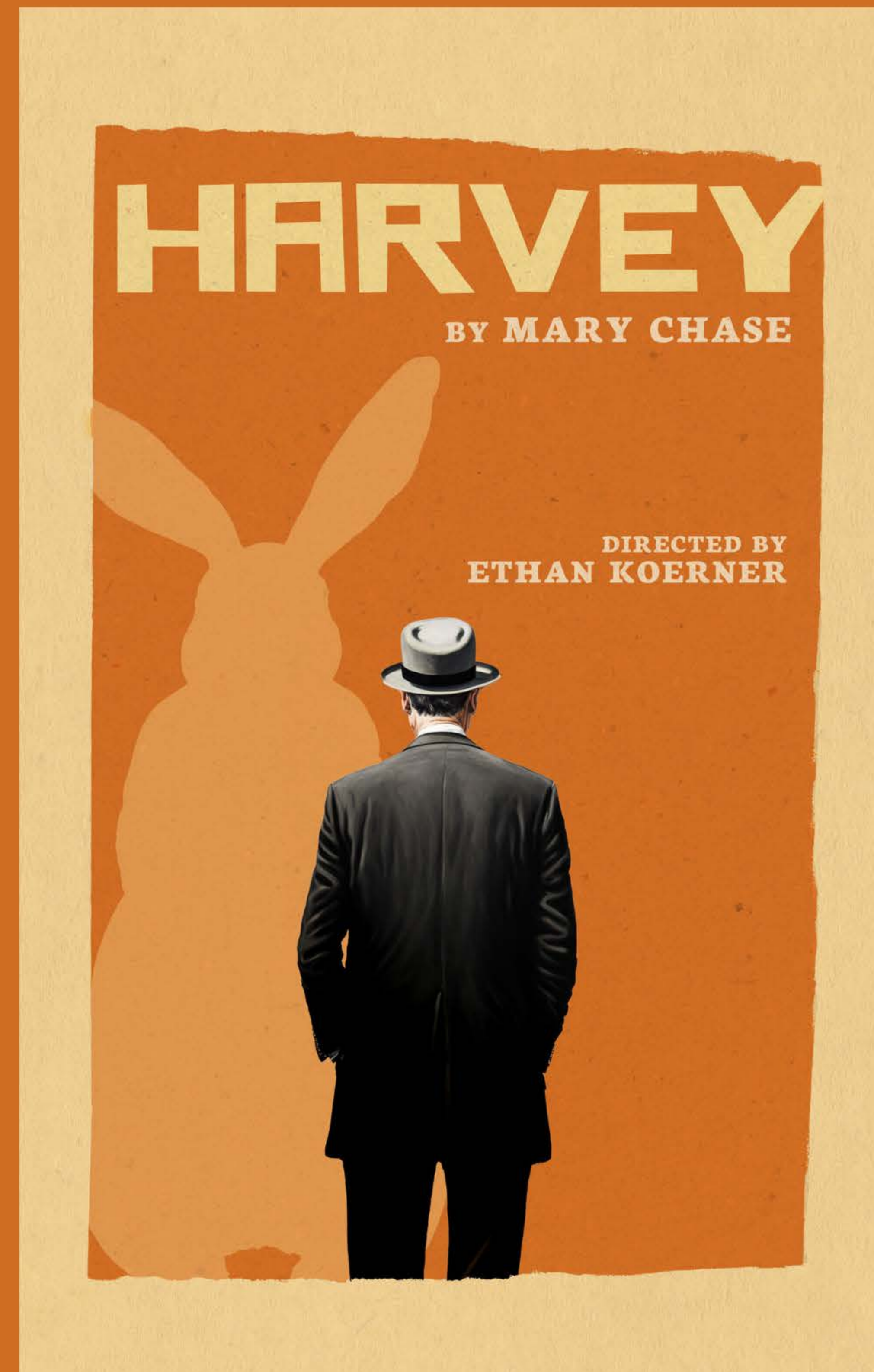


However, hydrotherapy itself did proceed, though methods advanced. One school of thought held that the mind, obviously, was the source of all mental illnesses, so they started to target the head with these therapies. This was achieved by creating showers, of sorts, that would consistently pour water over the patient's head.

Hydrotherapy continued until doctors began to see that there was not much scientific proof that this was beneficial for patients – that was in the 20th century...– and so, prior to that, methods only got worse: binding and restraining patients during this hydrotherapy became more popular, and the practices became even more uncomfortable for the patients.

Thankfully in our time, we have much more efficient practices to helping mental illnesses, but as you begin to portray these characters – especially the institution staff – this was normal, acceptable, and even what your character thought was the best.

Dramaturgy for the Theatre Production, "Harvey"



Researched By: Marissa Leraas
Sophomore Theatre Major
NWC '25

Mary Chase

Journalist Mary Chase had written many plays in her time, including titles such as her very first production, "Me, Third". However, "Harvey", written in 1945 is what made her name known and even won her the Pulitzer Prize – a rare commodity for women at the time. Since then, her play "Harvey" has been dubbed the 39th longest running play on Broadway, and many theatre companies produce this play. Northwestern College's Theatre Department will continue this legacy as they prepare to open their own rendition of "Harvey" in April.



The Legend of the Pooka

The Pooka is a mysterious character, a legend rooted in Irish folklore that is often embodied as a horse or rabbit. However, this is not always the case; a well known example of a Pooka would be Puck from Shakespeare's, "A Midsummer Night's Dream". They are often known for the trouble they cause those they follow and their overall catastrophe making. There still remain people in Ireland who believe that the Pooka can be sought out and found in and around the country, though they try to avoid them as these spirits have a habit of bringing bad fortune around.



Day in the Life as a Dramaturg

Act 1, Scene 1:

The Song "I'm a Little Buttercup" (pg 1): Was a part of an opera called "H.M.S. Pinafore", or "The Lass That Loved a Sailor", that was written by Gilbert and Sullivan. Its opening performance was in 1878.

Festooned (pg 2): A decorative chain or strip hanging between two points.

Smilax (pg 2):



Didactic (pg 4): Usually disapproving; making moral observations; intended to teach proper or moral behavior.

Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, & Open Road for Boys (pg 5):



Responsible for text analysis, historical context, and rehearsal – to – rehearsal questions.