

# NINE

*Music & Lyrics*  
**Maury Yeston**

*Book*  
**Arthur Kopit**

*Production Concept*  
**Harlan Epstein**

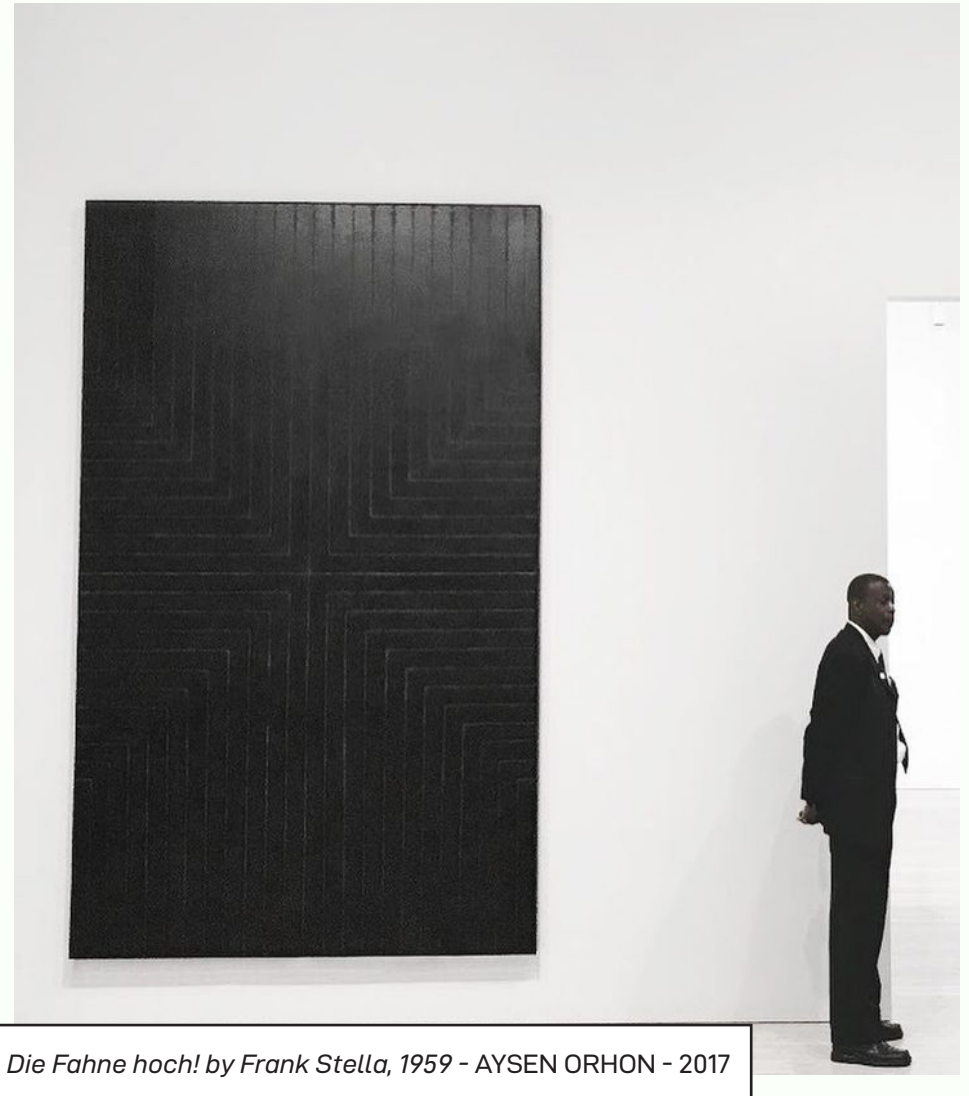


*Viva at the Airport* - ROBERT FRANK, 1962

**Nine** is a Tony-winning 1982 musical by Maury Yeston and Arthur Kopit, based on Federico Fellini's semi-autobiographical 1963 film **8 1/2**.

Both tell the story of Guido Contini, a famous film director in a creative slump, as he juggles the women who populate his life, from his wife to his mistress, his muse to his mother.

How will he keep his mind and his marriage from falling apart, all while proving his critics wrong and creating his next work of genius?



*Die Fahne hoch!* by Frank Stella, 1959 - AYSEN ORHON - 2017



# *The Idea*

While *Nine* is traditionally cast with 22 women and one man, this production will cast one actress to play (almost) all of the female parts, aided by a combination of prerecording, puppetry, shadow play, and quick changes of both costume and lighting. Her base costume, a simple black top and maxi skirt, will be the outfit of Luisa, Guido's wife, and additions (a hat, a scarf, a limp) will denote a shift in persona.

Throughout the play, the lines between Luisa and the actress playing her get blurry, as the exhausting chaos of her constant quick-changes starts to bleed into the exhausting chaos of being the wife of a narcissist.



*Couple d'amoureux dans un petit café, quartier Italie- BRASSAÏ- 1932*

# The Cast

## GUIDO

A middle-aged white man whose careless single-mindedness hides beneath his disarming grin and easy charm.



*Richard Avedon - UNKNOWN- c. 1951*

## THE ACTRESS

A non-white woman who has learned to play her many roles impeccably, but whose sad eyes betray her.



*Alone But Not Lonely - A. MANCHEV- 2019*

## THE GUYS

A trio of silent clowns dressed similarly to Guido who appear throughout the production as extensions of his will.



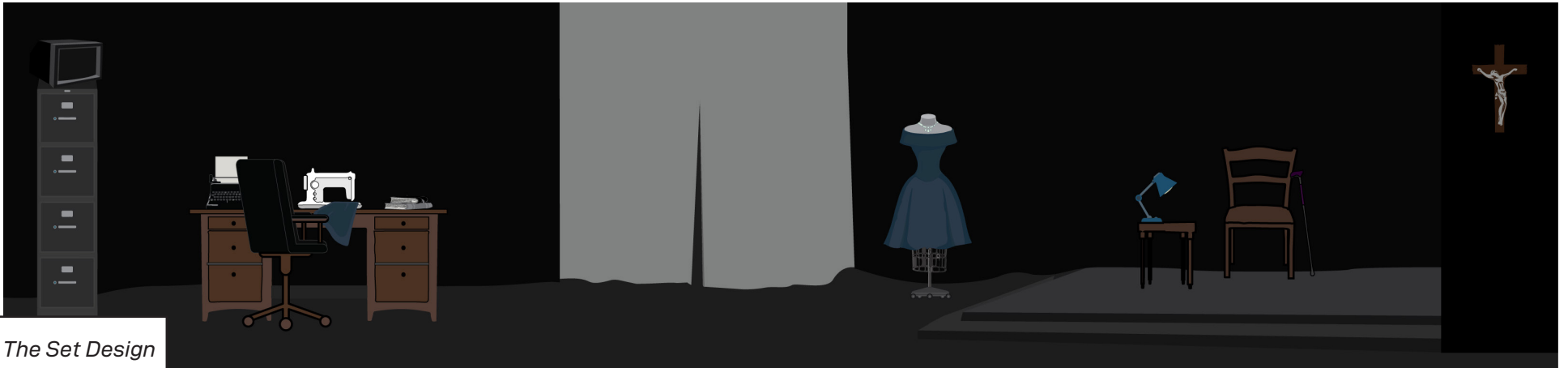
*Buster Keaton in THE PLAY HOUSE - 1921*



# *The Space*

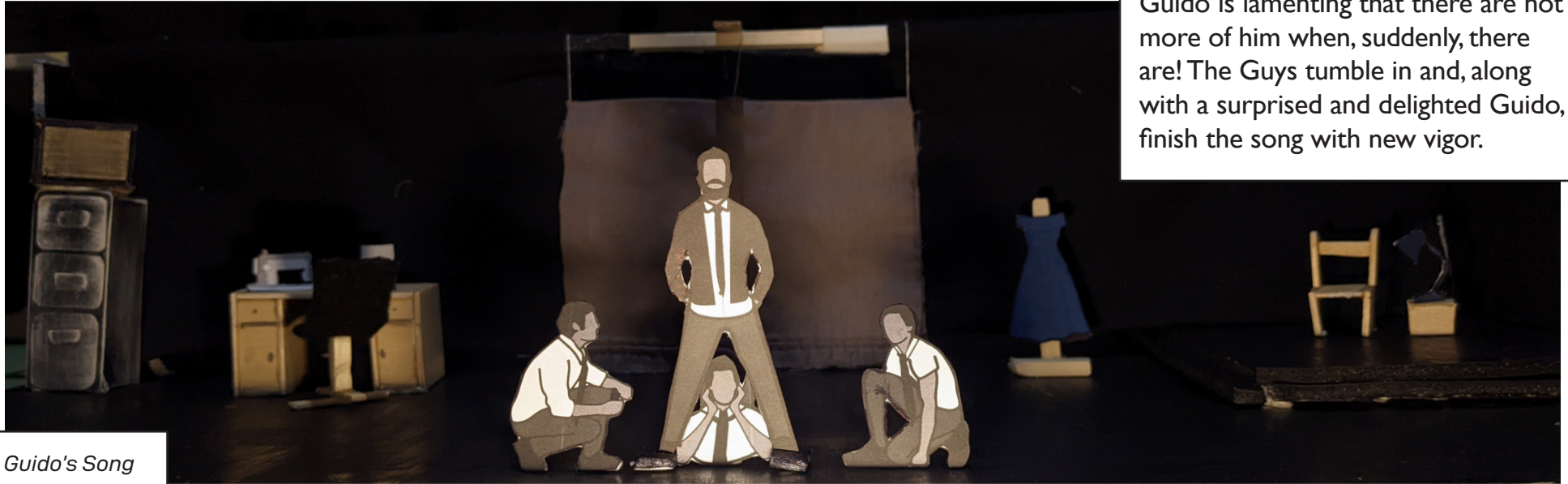
Continuing on the theme of auterist narcissism, the set for this production will be a surreal, transformational space that is an expression of Guido's quickly-disordered mind.

On one side, him: a romantically messy artist's workspace, strewn with the various excreta of his creative output. On the other side, her: a simple wooden chair; a small table; a reading lamp; some props and costume elements she will need. Between them, a curtain, lighter than the thick black draping that makes the walls of this space, and a mannequin wearing a beautiful dress.



# *The Model*

Some early moments, displayed within a 1/2" scale model of the set (and lit approximately).



*Guido's Song*

Guido is lamenting that there are not more of him when, suddenly, there are! The Guys tumble in and, along with a surprised and delighted Guido, finish the song with new vigor.



*My Husband Makes Movies*

Cornered by reporters, Luisa laughs away rumors of Guido's infidelity. When she stands, her shadow stays seated, dutifully going through the motions while she dissociates.



# *The Overture + The Dress*

The original text uses a baton as the expression of the supremacy Guido assumes through his art, with the overture consisting of him conducting the chorus of women. In this production with only one woman, his control over her is asserted by his sewing machine, creating items for the actress that give her slivers of identity, but never a whole outfit, like the one on his mannequin.

With this in mind, this production's overture has Guido ignoring his real wife as his dress 'comes to life', and dances with him. As Guido's reality collapses in Act II, he will begin talking to the dress and addressing it as if it were his wife, the line between person and persona falling away.



*The Overture*



*Fred and...*

# *The Big Puppet*

## MOTHER

With some simple ropes and pulleys, the large sheet of fabric at the center can take on the form of Guido's mother: he is suddenly a child again, comforted and soothed by this towering maternal presence.



Second Prototype

*Click here to watch  
both versions of the  
puppet in motion.*

(Video – 46s)



First Prototype



Nine (the song)



# *The Little Puppets*

## STEPHANIE NECROPHORUS

Guido's most ardent critic and the new co-producer of his next film. She is initially voiced by The Actress, but when Guido pulls the puppet off of her hand and it reappears on his, he begins voicing her himself.



Hand Puppet – Prototype

## LITTLE GUIDO

In the final scene, The Guys use Guido's discarded blazer and the desk lamp to create a puppet of young Guido. The jacket drags on the floor behind him like he's a child dressed in his father's clothes.



Young Guido – Rendering

# Sarraghina

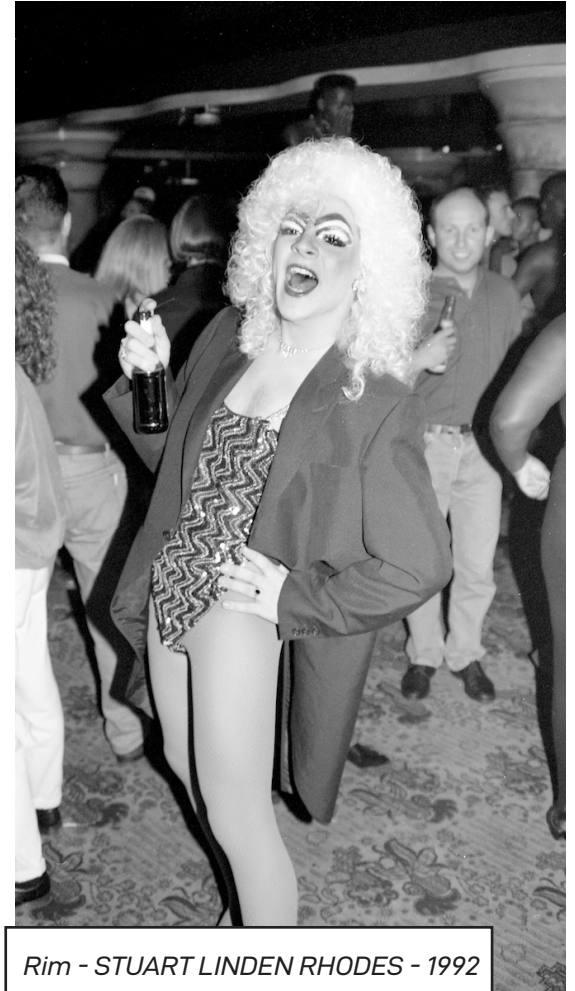
In the finale of Act One, we meet Sarraghina, the prostitute who taught Guido and his school friends “about love”. She is played by Guido in “skag drag”. Sarraghina teaches the boys how to seduce a woman, and then a sexy tambourine dance: The Tarantella.

As the dance reaches its climax, the rest of the world falls away, and Guido is spotlit, dancing to the point of convulsing, overwhelmed to be at once the object and subject of his desire. The music stops, the world returns, and the song concludes.

For just a second before the blackout we see Guido / Sarraghina, alone in the spotlight once more, eyes wild with a mix of confusion, excitement and fear.



*Ti Voglio Bene / Be Italian*



*Rim - STUART LINDEN RHODES - 1992*

Note:

*Skag drag is a style of drag where male-bodied queens do not attempt to hide their male appearance*



# *The Climax*

Seeking comfort after his thoughtlessness has driven away both his wife and his muse, Guido finds his mistress Carla. After she sings a final goodbye, she starts to leave, and Guido calls after her:

“Carla!”

No response.

“Luisa!”

She stops.



*Red on Maroon - MARK ROTHKO- 1968*



*Be On Your Own*

Turning to face Guido, suddenly she is Luisa, the real Luisa. All of the emotions she has kept bottled away for so long come out all together, and he, for once, has to listen.

Having said her piece she, too, leaves. Guido is alone.

# *The Denouement*

After a conversation with the voice of his dead mother (recorded by a different actress), and another with his nine-year-old self (the puppet on page 8, voiced by a real child), he begins to feel better.

Then, he notices the mannequin next to his desk: The Dress is gone: Maybe this time she's really gone, too. He finally begins to think about how badly he has treated her.



*Robert and Mary Frank* - DANNY LYONS - 1969



*The Final Stage Picture*

As he stands alone, thinking about her, Luisa enters upstage, wearing The Dress, and watches from afar. He feels her gaze, and turns. Their eyes meet.

An uncertain moment.

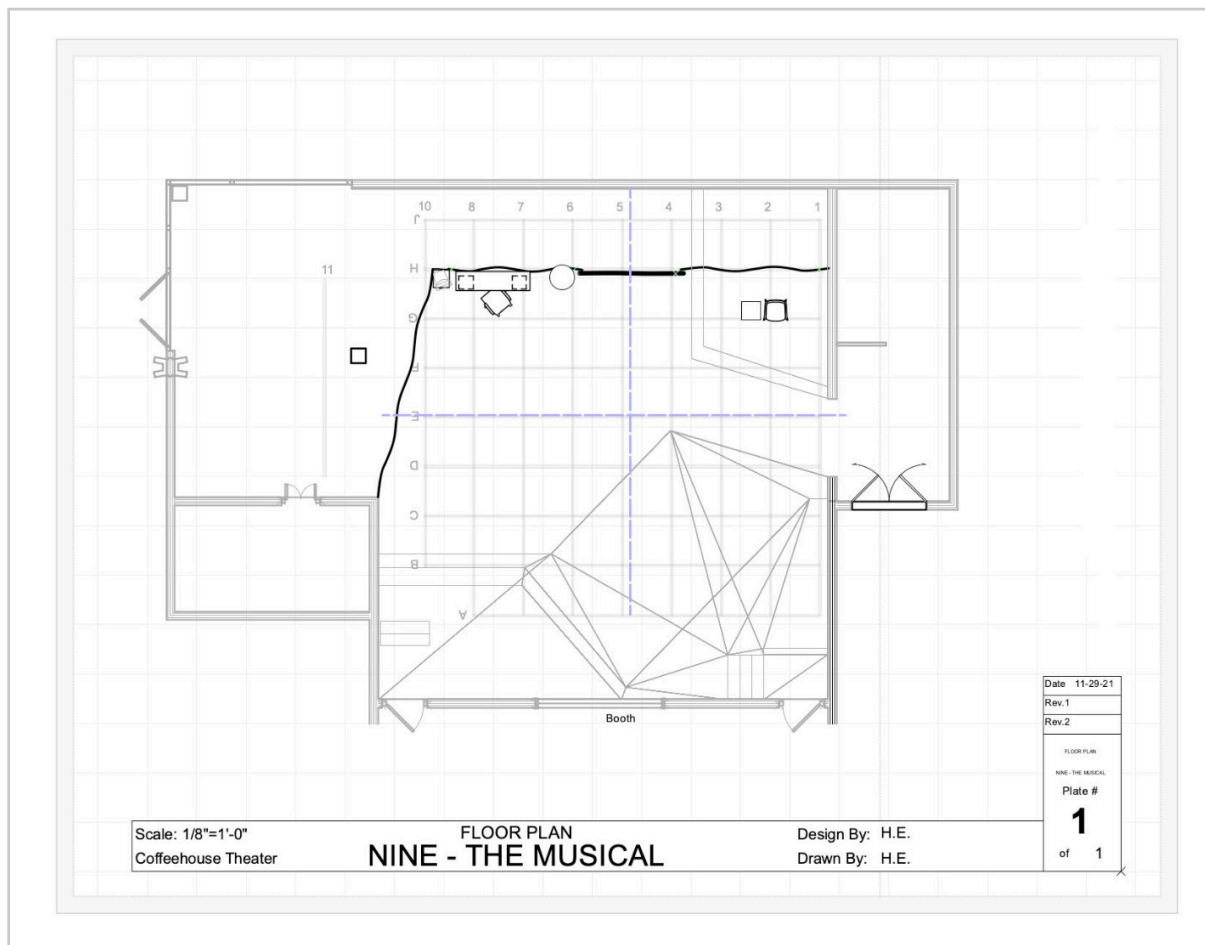
Blackout.



# The Set

The set documentation is built around a hypothetical production in the Coffeehouse Theater at CalArts, a classic, intimate black-box.

The soft goods being used to create a backstage and build the claustrophobia of the space also reflect the production's adaptability: with just a few curtains, the space can be erected anywhere.



Expected Prop/Furniture Needs List

ITEM	NOTES	UNITS
Black Masking Curtains	Depending on space	TBC
Desk	Traditional; Wooden	1
Rolling Desk Chair	Old-Fashioned	1
Small TV	Mid-Late 20th c. (must work)	1
Wooden Chair	Simple	1
Side-Table	Simple	1
Hanging Manikin	Can Be Cheap Plastic	1-3
Manikin Stand	Preferably With Wheels	1
Tambourine	Not Plastic	4
Suitcase	Woman's Valise	1
Filming Equipment	Mid-Late 20th c. (needn't work)	TBC
Ladder	Purely utilitarian, behind curtain	1
Typewriter	Purely decorative	1
Sewing Machine	Purely decorative	1
Books	Purely decorative	TBC
Crucifix	Purely decorative	1

# The Script

Since the text as written calls for 1 man, 4 boys, and 22 women, and this production aims to produce the show with 1 man, 1 woman, and 3 mute puppeteers, the script has been retooled to act as a guide for the development process.

Minimal changes have been made to dialogue, and only one song has been cut, as it was in the 2003 Broadway revival. The majority of additions to the text are stage directions, with the aim that a potential development process can jump right into the project as smoothly as possible.

Below are some examples of the script's formatting. (The full script is available on request.)

<div>Page 1</div> <div>Nine - The Musical   CalArts '22</div> <div><h3>A Note on the Production</h3><p><i>Nine</i> is a 1982 musical by Maury Yeston and Arthur Kopit, based on Federico Fellini's semi- autobiographical 1963 film <i>8 1/2</i>. Both tell the story of Guido Contini, a famous film director in a creative slump, as he juggles the women who populate his life, from his wife to his mistress, his muse to his mother.</p><p>The text as written calls for 1 man, 4 boys, and 22 women. The latter of whom remain onstage throughout most of the show, as a sort of greek chorus. This production aims to produce the show with 1 man, 1 woman, and 3 mute puppeteers.</p><p>Aided by a combination of pre-recordings (both audio and video), shadow play, and quick changes of both costume and lighting, one woman will play (almost) all of the female parts. The idea is to emphasize how the women in Guido's life are nothing but the archetypes he needs them to be, inhabiting a stock female form; in order to have her own inner life, and control a body that is only hers, each must escape his gaze (as they all do, one by one).</p><h3>A Note on the Text</h3><p>The changes made to the script itself are few and far between. Only one song is cut (a song which was also cut in the 2003 Broadway revival), and changes to dialog are minimal, made only when necessary for the conceit of the production.</p><p>The majority of the changes made to the text focus on the stage directions, attempting to present the broad strokes of the overall idea as a cohesive whole. The aim is not to follow this document to the letter, but to use it as a starting point for the production.</p><p>[NB This is how an addition/alteration is formatted.]</p><p><b>EXAMPLE:</b></p><p>Original: This is a very very very very very very long sentence.</p><p>Altered: This is a [not:] very [—] long sentence. [Here's another.]</p></div>	<div>Page 2</div> <div>Nine - The Musical   CalArts '22</div> <div><h2>Nine</h2><h3>ACT ONE</h3><p>[Lights up on a studio. On one side, the office of renowned film director GUIDO CONTINI, including a filing cabinet, a TV, and a desk piled with the excreta of creativity, and seemingly random objects. On the other side, a small table with a desk-lamp and a single wooden chair, on which sits his wife, LUISA CONTINI.</p><p>In center-stage, a manikin torso hangs from a hook on a metal stand, wearing a dress the same color as the desk-lamp. Behind it, across the back of the stage, hangs a large pale sheet.]</p><p>LUISA is talking to GUIDO, but GUIDO's mind is elsewhere.</p><p>LUISA. Guido, mi stai ascoltando? He was a teacher of mine from school, a priest. I hadn't seen him in years. Anyway, he was amazed to hear I was married to you. He said, "What's it like being married to Guido Contini?"</p><p>A woman's sensuous laugh is heard from offstage. LUISA continues to talk, but in Italian and softer, telling GUIDO that she'd like to spend more time alone with him, describing the dinner she's prepared for him, recalling the events of her day. The focus of our attention shifts to the woman about to enter GUIDO's thoughts: CARLA.</p><p>CARLA. (entering saucily, unnoticed by LUISA) Oh, Guido, Guido! Just to think of him my heart comincia fare boomp-boomp —you should feel it. Guido e mio amore. It's true. And what's more, I know Guido e completamente innamorato di me! You see, I know what Guido really needs. I am what Guido really needs. If only my husband would give me a divorce —then Guido could get his divorce, and we could get married! !</p><p>CARLA and LUISA continue to speak as GUIDO'S MOTHER enters. CARLA wonders how LUISA can live with a man who doesn't love her, then details her bland life with her husband.</p><p>GUIDO'S MOTHER. I have never understood any of my son's films. It's true. I never know what Guido is thinking. I never knew — even when he was a child.</p><p>NECROPHORUS. (entering) Guido Contini is a charlatan! To see a film directed by Contini is to experience a world —no, not a world, a</p></div>	<div>Page 58</div> <div>Nine - The Musical   CalArts '22</div> <div><p>NOW UNTIL FOREVERMORE, EVERMORE.</p><p>[One of THE GUYS picks up the 5-million-lire costume and holds it up as if it is CLAUDIETTA.]</p><p>*CLAUDIETTA*.Casanova! [silent; melody played in pit]</p><p>GUIDO (as CASANOVA). Claudietta!</p><p>He goes to her. [As GUIDO dances with the empty dress, THE ACTRESS can only watch in horror as he makes a mockery of their personal life.]</p><p>ONLY YOU BRING OUT FROM MY SOUL THE POETRY THAT I HAVE WRITTEN. NOT ONE LINE WOULD I HAVE COMPOSED IF I HAD NOT BY YOU BEEN SMITTEN.</p><p>LUISA. (totally humiliated, has seen enough, sings)</p><p>GUIDO...NO...!</p><p>[THE GUYS exit.]</p><p>GUIDO and LUISA fight over harsh tarantella music.</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa, ma she cosa?</p><p>LUISA. Come hai potuto fare una cosa così?</p><p>GUIDO. Che cosa? Che dici?</p><p>LUISA. You've made a joke of my love!</p><p>GUIDO. Ah, Luisa, tu drammatizzi troppo!</p><p>LUISA. Guido, mi sento ridicola! Davanti a tutti!</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa, it's only a farce!</p><p>LUISA. My life is not a farce!</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa, it is only a film. Capisci? Solo un film.</p><p>LUISA. Ah—solo un film —. La mia vita, solo un film? Il nostro amore, solo un film?</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa, you're taking this too seriously.</p><p>LUISA. Ma hai tradito il nostro amore!</p><p>GUIDO. Va bene! You feel betrayed? I'll cut the scene from the film!</p></div>	<div>Page 59</div> <div>Nine - The Musical   CalArts '22</div> <div><p>LUISA. (hand on heart) But not from here!</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa, listen to me! As an artist I have to use everything in my life! Everything!</p><p>LUISA. Fine! Use it! But use it well!</p><p>She runs from him.</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa!</p><p>LUISA. No, no more!</p><p>GUIDO. Luisa!</p><p>[He grabs her by the arm. The music of the tarantella stops abruptly, replaced with a soundscape like crumbling nostalgia, whipped up by the impotent anger of despair. She is afraid, but unbenet, and looks him dead in the eye. He lets go.]</p><p>LUISA. Basta! Va' a lavoro. Va' all'inferno. Go to hell!</p><p>GUIDO, about to rush after her, cannot because the finale is beginning and he must join in.</p><p>[As the music returns, and the ensemble continue without him, GUIDO tries to join in and finish the number, but the soundscape fills his head like a migraine, overpowering the song.]</p><p>[GUIDO &amp;] SPA PEOPLE.</p><p>THIS IS THE GRAND CANAL. (LA LA LA LA LA LA) ITS RESEMBLANCE TO LIFE IS NOT OBSCURE. IT IS FILLED WITH THE MILE OF HUMAN KINDNESS IN SPITE OF THE FACT IT'S REALLY A SEWER. BUT DON'T LET THAT SPOIL YOUR MORALE. IT'S A GRAND CANAL.</p><p>GUIDO. Cut! Print!</p><p>Exit ALL except GUIDO.</p><p>[GUIDO sits down, stunned. OUR LADY OF THE SPA appears on the TV, again as if being interviewed.]</p><p>OUR LADY OF THE SPA. As far as I could see, his creative life had become, by now, so closely bound to his personal that once his personal life began to fall apart, his creative had to fall apart as well;</p></div>
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# The Budget

EXCITING, I KNOW!

The expected purchases required to stage the piece, assuming basic prop and costume stock.

ITEM	NOTES	PRICE/UNIT	UNITS	EST.COST
<b>Fabric (puppet)</b>	To Cover: H125" x W98" Charm IFR Width: 116"	\$10/yd from Rose Fabrics	5	\$50.00
<b>Pulleys (Puppet)</b>		\$8 for 2 on Amazon	3	\$16.00
<b>Twine/Rope (Puppet)</b>	100' needed	~\$10 for 200' on Amazon	1	\$10.00
<b>Weights (puppet)</b>		\$9 for 10 on Amazon	3	\$9.00
<b>Desk Lamp (Other Puppet)</b>	Needs flexible neck	\$8 at Target	1	\$8.00
<b>Regular coil phone cord</b>		~\$7 on Ebay	1	\$7.00
<b>Long coil phone cord</b>		~\$10 on Ebay	1	\$10.00
<b>Phone receiver</b>	With jack for cord	~\$15 on Ebay	2	\$30.00
<b>Tower filing cabinet (low priority)</b>	For use as surprise entrance <i>Front face w/shelves becomes a hinged door</i>	< \$100 (+?)	1	\$150.00
<b>License</b>	Concord Theatrical	~\$1000 from Concord	1	\$1000.00

# *The Point*

To me, *Nine* is a play about narcissism, and society's acceptance of abuse from the (usually white) men to whom we have collectively assigned the title of auteur.

The 1982 text makes the women in Guido's life two-dimensional because that's how he sees them, but by casting one actress to play all of them, a new depth is added which allows her to be as much the universal "woman" as Guido (literally 'guy' in Italian) is the universal "man".

Just as Fellini's everyman is a well-meaning idiot-genius who always deserves another chance no matter what he does, this production's everywoman is what so many toxic relationships force so many women to be for their men: the madonna *and* the whore; the meek maid *and* the vengeful goddess; the wife, the muse, and the mistress, all in one.



*Femme Maison* - LOUISE BOURGEOIS- 1945