



# The Trial of Ubu (Modern Plays)

*Simon Stephens*

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In *The Trial of Ubu*, Simon Stephens takes the grotesque and amoral megalomaniac dictator from Alfred Jarry's proto-surrealist 1896 play *Ubu Roi* and places him before a twenty-first century international tribunal.

Set in January 2010, at the International Criminal Tribunal sitting in The Hague, it is day 436 of the trial of the dictator Ubu. Sitting before a UN constituted International Tribunal, he is charged with Crimes against Humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Simon Stephens' virtuosic satire examines the often absurd legal wrangling of the international justice system. *The Trial of Ubu* is a savage comedy that interrogates the assumptions of a Court as it struggles to deal with defendants who are not only opposed to the morality of law, but exist in a different moral dimension altogether.

Exploring the central legitimacy and effectiveness of international law, Stephens asks how a civilised society can deal with the perpetrators of unspeakable crime, and wherein lies the legitimacy of any internationally convened tribunal. Taking a wry and intelligent look at the international courts when reduced to senseless and convoluted legal altercations, this funny yet unsettling play asks important questions about legal against moral justice, and the futility of reasoned argument in the presence of a heinous malefactor.

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