

# THE SOUL OF THE AMERICAN ACTOR

America's Artists' Newspaper ♦ Volume 11 No. 2 ♦ 2014

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## Acting is Leadership

BY PAMELA J. NEWMAN

I have been acting off-Broadway for 48 weeks a year since 1976. I have had a longer run than any of the performers in "The Fantasticks," "Cats," or "Phantom of the Opera." Every day, I must consider and choose my costume, make-up and countenance.



Thank good-ness I went to acting school, the Little Theatre, the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, the University of Michigan Theatre performances. This set of experiences became the most useful to my career as an international

insurance broker.

For example, recently I was asked by a client to demonstrate creativity. Did I discuss how we negotiate and place directors' and officers' liability contracts? No!

Armed with two large scarves, I flew around the room emoting: "Terms and conditions! Terms and conditions!"

While I bordered on ludicrous, the Conservative Financial Institution hired our firm, pointing out that they couldn't overlook our depth of knowledge for our subject matter.

As a professional, you learn that every phone call, every meeting, requires acting. Long ago, a boss said to me about the insurance business, "Pamela, you can be tired in our business but you can never look, sound or act tired."

Even when you fail, you must remember to act, welcoming the hideous moment of failure like a lover on holiday in Italy. Even when you're exhausted, you have to muster power and energy and fill a room with people who leave it feeling good about themselves.

Even when your world is turned upside down by 9/11 and your colleagues, office infrastructure, and schedule have disappeared into a labyrinth of confusion and pain, you have to act. You have to say to clients: "No problem," even when there is no desk, no computer and no office.

Acting is the methodology for professionalism.

Woody Allen taught us that 90% of success is showing up, so show up and be reliable.

Take really good care of yourself. If you take really good care of yourself and believe in your capacity, you can do it all, you can have it all. Be the person you want to be by staying in character and being confident. Always act the part. Act. Act when you hear someone say something cruel and inappropriate. Act when you see others paralyzed and gripped by inaction.

Act when everyone is waiting, wanting, and hoping that someone will finally take charge.

Acting is leadership. ♦2013

*Ms. Newman's bio is on page 15*

## Touching the Invisible

BY ILONA SELKE

There are many secrets to life. Being artistic and creative allows us to tap into the unseen powers of the universe. As artists of any kind we tap into a way of being that allows us to reach outside of the confines of the three-dimensional world. Artists somehow know how to shift their perceptions, their way of feeling inside of their body, and adapt a wavelike sensation inside of them to tap into that other inspirational world.



This shift in perception can be felt as an internal vibrancy, becoming more present in oneself as a current that is invisible, rising, pulsating, connecting us to a larger greater field of What - Is.

When people ask me when I started getting in touch with that other way of being, and when it was that I started being in touch

with an invisible current, I have to answer that it came to me in stages.

First comes to mind a friend of our family who played guitar and sang songs, who inspired me. So I started to learn how to play guitar at age ten and started composing my own songs at age twelve: Songs of social protest, as was popular in the 70's.

I was always drawn to introspection, loving to write, to draw and to journal. Even to this date, I recall the moments for my inspiration which were my walks through the wheat fields and the woods, which I took by myself as a teenager often. There I practiced sensing the energy of nature. I remember noticing seeing and feeling the fields of life that existed between the trees in the forest. Most people would only see the trees, but I started watching the languid light wash through the trees, or across the wheat fields in the autumn evenings of sunlight.

Perception for artists and inspiration starts at the intersecting points of being conscious and yet touching into the ephemeral. Staying aware and awake at that special moment when we start to expand or even float. Artists learn how to shift from the left side of the brain to the right side of the brain, using a different way of perceiving reality. This allows the artist as well as the mystic to ascend to the ever-expanding ocean of heightened state of frequencies. This was something that I began to practice in my teenage years, in those years I spent walking silently in nature. I believe this essential quietness, which expands beyond the horizon of the palpable, was and still is the basis for artistic expression in me and truly for everyone.

Later on, through hours of meditation, I learned how to navigate and to reach into higher and finer world of frequencies. I would say at this point, that the closer I come to the point of the eternal Oneness, the greater my inspiration, the greater my ability to creatively interactive interface with time space at large.

Not only is art for me an expression such as poetry, writing books, music or painting. Artistic, creative living for me has become a whole-body experience, realizing now that my entire reality has become the canvas on which I paint with my consciousness.

In my early teenage years, music and art gave me a way to express this wavelike motion that I longed to occupy, and loved so well. From these inner, expanded dimension I had

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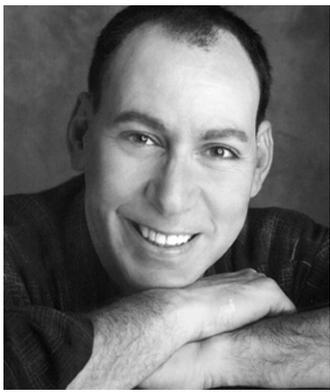
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L-R TOP ROW: Cherry Jones, Patina Miller, Jessie Mueller, John Glover. 2ND ROW: "The Trip to Bountiful," "Matilda". 3RD ROW: Betty Buckley, Ian McKellan, Patrick Stewart, Alec Baldwin, Ethan Hawke. 4TH ROW: Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Dian Kobayashi, Judith Light, John Barrymore. 5TH ROW: "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike," "The Big Knife." 6TH ROW: Mark Rylance, Danny Burstein, Sarah Paulson, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Lydia Gaston. 7TH ROW: "Kinky Boots," "Doubt," "Mister Roberts," "My Name is Ascher," "Glengarry Glen Ross."

# Who We Are!

JUST A FEW TREASURES TO REMIND US



## Acting from the Heart and Soul

BY RONALD RAND

Every time I walk out onto the stage I surrender more and more of myself – trusting and swimming in the freedom of the moment with a deeper consciousness. I tap into the energies of my soul, knowing I've come to breathe with those in the audience. Quieting my mind I share with greater clarity and sincerity in the eternal moment.

What does it take to act from the heart and soul?

### Courage

The Courage to overcome fear and limitation. Sometimes we may be drawn off our path or the unexpected may occur. That's when we need to take the time to draw upon our courage, to be willing to step back into the light and know just around the corner there's an even greater possibility for expansion.

### Love

The Love inside that's just waiting to be released. When we're able fill the space with all the love and joy in our heart – a true authentic and honest connection can take place.

### Passion

The Passion that comes from the core of our being, aligned with our soul's desire, is one of the greatest gifts we can offer our self and others. When we're free enough to release the deepest vibrations of the eternal part of ourselves, our passion can be an illuminating experience of truth and magic.

### Humor

The Humor of just having fun, falling down, picking ourselves up and laughing. Filling our heart full of joy. Singing, dancing to our heart's content. Allowing exuberance to fill our entire being and all those around us.

### Trust

The Trust to connect to the richest part of our Self, to nature, to let our soul sing with every cell of our being. Trusting everything that's been placed in our path is there to help us grow and expand. Trusting and accepting it willingly, with a glad heart and an open mind.

### Knowing

The Knowing that comes from not having to judge or control others. By paying attention and remaining open, we give ourselves permission and the freedom to simply "be" and to "fly" – accepting all of life in its simplicity – allowing our consciousness to truly awaken our heart and soul.

### Compassion

The Compassion to feel what others are feeling with total empathy, innate understanding, no matter the situation. We may not always know why we're being asked to do what we're being asked to do. So give more.

### Truth

The Truth in finding your own inner voice can lead you on a never-ending journey of self-discovery and self-realization. As long as we're willing to be open enough to continually challenge our preconceptions, prejudices and habits, our heart and soul will lead us forward. By developing our moral compass, we enable ourselves to

**RONALD RAND** - International Performing Artist/Fulbright Teaching Specialist, he continues performing his acclaimed solo play, "LET IT BE ART!" bringing to life Harold Clurman, directed by Gregory Abels. In its 15th year, the play had two critically-acclaimed runs Off-Broadway, seen in 22 countries including London, Paris, Athens, Kathmandu, Mumbai, Buenos Aires, Bangkok, Harare, Tangier, Paysandu, Bangalore, Kolkata, Cayman Islands, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Barrancabermeja, New Delhi, Zagreb, and in 17 states. Upcoming: Italy, Mozambique, Kenya, Singapore, Cambodia & Uruguay. ([www.ClurmanThePlay.com](http://www.ClurmanThePlay.com)). He appeared at BAM in "Julius Caesar," as Hamm in "Endgame" directed by Joseph Chaikin; presented and appeared in the Scheuer Book Series with Marian Seldes, Rosemary Harris, Elizabeth Ashley, and Jayne Atkinson at The Jewish Museum. He directed his play, "The Group!" about The Group Theatre at Pace University, and co-wrote the film screenplay of "The Group!" with Joan Micklin Silver. His new opera, "IBSEN" was given a presentation in India. Author of Acting Teachers of America, Mr. Rand has taught his master acting workshop, "Art of Transformation," at over 75 festivals, universities, and schools. Committed to the vision of his teachers, Stella Adler and Harold Clurman, he created this newspaper in 1998.

expand from a grounded state of truth, vibrancy, and understanding.

### Communication

The Communication of language and behavior – the simplest vibration, energy, movement, light particle, or wave carries within it all the seeds of our past, present and future. Universes of thought and spirit just waiting for our permission to dance with them in ever-ever-expanding ways.

### Transformation

The Transformation of our entire body, mind and spirit fused into an instrument for storytelling carries within it all of creation. By having a strong work ethic, discipline, tactfulness and respect for ourselves and those we work with, we give ourselves permission to transform, allowing the audience to be truly awakened.

### Listening

The Listening that comes from mindfulness, intuition and discernment. Listening to the still small voice within – to all the sounds of nature – so slowly, slowly, we can begin to re-discover not only our Selves but all the wisdom of creation.

### Surrendering

The Surrendering to open our heart with kindness and compassion for all. The willingness to share our talents in the truest way possible – this is the ultimate gift to ourselves, the world, and the universe.

What continues to give me my faith as an actor are all those joining me on my journey who have come before me, and those who continue to inspire me today ...inspiring souls including Mandela, Harold Clurman, Aung San Suu Kyi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, Rabindranath Tagore, Oprah Winfrey, Louise Hay, Elie Wiesel, Joan Baez, John Lennon, Ilona Selke, Rita Fredricks Salzman, Sabra Jones, Alida Brill, Marilise Tronto, among others ... who have drawn upon the richness of their moral compass, by searching deep within themselves, have expanded the preciousness of life through their goodness and humanity.

Every day I draw from nature, letting its inspiration flow through me allowing for a greater mindfulness. Birds sing within my breast. A mountain stream cascades through my heart. Once I allow myself to awaken to the ever-expanding vibrations of the earth, my soul's joy is released to serve the noble art of acting. ♦ 2014

Written exclusively for "The Soul of the American Actor."

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To all those who share their enthusiasm for our newspaper, THANK YOU!

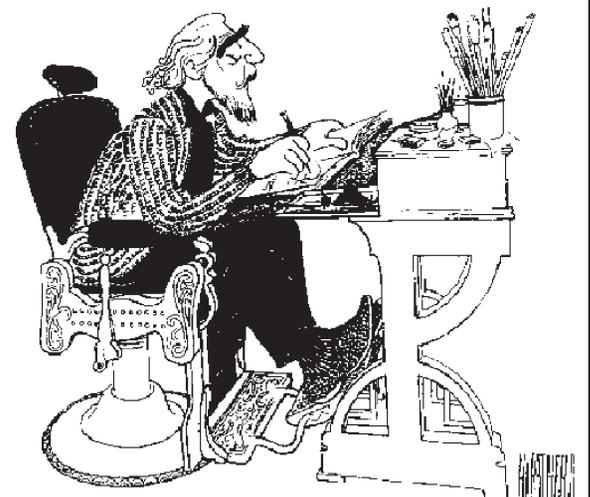
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Al Hirschfeld created caricatures of the theatre for The New York Times for over half a century. The first artist to have his name on a US postage stamp booklet, his works are in The Smithsonian Institution, The National Portrait Gallery, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art and many other museums. Since 1969, Al Hirschfeld has been represented exclusively by Margo Feiden The Al Hirschfeld Theatre is located on W. 45th St., NYC.

## Production Credits

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# A Critic's Credo

BY HAROLD CLURMAN

Recently I was introduced to a gentleman as a person about to stage a new play. "What do you think of it? I was asked. "It's a good play," I answered. "Ah, I notice you are careful not to say it's great," he remarked. I then explained that in the history of the theatre from Aeschylus to Axelrod there were probably less than a hundred

plays I would call indisputably great. Not all of Euripides, Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen or Chekhov is great. Shaw, Pirandello, O'Neill, Brecht, Beckett, Genet are important but I hesitate to call them great.

The use of the designation, depends on one's frame of reference. If one believes a play may retain its efficacy for, let us say, fifty years, one may reasonably call it great though that is not the yardstick by which I measure. In contemporary American theatre criticism the word has come to signify gushing enthusiasm, as similarly indicated by such a phrase as "the best play of several seasons." With us, the superlative is largely an implement of first aid to the box office.

Our theatre and its status among us are in such a sorry plight that when a reviewer labels a play, "good" or "interesting," we take it to mean 'mediocre,' hardly worth the expense of seeing it. Only a "money notice" is considered a favorable review – something having at least the force of a full-page newspaper ad. Criticism in such an atmosphere is perilously difficult. Theatre managers who complain about the reviewers do not want criticism; they want praise verging on hysterics. This generally holds true for playwrights and actors as well.

The reaction on the part of some critics to this journalistic inflation is to reverse the process: to preserve their critical chastity they assume an attitude of absolute severity. They will have nothing but the "best," they insist on "the highest standards." One cannot be too extreme, they feel, in defense of excellence.

Such a posture strikes me, as no less false, than the promiscuity of those addicted to raving about any presentation that can decently be commended at all. For while some absolute standard must be latent in the critic's mind if he is to give any play its proper place, it is not at all necessary or desirable to judge every new play on the basis of that ideal. There is even something inimical to art in such a practice.

"Masterpieces," says Auden, "should be kept for High Holidays of the Spirit." That is certainly not to deny that we need organizations to keep masterpieces perennially in view. But what we must demand, above all in plays, is that they speak to us, stir us in ways which most intimately and powerfully stir our senses and our souls, penetrate to the core what is most truly alive in us. To do so, plays do not have to have the stamp of universality on them, of impeccable inspiration, or signs of topflight genius. They have to be the consistent and persuasive expression of genuine perception, individual in origin, social in application. Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Moliere are prototypes of dramatic greatness. It must be evident that many second, third, fourth and fifth-rate plays may also fulfill the function of usable art.

It is no special feat to determine greatness retrospectively. The critic who implies that nothing less than the absolutely first-rate will do is usually more pedant than artist. Immortality awards are best conferred by our descendants. "A 'high standard,'" said Henry James, "is an excellent thing, but we fancy it sometimes takes away more than it gives." We live more fully on what we create now than on what was created for us in the past. That is as true for audiences as for the makers and doers.

Since we are speaking of the total phenomenon of the theatre, rather than of drama alone, we must remind ourselves that masterpieces, badly produced or produced at the wrong time and place, cease to occupy their exalted position; in fact they no longer serve the purposes of art. Under the proper circumstances, on the stage and in the auditorium, plays of more modest literary pretensions may excel them.

I am often given to understand that Sophocles was a greater dramatist than O'Neill. I need no such instruction. It is none the less true that most productions of Sophocles (and of other Greek masters) have struck me as singularly empty, while certain O'Neill staged plays have impressed me deeply.

We have also learned that some dramatists of unquestioned stature – Goethe, Kleist, Racine, Strindberg – do not have the same impact in one country as in another,

or make the impression they presumably should, even upon their own people at all times.

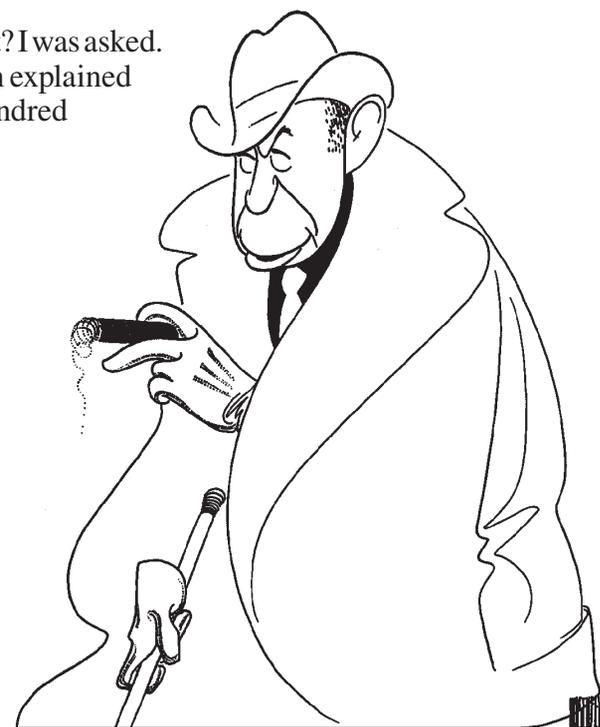
Talent of every kind, even small talent, must always be credited. That is particularly so of talent close to us in time and place. I do not suggest that we follow Herman Melville's injunction: "Let America first praise mediocrity in her children before she praises...the best excellence in children of other lands." I submit, however, that a sense of the present, and of presence, are factors which it is unwise to overlook or underestimate. But the critical faculty does not consist only in recognizing talent; there must be also an ability to evaluate it. The American theatre is richly supplied (I almost said lousy) with talent, but too often talent not worthy enough or put to the best uses.

This raises an aspect of theatre criticism in which we are decidedly at fault. Our praise is usually the response to an effect, a register of stimulation. We applaud the person who produces the effect in an acclaim which ranges from a compliment to cleverness to the proclamation of genius. But what counts in talent is its specific gravity, its meaning, how and in what way it affects us, the human nourishment it offers us. Cyanide of potassium is tremendously effective, but it is not food.

Everything – even the damnable – must be expressed in the theatre. I cannot hold anything to be true unless tested by its opposite. I need Beckett's negations if for no other reason than that they fortify me in my affirmations. I need Genet's "decadence" to sustain my health. I embrace the madness in certain modern dramatists to find my balance. To be sure, there is authentic "far out" writing and there is its fashionable simulacrum; it is the critic's task to distinguish between them. He must sift the stuff which composes each particular talent, assess its value for and in itself, and in relation to himself as a person representative of a certain public. "Entertainment," "good theatre," "beauty" are not enough. We must know what these virtues actually do, how they work. The critic's main job, I repeat, is not to speak of his likes or dislikes as pleasure or distaste alone, but to define as exactly as possible the nature of what he examines. It were best to do this without the use of tags intended for quotes to be read on the run.

Merit in acting is weighed chiefly by the degree of personal appeal it exercises. The actor is rarely judged for his relevance to the play as a whole since the play's meaning to begin with is frequently unspecified. To speak to the point about acting, the critic must judge the texture and composition of the role as the player shapes it through his natural endowment and through the authority of his craft.

Perhaps critics should not be held to too-strict account for neglect or oversight in the matter of acting, direction, etc., since most acting and direction on our stage today, for reasons we must refrain from entering into in the present context, is rarely better than competent. In such cases a consideration in depth, becomes supererogatory when it is not pretentious. Still, even with actors as eminent as Laurence Olivier, Alfred Lunt, Paul Scofield, Jean-Louis Barrault, or with directors as accomplished as Tyrone Guthrie, Peter Brook, Orson Welles, what our critics have to say usually comes down to little more than catch phrases, a bleat of unreserved enthusiasm or regretted disapproval. In this connection I must cite a fact first called to my attention by Jacques Copeau, the actor-director who



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**HAROLD CLURMAN** A dynamic force as producer, director, drama critic, he founded the famed Group Theatre in 1931 with Lee Strasberg and Cheryl Crawford. He directed the original productions of *Awake & Sing*, *Golden Boy*, *The Member Of The Wedding*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Incident At Vichy*, and *Bus Stop*, among others. His classic account of The Group Theatre, *The Fervent Years*, is a must read for all theatre lovers, as well as his *On Directing*, *All People Are Famous*, *Ibsen* and *The Collected Works of Harold Clurman*. A recipient of the George Jean Nathan Award, he was known as the "elder statesman of the American Theatre."

strongly influenced Louis Jouvet, Charles Dullin and a whole generation of European theatre folk from 1913 to 1941: "There have been fewer great actors in the history of the theatre than great dramatists."

The new season begins, and no doubt, I shall often make hash in my columns of many of my own prescriptions. In extenuation I can only urge that while I am not sure I agree with an admirable literary critic I heard lecture many years ago in Paris who said, "The artist has every right; a critic only obligations," I always bear it in mind. ♦1964

Excerpt from *The Collected Works of Harold Clurman: Six Decades of Commentary, Theatre, Dance, Music, Arts and Letters* edited by Marjorie Loggia and Glenn Young. Published by Applause Books. Reprinted with the permission of Ellen Adler and J.C. Compton.

*"We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection. Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them – we can only love others as much as we love ourselves. Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged and healed."*

– Brené Brown



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## Artistic New Directions

by Ronald Rand

Artistic New Directions, led by co-directors Kristine Niven and Janice L. Goldberg, is dedicated to developing and presenting new theatrical works in fully staged productions that ignite the theatergoer's mind, heart and imagination. Vital to the growth of Artistic New Directions is continually providing artists in the community with artistic and technical resources from inspiration to production, as they explore and expand the possibilities of improvisation as a performing skill, and a means of creating scripted works.

Their Laboratory program is the keystone to their development program, and within it are: 'Anything Goes' open rehearsal, 'to Works-in-Progress' to 'Plays-in-Progress' to 'On Stage.'

Among the projects that have been produced and/or developed through Artistic New Directions' Laboratory include: "A Life in Her Day" written and performed by Hilary Chaplain; "A Time to Dance" and "Lilia!" written and performed by Libby Skala; "Bluff" and "Immoral Imperatives" by Jeffrey Sweet; "Buon Natale, Bruno" written and performed by Terianne Falcone; "Church" and "Oil" written and performed by Gary Austin; Margo Hammond's "Look Me in the Eyes"; Kristine Niven's "Love Games" and "Wash & Dry" by Kristine Niven, the "Sophie Tucker Project" written and performed by Carol Fox Prescott; and "That Dorothy Parker" written and performed by Carol Lempert.

Their workshops include Pro-Positive Choices, The Power of Your Presence, and The Beat Goes On with David Razowsky; and The Space Between with Carol Fox Prescott.

Upcoming Workshops include: Writing and Performing the Solo Play – Joseph Gallo, Exploring Musical Improv with Larry Rosen and Noel Katz, Improvisational Techniques For Actors – Gary Austin, Gary Austin's Solo Exploration Workshop ("48th St. Exercise"), The 15-Second Scene and Beyond – Gary Austin, Characters and Their Voices – Wendy Mackenzie, "Sharpen your Point of View" Improvisation Workshop – David Razowsky, "Revelations!" Improvisation Workshop – David Razowsky, Improvisation: The Next Level – David Razowsky, Scene Gym 1: Extreme Listening – Rachel Hamilton, Scene Gym 2: Taking Risks – Rachel Hamilton, Scenario to Stage Improvisation Workshop – Michael J. Gellman, Script Writing for Actor/Improvisors with Jeffrey Sweet, Scotty Watson's Big-Ass Workshop in Improvisation, and Character to Scene Improvisation Workshop with Michael J. Gellman. Their faculty includes: Gary Austin, Hilary Chaplain, Kevin Frank, Joseph Gallo, Michael Gellman, Rachel Hamilton, Noel Katz, Carol Lampert, Wendy Mackenzie, David Marx, Kristine Niven, Carol Fox Prescott, Kenny Raskin, David Razowsky, Michael Rock, Larry Rosen, Jeffrey Sweet, and Scotty Watson.

For info: Artistic New Directions 250 W. 90th St. #15-G NYC 10024, (212) 875-1857 info@artisticnewdirections.org, www.artisticnewdirections.org.

*"Feel is if you are reborn each day and rediscover the world of nature which are joyfully a part."*

– Pablo Casals, at the age of 96

## SITI Theatre Company's 30th Anniversary

by Ronald Rand

The SITI Company recently celebrated its 30th Anniversary. Founded in 1992 by Anne Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki, and currently led by Ms. Bogart and Executive Director, Megan Wanless. The SITI Company was created to redefine and revitalize contemporary theater in this country with an emphasis on international cultural exchange and collaboration. SITI Company's roots began in a summer institute in Saratoga Springs, New York, and have expanded to encompass a year-round program based in New York City with a summer season

Among their memorable productions include: "Bob" (a solo play revolving around the life and times of Robert Wilson), "War of the Worlds – The Radio Play" (A staged dramatization of the original Orson Welles & Mercury Theater), "Room," "Score" (a study of Leonard Bernstein), "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Death and the Ploughman," "systems/layers," "Hotel Cassiopeia" (written by Charles Mee about American artist Joseph Cornell), "Radio Macbeth," "Who Do You Think You Are," "Under Construction" (Charles Mee's play about America, inspired by Norman Rockwell and contemporary installation artist Jason Rhoades), "Antigone" (Jocelyn Clarke's retelling of Sophocles tale), "Trojan Women," "Café Variations," "bobrauschenbergamerica," and "A Rite" (An exploration into Igor Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring.")

The SITI Company's training philosophy and technique of SITI's work is through a dialogue between Suzuki and Viewpoints, two very distinct yet complementary approaches to the art of acting. A great deal of SITI's work is the teaching of their training techniques with actors and theater artists.

The Suzuki Method and Viewpoints as taught by Anne Bogart and the SITI Company, two of the most essential

components of the SITI's creative work affords young artists control in order to make conscious, deliberate choices, encourage flexibility and freedom in the exploration of one's instincts, demand presence and moment-to-moment living in space, promote a range of versatility beyond the constraints of one's habitual nature, and awaken the mind, body, and spirit as tools for expression, to the human experience.

Their technique of improvisation grew out of the post-modern dance world, and was first articulated by choreographer Mary Overlie, who broke down the two dominant issues performers deal with – time and space – into six categories. She named her approach the Six Viewpoints. SITI's Anne Bogart and our company members have expanded Ms. Overlie's work and adapted them for actors.

The company members include: Akiko Aizawa, J.Ed Araiza, Anne Bogart, Will Bond, Gian-Murray Gianino, Leon Ingulsrud, Ellen Lauren, Kelly Maurer, Charles L. Mee, Tom Nelis, Barney O'Hanlon, Neil Patel, Brian H. Scott, James Schuette, Megan Wanless, Stephen Duff Webber, and Darron L. West.

SITI Company has received numerous awards including the American Theatre Wing Award, Dublin Festival Award for "The Medium," and the Connecticut Critics Circle Award for "bobrauschenbergamerica."

As they continue, SITI Company will continue sharing more performances, educational programs, and collaborations, challenging and exploring new work, "providing a "gymnasium for the soul" where the interaction of art, artists, audiences and ideas will inspire the possibility for chance, optimism and hope," as they have declared their mission to be.

For more info: SITI 520 8th Ave., NYC 1018 (212) 868-0860, www.siti.org ♦

## Thalia Spanish Theatre

by Ronald Rand

Queens' original home for Latino culture, Thalia Spanish Theatre, the first and only bilingual Hispanic theatre in Queens, was established in Sunnyside, Queens in 1977 by actress/director Silvia Brito. For over 32 years they have celebrated the vibrancy and diversity of Spanish and Latin American culture with unique productions of plays, musicals and dance, presenting over 150 plays, zarzuelas and Folklore Shows, and are an important venue for new plays from Spain and Latin America.

An important venue for new works by Spanish and Latin American playwrights and composers, they have produced the American and world premieres of plays by Mexico's Carlos Fuentes and Spaniards Inigo Ramirez de Haro, Antonio Gala, Jaime Salom, and Jerónimo López Mozo, all of whom have attended their openings at our theatre.

In 1987 they began presenting Folklore Shows of music and dance from Spain and Latin America. In 1995 they inaugurated Festival de Thalia al Aire Libre Festival with four free concerts in their local park every June.

In 2001 they began producing plays by authors from the Americas, and are committed to the preservation and

promotion of zarzuela, a form of Spanish musical theatre which combines operatic singing with dialogue, and are a celebrated producer of this unique genre of Spanish musical.

Acclaimed Spanish director/writer/producer Angel Gil Orrios, has produced and directed more than 150 productions in Spain, the United States, and France in the last 40 years. His most important innovation is to present productions with bilingual casts, alternating performances in English and Spanish.

Thalia Spanish Theatre has also produced masterworks by such celebrated writers as Calderon de la Barca, Jardiel Poncela of Spain, Chile's Miguel Frank, and created World Premiere flamenco musicals from plays written by Pablo Picasso.

Thalia Spanish Theatre has received over a hundred and fifty awards, including the Hispanic leadership award, Mayor's award for arts & culture, New York State Governor's arts award, Encore awards from the arts and business council, ACE awards, the Association of Critics of Entertainment, an organization for the Spanish-language press in New York, and 5 HOLA Awards. For info: Thalia Theatre 41-17 Greenpoint Avenue, Queens, New York 11104 (718) 729-3880, www.thaliatheatre.org. •

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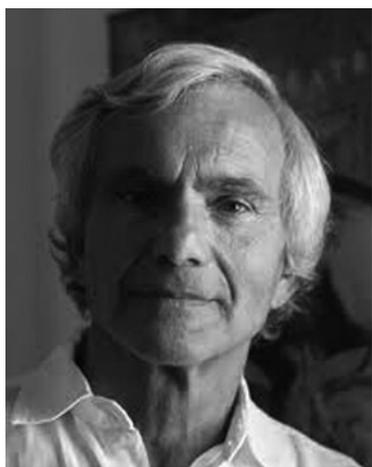
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# Hope And Incomprehensibility

BY EUGENIO BARBA

**W**ithout hope we cannot live. Hope can be a strength or a burden. It can fuel mediocre illusions or harmful and fierce beliefs. It can inspire those “truths” that leaders of doctrines proclaim eternal and philosophers call “idols” or “vital lies.”

In Odin Teatret's most recent performance, “The Chronic Life,” the comfort and uneasiness of the

world in which I live and which I know through journeys, newspapers, books, film and television, is evoked through a mosaic of details, each of which is easily recognizable. The spectator can identify the interlacement of privileges and exclusions as well as the unforgivable sin of our society – “to eat without hunger and to drink without thirst,” in the words of Charles Baudelaire. But the performance as a whole – because of the way reactions and circumstances are connected and interwoven – causes a reverberation of incomprehensibility. The performance doesn't proclaim the hopeless absurdity of life. It points out another way of living hope as inverted despair, that is as poetry: a subverting way of looking and rebellious vitality.

There is no hope when we are convinced that nothing can be done because conditions don't allow it. Despair, before being a state of mind, is the painful acceptance of the status quo, the admission of the forces at stake, of everything which is evident, sensible and which in the end we submit to. Despair is inaction which comes from understanding only too well that which encircles us.

A mysterious bond ties hope to incomprehensibility. Hope is a dark force and cannot be deciphered. However, hope helps me to see closely and in detail that which I feel the need to refuse, without sheltering behind preconceived judgments, contempt and resignation. And without deluding myself that I have found the key which throws light on what I experience as dark forces.

One of the most refined totalitarianisms of our time is the obligation to clarity, the disdain for the state of I-do-not-understand, the shared devaluation of the feeling of incomprehension whose secret effects prompt decisive choices in our life. The cult of clarity, which served to enlighten minds, serves today also to darken them.

Every time we turn on the television, open a newspaper or listen to a politician or an expert, the world is presented to us as something that has been understood and can be explained. Every piece of information depicts facts coherently interpreted and commented, ready to be classified; or else exposes the impatient waiting for the solution of the enigmas of politics and news stories. There must be an explanation.

If it is late in coming, the event will in time end among the refuse of unexplained news, and thereby destined to extinction. Anyone who speaks or writes, fears above all not to be clear. The need to be understood impels us to censor our reactions and feelings which we are unable to understand in depth. Even in linguistic behavior, the expressions that cannot be clearly translated from one language into another are discarded. The gift of clarity loses vigor and sense when it buries the gift of ambiguity and the sensation of not seizing everything.

If I ask myself: “What is theatre?” I can find several bright answers. But none of them appears to be of any practical use in intervening in the surrounding world, in the attempt to change at least a tiny corner of it. If I ask myself in which paradoxical enclosure in space and time I may allow the dark forces which rule in history and in the individual's interiority to surface, and how I can make them perceptible in their physicality without producing violence, destruction and self-destruction, the answer is evident to me: it is the enclosure called theatre

The image of Fridtjof Nansen appears. He was a scientist leading the International Bureau for Refugees of the League of Nations, Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He died in 1930 at the age of seventy. In the years of his maturity, he was a polar explorer, the most creative among the Norwegian explorers. The ships that opened the road to the North Pole were imprisoned by the ice during the long winter freeze. Nothing could be done. The only hope was to succeed in not succumbing and to wait for the weather to change. Because times do change and even the longest night, as Brecht sings, is not eternal. Nansen did something

more. He dreamt with open eyes against despair.

He dreamt a contradiction: the navigation of a ship imprisoned by invincible ice. He called his ship Fram (Forward), a name that could be turned into derision. Nansen studied the ice; the conditions of the psychic and physical resistance of the men in the homicidal vice of the frozen season; he calculated the tides and currents. Because also the frozen sea moves and changes. He let himself be trapped by the ice and exploited its long, desperately slow drift. He turned it into a paradoxical static navigation, ready to take the initiative again at the first change in the season.

Nansen is the great master of the deep hope.

Beyond the ephemeral swarm of thousands of small daily hopes, there is the deep hope which dwells beyond the border of the Great Freeze and its fear. If we want to keep the deep hope alive, there is no other means than to look at it from its opposite, steering the dark face of its negation. To keep hope alive – and thus deny despair – is an arduous enterprise, and in certain historical moments we know it only too well. The act of hoping is as strenuous as the act of withstanding. It means to react in first person, often with actions which are incomprehensible to the criteria of the craft and the expectations of others.

Until now I have made performances which refer to events and experiences of the past or the present. For the first time, “The Chronic Life” is imagined in a near future, simulated and simultaneous.

The action takes place in Denmark and Europe: different countries at the same time. The story unfolds during the first months after a civil war. To make this scenario less believable (which is no consolation) I have chosen a relatively close date, 2031. I have striven to confuse the relationships between the various elements of the whole, weakening the spectator's illusion of being able to recognize the chains of cause and effect. The whole, seen in just one glimpse, delineates a landscape that cannot be grasped rationally.

A multitude of voices, day and night and through many means, comment upon the various whys of history which besieges our lives and which threatens to drag them into chaos. The intelligible answers stifle the questions that concern us most, dilute their urgency and become a sedative. We know this, but we cannot do without them. The fiction of understanding consoles.

I don't think that my undertaking in theatre consists in furnishing a reliable interpretation of events which others have narrated, or in showing ways out of the vice in which we feel trapped. I believe in the urgency of another task: to give form and credibility to the incomprehensible and to those impulses that are a mystery even to me, turning them into a skein of actions-in-life to offer to the spectator's contemplation, annoyance, repugnance and compassion. I would like this skein of actions-in-life to infect that zone in each of us where unbelief blends with naivety.

We assume that a theatre performance has above all the aim of communicating.

This is true up to a certain point. What “awakens” the spectator is the way the actor alternates alchemically situations of incomprehension with moments of pure information. This process generates a state of empowered life with inner consequences, which only the theatre can trigger in the human being. In such moments we spectators feel a crucial question arise in our mind: what other reality is hidden behind that which seems totally clear to us? Is

clarity a form of blindness, manipulation or censorship?

A ship gripped by the ice's vice: I do theatre to turn her into a tiny precarious islet of resistance for me and for my fellow travelers, actors and spectators. On this islet, which a thousand sea-paths link to the surrounding geography, I weave performances that seem and are obscure. I try to bring into the light the dark forces which inhabit me, my biography, the history in which I am caught up, the difference which I have conquered and the differences which others have known how to conquer.

I want to repay the spectators for their effort to come to the theatre by offering them the vision of an incomprehensibility that they can recognize because it is what they want to refuse: the image of the country they would like to leave. It is the wish to distance oneself that preserves the seed of hope.

I would like the performance to open a tiny crack into the dark incandescent magma of the individual and his painstaking zigzag to free himself from an icy embrace: that of the implacable and indifferent Great Mother of Abortions and Shipwrecks, Our Lady History.

Perhaps it is not the question “from where do I come” which defines our identity, but the question “from where do I want to go away.” ♦2011

Eugenio Barba's speech at The Prize of Hope celebration. Reprinted with the permission of Eugenio Barba.

**EUGENIO BARBA** – Director, theorist & founder of Odin Teatret, Mr. Barba was Jerzy Grotowski's assistant for 3 years, and wrote the first book about him. He has directed 18 Odin Teatret productions, including: “Ferai,” “Min Fars Hus” (“My Father's House”), “Brecht's Ashes,” “The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus” and “Kavsmus.” He founded ISTA, International School of Theatre Anthropology and has written several books including: *Beyond The Floating Island, Land Of Ashes, Diamonds: My Apprenticeship in Poland, 26 Letters from Jerzy Grotowski to Eugenio Barba Theatre, Solitude, Craft, Revolt* and *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* with Nicola Savarese

*“Willingly confront the obstacles in our lives and avoid the temptation to paint them as problems. Choosing rather to savor the spontaneity they can introduce in our experience of this particular time. Patiently abide the periods in our life passage during which activity wanes, visible progress ceases and we only have to wait for our good to appear without struggle. Be content to be in this moment, blessing the process and accepting the past with quiet gratitude. Always trust the unknown, the unseen territory in our lives ahead will manifest in a manner that will support us, nurture us, expand our spirit and allow us the room to grow. Knowing only that, in the current of universal energy in which we bathe and flow, the destination is assured. The peace we deserve and the love we seek will come to us, when it will, as abundantly as we dreamed. For we are safe within the spirit of this life stream.”*  
an excerpt from “Being Enough”  
– Leigh Sanders

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# Style

BY JOANNA ROTTÉ

For the most part, our theatres in New York City and across the country, at least our commercial theatres, aspire to work in the style of realism. Our schools of acting continue to teach variations of the Stanislavsky System based in the style of realism.

It's a century now since Stanislavsky. And stage acting in America has yet to achieve the kind of realism manifested by the Moscow Art Theatre, inspired by the plays of Chekhov.

Realism is an artistic style. In the theatre it requires the intention to act "as if" everything is actually real. The place or setting, and all that goes with it, is to be taken as real by actors and audience. So too, the actors and audience are to take the characters as real persons. The actors are to behave "as if" the events of the play are really happening, and the audience is expected to cooperate, to play along, engaging in a willing suspension of disbelief. How sweet that everybody together enters into an act of mutual agreement based on imagination!

But I wonder if the American theatre is living up to its end of the realism agreement? More and more, when I go to the theatre, I see an interesting set, sometimes quite realistic in detail. Then I see actors pretty much talking to each other in front of the set. The actors may sit on a few pieces of furniture or on abstract shapes constituting set pieces (which can work just fine in realism), or they may walk about, or they may take stances in partial profile. What they don't especially do is live within the set. Realism, to be authentic, requests the actor to create the illusion of actually living life particular to circumstances given by the playwright. What has happened to our theatrical tradition, that realism seems to be more about talking than about particularized "as if" living?

Here's an example, only one example of many and not the most egregious but nevertheless vivid. I attended the opening of Bruce Graham's "North of the Boulevard," world-premiering in Philadelphia at Theatre Exile. The play takes place in an auto repair garage. The set was amazing: the interior of a garage equipped with an actual car and staggering amounts of tools, metal parts, and auto equipment hanging from the walls, on shelves, in cabinets, and everywhere the eye could look. I would surmise that only two of the four actors in the all-male cast actually put his hands on a tool or a piece of equipment in the course of the evening. In total, actors came into contact with the accouterment of the set on which (but not within which) they were performing probably less than five times. They didn't make use, or even take note, of the abundance of shop equipment surrounding them. It seemed such a waste of great stuff! (Why not just paint flats to look like a shop

if the set is just background?) The actors talked and talked to each other and sometimes they yelled. They did speak like men who work or hang out in an auto repair shop, because that's how the play was written. But they could have been just about anywhere that working class guys congregate. Their behavior was the generic behavior of actors on stage simulating realism. It was not particular to grease monkeys in an auto repair shop.

Our theatres have become proficient, even expert, in producing plays that at a glance may look like realism and at a listen may sound like realism but are not being performed in the style of realism. I don't believe the legacy of Stanislavsky is generic simulated realism. The Stanislavsky System invites the actor to create behavior appropriate to the place where the action unfolds, as well as behavior belonging to the social class and profession of the character. How generous to the audience, how exciting for the actors, if our theatres were to produce real realism!

On the other hand, there are forms of theatre in which realism can and ought to be set aside. There is opera, in which the emphasis is on voice; or music theatre, featuring song and dance. Shakespeare demands the rhythms of verse and the perfection of diction. There are the Greeks and Racine and today's movement theatre. These forms may draw upon elements of realism but ultimately their artistic style bows to a more theatrical truth.

Last summer in the month of June, I enjoyed an imaginatively designed and beautifully sung production of Wagner's opera, "The Flying Dutchman," at the Princeton Festival. Although the actor in the role of the "thin" Dutchman wasn't thin and an African-American actress played the daughter of a white father, it ultimately didn't upset the aesthetics. It was odd in terms of everyday logic but acceptable in terms of the conventions of opera where voice production supersedes skin color and body-type.

The month of July brought me to a gloriously grand production of "Aida" at the Cincinnati Opera performed in gorgeous Music Hall, a national historic landmark ranking acoustically as one of the finest performance venues in the world. Though multitudes were in attendance, I regretted that not every single one of the 3,500 seats was occupied. Everyone possible should have heard the thrilling high notes of Latonia Moore in the title role of the Ethiopian princess, just a year past debuting at the Met as Aida. The Cincinnati Opera, the second oldest opera company in the nation, not only draws singers from the Met but audiences from across the Midwest. I grew up in Cincinnati and there at the age of 17, I attended my first opera, all by myself. (My friends weren't drawn to orchestral music.) The opera was "Aida." For the first 50 years of its history, including when I was in high school, the Cincinnati Opera performed outdoors at the Cincinnati Zoo Pavilion. I've not forgotten the sound of nearby elephants trumpeting in tune with Verdi's triumphal entry march into Egypt!

To add to the charm of my return to "Aida" in Cincinnati, when the artistic director was giving the curtain speech, he invited the audience to turn to a stranger and ask them to name the first opera they had ever attended. For the man in front of me, it was "Don Giovanni" in St. Louis. I shared my "Aida" story. Then at intermission I read the dramaturg's program essay, which coincidentally began:

"You never forget your first "Aida." Mine came when I was 12, in the ultimate of all "Aida" performance venues, the Arena di Verona, with 20,000 people showing wild enthusiasm for the singing as well as the spectacle. I came away assuming that no opera could be more thrilling to experience in a live performance than "Aida." Today, so many years later, I see no reason to change that opinion."

Completing the auspiciousness of the occasion was the fact that my seating companion, my nephew's daughter, 15 years old, was experiencing not only her first "Aida" but also her first opera! High style arose everywhere that evening – in the sumptuousness of the hall, on stage, in the singing, in the music, in the costuming, in the chorus, in the trumpets, in the literature, and in memory.



**JOANNA ROTTÉ**, a writer, actor and director, is Professor of Theatre at Villanova University. Her books include *Acting with Adler* and *Scene Change: A Theatre Diary: Prague, Moscow, Leningrad*. She regularly performs on the Villanova stage, most recently in "Cherry Orchard" and "Long Day's Journey into Night." She has directed featured productions for the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, including her own plays "Art Talk," "Death of the Father," "Prajna" (based on a script by the Tibetan meditation master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche), and "All Victorious Ocean: the Noble Life of Yeshe Tsogyal, Tantric Yogini," in which she performed the title role. She has recorded five of Pema Chodron's books for Shambhala Publications: <http://www.shambhala.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=rotte> She is a meditation practitioner in the Shambhala lineage. [www.nohtrainingproject.org](http://www.nohtrainingproject.org).

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to engage in a thoroughly non-realistic, utterly foreign theatrical style – not as audience but as theatre practitioner. Years ago I had discovered five Noh plays based on the life of a medieval Japanese beauty named Ono no Komachi. Over time, I adapted the five plays to form one play depicting the quintessential events of Komachi's long life. Historically, Komachi was a real person who in her youth served at the Emperor's court. She became a poet of renown and teacher of poetry. (You can find ever-evolving translations of her marvelously evocative poetry!) Through the loss of lovers, husbands and family, ultimately through the loss of everything, she became an old beggar and finally a person of spiritual attainment.

The play was directed by Elizabeth Dowd of the Noh Training Project (using suggestions of performance elements of the Japanese Noh. The production did not try to imitate or wholesale appropriate the Noh. Though the actors were white American women and men speaking, chanting and singing English, it wasn't fusion art. There was borrowing, not blending. The Noh came through in whiffs of gesture, movement, dance, voice, drums and flute. The production created the stirring scent of an abiding perfume, that we could call Zen style.

I love that in the contemporary theatre, every style is welcome. There is room for stately classicism and room for commedia clowning. I don't love when a style is made generic. Everybody comes up short. It doesn't have to be that way! When a style is specifically, uniquely and fully entered, meaning arises. And when meaning arises, the world is enriched. ♦2013

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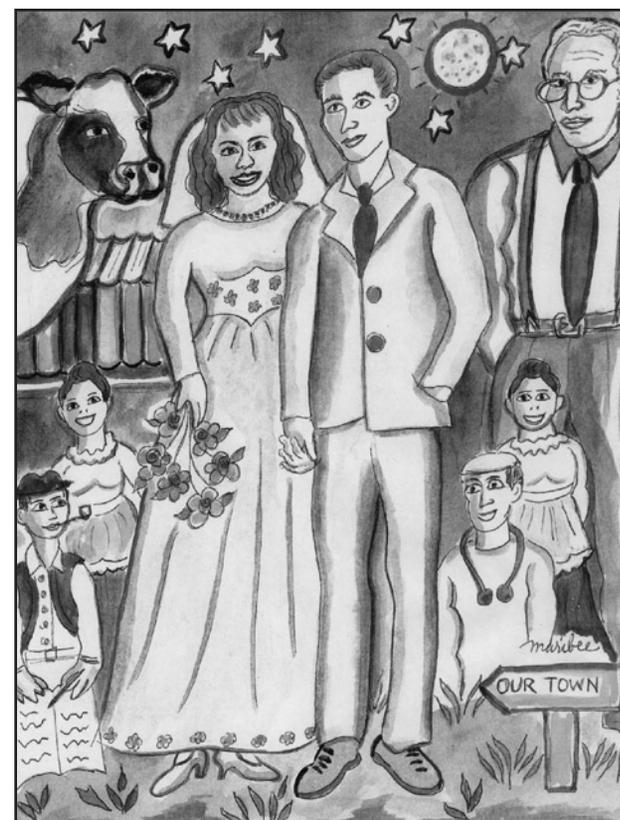
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# Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Critical Portrait

BY ANDREI MALAEV-BABEL

As an artist of the Russian avant-garde, Yevgeny Vakhtangov was as much concerned with the new forms of life as he was with the new forms of art. Non-separation between artistic forms and the forms of life was Vakhtangov's trait since his first steps in theatre. Vakhtangov always saw Theatre as a prerequisite to the new, more beautiful, and sophisticated forms of life.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 created an illusion that, in the new society, popular masses would be exposed to arts and culture, both as spectators and artists. Stanislavsky's dream "to cover Russia with a web of studios" was literally coming to life. Hundreds of new theatre studios were opening throughout Russia during the first years of the Revolution. Regular people felt the necessity to engage in creative play. Theatres were filled with people, who, prior to 1917, could never attend a theatrical performance. Theatre art was promising to become a major force in the spiritual life of the nation.

In a way, the Soviet regime fulfilled this promise, with one major stipulation. Shortly after Vakhtangov's death, arts and culture in the Soviet Union were subjected to heavy censorship by the regime. More-over, Stalin's doctrine of Socialist Realism led Soviet theatre in the direction contrary to the path indicated by Vakhtangov.

In the meantime, like many of the Russian avant-garde artists of the 1920's, Vakhtangov was working toward freeing the human spirit by enriching it with creativity. He saw the future of mankind as a community that will introduce a new man – a perpetual creator. When such a new man appears, the Stanislavskian formula of theatre art-recreating "life of the human spirit" onstage would be realized, as the human spirit and the creative spirit will be one.

Vakhtangov's vision of the contemporary man's life, therefore, was deeply tragic. This tragic perception of life created an invisible layer in Vakhtangov's "Princess Turandot." At the same time, Vakhtangov's production proclaimed that creative human beings (actors) can overcome the tragedy of their daily existence through their creative act. Actors, who can evoke the spirit of creativity in their acting, according to Vakhtangov, can achieve inner and outer freedom and approach the beautiful sphere of Higher Reason.

Vakhtangov believed that in the society of the future, where the human spirit will become perpetually creative, every human being will possess the gift of an artist. This belief of Vakhtangov's was at the foundation of his vision of the Future Theatre. Vakhtangov saw the theatre of the future as a kind of forum where any audience member, at any point in the performance, could step onto the stage, and take up a role in a play. The future society will allow everyone's artistic gift and free creative spirit to flower in whatever way it demanded. Those of the future society, whose artistic gift is more inclined toward acting, will act.

This is how Vakhtangov himself explained his idea of the Future Theatre to one of his students:

"The time will come when theatre will be an ordinary event of our life. Theatre will simply be in a square. Everyone, who feels himself capable, will act. Theatre will be free of charge – there will be no admittance fee, or a performance honorarium. It will be a free art for free people. Narrow professionalism will disappear; all naturally talented actors will play."

"Faith," in Vakhtangov's meaning of this word, is an actor's ability to live creatively onstage and to experience creative passions without literally perceiving the events of the play and the stage environment as real. This statement of Vakhtangov's may have been interpreted by some of his followers as a step toward Presentational Theatre, away from the theatre of the emotional experience. What Vakhtangov's statement truly means, however, is that the process of life onstage does not equal everyday life process – onstage an actor engages in a creative process where everything that surrounds them does not equal itself. Therefore, in order to become "real," an actor's surroundings need to be creatively transformed through the prism of an actor's artistic fantasy.

Vakhtangov suggests that an actor's faith is an ability

to perceive the essence of every event and every object onstage. As any essence, it is intangible and invisible. A theatrical essence, according to Vakhtangov, is festivity, or joy. At the height of this experience is the heightened sense of living, described by Vakhtangov as the sensation of wanting "to live more than ever" and feeling yourself "belonging to everything living." This sensation, and not the reality of the character and their environment, is what serves as justification for the actor's experience and causes him and her to live out of their creative passions.

During Vakhtangov's last talk with his students, the director made the following statement on the future of his creative search:

"A perfect work of art is eternal. Only a work in which the harmony between the form, content, and material has been discovered can be called a work of art. Stanislavsky only found harmony with the sentiments of the Russian society of the time, but not all that is contemporary is eternal. All that is eternal, however, is contemporary without fail. Meyerhold never sensed "today;" he only sensed "tomorrow." Stanislavsky never sensed "tomorrow;" he only sensed "today." Ideally, one should sense "today" in the day to come and 'tomorrow' in the present day.

When the revolution came, we all felt that things in art cannot remain the same. We did not yet know the form – the real, appropriate form. The next stage of our work will be dedicated to the search for the eternal form. In time, the means we have chosen will cease being theatrical. We must find the true theatrical means. We must find the eternal mask."

Vakhtangov's Contemporary Form was capable of expressing the given theatrical collective in the given time. In order to do so, this form often had to reshape the work of the author (the play), to reduce it to a mere pretext for the theatre ensemble's creativity. In order to realize his productions, Vakhtangov often had to create a new "scenario" out of a play – such was the case with "The Dybbuk," and, ultimately, such was the case with "Turandot." Vakhtangov even prepared a 'scenario,' based on Shakespeare's "Hamlet," where the bard's texts were

"reconstructed" with the boldness of a contemporary "conceptual" director.

Vakhtangov's Contemporary Form serves as a foundation for the conceptual theatre of today. In our contemporary theatre, plays are often transposed into different time periods, or better yet, different time periods are mixed within the space of the same play. Often classical plays are set in contemporary times, thus turning larger than life characters (heroes) into mediocre contemporary "average people." Plays are stylized after popular movies, TV shows, all other kinds of liberties are taken with them. These devices are usually justified by the fact that they make the classical plays more accessible to the contemporary audiences. In actuality, however, such "creative" transpositions are usually motivated by the fact that a particular theatrical company is simply incapable of staging a classical play (and approaching classical characters) as they are written by dramatic geniuses.

Vakhtangov fully understood the limitations of the Contemporary Form. He was aware of its tendency to tailor the play to the limited capacities of the ensemble. In most of his productions, Vakhtangov, striving to express the individuality of the creative collective, had to change the content of a play. He did so in order to make this content fit with the one of the collective. For example, the story of "Turandot" was turned into a story about actors, performing "Turandot." Having discovered the formula for the Contemporary Form, however, Vakhtangov proceeded toward the Theatre of the Eternal Mask.

Contemporary Form, according to Vakhtangov, had to be periodically renewed in order to remain contemporary. Vakhtangov insisted that, as soon as he got well, he must immediately restage "Turandot." He felt that the rapid flow of time demanded that the form of the performance evolve. Similarly, in a letter to the First Studio of MAT actress, Birman, Vakhtangov wrote: "So, if I have my health, together with those who would want to help me, I undertake to restage all our plays in such a way that they would sound contemporary."

Therefore, the Eternal Theatrical Form, according to

*continued on page 17*



Yevgeny Vakhtangov

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## The Flea Theatre

by Ronald Rand

Founded in 1996 by three of New York's most acclaimed downtown theater artists director, Jim Simpson, designer Kyle Chepul, and playwright Mac Wellman, The Flea Theater was originally formed out of the purely artistic impulse to create "a joyful hell in a small space" – to present distinctive work that raises the standards of Off-Off-Broadway for artists & audiences alike. The Flea embodies the spirit of adventure and experiment that has defined Off-Off-Broadway since its inception. One of the only professional theaters in the city that maintains an open-door policy for artists – part playground, part laboratory, part training ground, The Flea has been home to established artists taking new risks, emerging artists developing their ideas, and mid-career artists building sustained audiences.

The Flea produces several original major productions each year, along with new work, with as many as four shows a night featuring new theater, music, dance, and cross-disciplinary inventions. In addition, they have provided a regular home for small companies including The TriBeCa New Music Festival, The New York Goofs, LAVA, Concrete Temple Theatre, and Composers Collaborative. Within their regular season they produce several mini-festivals, including "Dance Conversations," a series of new work by mid-career dance companies and choreographers, and "Music with a View," an exciting showcase for new music.

Additionally they present on-going programs for artists including their resident company, The Bats, and a series of artist-driven playwriting workshops called 'Pataphysics.'

Especially known for their early support of emerging innovators including Sarah East Johnson, Kathy Supové, and Nicholas Leichter, they are also recognized for presenting the experimental work of Adam Rapp, Len Jenkin, A.R. Gurney, Karen Finley, Will Eno and Elizabeth Swados, among others.

A seminal early production was "The Guys" by Anne Nelson, which captured the hearts and minds of New York City after 9/11, playing for 13 months before being made into a feature film. At the end of its run, it featured a rotating cast that included Sigourney Weaver, Bill Murray, Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Bill Irwin, Carol Kane, Amy Irving, and Anthony La Paglia, among others. In 2006, "The Guys" returned for a special five-year-anniversary run.

Other notable productions at The Flea include Will Eno's "Oh the Humanity and other Exclamations," with Marisa Tomei and Brian Hutchison; "Mrs. Farnsworth," written specially for The Flea by A.R. Gurney, performed by Sigourney Weaver and John Lithgow; "The Great Recession," six plays by Thomas Bradshaw, Sheila Callaghan, Erin Courtney, Will Eno, Itamar Moses and Adam Rapp; Jonathan Reynolds' "Girls in Trouble;" and Bathsbeba Doran's "Parents' Evening."

Their resident company, The Bats, perform each season in extended runs of challenging classic and new plays. Past Bat productions include: "Benten Kozo;" Alice Tuan's "Ajax (por nobody);" "Baal;" Mac Wellman's "Cellophane;" Len Jenkin's "Like I Say" and "Margo Veil;" "JABU" by Elizabeth Swados; "Screen Play" by A.R. Gurney, Yussef El Guindi's "Back of the Throat;" "The Great Recession" by Thomas Bradshaw,

Sheila Callaghan, Erin Courtney, Will Eno, Itamar Moses and Adam Rapp; Jonathan Reynolds' "Girls in Trouble;" A.R. Gurney's "Office Hours;" Steven Banks' "Looking at Christmas;" Trista Baldwin's "American Sexy;" Laurel Haines' "Future Anxiety;" Zack Russell's "Just Cause;" and Qui Nguyen's "She Kills Monsters."

The Flea's offerings include "#serials@theflea Cycle 16;" "Dirty Paki Lingerie" a one-woman show by Aizzah Fatima, directed by Erica Gould; "Under the Greenwood Tree;" "As You Like It;" the NY premiere of Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation;" Adriano Shaplin's "Sarah Flood in Salem Mass;" Mallery Avidon's "Mary-Kate Olsen is in Love;" A.R. Gurney's "Family Furniture." Over the years, Flea artists have been honored with two OBIE Awards, an Otto Award and, in May 2004, The Flea was also given a Drama Desk Award for Distinguished Achievement. For info: 41 White St New York, NY 10013, (212) 226-0051 www.theflea.org.

## Project HOOP

by Ronald Rand

"There are 512 or so Indian tribes in the United States today. If each one were to establish and sponsor its own theater company, and produce just one new work based on its history, culture, and heritage, we would have 512 new works for the theater. Theater is one of the most accessible of the performing arts, and we should begin immediately to create new Indian theaters." Hanay Geiogamah, (Kiowa/Delaware), Director of Project HOOP has said. Project HOOP was created by Hanay Geiogamah, Professor of Theater UCLA, and Jaye T. Darby, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the College of Education at San Diego State University as a national multi-disciplinary initiative to advance Native theater artistically, academically, and professionally. The overarching goal of Project Hoop is to establish Native theater as an integrated subject of study and creative development in tribal colleges, Native communities, K-12 schools, and mainstream institutions, based on Native perspectives, traditions, views of spirituality, histories, cultures, languages, communities, and lands. For info: (310) 825-7315, www.hoop.aisc.ucla.edu

## Olney Theatre Center Celebrating 75 Years

by Janice Berliner

Located just north of Washington, D.C., traveling west on Route 108 into the town of Olney, Maryland you will find The Olney Theatre Center that has been offering quality theatrical productions to the community for 75 years.

The Olney Theatre Center, celebrating its 75th anniversary, first opened its doors in 1938 with a production of Ladislav Bus-Fekete's "The Lady Has a Heart," starring Elissa Landi, early playbills dubbed the playhouse, "The South's First Professional Summer Theatre." Over the years some of the biggest names in theatre appeared at the Olney including Helen Hayes, Tallulah Bankhead, Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Uta Hagen and Carol Channing.

The Olney Theatre Center offers a diverse array of professional productions year-round that enrich, nurture and challenge a broad range of artists, audiences and students, and is the oldest theatre in the state of Maryland.

Artistic Director Jason Loewith told us: "The theatre offers three distinct programming tracks – family oriented, what's new in American theater, and presenting the classics in incredibly interesting ways. The Olney Theatre is radically different as a theatre just based upon its geography, pulling its audience from Montgomery County, Washington, DC and the Baltimore area. I'm interested in offering a cultural adventure to the audiences so that familiar theatre can be seen in new ways and I want the Olney to be all things to all people, ranging from a classic to a musical to something new."

Mr. Loewith came to The Olney following his position as the Executive Director of the National New Play Network. As a playwright, his book for "Adding Machine: a Musical" was performed at the Studio Theatre with Mr. Loewith directing the production, and received the Outer Critics Circle, Lucille Lortel, and Joseph Jefferson Awards for Best New Musical.

Mr. Loewith continued to say: "The Olney also has a wonderful educational program that serves young professionals to older adults, and has the "National Players" program which is America's longest running touring company."

The National Players, founded in 1949 by Father Gilbert V. Hartke, a prominent arts educator and then head of the drama department at Catholic University of America, continues its mission to stimulate young people's higher thinking skills and imaginations by presenting classical plays in surprisingly accessible ways.

The National Players brings literature to life in special 90-minute matinee versions of Shakespeare and other classics, with post-show discussions of the play and offers in-school workshops year-round. This year they are touring with "The Comedy of Errors," "The Odyssey," and "Macbeth."

With the support of the Maryland State Department of Education, Olney Theatre Center engages students by offering an apprenticeship program where artists and students can live and work in a vibrant artistic community.

Their 2013 season included "Spring Awakening," "Neville's Island," "The Submission," "Angel Street," "A Chorus Line," "Saint Joan and Hamlet," "Rancho Mirage," and "The King and I."

For info: Olney Theatre Center 2001 Olney Sandy Spring Rd, Olney, MD 20832, (301) 924-4485, www.olneytheatre.org, wbrown@olneytheatre.org or khasser@olneytheatre.org.

*"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."*

– Aristotle

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# You Can Create an Exceptional Life

BY LOUISE HAY & CHERYL RICHARDSON

**D**EEP AT THE CENTER of our being there is an infinite well of love, an infinite well of joy, an infinite well of peace, and an infinite well of wisdom. This is true for each and every one of us. Yet how often do we get in touch with these treasures within us? Do we do it once a day? Once in a while? Or are we totally unaware that we have these inner treasures?

Just for a moment, close your eyes and connect with that part of yourself. It only takes a breath to go to your center. Go to that infinite well of love within you. Feel the love. Let it grow and expand. GO to that infinite well of joy within you. Feel the joy. Let it grow and expand. Now go to that infinite well of peace within you. Feel that peace. Let it grow and expand. Now go to that infinite well of wisdom within you, that part of you that is totally connected to all the wisdom in the universe – past, present, and future. Trust that wisdom. Let it grow and expand. As you take another breath and come back to your space, keep the knowledge, keep the feeling. Many times today and many, many times tomorrow and each and every day of your life, remind yourself of the treasures that are always within you – and just a breath away.

These treasures are a part of your spiritual connection and are vital to your well-being. Body, mind and spirit – we need to be balanced on all three levels. A healthy body,

a happy mind, and a good, strong spiritual connection are all necessary for our overall balance and harmony.

One of the major benefits of a strong spiritual connection is that we can live wonderful, creative, fulfilling lives. And we will automatically release so many burdens that most people carry.

We will no longer need to be fearful or carry shame and guilt. As we feel our oneness with all of life, we will drop anger and hatred, prejudice, and the need to be judgmental. As we become one with the healing power of the Universe, we will no longer need illness. And, I believe we will be able to reverse the aging process. Burdens are what age us; they drag down our spirit.

Let's affirm: I trust my inner wisdom. I follow my inner voice, always knowing that I am in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing. •2013

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**LOUISE L. HAY** - author of the international bestsellers, *You Can Heal Your Life*, and *You Can Trust Your Life*, is a metaphysical lecturer and teacher with more than 50 million books sold worldwide. For more than 30 years, she has helped people throughout the world discover and implement the full potential of their own creative powers for personal growth and self-healing. She has appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and many other TV and radio programs both in the U.S. and abroad. Ms. Hay is the founder and chairman of Hay House, Inc. which disseminates books, CD's, DVD's and other products that contribute to the healing of the planet. Visit [www.LouiseHay.com](http://www.LouiseHay.com), [www.HayHouse.com](http://www.HayHouse.com), [www.healourlife.com](http://www.healourlife.com)

**CHERYL RICHARDSON** - a New York Times bestselling author of several books including, *Take Time for Your Life*, *Life Makeovers*, *Stand Up for Your Life*, *The Unmistakable Touch of Grace*, *The Art of Extreme Self Care* and *You Can Create an Exceptional Life* with Louise Hay. The first president of the International Coach Federation, she was the team leader for the Lifestyle Makeover Series on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." Co-executive producer and host of "The Life Makeover Project with Cheryl Richardson" on the Oxygen Network and co-executive producer and host of two Public Television Specials – "Stand Up for Your Life" and "Create an Abundant Life," and her radio talk show, "Coach on Call" at [www.hayhouseradio.com](http://www.hayhouseradio.com) (Mondays at 5pm ET). [www.cherylrichardson.com/about/cheryls-bio](http://www.cherylrichardson.com/about/cheryls-bio)

## Cayman Drama Society

by Ronald Rand

Located on The Cayman Islands in the British West Indies, you will find The Cayman Drama Society, committed to providing quality live theatre, educating, enriching and entertaining this nation, while providing lifelong learning opportunities and fostering creative expression.

Originally founded in the early 1970's, Cayman Drama Society over the next fourteen years presented over 40 plays in George Town. They then moved to another location, and subsequently built a new theater calling it The Prospect Playhouse. Over 50 productions have been presented in this new home with a blend of comedy, drama and musicals.

In 2004, Hurricane Ivan struck Grand Cayman, and the Playhouse was severely damaged. However, the theater has been rebuilt and reconstruction led to an even greater improved facility for theater lovers in Grand Cayman.

Among their recent productions include: "The 39 Steps," "Noises Off," "Stomp the Rock," "Fortytude," "Hairspray," "Rumors," Lorca's "Blood Wedding" and "House of Bernalda Alba," "Godspell," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Wit," "Little Shop of Horrors," "Toad of Toad Hall," "Moon Over Buffalo," "Annie," and "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

2014 productions include: "Much Ado about Nothing," "Steel Magnolias," and "Legally Blond."

Sheree Ebanks is Chairman of Cayman Drama Society, with Paul de Freitas is Theatre Manager. Neil Rooney is in charge of productions, and his wife, Kelly Rooney has been involved with several of the musicals in practically every way, including as Stage Manager.

While I was performing in The Cayman Islands, I had the great delight of meeting the Rooneys, along with some of the talented performers on Grand Cayman, including their daughter, Isabella Rooney, who had given a memorable performance in the lead role in "Annie," and Jacoline Frank, who delighted audiences in "Stomp the Rock."

I had the opportunity to ask Neil Rooney how he views the Cayman Drama Society's role in the life of the community on Grand Cayman. "When the material is selected with a multicultural sensitivity it brings a mix of Cayman society together in ways that are new and fresh, both onstage and off," he replied. "Our recent production of "Hairspray" diversified our actor base and audience noticeably. We have been seen historically as an 'ex-pat organization.' Kelly and I very much want Cayman Drama Society to become a true community theatre." I then asked what's been most satisfying for him being at the Cayman Drama Society. Having complete artistic control over the productions has meant that we have been able to personalize our visions for these shows. It is rare to have such complete freedom. Bringing young new faces to theater has been the greatest blessing though. We have seen some of these young people aspire to careers in the arts through this early interaction."

I was also fortunate to ask Kelly Rooney what it's meant for her to have her entire family so involved at the Cayman Drama Society. "We're so fortunate to have the opportunity to be involved in the local amateur theatre." "Although it means 'living at the theatre for a month' in preparation for a show. When it involves the whole family, it becomes a great thing. In the early years of our marriage I was a theatre widow. I attended most of the shows Neil performed in during a run,

not only to support him but to learn, as a member of the audience, the makings of a show."

"Once I had seen the same production two or three times, I started to enjoy watching the technical aspects of the show. I decided to become involved. I started backstage with props, worked the front of house, did lighting, worked the sound board then got involved with costumes and stage management over several years. During this time our daughter was growing up and at a young age, she would come to the theatre to watch her Dad perform or help hand out programs. When she was eight we decided to stage "Annie Get Your Gun." Bella was happy to play the role of 'Little Jake', and with Neil (her husband), playing the role of Frank, and I was in the chorus as a Cowgirl, all three of us were actually on stage for three numbers during each of the twelve shows we did. It was really a memorable feeling to be sharing such a good show together. We had five families in that show – fathers, sons and daughters – mothers and sons, and brothers and sisters – every possible combination, and together the theatre experience created one large "Annie Get Your Gun" family. Since then, as a family we have successfully put on "Annie," "Little Shop of Horrors," and "Hairspray," as well as various musical reviews. We warm up vocally in the car on the way to the theatre and come home from rehearsals feeling excited as a team and full of anticipation. It is incredibly bonding for a family to experience this work together as everyone wants the show to be successful.

I also asked about her daughter, Bella, who played the lead in "Annie," and is a very talented musician, to describe the impact performing at the Cayman Drama Society?

In "Annie," Bella's first lead at age ten, our audiences were blown away by the quality of the show and her ability to carry the role. For her it was a bit shocking as she was approached many times, in the grocery store, restaurants, on the beach, by people whom she did not know, that wanted to congratulate her. At that age she had a hard time with the attention, as she was and still is, a very modest girl. Five years later she is still known as "Annie" to a lot of people. It has made her realize the impact that good theatre can have on people. She also understands the huge amount of work that goes into staging these productions not just learning her lines as an actor but all aspects of the show. It has made her an incredibly appreciative actor. She doesn't take any job in the theater for granted and has helped backstage in productions when she's not performing, not to mention the hours spent painting sets for her own and other shows. For her, theatre is the whole experience, not just the applause at curtain. I think having Cayman Drama Society has helped create in her a very confident, aspiring actress."

For info: The Prospect Playhouse, 223 Shamrock Rd, Prospect, PO Box 1624m Grand Cayman KY1-1109, Cayman Islands, British West Indies, (345-947-1998), [www.cds.ky](http://www.cds.ky).

*"Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can. Don't bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself."*

– William Faulkner

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*"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."*

– T.S. Eliot

## Interviews with Artists

We feel it's absolutely vital to hear what today's artists have to say. So in each issue a section is devoted to their ideas. We hope you will gain a deeper insight of how necessary these artists and their dreams are to the future of our culture. All interviews are conducted by RONALD RAND, Publisher.



### Ellen Burstyn

Recently starred on Broadway in William Inge's "Picnic" presented by The Roundabout Theatre. Ms. Burstyn's illustrious acting career includes the Broadway productions of "84 Charing Cross Road," "Shirley Valentine," and "Sacrilege," "Same Time Next Year (Tony), and "Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All." Off-Broadway she appeared in "The Little Flower of East Orange directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman, a co-production by LAByrnth Theatre Company and The Public Theatre. Her film and TV work includes "The Age of Adaline," "Draft Day" with Kevin Costner, "Political Animals," "The Last Picture Show," (Oscar nom.), "The Exorcist" (Oscar nom.), "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (Oscar-Best Actress), "Same Time, Next Year" Golden Globe Award, Oscar nom.), "Resurrection" (Oscar nom.), "Requiem for a Dream" (Oscar nom.), "The Fountain," "The Elephant King," "W," "Law & Order: S.V.U. (Emmy), "The People vs. Jean Harris" Emmy nom.), "Pack of Lies" Emmy nom.), and "Mrs. Harris" (Emmy nom.). Ms. Burstyn is one of the few actresses to have won the Triple Crown of Acting. Her TV work includes "The Big Valley," "Gunsmoke," hosting "Saturday Night Live," starring in her own TV show, "The Ellen Burstyn Show," "That's Life," "The Book of Daniel," and "Big Love." Currently Co-President of The Actors Studio in New York City, alongside Al Pacino and Harvey Keitel. She received the Sarah Siddons Award. Ms. Burstyn served as president of the Actors' Equity Association from 1982 to 1985. She was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame. Ms. Burstyn holds four honorary doctorates, one in fine arts from the School of Visual Arts, a doctor of humane letters from Dowling College, a doctorate from the New School for Social Research, and a doctorate from Pace University where she teaches in The Actors Studio M.F.A. program. She lectures throughout the country on a wide range of topics, and wrote her memoir, Lessons in Becoming Myself, as well as planning a book of her photography accompanied by her favorite poetry.

I enjoyed your performance in Inge's play, "Picnic," very much, as I have many of your other stage performances and film work. What kinds of things did you learn about Helen Potts, the person you brought to life, during the run of the play?

I learned about William Inge and what an unhappy life he had because he was a gay man in the 1950's. One did not "come out" then, and even though Inge was a friend of Tennessee Williams; he was close to him, and they were probably lovers but we can't verify it, Tennessee came out pretty overtly about his sexuality, Inge couldn't, he was so afraid of disappointing his mother. He couldn't face telling her so I found in playing Helen Potts that she is Inge's mother and Inge is the one who keeps keeping Helen from having a life of her own, controlling her life as given in the play.



As I read more about Inge, he actually said the character he identified the most with was Helen. I felt like I was his persona, observing life being on the sideline. She can observe without take part in life, without having any role in the story. Yet because of her not having any life of her life, she invites into her life a young man, the character in the play, that has an effect on her.

Helen was in love once, but her mother weakened her. I think Helen just wants a male energy in her life. She wants to have men around. She enjoys their masculinity. It's Inge talking about his love in his life. The young man stomps in from the great outdoors, and brings into her house that kind of energy.

In this way Helen compensates for the lack of a man in her life. He gets the work done around the house. I don't think I have any liaison with him. She just likes having these young men in her 'inner house,' and that's so lacking in her present life.

What is it that makes an ensemble work as well as it did in this production of "Picnic"?

It's that these individual actors dedicated themselves to the ensemble work. They worked graciously with each other, they weren't selfish, they weren't thinking for themselves, they thought about what would nourish the whole production. This cast was such a wonderful group of human beings.

I'm always tickled how theatre is shown with dominating prima donnas, drunken egotistic directors or playwrights or selfish actors. But I just never see that. It's so odd to me that that's how we're presented but it's not the truth.

With "Picnic," this group of actors were kind, supportive. Before every performance we had a gratitude circle at five minutes to curtain on stage, and whoever wanted to would come and we'd hold hands and we'd say how much we were grateful. It was an opportunity to love and join together – it was laugh fest. There was always laughing.

I always wondered what those in the first seats would think when they heard all this laughter. It's what would send us on stage – a spirit of community.

**I know you had a very special relationship with Eva Le Gallienne, one of the most celebrated actresses we've had in the American Theatre. You had worked with her in "Resurrection." Today when the new generation is not as familiar as they should be with their theatrical roots – what can we learn from what Ms. Le G, as she was called, and what she meant to you personally?**

She wrote a couple of books on Duse. One of the most important is The Mystic in the Theater. She also wrote her autobiography. She was a real giant in the theatre. It pains me when people get lost today and don't realize their connection to such giants as Duse and Bernhardt.

I have theatrical collections of their writing and their books. I believe this legacy is where we come from.

After Ms. Le G and I worked together on "Resurrection," she showed me around her home. She had different artifacts from Duse, some that Duse had given to her personally. Others she had bought when they were up for sale.

When Ms. Le G died, I was lucky enough to buy some of them. One is a ring which Duse's mother had given to Duse, and another is this ring Duse gave Ms. LeGallienne on the table.

Whenever I'm on stage in a show I always try and wear this ring. I wore it in "Picnic" for the first performance. After the show I thought it was totally inappropriate, so I didn't wear it again. I usually wear it throughout the production of a play I'm in.

**What do you love about creating on stage?**

Well, the process of acting for me is amazing; there so many surprises. I love the whole process of digging into the play; all the things I kept discovering more about Inge during the show and it affected my understanding of Helen. It gave me something concrete to play in that role that I could consider. These ideas may not be very developed at the beginning but once you keep going they become much clearer.

Once I get into rehearsal I love having the time to explore what's in the play, what you don't find out until you're in the rehearsal process.

It's one of the most interesting parts of the process because it's the time when we take these weeks and you're finding out meanings, understanding things, and the play is revealing itself to you. That to me is the richest part of being in a play.

**You've also been President of Actors Equity Association, and are very involved with giving yourself in service to others.**

I've received so much from acting; it's my profession. It's also my art form, so I try and do what I'm able to. I moderate sessions at The Actors Studio. I like to give as much as I can; to be in gratitude

**You became a member of The Actors**

**Studio in 1967 and currently you're Co-President of The Actors Studio, along side Al Pacino and Harvey Keitel. What sustains The Actors Studio in terms of the process of creating on stage?**

That kind of work's been going on all these years at The Studio. It's because it's the one place in the world where its members keep developing their craft between jobs and don't pay dues. They get in by auditioning and once they're in, they're members for life. The Studio is there for its members.

All other forms of art you can practice when you're not employed. An actor is the only one who needs to have a stage and an audience to keep developing your craft. The Studio provides that.

**What do you think audiences keep coming to the theatre for?**

Great playwrights, if they're really great, you have to listen to them, to what they say. If those who come have the ears to hear what's being shared – while some people come to be entertained and they have a good time – other people come with a focus, an attentiveness. If they really receive what theatre artists are offering, not only the playwright, but all the people that have contributed to what's before them, a transference of message of the play will occur.

**How do you stay open each day?**

When I start the day I make sure the first words I say are: "I thank you." I'm thankful before I get out of bed. I just look at the incredible beauty of création around me. Right now I'm up in the Hudson, it's flowering with such splendor – magnolias the parsippannies, hibiscus, and tulips. They're so gorgeous up here...the light on the river. For me, it's staying connected to nature. It keeps me aware of the great blessing of living life.

I believe we're all made out of the same stuff. It's the "God stuff" some people are aware of and some aren't. When people are in a difficult situation, that's when they're usually more aware of it.

*"Theatre exists in the here and now. It is what happens at that precise moment when you perform, that moment at which the world of the actors and the world of the audience meet. A society in miniature, a microcosm brought together every evening within a space. Theatre's role is to give this microcosm a burning and fleeting taste of another world, and thereby interest it, transform it, integrate it... A word does not start as a word - it is an end product which begins as an impulse, stimulated by attitude and behavior which dictates the need for expression. This process occurs inside the dramatist; it is repeated inside the actor. Both may only be conscious of the words, but both for the author and then for the actor the word is a small visible portion of a gigantic unseen formation. Some writers attempt to nail down their meaning and intentions in stage directions and explanations, yet we cannot help being struck by the fact that the best dramatists explain themselves the least... They recognize that the only way to find the true path to the speaking of a word is through a process that parallels the original creative one. This can neither be by-passed nor simplified... We can try to capture the invisible, but we must not lose touch with common sense... We have to accept that we can never see all of the invisible. So after straining towards it, we have to face defeat, drop down to earth, then start up again." – Peter Brook*

# Interviews with Artists



## Tommy Tune

Known as one of the most prolific director/choreographers of the twentieth century, Mr. Tune currently tours in "Tommy Tune Steps in Time: A Broadway Biography in Song and Dance." Most recently, he was seen at Town Hall, and across America. Mr. Tune began his career as a dancer in the Broadway shows: "Baker Street," "A Joyful Noise," and "How Now Dow Jones." His other Broadway appearances include "Seesaw" (Tony), "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," "My One and Only" (two Tonys), "A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine" (Tony), "Grand Hotel" (Tony), "The Will Rogers Follies" (two Tonys), "Nine" (Tony), and "Grand Hotel" (Tony). His film work includes "Hello Dolly," "The Boyfriend," and "Mimi Blurette... fiore del mio giardino." In 1999, he made his Las Vegas debut as the star of "EFX." Mr. Tune is the recipient of the National Medal of Arts, honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, designated as a Living Landmark by the New York Landmarks Conservancy. He has also been awarded eight Drama Desk Awards, three Astaire Awards and the Society of Directors and Choreographers' George Abbott Award for Lifetime Achievement.

### What gives you the greatest joy today in the work you're creating?

The audience, without a doubt. It's all about their reaction to the show. Each audience is different. It makes me think of a Japanese saying: Each step is a building block; each performance is a stone in the path.

### When did you decide to create your current show? How did you put it all together?

I woke up January 1st five yrs ago, and I realized it was my 50th year anniversary in show business! I had gotten my Equity card in Dallas doing musicals during the summer musicals. And I thought it was time to look at what I had done in terms of telling my story – who I was and how I got here.

People ask me how I chose all the songs I sing in the show, and I tell them I'm doing these songs from all the shows I've done during my life, and then there are also songs from shows I like, like "Promises, Promises," a Carole King song, one by Green Day..

Still, mostly they're the songs from the "sound track of my life." And they're not necessarily shows I was in but they tell my story and they're attached to every important event in my life. The hardest part was deciding what to leave out.

### What does it take to stay physically and mentally in tip-top shape, and diet-wise to prepare yourself for each show?

I do some important physical exercise every day. It can be yoga, movements, but I need to do something every single day. I also have rehearsals, voice classes. Not a day goes by where there isn't some kind of class or physical warm-up for the maintenance

I also have a special diet. You know there are all these people who seem to "know" everything there is to know about the best diet. I do a lot of reading, I listen to what they say. I try a variety of things, I experiment, trying things, sometimes to my benefit, sometimes to my detriment.

I'm very strict, diligent...disciplined, that's the word, because, you know as a dancer, you have basically your talent, and the main thing is establish a balance, as with anything, when you're putting together a show, some songs are slow and some are fast, and your heart is in every note, so there are certain things you have to do to be in balance out. You have to know what is feeding your instrument. Right now I think I'm feeling very well.

### At the beginning of your career, you did the film "Hello Dolly" with Barbra Streisand and Walter Matthau. How did you get the role and what kind of an experience was it for you?

It was thrilling to get that. At the time I was dancing in the chorus on Broadway in "How Now, Dow Jones," and I was covered while I was flown out to Hollywood for the screen test. I was the only person from New York flown out there, and I tested along with twenty other guys for Roger Edens.

There are no "accidents," so the idea of getting the job was wonderful.

I actually didn't find out until about two to three weeks later. I was doing a show and was in the dressing room along with everyone else in the chorus, and we're tightly packed in there, and I hear: "There's a phone call. They want you." So I climb over everybody at our dressing room table, and hear on the other end of the phone: "How would like to go to Hollywood and make a movie?"

I had never made a movie. I need an audience. It's definitely not the same thing to have a machine filming you. I personally prefer doing a whole show from start to finish, and keeping going. You can't stop if you don't get it right. More recently, I played a role on "Arrested Development," and they've called me three times to go in and "fix" my performance. I've had to go back in to do some looping of the dialogue.

I feel I probably had a better experience on

my second film working with Ken Russell; he could be a bit "crazy" but he was a brilliant director to work with.

When I worked with Gene Kelly, (the director of "Hello Dolly"), he pulled me aside after one of the takes and he gave me the greatest bit of advice I've ever gotten – "dance better."

One thing that I'm reminded of, by your giving me this stone that you've painted with this beautiful sea turtle on it, which I just love, was when we were shooting "Hello Dolly" on location in Garrison, New York. And I haven't thought of it since that day.

Well, we were on location, it was up on the West Point campus, near Poughkeepsie, and here we are shooting in this location, and someone in the crew says to all of us, and we're in our costumes in the middle of shooting, that "You've all got to see this." So we step over and look over this fence, and there's this giant sea turtle in what you could describe as sitting in loam, and she had somehow come down a tributary from the sea, and came through the grass, and had made her way into this vegetable garden, and there she was, digging a hole for her eggs. So here she was, in this garden in the middle of all this loam, and the corn is growing, and we all just stood there in our costumes and watched her bury her eggs. Of course, what happened to her offspring, who knows? You just sort of hope they made their way back to the sea somehow.

### Your carry on the tradition of several great musical directors including George Abbott, Joshua Logan, Katharine Dunham, Harold Prince, Jerome Robbins, Martha Graham, to mention a few – what does it mean to you to be a part of that kind of tradition?

I'm proud to be a part of it and to include me with that list, it's flattering. I guess that's a question I can't answer because when you're in the midst of creating and bringing yourself to art and bringing art to others, I think if we're

lucky to be able to do it, that it's a collective process. I feel we're all just working the best we know how, serving the greater god of the arts, using the gifts we've been given.

### You're also a painter. How have you allowed yourself to keep seeing with new eyes?

Well, each day I start with a thank you and a prayer. In a way, it's 'cleaning the canvas,' which I do each day when I begin a new painting. And when I begin I just never know what's going to happen.

A few days ago I began to paint and allowed whatever wanted to come. Well, I've never been a big fan of cubism, but once I began it became a cubistic painting.

Now if you look close up at either a TV screen or a computer screen, it's always moving since its all pixels, cubes and dots. So in a way, pointillism became cubism, and we're surrounded by cubism, especially when you look at the buildings in this city.

It's a Euclidean derivation of what we see. We may not consciously see it, but cubism is surrounding us and in front of us and affecting our subconscious.

I went to the Metropolitan Opera and I've been seeing the full cycle of performances of the Ring cycle directed by Robert Lepage, I saw "Das Rheingold" the night before last and tonight I see "Der Valkyrie." Lepage set is also cubism sculpture. I predict a big movement in relationship to this. Well I guess I received it and it's been affecting me.

Ultimately I think to create anything, the magic ingredient is love. That's the highest source, the main ingredient. Right now I'm still doing what I'm doing on stage because when it hits you, you know you're working in a state of love with what you're doing, and if not, change it because the world needs all the love it can get. That's what it's all about.



## Mark Rydell

His films include: "The Fox" (Golden Globe Award for Best English Language Foreign Film), "The Rievers," "Jeremiah Johnson" (producer), "Scarecrow" (producer-Palme D'Or), "The Cowboys," "Cinderella Liberty," "Harry and Walter Go to New York," "The Rose," "On Golden Pond," "The River," "For the Boys," "Even Money," "Crime of the Century," TNT's "James Dean" (Directors Guild Award, directed himself in the role of studio mogul Jack Warner in the film opposite James Franco). An Academy Award-nominated director, a classically trained actor, and an accomplished jazz pianist, throughout his multi-hyphenated career, Mr. Rydell's films have received twenty-six Oscar nominations. His showbiz debut came as a jazz pianist, working the nightclubs of both New York and Chicago. He turned to acting when he won a scholarship to The Neighborhood Playhouse. He acted in numerous live TV shows and eventually landing a continuing role on the CBS daytime drama "As the World Turns." He made his Broadway debut in "Seagulls over Sorrento" with Rod Steiger. Soon after, he made his feature film acting debut opposite John Cassavetes and Sal Mineo in Don Siegel's "Crime in the Streets." His directing career began on television with the "Ben Casey" series. He also directed the first episode of "I Spy," starring Bill Cosby and Robert Culp, and went on to helm more than fifty episodes of dramatic television, including an award-winning episode of "Gunsmoke." Mr. Rydell recently played the lead in "Moving Right Along," a three-part set of short comedies written by Elaine May and Jan Mirochek, at San

Francisco's Magic Theatre. As an actor, his films include "The Long Goodbye" and Woody Allen's "Hollywood Ending." Mr. Rydell with Martin Landau and Lyle Kessler produced an education seminar, "The Total Picture Seminar."

### I understand you were in Harold Clurman's late night acting classes.

I was in his midnight class till 4 in the morning; it was great class. It was the 1950's, and Harold was inspired, brilliant, he would get so passionate he would stutter like Marchbanks in the Shaw play to get all his ideas out. He was brilliant! Harold was so exciting when he was passionate; he influenced my life.

### Who were in some of the classes with you?

Kim Stanley, Brando, George C. Scott, Colleen (Dewhurst), Eli (Wallach) and Anne (Jackson), Maureen (Stapleton) were there – all brilliant actors and he was inspiring for us all. I'll never forget watching him when

he would talk about the work; he had such a commitment. I actually met my first wife in his classes.

### You're an accomplished jazz pianist. I believe your initial training was in music.

I grew up in the Bronx; my father was a Wall Street stockbroker. I yearned for a place, so I studied piano and became a jazz pianist. I used to go and listen to jazz at the great clubs: the Three Deuces, the Downbeat, and listened to people like Art Tatum. I'd get home three in the morning. Music was an escape.

When I decided to be an actor, I was recommended to Sandy Meisner. So I went and was interviewed by him and he gave me a scholarship. It changed my life.

Sandy was an idealized father figure for me. He was an artist. He was encouraging, a supportive teacher, guiding me. He also sent me to an analyst. Everything he told me, it changed my life completely. He was one of the strongest influences on me, along with Gadge (Elia Kazan), and Clurman.

I think I inherited my father's leadership with all the realities that goes with it. I wanted to be a conductor early on, and that led to the idea of my being a director. Some people are propelled to follow, others are comfortable guiding others.

### You began as an actor on "The Edge of Night" and "As the World Turns," have acted in several films including Woody

Allen's "Hollywood Ending." You played Samuel Goldwyn recently in a reading of "Mr. Goldwyn" at The Actors Studio. How has being an actor informed your work as a director?

Every director should be forced to take acting classes to realize how difficult or what it takes to create real behavior. It's a skill most directors don't understand at all. They learn how to work with a crew and the camera and with scripts. They work very little nurturing an actor. All my acting has been a critical element for my directing. I believe in craft because art isn't an accident. It's about making choices.

### Before you began your career as a film director you did a lot of TV directing

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### including the first episode of "I Spy." How did it begin for you?

There were a lot of great directors in those days doing live television: Sidney Lumet, Frankenheimer, Arthur Penn, and really great writers: Chayefsky, Rod Serling, Reginald Rose.

Well, Sydney Pollack and I were very close friends and later we had a production company together and produced a number of films.

At that time he was doing TV in California and he suggested I come out. And he spoke to the executive director of "Ben Casey," where he was. Well, I sold my apartment, come to California, get married and suddenly I'm working on "Ben Casey" for a month as an assistant and I've never stopped. I was lucky. I love directing and helping people reach their capabilities to achieve their best work.

### You've directed many talented actors including John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Katharine Hepburn, Bette Midler, to Sissy Spacek, Marsha Mason and James Franco—how do you prepare with actors before the camera rolls?

Well I insist on rehearsals; studios object to it. They have to pay the actors, but I insist

rehearsing on every film I direct. Very little of that is being done on films today, they don't rehearse. Actors just come on the set and they read the scene. That's not the best way to work.

We're in the theatre so we know how important it is to go over each scene in detail – what the characters are striving for, to accomplish what they want to do – the why.

Once the confidence happens within the actor, they're able to do the work. Each actor has their own way of working. When I worked with the Duke (John Wayne), he was one of the nicest, most generous men I've ever known, very dedicated, available, so he showed me a big lesson about pre-judging.

### Your film, "On Golden Pond" had a most memorable cast which included Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda, and Katharine Hepburn. How did you know how little to say or what needed to be said during filming?

I rarely talk about this but what I learned from being in therapy was: how everyone has to be treated differently. There's a lot inside of us that needs to be released. I try to provide a 'lubricant,' in a way, so actors can do what they do well.

Working with Fonda and Hepburn was glorious, and I had had a chance to work with Jane. We knew each other from The Actors Studio.

Jane had bought the play as a gift for her father as an effort to reconstruct their relationship. They hadn't talked in years.

Thank God, when he agreed to do the film, Henry said "Get Mark Rydell." I had met with him before, and we had a great time together. He was not easily approachable as was Hepburn.

Once we were on the set, it was just a great experience all together. Hepburn was all over the place, and Henry warmed to her.

Also what happened in the film literally helped Jane's relationship to her father. They hadn't spoken in a quite a while, and to have them together was very special. She spent a lot of time working for his understanding, and he reluctantly submitted to her. It was quite an experience. It was like 'art imitating life.'

### You also directed James Franco in TNT's "James Dean." Why did you want to tell that story?

I knew Jimmy (Dean) very well when we were young actors. We acted on TV together. We did the first play teleplay by William Inge

for "Omibus," "The Glory and the Flower" with Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy. I was close to Jimmy. I felt I could do him justice; it meant a great deal to me.

I had a great opportunity with Jimmy Franco; he was terrific bringing Jimmy (Dean) alive. I wanted to capture Jimmy's essence and Jimmy (Franco) was able to embrace a lot of things that made it all come together.

### How does theatre and art soothe our nature, our desires and struggles?

We live in a democracy. That's had a lot to do with conditioning us to pursue the dollar. That's been the nature of American culture for a long time.

I can't imagine what the world would be without the arts existing. It appeals to the perceptive and sensitive area of human development; its food for a hungry nation. I think it's been really a critical element but most people don't recognize it.

I've been fortunate to have a path in the arts and I've been thrilled to have a very productive life creating work with some of the greatest people in the business. It's been absolutely so meaningful.



## Linda Emond

Her Broadway appearances include: Linda Loman in "Death of a Salesman" (Tony nom.) opposite Philip Seymour Hoffman and Andrew Garfield, "1776" as Abigail Adams, "Life x 3" (Tony nom.) Off-Broadway, Ms. Emond was seen opposite Al Pacino in "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui," "The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures" (NYSF – in the role of Empty, which was written for her by Tony Kushner), "Nine Armenians" (MTC – Drama Desk nom.), "The Dying Gaul" (Vineyard Theatre), "Homebody Kabul" (NY Theatre Workshop – Drama Desk nom., Lucille Lortel Award, Obie) & at Mark Taper Forum, BAM), and "Winter's Tale" (NYSF). Regionally, she has performed in "The Secret Rapture" (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), "The Cherry Orchard" (Williamstown Theatre Festival), "Far East, and won two Jefferson awards for her work in Chicago in productions of "Pygmalion" and "The Winter's Tale." Ms. Emond's films include Spike Lee's "Oldboy," Terrence Malick's "Project V," "Julie & Julia," "A Bird of the Air," "The Missing Person," "Stop-Loss," "Trade," "Across the Universe," "North Country, Dark Water," "The Dying Gaul," and "City by the Sea" with directors Nora Ephron, Julie Taymor, Kimberly Peirce, Niki Caro, Bob Balaban, Michael Caton-Jones, Ed Harris, Craig Lucas, Noah Buschel, Peter Berg, and Walter Salles. Her TV includes "Georgia O'Keeffe" with Joan Allen and Jeremy Irons, Hallmark Hall of Fame's "A Dog Named Christmas," "John & Abigail Adams" opposite Simon Russell Beale, "The Good Wife," "Elementary," "Unforgettable," "The Sopranos," "Gossip Girl," and all of the "Law & Order" shows. Ms. Emond has been a reader for audiobooks, including Kathy Reichs' "206 Bones" and "Another Thing to Fall" by Laura Lippman.

### What have been some of your recent new projects?

I did two films in one week, which were great adventures. I was in New Orleans working with Spike Lee, and then with Terence Malick. They're two amazing guys with incredible point of views. And I had returned again to "The Good Wife," on which I have a recurring part, and also a recurring part on "Elementary" as Lucy Liu's therapist.

### One of your recent roles was as Linda Loman on Broadway. How did your getting the role come about, and why did you want play Linda?

Mike Nichols called me in July of 2010, a year and a half before we went into rehearsals. He called me at home and told me: "I'm going to do "Death of a Salesman" and Phil will play Willy, and we're all agreed you should play Linda."

It was a very good day. I had known Mike originally through Tony Kushner when I did "Homebody Kabul." Mike had worked with Tony on "Angels in America" for HBO, and had been very supportive. Phil (Philip Seymour Hoffman) and I knew each other for a long time, and I would run into him every now and then.

Phil and I communicated how terrified and thrilled we both were doing a play like "Salesman." I mean, there's such a feeling of history attached to it – it's one of the greatest plays ever written. The mountain is high and hard and daunting. I said: "Yes" to Mike not only because it's one of the greatest plays ever written, but I'd be working with one of our greatest actors, Mike is one of the greatest directors we have, and we'd also have one of the great producers producing the production.

"Salesman" has such power in it. It's the kind of power that there's a mystery to its power, that it came out of some place in Arthur Miller that defies words. I could feel it in the theatre every night during the production.

Miller wrote it in an almost fervor, and you can feel it in the play. It's a great play that

speaks to a place and time when everyone would come to sit and experience great theater.

When we began to work on it, we did a workshop in New York City for three weeks, without an agenda. There wasn't any reading for producers like there usually is. We had a set to work on for three weeks, which was an unusual opportunity to walk into that rehearsal space and decide what we'd talk about in the play, which inevitably led to our talking about our lives, which would lead a bond created to the play, and to the other actors. It was irreplaceable to the nature of the play. The family of Lomans became alive in the space.

### What kinds of challenges did you face bringing Linda to life and what did you continue discovering during the run of the play?

I think I came from my insides to the play. With those scenes in the kitchen and in the bedroom, Phil and I had to work to have the most authenticity. Phil was the perfect scene partner; he's so grounded. Working with him there is the deepest simplest, most honest kind of relationship.

I had the perfect partnership with the two actors playing my sons – Andrew, and with Finn. In rehearsals, it was about all of us getting out there and doing it until it made some sense. Early on I don't think I found her or felt like I was doing the right thing, but slowly and surely it began to feel right.

Some things became very clear beyond anything I could have imagined. Her deep love – as love sometimes leads us to always make the best choices but she loves Willy and the boys. Beyond measure, the love in the play is immense. I found what she does is to connect the family; that's enormous. I think it's a female thing to do, to create that kind of a connection. I found her so strong in so many ways.

### How do you maintain your energy and focus during a long run of a play and do you read reviews?

We all went crazy, quite frankly. I don't mean to sound indulgent with those actors, but the time and the play demanded so much from us. Wonderful things about that time: very talented people who very loving, very supportive and we helped each other through it. It meant a lot to each one of us.

How does one, when you are of the actor that Phil is: how do you "commit suicide" each night and not go crazy? It costs something. The value is evident in the audiences who came. I have never experienced such stillness in the theatre and as honored, kneeling in front of "Phil's grave, a thousand people in the audience were silent and still, and I could hear them often weeping and leaning forward, they wanted to hear every last word of the play.

What an honor it was that we had brought them to that point as a group. Everyone involved with the production contributed so much – and having the original set was haunting and thrilling. It was great being able to "live" in our home – it was a great benefit.

It was also great having a curtain for the show, because we were all out there on the stage for some time before the show began, the boys would be in their room, and Phil and I would be in the kitchen, and he would have a cup of coffee; we would have that kind of time.

### What kind of an experience was it for you doing "Life (x) 3" at Circle-in-the-Square?

In that play we had the genius of Matthew (Warchus), one of the best directors today. He became like a little engineer; he was very smart. We had created the basic dynamics in the rehearsal room. He'd say: "Can you find a reason to get over there at this point?" In order to share the story with everyone in the space. And he did it only when it was necessary, but it was in such a smart way and you figured it out.

### You also had the great good fortune of working on Tony Kushner's "Homebody Kabul" and "The Intelligent Homosexual's

### Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures." How did you begin to enter into his particular world and the reality he creates?

With "Homebody Kabul," I was first introduced to Tony by Craig Lucas. I was doing Craig's play, "Dying Gaul" at the time Off-Broadway. Tony had been working on the first drafts of "Kabul," and he was looking for somebody to read "something" he was working on. Tony asked me if I would read it. So he sent it over to me.

I still remember vividly pulling it out of the envelope. I had to sit down, and when I began reading it, it took my breath away. It just sucked me in. I spent the next entire two weeks digesting it; it takes me a little time. I spent hours every day trying to understand what I was saying in the role and this was before you could Google things, so I'd spend hours at the library looking things up.

I couldn't "find my life" once I was swept into his world, and this was over a three-to-five year period in three different productions, as it seeped into my bones. I was helping him develop it. Sometimes he'd asked me if I could come over and read a newer version. I read it and he'd listened and it meant a lot to him to be heard out loud. I read the script many times – ultimately two-thirds of it changed.

### What do you do to energize yourself during a show and between projects?

I try, when I'm doing a play, to structure my days in a different day; it requires a different structure. What I eat changes, and I also try to keep that structure in between projects as well. I definitely take the advantage of any down-time to try and rejuvenate myself. I can tell you I was exhausted at the end of "Salesman" run. And I wanted to exist as Linda for a while, and then the phone rang, and I'd be off to work to work on something new.

Between runs I sometimes do voice-overs or do on-tape books. I do yoga and some physical therapy. I try and take trips to catch up with my family and friends and my life; that's really important to me. There's a definite

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necessity to take that kind of time.

Depending on the project, to let go of the 'heart and mind' of the person you've just brought to life, and to have dealt with all those high stakes, it takes some time to let



confront real-life issues facing participant communities around the world. Her "Planetary Dance: A Call for Peace" between peoples and the earth was staged in Berlin at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Potsdam Treaty to end World War II, and involved over 400 participants. In 1995, she was invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to present an invocation at the State of the World Forum in California. She has created a 150 full-length dance theater works. Her recent works include the award-winning video "Returning Home," and "Intensive Care: Reflections on Death and Dying," "Seniors Rocking." In 2009, "Breath Made Visible," a documentary of her life and work premiered, she presented "Spirit of Place" a tribute to Lawrence Halprin, and "Song of Songs" the first in a trilogy called "Remembering Lawrence," her husband and long-time collaborator, at her Mountain Home Studio in Kentfield, California. She has received the NEA's American Dance Festival's Lifetime Achievement in Choreography Award, Guggenheim Foundation, American Dance Guild, Samuel H. Scripps Award for Lifetime Achievement in Modern Dance, and many other awards. Author of three books, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance* with Rachel Kaplan, *Dance as A Healing Art*, and *Returning to Health: With Dance, Movement & Imagery*.

### What are you currently at work on?

I completed a huge project presented at the Berkeley Art Museum. It was a new version of parades and changes, which was first performed in this country in New York City at Hunter College. It has been referred to as "a performance that changed the definition of dance." I was also arrested at that performance for indecent exposure.

Another performance of parades and changes was presented at the Berkeley Art Museum when it opened thirty years ago and is now closing.

I am in post-production working on editing a video of it. Soon I will be focusing on a new piece that is part of a trilogy called remembering Lawrence (Ms. Halprin's husband). The first part of the trilogy was called "Spirit of Place," and was performed at a site that Lawrence designed a park which was an amphitheater in San Francisco called Stern Grove.

The second piece was a series of events at Larry's sites that he designed at the campus of the Berkeley University or more exact, the University of California in Berkeley I am currently preparing to start a new work is the third part of the trilogy called "Beyond Death."



### How have you been enriched and grown as an actress by being in "Cinderella?"

I love coming to work; it's been so much fun; it's been such a positive, learning experience. It's fresh and something the audiences aren't necessarily expecting from "Cinderella." That's also been one of the most challenging and exciting parts of the process. It's really a contemporary, witty, funny book and relevant to today's generation – what Douglas Carter Beane has done with the book. He's made her in a real human being. The show has a real depth to it, a lushness, and we've added four or five new songs. We've had such a wonderful response from all the audiences. We have a twenty-piece orchestra led by Andy Einhorn. It's the first time the show's been on Broadway. And it's such wonderful ensemble to work with – everyone is such a joy.

You've also been involved with quite a few

go. I know I've been so lucky with all the work I've done, terribly lucky.

It's really important to remember that this work is ever-changing, and to embrace that notion, and to keep checking in with myself. I

don't ever want my reasons to be an actress to become stagnant or to hold reasons that are no longer relevant to my life for why I'm doing it. I always need to continue going deep within myself and keep asking more

questions, that this is what I want to be doing as I continue to grow and work, and I believe, that that's what gives it a purpose for me, and makes it meaningful and worthwhile. •

## Anna Halprin

At 91 years of age, Ms. Halprin is "one of the most important theatre artists of the 20th century." In 1955 she founded the groundbreaking San Francisco Dancer's Workshop, and the Tamalpa Institute in 1978 with her daughter, Daria Halprin. Her students include Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Dohee Lee, Dana Lova-Koga, Shinichi Momo Lova-Koga, Isak Immanuel, G. Hoffman Soto, some of who become involved in the progressive and experimental Judson Church Group. Over the years, her famous outdoor deck has been an explorative haven for numerous dancers and choreographers, including Merce Cunningham, Eiko and Koma, and Min Tanaka and Anne Collod, composers including John Cage, Luciano Berio, Terry Riley, LeMonte Young, and Morton Subotnick; visual artists including Robert Morris and Robert Whiteman; poets including Richard Brautigan, James Broughton, and Michael McClure. Ms. Halprin is an early pioneer in the expressive arts healing movement, leading numerous collaborative dance programs with terminally ill patients. She is long committed to a belief in the connection between movement and the healing power of dance. For the past decade, she has led "Circle the Earth," a contemporary community dance ritual to

### What have been some of your strongest discoveries in creating dances in dealing with those who face life-threatening illnesses in their life?

What I discovered is that there is a difference between curing and healing. I feel that dance because our bodies are our instruments have the opportunity to heal but not necessarily cure but not any kind of dance has this possibility.

In the twenty-five years that I worked specifically with people with life-threatening illness, I realized the need not only to keep people physically fit but to help them learn how to develop an internal awareness of their physical bodies, and be able to express themselves through their bodies. Whether the expression is one of fear, hope, loss, enlightenment, regrets...whatever they are feeling with no withholdings. When the feedback process between movement and feelings are expressed freely there is a deep sense of satisfaction, release and change and fulfillment. Another healing is the opportunity to be with like-minded friends who are able to appreciate, share their deepest feelings, and work together for each other's healing. I have two videotapes that I recommend that everyone view and you can see for yourself

the healing effects of dance. One is called "Positive Motion," and the other is called "Dance for Life." They will perhaps give you a better idea of what I'm trying to say. Another video is "Breath Made Visible," too. When you look at these videos I believe you'll see what I mean, as well if not better than I can, as I am too close to the situation.

### What are some of the most valuable things you learn from your students?

The most valuable things I learned is how normal, easy, important it is to be able to generate their own creativity. I like to leave a class saying to myself, "Wow! How inspirational these students are!" rather than "What a good class I taught."

Creativity for me is the key word and is exciting because what they do is original and uniquely their own. I am always amazed by the diverse city and uniqueness of each students' creative expression. This is the most valuable thing I learned from my students – the life affirmation of each individuals' stunning creativity.

On a more self-serving level they respond to my scores in a way that provides me with new and fresh resources and ideas that I would never have imagined so that I can get from class as much as I give to a class.

### How did you come to the realization and desire to adapt your work to the present moment?

It's hard for me to answer that question because I don't know any other way to present work

### How have you learned to quiet your mind to allow true expression to occur?

I have developed a series of processes that guide my students into internalizing this involves a series of exercises. Awareness exercises that focus on breathing and other sensorial internalized body like hearing, relaxing, eyes, jaws, facial expressions, the sensation of and sound of birds, smell and so forth. This can take anywhere from ten to thirty minutes before the student is ready to dance.

Another good way to internalize is shaking movements. Shaking movements will give you time to be out of your head. You instantly start feeling your body.

To answer a question like this however really depends on each situation. There never is just one way to do something, to achieve a particular result. •

## Laura Osnes

Recently starred as Cinderella on Broadway (Tony & Drama Desk nom.). She will be appearing in "The Threepenny Opera" Off-Broadway. She also starred in Frank Wildhorn's "Bonnie & Clyde" (Tony nom., San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Award), as Nellie Forbush in "South Pacific," and appeared in the recent revival of Anything Goes. Ms. Osnes made her Broadway debut as Sandy in "Grease," having won NBC's reality competition "Grease: You're the One That I Want." She appeared in Rodgers & Hammerstein's musical, "Pipe Dream," at New York City Center ENCORES! and in "The Sound of Music" concert at Carnegie Hall.

### Rodgers & Hammerstein musicals over these past five years?

The entire experience over these past five years has been rewarding and so much fun. The music penetrates the soul. They've been very loyal to me. I had seen Kelli O'Hara in "The Light in the Piazza," and she was marvelous, I truly had no idea I'd ever replace her. I just loved her work, and then being asked to audition and to take over the role of Nellie Forbush was such an incredible honor – to follow, in a way, in her footsteps. I truly had no idea I'd ever replace her. When I was in school in Minnesota, I was voted most likely to be on Broadway and I seriously tell people that it's been everything I ever hoped and dreamed it would be. I couldn't have planned it better, never guessed I would make it to Broadway this soon in my life and through a reality TV show. I had started out doing children's theatre and my parents were supportive of me.

### What was the experience working with Bartlett Sher, the director on "South

### Pacific?"

Bartlett was supportive and challenged me to come out of my "box." It was scary for me but I had to step up and I knew I had to be mature and challenge all my fears. He was amazing at helping me discover all of who Nelly was. It was an incredibly growing experience for me.

### What keeps "Cinderella" a magical experience for you?

Whenever the first song starts, it's a beautiful feeling for me of entering into a world of beauty and wonderment. I often get teary hearing the overture begin. It's been so rewarding being directed by Mark Brokaw. I'm truly grateful to wake up every morning and be able to come to do the show – it's all been truly magical.

*"You are led through your lifetime by the inner learning creature, the playful spiritual being that is your real self."*

– Richard Bach

*"If you want to reach a state of bliss,*

*then go beyond your ego and the*

*internal dialogue. Make a decision*

*to relinquish the need to control, the*

*need to be approved, and the need*

*to judge. Those are the three things*

*the ego is doing all the time. It's very*

*important to be aware of them every*

*time they come up."*

– Deepak Chopra

# Interviews with Artists

## Petronia Paley



Actor, Director, Playwright, Teacher. Ms. Paley created and starred in her own critically acclaimed solo play, "On the Way to Timbuktu," as Dr. Selene Slater-Bernaud (Turtle Shell Theatre, New York City – 3 Audelco noms., 2 Innovative Theatre Awards). Her roles include: Linda in "Death of a Salesman" opposite Avery Brooks (Oberlin College), Clytemnestra in "Electra" (Classical Theatre of Harlem – Audelco Award), Gertrude in "Hamlet" (Take Wing and Soar), Dr. Iris Preston in EST's "Relativity" (Audelco nom.); Gratiana in "The Revenger's Tragedy" (Red Bull Theatre), Madame Ranevskya in "Cherry Orchard" (Classical Theatre of Harlem – Audelco nom.) Jocasta/Eurydice in "The Oedipus Plays" (Shakespeare Theatre), Regan in "King Lear" (Yale Rep), Hecuba in "Trojan Women" (Shakespeare Theatre – Helen Hayes nom.), Prosecutor in "The Trial" (New Federal Theatre – Audelco). Ms. Paley is a veteran of daytime TV, creating long-running characters on "Guiding Light" and "Another World." Her directing includes: "Munched," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Medea," "Daughter," "Kernel of Sanity" (New Federal Theatre), "Truth Be Told" (EST), "Daughter" (EST), "The I, the Actor" "Ascension" (Cherry Lane Theatre, National Black Theatre Festival). Her recent TV includes: "2 Days in New York," "Stray," and "Damages. Her writing includes: "On the Way to Timbuktu," "The Empty-Hand Traveler Set No Limit to her Desires," "The Psycho-Genesis of Sexuality in a Woman;" and a children's book. She has taught as the Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, Puerto Rican Traveling Company, and at the New Federal Theatre. She is the founder of the I the Actor Acting Workshops. Member of The Actors Studio and EST. [www.itheactor.xbuild.com](http://www.itheactor.xbuild.com).

### Why does being an actress mean so much to you?

Acting is a way for me to be creative and to inhabit another person. I've been so many different things in my life, acting is one of those expressions. I love finding how a character ticks, getting in to their minds their physicality; these things are challenging for me. I love trying finding ways bring all of the things I love to life: history, painting, music – trying to find ways to help me grow. Acting gives me an opportunity to use my whole self, as an actress, as a director. It causes me to have to think on a larger scale.

Acting enlarges you as a human being. Clearly the only thing that helps anyone to grow is to be challenged, to do something you've never done before. All the characters I've played have allowed me to do that, to go to those places where I don't live. I just love that. I always look forward to the next challenge, learning new situations; it's a joy.

### How did you prepare to play Linda in "Death of a Salesman" opposite Avery Brooks?

I did research on what other people had thought about her. I try to do as much reading as I can. Avery and I had done a lot of work together before this production. We had also gone out to Oberlin College for a reading before.

I felt I really had a lot of freedom to feel free, more than I would have had in New York City. I could focus on her, on the process of finding her. Justin (Emeka) was a wonderful actor-director. We had first worked together on "King Lear." I had trust in his vision, and it was wonderful working with the students there at the college.

To get to Linda I had to be open to Avery, to what he was doing as Willy. Linda's so supportive of him, remaining in the background to him, trying to be open. I had to be strong inside myself to find her.

I've always had a great respect, to be disciplined, to work to the best of my ability. For Linda, I called upon my own personal life, to be available, to bring my whole self to the role. It was a wonderful way to be creative, being there at Oberlin.



Memory Keeper's Daughter," and "The Pillars of the Earth" (in which he played Cuthbert Whitehead). He has been a writer-in-residence at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Ossabaw Island, The Gathering at Bigfork, and the New Harmony Project, and was inducted into the Blair County, Pennsylvania Arts Hall of Fame.

### What are you presently at work on?

I'm working on a novel at this time. I also have a couple of projects I'm in the midst of.

### While you were studying to be an actor at Catholic University, had you already begun writing plays?

I only saw myself as an actor; I didn't know if I would have a career. I was thinking more of film and TV – there weren't acting programs back then. At CU I fell in love with the theatre. It

I thought Avery did a wonderful job, and the concept of the neighbors in a diverse community I thought came off very well.

### What led you from acting to directing?

When I was in college I didn't really study directing. I came to New York City, and eventually directed something at the Negro Ensemble Company. I always had an interest in directing. My path first went to acting. There was always a part in me wanting to direct.

I'm always trying to grow in different ways. Last year I took time to draw a lot. Once I started drawing, I began to see things in a different way. Directing came in that kind of way. It's where I needed to be.

When I left the daytime soap opera world, I took my work as a director more seriously. I guess everything has it's time for birth, to grow to evolve.

In terms of acting, I had gotten to a point in my life where I wasn't being asked to audition for the kinds of things I wanted to do. I was being asked to audition for roles that felt limiting, that wouldn't challenge me. I was telling my students: sometimes you have to create your own opportunities. I thought I needed to write something for myself and so I did. I wrote a one-woman show and it was produced.

### How did you find your director and what was the process like working with him?

I courted Talvin Wilks, you might say. We went out and talked. I wanted to get his interest. I love his directing, and I knew I wanted to work with him. We had worked together at Crossroads Theatre and when we talked together, he told me he like the idea of the show. He was helpful to me. The script needed some shaping. Talvin's highly intelligent and was very agreeable. He didn't impose on my work; we had a good working relationship.

The play was all written, and when we worked together, we'd sometimes changed the order of a scene. He was instrumental in doing that. When I did the show again I wanted to expand some things but he didn't want me to take certain things out, so that kind of thing helped me a lot.

### Why did you want to create your own solo play, "On the Way to Timbuktu" and how did you decide on who this woman was?

Being a black creative person of a certain age, and realizing certain opportunities are not there, and knowing how one's race gender, one's age affects you and how others perceive you – all these are things have been very important to me as I got older as a woman. All the time I worked I would hear from everyone that it doesn't matter and I didn't want to be limited in any way.

I actually felt because of the scope of "On the way to Timbuktu" would achieve a greater response. That was a big disappointment because the story and character is so rich. This kind of woman can be embraced by everyone because of her great intelligence and scope so I'm still working on it. It got wonderful reviews and that meant a great deal to me, and everyone who saw it were very moved by the play.

I felt it was right to make her a Shakespearean professor obsessed with the sonnets, and the play explores her relationships, the trauma, the struggles in her life. They were, in a way, to reconnect with her authenticity, and explored love, betrayal, sexuality, race.

Originally she was a professor of Greek theater, but then I came across a book which fascinated me, and it thought it would be a better idea for her to be a professor of sonnets, and it was also tied into racism and race, and it was became more cohesive and came together then.

### What led you to your creating "First Readings" at the Nuyorican Poets Café?

It seems I was in the right place where I needed to be to make it happen. I happened to be down there, and met a young woman in charge of the programs and talked with her. When I asked if I could have a reading of a new play, one thing led to another, and I was able to put together a series of plays. They also happened to need a director and I agreed, and that opened an opportunity to do more shows there.

How satisfying has it been for you to teach acting?

I'm an only child, and I probably consider

## John Pielmeier

Playwright, Screenwriter, Actor. His plays include "Agnes of God" which appeared on Broadway with Geraldine Page, Elizabeth Ashley and Amanda Plummer (he wrote the screenplay for the film directed by Norman Jewison, starring Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft and Meg Tilly (Oscar noms., Writers Guild of America nom.), "A Chosen Room," "The Boys of Winter" produced on Broadway), "Sleight of Hand" (produced on Broadway), "Voices in the Dark" (produced on Broadway and winner of the 1999 Edgar Award for Best Play), three solo plays: "Courage" (a one-man show about J.M. Barrie), "Young Rube" (about the early years of cartoonist/inventor, Rube Goldberg), "Jass" "Impassioned Embraces," "Steeplechase The Funny Place," "The Classics Professor," "Slow Dance With A Hot Pickup," three solo plays: "Courage" (a one-man show about J.M. Barrie), "Young Rube" (about the early years of cartoonist/inventor, Rube Goldberg), and Willi," (based on the speeches of mountaineer Willi Unsoeld, a member of the first American expedition to reach the summit of Mt. Everest). His film and TV includes "Choices of the Heart" (Christopher Award, Humanitas Award, Writers Guild nom.), "The Shell Seekers," "An Inconvenient Woman," "Through the Eyes of a Killer," "The Last P.O.W.?" "The Bobby Garwood Story," "Flowers for Algernon," "Sins of the Father," "Hitler: The Rise of Evil," "The Capture of the Green River Killer," "The

was always great having an audience present. What I find most enjoyable is working with other people – the collaboration involved. It's very much about acting, the collaborations between an actor and an audience; it feeds a performance – you're feeding one another.

### Were there certain actors and playwrights at that time that influenced you?

No one that I was really in love with. I was just beginning at that time. I was a raw talent

when I went there. That rawness was good for me. I didn't learn a lot from classes but I still learned. As an undergrad to be fortunate to get as many parts as I did then.

### While you were performing at The Guthrie, you were able to produce, co-direct, and perform in your graduate thesis play, "A Chosen Room." How in a sense did it free you and allow you to move on?

Because it was my first play. I wrote a couple

myself a bit of a selfish person, and never thought about teaching until it came about. I truly get so much from being in service to others; it's been incredible. Again, I was in the right place at the right time. I was directing a reading and I was approached to teach at the Frederick Douglas Creative Arts Center from the way I was working with the actors in the reading.

I always say yes but I had no idea that it would be so rewarding. I don't have children so I think of my students, in a way, as a part of me of something that goes out in the world. I've had a lot of good fortune to help these young people realize themselves, to open up themselves to the world of acting. I think I learn a great deal from my students. I have very young students and I do a lot of physical work with them, scene work and monologues and I always try to see where they are, trying to help in ways that give them what they may need. It can be a challenge, but I try very hard to find a way to work with each individual; they keep me on my toes. It's not easy as they're not on the same level but I like working with all kinds of people at different levels. It always keeps me very present.

### What keeps you excited about your continued growth as an artist?

I feel the best is ahead of me. What I've done is nothing to what I will do. I want to make sure what I'm doing adds up to something valuable. I feel everything that has come before has left me in a position to keep growing, to be more, to keep discovering who I am. I am so thankful on so many level things. Things keep happening. All the things I've done, acting, directing, and teaching – have all been so rewarding, and now painting and drawing.

It's all about to finding a way to bring everything into being. I wanted to have a theatre company at some point, to do things I believed in. I envision doing so much more. I think I haven't all the things I want to do and I know I need to be healthy and stay strong and active and keep learning to do more new things I love to do.

of plays before but this was my first serious playwriting assignment. I kept rewriting it. It was very much an albatross. Getting it out of me was relieving for me. It was a good experience.

### Your play, "Agnes of God" was given its first staged reading at the O'Neill National Playwrights' Conference.

It was my experience as an actor at the O'Neill that made me turn to writing. I had

# Interviews with Artists

such an extraordinary time. It was a magical place, a holy place I wanted to return to as a playwright. At the O'Neill I learned a lot. "Agnes" was still a play-in-process there.

**At the time "Agnes of God" was produced on Broadway, were you pleased with the cast and the production?**

All of it was great. It was a lovely experience. It was very exciting to see and hear the words. It's always a little sad when the piece is being taken away from you. I created it to have it taken away by masterful artists.

**Was it challenging to open it up as a film?**

No it wasn't. It was Norman Jewson who opened it up, and said: "Let's set it in Montreal because they have crucifixes in the courtroom." It was sort of the mixing of God and State up there. In fact a lot of stuff was there. It was like another language, like beginning almost in a European country. It gave it a wonderful feeling; a distance to the piece. The play wasn't set anywhere, so this was a very different cast. And the kind of actors they were – it was a really good experience.

**Another of your plays on Broadway, "The Boys of Winter," examined the causes and justification of the Vietnam War through the eyes of seven Marines preparing for a mission. What led you to choose to write it?**

Essentially it was a commission. It became something close to me. I had never written characters that became so alive for me.

**I understand you wrote your first movie for TV about the terrible tragedy of the four American church-women murdered in El Salvador.**

That got me my career and paid for my way in life. As much as I like writing for the theatre, the theatre is a very cold and cruel mistress. She has not been as kind as Hollywood for me as a writer.

I'd very much like to get back to acting in a more serious way. I think it's not as much as a lonely experience. I know I have some talent along those lines in those ways.

**Is there a usual time you begin writing during the day?**

I usually start in the morning and write until I'm tired; about two hours or it can be a little longer. I'm really pretty good at meeting deadlines. Sometimes they're a good motivation to sit down to work. It's always a challenge when you write the first word.

**Do the plays we see, the films we watch help humanize us as a people?**

I think that goes back the need humans have to tell and hear stories. Why? Why do we need to hear them? I think the answer lies somewhere in our humanity. It makes us want to hear a good story told well. It allows

us to experience all aspects of our humanity, experience the things we're not comfortable in our lives.

My experiences as a story listener have been some of the most meaningful moments I've prized. They're the ones that will live forever, moments in the theatre, moments when I'm reading a certain books, or watching a film house, moments that take me out of myself and into myself.

**Your wife, Irene O'Garden is a very gifted playwright.**

Irene is the center of my life. It's nice to have someone whom you love more and more each day after being together for 35 years. I like to think it helps and I think we've become better artists.

**How do deal with the ups and downs as a creative artist?**

I don't know if I have ever learned how to cope with it. For any of us in the business your current job is your last job. Once you're finished, you wonder: Will I ever work again? It's an awful hard thing to deal with. When you sense doors are closing or the window's not opening; that's hard. I try to relax. I work with my own stuff. I do a lot of reading. I try not to shut out my creative life. I'm still creating and that keeps me going.♦

*continued from page 1*

**PAMELA J. NEWMAN** President & CEO of The Newman Team at AON Risk Services, Dr. Newman has been an Executive Vice President at AON Corporation, specializing in Fortune 500 international clients, since 1991. Dr. Newman is on the Board of Directors of Forbes, and a member of Clear Skies Group, Inc.'s Board of Directors. Before joining AON, Dr. Newman worked for Marsh & McLennan; and Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. Dr. Newman is a member of the board of directors of Ivivi Technologies, Inc. and also serves on the boards of RKO Pictures and Interactive Metronome. Dr. Newman serves on the Medical Center Advisory Board of the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center and on the Board of the McGowan Transplant Center, the Brain Trauma Foundation and American ORT. Dr. Newman also serves on the Board of Trustees of The American University of Paris, the Corporate Board of Carnegie Hall and the Associate Committee of The Julliard School and is a Fellow of the Foreign Policy Association. Dr. Newman has co-authored two books: *Organizational Communications and Behind Closed Doors; A Guide to Effective Meetings*. Dr. Newman serves on the Horace Rackham University of Michigan Graduate School Board of Advisors.

### The Four Agreements

*"Be Impeccable With Your Word: Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love. Don't Take Anything Personally: Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering. Don't Make Assumptions: Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life. Always Do Your Best: Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret."*

– Don Miguel Ruiz from *The Four Agreements*



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# Black History Month PLAY FESTIVAL

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# Vocal Strain

BY RUTH WILLIAMS HENNESSY



**E**very performer knows what vocal strain feels like: that horrible feeling when you open your mouth and “somebody else’s” voice comes out. Our voices are so important to our identity as performers that we often freak out when it happens. However, while vocal strain is nothing to take lightly, remaining calm will help you find a more integrated physical coordination to remedy any current situation and prevent future problems. Keep calm and carry on.

Vocal strain can appear as hoarseness, a lack of volume and intensity, or even a complete inability to make sound; it can appear as a feeling of tension or a “lump” in the throat; it can appear as dryness, as if our vocal folds had forgotten how to lubricate themselves. These are the physical sensations, the results, of straining your voice. A properly produced voice feels easy and free, never pushed or forced. In voice, pain equals strain. When you find yourself working hard to create the volume or intensity you need, whether for a performance or in a noisy room, you can expect to feel vocal strain.

Common causes of vocal strain include: A physical condition (e.g., fatigue, coughing, dehydration, smoking, viruses, fungal or bacterial infections, chronic sinusitis, allergies, reflux, or GERD); Using your voice when your vocal folds are swollen, whether from misuse or illness; Misplaced tension in the body: holding in the throat or back of the neck; holding in the jaw and tongue; over-tightening and shortening the abdominals; Using too much breath and breath pressure. Pressing and pushing the breath, creating too much pressure at the vocal folds: to create a louder or more intense sound; to create a character voice; An improperly supported everyday speaking voice: using “vocal fry”; dropping breath support at the ends of phrases; not using proper support when speaking over loud sounds at restaurants, bars, concerts, or sporting events.

Vocal strain is the result of imbalance in the physical effort you are using to produce your voice. A properly produced voice feels “easy” because no muscle is working past its capacity: the physical effort is balanced. I often say that speaking and singing are easy... it’s learning to do it properly that can be hard!

When we use the large, deep muscles of our body to support our sound, we don’t need to overwork the smaller muscles in the throat that create vocal strain. Recognizing your own patterns of misplaced muscle tension and overwork – particularly with regard to your breath – can help you not only to prevent vocal strain from happening, but also to help you recover more quickly even after you have strained your voice.

When you experience vocal strain, there are several things you can—and should – do.

Rest your voice; rest your body. When using your voice feels uncomfortable, that is a sign for you to take it as easy as possible. Keep quiet and give your vocal folds a chance to recover. When you use your voice, keep the effort level low. Don’t strain your voice further by trying to make a “normal” sound. Speak at whatever volume is most comfortable. Whispering is not recommended, because you will work very hard to make your whisper audible. Ease is the key!

Steam and irrigate your throat and sinuses. Hydration is very important for the recovery of the vocal folds. Drinking liquids is helpful for overall hydration but not a substitute for steaming, which has a direct and immediate impact on your vocal folds. Teas, lozenges, and sprays can soothe your throat, but liquids do not pass through the vocal folds, so they are not directly affecting your folds.

Boil water, pour it into a bowl, let it cool off a bit, and then make a “tent” with a towel over your head and the bowl to breathe in the steam. Some physicians advise against using tap water and recommend distilled water or even prescribe a sterile solution used in surgeries. A long, hot shower is another easy way to inhale steam. When using humidifiers, facial steamers, and the like, be sure to use distilled water and clean them frequently to avoid any buildup of mold or bacteria.

Irrigating the sinuses with warm distilled water, a very mild saline solution, or a nasal spray without saline (such as Xlear) is a great everyday habit for people who use their voices, and can be particularly soothing when we experience vocal strain. If you use a neti pot for this purpose, be sure to sterilize it between uses. Or, you can “sniff” the water out of your own clean, cupped hand. If you use an over-the-counter nasal spray be sure to sterilize the applicator between uses.

Stretch and release your body, especially your throat,

spine, and the spaces between your ribs, to facilitate better breathing habits. When our vocal folds are stiff or swollen, they do not respond as easily and quickly to the breath as they usually do. This is the first sign that we need to use them more gently, but most people do just the opposite. We tend to push and press the breath harder against the folds, trying to create our usual responsiveness and quality of voice. Release your voice; don’t force it. It can feel counterintuitive, but we must work less when our voices aren’t responsive. You don’t need a lot of air to make a healthy vocal sound; healthy vocal production requires a balance between the breath and the vocal folds. Stay away from any physical exercises or activities that shorten and tighten the throat, back of the neck, abdominal wall, or spine (no crunches, pushups, or any activity that may make you hold your breath). Massage and releasing bodywork are both therapeutic. You can find release and breathing exercises at the end of the online version of this article and at [www.VoiceAtTheCenter/clips](http://www.VoiceAtTheCenter/clips).

Certain vocal exercises, done properly, are restorative. First, gently yawn or sigh to feel release and stretching in your throat. Don’t push your throat open; relax it open. Then, make quiet sounds, almost like a whimper, on a comfortable pitch, using an “m,” “n,” “ng,” or “y” sound. Send a little air through the nose just before you start the sound. Try “gliding” through pitches in a comfortable range, like an easy hum through a sighing throat. Place your fingers on the bones at the bridge of the nose to make sure they are vibrating. Both your throat and breath should feel very free, not pressed or pushed. Think of the breath as a release, the throat as a sigh, and the sound as easy. Do these exercises throughout the day, in sessions of 4-5 minutes.

The former conventional wisdom was that complete vocal rest was the quickest way to relieve the swelling and hoarseness of vocal strain is inaccurate. Recent studies have shown that proper use of vocal exercises like the ones described above help restore your voice faster than vocal rest alone. Interestingly, the opera singer Lilli Lehmann understood and recommended this same type of vocal exercise for vocal strain in her book, *How to Sing*, written in 1902!

Take care of your whole body. Vocal strain is the result of over-doing, so take some time to relax and create more balance in your energy. If your vocal strain does not respond to this treatment within a few days, if you experience pain, or if you remain hoarse for more than a week, you should seek the expertise of an Ear-Nose-and-Throat doctor. There may be underlying causes that are preventing the vocal folds from responding to these treatments. Some physical issues that lead to vocal strain are viruses, fungal or bacterial infections, chronic sinusitis, allergies, reflux, or GERD. Over time, systematic abuse of the vocal folds can lead to polyps, nodules, and chronic edema or swelling.

Find a doctor who is used to working with the specific needs of performers. Have a complete examination, including a videostroboscopy. That might seem like overkill, but vocal folds are one to a customer! A small problem, caught early, may be easy to remedy. Left without treatment, however, that small problem can turn into a major issue. Most vocal strain is caused by unfortunate habits of breathing and speaking, and habits can be changed. ♦2014

*“You are joy, looking for a way to express. It’s not just that your purpose is joy, it is that you are joy. You are love and joy and freedom and clarity expressing.*

*Energy-frolicking and eager.*

*That’s who you are.”*

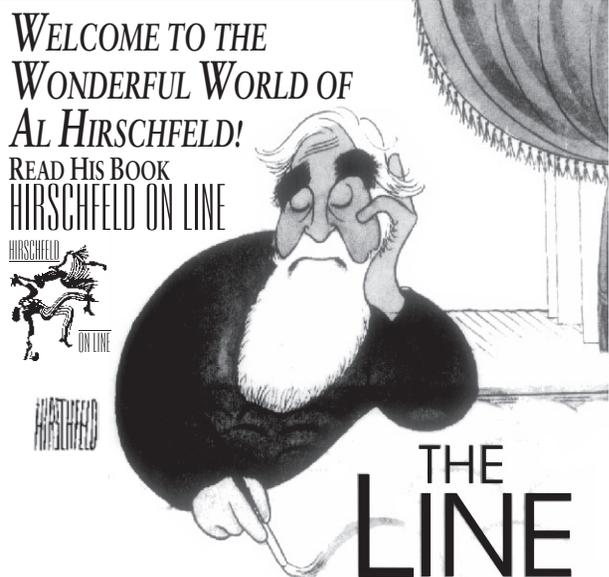
– Esther Hicks

**RUTH WILLIAMS HENNESSY** - is the founder of Hennessy Whole Body Voice™ and the creator of the instructional DVD Voice at the Center™. Ms. Hennessy’s Vocal BodyWorkShops are offered weekly in Manhattan, as well as at universities, choral organizations, and symposiums across the country. With both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Voice from Indiana University, Ruth’s continuing studies include bodywork, breathing, and alignment techniques; the physiology of the voice; release and massage therapies; and numerous other disciplines. You can see more about the workshops at [www.HennessyWholeBodyVoice.com](http://www.HennessyWholeBodyVoice.com). Her DVD Voice at the Center, containing over two hours of bodywork exercises and explaining Ruth’s unique approach, is available at TheDrama Book Shop and at [www.VoiceAtTheCenter.com](http://www.VoiceAtTheCenter.com).

*“I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws will be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings.”*

– Henry David Thoreau

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## Transport Group

by RONALD RAND

Transport Group, an off-Broadway theatre company stages new works and re-imagined revivals by American writers in New York City. Their visually progressive productions of emotionally classic stories explores the challenges of relationships and identity in modern America.

Founded in 2001 by Jack Cummings III and Robyn Husa, Transport Group has produced nineteen shows, including eleven new works and eight revivals. They also present readings, developmental labs, concerts, and other special events.

During Transport Group's first eight seasons, the company was in residence at The Connelly Theatre, a turn-of-the-century proscenium theatre located in the East Village. In 2009, they moved into a phase of environmental staging, performing works in non-traditional spaces such as a penthouse, a commercial loft, and a gym. Beginning with their 2012 – 2013 season, Transport Group is in residence at The Duke on 42nd Street.

Among their memorable productions include: the first New York revival of Michael John LaChiusa's "Hello Again," which received the Off-Broadway Alliance Award for Best Musical Revival; the New York premiere of Douglas Carter Beane and Lewis Flinn's musical, "Lysistrata Jones," which transferred to Broadway; the first New York revival of Barry Conners' "The Patsy," re-invented and re-imagined as a remarkable one-man tour-de-force starring David Greenspan; and Transport Group's first commission for The 20th Century Project, the world premiere of Michael John LaChiusa's musical, "Queen of the Mist," starring Mary Testa.

In 2011, in celebration of their 10th Anniversary, Transport Group launched a ten-year cycle of curated and commissioned works, entitled: 'The 20th Century Project.' Each of the ten productions in this chronological cycle will explore the American experience and identity particular to each decade of the 20th century. Five of the productions in this cycle will re-imagine classic American works while five additional productions will tell new stories through commissioned plays and musicals about our collective past. Their next play in the cycle is a production of John Van Druten's "I Remember Mama." For info: Transport Group 520 8th Ave. #305 New York, NY 10018, (212) 564-0333, info@transportgroup.org, or www.transportgroup.org. ♦



"Once Upon A Mattress"

*"A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."*

– Albert Einstein "

## Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Critical Portrait

*continued from page 7*

Vakhtangov, would have to be completely free and alive – so that it could renew itself from the inside at any moment of the performance.

For Vakhtangov, as the avant-garde thinker, theatre art was the means of practically transforming both the artist and the audience into a new creative body – social and spiritual. This transformation is achieved in theatre by inspiring, in the ensemble and the audience alike, a hitherto unknown, infinite level of creativity.

"The important result of the Stanislavsky system is acquiring the knowledge of self. The positive side of the system is that it draws from true art. An actor, having entered the realm of art, must be a good human being... We can only enter art as good people. One must believe that. This means: I enter the theatre, and I will proceed with an open soul with the things." ♦2013

Excerpts from *Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Critical Portrait* by Andrei Malaev-Babel & *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook* edited by Andrei Malaev-Babel. Published by Routledge. Reprinted with the permission of the author and publisher.

**ANDREI MALAEV-BABEL** is an actor, director and scholar, a graduate of the Vakhtangov Theatre Institute in Moscow. He serves as an Associate Professor of Theatre at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, and on the board of the Michael Chekhov Association. He is the editor of *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook*.

*"Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us."*

– Wilma Rudolph

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VOICE OF SUCCESS PROGRAMS



David Zema is a voice over performer, producer and coach with over 20 years experience. He has helped many performers develop their talents and skills into successful careers.

## Passing the Michael Chekhov 'Ball' on to another Generation of Artists

*continued from page 20*

buddies' flattery to do just one more stunt. It didn't kill me, but just merely nearly paralyzed me.

Interestingly, trying to walk again led me to the science and metaphysics that transformed my ability to teach the Chekhov Technique. I noticed the teaching brought healing to my students too, which, in retrospect I can now see has been the driving super objective underlying my subsequent career choices.

From the time of the first International Michael Chekhov Workshop in Berlin, I began filming many of the Chekhov events through 1999, interviewing actors including Anthony Quinn, Lloyd Bridges and many first-generation Chekhov teachers. I co-produced the first documentary on Michael Chekhov, and created the first International Michael Chekhov Workshops outside of Europe and Russia at the Eugene O'Neill Center in the late 90's, a legacy that continues today.

I co-created with Mala Powers and Wil Kilroy the National Michael Chekhov Association Training Intensives, now in our 20th year, offering a rich cohesive structure and a strong clear pedagogy for Actors, Directors, and Teacher Certification. It was clear my life's work was in sharing the gift that Michael Chekhov had given me.

When my husband passed in 2009, I went into a 'dark night of the soul.' What was the point of me 'pushing this Chekhov ball' any further To climb out of it, I fulfilled my dream of doing a one-woman show under Victor Tkachenko's intense direction. We worked for a year, via Skype, from Connecticut to Texas where I had moved. I learned a whole new level of Chekhov and felt as naïve and as empowered as I did in "The Fox." And then I met a new man.

This March, I went to the Southeastern Theatre Conference. It is the first conference I have been to in decades where I have not taught or performed. I was a student. Chekhov workshops were abundant with hundreds of actors, teachers and directors wanting more. It was offered in bits of itself and interlaced with Stanislavsky, Meisner, Laban, Alexander, and others.

I felt like that the 'once mocked and attacked Chekhov ball' had passed the tipping point and was self-evidently flowing on its own. In one special moment, I was being taught by my student's students who were lighting up yet another generation of artists' souls. I wish I could share that with Wilfred and Billie. ♦2013

**LISA DALTON** President of the National Michael Chekhov Association, co-founded with Mala Powers and Wil Kilroy. She is a master teacher of Michael Chekhov's acting technique and a noted documentarian. She is the co-producer of "From Russia to Hollywood," the award winning documentary and contributed about one third of the footage for Michael "Chekhov: The Dartington Years" as well as for Russia's Planeta TV's first documentary on Michael Chekhov. She released two DVD's: "Anthony Quinn's Life and Encounters with Michael Chekhov" and "Lisa Dalton's Actor's Workout of the Chekhov Exercises." Since 1994, Ms. Dalton has been on the Faculty of the Chekhov Theatre Institute, co-created with Mala Powers, Chekhov Estate Executrix and Professor Wil Kilroy, training acting teachers and professional actors. She was the Creator/Artistic Director of the first two International Michael Chekhov Workshops in the United States in 1998 and 1999 at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center in Connecticut, on the Organizing Board of Directors of the International Michael Chekhov Association. Ms. Dalton taught the Chekhov technique in UK, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Caribbean, and around the US at various other Theatre Festivals, professional acting companies and colleges. Ms. Dalton has received numerous awards for directing stage, independent film and video, and, performed in over many commercials, TV Shows and Films. She was the Acting Coach for the A & E Channel "Spying on Myself" pilot and has coached actors on numerous Stage, TV and Film productions. [www.chekhov.net](http://www.chekhov.net)

*"We attain freedom as we let go of whatever does not reflect our magnificence. A bird cannot fly high or far with a stone tied to its back. But release the impediment, and we are free to soar to unprecedented heights."*

— Alan Cohen

## American Repertory Theatre

by Ronald Rand

A leading force in the American theater, American Repertory Theatre (ART), under the inspired leadership of Artistic Director, Diane Paulus, continues producing groundbreaking work in Cambridge, Massachusetts and beyond.

During its 32-year history, the American Repertory Theatre has welcomed many major American and international theater artists, presenting a diverse repertoire, including several new premieres of American plays, bold re-interpretations of classical texts, and provocative new music theater productions.

Among their productions include "Sleep No More," "The Donkey Show," "Gatz," "The Blue Flower," "Prometheus Bound," "The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess," "Wild Swans," The Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," and "Pippin," currently on Broadway.

The American Repertory Theatre has performed across this country and around the world in 16 countries, and has been a training ground for young artists. The Theater's artistic staff teaches undergraduate classes in acting, directing, dramatic literature, dramaturgy, voice, and design at Harvard University.

In 1987, the A.R.T. founded the Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University. A two-year, five-semester M.F.A. graduate program that operates in conjunction with the Moscow Art Theater School, the Institute provides world-class professional training in acting, dramaturgy, and voice.

Recent productions include "Pirates of Penzance;" "The Hotel Nepenthe;" Steve Cuiffo as "Lenny Bruce;" "The Friends of Eddie Coyle;" "Experiment America;" "Roller Disco: The Musical;" "Nutcracker Turbo (and other Love Stories);" "Woody Sez;" "Bye Bye Liver: The Boston Drinking Show," "8" The Play," "Becket Shorts," "Futurity: A Musical by the Lisps," "Bob: A Life in Five Acts," "Wild Swans," "The Snow Queen," "Three Pianos," and "The Rocky Horror Show."

The A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University, established in 1987 by the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.), is a two-year, five-semester training program for young theater professionals, operated in association with the Moscow Art Theater School (MXAT). Each year, nearly twenty-five students study in a two-year, five-term program of study in acting, dramaturgy, or voice pedagogy.

The American Repertory Theater's production of "Pippin," currently playing on Broadway at the Music Box Theatre in New York City, received three Tony Awards including 'Best Musical Revival.' The A.R.T. is the recipient of numerous other awards including the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater, the Pulitzer Prize, and many Elliot Norton and I.R.N.E. Awards. Its recent premiere production of "Death and The Powers: The Robots' Opera" was a 2012 Pulitzer Prize finalist.

On Broadway: Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" with Cherry Jones as Amanda Wingfield, with Zachary Quinto as Tom, Celia Kennan-Bolger as Laura, and Brian J. Smith as The Gentleman Caller, staged by John Tiffany, at the Booth Theatre. For info: American Repertory Theater 64 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 496-2000. For info: OBERON 2 Arrow St. Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 496-8004, [www.americanrepertorytheater.org](http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org).

## Baltimore's Center Stage Celebrates over Fifty Years

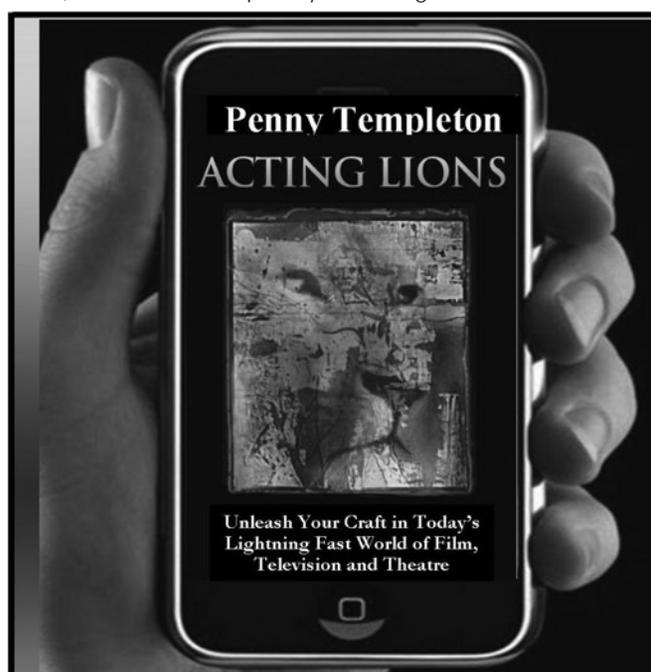
by Janice Berliner

Center Stage, the State Theater of Maryland, under the dynamic leadership of Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah and Managing Director Stephen Richard, Center Stage the State Theater of Maryland, enters its second 50 years with a commitment of exploring how art and entertainment can ignite meaningful conversation in Baltimore and beyond.

An artistically-driven theater dedicated to the creation and presentation of a diverse array of new and classic work, each year Center Stage hosts an audience of more than 100,000 in its historic home in Baltimore's Mount Vernon neighborhood.

Center Stage's 2013-14 season kicks off in September with "Animal Crackers," under the direction of Northlight Theatre Artistic Director BJ Jones. Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah helmed Marcus Gardley's melodic family drama, "Dance of the Holy Ghosts: A Play on Memory," bringing the story of blues-man Oscar Clifton as he confronts a history of loves and regrets to life – and Naomi Wallace's historical saga, "The Liquid Plain," which he opened at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Winner of the prestigious 2012 Horton Foote Prize for Promising New American Play, "The Liquid Plain" follows two runaway slaves and an amnesiac sailor as they live a life and plot an escape on the docks of eighteenth-century Rhode Island. Rebecca Taichman directed Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel's new musical "A Civil War Christmas." Ms. Taichman recently directed a production of "The Winter's Tale" at The McCarter Theatre and DC's Shakespeare Theatre Company. Set on Christmas Eve in 1864, "A Civil War Christmas" weaves together carols and folk songs. Celebrated choreographer and MacArthur "Genius" Fellow Liz Lerman, originator of the National Civil War Project, joined the creative team as choreographer. Washington, D.C.-based director, Derek Goldman, Artistic Director of the Davis Performing Arts Center and Professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Georgetown University, directed Marie Jones' "Stones in His Pockets," and, Center Stage's Associate Director Gavin Witt directed "Twelfth Night." Artistic Director of The Playwrights' Center. Jeremy B. Cohen in June will direct Colman Domingo's "Wild with Happy."

Center Stage also has one of the country's largest and most accomplished Dramaturgical departments, led by Gavin Witt Director of Dramaturgy and Artistic Producer, Susanna Gellert. They have received immense support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation \$2 million challenge grant over the last 20 years. Center Stage, in addition to their productions, integrates theater into the lives of nearly 10,000 Maryland students each season, inspiring young imaginations through programs that cultivate creative and intellectual potential, and developing a practical understanding of the arts. This past year student playwrights in grades K-12 throughout the state of Maryland had submitted their plays to Center Stage's 27th annual Young Playwrights Festival. For more info: [info@centerstage.org](mailto:info@centerstage.org), 700 North Calvert St., Baltimore, MD 21202, (410)-986-4000, [www.centerstage.com](http://www.centerstage.com).



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## 12th International Theatre Festival "Slavija 2013"

by Ronald Rand

This past spring the exciting 12th "Slavija 2013" International Theatre Festival was presented at the Slavija Theatre, under the dynamic leadership of Managing Director, Batric Zarkovic and his vibrant wife, Ljiljana Zarkovic, in Belgrade, Serbia.

The Slavija Theatre created this important theatrical event, and over the past twelve years has hosted more than 70 theaters from 40 countries, including the Albanian National Theatre, including theatre companies from Bulgaria, Hungary, England, Israel and the Ukraine.

At the opening night ceremonies of the 12th "Slavija 2013" International Theatre Festival, Managing Director, Batric Zarkovic welcomed everyone with a rousing speech.

Productions and performers from Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Serbia, Morocco, Macedonia, Romania and the United States were presented throughout this momentous Festival, including a portrayal of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, "Clay Fragments," by The Phoenix Theatre Company of Rabat; Kazah Drama Theatre's presentation of Auezov's "Karagoz;" "Medea" by the State Drama Theatre in Bulgaria; Romanian's National Theatre of Kluj-Napoca's production of Stefan Tzanev's "The Other Death of Joan of Arc"; People's Deputy" by the Uzice National Theatre of Serbia; Slobodan Šnajder's "The Encyclopedia of Lost Time" by the Royal Theatre Zetski Dom; Bulgarian author Elin Rahnev's "Beans" with actors from the Small Drama Theatre and the Dramatic Puppet Theatre in Bulgaria; "The People's Deputy;" and Ronald Rand's critically acclaimed solo play, "Let It Be Art! Harold Clurman's Life of Passion." Mr. Rand's performance was attended by an overflowing audience that included U.S. Ambassador Michael D. Kirby and his wife, Sara Powelson Kirby. The Jury of the Festival consisted of Prof. Dr. Rasko Jovanovic; Risto Stefanovski; and Dusan Diokovic, President of the Board of the Academy of Arts in Belgrade and awarded best company production to Stefan Tsanev's "The Other Death of Joan of Arc."

Noted sculptor, Nikola Kojic-Milunovic created the stunning statuettes of Don Quixote awarded to the Festival participants. For info: Theatre Slavija, Belgrade Saint Slava 16-18 Belgrade, Serbia, ozoriste.slavija@sbb.rs, www.pozoriste-slavija.co.rs. ♦

## Greensboro Arts Alliance and Residency

by Ronald Rand

Greensboro Arts Alliance and Residency, located in Greensboro, Vermont, is a community-based arts organization, providing year-round cultural, economic, artistic opportunities to the residents of the Northeast Kingdom and will build and operate a cultural theater center where visionary artists will come to perfect and share their craft with the community. Founded in 2005 by its Artistic Director, Sabra Jones, through the sponsorship of the Mirror Repertory Theatre, Greensboro Arts Alliance and Residency, recently presented Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," in a 75th anniversary production, directed by Charles McAtteer, Associate Artistic Director. The cast included Ronald Rand as The Stage Manager, and Sabra Jones, Eve Passeltiner, Rachel Ester Tate, David Beck, Ed Stehle, Bruce Buckley, Elye Alexander, Bruce Buckley, Zachary Wright, Stelen Willis, Macy Molleur, Zaccari Gravel, Sonia Dunbar, Marie Cloutier, and John Bradshaw. The memorable production was presented in repertory with Meredith Willson's "The Music Man," starring Marla Schaffel, skillfully directed by Sabra Jones, Judith Jacobs (Music Director), Justin Jacobs & Rosa LoGiudice (orchestra). The cast included: Anthony Willis Jr., Rosann Hickey-Cook, Jim Sowles, Alahni Wright, Richard Alexander, John Bradshaw, Bruce Buckley, Steven Willis, Zachary Wright, Ed Donlon, Abigail Demers, George Sowles, Krissie Ohlogge, Ella Considine, Deanne Gann, Marie Cloutier, Helen Twiss, Emilie Stuart, and the Forward Motion Quartet (Henri Garven, Cara Hill, Lynn McKinney & Bonnie Rinehart.) Ronald Rand brought his solo play, "Let It Be Art!" to Greensboro two years ago. Len Cariou performed "An Evening of Cabaret" as a Benefit Performance. For info: The Greensboro Arts Alliance & Residency P.O. Box 304 Greensboro, VT 05841, (802) 533-7487, Sabra@greensboroartsalliance.com, www.greensboroartsalliance.com.

## Touching the Invisible

continued from page 1

insights that were beyond my years. This expanded inner way of being gave me a depth of feeling and enriched my life beyond normal ideas of pleasure.

The quest to explore these inner creative dimensions lead me to go beyond the confines of our modern-day perception which mostly utilize a linear type of perception, by focusing our five senses on the objective world, rather than the multi-dimensional senses being directed towards our subjective and inner dimensions.

I love sitting within a circle of friends, or alone and take time to notice all that is beautiful. Simply noticing the cool tiles under my feet in the hot sunshine, to see the leaves wave in the wind, to notice the impeccable beauty of a flower, to feel the breeze of air touch my skin, this becoming mindful to the beauty in the moment moves me to become: aware of seeing, aware of all that is beautiful, and it moves me from seeing a thing to feeling gratitude. Eventually it moves me to the inside, to feel beauty in so many more ways and forms.

The path of creativity in my teenage years led me onto the path of meditation. Turning inward, quieting my mind and eventually learning to see outside of the proverbial cave of Plato, when I had learned to accustom my perceptions to the lofty worlds of the world of Ideas, the world of creative IS-ness, I realized that it is our *consciousness*, which is the *artist*.

Playing flute or the harp, which I took up in my 20's, and still continue to this day, has allowed me a way of expressing that ephemeral inner dimension, and transporting visions of the infinite to those who have ears to hear. When I playing music, I am transported to a larger universe, where my soul shows me levels of reality that escape the rational mind.

Through writing, first in my journals in my teenage years, and all of the many endless letters to my Beloveds, and later on in my 30's, then in my early adult years, writing books, I have been able to express my insights about the power of the inner dimensions, and I feel, have been able to help people access the creative power hidden within their subconscious mind – the non-literal mind – to reshape their inner landscape in order to create a more beautiful outside landscape in their lives.

Writing is at once a tool to share and inspire as well as a tool to give color to that which remained wordless and silent, but that which is fully and alive, which I experience in the many hours of inner listening to the cosmos.

In my teenage years I keenly became aware of the desire to be artistic as well as to teach access to these creative realms. Art to me was a way and a tool at once. As words, as well as music, became a tool which transported myself as well as the reader or listener to a higher ground.

However, all of the forms of art which I have pursued in my life, developed as an expression out of the wellspring of my inner silence.

It is when we allow ourselves to revel in stillness, which takes us on an upward spiraling journey to touch the heavens and eventually the face of God, if we go deep enough, that inspires us and truly gives us the artistic power that then touches those who seek inspiration from the art that we deliver.

Most people are caught in a 9 to 5 routine, having followed the dictate of our society to remain focused on that which is visible and palpable. They appear to rely on the other 20% of civilization to tap into the unseen – those who allow themselves deep moments of silence, and who practice the capacity to shift into another world with a wavelike perception – from where they can bring back morsels of inspiration, which then reminds the other 80% of the population of the eternal with themselves.

Artistic expression shifts the artists' and the viewer alike from a particle perception, a linear mind-set to a



wave-like perception.

Artists and the mystics alike live within a more fluid world. Because of the many facets and many layers and levels to be found in this upward journey, that which is expressed is equally manifold. There are many levels and ways of expressing art and being artistic, just like there are many layers of heaven.

Art, to me now, is related to touching the invisible, to touching the face of God, the Alpha and the Omega, the source of all it is – the One. To experience this inner stillness and then to express those states, in order to inspire others to take the journey back home is my greatest joy.

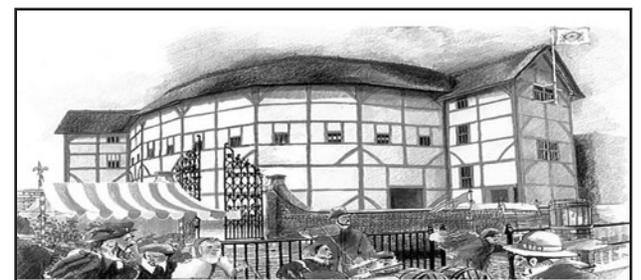
Art comes out of the stillness and imbues us with authenticity. So in order to create, I first ascend to that inner most point of reality that I can reach. Some may call it soul, some may call it God; some may call it simply – stillness.

The nature of my creative mind then desires to move this inspiration into form and dress it into clothes, in order to share this upward motion with others.

Being artistic is highly related to being a mystic to me. Art is a way towards discovering and expressing that which is divine. ♦2013

Written exclusively for "The Soul of the American Actor."

**ILONA SELKE** - International author, seminar leader, lecturer, and musician. Ms. Selke teaches seminars bi-annually in Germany and Switzerland, and annually in Florida, Bali, and on Hawaii in German and English. She has also taught seminars in: America, Australia, India, England, France, Canada, Mexico, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Bali. She and her husband are co-founders and directors of Living From Vision®, teaching personal growth seminars for the development of holographic problem transformation, and spiritualizing relationships. Together with her husband, they have built an inspirational Seminar Retreat Center on the Northshore of Bali called Shangri-la, as well as an additional Spa, also called Shangri-la in Ubud. Since 1991, Ms. Selke and Mr. Paris have studied the lives of dolphins in their natural habitats throughout the world. Her books, *Wisdom of the Dolphins, Dolphins, Love & Destiny*, and *Alin Learns To Use His Imagination*. Her CD's include *In One We Are*, "Himalayan Soul," "Mantras of Shangri-La," "The Best of Mind Journey Music" with Don Paris. www.ilonaselke.com, (360)-387-5713, (360)-387-5713



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# Passing the Michael Chekhov 'Ball' onto another Generation of Artists

BY LISA DALTON

**A**t some point in my life, I dedicated myself to blatantly and publicly cultivating the spirituality within Michael Chekhov's technique, while simultaneously sharing how to practically apply it to the business, directing, and life coaching.

I ruffled a lot of feathers "endangering the growth of the technique" by associating it publicly with spirituality. My work has been mocked as fluff from 'LaLa Land.' I have been chastised for using it to make money in film and television instead of purely for stage. Trying to convince a fear-driven industry that a healthy, body-mind-spirit training is possible, practical and productive often seemed as hopeless as Sisyphus eternally pushing his stone up the hill. Instilling a sense of social responsibility for the entertainment we produce, also impossible. And yet, I believe this has been "mine to do."

Is it just me, or does everyone who commits their life to the arts believe they have something powerful to contribute – an answer to a human yearning that if people would just listen to – pay attention to – open up to? If so, is it hubris to think that our answers are real? Is it Sisyphean to undertake convincing the world of your idea? My final answers: yes and no.

Through Mr. Chekhov's spiritually driven ideas, I recognize now that mock and attack were gifts to guide me on the rocky path.

In 1969, my actor training began with a wonderful Thespian teacher who was all about Viola Spolin's improvisational play. College was filled with technically classical work and heady Stanislavsky that left me useless. I dove headstrong into the radical avant-garde of the 1970's – Theatre of the Absurd, Grotowski, circus arts, gymnastics, dance, mime, and stage combat. I trained with Richard Schechner, Charles Ludlum, and Mabou Mines – and was encouraged to come to New York.

In 1976, two weeks after arriving in the Big Apple, my skills landed me a four year stint as an original company member of the still-amazing Bond Street Theatre, doing a thousand performances of bold commedia archetypes in socio-political plays in venues around the country. And to hedge my Broadway bets, I continued my "internal technique" training at HB in 'Method' classes and the Meisner approach.

I was forever straddling the internal versus external paradigms and discovered I could convert the circus and combat skills I learned into being a clown and stuntwoman.

One audition I went to called for a mime-actress for "The Fox" on 46th Street in Manhattan. The director/male

lead was Wilfred A. Hunt. Billie Lorient was the third in our trio. Once I was cast, the three of us poured four months of 30 hour-a-week rehearsals and all our resources into it, as Wilfred led us through strange exercises that created powerful, non-verbal communication with the subtlest movement. Energy radiated across the stage into the audience. The finale of a 25-foot birch fatally falling on me was stunning. The excitement about this production was high because Wilfred and Billie had spent two years adapting the D. H. Lawrence novel into a silent play.

During final dress rehearsal, the Fire Department burst in, threw our period-costumed selves out, and taped the building shut. The theatre's management had left the subcellar in substandard conditions. When audience showed up the next night, no show – it broke our hearts.

I was devastated. What I knew was this: it had been a truly holy, healing, and uplifting experience. We had played the soul of a story in a rich and intense atmosphere, radiating powerful gestures and receiving deep, lingering images that were shared among the cast. I felt the DNA of the cave artist. I felt the power of the shaman, the influence of the teacher, the defender of all causes that all storytellers share.

One day at an AEA audition, after performing my one minute and fifty-eight second monologue, the director asked me for something contrasting. I delivered it. He asked for some of my circus/movement skills. Done. He asked for a classic. The Bard was proud. Twenty minutes of dialects, tears, styles, and improv were delivered like pieces of cake. Finally, he sat me down and said: "Lisa, can I be honest with you?" Of course, far too few people are, so please. "You took every direction I gave you without flinching." I felt a touch of hubris. "And that's why I can't use you." He continued. "I don't think you surprised yourself once! I think you need to go back to Acting 101."

I was floored and deeply grateful. His courageous honesty inspired me to change my life.

I confided with my clown partner Trisha Gray and she asked: "Have you read Chekhov?" Somewhat surprised that she should think I had never read Russia's most notable playwright, I answered: "I graduated from a major university in a major theatre department. Of course I have

read Cherry Orchard!" The AHA moment! She kindly placed into my hands a copy of *To The Actor* by Anton's nephew, Michael Chekhov.

In moments of glancing over the pages I was filled to my soul's brim with amazement. I understood everything he wrote – I had done it in "The Fox!" Thank you Trisha!

"Who is teaching this?" I asked. Trisha suggested Ted Pugh might if we got a space. Ted Pugh agreed and we gathered and eventually it led to our finding space at the Rudolf Steiner High School where some of their faculty joined us.

Since Michael Chekhov was a follower of Steiner's spiritual science called Anthroposophy, two notable points in the growth of Michael Chekhov's work resulted from this. First, Ted built the Actors Ensemble from this group that continues today as a kind of performance laboratory and touring company. Second, Ted Pugh eventually brought the work to Steiner communities in East and West Berlin and it was in Berlin, in 1992, the first International Michael Chekhov Workshop was held, changing my life.

Since then, Steiner communities across the US, Europe and Russia have supported the Chekhov work, in great part, enabling its growth and development.

By 1983, Ted joined the faculty of Beatrice Straight's Michael Chekhov Studio so I consumed everything the first generation Chekhov students offered there. I cashed in using Chekhov for commercials, stunt work, lip-synching Marilyn, Madonna and Mae West, and performing some twenty-five characters for events.

In the fall of 1987, the Anthroposophical Society gave Ted Pugh the space to do a full three-month intensive. It was amazing. The powerful call of spirit that the Chekhov Technique awakened in me was not to be denied.

I moved to Los Angeles and began teaching with Mala Powers, executrix of Mr. Chekhov's Estate. I trained with George Shdanoff and for six years, Chekhov protégé Jack Colvin mentored me closely. I started a film career from scratch with a new name, but made almost forty trips to New York in a year and a half. I was too scared to give up the money.

At the end of 1989, I succumbed to my New York

*continued on page 18*

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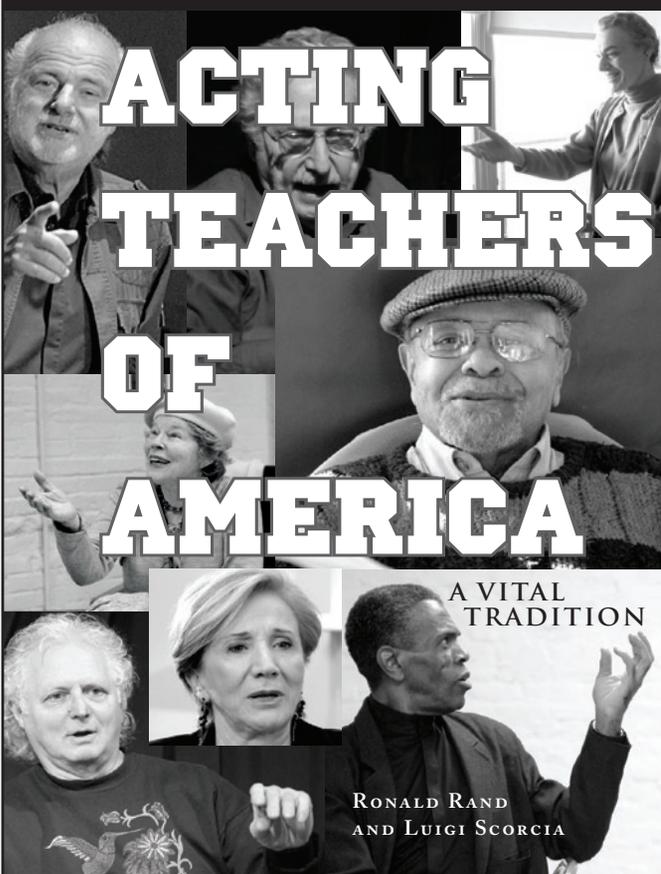
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