

DIARRHOEA

#32

Sex with Actresses

Directing your own plays is like heroin. It is also an opportunity to sleep with oodles of actresses (not to mention, stage

managers, best boys, key grips, caterers). You see, as a director, and particularly as a writer/director, you are managing at various levels the creation of a world, and in this world you are god. I don't consider it an abuse of power to sleep with the people I work with. I consider it the primary reason I work with them.

Of course it's not just about the sex. I mean, I have very strong artistic and moral principles, sort of. I love seeing people read my lines. I love seeing my imagination enacted in four dimensions, enriched and charged by the combined energies of many. It is intoxicating to stand at the epicenter of a world unfolding through your own influence. But all the while, you are painfully aware that it is fleeting, and that your director's power of influence is fleeting as well. Soon nobody will listen to you so closely, and you wonder if the actresses will have that same quality in their eyes in a few weeks time. Those big doe eyes that look to the director always seem so helpless, like they need a daddy, like they need a friend...

Considered ugly under normal circumstances, I am more than happy to capitalize upon such opportunities. I do, nevertheless, wait until the final week of production before sticking it to the cast and crew. This is not out of any abstract duty to professionalism, nor even to protect the feelings of others, but because the production is my foremost concern. And if the production sucks, there is a risk of no further productions, and no future debauchery.

I recently made the mistake of telling an actress that I was interested in her, but needed to keep my distance until the end of rehearsals. She then took my distance as a rejection of her personally, and our interactions thereafter became infused with more awkwardness than had we fucked in the first place. This is the annoying reality of sexual politics: the line between personal and professional acceptance is nil, therefore one must constantly be aware of both. Sleeping with an actress and trying to keep it a secret is no good either. Any shift in the interstellar thespian flux will be detected by the other actors, who, always looking to blame themselves, will look inward for an explanation. They will usually conclude that the strained atmosphere is due to an overall disgust with their lack of acting ability. They will then fall into a private dungeon of despair, in which they act out fantasies of confrontation with the director, wherein they demand to know "why you are treating them this way," and "how you can expect them to perform well when you don't give them sufficient feedback." One of my favorite stupid things an actor has told me was that "he didn't understand my style



ASK ANTI-THEATER!

Dear Mister Antitheater,

What are we going to do about Richard Foreman? I am really starting to think that we need to rescue him. He has created this perfect little symbol for his brain, this little talking diorama behind plexiglass, and now he is stuck there. I mean, I think we can all agree that "Paradise Hotel" was brilliant, but, Tony Torn aside, this new one is like an hour of listening to someone in solitary confinement solve a math problem.

A friend told me that the last time she went to see Foreman, she wanted to leap from the audience and run behind the plexiglass and just start throwing stuff around. I love that idea, but I am afraid that if we did it, RF would have a nervous breakdown. The night I was there, he stood at the door and watched everyone file in with that impassive look on his face. It was like we were walking into homeroom at mortuary school. Then before the play started, he came in and admonished everyone to turn off their cell phones. There had been problems with people's cells going off during the play, he said, and it had been "very distracting."

And I know cell phones are distracting and awful, but still, I was like, Hello? Wasn't that the whole point of the plexiglass in the first place? To keep us a little distracted? To divert our attention? And wasn't that also the point of the play being punctuated about 400 times with the sound of, uh, bells ringing? Bells ringing, really loud? I mean, wouldn't you think, with everything Foreman has said in interviews about wanting to frustrate our inclination to identify with characters and plot and all that stuff, that he would actually be praying for more bells ringing? More spontaneous, distracting, unplanned, really loud bells?

I am reminded of how I felt after I saw three Richard Maxwell plays in a row, all with songs in them. And then I saw this last one, the one about the boxers. And there weren't any songs in it. And it was so moving to me that he was going to give it a go, to give up the thing he does so well, the total crowd-pleasers, I mean, people just hooted and hollered during those songs. And maybe he knew before he started writing that he didn't need them, and it would all be fine, I don't know, but I am guessing that he didn't know that. I am guessing that he, like everyone who tries to make something from scratch, wasn't completely, one hundred percent sure what would happen.

And you know, when artists do that, when they give up the thing they know really well, to try something they might not know at all, it just freaks me out with joy.

Anyway. Should we try running onto the stage during the new Foreman play or no?

Love, Mistress Sparkle

of directing and needed more attention." At the time of this statement rehearsals had not even begun!

Actors are prone to all sorts of irrational behavior. Their apotheosized promiscuity is but one symptom of a larger psychological conflict. The actor's brain, agonized in its daily attempt to unite reality and make-believe, begins to secrete all sorts of inappropriate chemicals, producing a myriad array of sociopath behavior. People punch holes in walls, spontaneously weep, fall in love, deliberately run into objects denser than they are and suffer injuries. The best thing a director can do is pretend to be above this chaos. People will ask you for advice in all types of things (least of which being the actual production) as if your willingness to put on a play gave you credibility in all areas of life. It is important to not disappoint your cast: you must make yourself conform to the image that they project upon you, if you are going to successfully woo them into the hayloft.

During production, I devote considerable energy to making myself seem eccentric and hip. I accomplish this with provocative hair styles and clothing, and by regularly making grandiloquent quasi-philosophical statements. For instance, while speaking to an actor I might stop myself to say, "a perfect metaphor is the aspiration of all religions." I will make such statements casually, as if it was common

knowledge. Such antics allow me the detachment necessary to avert premature sex, as well cultivate a mystique that makes me appealing for the time when we really do get it on.

During these first difficult weeks of not having sex with the actresses, I find solace in small sensual pleasures: guiding their bodies across stage, showing them how to hold their hips, de-stressing backrubs and all manners of Stanislavskian seduction ("say the line as if you were breathing affectionately on your lover's erect penis"). I also will bide my time sleeping with the assistant director or stage manager, although I find this a bit risky. Due to the close quarters a director shares with his assistants, they may realize that you don't have any idea what you're doing, or even deduce that you are completely without moral fabric (the personal qualities of an artist need have no bearing on the moral quality of his work, however. Take the examples of Fassbinder or Picasso; assholes in their own right, but capable of moral masterpieces).

A week before opening night, the actors start memorizing their lines. Everyone is scared and claims to not understand how time works. It is at this point that you begin to loosen the moorings of your craft and watch it sail on its own. Ideally, which is never the case. This is the point when I panic and begin to insult the cast and crew, throw tan-

Dearest Mistress--

Your letter thrills me, but my answer to your question is NO. Mister Foreman has rehearsed long and hard in that theater and if the work you find there is dull and lifeless, you must accept that it is dull and lifeless and FORTIFIED. Rehearsal, repetition, tradition: these are FORTIFICATIONS which cannot be destroyed through mere spontaneous interruption. This kind of attack only result in further fortification, and thus further dull lifelessness. Now, I do not think the Foreman Case is beyond help—quite the opposite in fact. I did not think the show was entirely dull and lifeless, but I do agree that the Foreman Case is serious and requires immediate attention.

If you truly want to help this artist, there are three ways you may attack his rut. (I always assume there are three ways to do everything, and if there are more than three ways I just tell you about three of them, because three is such a good number for advice.)

1. FROM THE INSIDE -- Stage an EXACT REPRODUCTION of the show currently playing at the Ontological. Adjust nothing except what must be adjusted according to your resources. Invite Mister Foreman through an anonymous letter. Whether your show is good or bad, the reflection of his own work will be startling and horrifying. The only danger is that once you enter the INSIDE you will lose your bearing and become someone in solitary confinement doing a math problem.

2. FROM THE OUTSIDE -- Exactly the same as above, but stage the show in a way totally alien to anything you have ever seen Foreman do. You needn't even use the text of Now That Communism Is Dead—you can use one of the texts to which you can legally obtain the rights. As is the case with all attacks from the OUTSIDE, this will be less devastating, but easier, and hopefully will reveal to Mister Foreman (invited by maybe not-so-anonymous letter) the beauty of newness.

3. FROM OVER THERE -- Don't invite Mister Foreman ANYWHERE. Don't go see his plays. Write letters to underground publications about your sadness and confusion. Brood re: Foreman's neurotic demise. Create a play about an artist who, through mindless repetition, loses everything that once made him beautiful. Brood, write a third act in which the artist overcomes his dull lifeless tradition and is reborn in the grand glory of newness. Feel freed from your obsession with Foreman. Become famous. DIE YOUNG.

I realize that these solutions are more time-consuming than jumping up in the middle of a performance and kicking some ass, but VIOLENCE DOESN'T SOLVE ANYTHING. The revolution requires slowness, dedication, and wiliness.

--ANTI THEATER

Got Theater Problems?
YOU TOO CAN ASK ANTI THEATER!
Antitheater@hotmail.com

trums and walk off the set in disgust. Ironically, this also the point when everyone really starts sweating me for sex, and the time when I finally acquiesce. Because time has all but run out, everyone sort of abandons themselves. Everything comes together at the last minute and so do the people, because they realize that the world they have inhabited, playfully and leisurely up till then, is now ending. Even as the curtain rises, the truth of its closing weighs in.

During the post-performance bouts of drinking, I allow myself to let my guard down and open up to the cast. Sometimes I even have a drink or two myself. I tell everyone how great they were, and they thank me for my wonderful work as well. I have sex with someone and go home, or vice versa. And then it all is over. And then I go to sleep.

Theater is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, and what's more, become a new person. After the charade is done with, I spent the next few weeks feeling perfectly ordinary, my mind swimming with memories of a rich world of which I am now removed. There is no final product to theater, merely constant process. And so after a week or two, I finally step out of that bitter-sweet cage of memory and set to work on a new project. This one, bigger, more complicated, with a larger female cast...

Nick Jones

MALL MORALITY:

A Call for Theatre Homogenous

As Americans, as New Yorkers, we are surrounded by a rapidly enclosing homogeneity. Storefronts are redesigned into mall-like quiescence. The public outcry against controversial or dissenting art keeps our public displays as homogenous as possible. Our society encourages us to consume homogenous objects, to discourse about them, which is to say about the nothingness we all share. As malls replace public space with private, our civil rights disappear. In the mall, we are bound to mall logic, mall laws. Distribution of any text or use of cameras is illegal; stores may distribute perfume samples and play candid camera but shoppers must simply shop. The lights are fluorescent. Mirrors reflect. We look at our selves and one another to confirm that we fit into attractive patterns. We buy.

As artists, we have always known that this homogeneity is stifling in all its forms, and affects the way we live no matter how hard we steel ourselves against it. What is our response? Theatre Homogenous, a theatre that explodes this homogeneity into a new, dissenting space and paints it in a full-spectrum light that exposes it for the sham that it is. Theatre Homogenous uses the laws of the homogenous space against its wishes and attempts to draw the people in that space into a new frame of mind, revealing the mutability of reality and the strangeness of consumerism.

On the evening of December 20, 2000, we brought the Theatre Ho-

mogenous to the Manhattan Mall. Dressed as homogenous consumers, we swung our shopping bags back and forth as we walked through identical hallways. People scurried back and forth around us, fulfilling their last-minute Christmas mandate. We reached the top of the Mall, fanned out in a circle in the atrium where Santa Claus had bestowed his eight dollar an hour wishes on budding consumers not an hour before, and began to sing our Christmas Carol:

Silent Night
Android Night
We just buy, and buy, and buy
Forget debt and poverty
Babes and hunks we strive to be
So we'd better consume
It's our job to consume

Silent Night
Android Night
Hug the arms of corporate might
Who cares if a child made these?
I'm in consumer ecstasy
Don't ask me what it means
Please just hand me those jeans

We then handed out cards detailing our message and the lyrics to the songs. Within five minutes we were escorted out of the mall by security guards. When approached by the guards, we asked them "Where's the Gap?" They answered, "On 34th street."

THE GAP is a perfectly ironic symbol of consumerism: both the pinnacle of consumer homogeneity and (more literally) the space between: the space between being a consumer

and being a human. On the way down the stairs, the plainclothes (suit and tie) head of security insisted on singing the real lyrics to Silent Night along with our own. In some further GAP of understanding between him and us, he did not sing along with the second verse, as he did not know the lyrics. We wondered if he had the ability to listen to the words at all, to even realize that we were not singing the song he sang automatically. This gap was further clarified by the fact that we were thrown out for "soliciting," while our propaganda solicited 'buy nothing'.

It is still legal to pantomime actions in malls, and it is legal to sing in them. Theatre Homogenous proposes a nationwide movement to perform insta-opera in these purchase palaces. Using our last remaining freedoms, we will act out and solicitously sing a plea not to buy. What better backdrop for a populist opera than a mall's fountains, marble turrets and grand ceilings? America's homogenous spaces offer us a uniform set; the songs are sung to equally homogenous tunes. Imagine groups, 60 android strong, from Manhattan Mall to the Red Wood Forest Mall bellowing new anti-consumerist anthems, distributed via the Internet. Theatre Homogenous performs for abstinence from consumption, turning the laws of homogenous spaces against themselves.

Jen Mitas and
Todd Polenberg

THE junior PROJECT

THE FLORIDA PROJECT
Text & direction by Tory Vasquez
Thru Mar 18. See LISTINGS for info.

The performers in THE FLORIDA PROJECT are enjoying themselves. They stand stiffly and deliver lines, they smile small secret smiles as they do the simple little choreographed dances, they do not apologize for the characters they portray and their "portrayals" have a half-finished quality, a double presence of the actor and the role.

This is a style of acting, a particularly contemporary phenomenon of choreographed, non-emotive stand-and-deliver. You can also see this plays of other contemporary theater-makers (Richard Maxwell perhaps best-known among them) and it seems strangely derivative of a particular dead-pan we all watched on Saturday Night Live when we were twelve years old. I would like to call this style "Junior Acting."

Junior Acting, when it avoids irony, can be very beautiful. The participants (and there is a sense that the performers, directors, writers are all participants, somehow on equal footing) acknowledge that they are involved in a game; the fact that the game has no higher meaning allows it—an empty vessel like the oversized fish-tank centerpiece—to contain all hopes. Junior actors, as individuals, are not sublimated by their roles, but made more visible. This, as opposed to the "professional" school, where an actor's worth is measured by their transformative ability. Junior actors are like friends pulling some stunt, pretending to be an alligator tamer for a moment, for your pleasure and for theirs. There is something non-invasive about it, non-coercive and totally convincing.

The "Junior" in Junior Actor does not connote any lack of skill or training, but merely an absence of the frame, an independence from emotional mimicry, and a skepticism about psychology. Bertolt Brecht pulled the frills off the proscenium and exposed stagehands, backstage machinery, and the sawdust behind the scene. These Junior actors, analogously, do the choreography and simultaneously MAKE THE CHOREOGRAPHY VISIBLE. There is a simplicity and an honesty in this sort of double-dealing: the characters do a dance, the choreography is clearly imposed and therefore clearly seen, and shimmering between the two things are the performers, enjoying themselves IMMENSELY like you do when you learn to do the Electric Slide at a party and suddenly you are sliding, a borrowed gesture, in synch with twenty others and feeling a rush of pleasure at the movement of your own body.

This is what Tory Vasquez' new play is like.

Yelena Gluzman

and welcome to
Willie Lumiere,
cousin and
now editor
along with
the Bros. Lumiere

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reviews and listing
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Bros. Lumiere, eds.

LISTINGS

ECCO PORCO

A Mabou Mines work-in-progress.
Text and direction by Lee Bruer and
choreography by Mary Overlie.
LAST WEEK! Thru March 18,
Wed-Sun at 8. PS122, 150 1st Ave.,
473-0559. \$15

SAVED

Banned in London in 1965, Edward
Bond's stark play returns to New York
for the first time since its opening.
Directed by the legendary Robert
Woodruff. LAST WEEK! Thru March
18, Tues-Fri at 8, Sat at 2 and 8,
Sun at 3 and 7. American Place
Theater, 111 W. 46th St.,
239-6200. \$45

THE FLORIDA PROJECT

Tory Vasquez' lovely new play, with a
great cast including Juliana Francis,
Kristin Kosmas, and Richard Maxwell.
LAST WEEK! Thurs-Sun at 7:30,
Thru March 18. PS122, 150 1st Ave.,
477-5288. \$15

THE BACCHAE 2.1/ A MOUTHFUL OF BIRDS

Rude Mechanicals presents 2 adapta-
tions of the myth of Dionysus: Charles
Mee, Jr.'s adaptation of Euripides'
Bacchae, staged by ambitious San Fran
director Ken Watt, and a dance-theatre
piece by Caryl Churchill & David Lan,
inspired by the myth and directed by
Rebecca Taylor. Performed in rotating
rep, March 21-April 22, Wed-Mon at 7.
Flea Theatre, 41 White St, 226-2407.
\$19/\$12

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY!

Richard Foreman's play "about" nice
shoes and a dog in a box. Starring Tony
Torn and Jay Smith. Tues-Sun at 8, thru
April 29. See it before the inevitable last
month ticket rationing. Ontological-
Hysteric in St. Mark's Church at 2nd
Ave and 10th St. 533-4650. \$15

LITTLE THEATER #13

Kristin Kosmas & Judy Elkan produce
this fun variety show monthly. Always
interesting and the audience is always a
who's who of NYC off-kilter theater.
This one, #13, includes "Full Moon
Superbowl Tits", with Tom Murrin,
Gary Wilmes and David Cote.
ONE NIGHT ONLY: Monday,
March 19 at 8pm. TONIC,
107 Norfolk Street, 358-7504. \$7

ORGY OF THE DEAD

Trav SD and Frank Cwiklik provide an
adaptation of an Ed Wood script with a
boy, a girl, a wolfman, a mummy, go-go
dancers, and the Emperor of the Dead.
Fridays at 10pm, thru April 13. Surf
Reality, 172 Allen, 673-4182. \$10

SOPHIE CALLE

A gallery exhibit of "Double Game," a
series of photographs taken while fol-
lowing strangers in the city.
Paula Cooper, 534 W 21st St,
255-1105, thru Mar 24. FREE

OASIS

Chashama presents a weekly series,
featuring Monday play readings, Tues-
day dance, Wednesday experimental
film, and Thursday experimental music.
It really is an oasis in its Disneyland
location, and very worth checking out.
Chashama, 135 W. 42nd St,
www.chashama.org.

in the digital age

FREE LISTINGS

BUILDER'S ASSOCIATION

The Whitney presents PULSE: a festival of digitally inspired performance. The first in their line-up is the Builder's Association, who made waves with last year's large scale JET LAG. This time they will show excerpts from their latest work-in-progress, XTRAVAGANZA. Monday March 26 at 8pm, doors open at 7:30, no tickets or reservations. The Whitney at Philip Morris, 120 Park Ave. at 42nd Street, FREE.

THE LOCUTION RETROSPECTIVE

Bonnie Marracca (editor of Performing Arts Journal) hosts this web site, which features special digital video interviews with Mac Wellman and Meredith Monk, among others. www.location1.org and yes, it is FREE.

THE DOT COM FUNERAL

The Living Newspaper Theater, a group who "reads the newspaper so you don't have to," will have a nice funeral for the dot com industry at the headquarters of the deceased, Josh Harris' pseudo.com. 69 dead since the passing of pseudo.com and now this: liturgy in HTML, mournful yet frothy dance numbers, and post-decadent fun. Held at Harris' infamous loft. Tuesday, March 13 at 7:30, 353 Broadway, FREE.

The emergency gazette
is a free bi-weekly
broadsheet on
performance.

it is a forum for
theater philosophy,
urgent reveries,
performative revol-
utions, heated inter-
views, and musing
manifestos.

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an ugly duckling
presse release