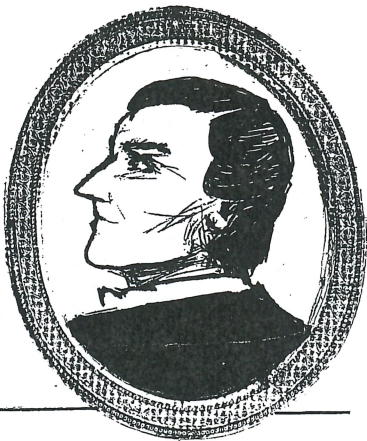




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Bros. Lumiere, eds.

EMERGENCY is a FREE and BI-WEEKLY gazette, providing an immediate response to what's really happening in theater, film and performance. EMERGENCY is not a consumer guide. The idea: To liberate the form of critical response from the limitation of conventional review etiquette. EMERGENCY seeks: essays, run-on reviews, manifestos, dialogues with colleagues, proposals for "impossible theater". Please send us word of open rehearsals, guerilla acts, collaborations, shows, and screenings.

GAZETTE No.6

November 24, 1999.

EMERGENCY

VICEROY

VERSO:

Reviews

- *I Love Dick
- *Gale Gates

*Portrait of an Imbecile
*The Hour We Knew Nothing
Of Each Other

Listings
too.

RICHARD FOREMAN SAYS: "WHY AM I DOING THIS AGAIN?" <PART TWO>

RICHARD FOREMAN is still the director of the ONTOLOGICAL-HYSTERIC THEATRE in residence at St. Mark's Church. The following is the continuation of an excerpt from a talk he gave to a group of theater students on October 25, 1999. Part One of this talk was published in EMERGENCY No.5, Nov. 10, 1999. **Back issues are available.**

Anything I say, anything any artist says should be taken with a grain of salt. Because now I'm sitting here, I want to look good in front of you to a certain extent. When I'm actually directing a play everything is up for grabs. You know what, I think one weakness I have is that I don't want to be embarrassed in front of people by looking stupid. So I want my plays to look like... I want to convince myself, wow, that Richard is a great artist, he's smart. But that may be a problem with my work.

(In response to a student's question about making controversial theater:)

I suspect you want justification for taking a kind of Fassbinder approach, taking this classic material and thinking well I can speak to these people and I can do something interesting to their heads by just shifting it slightly, refreshing it for them.

Obviously, I don't have to live your life, I don't have to suffer the attacks and the no money and the no support that you might suffer if you do only what thrills you. But, you're talking to somebody who can only say your only chance in life is to do what really thrills you, and know that if you keep doing what thrills you, if it's right and if it's meant to be eventually a few people will pick up on it. You'll find a way. But how can you look forward to spending your whole life cheating yourself of the chance of finding out if what really thrills me cannot make a real difference in the art of the theater in the 20th or 21st century, okay. Well, you can make any other choice if you decide well, yeah, I gotta eat.

I make no secret of the fact that I knew for my whole life that I would not be rich, but my family had enough money, my father died and so forth, I would not starve to death. I've often wondered what would have happened to me if I really had to worry about starving to death. And I'm saying this not to toot my horn, believe me, but some people have said to me—oh you're a hero to us because you kept doing what you really should be doing. I don't know if I would have kept doing it if

I had to worry on a deeper level about how I would survive. Under my circumstances I certainly felt an obligation. There was pressure when I was a young man. My parents used to say, "Richard why aren't you doing what Neil Simon does, why are you doing those things that nobody can understand?" Since they were also giving me a little money, that was my little psychological trip. But I felt I had a real obligation to try and do what inspired me in other 20th Century art, not so much the theater. I would read Rilke, or the philosophers, or I would see paintings by Bacon or Balthus. And I would say: No, those people are reaching into the fire with their tongs and taking out the white hot ingots of what their real scary desires are. And they are daring to take those ingots out of their own fire and say: here it is, you may be burned by it, I may be burned by it, but I've got to show you the stuff from my heart. How can I say anything to you except that you must do what you think you should do?

You know what the answer is. Can I have the courage to hold out? If you really like it how can you deny that part of yourself? You know that you can survive five years or ten years. But if you don't pay homage to that most honest, most rigorous, most outrageous thing inside yourself you're going to have cheated yourself out of the most important possibility in your life. At a certain point you're going to try and try and it doesn't work. You can't sustain it anymore. In essence it is another human tragedy. Societies have always created human tragedies. How many people have ever in any society gotten to flower the way they really should flower? That's reality. But you certainly can try for a while. It's grotesque not to try for a while.

Generally, when a play opens, of course I'm wrong, but I think I've solved all the problems. That's that and I always want to get into the next thing. If a play doesn't work, I won't open it. I have not done a play where anywhere from a week before the opening to two days before the opening I didn't call up my managers and say: Am I going to lose my funding, I can't open this play. I tell the actors, I'm an honorable person, I'll pay but unless something happens I'm not opening this play, it's too embarrassing to me, it's too bad. And then, up till now, at the last minute something has always happened, I think of something to do that turns everything upside down and makes it work. Increasingly as I get older, I feel like I'm on a tightrope, constantly just about to slip off and just at the last minute, just by accident, by the grace of God, I get the little apple that's going to feed the piece. Somehow, in the last 32 years, I've been able to snatch it out of the garbage at the last minute, always, but this time it ain't gonna work. And I'm always thinking that.

Now I've done a couple of plays behind the glass walls. First time I ever

did that was at the Public Theater. The night Martha came to take the official pictures. In the middle of taking the pictures, half way through the play, I shout out: "Stop! Martha, I'm sorry, this is so awful I've got to think about this play. Actors, I need some time to think." The next morning I say this isn't working. But it should work. Maybe if we put it behind a wall of glass, like a display case. Everything that was dead that wasn't working would suddenly become like a displayed jewel. And to me that made it work. We put up the glass wall the next day and everything that had been bad just worked. It was making a statement about a certain deadness that I think the theater is always about in a funny way.

Other times at the last minute we're rehearsing and the music is running and it isn't working. I was getting so used to the music. I go home and I find three different loops that have a totally different energy. There's nobody dumb to do it, and I say rehearse, I have some new music and I'll try playing it. And all of a sudden if it's disruptive in the right way, it works.

In PEARLS FOR PIGS, we were rehearsing, it got fairly late. We had a big stage and six tables scattered around the stage. We had been rehearsing for eight weeks, the whole play was staged. I said it isn't working. What do we do? You know what, we're going to take those six tables and line them up right down the middle of the stage. I don't want to change the blocking. Actors, do the play. How can we do the play those tables are in the way. Do the play! And they did it. All of a sudden the play came alive and transcended all the obviousness and stupidity of my intelligent staging. It was like throwing sand and that grit made everything come to life. So often times those solutions are pretty radical.

The center of my events is organizing this force field, so it is making an adjustment on that force field. Sometimes it's also telling the actors that they're overacting and trying to convince us instead of just letting the language lead them. But generally it has to do with changing a crucial element in that force field.

You'd think after doing this for thirty years I'd be able to anticipate that. And no! I find myself making the same mistakes every play and having to reinvent the same fucking wheel in every play at the last minute. Oh, of course!

(Question: Have you ever considered giving up?)

All the time. I would give up the theater if I did not need it, because I am a shy, reclusive person I would never get out in the world. I would never see people. And I need that, like anybody else. And the theater is the only thing that forces me out into the world. I've often thought

that I want to retire and just paint. But that would be the death of me. Like all these people who retire and die a few years later.

I'm going to go to rehearsal in two weeks and I'm sure that after the first week I'm going to say, "Oh, why am I doing this again, it's not worth it, it's so hard, so many pressures. Why are you doing it?" And then if I'm not doing it, I think: "Oh my God, I've got to do something."

(Question: What about teaching?)

People always ask me that and I've resisted because a couple of times a year it's fine. But I start to bore myself. I know I'm saying that I'm saying things to you, well with some differences. But I know that the same persona is here that was there when I was talking to other people in other places. And it's a big ego trip for me, right. I enjoy being here. Maybe some of you think I'm a fool, some of you think I seem smart, titillating... Whatever it is I'm getting off on it. And I don't trust it. That's not really where the interesting stuff in me is coming from.

I was going to say, all I really like to talk about is my work, but that's not really true, I can talk about a lot of things. But, I don't want to be a teacher, maybe if I have to someday I would. And I know it would be good for people that I'm teaching, I could give something to people.

But I'm still struggling with the problem of having failed to deliver what I want to deliver as an artist. And I'm sure I never will. I'm always satisfied with every play, basically, that I've done. But I'm not satisfied that I've really broken through and done something unimaginable.

I think I did it in the beginning. When I first started making theater the way I'm making it, I had a vision. I went to Yale Drama School as a playwright and I was imitating Brecht, Arthur Miller one year, Murray Shiskel one year. But I remember coming home one day and thinking: this is ridiculous. Really, if I walked into the theater tonight what would I want to see going on the stage. 'Cuz even then I was bored. And I was sitting at my little desk and about that fast I had a vision... of something, some kind of tension on the stage based on actors on this side of the stage looking at each other and twisting in some kind of funny manner, and I said that's what I want it to be. And at that point I started writing a totally different kind of play. For the first couple of years everybody thought I was crazy. But I had the support of the underground film movement in those days. That finally gave me the space to put on my own play. That was a breakthrough, I really think I was doing something in the beginning that I had never seen before in the theater and I don't think anybody else had seen in the theater.

For the last twenty years I've been saying: Okay Richard we need another shot of that stuff. So, I walk into a theater tonight what would I really like to see going on on the stage. But it hasn't happened. (He laughs) It hasn't happened yet. But I would like to think that someday it could happen. That's why I'm doing this project with Sophie [Haviland]. I'm sure it will pull back to being more like what I do. But, you know, I'll wait for something else.

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LISTINGS



F I L M

SECRET SUNSHINE SCHEDULE

Slovanian dance-theater troupe Beton-tanc creates this piece in a huge aquarium. 4 shows only. Nov 26 - 28 at 7:30. Nov 28 at 3pm. La MaMa, 74A E 4th St., 475-7710. \$15-20.

MILLENNIUM'S NEIGHBORHOOD

An alternative festival to the Times Square Disney-led millennial celebration. Hosted by Reverend Billy. Dec 4-11. PERMITLESS PARADE Bindlestiff Cirkus, Dance Liberation Front and many others meet at Charas (9th bet. B&C), march to Judson through adoring crowds. Dec 4 at 6pm. ROMEO SIERRA TANGO Rinde Eckert. Dec 8 at 7:30. DAILY PRANKS at ATM machines, billboards, and capitalist meccas. Based at Judson Church, 55 Washington Square South. Call 414-5071 for more info, or see www.revilly.com.

THE ROARING GIRLS

A forum discussing how women directors explore classic texts. Panelists include: Joanna Adler, Migdalia Cruz, Shirley Fishman, Kristin Linklater, Elizabeth Marvel, Annie B-Parson & Moe Schell. A benefit for The Roaring Girls, a project of New Georges. Mon, Dec 6 at 7pm. Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St., 620-0113. \$15.

IS THERE LIFE ON MARS: A MYSTERY PLAY

Legendary Russian performer Piotr Mamonov "may be the closest thing to anarchy Moscow has tolerated since 1917," said Rolling Stone. Only two performances! Dec 17&18 at 8. Tribeca Perf Arts Center, 199 Chambers, 346-8510. \$35-70.

1839

Gale Gates et al. present a multi-media extravaganza, including sophisticated sound and puppets. Starting Nov 11. Tue-Sat 9pm. 37 Main St., B'klyn (F train to York) 718-522-4597. \$15-\$25.

I LOVE DICK

Mabou Mines present Chris Kraus' play, adapted and directed by Leslie Mahn. With Jan Wesley Harding, and others. Thru Nov 28 at 8pm. 718-398-4882. PS122-Mabou Mines Studio, 151 1st Av.

IN THE BLOOD

Suzan-Lori Parks' new play begins the Public Theater's surprisingly interesting season. Tues-Fri 8pm. Sat 2pm & 8pm. Sun 2&7. Public Theater. 425 Lafayette. 239-6200.

TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS

Not often do you get to see Odon von Horvath's classic. Dir. by Avra Sidiropoulou. Dec 8-11, Wed-Sat 8, Sat 3pm. Horace Mann Theater, 120th & B'way, 854-3859. \$5-10.

LOVE SONGS

David Rousseve and REALITY stage a ballroom where "memories mingle with mythology." Dec 8 - 11 at 7:30. BAM, 718-636-4100. \$15, 30, 40.

MORNING, NOON & NIGHT

If you're into Spalding Gray, this is his newest. Sun, Mon at 7:30. Vivian Beaumont Theater. 150 W. 65th. 239-6200. \$25-45.

CHARLIE VICTOR ROMEO

Text taken from "black box" cockpit voice recorder transcripts of six major airline emergencies. Extended run starts: Dec 3. Thu-Sat at 8pm. Collective: Unconscious. 145 Ludlow St. 254-5277. \$10, \$7/invite.

GEOMETRY OF MIRACLES

Canadian avant gardist Robert Lepage presents a piece pondering Frank Lloyd Wright and Georgi Gurdjieff. Nov 30, Dec 1-4 at 7:30, Dec 5 at 3. BAM, 718-636-4100. \$20, 35, 50.

THE BEARD

Lawrence Sakharow's staging of Michael McClure's text, closed for obscenity in 1960, is playing an extended run at LaMama. Nov 18-Dec 5, Thu-Sat at 8, Sun at 3:30. La MaMa, The Club. Box office: 74A E 4th St., 475-7710. \$12.

REQUIEM FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Branislav says: "If you have never seen Kazuo Ohno, who must be about 90 now, this is a must for the Outstanding Performers of the 20th Century list." Dec 9-11. Japan Society. 333 E 47th St., 832-1155.

Invite EMERGENCY to your performance.

FILMS AT ANTHOLOGY

AFRICAN DIASPORA FILM FEST Nov 26 - Dec 2. Jean-Luc Godard: MADE IN USA ('66) Dec 4 and 5 at 4. NEW RUSSIAN FILM FESTIVAL MOLOKH, Sokurov on Hitler, Dec 11 at 3. SHORT FILMS incl. "parallel cinema" by Yukhananov, et. al. Dec 12 at noon. \$8 / \$5 Students Anthology Film Archives, 2nd & 2nd, 505-5110

EXPERIMENTAL FILM AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

Saturday, Nov 27: Rare films by JACK SMITH at noon. BRUCE BAILLIE (essence of film!) at 2. KEN KESEY & Merry Pranksters at 4. Nov 28: Electronic Films all day! Program of 60's film runs through Dec 5. Call for exact film schedule: 570-3676. Tix \$6, or \$12.50 including the exhibit. Whitney Museum, Madison & 75th St.

ROBIN BECK MEM' L CINEMA

Wack films every Tuesday at 9pm. Nov 30: SIT ON A POTATO PAN... 16 mm's by recluse JAMES OTIS. Collective: Unconscious. 145 Ludlow.

BAM CINEMATEK

VANYA ON 42nd STREET, Malle Dec 1, at 6&9. NÔ, LePage, Dec 3, at 6&9. FELLINI'S CASANOVA, Fellini Dec 7 at 6&9. Brooklyn Academy of Music. 30 LaFayette Ave, Brooklyn, 718-623-2770. \$8.50, students \$5.

PRATT FILM SERIES

FREE, every Wednesday at 8:30pm. DEC 1: REPORT. unconventional narratives by BALDESARI, FRAMPTON, RESETARITS. DEC 8: CINE-POVERA: propositions on film by Luis A. Recoder. Pratt Inst. of Art&Design; 718-636-3422 Engineering bldg. 379 Dekalb, rm. 371.

LA VISTA

A downtown cinema club open to public. "The problem is not to show experimental films, but to show films experimentally." Films every Sunday at 7:30. 303 E.8th Street, #1R. FREE.

GODARD AT THE YWCA

ALPHAVILLE City of love. Dec 4 & 5 at 4pm. YWCA, 610 Lex. at 53rd. 735-9717. \$7.

Reviews!

The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other

By Peter Handke, trl. Gitta Honegger Mad Dog Theater Company Dir. Phil Soltanoff Oct 28-Nov 20. Over.

You are in a rectangular matte gray room with a bunch of strangers, high ceilings and a rectangle on the floor that you hear people constantly refer to as a square. A plaza, you realize, a park.

Snoop and Nazo come on stage and begin rapping. "Educate the educator" is the general message, but you can't concentrate on words, amazed by the perfect rhythm of the accompaniment, produced solely by the lips of one of the men.

THE HOUR WE KNEW NOTHING OF EACH OTHER begins. Mad Dog actors start the journeys of their characters by crossing the rectangular square. Bertie Ferdman and James Stanley are sharp and unique, walking, crawling, jumping and falling in slow motion.

The general color of the space is gray, complimented by occasional black and white of some actors' clothes. The shadows and half-light work well, except for moments when you see something but not enough to know you were meant to see it. Once, in an almost thorough darkness, in a psychologically suspended moment, an actress's white shirt reflects a weak light, and pisses you off, ruining the mental picture you thought you were allowed to create. But red back lighting and projected text on Sebastian White's chest are worth suffering for.

The sound is the most consistently amazing thing about the play. The program's description of THE HOUR is somewhat misleading,

making you expect no spoken word whatsoever; and so, when you first hear the recorded narrative, you feel betrayed and disillusioned. However, every pause comes just at the right moment, when you are given enough clues to create a picture and then are left alone to finish it in your own fashion.

Unlike the sloppy use of space and movement (with actors running chaotically once their walk within the square is over), the music, the recorded voice and the pauses were precise, meaningful, and liberating to a grateful imagination.

Julia Dizenko

Portrait of an Imbecille

In response to Yelena Gluzman's PORTRAIT OF AN IMBECILLE Texts by Inge/Camus Nov 19&21. Over.

A little girl loved the theater so she went. This is what she heard there:

O, I am an actor. O, I am playing a role. O, when I am finished this will be over. O, you can be happy and go home. O, you can go home and be happy.

The little girl went home and she was not happy.

A little girl hated the theater so she went. This is what she heard there:

Kill me. I'll kill you. Kill me. I'll kill you. I'll kill you. Kill me. Kill me. I'll kill you if you don't kill me. Kill me.

The little girl went home. This is what she saw there:

The absurd is doing something again and again, like waking up in the morning, and knowing the outcome will be failure and failure, like going to sleep at night.

The little girl stole a cookie from the cookie jar. People asked, did you take the cookie? No, she said.

A voice came down, saying: HEREIN LIES THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL. The voice was gruff and it had a dark moustache.

Herring? asked the little girl. And proceeded to eat the cookie and think about how she would immolate herself on stage.

Just once? asked the voice. But that ruins it.

Instead, she decided to hit herself over and over until she felt pain. But she felt nothing. Because she was on stage? she thought, thinking about herself hitting herself.

I can't do any more, says the girl and sits down on the floor. Somebody coughs. The audience (which consists of you and me) takes cookies from a cookie jar and eats them. Some throw cookies at the girl.

I'm not leaving, she says.

We're not leaving either, people say.

I'm not leaving until you leave, says the voice. There are crumbs on its moustache.

Matvei Yankelevich

I Love Dick

PS 122 (See LISTINGS for dates and times)

It could have been a story I saw in THE NEW YORKER, read the first few paragraphs of, skimmed the next few paragraphs of and finally stopped reading, in favor of a byte sized poem, a film review, or a cartoon.

Perhaps I LOVE DICK is more suited to that New Yorker short story genre, anyway. It's certainly geared towards that demographic: A filmmaker about to turn forty and her older husband, a college professor, have replaced their sex life with the—ugh—deconstruction of a man they are obsessed with. The man's name is Dick.

Though not deconstructionist in form—it's a naturalistic play—the

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couple sits in swivel chairs deconstructing their relationship, while waiting for Dick to call.

For those of you who avoided that lit. theory survey course in undergrad, here's a crash course in DECONSTRUCTION: it's like studying the red lego blocks in relation to the blue lego blocks rather than putting the lego blocks together in the form of an intergalactic space station. Deconstruction examines the object by examining the discourse surrounding the object.

Swivel chairs, naturalism, and deconstruction—Yawn! Superfucking yawn!

Thing is, it stuck. Analysis on stage is far from dramatic, yet the analysis became the drama itself. The obsession with Dick, told in epistolary form, (they write him letters) was, like obsession itself, one sided. Their obsession lacked relation to the object of their obsession. In other words, IT HAD NO DICK.

Usually, it's only after the obsession is deep-sixed that you realize how useless the analysis was. Though exhausting to watch the exhaustion, I LOVE DICK, I'll admit, is a fun one to analyze. Just don't bring a date.

Susanna Speier

1839 Gale Gates

(See LISTINGS for dates and times)

In his latest production, Michael Counts (wri., dir., design.) uses video, sound, puppets and live actors to depict a version of the Oedipus story.

The Fates, along with Apollo, have cursed a family with the Mother's troubled son, Henry. Henry completely loses it when he is confronted by a giant armadillo who, in reality, is a naked woman, who, in reality, is a personification of Brahma/Gea/The Force. Who can blame him? Henry is told that he has been cursed since he was a tot, just like Oedipus. Henry broods, falls into a narcissistic relationship with a Fate who is also his own feminine side, broods some more, and finally sleeps with and (I think) kills his mother. All this, plus archery, nudity, a too-frequently recurring flashlight/strobe dance, and a lot of asphyxiating stage fog are contained in a long hour and a half.

The cast (including DD Dorvilleir, Peter Jacobs, Antka Kristensen, Kate Moran, Josh Start, and the Living Theater's Tom Walker) all have finely tuned bodies, capable of expressing the subtlest of emotions. Puppets (by Manju Shandler) and lights (Jayson Boyd) are stunning. Some of the staging is quite effective.

However, Mr. Counts has forgotten or ignored the intrinsic heart of classical Greek theater: the rampant emotion. Jo Anne Akalaitis made the same mistake almost a year ago, with the first part of her IPHIGINIA CYCLE; instead of giving weight to a situation, they choose to explore the idea behind it. For example, Henry the Child is played by a mannequin, clearly showing the boy as a blank slate, but precluding the possibility of an actor embodying the boy's reaction as his parents calmly recite the Oedipus myth. In this sense, the production was antiseptic; any emotional truth was buried under a wave of technology and concept.

Benjamin Nadler

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