

on writing

A PUBLICATION OF THE WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA, EAST

IN THIS ISSUE: MARSHALL BRICKMAN AND TOM STOPPARD



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July 2007 | Volume #27

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All correspondence should be addressed to
on writing

The Writers Guild of America, East
555 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019
Telephone: 212-767-7800
Fax: 212-582-1909
www.wgaeast.org



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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In a letter written to Alexander Woollcott, Edna Ferber—the author of the novel *Show Boat* on which the musical was based—described seeing the 1932 revival on Broadway. There was standing room only in a theater with no place to stand, and she arrived late:

I went in, leaned against the door and looked at the audience and the stage at the very moment when Paul Robeson came on to sing ‘Ol’ Man River.’ In all my years of going to the theater... I have never seen an ovation like that given to any figure of the stage, the concert hall, or the opera. It was completely spontaneous, whole-hearted, and thrilling.... That audience stood up and howled. They applauded and shouted and stamped. Since then I have seen it exceeded but once, and that was when Robeson, a few minutes later, finished singing ‘Ol’ Man River.’ The show stopped. He sang it again. The show stopped. They called him back again and again. Other actors came out and made motions and their lips moved, but the bravos of the audience drowned all other sounds.

That kind of collective audience experience, unique to live theater, is one of the things Marshall Brickman and Tom Stoppard talk about in this issue. We are also pleased to be publishing some of Brickman’s *New Yorker* pieces and the acceptance speech he gave when presented with the Ian McLellan Hunter Award for Lifetime Achievement in Writing, as well as excerpts from Stoppard’s play *Coast of Utopia*.

The Back Page features *A Note On the Type* by Patricia Marx from her book *Him Her Him Again The End of Him*, which was published this year in hardcover by Scribner and will be out in paperback in January 2008.

— Arlene Hellerman

Front cover illustration by Herb Gardner

Marshall Brickman
AND Tom Stoppard

NEW YORK CITY – JANUARY 15, 2007



STOPPARD: It just occurred to me that because of *Jersey Boys*, we're both now qualified to say something about writing for theater and writing for film. That would be a fresh question, wouldn't it? But you've never had it because you've never written for theater, you said.

BRICKMAN: Well, I did contribute a joke to David Merrick for *42nd Street*.

STOPPARD: Did it get a laugh?

BRICKMAN: I don't know. It was kind of at the end of his effectiveness as a producer. But that's the extent of my writing for theater, except for college where I contributed a lot of anti-Vietnam War skits to the campus socialist club. So I feel totally trumped and outclassed in this conversation.

STOPPARD: The boot is on the other foot as well, because you've written original movie scripts and I never have. I've only adapted other people's work. So we're not actually that good a fit, you know. Or perhaps we are, because we haven't done the same thing as each other.

BRICKMAN: I have to get this out of the way, I saw the first part of *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy when it opened and I saw the second one last night—

ON WRITING: —*Voyage* and *Shipwreck*.

BRICKMAN: —And I thought, how is it possible to do that? It was an amazing achievement.

STOPPARD: Thank you.

BRICKMAN: It has everything, this play. I do have one thing, if I may—

STOPPARD: Yes, anything.

BRICKMAN: It occurred to me that the idea of a bunch of aristocratic intellectuals trying to reinvent a country and drag it into the 19th century is exactly what America needs right now: a major rethinking of the Constitution to incorporate and

deal with what the framers presumed was going to be an informed electorate, which we don't have any longer in this country because of media. Your play made me think that it's sort of stunning that a group of people—even though it took 70 years to happen—actually had the arrogance and confidence to start thinking about these things.

STOPPARD: I think there were fewer pieces to play with in those days. And there were certain kinds of people, like the people the play is mostly about, who clearly felt it ought to be within one's mental grasp to redesign a country so that it worked. As it happens, there's a scene in the play you haven't seen—

ON WRITING: —The third in the trilogy, *Salvage*.

STOPPARD: —Which I thought needed more substance to it. For the last few days I've been messing about with it. And before I went to bed last night, I was trying to deal with this very thing that you're talking about. Herzen—I don't know if he'll ever get to say it onstage because until I wake up in a couple of days and look at it again I won't know whether I really think it's of any use—but he's complaining to Bakunin and he says, Western civilization actually managed Michelangelo, Newton, Galileo, Shakespeare, it managed to drive ships across the oceans by steam, and somehow we haven't had the wit to arrange ourselves so that nobody's hungry or afraid. It doesn't seem that it ought to be that difficult, as long as—and this is the essential thing really—as long as you believe that left to themselves people are essentially good rather than bad. But it's a hard thing to keep faith in.

ON WRITING: I read *Salvage*, and in it, Herzen—who it seems did believe that people were basically good—gets into the question of, once the revolution happens, who's going to run the show and if the proletariat is, in fact, capable.

STOPPARD: I'd better emphasize that a lot of great stuff is not me at all. Herzen had, even in translation, a wonderful free-flowing grasp of things, and

a style. And he wrote this striking thing, which I just plopped straight into one of his speeches. He says that the masses want a government to govern for them, not against them. The idea of governing themselves doesn't enter their heads. He says that they love authority, they're suspicious of talent. We all recognize some truth in this. But the question is, is that their human nature or is it that they've been tainted, contaminated by the way society developed?

BRICKMAN: From what I can see from the two plays, you've been very careful about not proselytizing at all on this very issue.

STOPPARD: Because I don't know the answer.

BRICKMAN: If I were to wake you up at three o'clock in the morning and asked whether you felt that wisdom does reside in the unconsciousness of the people, what do you think you would say?

STOPPARD: It's interesting, it's not only wisdom, it's also love. And this is what I find completely fascinating, that in very small, intimate groups—the family being a good example—we're perfectly at home with the idea that life is a little contest of generosity: here's the turkey, or whatever, there's one slice left. *You* have it. When it's family, there's nothing odd about people being good to each other. And then you get the sort of extended family, and then you might have neighbors, and then you might have a hamlet, then you might have.... At a certain point it all goes wrong. At a certain point, some corruption enters in and greed and fear come into the equation. And from then on, you're fucked. From then on you have war between nations. In other words, rather in the way that physicists can never figure out where microphysics has its frontier with macrophysics, where the behavior of particles becomes the behavior of grains of sand, there seems to be no frontier between the area where people really are good and the area where they behave badly.

BRICKMAN: I am now convinced that the great enemy is electricity, because from electricity you

get the electric guitar, and sound systems loud enough to knock out your immune system—and television. And all of those things are of course anathema to the aspiration of art, which is to realize the full potential of what it is to be a human being.

STOPPARD: Interesting, yes.

BRICKMAN: Of course the *real* culprit might in fact be agriculture. Because the only truly balanced societies that exhibit everything you're describing are the primitive societies that work in concert with their environment. And the minute you get a concentration of people—too many people in too small a space, or whatever it is—you get a disparity of wealth and opportunity, followed by a slave culture or capitalism, followed by imperialism, exploitation and abuse of the environment and culminating in the sitcom and George W. Bush.

ON WRITING: But then there's also the question—which Herzen talks about in *Shipwreck* and comes up again in your new play *Rock 'n' Roll*—of whether people will act or vote in their own self-interest, regardless of whether or not they have good intentions. In *Shipwreck*, it comes up after the French Revolution and in *Rock 'n' Roll*, it's a matter of working-class people voting for Margaret Thatcher.

BRICKMAN: I think what Tom said before about the quote from Herzen, where he says that the people, whoever they/it may be, want government to govern for them not against them, but the notion of them governing themselves—

STOPPARD: —Never enters their heads, he says.

BRICKMAN: Never enters their heads. I think that's a characterization of an adolescent point of view about one's position in society at large: you want a parent, or at least an authority figure, to tell you what to do and what the parameters are and so on, and you don't imagine yourself taking on that responsibility. And I think the reason the red states vote the way they do, against their own self-

interest as many have suggested, is maybe there's a higher self-interest—if that's the term I want—operating, which is the abdication of responsibility. I've always thought that Americans—unlike, say, Europeans—don't live comfortably in the gray area. Americans like simplistic, almost mathematical solutions. That's why we like polls so much: 73 percent of people with red hair who were born in August brush their teeth left to right and vote conservative, or some such. Black and white. This is right and this is wrong, this is good and this is bad. Ambivalence is uncomfortable.

STOPPARD: I felt this years ago when I came here and saw *WALK–DON'T WALK*. I always thought there was some kind of internal contradiction about America when I discovered it personally. Because the bottom layer was that the people were only here at all because they had some gumption. They were pioneering people. I know many of them were fleeing from something, but even in that context you felt Americans were get-up-and-go people in some way. And when you came here, they were in some ways very, very conforming. It's less true than it was, but I remember we would stand on the corner and it would say *DON'T WALK*, and you could see a quarter of a mile in both directions, nothing was coming either way. And people would wait for the sign to change. I was always surprised trying to put this together with what my own European view of Americans were, that they were people who walked when it said don't. And nowadays, they are.

ON WRITING: At least they are in New York. I'm just wondering if you've seen any kind of related change in American theater.

STOPPARD: I am currently slightly in love with Broadway and American theater, which is not always my state of mind.

BRICKMAN: How come?

STOPPARD: Partly through you, actually. I had this reaction the other day—because *Utopia* is categorized as being so “intellectual” for a theater

piece and so on. And there was an implication, the premise of which was a kind of categorization, a kind of hierarchy of worth between entertainment and instruction, I suppose. I got into a spin about it because I so deeply disagreed with the premise. My personal experience of *Jersey Boys* reconfirmed to me what I've always felt, that categorization completely misses the point of theater. While I've been in New York I haven't seen very much, I haven't had the opportunity, but I went to see *Vertical Hour*, which is well-written, intelligent conversation for good actors about something important happening right now. And it was the most extraordinarily wonderful thing to be among what, 900 people, who were completely agog to be part of this conversation—the silent part, but they were part of it. It was fantastically affirming for the world I work in that they were completely part of the argument. And when I went to see *Jersey Boys*, there were a different 900 people who in a weird way were in exactly the same state of mind. They were absolutely part of that narrative. Theater is entirely about being done well, quite well, very well or not well at all. What the piece is, is such a secondary matter for me. I've seen two musicals while I've been here, *Mary Poppins* was the other one because friends were involved in that as well. To be honest I wasn't that interested in Mary's adventures and the family, it didn't mean that much to me. But I sat there with my mouth open at the sheer brilliance of the event, just the display of precise expertise. So I left the talk piece and the music pieces on a similar plane of satisfaction, and I had a moment of sentimentality about New York theater, that it delivers this standard, and that it's not at all about some kind of hierarchy between entertainment and instruction.

BRICKMAN: There's an Indian word that describes the mystical experience of being in a crowd. And the thing that took me by surprise about *Jersey Boys* was watching people in the audience relate to each other through the medium of what was happening on stage—it seemed to be, for them, an intensely socializing experience. I'm not the first person to say this, but the crucial thing seems to be that the theater event is happening in real

time, in the moment, with real people, which gives it an impact and an immediacy that's impossible to achieve in film. Film has already happened. People don't stand up and cheer in the middle or at the end of a film. Well, rarely anyhow. And very rarely do you hear the same sound from a film audience that you have in a live theater when the thing works. And it is that highly socializing event, I think, that speaks to some atavistic need, perhaps hard-wired into the brain, because—now this is going to start to sound like a seminar—that is the origin: it's ritual, it's religious.

ON WRITING: Theater's origin?

BRICKMAN: Yeah. The Dionysian rebels, Aeschylus, that whole crowd. And that's the interesting thing for me. The theme of *Jersey Boys* and the story couldn't be further from my own experience as a Jewish kid from Brooklyn—a Red Diaper baby listening to Pete Seeger, The Weavers and Woody Guthrie, and not to The Four Seasons. But the Seasons' music, and their story, turns out to be universal—a kind of folk music, really. Bob Gaudio's genius was to be able to retain a kind of simplicity but also be musically and rhythmically surprising and exciting. And what happens is, it's an intensely socializing experience for the audience. People walk out of the theater talking to people they didn't know three hours ago.

ON WRITING: I just want to say that Bob Gaudio was the Four Seasons member who wrote much of their music.

BRICKMAN: I had a question that occurred to me as I was walking down here that I would like to ask you, Tom. I was born in Brazil, and I stayed in Brazil until I was about 3½ years old. And my mother told me that I had about 300 words of Portuguese, which is certainly enough to communicate anything you need. I think someone did a study of the vocabulary of a typical anchor newsman in America and it was 5,000 words, maybe.

STOPPARD: Really?

BRICKMAN: Well, anyhow, much less than you'd think. And you came over to England when you were, what, six or seven, something like that?

STOPPARD: Eight.

BRICKMAN: And I had read somewhere that people who as young children were bilingual, first of all become infatuated with language in a way that perhaps other people aren't. And the second thing was that those people who as children were bilingual found it easier to get on in the world. And I wonder if any of this resonates with you at all.

STOPPARD: Well, it doesn't apply to me unless the process begins very, very early. Because although I came to England when I was eight, I was educated in English. I spoke Czech with my parents probably until I was four. We went to Singapore at the time of Pearl Harbor, and I guess we all spoke Czech. But we got to India—this is a gang of Czechs and their kids—and we all went to this convent in a hill station in India, which meant that I was educated in English from that point on, from the age of five, six. I was boarding at that age, too.

BRICKMAN: And do you still speak Czech?

STOPPARD: Unfortunately I don't because when my father died—he was killed in the War—my mother married a Major Stoppard in the British Army, and he brought us to England. And my mother's temperament was such that essentially we drew a line and carried on. By the time I got to England, I probably hadn't spoken any Czech for the two or three years in India.

BRICKMAN: And not in the house either?

STOPPARD: My mother had Czech friends, but my stepfather was, it's interesting, in some sense a difficult man. He wasn't the kind of man who would say, "Oh come on, speak Czech, I don't mind." He'd feel put out as if a foreign language somehow isolated him if it was the second language in the house, maybe that was it. We were at boarding school in England. We were turned into little English schoolboys and it was good-bye Czechoslovakia. I didn't even know I was Jewish until much, much later.

ON WRITING: You're Jewish?

STOPPARD: Yeah. My mother got the idea that my brother Peter and I would be disadvantaged in England by a kind of residual anti-Semitism, and I assume she meant at school. I honestly think she was wrong because there were Jewish boys at school and I was never aware of anything like that from my side of things. Although of course there was an endemic unthoughtful, mindless inheritance of anti-Semitic culture which, before the War, was respectable culture. It was the culture of the newspapers.

BRICKMAN: Well, even during the War in some quarters in England.

STOPPARD: My stepfather was—I'm not going to get into this, it's not what we're here for, I don't think. But he was an absolutely extraordinary contradiction, because he was definitely anti-Semitic in the sense that he didn't like Jews, blacks, Irish, working class. I mean, he was a case. And he married a Jewess with two children. I never, ever understood it when I thought about it.

BRICKMAN: He fell in love.

STOPPARD: He fell in love with her. God, after all these years, the answer.

ON WRITING: There was overt anti-Semitism in this country, even in the '50s and '60s. Marshall, did you experience a sense of being part of a minority when you were growing up in New York?

BRICKMAN: I was a member of many minorities, including being Jewish and the son of Communists.

ON WRITING: Oh, your parents were Communists?

BRICKMAN: They were what was called "fellow travelers," not card-carrying members, but almost.

STOPPARD: What decade are we talking about with your parents?

BRICKMAN: '50s.

ON WRITING: During the blacklist years.

STOPPARD: Oh, that was a scary time to be a fellow traveler.

BRICKMAN: Oh yeah, our dinners would be interrupted by two gentlemen in the traditional trench coats and snap-brim hats—the whole uniform—who'd come to the house and ring the bell, and my father would throw his napkin down on the table and talk to them in low tones. And, I am not making this up, there were times when I was both fearful *and* hopeful that the FBI would come and take away my father.

STOPPARD: No wonder you turned out to be a humorist.

BRICKMAN: Well, that was the best way to deal with my father.

ON WRITING: Marshall, you started out as a writer—the head writer—for Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show* when it was still in New York. When was the transition from writing for Johnny Carson to writing screenplays?

BRICKMAN: While I was working on *The Tonight Show*, I was kind of moonlighting with Woody Allen on material for his stand-up act and also for an obsolete TV phenomenon known as the “special,” an hour-long one-off, usually featuring some personality—in this case, Woody—with guests and some singing group, a tap dance act, whatever. On one special I recall Woody convinced the Reverend Billy Graham to be the guest and Woody interviewed him, and his first question was, “What’s your favorite sandwich?” This is why I love Woody.

STOPPARD: Before I consciously registered I’d seen movies that you’d written, I was reading *The New Yorker* one day years ago in England and I read this piece that I tore out of the magazine—I read it twice and I thought, I’m not quite finished with it. I kept it for years. I was enraptured by this piece.

ON WRITING: Which piece was it?

STOPPARD: Well, when I knew we’d be meeting to talk, I made arrangements to get Marshall’s *New Yorker* pieces dug out of the mines so I could read the ones I hadn’t read. But when I read them all, I couldn’t remember which was the one I read in England because I just liked them all. I think it could have been *A Short History of Deedle*.

BRICKMAN: What’s nice is that, with that medium—they call them “casuals” at the magazine, although the work that goes into them is anything but casual—you have complete control. You don’t need an actor, a director or an ambassador to interpret your work. It’s just you and the reader. And then

of course there’s the infantile delight in the wordplay and the way it looks on the page and all that.

ON WRITING: Those pieces are not just prose, they’re not just succinctly getting from one place to the other. It’s like they’re constructed. They almost remind me of S.J. Perelman’s work.

STOPPARD: They are quite like that, you know. You’d never mistake Perelman for Brickman or the other way around, but I know what you mean.

BRICKMAN: If you’re lucky enough to get the right premise, then it really helps and you don’t have to force it. But it does take a bit of time to get it right. I am still in awe of Benchley and Perelman and Russell Baker, when he was doing it for the *Times*, and Dave Barry, who can be as hilarious as the best of them—anyone who has to deliver humor pieces on a schedule and keep up the quality. I could never do that.

STOPPARD: I was going to ask you, is that Jewish humor, and if so, why is it?

BRICKMAN: Well, the Jews have always had something amusing to say while they were getting the shit kicked out of them. But seriously, since we’re talking about humor, yes, I suppose there’s a rhythm and an attitude, don’t you think?

STOPPARD: I do, and yet it seems strange to me that there’d be so much of the human race in how many languages which by implication, wouldn’t be able to write that piece. Or if they wrote it, it wouldn’t come out with that feeling.

BRICKMAN: But humor is always ethnic, isn’t it?

STOPPARD: That’s a really interesting thing to say. It’s never, ever occurred to me.

BRICKMAN: I think it is, and that’s why sometimes I’ll see television humor—which has been leached of all of its ethnicity in order to presumably appeal to a broader audience—and then you lose every-

thing. I think it was F. Scott Fitzgerald who said, if you go for the universal, you get nothing, go for the specific and if you're lucky you get the universal.

STOPPARD: Here's something of anthropological interest, maybe. In *Shipwreck*, Herzen is talking about his name being German and he says, "Being half Russian and half German, at heart I'm Polish, of course." And in New York—

BRICKMAN: —Big laugh last night.

STOPPARD: —That is a big laugh. In London it's not anything like that, it's just nothing.

BRICKMAN: Why?

STOPPARD: Because in London they understand my joke, as it were, from the outside. But in New York it seems to be a joke about almost a third of the audience.

BRICKMAN: Yes.

STOPPARD: Or somebody they know.

BRICKMAN: But it presupposes some bit of historical knowledge that Poland has always been crushed between Germany and Russia.

STOPPARD: That's what they laugh at in London. But in New York it's like a personal moment.

ON WRITING: I want to move on and ask about the relationship between the writer and the director in theater. I realize it's always a collaboration, but in theater, is the collaboration for the writer's vision or is it for the collaborative effort?

BRICKMAN: I think it's different depending on the personnel. Tom can probably speak to this more specifically, but my guess is that control defaults to the dominant creative personality on a project. Certainly in film that's true.

ON WRITING: In film it's the director, right?

BRICKMAN: Yes and no. It could be the writer or the producer. Or even a star who can distort the script to skew away from the writer's intention, or the director's. George Kaufman said, when they asked him what makes a good director, "If I have a good script I'm a good director, if I have a lousy script I'm not such a good director." It's sort of an unanswerable question, really.

STOPPARD: It sounds as though there ought to be a general answer to it, but in fact, writers differ from each other quite a lot, and so do directors. And you have to split the question up in just so many different ways and so many different dimensions. For example, the revival of a classic is a very different situation from the first production of a new play. But personally, I entered the theater thinking that theater was the expression of the text. And that's remained largely true. But it's quite a pragmatic art form. For one thing, writers have the illusion that the typewriter keyboard offers the notation to comprehensively describe the event which the writer thinks he's describing. Now you get into rehearsal and you invariably discover that in many unexpected places there's more than one way of reading that scene. It's not as clear as you thought. A lot of the time you're informing the director and the actors of what you actually meant, and from that it very often follows that's what they thereupon try to do. But now and again, not that infrequently, what directors and actors thought you meant is quite interesting. Or, if not quite interesting, it's worthy of interest in a different way because the way you've been thinking might have been the way you just slipped into one Friday when you were willing to settle for a hand-me-down, something you had in the fridge. And you get shown up. You get caught out. And you think, oh, yes, I'd better take that back then. So there's all kinds of things happening. The reciprocity is continuous.

ON WRITING: But it's still your choice to say yes, that's better than what I intended.

STOPPARD: On the very simplest level the theater culture we have is that you don't change what we

write without our permission. And you don't need me to tell you that is not the culture of film. I had a great time working on a movie before I went into a rehearsal with a play which I've now got in London. And the other day in New York I met a very nice young man who was the seventh writer on this movie.

BRICKMAN: Where were you, sequentially, in the seven?

STOPPARD: There had been a script of some previous incarnation, which I read. But I was the first guy starting again. I think the second guy then started again *again*, and so on. And at some stage, when I think they'd had five and a half writers, the director showed me the script again and like in homeopathy, I could see my molecule in some way in there. So anyway, look, in theater, people don't quite factor in that you're working with friends a lot of the time, so it's not quite right to think of it as a place where there are certain rules of the game and you'll stick by them. It's much more to do with being with your friends and trying to do something which feels right, and mostly it stays with the text. I personally change the text in small ways right through the rehearsal period. I just consider that to be one more chance to have a go.

ON WRITING: And in fact, you talked about *Salvage*, Part III of *Utopia*, which has already been performed in London, you're possibly changing the text for the New York production.

STOPPARD: To me *Utopia* is now quite adrift from what they performed in London. An audience which saw the play in London and saw it in New York may not realize I've done anything. But I've done a lot. And I don't mean cuts. I mean adding as well, moving things around. There's no cutoff point for this. When I was writing *Shipwreck*, there's a German couple, the Herweghs—he's got a very forceful wife who idolizes him. And at one point I sort of just cheated, really. I put

in a joke which was anachronistic that the wife one day should invade Poland or something. This is a World War II joke, it's a 1939 joke. And it didn't bother me because it's not illogical that somebody might have said something like that in the European history of the 1840s. But I knew it. And I am such a tart, I'll do anything for a laugh. But actually it doesn't really get a laugh, so I meant to take it out yesterday and I never got around to it. I'll probably do it next week. And I like the idea that's what theater is like.

ON WRITING: Marshall, is that your thinking about *Jersey Boys*? Is it that changeable? And also I'm curious, what was your relationship with the director?

BRICKMAN: *Jersey Boys* is by no means, nor does it pretend to be, anything profound, anything other than a ripping good yarn with some really neat music. And something you never see in credits, it's not only based on a true story but it's based on a *good* story. It's Shakespearean, not to make a ridiculous comparison, all I mean is that it has jealousy and envy and betrayal and revenge—and humor. Don't forget the humor. The play will change slightly depending on the dynamics of the actors who play the four parts but, with any luck, it's not going to change significantly from one production to the next. It's a bit of a machine. And it's codified in the stage manager's prompt book, which looks more like the manual for the Space Shuttle than a play script. It's three inches thick and in 12 colors and has all the cues: lighting, elevators, sound, entrances, exits—the complete manual for putting on the show, anywhere.

STOPPARD: Did you attend all the rehearsals?

BRICKMAN: Not all of them, but some. Enough to protect the dialogue.

ON WRITING: How did you work with the director and the choreographer?

BRICKMAN: The director in this case was Des McAnuff, who did a wonderful job. He hates the word “staging.” He says, “I’m not a stager.” And he’s not. He had some very interesting and insightful ideas about how to structure the piece; he made significant contributions to that, in addition to his, uh, staging, which was brilliant in and of itself. There was a certain amount of diplomacy and negotiation having to do with the fact that we were dealing with living characters, and many of these characters had friends who were still alive and had old girlfriends. And there were people in their past with gun permits, and other people with guns without permits, and all kinds of complications that are extraordinary to the text itself. We sorted that all out and then Des essentially took over like a general. He is very organized and he got this thing up and running in record time, and he’s very impatient, which I like. He likes to see things happening on stage. And coming as I do from film, early on in the collaboration with my co-author Rick [Elice] I would say, “Then we’ll cut to....” and I had to be reminded that you don’t cut to anything on stage, really. Although you can, kind of, with facile lighting and staging, but it’s not really the same. I was going to ask Tom what his situation was during the rehearsal period, from the first reading right through to getting it up to the tech in terms of his contact with the actors. Is there a protocol involved in there? What is it?

STOPPARD: The whole thing of interrupting is quite tricky. I used to have a director in England where we were a double act, almost, and now I kind of sit more quietly in the corner. And you literally, politely, intervene if you think you can be helpful. It’s that simple. There are things you know about your own page that nobody else knows yet. And you can save them a lot of time. They could spend 45 minutes figuring out, what does she mean by that? Does she mean this or does she mean that? Well, it’s ridiculous for the author to be sitting there and let them think about it for 45

minutes. You can say, “When I wrote it she meant that.” And on we go. And we’ve saved 45 minutes. So you can see the situation. But you have to develop a sense of proprietary appropriateness as well. I love being part of things, and my fault is that I stick my oar in too early because I just like being part of it for a moment. I put in things which could just as well wait. Let them get to the end and we’ll be back here tomorrow or next week, and they’re not ready anyway. But I can’t help it. I like to get my spoon in the stew. But sometimes it’s not too early, it’s too late. And this is for me the trickiest thing of all, that if I’m behaving well there never seems to be a moment where it’s exactly right to intervene. It’s like trying to watch the light in the fridge go out, the kind of middle moment.

ON WRITING: You’ve both directed films. Tom, you directed an adaptation of your play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. And Marshall, you’ve directed a number of films. Is that true when you’re directing as well?

BRICKMAN: The big difference is that the actor’s internal, unseen motivation doesn’t really count for as much in film as it does in theater, because the actors have to come up with it all the time—

ON WRITING: In theater?

BRICKMAN: In theater. In film you get it once and then you’ve got it for all time. So you can use any amount of conveniences and wiles and trickery to get what you want, or put more delicately, to help the actor give you what is required by the text. In live theater, if they’re going to be able to get the energy and focus to make it convincing night after night, there has to be something a little deeper, a source for the energy and emotion.

STOPPARD: And this is the other thing. I’m not good at that, because I know what noise the play should make at every moment, or I think I do. And I think, if I tell him the noise he’ll figure

out how to get there. But what Jack O'Brien, or any good director does, he doesn't mention that the noise is right or wrong or what it should be or shouldn't be. If he wants the actor to produce a certain moment, noise, effect, whatever you like, he always gives the actor something which isn't actually about that moment, or if it is, it's actually about what the character might be feeling at that moment. And lo and behold, the guy says, okay, yeah, I get it, and he does it again and he makes my noise. It's like a miracle to me. Whereas I keep saying no, no, can you just go up on the last syllable...

BRICKMAN: Yes, hit that word a little more.

STOPPARD: Yeah. So, you're right. I did direct a film. I also directed a play once, in both cases my own writing. I couldn't do anything else. I'm not a director and don't think of myself as a director. You can only be a director if you can do other people's work, in my opinion. And I think that were I directing my own play, it would be brittle because I would be nagging them to make the right noise all the time instead of have the right thought.

BRICKMAN: The writer tends to be result-oriented, because you want to hear them do it the way you've heard it in your head.

STOPPARD: Yes.

BRICKMAN: And you'll do anything to get them to do it, but you have to have more patience, I think, than a writer would, oddly enough.

STOPPARD: You enjoyed directing, though?

BRICKMAN: I was going to say I like holding my hand out and having someone put a cup of coffee into it. I once saw somebody do that, an actress on a big movie I had written. She had this endless staff of acolytes who watched her constantly, and she held out her hand and somebody put a lit cigarette into it and I thought, wow, that's Hollywood. But yes, I do enjoy working with people I like and solving those little problems. That's how they get you as a writer to begin with,

when you have the little problem of the line or the scene and you solve it. There's such a great feeling of triumph and relief. And you get addicted to that feeling.

STOPPARD: I understand what you're saying, yeah.

BRICKMAN: And you feel that you're using whatever it is that you've got.

STOPPARD: And also, being on a film set is public, which the actual writing isn't. If you're on a film set as a writer and there's a problem and you just move two words around and suddenly there's no problem, there's all these people saying, oh, that's what he does, isn't that great. They don't know how to do that.

BRICKMAN: You have to remind yourself sometimes in this environment of competitive hysteria and grabbing for credits that none of it happens without the script. My father used to say the best work is done by individuals working alone at night. The other thing we're not talking about—which has to do with the author's ego or his narcissism or, if you're being generous, his sense of community—is that sound you hear in the back of the theater sometimes when the thing is working. I know this will make me sound like a New Age tree hugger, but for the first few months, when *Jersey Boys* was still kind of fresh, if I was feeling lousy I would go down to the theater and stand in back and listen to the play and the audience's reaction to it, and I would feel better. Physically. Sue me.

ON WRITING: Do you ever get that from sitting in a theater watching an audience watch your movie?

BRICKMAN: No. I don't go to watch audiences watch my movies, because it's too painful.

ON WRITING: Why?

BRICKMAN: I don't know. I just don't like them: it's too long, get on with it, stupid, wrong angle.... The usual post-mortem anxiety.

STOPPARD: I think David Lean said that the hardest thing is knowing how fast the actors should speak, because you're stuck. You can't change your mind.

BRICKMAN: Psychological time is so much more accelerated when you have 600 or 1,000 people in the room. Something really happens. A second takes so much longer. It's like a second on Jupiter. Lean also said you have to always remember that the film is going through the projector at 90 feet a minute, which is another way of saying get on with it.

STOPPARD: I find this thing of time is interesting to me, because if I walk into a play, my own play, after it started and I think, oh, I'll just go and watch this for a while, if I haven't been there at the beginning, it seems interminable. And I think, what's going on tonight? Why are they all speaking so slowly? Get on with it. And if you're there at the top, it's okay.

BRICKMAN: Because you're not in it somehow. Yeah. Timing.

ON WRITING: I want to bring up something you've both written about. The Writers Guild, East has an award that Marshall won last year called the Ian McLellan Hunter Award for Lifetime Achievement in Writing. And in his acceptance speech, Marshall talked about language—which Tom also talks about; I've found a number of references in *Rock 'n' Roll* and in *Travesties* about language. What Marshall said is, "What's happening is that the language, our common language is being dismantled, deconstructed and turned upside down and inside out. And as writers and authors we should especially be troubled with people tampering with the tools of our trade."

BRICKMAN: It started with advertising probably. Words start to mean something off center of what they originally meant and gradually they get to a point where they mean the opposite. Small is large, large is economy and giant is "family size." So how big is it, really?

ON WRITING: Tom, in *Rock 'n' Roll* you have a character say, "We have to begin again with the ordinary meaning of words. Giving new meaning to words is how systems lie to themselves, beginning with the words themselves—'socialism,' 'democracy.' And 'invasion' becomes 'fraternal assistance,' and a 'parasite' could be someone who is unemployed, and punished again for being unemployed."

BRICKMAN: It's a kind of inflation as applied to language.

STOPPARD: I think that's absolutely right. It's the corruption of language. It's a form of inflation. It's a phrase I've used many times myself about that very subject. I just want to slip in my tuppence-worth. I wrote to the editor of, I think it was the *Times* in London three, four years ago—because this spear would go through my body when I saw "who" for "whom" in the text of a piece. And one day I saw it in a big headline. So I wrote to this guy whom I slightly knew, and I said, "Is this what the *Times* has decided, that 'who' for 'whom' is okay?" And he wrote back and said, "No, it slipped past. Thanks for pointing it out." But I've given up now. "Who" for "whom" is an epidemic. And nobody even pretends there's a usefulness in that distinction. In a way I discount advertising, which has almost become a language of its own. I also discount informal prose when in fact you're writing conversation. I use "who" for "whom" in a given sentence in the middle of a conversation,

because there's something unnecessary and pedantic about the particular at the time you're just having an informal, idiomatic conversation. But in a headline in the *Times*, I just feel that is corrupting.

BRICKMAN: Can I make a suggestion as to the source of your anger? I'm only speaking personally—but I'm including you—that it makes you feel somewhat alienated from your audience, that the audience is willing to accept that there's no distinction. No?

STOPPARD: You've put your finger on something really interesting, and I was going to say something about it earlier. Dialogue is not the writer's voice. It's the character's voice, and it's naturalistic, usually. So things like cliché and syntax don't have the same place in the writing which I do for a living 90 percent of my time. Martin Amis titled his collection of essays *The War Against Cliché*. As an author of novels, he, I guess, feels it's a personal failure if he's nodding and some threadbare phrase is there in the middle of a paragraph describing the weather or whatever it is.

ON WRITING: Nodding?

BRICKMAN: Not alert.

STOPPARD: He nods off. And someone could look at a page of my play—my play which he just saw and admired—it would be stiff with clichés, and stiff with familiar phrases, formulations. I like them, and also they are extremely useful because they communicate something instantly in the best economic way. You know exactly what somebody means because you've heard it a million times. It's inoffensive in a play. If the character is the professor of ancient history at Oxford or something, maybe,

but generally speaking, we don't have any shame about using shopworn phrases in a conversation. So it doesn't apply. I don't have to think about an audience which cares about language.

ON WRITING: Why?

STOPPARD: What I mean is, that's not part of what I do. The audience has to care about language in other ways. They have to like it when you do the other thing, which is invent a phrase which communicates wittily and is nice. They've got to be there for that. But funnily enough—I remember being at this point in a conversation before, so I'm just going a bit carefully—in some strange way the audience is capable of receiving what they cannot themselves articulate. They haven't been robbed of that recognition.

BRICKMAN: So you can be a little ahead of the audience. It's just a choice. I think what you were saying before is, how much ahead do you want to be?

ON WRITING: One of the things that's interesting to me about your work, Tom, is there's a lot you don't explain to the audience.

STOPPARD: But that's a tactic. We have a skill. This is part of what that skill comprises. A sentence moves towards an audience, and there's a certain point where the audience comes exactly the right distance forward to get it. And if you miss that point, if they have to stretch too far, they've lost the edge of it. You lose the edge of their response. If you don't push it far enough, they haven't quite understood it. This pivot has only one position, and it's different for every sentence you write.

ON WRITING: Well, for instance, in *Utopia*, it would be easy enough to explain who the

characters are by having one say to the other, “Who is that guy? What did he do?” You could very easily introduce with exposition why somebody is important or who somebody is by having a character in there who doesn’t know and needs to find out.

STOPPARD: Well that’s 101, isn’t it? Isn’t that what you’re saying?

BRICKMAN: He made the choice to write this play about those characters who were articulate and educated, and so he can give them dialogue that has dependent clauses, the way people spoke in that period of time. He’s not writing a Clifford Odets play where the characters are comparatively inarticulate, and some of the tension, and the artistry, comes from the characters’ struggle to express themselves.

STOPPARD: And how could I? I think we choose what we write with that in mind.

BRICKMAN: I like to have one character that’s me, that can speak the way I speak, because I need to have that connection to the audience, you know? Even in *Jersey Boys*, one of the characters can reference T.S. Eliot and Vivaldi and so on, and it’s something you throw in for yourself and your friends, but also because it gives you a sense of connection somehow. Because the other characters are un-self-aware and the language is much more constrained and limited.

STOPPARD: I was interested by the Vivaldi reference, actually. What’s been your experience with it?

BRICKMAN: Well, it gets a laugh.

STOPPARD: Yeah, when I was there, too.

BRICKMAN: Maybe it’s just the way it’s inflected, I don’t know. It’s clearly intended as a joke. The guy who says it is the producer, Bob Crewe, and I sort of drew him as someone who might like classical music, as a guy whose world included but was not limited to the world of the four other guys.

ON WRITING: What’s the line?

STOPPARD: It’s a reference to Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons.”

BRICKMAN: The group comes to the producer and they say, “We have a new name. The Four Seasons. Do you like it?” He says, “I love it. So did Vivaldi.”

ON WRITING: I have one more question. I read all three of the *Utopia* plays and then I read *Travesties*. And I felt very at home reading *Travesties* after having read all of *Utopia*, it’s a lot of the same conversations. And one of the conversations is, what is the role of the artist in this question of social change—not just the intelligentsia but the artist. In *Utopia* Turgenev talks about being criticized because he just writes good literature. And at the same time, in your introduction to one of your collections of plays, you also say that the primary role of all this is entertainment.

STOPPARD: I didn’t say that. I said a recreation.

ON WRITING: Yes, I’m sorry, you’re talking about *After Magritte* and you say, “A friendly critic described [The Real Inspector] Hound as being as useful as an ivory Mickey Mouse. *After Magritte* is maybe slightly less useful than that. ...The ‘role of the theater’ is much debated (by almost nobody, of course), but the thing defines itself in practice first and foremost as a recreation. This seems satisfactory.”

BRICKMAN: Yes, but in the original meaning of the word.

STOPPARD: To recreate yourself. You know, *Oedipus Rex* can be a recreation in a certain mood on a Friday evening. I’m not saying that it means it has to be light or funny or anything. I just mean that you don’t go there like you might go to a public library to look something up or to learn. I really just want people to have a good night out in whatever way, whatever that means to them. I don’t see the point otherwise. I just don’t see the point.

ON WRITING: Is this something you think about?

STOPPARD: Not as much as you'd think I should. I don't think about it very much. You know, when you're writing, the problem is actually the next line. It's not really one about thesis.

BRICKMAN: I think there are two things that happen without your intending to, if it works. One is the sense of the audience coming together as an organism, as a socialized organism, which is a good thing.

STOPPARD: Yes.

BRICKMAN: Through laughter, or through pity, or fear. The other is a hope that you get people to listen to the language in a precise way and there's a respect for that precision, and the power of the language. And mixed up in there is the therapeutic aspect of the whole enterprise, the writer trying to express himself or make things come out right on paper that never come out right in real life. So some attention is paid to the specific meaning of words and how ideas can be expressed in an elegant and meaningful way. And the socializing experience, which is somehow related, if only distantly, to a religious experience.


STOPPARD: Because having a story does that to a group of people. It unites them, the listeners.

BRICKMAN: And despite all of the protestations to the contrary, all the electronic developments have done is to fragment this society rather than to bring it together, I think. It's isolating, mostly, what's happened. Television takes people from larger groups into smaller groups in the house in front of the TV set.

STOPPARD: I think it has.

BRICKMAN: And then one step further, people alone in front of their computers. And I've always thought that the terminal is not the thing you're looking at, but it's you, yourself. You're the last step in that process. And that's thoroughly isolating.

STOPPARD: But from the outside, this socializing influence is paramount. It's what theater is for.

BRICKMAN: The weirdest thing that I've read lately is the new iPod has the ability to have movies on demand as though that's what's desirable. That's the opposite of what you want. What you want is to get people in theaters. You want groups of strangers to commune with each other. Otherwise, civilization is going into the toilet. In my humble opinion. 

BIOGRAPHIES



MARSHALL BRICKMAN began his career as a musician in the folk group the Tarriers. In the late '60s, while headlining at the Bitter End in New York, he met a new comedian named Woody Allen. Over the next few decades, Brickman and Allen developed a collaboration, writing stand-up material, TV specials and co-authoring the films *Sleeper*, *Annie Hall*, which won four Academy Awards including Best Screenplay and Best Picture, *Manhattan* which garnered an Academy Award nomination for Best Screenplay and *Manhattan Murder Mystery*. Between screenplays, Brickman wrote for television, first on *Candid Camera*, then on *The Tonight Show* where he became head writer. He left *The Tonight Show* to become co-producer and head writer of Dick Cavett's late-night show for ABC.

Brickman's other screenplays include *Intersection* and *For the Boys*. He's also written and directed four films: *Simon*, *Lovesick*, *Manhattan Project* and *Sister Mary Explains it All*.

Most recently he co-wrote the Broadway show *Jersey Boys* (with Rick Elice), which won the Tony Award for Best Musical. In 2006, he was awarded the Ian McLellan Hunter Award for Lifetime Achievement in Writing by the WGA, East.



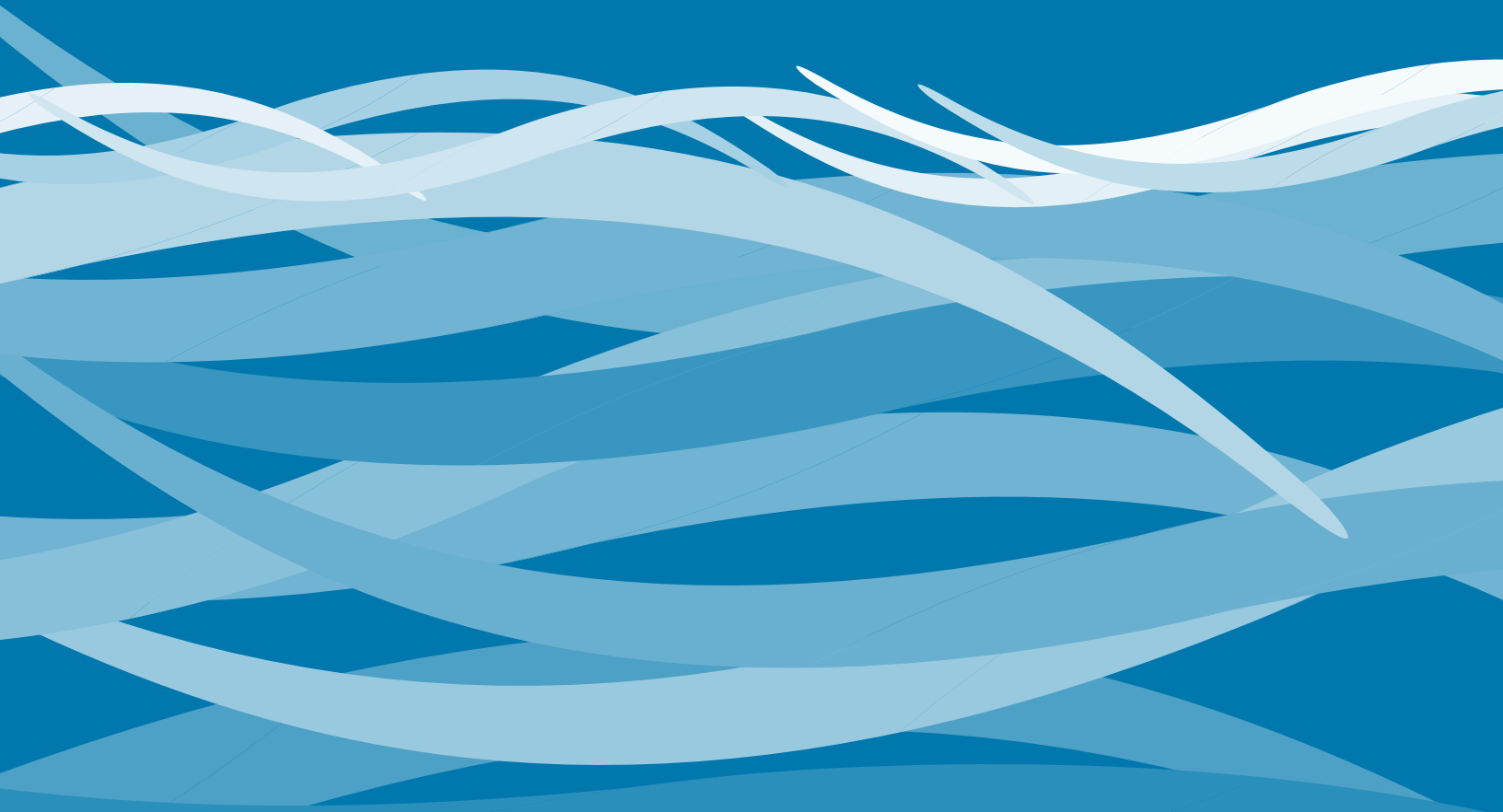
Before his success as a playwright, TOM STOPPARD was a journalist and then a drama critic from the late 1950s to the early '60s.

In 1966, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was presented at the Edinburgh Festival. The following year, it was produced by the National Theatre at the Old Vic as well as on Broadway. His plays that followed in London and New York include: *Enter a Free Man* (originally titled *A Walk on the Water*), *The Real Inspector Hound*, *After Margritte*, *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (with Andre Previn), *Dirty Linen*, *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, *Artist Descending a Staircase*, *Hapgood*, *Arcadia*, *Indian Ink*, *The Invention of Love*, *The Coast of Utopia: Voyage*, *Shipwreck* and *Salvage* and most recently, *Rock 'n' Roll* which opened in London and is scheduled for a Broadway run in November 2007. His plays have won five Tony Awards, eight London Evening Standard Awards and an Olivier Award.

Stoppard has also done a number of translations and adaptations, some of which are: *Undiscovered Country* (Schnitzler), *Dalliance* (Schnitzler), *On the Razzle* (Nestroy), *Rough Crossing* (Molnar), *The Seagull* (Chekhov), *Henry IV* (Pirandello) and *Heroes* (Sibleryras). His BBC Radio plays have been broadcast throughout his career: *The Dissolution of Dominic Boot*, *M is for Moon Among Other Things*, *Albert's Bridge*, *If You're Glad I'll be Frank*, *Artist Descending a Staircase*, *The Dog It Was That Died* and *In The Native State*. His British television work includes: *A Separate Peace*, *Teeth*, *Another Moon Called Earth*, *Three Men in a Boat*, *Professional Foul* and *Squaring the Circle*.

Stoppard began writing screenplays in 1975, his first being *The Romantic Englishwoman*. He went on to write (sometimes co-write): *Brazil*, *Empire of the Sun*, *The Russia House*, *Billy Bathgate*, *Enigma* and *Shakespeare in Love* which won several awards including an Academy Award and a BAFTA Award. He wrote and directed the screenplay of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival.
Photo by Arnie Stamp.

Selected Work



WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

ANTHONY MOON (Zeckendorf) was born in England and attended Eton, Witley, and Miss Gobbett's Academy, concluding his formal education at St. Vitus's College, Oxford, where he studied *mouse* under the brilliant House Beamish. His first professional job was as Obadiah in the revue *A Pound of Cheese*, which ran for fifteen years at the Wee-Theatre-in-the-Bog, breaking all records for the West End and closing only when the cast set fire to the scenery. After joining the National Theatre, Mr. Moon was acclaimed for his performances as Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Monroe Parch in *Parippany Place*, and Sir Giggling Fatbody in Sheridan's *The Wind-Sucker*. Mr. Moon is the author of *A Penn'orth of Rumply*, a fantasy for "children of all ages" based on the limericks of Albert Speer, which is currently in preparation for the 1977 season. His autobiography, *Scones at Eventide*, was a best-seller and will be filmed by the Rank Organisation, featuring Colin Ponce and Colin Headstrong-Jones as the twin bakers.

MISHRU FEK (Curley) in a long and distinguished theatrical career has appeared in over three thousand productions, from Second Avenue cabaret (*Don't Make Me Laugh, So Who Are You Kidding?, I'm Entitled, and You Should Live So Long*) to regional theatre (Chaim in *The Wild Mousse*, Vontz in *Crusts*) to Broadway, where he triumphed last season as the grief-stricken father in *Runteleh*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical drawn from the life of Eddie Carmel, the Jewish giant. In recent years, Mr. Fek has divided his time between *King Lear* ("twice a year, rain or shine") and Hollywood; his latest films include *Blood of the Face Eaters*, *Nostril from Outer Space*, and *Monster Beach Party*. His television credits include numerous specials, notably an abbreviated version of *Runteleh*, for which he won the coveted Emmehel. The Department of State has engaged Mr. Fek to tour Europe with his phenomenal one-man show *Jews in Motion*, an entertainment based on the *responsa* of Chodish, the skating rabbi of Budapest.

MARY BETH NUMKINS (Nell Runcible) is a self-professed "stage kook" who has appeared in stock and regional theatre. Among her favorite roles are Molly in *Tom O'Monahoon's Chowder*, Sally in *The Misty Bog*, Wendy in *The Bosky Fen*, Peggy in

The Dusky Glen, and Polly in *Poppa's Pockmark*. She appeared as Princess Tinkle-Beam in *Toast and Mrs. Toast* and won plaudits for her portrayal of the shepherdess in *The Bleat of My Heart*. She maintains that the theatre is a "special, magical place, made of fairy-webs and gossamer." She lives in New York City with her cat, Mister Cat, and a large colored man.

RAMON PELIGROSO (Parson Anders, Ziggy) was last seen in the role of the psychotic barber in *Don't Nobody Gonna Whip My Face*, presented last season at the Drainpipe Theatre. In addition, Mr. Peligroso has appeared as the addict in *No Horse for Handkerchief-Heads* and the sadistic orderly in *Enema*. He created the role of Goatberry Jones in the national company of *Harlan Peachtree's Massive Apparatus*, for which he won the Frobisher Award. His autobiographical play, *The Repository of Naphthalene Catfish*, was presented last season by the Militant Playhouse.

LYDIA BUNTING (Mrs. Peahen) made her theatrical debut thirty years ago in Tennessee Williams' *For the Safety of the Passengers, the Driver Is Not Permitted to Change Any Bills Larger Than Five Dollars*, playing the harelip to Luther Dabchick's waterhead. After a hiatus of twenty-eight years, she returned to Broadway last season in the revival of *Perseus Desires*, which closed during the first act, although the critics were unanimous about her performance. This marks Miss Bunting's first appearance in the legitimate theatre without a mobcap.

RENÉ CATAPALQUE (Beggars, Whores, Townspeople)

To act is to be;
To be is merely to seem.
The truth is a hat.

—HANS EKhardt

O'BOB MACVOUT (Director) trained at L.A.M.D.A. and the Yale Drama School under Fleming Pease, directing revue and cabaret (*Redoubtable Antics of '62, Arty-Tarty*). After a spell in television, he directed the wildly successful nature film *Ring of Bright Beavers* ("Vapid family fun! Non-threatening!"—L.A. Times), which grossed six hundred million dollars worldwide and won him three Oscars, two Patsys, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Last season he directed Sir Henry Wolfbane in the highly ac-

claimed R.S.C. production of Congreve's *Pox*; or, *The Traducer Traduced*, which won both the Drama Circle Critics Citation Prize Award and the Award Circle Drama Critics Prize Citation.

LEON MATRIX (Sets and Lighting) is one of our most versatile designers, whose work ranges from the long-running *Leafy Green Vegetables* to the costumes for *Mary's Nose*. Trained under Schlemmer and Gropius, he did pioneering work at both the Bauhaus and the Bau-wau-haus, the avant-garde Theatre for Hounds he designed for Piscator in Berlin. More recently, he won the rarely awarded Mortimer for *Roach!*, the musical version of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, which will be presented on Broadway every season by David Merrick. He is four feet tall.

ARNOLD BATFISH (Author) spent several years as an advertising copywriter and burst upon the theatrical scene with a cathartic evening of one-acters: *Spearmint*, *Doublemint*, and *Excrement*, which won him both a Nudlicer and a Peavy. His dental trilogy, *Drill*, *Fill*, and *Rinse, Please*, was hailed as the finest American dental writing in fifty years and was compared to Gogol's *The Overbite* and Sophocles' *Oedipus in Pyorrhoea*. Mr. Batfish resides with his wife, Laura, and her wife, Leslie, at Nutmeat College, North Carolina, where he holds the Robert Goulet Chair of Dramaturgy.

AHMET ERGOTAMINE (Producer) has been represented on Broadway by *Goodbye, My Toes* and the smash hit musical *Morons Over Manhattan*, currently in its third season. In association with Max Rubric he produced *The Man in the Paper Pants* and *The Smell of Shapiro* for the Colloid Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles. Mr. Ergotamine's reputation as a promotional genius dates from 1950, when he employed a chimpanzee in a miter to unicycle through the theatre district to publicize his knockabout religious farce, *Bishopzapoppin!* His innovative all-black production of *The Dance of Death* was followed by an equally successful all-male-Pakistani *Riders to the Sea* and an all-parrot *Importance of Being Earnest*. Next spring, he will produce *Death of a Salesman* in New Orleans with everyone (cast and audience) wearing giant papier-mâché Mardi Gras heads, borrowed from the Grand Krewe of the Knights of Toulouse.

—MARSHALL BRICKMAN

A SHORT HISTORY OF DEEDLE

THE culturally obtuse who still cling to the notion that scat—that is, the singing of a musical phrase made up of an idiotic syllable or syllables—was invented by Louis Armstrong or Ella Fitzgerald would do well to approach Muncie Peasley's new book, "The Meaningless in Music: Six Centuries, from Fa-la to Ooblie-dot" (Nigging Press, New Haven. Six pages; \$18), with extreme caution. Dr. Peasley, curator of rare beineckes at the Beinecke collection at Yale University, has assembled cast-iron proof that the first nonsense syllables were sung not by a man in Chicago with a wide tie and zoot pants but by an unknown fourteenth-century English thresher, whose magnificent contribution altered the course of Western culture, though he himself was trampled to death by kine the following week. Peasley, using blunt scissors and a jar of mucilage, has reconstructed this and other significant events in his field, and we can but stand slack-jawed at the quality of his research, to say nothing of his general appearance. A short précis follows, after which the reader may continue to stare vacantly out the window.

FOLK BEGINNINGS: The earliest known record of primitive scat, or *scutte*, occurs in Weir's "Synggebok" (1345)—a collection of English country airs sung at harvest time to celebrate the continuing failure of all known farming methods. Weir, a London scrivener and curdsmonger, obtained a contemporary version of the Scots ballad "Wha Haue Ye Gae?":

Oh, wha haue ye gae,
Ma' billy-dilly glorn?
Wha haue ye gae, ma' birney?
Ich bene ta' ye toon,
Wi' ma' nelkins all a-blorn.
Syng lack-a-day, witherey-boo,
lack-a-day, tarn —

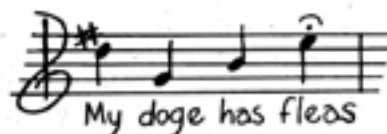
Here the fragment ends, probably because of Weir's falling into the mill and being ground into a fine white powder. (The event was celebrated in another popular ballad of the day, "Weir Haue Bene Grynde Intae Whyte Poudre, Ye Stupe" [1346].) However, the evidence is incontrovertible. "Lack-a-day, witherey-boo," dating from this period, was instantly recognized as the most infuriating musical phrase in the language, remaining unchallenged until the introduction, over six hundred years later, of "tootie-fruutie, o-rootie" by Charles Berry.

TRANSITION TO OTHER MODES: The classical school begins with the appear-

ance, in Italy, of Fra Antonio del'Nonentati, a modest seventeenth-century cleric who was the *maestro di concerti* for the Pietà Ospedale during the period when it was entirely under water (1689-90). In an era already celebrated for the hysterical productivity of its artists, he stands out as the pre-eminent freak. In addition to performing his regular duties at the hospital (he was responsible for the daily taunting of the *incurabili*), he provided for his patron, the Duc M'anti, thousands of masses, cantatas, capriccios, preludes, and fugues, plus hundreds of occasional pieces designed, in the fashion of the time, to aid the aging nobleman in the execution of his daily regimen: a sicilienne to help him sleep, a brisk rondo to wake him up, a tuneful courante to make him eat his peas, a merry allemande to encourage him to pitch face forward into the canal. This creative cataract, dwarfing even the combined oeuvre of Haydn, Scarlatti *père*, and Paul (the Tiny Dynamo) Williams, allowed the Duke to dominate the social and cultural life of Italy for over a decade, until the Vatican impounded his Rolodex.

It is no secret that Nonentati's endless inspiration severely taxed his collaborators, notably the castrato Calamari (Fruggio Spedini, nicknamed the Squid because he was fat and rubbery and darted about the stage in an obnoxious manner). The relationship, though unproductive, was not entirely cordial, judging from this entry in the monk's journal:

July 29. A long hot summer. In two weeks it will be July 43. How slowly the time goes! Up at 3 A.M. for matins and some light composition. Completed a commission from the Grand Magistrate to devise a new tuning for his mandolin; viz.:



He was quite enchanted with it and sent along a scroll entitling me to have my nose twisted any time I am at the palace. Finished today's opera, but the bewigged ponce is again late with the text. What to do? Without words, I cannot rehearse the singers. Without singers, you got no opera. Without no opera, you got nothing.³

The story is taken up here by Langoustino, another *soprano naturale*, about whom Handel said, "... his sing-

³Translation by Fabrizio Linen Supply and Translation Services.

ing can make the birds come down from the sky and walk around for a while. If that is what you want." From Langoustino's famous letter to his horse:

...in the absence of any text, Maestro asked me for tonight's performance to sing "anything at all—even something imbecilic, like your name." By the second act, however, the inordinately damp weather had shrunk my costume (a leather jerkin) to one-quarter of its original size, totally constricting my chest and rendering impossible any but the tiniest of breaths. "La—" I sang, over and over, in a series of strangled mouse-like inhalations. From beyond the footlights came a telltale rustling and shifting as the audience gleefully anticipated a major fiasco. Tartini smirked behind his fan; humiliation seemed inescapable. My embarrassment turned to rage. "La...la...la..." I persisted, forcing each breath, until my field of vision was replaced by a pleasant series of bright pinwheels against a black background. Upon being revived, I learned that the performance, far from a disaster, had thoroughly charmed the Duke (who is a swine), and he awarded me twelve florins and a thaler, though I would have preferred money.

THE BAROQUE MASTERS: Baroque scat had its origins in the work of Johann Joachim Quantz, the German flautist who was clever enough to be called a contemporary of Buxtehude even though they did not both live at the same time. Quantz taught his students to speak the word "did'll" into their flutes to achieve proper articulation. The novelty caught on quickly, as the only other diversion available in eighteenth-century Berlin was the weekly placing of large stones upon an ugly person, or "critic." Quantz died a wealthy man, and, as befitted a person of his stature, was buried upside down to see if he had any loose change in his bib.

THE CLASSICAL SCHOOL: It is probable that the young Mozart was familiar with Quantz's work, most likely through the efforts of the Baron van Swieten, an amateur who also ran the catcall concession at the Munich Spielhaus. Van Swieten was a friend and patron of the young Salzburg genius, and occasionally let him see the works of the Baroque masters. As he was mortally afraid of adulterating the pure musical wellspring of the prodigy, he permitted him to view his copy of Bach's Goldberg Variations only through a telescope while the Baron rode by in a carriage, opening and shutting the book very quickly.

In his memoirs, the Baron himself recalls, "Today I chanced to overhear the lad singing to himself in the

act of composing a song. It was a bitersweet, haunting melody”:

Allegro molto

Dee-dle dum, dee-dle
dum, dee-dle dum dum: Doo-dle
 doon, doodle doon, dee-dle dum dum

We now know this fragment belonged not to a song at all but to the opening few measures of the “Leipzig” Symphony, or “St. Anne’s Jitters,” as it is known in England. With typical unself-consciousness, Mozart here takes the antiquated “dee”—a product of the lyrical but unsophisticated Italian school—and combines it with the more intellectual “did’ll” of the German Quantz and arrives at the brilliant synthesis “deedle,” thus effecting in one masterstroke a blending of the *affettuoso* with the *rubato*, and the creation of a style that can be either played at home for friends or worn after dark for an evening of casual elegance. Mozart himself was quite pleased with the phrase, writing to his father, “I’m certain you’ll agree it has wonderful potential if used correctly, and should garner hefty ducat in local situations.” He went on to say, “It has become a favorite of Prince Leopold, who sponsored an outdoor musicale on my behalf, even joining the orchestra to blow a little flute (called a *piccolo*). When the concert was halted, due to a rain shower, he was kind enough to draw me aside, saying, ‘Someday you and your deedles will be more famous than Mozart.’ Since I *am* Mozart, I found his remark perverse, until I recalled that he had been repeatedly struck by lightning during the afternoon.”

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCHOOL: The early Romantics (Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and the Shapiros—the last not composers, but inseparable) brought scat out from the musty corridors of classicism into the bright sunshine of what Liszt called “the emotive rebobazoid” (the Abbé was over seventy at the time and may have meant something else entirely). In any event, strict adherence to classi-

cal syllables was abandoned for a freer, more poetic style. Mendelssohn hummed the opening theme of his Violin Concerto to Ferdinand David thus:

Allegro molto appassionato

Dwee-dle dee-dle,
 oh ree-dle, bah dah-bah
 dee-bah zoon-

An illuminating anecdote about Brahms illustrates how the artistic personality transcends formalistic limitations, but we do not have this anecdote. Yet it is known that Brahms, at the dress rehearsal of his “Ein Deutsches Requiem,” admonished the chorus, saying, “Text, schmext, just keep it peppy. And don’t fidget during the solos.”

THE MODERNISTS AND BEYOND: If there is one composer who developed a truly contemporary technique, it is either Maurice Ravel or someone who looked just like him and lived in his apartment. Ravel, a great admirer of American jazz, heard an early Louis Armstrong performance of “Honey-suckle Rose” containing the following phrase:

I don't blame them
 good-ness knows, Hon-ey
 suck-le Rose, Bah zah zah
 zway-bo dwane

Like all great innovators, Ravel took great risks, often saying, as he twirled

his upper lip (he had no mustache), “Now I take these great risks, isn’t it?” and, stimulated by Satchmo’s brilliant improvisation on the Waller tune, attempted to dictate the cadenza of an unpublished saxophone concerto (two hundred bars, all thirty-second notes) on the syllable “dwane;” viz.:

Avec agitatedoricsimoto

Dwane dwane dwane dwane
 dwane dwane dwane dwane (etc.)

By the third bar, his jaw had dislocated, and Honegger later reported that he had to sponge foam from the Master’s cravat.

Ravel was of course the victim of a rapidly worsening situation—one that Schoenberg characterized as the lack of a simple, universal “zot-sprechen,” capable of being understood by anyone, regardless of style or nationality. Toward that end, a worldwide artistic conference was convened in April, 1938, in a nice room at the Europa Hotel, in Vienna, with folding chairs for up to three hundred people and light refreshments promised afterward. The steering committee, co-chaired by Francis Poulenc and Fats Waller, urged the adoption of the simplified, or metric, *vout* system, a workable compromise in which all previous syllables, from “fa-la” to “vaus-o-zootic,” were immediately replaced by a simple “zot,” while the irregular hyphenates (“zob-ba-zide,” “po-zide,” and “re-bop”) were to be slowly phased out. In the keynote address, delivered to almost three hundred folding chairs, rooney-master Slim Gaillard captured the spirit of the evening when he said,

Yip rock, heh-ree-sey,
 Kay biss-ay *knee*, kib-bee bah,
 Ah-la-ha mish-a-Mac *vontie*!
 La-ha, la-ha Macrooney-mo.

Seven years later, in occupied Austria, Anton von Webern paused to light a cigarette in the doorway of his home and was struck down by a bullet. An old era had ended, and so far nothing has replaced it.

—MARSHALL BRICKMAN

INSTRUCTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS! You are now the owner of a new Simplex automated timesaving miracle Fletch-o-mat, designed by space-age scientists specifically to remove the drudgery from tiresome daily fletching. To operate, unlock the safety grommet (G) and loosen knurled screw (B) by turning in a clockwise direction, bringing the elbow directly in line with the lower back. Now touch the bottom of the heel with the chin, exactly as in *Mayuratsana*, "the Peacock" (figure 5), concentrating on the White Spot, or Source of All Being. Repeat the mantra for the count of ten, meanwhile mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. nutmeg with the melted butter and the shallots. Now slowly add the iron filings, brine shrimp, and a pinch of matzo meal (for needed nitrogen) and, using a rubber spatula, smooth the mixture *upward* on your face, especially remembering the oily areas around the nose and forehead. Once those dead skin cells have been sloughed off and your pores can *breathe* again, the soft cartilage may be carefully planed away until the desired shape is obtained. The flap of skin is then folded back over the bridge and sutured in place with three or four common roofing nails or a stapling gun. A dressing of hydroxyzine suspension (1 mg. per 5 ml.) may be applied topically to prevent redness, scaling, rot, mites, moles, bloat, crabgrass, or Murray face (a postoperative symptom in which the patient's visage is seen to resemble that of a man named Murray). For three to ten days thereafter, cover everything with a sheet of clear plastic wrap to help the seedlings retain moisture and grow to full maturity. Later, after the plants are dried and crushed, you can separate the seeds and twigs by forcing the material through a strainer, which will avoid a paranoid, or "bad," trip. A much more pleasurable trip is obtained by taking the auto ferry directly to Capo di Gallo, near

Palermo, and boarding the charming funicular railway, which starts at the base of the scalp and works its way forward, massaging the entire area and stimulating circulation where it is most needed, at the gumline. A brisk up-and-down rather than a to-and-fro motion is what most dentists recommend. A series of rapid contractions also has a delightful effect; your wife can develop her ability in this area by practicing just a few moments a day, using a strumming motion, striking the low E string down (*oom-*), followed by a glissando up (*pah!*), tightening the embouchure for crescendo and relaxing the lips for diminuendo. In no time you'll be playing such old favorites as "Bile Dat Cabbage Down" and John Blow's "Elegy on Queen Mary." If, after six lessons, you remain a social pariah, remember that a simple implosion device may be fashioned using a discarded length of two-inch pipe and materials available from any scientific supply house. The energy released by such a reaction is equal to the explosive force of 30,000 tons of TNT, or seven forty-year-old men riding a bicycle up a flight of stairs, or a child skipping rope for a hundred years (which burns up 750 calories but does nothing for that flab around your middle). The easiest exercise is one you can do while sleeping at your desk: (1) Tense the diaphragm muscles. (2) Grasp the Flex-o-toner in the middle. (3) Snap the lever around *quickly*. Now measure your arm. You'll be astounded at the results you will get in only three seconds. If you want even better results, H. P. Whitebait, leaders in the investment field for years, recommend tax-free municipals or C.D.s, which yield a smaller return but follow a pattern you can sew yourself with just scissors, a pot of glue, and an astrolabe. Simply compute the volume of the room, which is the width times the length times the height divided by a simple Chinese screen or potted plant,

which maintains the traffic flow without distorting the ambience. An understated Parsons table or lovely hand-rubbed Shaker gibbet completes the décor, and will cost less than ten per cent of what you would pay a professional decorator! Everyone agrees: Mister Cork-Board (reg. U.S. Pat. Off.) takes you step by step and eliminates the anxiety-producing guesswork associated with linoleum installation or any other creative undertaking. What's more, the accompanying diagrams (reprinted from *Creative Undertaking*) reveal the ancient secrets of the Egyptian embalmers and show you how to turn a nice dollar by winding cadavers in strips of old percale. It's so easy. (1) Open the packet of powdered grout and empty into a coffee can or 60 mm. shell casing. (2) Add just enough water to make a thick paste. (3) Apply to the armature, shaping carefully until the amorphous mass resembles a horse or other object of your fancy (suggestions: wolf, nude boy, bunch of pears). (4) When dry, place the completed work under a good strong light, pausing briefly to examine your chin in a magnifying mirror. See those thousands of giant gnarled tree trunks sticking up out of the blighted terrain? That's your beard! That's why we coat each and every razor blade with a thin film of Silislide, the incredible new friction retardant that adds literally years to the life of your dog, because it contains not only a natural, organic moisturizer but a set of hex wrenches, a soldering gun, six terminal lugs, and a melding tool. Even a woman or child can follow our simple schematic drawing and learn how to make BIG MONEY in your own home by going down to the basement after dinner and practicing the kind of personalized, demanding craft that made this country what it is. Using a jeweler's loupe and a No. 4 Superfine needle, start by engraving the face (Andrew Jackson if it's a twenty), remember-

ing that most beginners slip up by omitting the little chimney on the left side of the White House. Work carefully. Write clearly. Do not look at your neighbor's paper. When you are finished, remain sitting quietly. Speak to no one. Anything you say may be taken down and held against you. You are entitled to one telephone call. If you have never been impanelled (and under no circumstances remove panel; there are no user-serviceable parts inside), please familiarize yourself with this simple time-honored trial procedure: (1) Place suspect in ducking stool (*figure A*), making certain straps (b) and (c) are secured. (2) Lower witch into pond (*figure B*) for period of not less than five minutes' duration. (3) Watch carefully: those bubbles on the surface of the water mean that all the goodness is being extracted, while the bitter oils and acids are left trapped *inside* the hair follicle, leaving the fingernails soft and shiny! Now buff to a high lustre. There's nothing more to do; nothing to learn, assemble, or understand. Simply roll the doubling cube, adding the number of points to your Master Score—*unless* you have previously acquired a Hazard card, in which case you must advance to the penalty booth. Once inside: (1) Draw the curtain closed. (2) Examine the sample ballot. (3) Pull down all levers marked "*Ausgezeichnet*." Remain calm. Do not panic. Place your head between your knees. Pull the two yellow tabs down smartly to inflate the vest. Step out of the booth. Once in the water, obey the stewardess. If a shark appears, remain perfectly still. Have your main points in mind. Speak clearly and in a loud voice. Use simple words. The repellent will last approximately one hour. After that, anything left over may be frozen for reuse in small plastic containers.

—MARSHALL BRICKMAN

Below is Marshall Brickman's acceptance speech when he was given the Ian McLellan Hunter Award for Lifetime Achievement in Writing by the Writers Guild of America, East in 2006.



Robert Benchley once wrote a *New Yorker* piece, probably 70 years ago, entitled *Why we laugh—or do we?*

I always thought there should be a companion piece entitled *Why we write—or do we?* Many of us do write, and for a variety of reasons—for money, of course, for revenge, to make things come out the way we want them to but never do in real life, for its therapeutic value, for the pleasure of connecting with an audience....

But most of us here know the real reason for writing, which is to get on the health plan. I believe the WGA health plan to be one of the great triumphs of Western civilization along with the Talmud, Magna Carta, the American Constitution and, of course, Ray Romano's last contract with CBS.

And that's why those of us in this room have it all over losers like Shakespeare and Sophocles and Molière and Jane Austen, because when they got sick, they essentially died. But when we get sick, we check into the Klingenstein Pavilion for as long as it takes, and that is a beautiful thing.

I was in fact at Mount Sinai when the call came from the Guild telling me of this award. I had just had elbow surgery—one of the benefits of 20 years of using a Microsoft mouse—and in my post-operative swoon I thought, as most people would, wait a minute, I'm just getting started. And the truth is, even after decades of thinking about it, I'm only now getting an inkling about structure, rhythm, architecture, dialogue, what to leave out, how much of the author's voice do you want to have in a piece and so on—those things that can't really be taught, but must be learned.

I recalled, as though yesterday, my first job, which was an assignment to write a TV pilot. And it was a great day, I could call my parents and tell them that for the first time I was actually getting money to do what I loved and that they were wrong about medical school. I imagined my life as a writer: up late, read the papers, some work on the play, then lunch at my club with Algernon.... And my agent at the William Morris office, who had given some considerable thought to career management, put his arm around me and said, "Kid, if this pilot goes, you'll never have to write another word in your life."

I should say in his defense, he did give me a rather wonderful piece of advice which I'll pass along. He said, "Kid, whatever you write, be clear. Never confuse fantasy and reality." Words to live by.

(there followed a short reel of film clips)

You may remember back in the '60s when 20th Century Fox had to sell off its back lot to raise money to finish a turkey which was known as the Elizabeth Taylor *Cleopatra*.

They confused fantasy and reality. They tried to turn their reality into fantasy so they could eventually buy more reality—and wound up being owned by an Armenian.

I was looking through some of the old films while putting together that audition reel we just saw and found myself practically weeping with nostalgia for the good old days at United Artists, where I started with Woody. These were, for studio executives, unusual guys. They always used to tell us, “We’re not artists, we’re just bankers. You’re the artists.” Weird, huh?

At UA, how it worked was, you wrote your script—on spec, and that was the trick—and Arthur Krim and his team would read it and if they liked it, they figured out what the budget should be, how much money you actually needed to make the movie—and then they’d give you a lot less because that built character. Then they’d say, “Okay, go ahead, make your movie. Invite us to the premiere.”

The idea of a studio executive giving a filmmaker notes on character arcs, whammies, what needs to happen on page 67, demographic considerations, likeability factors and all that post-Katzenberg mishegoss—all that was unthinkable and unimaginable.

So things have changed, even in my short span in the business. But the changes are more subtle and aren’t limited to the business.

What’s happening is that the language, our common language, is being dismantled, deconstructed and turned upside down and inside out—and as writers and authors, we should be especially troubled with people tampering with the tools of our trade.

If George Orwell were alive today—22 years after 1984—and was in his room (at the Chelsea Hotel, I feel) watching CNN or Fox News, or even reading the paper, I think he would be very confused. Because what he wrote in 1940 about Russia and what we now call the “Soviet experiment” seems very familiar to us today, ironically, in a country that is supposed to represent the opposite of the Soviet experiment.

It’s hard to know how it happened. It probably started innocently with hyperbole in advertising in which the size labeled “large” was in fact the smallest size and the really large size was called the “economy size,” so large meant small and you never knew exactly what to ask for. And then television sitcoms and stand-up comedy developed this kind of deconstructive, ironic approach in which something became funny because it wasn’t really funny. Letterman is a kind of genius at that. And I’m probably crazy, but I think that the politicians intuited our willingness to accept these weird contradictions in the language as some kind of opening and ran through it—and now we’ve got a real problem. Don’t get me wrong, I love Letterman. But he’s not writing the laws. He’s not on the Supreme Court. Although they probably could do worse.

I don’t think we are yet at the stage in which we are being told—and believe—that up is down, black is white, love is hate and war is peace, but I do wonder what it will be like for the next generation to have been raised in an environment in which an idea or an event can be either itself or its opposite.

Just to take a phrase at random: “Mission accomplished.” When “mission accomplished” turns out to really mean “mission not accomplished,” or “We’re going to stay the course,” turns out to mean, “We actually have no idea what the fuck we’re doing,” I start to worry about my kids and their kids and your kids trying to figure out what’s true, what’s really happening—in other words, how to tell the difference between fantasy and reality.

So it turns out there’s another reason to write. It’s not for money or for revenge or to get on the health plan, lovely as it is, but to keep them—and you know who they are—from hijacking the language, and therefore the laws, and tinkering with them; in Garson Kanin’s phrase, to try and make the system pay off like a slot machine.

Because in fact, it’s all about the language. And I don’t mean TV or radio or movies or theater, I mean everything. Whether you’re asking your girlfriend to marry you or ordering a chicken sandwich or declaring war, people have to know what you’re talking about. There’s an old joke: a man comes into the deli and asks the waiter for a chicken sandwich. The waiter says, “Sorry, we’re out of chicken.” So the guy says, “OK, make it a turkey sandwich,” and the waiter says, “Mister, if we had turkey we’d have chicken.” If the day ever comes when a chicken sandwich can also mean a turkey sandwich then we, as a civilization, are over.

Sam Goldwyn is reputed to have said a lot of things, some of which he may have actually said. One of them was, “Give me three writers and I’ll write it myself.” Goldwyn was no dummy. He knew that if you wanna write, you gotta have a writer.

And so it redounds to us, the writers, those who work alone at night, to keep things honest, to be sure that the words are used to clarify, not to obfuscate; to enlighten and not to intimidate.

Ian McLellan Hunter, for whom this award is named, fought the good fight and was rewarded by being blacklisted—another remnant of the good old days—a horror from which he emerged, probably not unscathed, but he did emerge, which is cause for hope. And now it seems that they’re watching and listening and making notes.... And we can’t let it happen again. As the Japanese said about Nagasaki, “Once is funny.”

Because the next time it happens will make the first time look like a garden party, and it won’t just be writers and actors who get on the list. It’ll be your aunt. It’ll be everybody.

Therefore, in the memory of Ian Hunter, I accept this award in the true and certain hope that we shall prevail and that the day will come when we shall all learn to love and understand, not only each other, but the proper use of the possessive apostrophe.

Thank you.

The following are excerpts from *Utopia* that illustrate changes from the London production to the one in New York. Tom Stoppard introduces each excerpt.



The New York text differed from the London text both by addition and subtraction. I wanted to make the plays swifter and, although I cut no scenes, the net effect was that in New York each play was about 15 minutes shorter. The examples shown here (from *Voyage*) are fairly typical of how I clipped and trimmed, and also added information to help the audience with the plot (page 28). (Even more typically—of me—I did this work just a few days before we went into rehearsal, having had four years to do it in.) I doubt that anyone seeing the plays in both cities would have been aware of the cuts, except perhaps in the sense of the play being a little swifter overall.

BELINSKY But what can I do? When a book seizes me it's not by the elbow but by the throat. I have to slap down my thoughts before I lose them, and change them sometimes while I'm having them, it all goes in, there's no time to have a style. It's a miracle if I have a main verb. Chaos, excess and no mercy...

CHAADAEV Yes ... an interesting moment. ~~(preparing to go, hesitates)~~
~~I happen to know Pushkin. (Looks like I'll give him your good wishes.~~

~~**BELINSKY** Give Mr. Pushkin my ... odors. Ask him to give me a boon, so I have something for Nadazhdin.~~

CHAADAEV ~~(deciding)~~ I have brought something of mine for Nadazhdin. Here. It's not new. It's probably unpublshable.

BELINSKY Oh, I'm sure it's not that bad.

CHAADAEV In Russia, that is.

BELINSKY Ah, yes.

CHAADAEV I think its moment has come – in the sense that at the present time the Moscow Censor happens to be a man of almost unfathomable stupidity.

BELINSKY Yes ... but if he passes your article, what will happen when ... ?

CHAADAEV When our masters read it? If they have any sense they'll ignore it ~~but the Telescope will have lit a candle stub against ten years of night.~~

BELINSKY But they haven't got any sense.

CHAADAEV Then the Telescope will go out in a blaze of glory, and we'll all be burned to a crisp. ~~Would you prefer to give it back?~~

~~**BELINSKY** No.~~

~~**CHAADAEV** I am not an artist, so I trust you will allow me to have a thesis. How did we come to be the Caliban of Europe? We stand with one foot in the air ... needing to repeat the whole education of Man, which passed us by. You'll see I share~~

(Voyage)

79

At least she's a real woman even if she's a tart.

MICHAEL (to Natalie) He's not talking about you.

NATALIE (resigned) I know.

MICHAEL

(to Natalie) I've written
I'm going to write to Taliana
I've told her to send
Belinsky's letter back ...
Miss Beyer ...

~~we'll show you you can read it~~

(He gives Natalie a letter)

BELINSKY

NATALIE

Hello, Vissarion You didn't come to the philosophy circle.

BELINSKY

Yes, I did. ^{Can we make less noise - Madeghen's got}
^{himself writing in his office.}
~~(Michael meanwhile has half entered the~~
~~inner room, and returned.)~~

~~MICHAEL~~

~~There's someone asleep in there.~~

~~BELINSKY~~

~~(kisses) Hold you ...~~

MICHAEL

Who is it?

BELINSKY

^{Kaminsky}
~~Stroganov~~ A publisher of history books.

MICHAEL

~~Really? (know lots of history.~~

(Michael goes inside and closes the door.)

BELINSKY

Why don't you sit down?

NATALIE

Thank you. (she sits) Now the chair exists. And I exist
where I meet the chair. A real woman! Who were you
calling a tart, by the way?

BELINSKY

Fichte didn't really mean ... It's the impress of the mind upon
the world ... the Self.

NATALIE

At least Fichte makes us all equal, not like in Schelling where
you had to be an artist or a philosopher, a genius, to be a
moral example to the rest of us.

BELINSKY

Yes! That's right! Democracy in the moral order. Fichte
puts us back in the saddle.

The *Salvage* example, by contrast, shows the end of one scene which became a whole page longer. This grew out of a feeling that I had been less than fair to the character of Bakunin. I think Herzen (in life) regarded Bakunin with a degree of condescension, and the play as I'd written it adopted Herzen's perspective; he treated Bakunin as a bit of a joke, and Bakunin never turned round and bit him. I wanted Bakunin, for once, to have the best of the argument. So I redid the scene and gave Bakunin his "moment."

Again typically, I couldn't get the end of the scene right until we were close to previewing. I took the job away with me as homework over a weekend but in the end kept Ethan [Hawke] and Brian [O'Byrne] waiting for nine days.

BAKUNIN To be freedom, freedom must be freedom for all - for the equality of each!

HERZEN Stop ... stop .

BAKUNIN It's within our grasp, Herzen if we can only remove the fetters from humanity.

HERZEN I think you're saying we'd all be free if humanity was given its liberty.

BAKUNIN Yes!

HERZEN I was afraid of that.

BAKUNIN Left to themselves, people are noble, generous, uncorrupted, they'd create a completely new kind of society if only people weren't so blind, stupid and selfish.

HERZEN Is that the same people or different people?

BAKUNIN The same people

HERZEN You're doing it on purpose.

BAKUNIN No - listen! Once - long ago, at the beginning of history - we were all free. Man was at one with his nature, and so he was good. He was in harmony with the world. Conflict was unknown. Then the serpent entered the garden, and the name of the serpent was - Order. Social organisation! The world was no longer at one with itself. Matter and spirit divided. Man was no longer whole. The Golden Age was ended. How can we make a new Golden Age and set men free again? By destroying order.

HERZEN (wails) Oh Bakunin ... ! It's where you were always going, staggering drunk into your fame, the first Anarchist.

BAKUNIN The year of revolution cracked the foundations of the old world order. Things will never be the same again.

HERZEN (exasperated) Things are the same again! Reaction has triumphed, and the same idiots are making the same speeches, calling on people to sacrifice themselves for metaphors. Who is there brave enough to say that dying for ~~the cause of~~ liberty or progress is not the apex of human

*Yours not a utopian,
yours an anarchist.*

criminally (Who is there to say that
cumulating yourself for glory
often leads to a betrayal of the quest for happiness

happiness? Who is there to say the sacrifice is for vainglory and five kinds of authority dressed up in revolutionary slogans? ~~Offended Blanc just now. His version of utopia has come through without a scratch: the organisation of labour on the Ancient Egyptian model, without the Pharaoh's concern for personal liberties.~~

OK ->

- BAKUNIN I'm disgusted with you. Resignation is disgusting.
- HERZEN Patience is not resignation.
- BAKUNIN What are you waiting patiently for?
- HERZEN The Russian people.
- BAKUNIN Is that the same people or different people?
- HERZEN Different. The Russian peasant. *(vehemently)* Cutting myself off from home was the worst mistake of my life! The Tsar was going to be swept off the board by the tilt from ... from what? Card-house republics? Constitutions to put the fear of God into the Russian army? What fools we look now! Nicholas just tightened the screws - no more passports, no contact, no discussion, perpetual fear, lights out and no whispering!
- BAKUNIN This is just a hiccup...and besides - for all you know ... the Tsar could die tomorrow.

(Herzen laughs. Tata is heard calling for him.)

MARCH 1855

It is daytime. The area around the table erupts into celebration. "Every Russian in London" and affiliated Poles and others are dancing and embracing as though it were New Year's Eve again. But the Christmas decorations have gone. Herzen tumbles in from the door with several new arrivals. He is showing "everyone" a story in the Times.

Tata and Olga (still about four-and-a-half) are dancing hand-in-hand and bare-foot on the table amid glasses and bottles [perhaps]. Tata is shouting "Papa! Papa!"

harmony with himself and the world. Conflict was unknown. Then the serpent entered the garden, and the name of the serpent was - Order. Social organisation! The world was no longer at one with itself. Matter and spirit divided. Man was no longer whole. The Golden Age was ended. How can we make a new Golden Age and set man free again? By destroying order.

HERZEN (wails) Oh, Bakunin ... ! And when you've destroyed everything, what then?

BAKUNIN Liberty, equality and Fraternity, my friend. You used to believe in the goodness of the people.

HERZEN (anguished) Yes, I did.
Help me, Michael

Where are you?

BAKUNIN I'm here. It's all right.

HERZEN Everyone has to obey someone sometimes. Without order you don't have paradise, you have chaos and then despotism. Christ! we worked out the solar system and the calculus, we drive ships by steam across oceans, and we haven't the wit to ~~manage~~ our affairs so that no one is hungry or afraid! About that, civilisation has nothing to tell us. But the future is with Russia now and our people are starting with nothing, so when their time comes, which won't be soon, they won't make do with half liberties. Cutting myself off from home was the worst mistake of my life! The Tsar was going to be swept off the board by the tilt from ... from what? Card-house republics? Constitutions to put the fear of God into the Russian army? What fools we look now! Tsar Nicholas just tightened the screws - no more passports, no contact, no discussion, perpetual fear, lights out and no whispering!

X

PK!

anger
order

✓

thought I could start people at home thinking again. I imagined Nick Ogarev and my friends reading me by candlelight in darkness that covers the land, and beginning again to push back the night. But nothing stirs. The fortress doors have closed on our generation. I was a boy when I pledged myself to the cause, that day with Nick on the Sparrow Hills: now I'm a failed prophet without even a country to call my own.

BAKUNIN You're living in freedom and comfort, and you're sorry for yourself. I'm disgusted with you.

HERZEN *(angered)* Then leave me alone. What are you doing here?

BAKUNIN You don't need a country! There's only one revolution, and it's to make man whole again. This is what I was looking for when I was young and in love with philosophy! - spirit and matter no longer in conflict - the Self in harmony with the Universe and soaring free!

HERZEN *(exasperated)* You're in prison! Bakunin, my heart breaks for you, but no wonder you never made sense. Revolution is for millions to live decent lives, with equality and justice. It's not for your Self to achieve harmony with the Universe.

BAKUNIN *(simply)* It's the same thing.

I know you always laughed at me behind my back, but you're not always right about everything. The people let you down because their inner and outer lives were divided. They couldn't struggle free because their spirit wasn't free. You puzzle over the problem as if revolution was a battle plan, and society a diagram, and in Paris you told us there was no sign of a revolution just before it broke out. And now you're saying in Russia it won't happen soon. Maybe it won't. But when it comes it will come against the odds, against calculation and

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Updated 1/16/07



common sense, out of nowhere like an epidemic,
because revolution is spirit set free. the body is
only keeping up; and society will find its own
form, which will be the shadow thrown by the
inner nature of the people. So keep faith in their
goodness, Herzen

Who knows if I'll ever see you again?

(They embrace.)

(cheerfully) No tears, now. The Tsar might die
tomorrow!



The Back Page

BY PATRICIA MARX



A NOTE ON THE TYPE



The text of this book was set in Wrunk-Targhool, a font designed by Radaker Targhool, widely renowned in the 14th century as the tongueless monk. This rarely used graphic style is recognized for the distinctive halos that hover above certain marks of punctuation and for the petite figures of Jesus on the lowercase *t*'s. The liberal use of serifs, frequently unattached to letters, numbers or symbols, gives the font a charming quality that some art historians believe to be the inspiration behind Marc Chagall's mid-period stained glass. This effect is enhanced by the *gramigna* curlicues that oftentimes extend gracefully across several pages and other times joyfully interweave themselves through the copy.

Unlike modern fonts, Wrunk-Targhool favors hexuple spacing and does away with the upper-case *M*, *R*, *A*, and *B*. Instead of the prosaic dot typically seen above the lower-case *i*, one finds a delicately drawn daisy. What one will not find on either the top or bottom of each page are numerals of any kind. These are instead efficiently aggregated in a clump on the dust jacket.

The story of Wrunk-Targhool began in 1358 when Radaker Targhool issued the illuminated manuscript *Doesn't This Thing On My Big Toe Look Funny To You?* Here, we see the first instance of consonants being bent downward to show respect for our Lord, still a signature of the font. Although modern critics consider Targhool's disquisition to be a masterpiece, the tongueless monk failed in his enterprise to acquire even a single commission in his day. Radaker Targhool's malady went untreated and thus, he succumbed to death from complications (without, of course, comment).

After Radaker Targhool's passing, Baptiste Cano, the Corpulent Acolyte, refined the font, adding squiggly-looking iconicons to the alphabet to represent the sounds of, respectively, a sneeze, a hiccup and the scraping on the ground of a small length of early iron. Despite popular belief, it was Baptiste Cano, not Johann Gutenberg, who first conceived the notion of a machine that could print multiple copies of transcription. At that time, most written matter was sewn into tapestries, which made it cumbersome for one to read in bed. While endeavoring to fulfill a last-minute holiday Bible order, Baptiste Cano, using a prototypical cheese press, was fatally melted in a tragic Gorgonzola event.

The contribution of the Danish trapeze artist Robbie Wrunk to the development of the font that bears his name is still a mystery.





