

WALLACE SHAWN-ANDRÉ GREGORY PROJECT

The
Designated
Mourner

Grasses of
a Thousand
Colors

**THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE
& THE PUBLIC THEATER** *present*

DIALOGUES

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The Wallace Shawn-André Gregory Project
is a co-production between



and



A co-production with The Public Theater, The Wallace Shawn-André Gregory Project is a celebration of a remarkable theatrical collaboration. Wallace Shawn is one of America's most significant playwrights, long overdue for a major retrospective. André Gregory, his *My Dinner with André* co-star, has been directing Shawn's plays for 40 years, and as part of this retrospective, he directs Shawn's two most recent plays; the first New York revival of the acclaimed masterwork *The Designated Mourner* and the American premiere of the profoundly provocative *Grasses of a Thousand Colors*.

Dialogues: The Wallace Shawn-André Gregory Project is intended as a companion piece to the plays, providing perspectives that look at the plays as literary works as well as a theatrical pieces. This issue contains excerpts from two remarkable essays on *The Designated Mourner*: renowned critic Stanley Kauffmann's illuminating introduction, and scholar Dayton Haskin's examination of Shawn's use of John Donne. The final piece is an interview of American poet Mark Strand by Wallace Shawn, specifically chosen for its discussion of poetry and the process of writing. All three pieces are intended to ignite readers' imaginations and to resonate with the productions.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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"In Conversation: March Strand and Wallace Shawn" excerpt from "Interview with Mark Strand" in *Essays* by Wallace Shawn (Haymarket Books, 2009), pp. 133-157. Reproduced with kind permission from Haymarket Books and the author.

Credits

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SHAWN'S THEATER STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Theater history is replete with actor-playwrights, but if we except Shakespeare, most of the Anglophones among them have been more notable for their acting than their plays. In our century the balance has altered somewhat. Harold Pinter spent his early years trying to build an acting career and his latter-day performances confirm his acting talent, but his real achievement is of course his drama.

Sam Shepard could obviously have had a full life as a theater and film actor, an outstanding one, but his plays reach heights beyond his acting. Now there's Wallace Shawn. He is familiar to many through his multiple screen appearances, most memorably in *My Dinner with Andre* and *Vanya on 42nd Street*, but his plays, which for years were a kind of rumor around the edge of his acting career, are looming larger and larger in the Shawn account. It's becoming increasingly clear that, though much of his acting has been pleasant, some of it more than that, his plays have true and pressing importance.

Shawn has written 14 plays to date. I concentrate here on the last three, both because they are thematically linked and because the latest, *The Designated Mourner*, seems a culmination of those themes and their tangents. (The fact that the latest play has been filmed helps to italicize Shawn's presence as a writer.) Those last three plays are haunting, troubled, troublesome. All of them deal ultimately with the subject of social responsibility—that kinship between one human being and other human beings—in tangible or rarefied form.

* * *

The Designated Mourner (1996), adventures further in form and theme. Formally, it is a piece for three actors who sit at a table facing us and speak. (The film doesn't much alter this shape.) More than the two other plays considered here, *The Designated Mourner* develops a story, but in its presentational baldness, the play makes no attempt to woo or seduce us. Its mild-mannered stoicism of form is, however, complimentary to those susceptible to the compliment.

Once again there is a mirror-image switch in theme. The social attitudes in the protagonist are much like those in *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, Jack, the principle

speaker, starts from more or less the same social locus as the speaker in *The Fever*—surrounded by grimness—but, instead of suffocating in the miseries of the world, he struggles to put them aside, to protect himself from them. The play follows his discarding of involvement just as meticulously as *The Fever* followed its speaker's growing involvement. And *The Designated Mourner* dramatizes the result of disinvolvement: safety, a safety that is degrading.

The setting is one of those "poor countries" under a harsh dictatorship. The three characters are Jack (his self-description: "You can sum me up in about ten words: a former student of English literature who—who—who went downhill from there"); his wife, Judy, who has been much in love with him; and her father, Howard, a somewhat snooty, radical intellectual.

Jack begins. He says:

The designated mourner. I am the designated mourner. I have to tell you that a very special little world has died, and I am the designated mourner. Oh, yes, you see, it's an important custom in many groups and tribes. Someone is assigned to grieve, to wail, and light the public ritual fire. Someone is assigned when there's no one else.

Jack never tells us who assigned him. Not himself, surely; it wouldn't have occurred to him. Some cloudy officialdom, perhaps, closing matters officially. Immediately after those opening comments, and for some of the reasons that applied in the earlier plays, a non sequitur.

Christ, you know, I remember so clearly the moment—when what that—years ago—when someone was saying, "If God didn't like assholes, he wouldn't have made so many of them," and the person who was saying it looked right at me as he said it—ha ha ha—

Ha ha ha. Jack's dialogue throughout the play is garnished with "ha ha ha." After another non sequitur, another offhand reminiscence, he speaks of Judy before we even know who she is.

I remember saying to Judy, "I don't sort of understand this need you have to look for beauty in subtler things. Look at your own hand—look at your hand, the plate, the cake, the table..."

This insistence on miniscule reality is less an emphasis on beautiful simplicities than, as we learn, a shucking of curiosity, of intellectual ambition. As he says later:

One day she said to me something like, "I don't understand your relationship to society, I don't understand your relationship to the world you live in." "Can I tell you something?" I said snappily. "I don't understand my relationship to my own ass. I mean, I was standing naked in the bathroom this morning, and when I saw my ass in the mirror I just said to myself, 'What is that? What is that? And what does it have to do with me?'"

Good for a laugh, until one thinks about it.

In the course of the three narratives, Jack's and Judy's and Howard's, we get, along with some of their privacies, a picture of life under this country's dictatorship. Judy and Howard managed to breathe freely for a while, trying to look near-objectively at what was happening around them. At last Judy and Howard are jailed, as dissidents, for five years. And after they are released, the government kills them.

Jack, who has separated himself from them physically, is separated otherwise, too. He gradually shears himself free of all social concern and (thus) he survives. Near the end, he tells us that, when he saw a photo of Judy's execution in a newspaper, all he could think was: "I didn't know what to do. I mean, literally, what to do, stand up, remain seated, stay in, go out." So he reached for some porno magazines.

All through the piece, we see Jack moving toward this almost affectless condition. Earlier he has said:

Why am I struggling every day to learn my lines, to once again impersonate this awful character whom I somehow believe I've been chosen to play, this terrible character whose

particular characteristics are impossible to remember? I feel exactly the way a criminal must feel, trying hard every day to stick to the story he was telling yesterday...

Eventually he triumphs completely over the burden of selfhood. One afternoon he sees his "self in the fading light." He seizes that "unpleasant little self," pummels it and strangles it. "What a fucking relief it was. All that endless posturing, the seriousness, the weightiness, that I was sick sick sick of—I'd never have to do any of it again."

...*The Designated Mourner* develops a story, but in its presentational baldness, the play makes no attempt to woo or seduce us. Its mild-mannered stoicism of form is, however, complimentary to those susceptible to the compliment.

At the end, he tells us that he sat in a park cafe in the evening, eating a pastry, and he burned the paper cup in which the pastry was served. This is the "ritual fire" that he thinks is appropriate for the mourning he was designated to do. The reduced man fulfills the ritual reductively. The Underground Man again: "And in conclusion, gentlemen, the best thing is to do nothing! The best thing is conscious inertia! And so, hurrah for the underground!"

Jack's devolution is, for Shawn, the metamorphosis of conventional social concern or, at any rate, conventional liberalism. The person who feels for the sufferings of others but does little about them is reduced to the person who feels little. He is no more ineffective than he was before, though, in a terrifying way, he is more honest.

Still, to strap Shawn's work, here and in the previous plays, too closely to social themes is to risk diminishing him. He is not a polemicist, he is an artist, a moral artist

who insists on human complexities and who uses the imaginative strategies that these complexities suggest—those startling yet engaging non sequiturs, the seductive surprises of locution, the shrewd observation, the dry wit.

Beyond, or rather beneath, all these elements, is a quality suggested earlier in the Speaker's lines about the violin. Particularly in his later plays, Shawn wants to confess: to reveal a view of existence that preceded and will survive any of the issues that torment him. This quality is a sort of intimacy, a vote of his confidence in us. In *Aunt Dan and Lemon* this intimacy is used ironically; but consider this passage from *The Fever*.

Do you know?—there are nights in the city where I grew up, the city I love most of all, when it's too cold for rain but the sky can't snow yet, although you feel it would like to, and so instead it seems that at a certain moment every car and face and pane of glass is suddenly covered by a delicious wetness, like the wetness you see on a frozen cherry, and on nights like that, when you walk through the streets in the nice part of town, you see all the men, in overcoats that hang straight down to the ground, staring harshly with open-mouthed desire at the fox-headed women whose lipstick ripples, whose earrings ripple, as they step through the uneven light and darkness of the sidewalk.

Even Jack, the unadmirable Jack, has comparable passages in *The Designated Mourner*. For instance, his last words in the play:

I sat on the bench for a very long time, lost, sunk, deep—in the experience of unbelievable physical pleasure, maybe the greatest pleasure we can know on this earth—the sweet, ever-changing caress of an early evening breeze.

Such passages are not compensatory for the characters' other aspects, not conventional rounding of personae. They seem to me to certify the world in which these complicated people live; these passages help to keep them from being characters in plays. We are given

glimpses of the whole world that encloses Shawn's people, which underscore the limitations of their dalliance. Shawn's secret, which he can't help sharing with us no matter how he aches, is that the sheer sensory experience of living entralls him. He almost seems to feel guilty about it.

Yet, that having been said, it's unmistakable that his plays, especially these later ones, are couched in social purpose. His plays are the work of an actor. This is worth emphasis because it adds a special tinge to their radicalism of shape and theme. Years ago I knew a poet who saw Weiss's *Marat/Sade* play and said, "This play doesn't say 'Change the world.' It says 'Change the theater.'" His remark seems to me truer than he intended it to be; theater was Weiss's means of entry into possibilities of change. And, because Shawn is an actor, his linkage with the theater as a force in the world, (let's delete that comma) is intensified. As an actor, he knows the risks in his plays. In his advice to the performer of *The Fever* that is published with the play, he says:

People are going to avoid what you're saying any way they can—either by escaping into enjoyment of the play, or by escaping into sympathy or lack of sympathy for the character, or in some other way. You may discover that one of the people running down one of the escape routes is you...

He enjoins simplicity on the performer, just "saying it to the people who are there." Yet paradoxically it is that simplicity—courageous, quiet, persistent—that conveys the astonishments of his art.



Excerpted from "Shawn's Theatre" in *About the Theater: Selected Essays by Stanley Kauffman* (The Sheep Meadow Press, 2010), pp. 15-27. Reproduced with kind permission from The Sheep Meadow Press and the author.

STANLEY KAUFFMANN has been film critic for The New Republic for some forty years. He has published ten books of criticism, seven novels, and *Conversations with Stanley Kauffman* in 2003. He has also published and produced many plays and taught at the Yale School of Drama and at the Theater Department of CUNY Graduate Center.

HIGH CULTURE AND LOW DAYTON HASKIN

There is something to be said, of course, for the idea that in *The Designated Mourner* [John] Donne's name is only a signifier, at most a stand-in for poetry in general. What Shawn has said about the origins of the play encourages the presumption that "Donne" is a word used to call up a time when, among influential elite, poetry seemed to matter a great deal more than it now does. In the prefatory letter that accompanies *Plays One*, he confides that the idea for the play began to come to him at a memorial service, where he conceived a desire to join the "reverence and respect" (xxi) he feels for certain writers (he does not mention Donne) with the social themes he had been probing in *The Fever* (1990). From early on in the script of *The Designated Mourner*, moreover, there seem to be signals that the playwright's real concern is the contemporary culture wars. No sooner has Jack introduced himself than he begins to deploy the categories that he will use to structure his narrative, "that wonderful pair of neatly matching phrases 'high-brow' and 'low-brow'" (2), which he traces back to the work of a columnist for *The New York Sun* in the year 1902. After introducing himself as "a former student of English literature," Jack proceeds to tell the story of how he came at last to acknowledge that "I guess I've always really been a low-brow at heart" (49).

Jack's invocation of the categories of high and low culture makes his narrative resonate with a kind of story that is currently being told in and about academic literary circles, for instance, in Robert Scholes's book on *The Rise and Fall of English*. Scholes urges that the discipline of English came into its own by separating "literature" from rhetoric and by erecting literary works as objects of study for teachers and students who were eager to find a substitute for traditional religion. He paints the earlier decades of the twentieth century as a time when literature was taught with evangelical fervor. (Scholes generalizes freely from reports about Billy Phelps's teaching at Yale). Then, following a shrewd account of the ascendancy of New Criticism advanced by John Guillory (1983), he depicts the middle decades as the heyday of English, when professors were busy inducting students into a project of interpreting quasi-sacred canonical texts. He claims that when English was at its height, professors of literature saw themselves as offering access through the works they were expounding to a transcendental realm beyond politics and the marketplace (Scholes 25-28). His account of

how deconstruction, feminism, new historicism, and other new methodologies subsequently delivered us from the pretensions of a midcentury literary criticism that glorified poetry frankly mirrors a personal story he has told elsewhere of his own deconversion, first from Christianity and subsequently from "literature." Ultimately, Scholes's narrative veers away from the course that Jack's takes, and he goes on to advocate a program that would allow rhetoric once again to reign supreme. Still, the kind of story he tells, of a rise and a fall, constitutes a presupposition with which Shawn has gone to work in *The Designated Mourner*. Indeed, Scholes's reliance upon the idea that Cleanth Brooks's celebrated reading of "The Canonization" epitomizes the displacement of Christianity into English Studies helps to open the possibility that in Shawn's play it matters that it's Donne whose valediction requires a mourner.

Inasmuch as "The Canonization" did acquire an unprecedented preeminence in the middle decades of this century (Haskin) and seemed to stand as a quintessential piece of "canonical literature" (Guillory 1995), Donne's name has become metonymic. Brooks enlisted "The Canonization" as a "well-wrought urn" to introduce a theory of poetry. If many recent developments in literary and cultural studies have been defined against (caricatures of) the New Criticism, one thing that makes Shawn's portrait of his designated mourner disarming and even sympathetic is that, unlike Scholes and other academics who proceed as if Donne has already been adequately understood and assimilated, Jack acknowledges that he spent many years faking it:

I was clever enough to know that John Donne was offering something that was awfully enjoyable—I just wasn't clever enough to actually enjoy it. I'd devoted my life to it... but I couldn't get near to the great writers... I read them and read them, but they always seemed remote. I didn't want them to. They just did. I was kept out of it all...Howard, on the other hand, was let right in. Come in, they said...We're right here. Howard couldn't even comprehend what the problem was for the rest of us poor mortals. (13)

Jack affably confides all this after "the readers of poetry" have been arrested, and Howard and Judy have gone

to their executions as many English professors have gone to their retirements, “quietly,” without protest (34).

Jack’s story suggests that he has managed to survive because he liberated himself from any remnants of adulation for high art. “And what a fucking relief it was. All that endless posturing, the seriousness, the weightiness, that I was so sick sick sick [sic!] to death of-I’d never have to do any of it ever again” (49). He tells of the experiment he performed one day of putting a book of poetry—the sort of book that he had always treated with the utmost respect—into the bathtub and

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of urinating on it, and later of defecating on it, “Just to see, you know, if it *could* be done” (50). When he declares the experiment “a complete success,” his autobiographical narrative rounds out its parody of a justly famous moment in traditional conversion narratives. Whereas autobiographers from St. Augustine to André Gregory report that they found in a book something that occasioned their personal transformation, Jack tells of going downhill from “reading a book of poetry by one of our very finest authors” (17), to watching “for hour after hour” that “familiar framed screen which held in side it colours, songs, characters, drunkenness, love—beauty” (18), and ultimately to spending “a lot of time” looking at “this little collection of, actually, sex magazines that I’d found one day in a rather nice plastic bag just lying on the street near a puddle” (50). This narrative seems to recap a larger story now circulating about a disastrous decline of standards and the undoing of a traditional curriculum. What makes Jack’s narrative genuinely disturbing, however, is the fact that his performance constitutes a valediction that eschews mourning for the woman who was once his life’s partner¹.

The actions that Jack performed on that book of poetry are reminiscent of impertinent gestures that figure prominently—and facetiously—in many of Donne’s poems, often at the conclusion and sometimes at the very center, as in the claim in “The Canonization” that

the lovers are eminently Christlike in the dying and rising that characterizes their repeated sexual exploits. Leslie Stephen once remarked that he found something in just about every Donne poem that tended to set his “teeth on edge” (37). More recently, this idea has been brought into a new focus by Christopher Ricks, who discerns in a group of Donne poems the poet’s tendency to spoil what’s best in his own work. Ricks takes as his principal specimen “Farewell to Love,” which ends with swearing off the hard work entailed in a genuinely intimate relationship and resolving to settle for something like impersonal sex or masturbation:

my mind
Shall not desire what no man else can find,
I’ll no more dote and run
To pursue things which had, endamaged me.
And when I come where moving beauties be,
As men do when the summer’s sun
Grows great,
Though I admire their greatness, shun their heat;
Each place can afford shadow. If all fail,
’Tis but applying worm-seed to the tail.
(31-40)

As Ricks reads them, many of Donne’s poems end with an expression of revulsion that precludes “an integrity of response” (21). He cites, among others, “Love’s Alchemy,” “Air and Angels,” “The Curse,” and, conspicuously, “Woman’s Constancy,” reading it as a poem in which a beautiful intuition about what is entailed in going to sleep together is disfigured when the final line is spat out:

Now thou hast loved me one whole day,
Tomorrow when thou leav’st, what wilt thou say?
Wilt thou then antedate some new made vow?
Or say that now
We are not just those persons, which we were?
Or, that oaths made in reverential fear
Of love, and his wrath, any may forswear?
Or, as true deaths, true marriages untie,
So lovers’ contracts, images of those,
Bind but till sleep, death’s image, them unloose?
Or, your own end to justify,
For having purposed change, and falsehood, you
Can have no way but falsehood to be true?
Vain lunatic, against these ‘scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,

Which I abstain to do,
For by tomorrow, I may think so too.

Ricks finds Donne's endings offensive on the grounds that the poet "takes perverse delight in meaning in the end something not only inadequate to, but unworthy of, the occasion he has created" (31).

Shawn's interest in the sort of phenomenon to which Ricks has called attention in poems by Donne was already evident in *My Dinner with André*, where the title character, having told Wally of his adventures over the past months, explains that he is "repelled" by his self-indulgence and feels that he has squandered his life. Later as they discuss the boredom that sets in among the affluent, André remarks that "the word 'spoiled' isn't a chance word," and Wally teases out of the metaphor its implication of doom (91). The film comes to a climax when they suddenly realize that all the other patrons have left the restaurant without their ever having noticed, and André muses on "that moment of complete forgetting" in "the sexual act" and its curious relation to a worry which sets in immediately afterwards:

In the next moment you start to think about things—work on the play, what you've got to do tomorrow...The world comes in quite fast. Now, that may be because we don't have the courage to stay in that place of forgetting, because that is again close to death. Like people who are afraid to go to sleep...And to not know what the next moment will bring, I think, brings you closer to a perception of death. So that, paradoxically, the closer you get to living, in the sense of relating constantly, I guess the closer you get to this thing that we're most afraid of. (111-12)

Unlike poems by Donne that seem to close with a deadly last word, *My Dinner with André* swerves away from dwelling on death and ends with a feeling of exhilaration, as Wally takes a taxi home to tell Debby the whole story of the evening.

By contrast, Part One of *The Designated Mourner* ends with self-criticism for spoiling a pleasurable experience. Howard tells of a recurring fantasy he had about being with his friend Joan, how she would sit beside him and hold him tightly:

Through the window, under a bright moon,
we see horses playing on the grass, and
birds playing in the sky above the house.
And her very cold hand is stroking me slowly
but purposefully with a delicate motion, up
and down, and I'm thinking about this whole
rather twisted question of death, and I say
to myself, For God's sake, will you stop
struggling? Lie back. Put your head on the
pillow. Close your eyes. Don't you know
how to enjoy *anything*? Just wait for the
moment which you know will come. There.
There. One, two—it's a certainty. (36)

The concluding section of the play seems even more like the poems by Donne that Ricks judges to be "marked by a vengeful infidelity to their own deepest apprehensions" (39). As the other side of Jack's increasing fascination with the "new friends" he finds in sex magazines, his experiment on a book of poetry bespeaks a revulsion like that expressed in "Farewell to Love." It makes a kind of variation on the disparaging endings of poems—"mummy, possessed," "if it be a she / Nature beforehand hath out-cursed me," "Yet she / Will be / False, ere I come, to two or three"—in which, as Ricks would have it, sadness colludes with revulsion to degrade the flesh and the poems degenerate into pornography, "doing dirt" on sex. Ricks would disallow as too easy the interpretive move by which such poems are assigned to a persona, urging Donne's own responsibility for what he wrote. Something similar needs to be remarked with respect to Shawn's creation of *The Designated Mourner*, in which it is ultimately the playwright, and not merely Jack, who bears the responsibility for confronting the audience with materials that are likely to leave us feeling unsettled, and if we're willing to acknowledge it, tainted in ways that we will want to do something about.



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Dayton Haskin is the author of *Milton's Burden of Interpretation (Penn)* and of *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford)*. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and has served as President

of the Milton Society of America and of the John Donne Society. Currently, he's working on a book about how, after the Civil War, American colleges attempted to turn English literature into an academic subject. He teaches Renaissance and comparative literature at Boston College and claims to have had a lot of fun watching the playwright perform the title role in an early production of *The Designated Mourner*.

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Notes

- 1 While relatively few reviewers have remarked on this aspect of the play, Egan helpfully emphasizes its importance (236-37).

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IN CONVERSATION WITH MARK STRAND WALLACE SHAWN



ESSAYS WALLACE SHAWN

Cover, *Essays* by Wallace Shawn; © 2009 Haymarket Books; design by Josh On and Amy Balkin, cover photo of Wallace Shawn © 1988 Associated Press.

In the world of *The Designated Mourner*, the readers and writers of poetry, “the charming little gang who could understand poetry,” are a dying breed. Although ostensibly hunted for their political leanings, these men and women hold within them the intellectual beauty of their culture and, presumably, the empathy of poets.

Poetry, in part, becomes an emblem for individuals for whom language, beauty, art, and free thought are valued above their own lives. The play provides snippets of these individuals through the eyes of Jack, Judy, and Howard, even as their poetry, their poets, their understanding is being forgotten.

The following is an excerpted interview of Mark Strand by Wallace Shawn in which they discuss reading and writing, and the societal benefits and dangers of poetry.

The American Poet Mark Strand says that the elements he requires in order to be able to write are “a place, a desk, a familiar room. I need some of my books there. I need quiet. That’s about it.” Asked if he ever writes in a less tranquil spot, such as on a train, he replies that he does, but usually only prose, because it’s “less embarrassing. Who would understand a man of my age writing reams of poetry on a train, if they looked over my shoulder? I would be perceived as an overly emotional person.”

SHAWN I started reading that thing that that guy wrote about you. But it upset me, because he kept talking about the themes of your writing, and I didn’t get it. I don’t think I really get the concept of “themes.” So I’m not going to ask you questions like, What is your view of nothingness? because I don’t get that, exactly.

STRAND I don’t get it either. And I’m not sure I could articulate a view of nothingness, since nothingness doesn’t allow a description of itself. Once you start describing nothingness, you end up with somethingness.

SHAWN In any case, do we read poetry because we’re interested in “themes”?

STRAND You don’t read poetry for the kind of truth that passes for truth in the workaday world. You don’t read a poem to find out how you get to Twenty-Fourth Street. You don’t read a poem to find the meaning of life. The opposite. I mean, you’d be foolish to. Now, some American poets present the reader with a slice of life, saying, “I went to the store today, and I saw a man, and he looked at me, and I looked at him, and we both knew we were...thieves. And aren’t we all thieves?” You know, this is extracting from everyday experience a statement about life, or a moral. But there is another type of poetry, in which the poet provides the reader with a surrogate world through which he reads *this* world. Wallace Stevens was the twentieth-century master of this. There’s no other poetry that *sounds* like a Wallace Stevens poem. But then, there’s nothing that sounds like a Frost poem, either. Or a Hardy poem. These people have created worlds of their own. Their language is so forceful and identifiable that you read them not to verify the meaning or truthfulness of your own experience of the world, but simply because you want to saturate yourself with their particular voices.

SHAWN Well, your poetry is obviously very much in this

category. When we read your poetry, we are enticed by the voice—and then led into a world that you have created. And at first, I would say, we can more or less picture or imagine the scenes you conjure up, although they may consist of elements that in our daily world would never be combined in the way you’ve combined them. Sometimes, though, in your poems—quite often, really—we reach a point that is almost, one could say, Zeno-like, in which we’re asked to imagine things that are either almost self-contradictory or literally unimaginable. I mean, in a surrealist painting, a painter could present a very strange landscape, but he couldn’t present one like this! This couldn’t be painted!

STRAND Well, I think what happens at certain points in my poems is that language takes over, and I follow it. It just sounds right. And I trust the implication of what I’m saying, even though I’m not absolutely sure what it is that I’m saying. I’m just willing to let it be. Because if I were absolutely sure of whatever it was that I said in my poems, if I were sure, and could verify it and check it out and feel, yes, I’ve said what I intended, I don’t think the poem would be smarter than I am. I think the poem would be, finally, a reducible item. It’s this “beyondness,” that depth that you reach in a poem, that keeps you returning to it. And you wonder—the poem seemed so natural at the beginning—how did you get where you ended up? What happened? I mean, I like that, I like it in other people’s poems when it happens. I like to be mystified. Because it’s really that place which is unreachable, or mysterious, at which the poem becomes ours, finally, becomes the possession of the reader. I mean, in the act of figuring it out, of pursuing meaning, the reader is absorbing the poem, even though there’s an *absence* in the poem. But he just has to live with that. And eventually, it becomes essential that it exists in the poem, so that something beyond his understanding, or beyond his experience, or something that doesn’t quite match up with his experience, becomes more and more his. He comes into possession of a mystery, you know—which is something that we don’t allow ourselves in our lives.

SHAWN We don’t?

STRAND I mean, we live with mystery, but we don’t like the feeling. I think we should get used to it. We feel we have to know what things mean, to be on top of this and that. I don’t think it’s human, you know, to be that competent at life. That attitude is far from poetry.

SHAWN An experience of total immersion in mystery that I once had was reading the first half of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. You know, it was really totally up to you to sort of create this world in your own head, and whether what was in your head was what was in Heidegger’s head—who could possibly guess?

STRAND Well, when I read poetry I can’t imagine that what’s in the reader’s head is ever what was in the poet’s head, because there’s usually very little in the poet’s head.

SHAWN You mean...

STRAND I mean, I think the reality of the poem is a very ghostly one. It doesn’t try for the kind of concreteness that fiction tries for. It doesn’t ask you to imagine a place in detail; it suggests, it suggests, it suggests again. I mean, as I write it. William Carlos Williams had other ideas.

SHAWN But do you suggest something that you yourself have already pictured?

STRAND I’m picturing it as I’m writing it. I’m putting together what I need to have this thing be alive. But sometimes it’s more complete than at other times.

SHAWN When you say that when you write language takes over, and then you follow it, you’re implying that the experience of writing is one in which, at least to some extent, you’re in a passive role. Something is coming to you from somewhere, and you’re receiving it. But where is it coming from? Is it *just* the unconscious?

STRAND Poems aren’t dreams. They just aren’t. It’s something else. People who write down their dreams and think they’re poems are wrong. They’re neither dreams nor poems.

SHAWN But the type of poetry you’re describing can be frustrating to the reader. A lot of people I know would have to admit that their basic model for what reading is would be something like the experience of reading the newspaper. Each sentence is supposed to match up to a particular slice of reality.

STRAND If you want a poem to say what it means, right away, clearly—well, what happens when you read that kind of poem is that it puts you back in the world that

you know. The poem makes that world seem a little more comfortable, because here is somebody else who has had an experience like yours. But you see, these little anecdotes that we read in these poems and that we like to believe are true, are in fact fictions. They represent a reduction of the real world. There's so much in our experience that we take for granted—we don't need to read poems that help us to take those things even *more* for granted. People like John Ashbery or Stevens do just the opposite—they try to explode those reductions. There's a desire in Ashbery, for example, to create perfect non sequiturs, to continually take us off guard. He creates a world that is fractured. But, looking at it from another point of view, you *could* say that it's simply a world that is as fractured and as unpredictable as the world in which we move every day. So there's an element of delight in these people who rearrange reality. We usually hang on to the predictability of our experiences to such an extent ... and there's nowhere else where one can escape that as thoroughly as one can in certain poets' work. When I read poetry, I want to feel myself suddenly larger... in touch with—or at least close to—what I deem magical, astonishing. I want to experience a kind of wonderment. And when you report back to your own daily world after experiencing the strangeness of a world sort of recombined and reordered in the depths of a poet's soul, the world looks fresher somehow. Your daily world has been taken out of context. It has the voice of the poet written all over it, for one thing, but it also seems suddenly more alive—not as routinely there.

SHAWN Of course, when you talk about poetry in that way, you're going on the assumption that your reader is willing to put quite a bit of effort into following you—in contrast to writing for the theatre, for example, where it's more normal for one's colleagues to say, "The people aren't going to get this. Clarify it."

STRAND I think a poet writes a poem not feeling that he must be understood on the first or second reading. He writes a poem hoping that the poem will be read more than once or twice, and its meaning will be revealed over the course of time, or its meaning will reveal itself over the course of time.

SHAWN When you say you hope that a poem will be read more than once or twice, how many times do you mean? How many times do *you* read a poem?

STRAND When I write my own poems, I read them hundreds of times to myself. But when I read other people's poems, I will read them dozens of times, sometimes more than dozens of times. I don't know why this should seem strange. The average churchgoing person who lives in the Bible Belt will have read the same passages in the Bible hundreds of times, and they will have revealed to him more each time.

SHAWN An actor in a play goes through a similar process, really, and acting could in a sense be seen as a form of reading, I suppose. The actor goes over the text hundreds of times, seeing more and more implications and different possible meanings inside each individual line, and at the same time seeing *through* the various clichés of interpretation with which he has at first mistakenly overlaid each line.

STRAND Well, a good reader of poetry may be very much like an actor working on his part, because he reads the poem aloud to himself again and again, and sometimes he learns it by heart. And it becomes familiar. It finally becomes part of him. A poem releases itself, secretes itself, slowly—almost, sometimes, poisonously—into the mind of the reader. It does it with cadence, it does it with combinations that might strike the reader as beautiful. Of course, God knows what the beautiful is. I don't know. Because the beautiful fifty years from now will be what is seen as the ugly now, or what's insupportable now, or barely tolerated now. But, you know, I think if you try too hard to be immediately comprehensible to your audience, if you give too much to the moment, you're also giving too much to the status quo. The poet's obligation isn't to his audience primarily, but to the language that he hopes he's perpetuating. And when you think of how long it takes us to understand each other, for example—and how much leeway we give other areas of knowledge in our lives—why can't we be a little more patient with poetry? The language of a poem is meant to be meditated on. You clear a psychic space for poetry that's different from the one you clear for prose. It's a space in which words loom large.

SHAWN But how does a person prepare such a psychic space?

STRAND Well, if you spend a lot of time alone, particularly if you're thinking about your life, or other people's lives, you're already used to the space I'm talking about.

There are certain painters I know to whom the language of poetry means a great deal. And it may be because these people spend a lot of time in front of canvases, alone, with nobody to talk to, that they're prepared: they're ready to take the poem in. Their minds are not full of a lot of noise and clutter and unfulfilled desire. I mean, you have to be willing to *read* poetry; you have to be willing to meet it halfway—because it won't go any further than that if it's any good. A poem has its dignity, after all. I mean, a poem shouldn't beg you to read it; it's pathetic, if that's the case. Some poets fear that they won't be heard unless they flatter the reader, go ninety percent of the way, do it all for the reader. But that's pathetic.

SHAWN Damn! I'm sort of worried that we're not living in the right world to read what you and the poets you admire are writing.

STRAND Well, poetry—at least lyric poetry—tries to lead us to relocate ourselves in the self. But everything we want to do these days is an escape from self. People don't want to sit home and think. They want to sit home and watch television. Or they want to go out and have fun. And having fun is not usually meditative. It doesn't have anything to do with reassessing one's experience and finding out who one is or who the other guy is. It has to do with burning energy. When you go to the movies, you're overcome with special effects and monstrous goings-on. Things unfold with a rapidity that's thrilling. You're not given a second to contemplate the previous scene, to meditate on something that's just happened. Something else takes its place. We forget that there is a thrill that attends the slower pleasures, pleasures that become increasingly powerful the more time we spend pursuing them.

SHAWN Maybe language in general is slowly losing out in some sort of weird competition in the world.

STRAND Well, but on the other hand, we do talk to one another. We would be lonely if we didn't use words.

SHAWN Maybe people avoid poetry because it somehow actively makes them nervous or anxious.

STRAND They don't want to feel the proximity of the unknown—or the mysterious. It's too deathlike; it's too threatening. It suggests the possibility of loss of control right around the corner.

SHAWN When you say deathlike...

STRAND Well, when I say the unknown—death is the great unknown. I mean, most lyric poems lead to some acknowledgment of death. In fact, most poems are dark and dreary affairs that have to do with death and dying, or loss of one sort or another—loss of love, loss of friends, loss of life. Most lyric poems are sad, because if you think deeply at all about your experience, you think about your experience in time—your life—and if you're thinking about your life, you can't avoid the fact that it will end in death. In fact, everything about a poem—the meter of the poem, or the measure of the poem—is a reminder of time. Even a line that's repeated: we're back again. I think that the popularity of villanelles or poems that use refrains is caused by the fact that they seem to enact a stay against time, they seem to give us a momentary reprieve from what usually is the subject of the poem, or the matter of the poem. So, although the poem may be about dying or death, we have repeated lines that seem to say we haven't really gone anywhere, we're back again. But in the end, that just helps us to hold on to the loss that is in the poem. It helps us to remember it.

* * *

SHAWN What did you mean when you said that a poet's first responsibility was to the language?

STRAND Well, in writing poetry, one wants certain flexibility in the use of language, a flexibility that can keep alive successes in the language from the past, that is, other poems, and that will also insure that whatever poetry comes next will capitalize on the successes instead of on the failures. The fact is that we take many of our cues on how to proceed, and our ideas about what is a good line, or a beautiful line, from what we've experienced from the poetry of the past. In other words, it would be nice to know that poets in the future will have read the best poets of today and yesterday, that they won't simply base their poems on news reports or instruction manuals. You know, so that there's some continuity in the language of poetry. Because it's complicated, but we're defined by the best that's written in our language and so we want to perpetuate the best that's written in our language. If poetry becomes just a revision of the newspaper page or the talking heads on TV, that's not a language that will last; it's not a language that translates into the future.

SHAWN But then what would you think of a poet, or someone who said he was a poet, a student, let's say, who came to you and said, "Well, I'm only interested in the present. I don't know about the poetry of the past, I don't like it, and I'm not too interested in it?"

STRAND Well, I would ask him, "What poetry have you read that makes you feel that you want to write poetry?" Because usually what draws us toward poetry is the individual voice that we want to hear—the voice of Wordsworth, the voice of Keats, James Merrill, Anthony Hecht, whoever it is. The chances are that a person who doesn't feel any desire to hear such voices may not turn out to have a very original voice himself.

SHAWN So you do in a way agree with the academic writers who always seem to imply that the parents of poems are other poems, as opposed to what I'm always wondering, which is why couldn't the greatest influences on a poet be the people he's known, or the experiences he's had every day, rather than the poems he's read?

STRAND Well, it all depends on the poetry you write. Some people may be more influenced by their mothers and less influenced by Robert Frost. It differs with different poets. But by and large, I think poets are more influenced by other poems than they are by what they eat and whom they talk to—because they read other poems deeply, and sometimes they don't eat dinner deeply or chat with a friend over the telephone deeply. Because poems not only demand patience, they demand a kind of surrender. You must give yourself up to them. Once you've done that, and allowed them to enter into your system, of course they're going to be more influential. This is the real food for a poet: other poems, not meat loaf.

SHAWN But what about the idea that a poet should be influenced by a wide range of experience, that a poet should explore *life* and allow it to affect him? Don't you have any feeling that you should do everything, at least once?

STRAND I don't have to try everything on the menu to know what it is that I like. I can make a reasonable guess as to what I *might* like, and so that's what I will order. I don't go out of my way to experience every possible thing, because that's dangerous. I want to protect myself. I want not to experience many, many different things, but to experience the things I choose to experience well, and deeply.

SHAWN Some writers, for example, have tried to enhance their work by writing under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

STRAND They interfere. I mean, if I've had a couple of drinks, I don't feel like writing. I feel like having another drink. Or I feel like going to sleep.

SHAWN But if poems, including poems from the past, are really a poet's main food, doesn't that lead to some rather odd consequences? For example, poets always seem to love to quote other poems in their poetry. I mean—my God—if a contemporary playwright put lines from some nineteenth-century play in one of his own plays, it would be considered, well, ludicrously academic.

STRAND Well, too much of that can be burdensome or overbearing. But sometimes it's delightful; sometimes there's a perfect line that just fits in your poem, and it comes from a poem that's a hundred years old. Poetry is always building these connections. It's not showing off. It's the verbalization of the internal life of man. And each poet forges a link in the chain, so that it can go on. That may be a grandiose way to think of it, but it's certainly not academic. I mean, academics really know very little about poetry; they experience it from the outside. Some of them are ideal readers, but their job is to make connections. It's the way they read, the way they *have* to read. But why should we allow the reading of an academic to become a paradigm for the way we *all* should read?

SHAWN Well, but some modern poetry, like *The Waste Land*, has been so full of connections—connections and allusions—that emergency academic help has been required in order to read it.

STRAND Yes, it would have been impossible for me to have read *The Waste Land* without critical intervention.

SHAWN But isn't there something wrong with that? Or don't you think so? I mean, you don't write like that.

STRAND No.

SHAWN Well, why don't you? Would you write that way if you felt like it—or do you have any objection to that?

STRAND I don't. I mean, Eliot was a very learned guy,

and you know—he wrote a very allusive poetry. My poetry is much more self-contained. I think that there are all kinds of poetry possible—there are all kinds of people possible. *The Waste Land*, the *Cantos* of Pound—this is one kind of poetry. It's a very extreme case of allusiveness. These are men who were intent on revising culture; that found its way into their poetry.

SHAWN And you're willing to make that journey?

STRAND Sure!

SHAWN It's worth it? You don't think it's an outrageous thing to do?

STRAND No. By what standard would it be outrageous? Only by the standard of how easily one can understand the daily newspaper. But say one's standard were trying to understand what is most difficult and most elusive in ourselves. How do we know who we are, and what we are? How do we know why we said what we said? If you use that as a standard, then *The Waste Land* becomes simple. Well, less difficult.

SHAWN The problem is that, because of the importance of very allusive modern poetry, a lot of people, at least in my generation, were given in their school days a sort of screwy idea of what poetry is, and it put them off poetry for life. I'm very grateful that I had some wonderful English teachers, because the bad ones did try to teach us that poetry was simply a game, in which you substituted a certain group of words for the code words offered by the poet. When the poet said *water*, you crossed it out and wrote *rebirth*, et cetera. It was all, "This is a symbol of this; this is a symbol of that." And in a certain way, we got to *hate* those symbols.

STRAND Well, rightfully. It sounds tyrannical on the part of the teacher, to submit you, and to submit the poem, to that. I mean, I don't think teachers who are forced to teach poetry know why they're teaching it, or what poetry provides. Some poems aren't paraphrasable, just as some experiences can't be readily understood—and yet we live with those experiences. I mean, we can *love* a poem and not understand it, I think. There's no reason why we can't live with a poem that doesn't deliver meaning right away—or perhaps ever. You know, somebody should have asked the teacher, "What's the relationship between the meaning

of a poem and the *experience* of a poem?"

SHAWN We didn't have an experience!

STRAND It's as if the paraphrase of the poem was meant to take the place of the poem, and the poem was lost.

SHAWN I'm afraid so.

STRAND You know, the idea is to experience the poem! But this is the reversal that takes place: the poem becomes a surrogate for what the teacher has to say about it.

SHAWN Well, I mean, *literally*, because in my old school books, the physical poem is actually obliterated by the notes I've taken on the teacher's interpretations. The page is a swirl of arrows and circles and scrawled-in words. You could never read the original poem.

STRAND I don't know why teachers are afraid of the *experience* of the poem...

SHAWN Well, because it would be like passing out drugs in class, I imagine.

STRAND Poetry is a high. It is a thrill. If people were taught to read poetry in the right way, they would find it extremely pleasurable.

SHAWN It's also an experience of close contact with another mind, another person.

STRAND Well, certainly something I would want a reader to have as he experiences my poetry is—a form of intimacy.

SHAWN Yes. But of course—how can I put this—as a reader, I wouldn't want to have that intimacy with everybody.

STRAND No. You have to like the voice. I mean, you have to like the music you hear.

SHAWN Right. And it's quite a personal and individual matter what voices you like. It's hard to predict. Like a lot of our other most personal preferences, it goes deep into the individual psyche.

STRAND Well, I feel that anything is possible in a poem. But the problem is, as a poet develops, he develops a predisposition to use certain words—which create or suggest certain landscapes, or interiors, or certain attitudes. Those, in fact, become his identity as a poet. So when a subject with a vocabulary he has never used asserts itself, it may be difficult to accommodate. It will seem strange and may eventually be repudiated in favor of the words that he or she knows will work, because finally—despite experimentation and all the self-righteousness attendant on experimentation—it's more of our own poems that we want to write, more of *our own poems*, poems that sound like they were written by us. It's a terrible limitation. I mean, in some ways, this is where John Ashbery's genius is so marked—that he's got such a large vocabulary that it accommodates everything. He can talk about Goebbels, or hummingbirds, steam shovels, and hemorrhoids, all in the same poem. And he could do it, probably, within ten lines—and it would sound like Ashbery!

SHAWN Allen Ginsberg once implied that he wrote "Howl" in one draft, without revising it, although later he said he actually did revise it a lot. Have you ever been interested in trying that approach?

STRAND Well, I would *like* to write just one draft of a poem and have done with it, but it rarely happens. It's only happened a very few times. You know, I'm not one of the geniuses that gets it right the first time. But there are people who do.

SHAWN Well, there *may* be. We'll never know—they may secretly be hiding a thousand drafts of their poems. Anyway, who cares? If we read something and we like it, we don't care whether it took someone a long time or a short time to write it.

STRAND I don't think the writer should care. We're lucky to write a few terrific things in our lifetime, and for all we know, we may already have written them. So, who knows? I know nothing of the value of my work—all I know is that it's what I do, and what I love to do.

SHAWN Did you feel differently when you were thirty? Because I did.

STRAND Oh, I felt very differently. I was much more ambitious. I felt that I was destined to hold a special place.

That's what I needed in those days to keep me writing. I don't need that any more, and I don't believe any of that obtains. But if young writers talk to me in those terms, I understand very well what they mean, and I'm sympathetic.

SHAWN But all the same, doesn't it sometimes bother you that millions of people don't revere you? I mean, don't you sometimes feel that you ought to be honored for your accomplishments everywhere you go? After all, you *deserve* it.

STRAND Well, some people like my poetry a great deal. It's better than *nobody* liking it.

SHAWN But what about the millions of other people?

STRAND There are a few people I know whose feeling about my poetry is the most important thing to me. It's as simple as that. I don't know many of the people who read my poems. I don't even know, when they read my poems, whether they like my poems. There's no way for me to know, so I can't worry about it.

SHAWN Yes, but all the same, don't you sometimes resent the fact that certain other people in our culture are so incredibly idolized? For example, I was recently listening to a CD of Elliott Carter, and I was thinking, Isn't it unbelievable that this man, who has created such incredibly subtle and beautiful music, is much less honored in our society than people who write songs using only three or four chords? Doesn't he have a reason to be outraged about that?

STRAND Well, the people who like those three or four chords probably aren't going to like his music.

SHAWN No.

STRAND And he probably wouldn't want to be popular with that set.

SHAWN No, he wouldn't.

STRAND So there's no complaint.

SHAWN You mean, these are two different audiences. So that would be like playing elephant music to giraffes.

STRAND There is only one reason to be envious of those

songwriters, and that is that they earn the kind of money that gives them a kind of freedom that Elliott Carter may not have. So it would be nice for Elliott Carter to go to the restaurants that Elton John can afford. But if the price is writing the kind of music that Elton John writes, he can do without it. And that's it. If I had to write the kind of sentences that Jacqueline Susann wrote, you know, write the kind of novels that she wrote, I wouldn't be able to hold my head high anywhere! I'd *slink* into restaurants—very expensive restaurants—and I'd *slink* into ... expensive hotels. And I'd be ashamed to say what it was that I did.

SHAWN But don't you find it sort of awful that our society doesn't even respect poetry enough to allow poets to support themselves through their writing?

STRAND I think poetry would be different if people could make a living writing poetry. Then you would have to satisfy certain expectations. Instead of the inherited norms by which we recognize poems to be poems, there would be a whole new set of constraints, and not such enduring ones, having to do with the marketplace, having to do with what sells, or what engages people in the short run. So perhaps poetry is better off having no monetary value.

SHAWN If I may speak of you personally, it seems that, for better or worse, writing poetry is an essential part of your identity, your sense of yourself—am I right about that?

STRAND Well, my identity is hopelessly wrapped up in what I write, and my being a writer. If I stopped writing, I would simply feel the loss of myself. When I don't write, I don't feel properly alive. There was a period in my life, for five years, when I didn't write any poems. They were among the saddest years of my life, perhaps the saddest years. I wrote a lot of other things. None of them satisfied me the way the writing of poetry does, but I did them, just because I had to be ready, in case poetry came back into my life and I felt capable enough to write poems that weren't terrible. I refuse to write if I feel the poems I'm writing are bad. My identity is not that important, finally. Not dishonoring what I consider a noble craft is more important. I would rather not write than write badly and dishonor poetry—even if it meant I wasn't properly myself. I mean, this sounds high and noble, but in fact, it's not. I love poetry. I love myself, but I think I love poetry as much as I love myself.

SHAWN You don't seem to share the attitude which some people have of, "Hey, I enjoy my hedonistic life of reading and writing, and I don't have the faintest idea whether what I do benefits society or not, and I couldn't care less."

STRAND No. That's not my thing at all. I'm *certain* that what I do, and what other poets do, is important.

SHAWN I have to ask you one more personal question. Well, I don't have to, but I will, because I'm curious: do you care whether you're read after you're dead?

STRAND Well, not to be funny about this, but I'm sort of split on the issue. I mean, I would like to be read after I'm dead, but that's projection.

SHAWN You mean, because you're imagining...?

STRAND I mean, I'd really like to be *alive* after I'm dead. That's all that is. I don't really think it will make much difference to me when I'm dead whether I'm read or not.

SHAWN Right.

STRAND Just as whether I'm *dead* or not won't mean much to me when I'm dead. You see?

SHAWN Sure. So the issue of whether your work is read after your death...

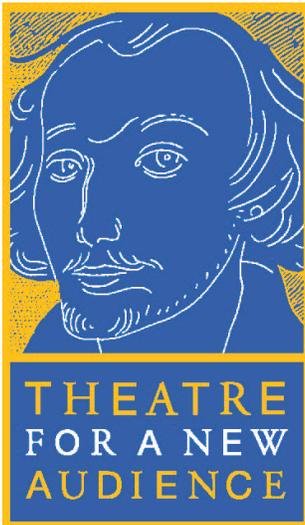
STRAND I think most people who have published books, whose career is a matter of public record, will be read for a little while and then dropped. I mean, after a while, almost everybody is dropped to make room for the new. I think that's only fair. I just hope that the new, or the next, includes poetry. That's what I want. Poetry must continue.



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Founded in 1979 by Jeffrey Horowitz, the mission of Theatre for a New Audience is to develop and vitalize the performance and study of Shakespeare and classic drama. Theatre for a New Audience produces for audiences Off-Broadway and has also toured nationally, internationally and to Broadway. We are guided in our work by five core values: a reverence for language, a spirit of adventure, a commitment to diversity, a dedication to learning, and a spirit of service. These values inform what we do with artists, how we interact with audiences, and how we manage our organization.

THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Theatre for a New Audience is an award-winning company recognized for artistic excellence. Our education programs introduce students to Shakespeare and other classics with the same artistic integrity that we apply to our productions. Through our unique and exciting methodology, students engage in hands-on learning that involves all aspects of literacy set in the context of theatre education. Our residencies are structured to address City and State Learning Standards both in English Language Arts and the Arts, the New York City DOE's Curriculum Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Theater, and the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts. Begun in 1984, our programs have served over 124,000 students, ages 9 through 18, in New York City Public Schools city-wide.

A NEW HOME IN BROOKLYN

After over 30 years of being an itinerant theatre, Theatre for a New Audience has broken ground on a new home in the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District. Scheduled to open in fall 2013, our new home will be a place to gather, learn and explore. In it, we will be able to expand our education and humanities programs to include activities on weekends, after-school and during school vacations for students; as well as lectures, seminars, workshops, and other activities for artists, scholars, adults and families.

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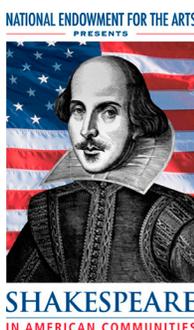
Even with capacity audiences, box office and other earned income account for just 30% of the Theatre's \$3.2 million operating budget. The Theatre expresses its deepest thanks to the following Foundations, Corporations and Government Agencies for their generous support of the Theatre's Humanities, Education, and Outreach programs.



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Theatre for a New Audience's Humanities programming receives support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these programs do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Theatre for a New Audience's productions and education programs receive support from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; and from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



Additional support for these programs is provided by the generosity of the following Foundations and Corporations through their direct support of the Theatre's Education programs or through their general operating grants to the Theatre's Annual Fund:

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