

Strikes & Orgies

Dear Natalie,

Grotowski once commented that what most fundamentally constituted “theatre” was a division between actors and spectators. That there had to be spectators for there to be theatre. Now, as to what kind of spectatorship was to be sought—that was an open question. In other words, if one goes into a classroom and gets everyone involved, including the teacher and oneself, into an activity (or several, all at once, or even in turns), where everyone is an actor—that that’s not theatre. I always found this very funny. But it also complicated things in a very deep, if not unsettling way, in that a division [accepting that division as the “moment one” of “theatre”] would have to be *breached*—as by strategy & tactic.

There’s a huge difference between participating and spectating in a hastily organized strike or in a well-coordinated orgy. I accept that. In a strike, we’re doing it for the outside mainly. Ok, how about this, even for the outside *of ourselves*, to move people (us, others) to either speech or body action (same). Else, what’s the point of a strike? It’s not prayer. It’s meant to *shatter* prayer. It’s not written-to-be-read-back-in, like most poetry. An orgy, on the other hand, is an attempt at *dissolving* theatre (a pretty ambitious one at that), where spectatorship and acting flicker at such rates as to (delightfully) confound the whole division. And that’s funny too,

hilarious even. But, that's it. It's this & that, that & this. Not theatre. *Porn* is theatre. But the problem with porn (besides it not being organized around fair labor standards) is that it's a *movie*, a fucking movie, a flat two-dimensional screen that is itself as dumb & blind as a dead person. Porn is necrophiliac theatre. Porn is a maddeningly frustrating form of spectatorship. Its response mechanism--collapses into prayer. Worse! "It'd be *so nice* to append a little action to this praying right about now". As theatre, it's not "live." I want a live theatre (!)

So there's strategies and tactics to *momentarily* re-shape and transform actorships into viewerships and vice versa. *All of them imperfect to the core*. But that's what we've got. And so contrast is at a premium, the testing of one mode as against another (in the actual pieces). What shakes out like fruits from a tree is what we pick at and taste. So the formation of Lab (where modes get actually conceived and pre-tested) is key in this regard. But here's where I (at this moment in time) differ with Open Theatre's way of doing things. Lab, for them, led to the actual pieces. For CPT, the poetics--the text's polysemic resonances and potentials, lead to Lab. Poetics is in the "lead", so to speak. So let's talk about "Poetics" "Theater".

People have often noted how in CPT, the word "theater" is used instead of "theatre". A "theater" refers more to an actual place, or, more generically a kind of space. I prefer it like that. I can't have "theatre" (its history, legend, legacies, triumphs, defeats, etc) pop its fat head into a space where nothing as yet--has even begun! So begin with a space, any. This notion of "any", an empty car lot, the corner of a classroom, a grand old gilded theater on main strait, a retrofitted toilet stall in a former prison, renders the impassivity of poetics as being primary. And (in agreement with early Chaiken, Beck & Malina), puts "the house" (producer-director structures) on the ropes. So this impassivity of the text is what marks "poetics

theater.” It is “unstageable” (though not all of it is, of course). And that’s ok. That’s plenty ok.

But still, what are we to make out of this “poetics” element in “poetics theater” (PT). You might ask, “ok, why can’t the ‘poetics’ element of PT be made by a group of people (more than just RT)?” And the answer to that is, it can, provided the participants have each *developed* a poetics that is recognizable (in its political valence most of all), so that a conjoining of poetics is a carefully honed negotiation and not a watering down of each of the other. You see, if one’s “poetics” is already “numerous” and “multiple” to begin with, who has the best chance at consolidating it, filtering it, but most of all, *translating* it into new formats? The texts in the book, “Collapsible Poetics Theater,” are *translations* of a poetics (one that happens to be “mine”). The built up of political contradictions--over years of struggling (forming & re-forming, collapsing & re-assembling) are threaded in such a way that the texts have a gravitational integrity that lend themselves to be kineticized into body movement (or orchestrated speech patterns). I find it outrageous that so often, in “Poets Theater,” poets (who’ve decided to write “a play “ for the season), almost completely abandon the key developments of their poetics (even their social import!), and often, do so, in the name of “collaboration” (which itself is supposed to *automatically* have a more “egalitarian” intent or flavor to it). To put it another way...in NKPT, “Natalie Knight’s Poetics Theater” (let’s say, for now, that you have one already--as a potential (and what else is it--in the end, but potential), who is in the most favorable position to translate its fundament--into action? At least the first few hundred strokes?

So what’s the organizational politics of the CPT? I put it like that, because before we talk about organizational structures, we have to talk about the politics driving that, right? And this is also a way of finally addressing the ensemble notion of Radical Theatre that you bring up. Should CPT operate as an ensemble? If not, then as what?

To each according to her/his needs and abilities.

The famous quote by Marx. For me, there's been no more sustaining and perplexing and inspiring meditation on human potential than that one sentence. Some needs change, some don't; some abilities change, some don't that much; often needs turn into other things, including abilities, and abilities turn into needs, strangely enough. That's the *projective* (note: not "real") politics of the CPT: the making way for the growth of human potential. Direct example, I get done doing a performance of Spine (with two others) in Auburn, NY, and at the end, I'm like, well, kind of a drone, and the players are light on their feet for days after, and open to new things in their own work (as by their reporting that). What was my need became their abilities, what was their ability *has now become my need—a new one*. That's the erotics of it!

And that there's different and divergent economies that spring up of their own during a particular run of CPT: "people getting what they want when they want how they want it" "people getting fumbly stumbly with it" "people getting theoretical about it too!" It's about regarding those multiple economies--as real gambits, with consequences--that drive the CPT now, maybe not before, but now, yes. The venues, schmenues. The books, well, there'll always be books. But a live theater where every action and effort is made into a renewable resource for others' doings (spectators and players both), that doesn't happen but through hard (playful, horse-around) work. So I say, let's work! This summer I plan to sketch out some new CPT pieces. I'll show them to you as they roll out. See what you think, whether and how they're "do-able."

Yrs,

Rodrigo

Exchanges 2009

a read n' shout poem

Voice 1, regular size font (medium volume, brisk); Voices 2-5, all caps (high volume, ultra committed (“theatric”) affect.

Voices 2-5, in attendance (as spectators) in the reading space; they sit apart from each other, in back, in front, in the middle; they fast-insert their words/phrases into voice 1's lines.

All readers decide beforehand as to which word/phrase will be shouted by whom.

People participated in it pretty cleanly—though unaware, but when you look *at* them you know there's something ELSE.

All directors should be tied up and made to squeal out their latest vision of how—*approximately*, they add FLAVOR to *their* UTOPIA time-scape.

Misdemeanor to leave a super solid political POEM in the drawer.

Ride, ride, just let'er ride, but then *get* OFF the horsey of culture. For a moment.

What happened? REALLY? at that moment.

Well, in New York, nothing “happens” AGAIN? *of course*.

It's time for a BUD light. I can't feel my way to this (LIKE A TOTAL CAD)—*histoire—elementaire*.

JUMP, you mean, bounce, bro...all I do, sis, is slip...into the (SPOKEN

like a laid off ROOSTER AT DAWN) CRRRAAAAFFFT—of poesy.
When FULL THROTTLE SHAME beclouds your fuzzy memory
of “cool” (*freak*)

Grand Larceny to not regard POOR, you heard me, poor, *poor*, poor
people around you, poor! not you, more—much more—poor, many
times--more--poor, richly endowed with NADA, RIEN, NICHTS,
bastantemente muy poco, no?

All employees of all sexes are pregnant with CAPITALIST POO
BABIES about to arrive—let’s calculate, next 48 hours?

In Southern Calisfuckia things happen. People miss the thin civilized
laser delivery of SCHEISSE FIDUCIARY BANTER...politely...and
it gets put to verse.

What’s happening? The HAPPENINGS, didn’t figure in the sly
calculus of the comm-OH-*ditty*, that’s clear.

But William Howe did foresee the advent of the comm-OH-*ditty*, as
to why he’s talking air hockey poetics--again (orchestral shoe shuffle,
right on).

Talk air hockey, Big Bill, OK.

It’s time for a STIMULUS package...in the arts...too.

Friendly warning from the security hub of the local poetic precinct
to call WHITE CAKE WITH COCONUT FLAKES on this...
incrementalist, *impulse revolucionaire*.

But I take baby steps too, toward the GLOBULAR world, five jivers
here notwithstanding, but withstanding LA VERIT...

In Santiago, Chile, I have friends who’ll attest to this LEGITIMATE
REACTION to my immediate unstable context, a simple nod
by my colleagues—TON amie, NOUS amie, MON amie, NON
amie—is helpful.