

POWER POINT PRESENTATION WITH PERFORMANCE EXTRACTS

- Image 1. BRIGHTON THEATRE
ROLLING THE STONE WITH RICHARD DEMARCO
- Image 2. SISYPHUS SKETCH
- RC: *(play extract)*
This is hell.
Welcome to it.
I expect you're wondering
why I'm so cheerful.
Isn't it designed to be monotonous,
you say, and soul-destroying,
rolling a stone to the top of a hill,
only for it to roll back down again,
or what's a punishment for?
Well, I'll tell you the truth
and not many will down here, I warn you.
This is not a punishment.
It's a task, and there's a difference.
You've heard of Hercules?
He had twelve tasks...
I've just got the one,
But a task is a task is a task,
and you can't pretend I'm not putting my back into it –
I'm killing myself!
But I'm damned if I can get it up.
I'll rephrase that.
I *will* be damned, if I *don't* get it up.
That's why I keep trying,
because once I've pipped it over the top,
that's it, done. I can go, I'm free.
Difference, you see, between a task and a punishment.
A task gets the blood going,
gets you reaching for the stars,
signifies a dream to be fulfilled.
- Image 3. BRIGHTON THEATRE LOGO
- RC: I'm Richard Crane, actor and playwright
- FW: I'm FW, director and actor
- R&F: We are Brighton Theatre
- FW: We are here to honour
the man who more than any other
inspired us to roll our stone up the hill

and when it rolled back down
to do it again and again and again and again.
and we're still doing it
and so is he.

RC: Brighton Theatre grew out of
artistic journeys we made.
which always seemed to start in Edinburgh
then set off around the world
including several tours to Poland
We would bring a new show
premiere it – we were awarded
a record-breaking 9 Edinburgh Fringe Firsts –
and set it on the road.

FW Threading through all these years
was our association with Richard Demarco.
Whenever we were short of venue for a show
he'd say: Bring it to my gallery
If ever we'd done the show
and were looking to extend its run, he'd say:
Bring it to my gallery.
We did this several times and between times
carried the inspiration to other venues & places
culminating in 1989
in the Sisyphus project
Rolling the Stone.

Image 4. ROLLING THE STONE POSTER

RC: *(play extract)*
And also I saw Sisyphus
enduring hard suffering
as he punched a huge stone.
He kept shoving it up to the top of the hill.
But just when he was about to thrust it over the crest,
Autis epeita pedonde kulindeto laas anaides.

That's Greek for
once again the pitiless stone
rolled down to the plain.

FW: Richard Demarco wrote:
Watching Rolling the Stone,
reminded me of the terrifying endless task
which all serious artists impose on themselves...
Think of Van Gogh, Dylan Thomas,
James Joyce, Mozart or WC Fields.
Laughter and tears, frightening passions

and deep compassion for the human condition
 intermingle in all their actions and thoughts.
 They resist success in the world's terms,
 and as a result suffer the 'slings and arrows'
 which only arts institutions and arts bureaucracies
 can fire against them within the 'outrageous fortune'
 offered by today's art world.
 The true artist exists to break the rules.
 Their capacity also for pain seems unlimited
 as well as their gift for releasing life-enhancing truths
 which if you wish, can be called Art,
 but which I do believe can actually be called 'prayer'.
 After all, the great artist never speaks
 except through what can only be described as a
 'cry from the heart'.

Image 5. EDINGURGH ARTS 73 PROGRAMME

RC: So how did it all begin?

FW: Scroll back to Edinburgh Arts 1973
 which Richard Demarco describes as
 an entirely new concept of the Summer School
 as an Art Experience in Scotland's historic capital city.
 His aim is to internationalize and democratize
 what he started in 1972. In his own words...

RC: Some people attack the idea of any festival.
 They say 'We've got the sick, the dying, the poor.
 Do something for them first.'
 Let me say then that my hopes for 1973
 are that for the first time I will be involving
 not only those who need the sound of Mozart and Scarlatti
 and the sight of Rembrandts and Turners and Klee and Rothko,
 but pensioners, police, and communities of underprivileged people
 in the outlying and suburban areas...
 I want to involve people in a 14-hour walk
 over the 7 hills of Edinburgh where they will enjoy not only
 the panoramic views but also the experience
 of sustaining themselves in the pubs on the way.
 I've suggested to the Lord Provost
 that my artists commandeer a bus
 to carry working people of Edinburgh
 to and from their places of work
 and along the way transmit
 visual and oral art.
 I shall also be asking questions of the
 quarter of a million visitors to the Festival:
 Are you polluting this city by your presence?

(by bringing in too many cars)
Have you not bothered to make the 14 hour walk?

Image 6. DEMARCO AND KANTOR

FW: 19th April 1973 I wrote to RD:
Dear Richard
Very excited by the mass of papers you sent me,
which I thought would be the usual advertising gumph
to add to the ever-growing pile of world litter,
and which seem instead to point to a renewal
of my faith in Edinburgh and its special summer...
I had been so disillusioned
by the weight of mediocrity I found there last year,
that I felt the Fringe especially had lost its point
and I decided to seek more fertile ground.

Then your letter arrived...
Immodestly I wanted to believe that I had
a deep desire 'to change things for the good'
but knew that as a lone figure...
the wilderness would be too vast to be heard in.
I also knew that as a widow/student with two children,
I'd never be able to afford the £300 dream
(or even a £50 dream) of Edinburgh Arts.
But that Old Nobby of the eternal student,
the scholarship that you offer,
seems to make all possible once more...

RC: 4 days later, RD wrote back to FW
Dear Faynia
I read your letter on Easter Sunday,
in Argyll in the house of a good friend.
I had gone there ostensibly to draw and paint
for an exhibition I must have soon,
but in the end I worked on Edinburgh Arts business
for 80% of the time, apart from an expedition
to a circle of prehistoric standing stones not far from Crinan...
I can see you have financial problems to cope with,
and of course I must give you a scholarship.
I'd like you to help produce Kantor's 40 Mandelbaums...
and also help with other productions...
Could you give a lecture on Tairov and the Constructivist Theatre?
I'll be able to pay you £10 for this...
You are a special shining spirit and the strength you have
will strengthen Edinburgh Arts which is so strong a thing
and so fragile at the same time.
Con tanto belle cose, Richard.

Image 7. LOVELIES AND DOWDIES

RC: He was as good as his word and so was she.

FW: At Edinburgh Arts, you did not just attend
you worked, produced, co-created and learnt.

Through Richard Demarco I became assistant director to
the legendary Tadeusz Kantor, whose show 40 Mandelbaums
became Lovelies & Dowdies and was the
runaway hit of the Festival.

That's me in the picture.

It was probably the most important formative
experience of my career.

Here's Lovelies & Dowdies in the words of
Michael Billington, theatre critic of Guardian:

RC: At first I had doubts.

As we filed in through a cloakroom turnstile
to take our place either side of a narrow strip of stage,
one got a whiff of that audience harassment
that depresses one about the American avant garde...
But the real action starts when Kantor brings before us
a set of characters doomed to carry out
some obsessive physical action for eternity...

Kantor's achievement lies in the way he refuses
all our expectations of theatre.

Even in avant garde theatre we expect sequential images;
instead he shows human beings endlessly repeating
a single action like trapped rats.

FW: Working with Kantor led to a long friendship
We continued to meet
both in UK, US and especially Poland.

RC: After Kantor's death,
our son the actor Sam Crane
who is Ricky's godson,
played the young Kantor in
A Little Requiem for Kantor
both in London and Brazil.

Image 8. DEMARCO AND BEUYS

FW: Ricky also put me together with Joseph Beuys
The other European genius who came to Edinburgh Arts 1973.
I had the privilege of preparing the room
with him for his famous 12 hour lecture.
The meticulousness of the arrangement of the chairs,

has stayed with me throughout my career
impacting on my use of space and objects,
in all my productions.

Image 9. CRANE MOTTO

RC: Our family name is Crane
and this is the motto of the migrating crane.
It mean Live to Migrate
Or more poetically
Live as a Pilgrim.
It unites us with Demarco
whose whole career has been a journey.
And the Latin language
confirms us as kindred spirits.

FW: I feel a responsibility (says Ricky)
as the last remaining member of the Roman VIth legion,
whose duty it was to bring Scotland into the civilized world.
Demarco means Son of Marcus.
Possibly the Emperor Marcus Aurelius
had Demarcos as his followers.
My family is Roman.
I can trace the whole thing back to a little village
set up by soldiers south of Rome...

RC: And he goes on to say...

Image 10. KING ARTHUR

My favourite fairy tale is the tale of Arthur,
because it warns me that even
when you've achieved your Utopia
it will probably be destroyed at its climax
and possibly by those you trusted most.
As I endeavour to build my Camelot,
the Italian in me tells me to beware...

FW: We two met doing a play called The Quest
on exactly that subject in 1974.
Following the precepts of Edinburgh Arts
we made theatre out of space
not space out theatre and for publicity
went riding round town in chain mail
on a bicycle.

Image 11. BEUYS BICYCLE

RC: This is one of Beuy's last works called

Is it about a bicycle?
 The answer is: Yes it is.
 Do you remember the scorching hot summer of 1976?
 I was doing a play about the Emperor Nero
 at the Traverse Theatre which Ricky had founded
 and Faynia was 5 months pregnant with our son Leo.
 She needed to exercise and at the same time
 sustain her career as an artist,
 so when Ricky said please come and do it in my gallery
 that was when the Passion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race
 by Alfred Jarry, achieved its dramatic premiere.

Image 12. JARRY BICYCLE

FW: *(play extract)*
 Barabbas, slated to race, was scratched.
 Pilate, the starter, pulling out his
 clepsydra, or water-clock,
 an operation which wet his hands,
 gave the send-off.
 Jesus got away to a good start.
 In those days, according to
 sports commentator St Matthew,
 it was customary to flagellate the sprinters
 the way a coachman whips his horses.
 Jesus then got off in good form
 but he had a flat right away.
 A bed of thorns punctured
 the whole circumference of his front tyre.
 The two thieves, obviously in cahoots, took the lead.
 It is not true there were any nails.
 The three objects usually shown in the ads
 belong to a rapid-change tyre tool called the Jiffy.
 We had better begin by telling about the spills,
 But before that the machine itself must be described....

RC: The Festival Times review:
 Faynia Williams's face is a gleeful expression
 of her collaboration with Jarry,
 and she delivers her iconoclastic
 sermon with sepulchral relish.
 All the traditional appurtenances of the crucifixion
 are given far more rational explanations
 than those offered by the usual sources...

Image 13. SATAN'S BALL CRUCIFIXION

We carried forward the idea of the Passion in 1977.
 Based on Master & Margarita by Bulgakov,

SATAN'S BALL has the same characters as the Jarry and the same iconoclastic treatment: Jesus, Matthew, Pilate are all there as well as the Devil and his retinue and Moscow in the time of Stalin.

FW: We sat for a day in the Old Chaplaincy (now Bedlam Theatre) with its 40 foot high gothic vaulting and organ pipes envisaging the floor raised to gallery level, creating a 'rink effect' out of which Tatlin's Tower would spiral up into the roof. The three Suprematist levels, the square, the circle and the triangle, would represent Moscow, Jerusalem and limbo. The whole would be the Tower of State with red-robed heroes poised biomechanically and singing in unison. Then it would become Golgotha, With Yeshua crucified naked against the organ pipes as they roared out the Matthew Passion. At the climax, the Tower would explode into the venue for Satan's Ball, with lobotomized guests streaming out from its base, to the music of Woland and his hellish band.

RC: In total contrast, 1978 saw our most minimalist production to date, GOGOL inspired by Nabokov's monograph on the great Russian/Ukrainian writer.

Image 14. GOGOL AND NABOKOV

FW: We opened in the Brighton Festival, then brought it to the Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh. As with Satan's Ball, script and design developed side by side.

After Satan's Ball, we had moved to Brighton into a house that was previously multiple bedsits. In each room, there was a black, round-edged, metal electricity meter with little clock-faces and dials. Strung up on fishing wire, like giant leeches, As Director/designer I took these as the scenographic starting-point for Gogol.

Image 15. GOGOL PART ONE

RC: *(play extract)*
I'm neither tall nor short.

I'm not fat; I'm not thin.
 I'm neither old nor young.
 I'm not fair; I'm not dark.
 I'm neither fighting fit,
 nor prone to sickness;
 not well off, not hard up;
 not good-looking, not bad looking either;
 not clever, not dim;
 not too happy, not too sad;
 not generous, not mean;
 not precise, not vague;
 not extreme either one way or the other.
 I think that's a fair description without giving too much away.
 In other words,
 I'm middle height, average weight,
 middle income, average intelligence,
 middle class, average age,
 and on the whole, fairly content.
 Thirty-five seconds.

FW: 1978 was officially the year
 the world never had it so good:
 We had the perfect balance of
 wealth, work and happiness
 before the winter of discontent and the
 coming of the Thatcher government.
 Our production of Gogol is a forecast
 of pitiless times to come'

Image 16. GOGOL PART TWO

RC: *(play extract)*
 The thing about working in my particular field
 is that you mustn't become involved with the consumer.
 You're not dealing with people, not even with money.
 It's figures. If they don't match, you switch off.
 If you fudge the logic of that, you're betraying the formula
 upon which our collective life is founded,
 and which decrees that if you weaken,
 you have to be rooted out to join the very same sad heap
 you were foolish enough to express pity for.

Image 17. GOGOL PART THREE

FW: We took Gogol round the world.
 We were in Poland in 1980, Moscow in 81.
 It was a time of blackouts, food shortages,
 disappearance, people declared not to exist,
 and resistance, solidarity.

Image 18. GOGOL WITH EFROS

All this from its beginnings in
 the Demarco gallery
 Look carefully and you'll see Anatoly Efros
 the great Russian director to my right.
 John Drummond, director of the Edinburgh International Festival
 also came and commissioned Brighton Theatre
 to celebrate the centenary of the death of Dostoyevsky
 with BROTHERS KARAMAZOV in 1981,
 with the late great Alan Rickman as Ivan.

Image 19. KARAMAZOV POSTER

This was the first time a fringe company
 had made the leap onto the main programme
 of the Edinburgh Festival.

FW: Then came 1989:
 the Year that Changed the World.

Image 20. TANK MAN 1989

One man stood in front of a line of tanks in Tiananmen Square.
 The Czechs had their Velvet Revolution.
 The Berlin Wall came down

RC: ...and Faynia Williams met Richard Demarco in Poland
 to discuss the Sisyphus project

Image 21. DEMARCO GALLERY VENUE

FW: Ricky had a new gallery.
 This was the upper floor and our performance space.
 Originally a Victorian church, it has height
 and an austere religious atmosphere.
 For us it became hell.
 The audience are tourists and
 Sisyphus rolling his stone is one of the attractions.
 Hell has no budget and neither had we.
 From the army we borrowed an assault course net
 anchored to the wall to be the hill.
 Instead of lighting which we couldn't afford
 we gave the audience torches -
 again borrowed from the army -
 and invited them to light the show themselves.
 We shrouded them in grey blankets
 to drain the colour out of hell.

The stone was a tractor tyre.

Image 22. SISYPHUS AND SINGER

RC: The characters are Sisyphus and an 'over the hill' opera singer. She is condemned forever to sing encouraging songs as Sisyphus pushes the stone. She is the sister of Medusa the Gorgon and she wears dark glasses because if you look into her eyes, you will be turned to stone.

FW: There are many similarities between Sisyphus and Richard Demarco. He was wily, unstoppable, loquacious, ever hopeful, and a thorn in the side of the Olympian gods. He almost succeeded in making all people immortal. His was the spirit of the struggles of 1989. At the end of the play, he tells a story.

Image 23. SISYPHUS

RC: *(play extract)*
 There was once a dragon
 with a hundred heads,
 which guarded the gateway
 to the gardens of the old world.
 Hercules was sent to slay the dragon,
 and take out its teeth
 which were sown in the rich soil.
 And from the teeth of the dragon
 sprang an army of warriors,
 true to the new gods.
 They swarmed like ants
 over the gardens of the old world,
 blackening and destroying.
 They marched in battalions
 on the protesting wise ones
 and cut them down without mercy.
 All that had taken so long to build up
 was brought down in an instant.

FW: *(play extract)*
 As he comes down the mountain,
 powerless and rebellious,
 he takes time to consider.
 He now knows the full extent of his condition.
 His fate is his own.

Nothing else exists.
 All stars are extinguished.
 He understands the night,
 and divides the silence
 into a million living voices.
 Each atom in the stone,
 each mineral grain in the midnight mountain
 contains the seed of a world.
 His faith negates gods and raises the stones.
 The struggle up the slope is enough to inspire him.
 and fill his heart.
 We must imagine that Sisyphus is happy.

Image 24. SALLY THE CAT

RC: The basic dilemma, as Demarco says,
 can be expressed in a parable.
 If there were a fire and you could save
 a Rembrandt or the cat,
 which would you save?
 It was Giacometti who put that question to me.
 He said he would save the cat and added:
 'When I got out, I'd let the cat go, because I can't stand them.'
 I think what Giacometti was trying to say
 was that the only object or expression of man's spirit
 which can possibly explain the mystery of all life,
 is the sublime art object,
 not philosophical statements or the doctrines
 of sociologists, economists or soldiers...
 He was simply giving a warning
 to those who don't realize
 why a work of art is profoundly important.
 No science or logic can explain the mystery of life,
 even the life of a cat.
 If we listen to the language of art,
 it's telling us that all things are sacred.
 So we can't choose the work of art.
 If we do, it loses its raison d'être.
 It was created as the only way man can explain the meaning of life.
 Now I get ten times as much from a Rembrandt as most people,
 and in the parable, the Rembrandt stands for
 all the three hundred exhibitions I've presented
 and all the plays I've helped to present.
 But if we don't defend the cat, what is the next stage?

Image 25. MOZZZ

FW: The next stage for us,
 because the road to Meikle Seggie does not end,

is the next show we're doing.
It's journey is just beginning.
We don't have a cast or a budget or a venue
but that is no problem
because if, as is our wont,
we bring it to the Edinburgh Festival
Richard Demarco will say:
Come and do it in my Gallery.

It's called Mozzz
A week in the life of an undercover mosquito.
the 2nd most dangerous creature in the world.

If you would like to read some of the plays we've metioned,
they're published by Oberon Books in our
RUSSIAN PLAYS collection.
www.oberonbooks.com/crane-russian-plays

Image 26. RUSSIAN PLAYS

For more information on Brighton Theatre,
please go to our website:
www.brightontheatre.com.

End

Richard Crane
Faynia Williams
Brighton Theatre
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