

grid, ink.

a short history.



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A Brief Introduction

grid, ink. emerged as a theatre group in the spring of 1978, when I was asked by the ArtSplosure committee of Raleigh North Carolina, to create a theatre piece for the newly designed *grassy mall* in the heart of downtown Raleigh scheduled for unveiling by the ArtSplosure committee, as part of their larger, more inclusive Earth Day program. The result was *Trash*, an environmental theatre piece written collaboratively by the diverse group of artists I assembled.

Trash was fashioned during weekend retreats ensconced in a pastoral farm like setting on the outskirts of town, the farm house dating back to the mid 18th century. The wide open backs of the surrounding hills beckoned us to come and explore the issues important to each of us. The name *grid,ink.* was taken in response to the concepts at the heart of the project. As part of the downtown renovation, the grassy mall was being divided, surrounded and inkorporated by a grid of cement walkways and sidewalks. *grid, ink.'s* response to this reduction (of land), became *Trash*, reducto ad absurdum, agit prop street theatre depicting Man's general irreverence to his environment. The script slowly evolved from a series of improvisational tasks, games, exercises, and rituals which kept the group warm through winter, and molded into a cohesive work presented to a lunchtime crowd gathered around the newly fashioned grids. Each participant brought with them a unique artistic medium. As it turned out, I was the only actor amongst the group, while the other's were involved with some form of visual art, or technical consideration. *Trash* represented ensemble work at its most inclusive. In this way *Trash* became the seminal project for the experimental theatre collective I secretly hoped would endure.

On Earth Day in the balmy, fragrant spring of 1978, Trash was performed for the first and only time. Over the next two and a half years though, *Opening Windows Passages, Dismembered, Remembered, a series of exposures*, and *Operation Work: In Progress*, quickly followed in the footsteps expressively and colorfully planted by *grid,ink.* as it took its place within the theatrical community of Raleigh North Carolina.

A Short History

The expostulatory howl (ing ing ing) elicited by the Hunter as he tugged his New Age Tyvekkian prey by the same yellow gridlike fencing material which bound them one to the other, dragging them beyond the field, and the network of sidewalks, bringing *Trash* to its climactic end, became the Poet's opening interrogative in *Opening Windows Passages*,



“i (sustain)

am just sick and tired of the sense of it all.

of having to constantly make sense.

make sense

how

make sense

how

make sense

how

ling howling howling howling...”

Truly, how do we make sense of the world we inhabit? Especially to one such as the Hunter. This is the inquiry *Opening Windows Passages* makes. Perhaps it is merely what any of us does personally to satisfy our sense of Self, and create a semblance of balance? There seems to be no prescription for living a satisfactory life.

Writing as a process, the abundant rituals which make up our lives, the significance of place in our life, the power place has, and the rites of passage we make, virtually every day, converged like salmon in this highly poetical, and whimsical theatre piece. *Opening Windows Passages* rose up from where the earth meets water. I spent the fall of 1978 in an upstate New York apple orchard, leaning, stretching and ultimately grasping Ida Red, McIntosh, Red and Golden Delicious and those, ahhh, so sweet, but ever elusive Empires. I became an intimate part of the landscape along historic route 18 adjoining Lake Ontario. I had the blessing to perceive ritual in my work, catch a glimpse under the canopy of leaves turning before my eyes, the significance of my presence in the orchard, and quickly recognize the widespread economic relationships which came of my,

“holding apples shipt in the palm a yr hand
from treetahandtabox
crated across these borders
by rail”

Opening Windows Passages had a sense of urgency about it. There was a need for each performer to get down with their own very personal understanding of the material. At the same time, *move the material* became the heralded cry reverberating throughout the rehearsal space. *OWP* was performed vignette style. This peripatetic scenic delivery became my stylistic signature.

The chorus which I have employed in nearly all my work, had their roots in this piece. I allowed the chorus a fairly wide swathe, providing them enough space to explore the vicissitudes of the material and imprint themselves upon the audience, adding question marks to just about everything. The chorus in *OWP* was very physical. They were also driven to explore the subtlest nuances of the script, those intended, and those serendipitously revealed.

Opening Windows Passages required space. To satisfy this need, it was performed in a large empty warehouse flanking the railroad tracks just outside the reach of downtown Raleigh North Carolina. The event marked the end of summer 1979. The event also marked my interest in carefully choosing a site which naturally facilitates the language of the script, a site which brings the audience into a new and intimate relationship with the performance, removing to some extent their sense of familiarity we all tend to rely upon, but above all, it had to be an interesting place. The audience was seated in the middle of four very large wooden posts, spaced more or less evenly through the middle of the theatre. There was also seating under a balcony that ran the length of the space along the inner side of the makeshift theatre; and in a row or two in front of the director's platform, on the backside of the wooden posts. Action effectively surrounded the audience, and took place above them as well.

Space as icon! The physical space of *The Antiques Warehouse* became an intimate and inextricable part of *Opening Windows Passages*. It was not only what took place within the walls of the theatre, but the space itself contained the evocative and alluring power of the script. Together they allowed the audience to reasonably enter and become an intimate observer of a new and idiosyncratic world. This belief in creating a theatre from the shards of what has taken place within the walls before me, has become a



fundamental and enduring quality of my work, marking it as one would use a felt tip.

Invitations were laminated and attached to wooden stakes by colored surveying tape and planted in the yards of those invited to the performances. These wooden stakes symbolically showed up in the theatre as the wooden posts that surrounded the audience, and held up the ceiling of the theatre. They also became the thick trunks of an ancient, wizened and gnarled apple tree during the scene which drew apple picking into an extended metaphor with writing and painting:

“in the multifarious rhythms
of picking apples
like painting
like writing
across a page
with strokes
with making marks
we have rituals, we have stories, we have
passages.”

In the beginning there is an image. If the image is stubborn enough it grows. From its tenacity, ideas sprout. Media provide the necessary voices by which to merge ideas and images, breathing life into what soon becomes a concept. Each voice speaks in a unique manner, providing a different perspective.



The application of music, video, film, slides, movement, gesture, and masks, provide emotional and intellectual depth and texture not often found on Main Street. The interaction for instance, between a performer and sounds, or visual imagery, in the form of film, or video, and movement, is as penetrating of thought, ideas and feelings, as any interaction between actors. A world exists beyond our spoken word and it speaks poignantly, dramatically, and with great clarity.

Specific concepts, shards of ideas, snippets of imagery, strains of sound, stimulating visuals, all converge to help create a multi disciplinary theatrical structure. Each discipline asserts its particular concern, while remaining focused on the themes at hand. In this way *Opening Windows Passages* evolved. In this way, through its many checks and balances, the

overall structure settled on a necessary balance. The various medium provided the piece rhythm. The work often moved like a film. The text provided characters and a basic map of the ideas, while the various media offered depth, emotional contrast, and texture.

An incident from childhood, a brief moment, a snippet of Time, regarding a woman; the image of a relationship between a young boy and his mother; the ring of a telephone, a hirsute ring, ring around the rosie, all served as basis for the mysterious thriller *dismembered, remembered, a series of exposures*. The performer as detective and suspect, scrutinizes memories, feelings, images, and ideas for clues to satisfy an urgent sense of loss. This piece initiated the extensive use of audio tape, another key and enduring element of my theatrical repertoire. The character is flushed out through a complex canvas of taped voices, as well as the actor's own changing vocalizations, as he relentlessly probes an obscure and fleeting, yet enduring incident from childhood—questions, questions, questioning—himself, his motives, thoughts, and feelings, examining the past for answers to his universal and eternal questions. *dismembered, remembered* was performed as a solo piece in an off-the-beaten-track apartment in Raleigh North Carolina during the spring of 1980.

Left dangling...

“what is an idea
separated from language,
an event,
from its image?”

Operation Work: In Progress, continued the experimental work begun with audio tape in *dismembered, remembered*. In the case of *dismembered* the performer was typically interrogated by one of several taped voices, all his own of course, and in turn, the performer responded, interacting directly with the audio tape, answering questions posed, while making further inquiry within himself, returning from time to time to the tape, and in this fashion incrementally developing an intimate relationship with the various voices of the piece. In *Operation Work* we witness the performer generally working separately from the tape, cultivating an altogether abstract working relationship between himself and the media. In time, these polar styles would unite.

Operation Work: In Progress was structured as a quartet. Each segment viewed work from a unique vantage point. The first segment was a rather humorous spoof on the philosophical underpinnings of work, grounded by the use of a taped voice whose thick German accent hinted at histories' most recent contributors to the philosophical and physical determinants of work, while focusing our attention on the historical antecedents of our American work ethic, firmly established by the early Puritan settlers.

While continuing this historical thread, the second segment adds the geological processes at work behind every rock, their historical materialism, placing each of them in a physical context akin the social processes at work in the world around us. Section three switches tracks entirely, focusing attention on the intimate stories of four workers: a Polish coal miner, a Jewish grocer, a New Yorker working at a Brooklyn car crushing facility, and an Italian stone mason. The performer meanwhile works at tuning up his cart loaded with an enormous volcanic rock, rigged as a car, with lights, heavy duty tires and a suspension system. Part four continues the performer's work.

We see him sweeping the performing space, while the Frère Jacques segment of Mahler's First Symphony plays.

Perhaps the overriding image in this signature piece is the performer yoked to the thick rope-harness of his car-cart, expending Herculean energy pulling the enormous rock atop the cart around and around and around and around...pulling the enormous rock around...

...the rotunda of *The North Carolina School of Design*, Raleigh North Carolina, around and around and around through December 1980.

hough!... While the rotunda was not critical to *Operation Work*, its roundness encouraged use of the visually stunning images that brought *Operation Work* to life, bringing to mind at once Berthold Brecht's *Mother Courage* and the myth of *Sisyphus*.

During the next few years I continued teaching drawing classes at the *School of Design*, at *North Carolina State University*, while studying the vocal techniques of Meredith Monk, with *The House* in New York City. Back and forth between Raleigh and New York; up and down the east coast, first in a greenish Dodge Dart, then a silver Honda Civic, sometimes the coastal route through Delaware in the middle of the nite, sometimes the route which took me through D.C., where I raced around the city from museum to museum, to ethnic restaurant before returning to the highway and continuing my drive. Eventually you will see me permanently roaming the streets of



New York City, living in Park Slope, a neighborhood of Brooklyn, prodigal son, returning home.

One sunny morning, in the earliest part of spring, I gathered my warmest winter garments and journeyed north to Vermont, where I found a family with deep Yankee roots living on their old family homestead. I settled in with them, helping the family tap their old and venerable maple trees, alchemically transforming sap, into sumptuous maple syrup. The poet was gathering material, **finding new forms of expression rooted in the natural world surrounding him.**

After a few years the intensity of New York City began to have the reverse affect. I was no longer stimulated but overwhelmed. This prodigal son looked for a different way in which to relate to his surrounding world, and so, journeyed west as his forebears. I rode in a yellow ryder filled with my possessions, from Brooklyn to Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, once the muscle of America, now a big village, gateway to the Midwest, and made it my home...



Leaning on the techniques learned and cultivated in the preceding years, I pulled out all stops to create ***Quodlibet***. Once again an old warehouse was found, situated ironically, on

the edge of the railroad tracks, in a part of town which more so resembled a western frontier jerkwater, than the industrial rich section of the mighty steel city it had once been. A prodigious set was designed which reached out and embraced its audience, wrapping them thickly. A complex score was created incorporating live music, taped music and taped sounds; slides, a short video, and a powerful and rich poetry were the lustrous threads used in weaving the consummate American journey.

from my journal, "After an image takes root, my idiosyncratic personal creative process emerges. I scan old journals for useful ideas, half-developed thoughts, images, props; I walk the landscape of the city, its parks, its backstreets, alleys, industrial sites, all the while speaking volubly into a micro cassette player; I meditate; play theatre games; fill my life with personal rituals which revolve around the emerging ideas, but most importantly, I lay on the floor breathing in a steady, unfettered manner, for surely a fine line exists between sleep, death and the imagination. From this place incredible insights and ecstatic material grow. Perhaps the strongest part of what I do is discovering why I do it, and this



differs from one piece to the next. We are alone. We live with pain. My work is an ironic, absurd, and sometimes humorous dramatization of this existential predicament.”

Quodlibet, (kwŏd'lə-bět´) noun A philosophical or theological issue presented for formal argument or disputation. A formal disputation of such an issue. Music. A usually humorous medley. A whimsical combination of familiar texts or melodies.

Quodlibet was performed at *The Brew House*, an old, borderline warehouse set against the industrial railroad tracks of the 19th century, on the Southside of Pittsburgh, an area well marked by its Polish working class inhabitants. *Quodlibet* was performed during the blustery days of March 1990, incipient hint of spring in the air, when the feet begin to stir and prepare for travel, peregrinating across the strapping continent which contains us. In this case the audience became America. They were seated in three separate landscapes or environments: a lurid eastern city, ala Gotham; the muscular mountains of the American west; or the prairie lands of the flat, or nearly so, American breadbasket.

An intimate collaboration with the composer-musician Brian Kruman resulted in a musical score that included a wandering three piece Mariachi band, a three voice chorus, taped music, voices and environmental sounds. When joined to the idiosyncratic text, fueled by what I hoped was a powerful and poetic voice, *Quodlibet* became capable of creating the proverbial American journey. It may not have been traveling first class, but traveling ground level, it shot from the hip, without making any excuses. Time, the evolution of the landscape, and the social imperatives of the landscape were the key issues. The vignette style I had made my own years before, was a perfect match for *Quodlibet*. I felt it was particularly effective in creating the inherent movement and energy in the evolution that transpired on the

American landscape. Each scene built on its predecessor inextricably connecting it to its successor—it was manifest destiny.

My language remained as compendious as ever, quirky, capricious, driven, determined to move my audience forward across the broad landscape I was carefully re-inventing. Motion was by fits and starts, and we didn't



seem to arrive where we had anticipated, but by then it was far too late, everyone was part of the movement. The familiar became whimsy; the audience was slowly baited, aboard a rickety covered wagon slowly rollin' west. With each section, the performers were transformed; we were now on the other side of the dotted yellow line, and the audience's perspective was likewise transformed. Questions were capriciously dangled; quirky admonitions offered about the invention of the America we take for granted; history was drawn into the present; a tapestry of social responsibility was weaving itself across a landscape familiar, and yet, somehow rather foreign.

“It is the evolution of a relationship, the evolution of the landscape. Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water, when Jack came down... [all ye all ye in free. all ye all ye in free...Time] it's the summary of things gone awry. he broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after. it is the *summation of oranges*. it is summarily summarily life is but a dream...it is and it isn't. it is and it isn't. it is and then again...i can't understand, not because i can't stand up to it...sometimes i can...i can't stand it, yet i stand. i can't stand it, yet i stand and i stand and i and it and it and it and it, can't...just is, you know what i...my mother hated that phrase. i hate that phrase...sumeria, sumeria, oh my sumeria, where are ya?”



The Summation of Oranges continued the symphonic effort. This *grid, ink.* production was performed in March of 1991 in an old storefront in the diverse commercial East Liberty district of Pittsburgh. The space felt like a bomb shelter, apropos, as the production overlapped the impending first Gulf War. *The Summation of Oranges* picked up thematically, and more or less structurally where I had left everyone in *Quodlibet*, right smack in the midst of a socio-political commentary on American values and the schism between these values and how we live our lives; the gulf between our politics and the Church; the distance between people and the institutions they invent; and the inconsistencies in our relationships with people, and the environment. These issues were enkindled by three quirky characters, a five person chorus, a six member band, an array of exotic props, spectacular slide work, and six tons of thick, coarse brown sand.



The main characters were peculiar, ironic, peripheral, nomadic types, eternally wandering about the edge of civilization yawping philosophically in their eccentric tread. Not a one could be trusted. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, roamed across a landscape made bitter by the hands of Man. Their humorous and engaging satire was often underscored by the music, once again a collaboration with Mr. Kruman. *Summation* also showcased the seminal work of photographer Thomas Fitzpatrick whose slide work helped define a changing set. In the desert portion of *Summation* for instance, vague mountain shapes came to life when slides of Bryce Canyon were projected onto them. This technique also helped create *the last niteclub on the edge of the desert*, where the audience was seated at cerulean blue tables shaped into the wings of the heralded B-52 bomber. from their perch, the audience watched *The Summation of Oranges* move peripatetically in a vaudevillian course, quixotically shaping text as first rate schtick. The pace was quick, tireless, and entirely tongue in cheek. Often the music or the absolutely breathtaking slide work facilitated a change in direction—ensemble work at its best.





“My current work comes out of the poetry I began writing in the late 60’s. My work then was largely imitative. I did not have a voice. In the 70’s I began to experiment with sculptural forms. I gravitated toward clay, plaster, plastic and bamboo to express my thoughts. While I continued writing, my creative urges now had other media for their expression. Around 1975 I devoted myself wholeheartedly to a rather encompassing American studies project, which ultimately led me to integrate my poetic style of writing, with my visual sensibility, my interest and capacity for exhaustive research, and certain concepts I unearthed, whose roots were securely ingrained in the American landscape, and within the evolving oeuvre of American literature, themes which became central to my work.

Okay, perhaps Bela Bartok influenced me? Perhaps David Smith? I don’t know. I’m not pointing any fingers. I tend to see everything in my life leading me equally, though randomly, toward what I do. There is a particular sensitivity for Beckett, Shepherd and Brecht. I see them as clear theatrical lines of transmission, but look as well to The

Open Theatre, or Meredith Monk's House, or the Ontological Hysteric Theatre. Their work certainly enlarged my scope of what theatre can become. They showed me the possibilities, and in turn, they helped make it possible for my work to have a voice. At this point in my career I tend to look toward my garden. A piece begins when it begins and ends when it ends. One season truly follows the text."

What was it like inhabiting the characters of *Quodlibet*? I remember changing into my costume behind and beneath the seats of the mesa. I could hear audience members speaking. Some of the voices I recognized. I used their conversations as a way to prepare my character for the next scene. I engaged them in my mind, and each nite this random and often very strange way of relating to the audience became for me, an integral part of *Quodlibet*. Each nite, while dressing beneath the seats of the mesa, I had the distinct impression I was somehow being guided forward...



Ineluctable

Modalities followed on the heels of *Summation*'s success, once again through the careful guidance of *grid, ink*.

Performances took place during the colorful days of November 1991. *Ineluctable Modalities* was two monologues performed separately, one by a male, and the other by a female performer, each about the wonderful world of work. The pieces were performed in separate locations. The performances were linked by bus



rides. On the first bus a male interviewer interviewed the audience about their relationship to the world of work, how they felt about work, what it meant to them, etc, etc., while on the second busride, a female interviewer performed this same function. I was the principle author and directed both *Modalities*, while performing in *Modality #1*.

To suffuse the production with an air of authenticity, it was essential the work be kept out of the traditional theatre setting. Hazelwood, a river community along the Monongahela River was chosen for its grimy, muscular, working class demeanor. The theatre space was an older, squat, wooden tinderbox along the railroad tracks with its back to the last working steel mill in the Pittsburgh area. As the audience gathered they were herded aboard a yellow Lenzner school bus.

The nite's performance began as the bus moved along Second Avenue, not only the site of the last mill, but those mills now extinct, which for a century or more, occupied the empty, raw topography of the Monongahela River's northern shore, the heart of Pittsburgh's wonderful world of work. As the bus steadfastly made its way to the center of downtown Pittsburgh, the audience was interviewed about their relationship to work by a mobile man with a microphone stalking the narrow aisle.

Situating *Modality #1* downtown was purposeful. Historically the downtown of any large American city, leastwise until recently, has been associated with the work of big business, corporations, the work of money. These ideas were not lost on the school bus audience. Heads turned to view the U.S.X. building towering above them, once proudly known throughout the world as U.S. Steel, or the incredibly delicate grillwork of the Union Trust Building, now referred to as Mellon Center. The names Carnegie, Mellon, Frick sprinkled about the bus like so much fairy dust. Upon their arrival to an innocuous looking storefront, the audience was seated corporate boardroom style at long tables fashioned with pads, pencils, and pitchers of water, in a tight, but sufficient conversion. The entire space was contained by a boxing ring.

Big business, manufacturing, food and naturally, boxing were the metaphors thru which a man's relationship to the working world was explored. Riveting image of the performer sitting at a regal desk dangling from the ceiling by thick iron chains. I intended my voice to move as seamlessly as possible from one character to the next, portraying one moment an obnoxiously self possessed corporate bigwig, while in the next, a down and out boxer, countering these two with the quiet stable voice of a poet-referee, navigating a difficult course between. I was very much over the top with my businessman and the boxer, relying on the poet-referee to

provide balance. The range of roles required some fancy technical vocal facility, and almost from the beginning I began to use this rather singular body language, an almost mime-like repertoire of gesticulations which allowed me to make subtle gestures that indicated the differences between characters, and in the end this style of speaking with my body, allowed me to speak to the heart of the issues central to the working world—success, failure, control—the power politics of our wonderful world of work.

As the audience was ushered out of the performing space by the bailiff, the boxer's final words echoed as a reminder of “how fractured our lives (have become). how displaced...” Aboard the bus, the audience was returned to Hazelwood. As the bus descended the steep hill leading to the door of the theatre space, it was eye level with the ghastly nocturnal orange glow erupting from the stacks of the mill, reminiscent of bygone days and nights.

Returned to the Hazelwood makeshift theatre the audience was treated to a second monologue, this time performed by the capable Ms. Sarah Erwin. Slide images were used to augment the script, projected onto one of three sculptural screens. A harmonizer allowed the performer's voice to shift



seamlessly between masculine overtones, and her natural female voice. Taped voices and miscellaneous sounds added some necessary texture. The mélange of elements however, were singularly focused on the politics, socialization and sexuality surrounding *the wonderful world of work* women are held by. Powerful image of female performer behind a plaster cast of the Venus de Milo applying make-up, while offering self-conscious comments about the application process, allowing her commentary to become an extended metaphor on jurisprudence and the sexual politics of the work place. Mr. Kruman again provided original music, this time in the form of a string trio. Mr. Fitzpatrick provided the visuals.



During the second scene Schmidt leaves her place behind Screen number two and moves center stage, accompanied by the melancholy bowings of the string trio and the glassy, aqueous sounds of an accordion, as they play *My Country 'tis of Thee* in a minor key. Schmidt, a pomegranate in her partially extended left hand, sings,



i feel...i feel alone
i wasn't...wasn't there

i have no...body
it isn't mine

it isn't...isn't mine
do you...do you hear me

when i'm naked
stop staring
no...keep staring
till you hear me

expressing the utter solitude and alienation women often feel participating in the so called *wonderful world of work*. Other themes: the proverbial corporate ladder, the unseen glass ceiling, our defiant reliance upon our court system to address wrongs on the one hand (their decisions never really seem to alter perceptions) and on the other hand, the hidden, often clever, and always peculiar ways people find to maintain their prejudices.

Unknowingly, *Ineluctable Modalities* marked a stylistic terminus in the ironic and often satiric portrayal of American society I had been pursuing. *Quodlibet*, *The Summation of Oranges*, and *Ineluctable Modalities* collectively kept a watchful eye, in their own idiosyncratic way, on the America that surrounds us, a land that perforce, attempts to nourish and guide us in its own haphazard, often serendipitous fashion, while slowly becoming big, fat, and happy. This trio of work, from the first green tennis ball thrown in the opening scene of *Quodlibet* to the *Venus de Milo* of *Modality # 2* applying a thick patina of make up, incorporates the elements of our everyday lives, indeed in abstract ways, into the brief moments the theatre allows, as these actions comment on the various methods we employ to fit ourselves within a society we have only inherited, rather than truly re-make it. If we are sober about our place in this world, we will necessarily find ourselves viewing society from somewhere on the periphery. There is an imperative in this. In the words of Jack, from *Quodlibet*, we are,

“...inextricably lanked to the land and everything in it. we’re all in this soup together. anyhow, that’s the way grandfather said it...”

Indeed, we are all in this thing together, this thing we refer to as the great American society, the Great Experiment, the great American novel we are endlessly re writing. More often than not though, we don't act as if this is understood, because on the whole, we don't think about it. While we largely enjoy the freedoms we have interpreted for ourselves, we move about the world with an inalienable sense of entitlement, the largesse our often unrestrained sense of freedom affords. Ours is a young, irrepressible yet naive intelligence. We often create our problems, and rather than admit to this, we further create division through our gift of colorful frontier repartee, in the end a fancy name for making excuses. Each of my theatrical projects explored a piece of the historical puzzle I had begun putting together as far back as *Trash* and *Opening Windows Passages*. As I came to the turnaround, without much pause I headed to a place within, where I could better explore the border places I personally inhabit.



Seven6=13 was born at this turnabout. It rose fortuitously from the mixture of people I randomly selected to attend the reading group I fashioned during the winter of 1991. I was deeply interested in celebrating the creativity of the individual, and I was concerned too many of my creative friends and acquaintances had no outlet for their artistry. Everyone who was invited to my home to celebrate the arrival of the winter solstice, was asked to perform something, anything, rather than sit, listen and leave. The piece produced six months later, was an extension of what transpired at that first gathering at the Manse. Virtually every reader, spontaneously, without any knowledge about his colleague's work, performed something thematically similar, or ironically, answered, or at least attempted to answer, some question another reading posed, or by chance, encapsulated in a singular theme two or more readings. It was an astonishing, and inconceivable experience, and led me to wonderful winter ruminations about its meaning, and 'how the heck could I duplicate this within a theatrical context'. Let me think on the matter...

Seven6=13 was born. It was named after my birthdate. It was also performed on my birthday, the 6th of July 1992, with production assistance from *grid, ink.* and the *Pittsburgh Center for the Arts*. *Seven6* exploded on the grounds surrounding the Center for the Arts, popping up in its galleries, hallways, elevators, and even in its parking lot. 13 elements: 11 writers-readers; one musician; one visual artist; and a single director who led the audience pied piper fashion from location to location: 13 locations. Each element revolved around the issue-concept Time. Each element was 13 minutes in length. All 13 elements were woven together into a script randomly fashioned, ambulating across 13 locations, in a pattern of constantly changing configurations of performers. Each location had a

unique time signature which fostered the wonderful idiosyncratic juxtapositions created amongst the performances. Each performance, at each of the 13 locations, was 13 minutes in length.

Seven6=13 moved with peripatetic strides across the sprawling grounds of the Center, then through its galleries, down to the basement, using its elevator, as it moved to its hilarious finale in its parking lot where participants popped out of windows, through open doors or raced headlong around a corner to breathlessly state their line. While the present moved briskly, the past was also represented. With some foresight each reading had been taped in its entirety from a gallery within the Center as it was in the process of being hung. This video was replayed on monitors strategically placed at various locations within the Center. Enough time was given to allow the audience to gather around these.

The idea of simultaneity was also given special attention. From their vantage point in the main gallery on the first floor, audience members were able to witness the relationship between separate environments, as performers from the main gallery, the elevator in a nearby hallway, and an adjacent, smaller gallery, interacted. On the flip side, as the audience perambulated to the second floor, they were asked to choose between locations. To the amazement of nearly everyone, most chose to cram themselves into the smaller of the galleries, which had the interesting affect of transforming this performance from a segment the performers interpreted as rather serious, to a performance marked by a great deal of laughter; the performance in the larger gallery, which everyone thought was humorous, became weighed down by the immensity of the open space and sober self consciousness the few who ventured inside accidentally created. It was an interesting study on the effects an audience can have on a piece of art.

As they traveled from location to location led by their peerless pied piper, moving circuitously across a rambling lawn, pausing thirteen minutes, of course, at The Head on the front lawn of the Center, and thirteen more minutes at the talking telephone booth obliquely stuck in the ground, where they listened to a juxtaposition of voice, text and music broadcast from one of the galleries within the Center, *Seven6* became the serendipitous and entertaining study in *Time* it was intended to be.

an excerpt from the parking lot

F = 4.75 minutes; J = 3.0 minutes; G = 6.5 minutes;
H = 6.5 minutes; M = 3.0 minutes.

F and J stand together, facing G and H also standing together, but ten paces apart. F and J stand closer together. M is offstage, and rushes to his chair near the AT&T telephone booth, to utter his first line. the audience is in front of the Center for the Arts. unless otherwise stated, the volume for all voices is normal.

C @ 1.0 minutes, from a window overlooking the parking lot;

D @ 1.0 minutes, from a window overlooking the parking lot;

E @ 1.0 minutes, from a window overlooking the parking lot;

G @ .25

G and M @ .25

H and M @ .25

H @ .25

J and M @ .5



Nearly a year and a half after the wonderfully fun and triumphant *Seven6* I moved with urgent steps inside my new character's mind. In March 1993 *grid, ink.* was called upon, this time to reprise the edgy, puzzling ***Dismembered, Remembered***, as a darkly lit psychological drama, suffused with an ironic and gripping wit, which I hoped would hold its audience by the nape of their necks. *Dismembered* was written, directed and performed by myself, based on the earlier work bearing the same title. The revised edition was far more technically elaborate however, which allowed an intense, larger than life exploration of the main character's sexuality and relationship to women. Once again a single event served as the filter for my musings. This version of *Dismembered* was performed in a large, open theatre space, where the performer had room enough to shuttle between a hair pile (subjective thought), and a couch (objective thought), thru a transit area (the world of experience) where he was engaged in a never ending dialogue with himself, variously disguised on video, in the same repetitious struggle to come to terms with his past.



Four 30” video monitors were linked and housed in a 14’ totem that contained nearly all the production’s audio-visual equipment, became the centerpiece through which nearly every scene was processed. A great sense of mystery, necessary texture and metaphor emanated from behind its barely concealed walls.

Meanwhile, the audience was divided, and isolated by design, into groups of eight. Each group inhabited a separate, discrete world, contained by the larger set. Each environment was outfitted with audio speakers and a video monitor. The aural and visual worlds created for these separate environments were themselves separate from the world of the stage, and related to a separate working arrangement created with Mssrs. Kruman (audio) and Fitzpatrick (visual), each of whom were provided an outline of the piece—only the bare facts—and asked to create separate story lines in their own media, based on their interpretation of the clues I provided.

Each collaborator’s work was inserted into the script at various, pre-determined points (in time). Each group of (eight) audience members heard, and saw distinct visual and aural material, neither the same as the other groups, nor at the same place in the script. By the end of the piece, however, the entire audience had heard all the sounds, and witnessed the same visual events. In their own fashion, each group was piecing together this material and fabricating their own unique story lines. The eight (discrete) worlds completely surrounded the performing space, a series of simply rendered platforms fashioned into a circle. The innermost circle slowly rotated through the course of the performance, providing a constantly shifting perspective on the comings and goings of the performer.



The stunning use of visual elements consistently incorporated into my work, culminated in the deeply psychological and philosophical manner they were put to use in *Dismembered.Remembered*. This production reflected years of experimentation. Slides came on the scene early. *Opening Windows* *Passages* used them, but did not rely upon them. They were incidental. It was more of the same in *Operation Work*. Their application was largely narrative, albeit idiosyncratic with respect to the locations where they were projected, as well as the timeliness of their presentation, all of which was largely shaped by the rotunda the performance took place within. In these early productions the slide work did not lead a separate life. *Summation of Oranges* changed that. During this production I had the benefit of working closely with the photographer. In fact we we took a road trip together to gather material. All the slides were shot on location out west. During the long hours we shared in the car, we spoke at length about how to use the slide work. With enough time to allow for experimentation we decided the slides could define the set, could be used as symbols, or could add texture. Appropriate screens were created. Mountains were built at the far end of the desert. Their rugged shapes loomed over the empty expanse of sand, coming



alive as slides were projected onto their surfaces. The niteclub was similarly defined by various screens which became the windows, the doors, or the walls of the club. And hanging high above the indistinct separation between niteclub and desert three rectangular glossy, metallic dividers sensuously swayed, grids, which received the symbolic imagery of our culture—slot machines, spires of well known churches, and specific imagery of a state poised to enter the first Gulf War. These screens spoke in a symbolic language and became an intimate part of the script.

Out of the blue, materials surfaced which served as monitors, and allowed Summation to go beyond its original concept. Once put to use, it became clear we could add slide work anywhere we felt would benefit from additional texture. Wherever it was necessary simple techniques easily administered, allowed us great creative latitude. For instance, casting slides on the sides of table cloths in the niteclub, was far from something written into the script, and came up only as we worked more elaborately with our technology. We had embedded a fairly extensive technical understructure, and this encouraged new directions.

The visual imagery of *Dismembered.Remembered* defined itself as one such consequence. The visual media was never an adjunct element. Like any solid character who expresses their unique way of viewing the world, it became quite clear technology was going to be a necessary tool in creating the intimacy central to *Dismembered*. The voice of technology was strong, with many variations, but underlying its often inscrutable tone, was a voice that spoke about intimacy.

Undeniably the intimacy between the monitor and the performer set the tone. After all, the performer was interacting with himself. His internal world was displayed for all to witness, larger than life—a decade before reality TV—exposing himself before his audience. The small groups within the audience separated from one another, listened to sounds and viewed imagery meant only for their eyes and ears. They came to realize this at some point, and that is when their world began to shrink. That is when they began to cultivate a more intimate relationship with the stage. Like the main character Jack, they begin to perceive themselves as a small separate body to which things happen. Their world becomes parallel to Jack's. Soon enough a personal connection to the comings and goings of the main character begins to surface, and as the piece evolves, the audience begins to recognize the performer's dilemma and identify in propria persona with his struggle. It was this intimacy, at the heart of any theatrical experience, I struggled to cultivate. It came to pre-occupy my thoughts:

“The element I have worked hardest to define is the audience. They are never far from my thoughts. Special consideration has always been given to placing them in an appropriate context. What role should they play? What is the nature of their relationship to the piece? And the actors? I have tried to involve my audience in challenging and intellectually stimulating ways.

“For instance, in *Quodlibet* they sat within one of three lush American landscapes. They became America. The *Summation of Oranges* saw the audience become patrons at the last niteclub at the edge of the desert. In *Ineluctable Modality*, part one, their presence created the corporate boardroom. They were shareholders. In *Seven6=13* their movement from location to location, created the Time line which connected all the performances.

“Theatre is built a priori on the relationship a performer has with an audience. This relationship is profound. In the historical continuum this relationship has acquired rich, deep historical, cross-cultural and personal roots. Each party comes to play a pivotal role as they determine their connection to the work and each other. In response, as a performer, I have evolved an intimate style of acting, borne from the obvious acknowledgement that not only does an audience exist, but this audience, as well as the performer, unequivocally understand the performer is acting, though the performer is not trying to be someone else. If the performer is trying at all, it is to isolate a set of feelings, ideas and or emotions, or some combination of these elements, so as to place this creation into the space between him or herself, and the audience, so that this gestalt may become like a pair of pants, one leg fit by the presence of the audience, the other, by the performer. Furthermore, the audience, like the performer, is aware of themselves as an observant body. We have then a connection between an observing passive audience and an observing active performer. Their relationship is critical and perforce, must be built on a foundation of intimacy and trust. Why assume trickery?”

In April, 1993 *grid, ink.* officially became incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania as a Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. This granted the theatre company permission to seek funding directly and with greater latitude. On Saturday the 31st of July 1993 *grid, ink.* ceremoniously kicked things off, by throwing a backyard benefit bash to honor the recent incorporation and tax exempt status, but more promisingly, to unveil the new performing space we had been assiduously working on since spring had come to town. ***Three Quarters Below the Street***, a tidy, black box theatre equipped with jury rigged theatrical lighting, a modest audio-visual system, and seating for as many as 44 people (entirely dependent on the nature of the performance) was given life. The idea was conceived with the intention of bringing artists together from a variety of medium, free from commercial distraction, whose desire was to perform their work in an intimate setting, where experimentation and originality were deeply encouraged.

Opening night Sam Hazo, Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania greeted the overflowing room full of guests. Support and excitement from the artistic community was immediate. Local writers were especially accommodating. Surprisingly, and most flattering, out of town artists began to contact the space with proposals. From 1993 thru 1994, every Friday evening, June thru December, a smorgasbord of poetry, fiction, music, monologues, video, film, slides, or theatre was presented at *Three Quarters Below the Street*. These wonderful evenings came to be glibly referred to as *intelligent vaudeville*. The hope was *Three Quarters Below the Street* would become a successful venue for *grid, ink.* to raise funds for existing projects as well as a setting to commence new projects.

The space quickly became a laboratory setting pour moi. During the 1993 season, *grid, ink.* showcased three segments of a piece entitled *Duet*, a work in progress I had begun in the fall of the preceding year with Sarah Erwin from *Ineluctable Modality*, part two fame. The piece pivots with great dexterity around the psychological concept that every woman has a shadow (animus); this shadow represents the maleness within her life; and this shadow further describes and gives form to the structures of work, politics, economics, and language, within which women inescapably function and interact.



Understanding her shadow allows a woman to deconstruct the enormous influence the shadow maintains in order to transform its authority.

The portions of *Duet* performed at *Three Quarters* were designed to emulate the inherent structure of the piece. As the writer, and as a man, I was responsible for the overall structure and direction of the project—vis a vis the shadow I cast over the female collaborators with whom I worked—two women—a female performer, Ms. Erwin, and a female visual artist, Ms. Sandra Budd. Material was presented by me, the writer, to the visual artist. Her work with these ideas formed the basis for the performer and her interaction with the script. The evolving script and visual forms were manipulated by the performer during the rehearsal process, often generating entirely new directions for the piece. These in turn, were picked up by me, the writer, making changes or simply pushing the script in a new direction, and were then given to the visual artist, who, in turn, provided a context for

the performer, and on and on in this fashion, as the piece continued to evolve through the summer and fall of 1993.

We witness Eva, EveryWoman, on her timeless journey in search of herself, in search of her female roots, her voice, as she connects herself with those who have come before her, and those women yet to come. *Duet* was being written as a Greek drama. Extensive use of masks, puppets, lyrical and liturgical language, stylized movements, exotic gestures, rituals, and special vocal techniques gave the work life. Eva, the EveryWoman, a three member female chorus, an elder crone, and a male shadow, are the primary characters.

There was plenty of good, solid work at *Three Quarters Below the Street* during the summer of 1993. In its opening months, I played a middle aged version of Krapp, in *Krapp's Last Tape*, by Samuel Beckett; the various surreal emanations- vocalizations- at the heart of *Tongues*, by Sam Shepherd and Joe Chaikin, which I performed with the adept percussionist Ravish Momin; and there was time enough to render a segment from *Operation Work: In Progress*, which hadn't been performed since the winter of 1980.



Three Quarters finally allowed *grid, ink.* a place to relax and stretch. New ideas could be given voice. Innovation was embraced. Experimentation was encouraged. It wasn't long before *grid, ink.* launched a formal exploration of a work we referred to as **Space**, generated by the experiences accumulated in *Dismembered. Remembered* and *Seven6*. The scope for this

project was substantially larger than the performance at the *Center for the Arts*. Like its predecessor, it was conceived as an interdisciplinary performance piece for writers, visual artists, musicians and performance artists, whose work would be structured by the vicissitudes the various notions and idea, the concept of Space stimulated. And like its forebear *Dismembered.Remembered*, the proposal *grid, ink.* presented the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, called for the construction of a complex Space-Time Tower, an interactive electronic industrial sculpture which would house an integrated array of video and audio equipment—lasers, infrared lights and other lighting systems—which could be pre-programmed, but also triggered by audience members, and performers moving around and about the Tower. The totem in *Dismembered* became the working model for the Space-Time Tower. It was the fervent hope of the principle collaborators the concepts of Space and Time would allow *grid, ink.* an open relationship with the local artistic community.

One approached a wide bodied aeroplane. It was an impressive edifice spread about the landscape like wings. They entered a grand, open, art deco rotunda, animate with activity, cast in huge squares of marble. The rotunda was the space *grid, ink.* hoped to install their Space-Time Tower, when they learned the Greater Pittsburgh National Airport was being replaced by a new International Airport at an entirely different location. After many, many months of ardent negotiations, unfortunately, in the end, the airport facility simply could not provide support to the proposal. While grant money had been generously supplied by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Space-Time Tower was temporarily abandoned.

On Valentine's Day 1994 I commenced my long awaited trip to the Middle East. I was sent by *grid, ink.* on an extensive three month journey which actually began in Ethiopia, that saw me proceed north down the Nile River to Cairo Egypt, before heading east across the Suez, where I picked up and followed as best I could, the assumed route of the Hebrew tribes as they proceeded en masse through the Sinai Peninsula, into the land Canaan, their homeland. My effort included a week of days on the backside of a camel while exploring the innermost provinces of the Sinai. I discovered



“...a world filled by wonderful Arabian tales, by sweet nocturnal dreams, by history, a remarkable world, an incomprehensible landscape, encompassed by enormous walls- a spartan desert of barren sand surrounded by thick white cliffs-and in the distance, an oasis of palm trees, shimmering in the thin beguiling desert haze, a bewildering image- fantastic, phantasmagoric, geologically rich. you descend from the limestone by a steep, winding path, difficult to negotiate, laden with pebbles. you are deposited into a wide canyon. you move in slow motion. a strange sense of intimacy softly begins to

grasp the nape of your neck. it is only you, this canyon land, an unutterable silence, nothing more. the world behind has vanished. you are completely enclosed within the quixotic world of Ein Hudra.”

Into a forbidding wilderness where the Hebrew tribes collectively rebelled against their spiritual leaders; into a sand wiped clean of any trace of history, I was guided by the local Bedouins whose knowledge was impeccably derived from generations of survival in the harsh and rather unwelcoming environment. I entered the promised land on the eve of Passover.

I rigorously explored the Israeli countryside from top to bottom, from the heart of the Negev in the south, to the Golan Heights in the north, picking up my forebear’s trail before losing it, only to regain it, walking in what seemed like endless circles. My adventure slowed enough to allow me the very necessary and rewarding work of being engaged with two theatre companies, one, an Arab company by the name of Ishtar, and the other, an Israeli theatre group called Tmu-Na. The basis of this work revolved around the elusive yet universal concepts of homelessness, separation, and place, concepts which for me had their origin in the Passover Seder/Last Supper. For me these concepts were not only inextricably a part of the Passover Seder, they explained the celebration. They gave tremendous insight into the motivations, feelings and beliefs that guided not only the Hebrew tribes but nearly every group who has inhabited planet earth. The collaborations promised a vital socio-political-economic dialogue between very culturally diverse peoples. There was even discussion about bringing an American Indian theatre company into the mix. The return trip was buoyed by the work accomplished and the prospects for further collaboration.

From early 1990 through the autumn of 1994, *grid, ink.* worked exclusively in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, gaining a regional reputation and a loyal audience. Five major theatre performance pieces had been produced in various locations throughout the city; a black box space for theatrical experimentation, where bolts and bolts of new material were unveiled, was carved out, and fashioned three quarters below the street. The work had become increasingly interdisciplinary, though my text remained the driving force behind each piece. Music, vocalization, and visuals, whether slide work, video or film, again and again provided the necessary voices by which I sought to merge ideas and images, breathing life into the abstract concepts I consistently attempted to bring to the stage. Media offered a profound emotional and intellectual depth, and texture, rarely found in traditional theatre. Unfortunately it was difficult to manage.



The performing arts have witnessed a great synthesis of medium. Dance companies have incorporated the spoken word, video, or live music, while musical groups have likewise brought into their domain text, video and or film. Varying degrees of success have been achieved by this synthesis. On the whole though, elements outside a particular media, have stubbornly resisted integration, typically leaving an audience feeling they have been attached and not organically woven into the production. Perhaps the art forms themselves relentlessly resist additions? For me the theatre remains singular in its ability to allow disparate elements to be woven into a cohesive, consistent and integrated fabric. Perhaps it is because in its nascent stages diverse elements came together to comprise what became known as theatre? Perhaps the seeds planted to create the art form in the beginning were various and sundry? Traditional theatre, where the elements of plot, character development or story line, remain paramount, likewise resists too much outside influence. Traditional theatre has self consciously structured itself, relying again and again upon the strict boundaries it has used to define itself. Commerce has certainly played a hand in all this.

Socio-political themes characterized much of the material, and a site specific feeling lent authenticity to that material. The striking regard for location assisted *Quodlibet* in creating the abstract, archetypal American journey; provided *The Summation of Oranges* an unequivocal feeling of sitting in *the last niteclub on the edge of the desert*; and gave the bus rides of Ineluctable Modalities along the river, and through downtown Pittsburgh and its various neighborhoods, a sub-textural sense that men were at work, reminding the audience again and again that historically, men have been at the heart of the working world, women somewhere on the fringe.

Though great plans were afoot to expand the company's constituency, it was the denouement of an era, and the beginning of a new period, equally as fertile. With the closing of the door to *Three Quarters Below the Street* late in the fall of 1994, I commenced a necessary winter retreat. By the end of 1994 conflict had lodged itself inextricably in the heart of *grid, ink*. A series of grant proposals met with rejection; an unexpected and dramatic shift occurred on the board of directors; and *Three Quarters Below the Street* failed by the end of its second season to receive the level of assistance required to keep it healthy and vibrant. It was under these circumstances I took what has once again become an annual month long retreat. I withdrew to the nurturing arms of my home and within its safe and solemn environment fasted, sat on my cushion, having resumed my meditation practice, and re-affirmed my yoga discipline, further integrating these practices into my theatre work. I spent considerable time contemplating my theatrical future. Sometime in January 1995, as my fast was coming to its inspirational end, I came to a very personal decision: I would write, and perform a piece based upon my experiences in the Middle East, a piece rooted in the Passover Seder, filled with all the insights I could bring to bear, a piece simply entitled, ***The Seder***. It would be an entirely new direction for *grid, ink*. It would temporarily become a smaller, and more reflective theatre company.

The Passover Seder was deconstructed, its constituent parts laid out... then re-constructed with edited excerpts from various haggadot, including *The Shalom Seders*, and *Haggadah, The Passover Story* by Gerard Garouste and Marc-Alain Ouaknin; original material; an adaptation of a Uitoto myth entitled "Was It Not an Illusion" and a segment from *The Sunflower* by Simon Wiesenthal.. The script was based on the universal themes of separation, guilt, forgiveness and participation. Powerfully evocative images



found life inside *Three Quarters Below the Street*: a shaman-rabbi silently davenning, placing folded prayers in a stone wall; the *limping dance* performed with rattle, while chanting the Uitoto myth of creation; a Kaddish, the mourning prayer, performed by an old man in complete darkness, and from out of this darkness, the ghastly image of a young German soldier, his entire head and face wrapped in gauze, who

relates the story of his participation in a horrendous wartime atrocity to a horrified audience. At the conclusion of his account he begs forgiveness of the Jew from a nearby concentration camp he had a nurse bring to his makeshift hospital room. By this time though the audience has become the Jew. As the German soldier's story ends, a taped question is placed to the audience by the taped voice of Simon Wiesenthal, the real Jew. It poignantly dangles, "what would you have done?" as the Rabbi completes the remainder of the Seder. With the final prayer, the Rabbi reminds an audience member the provocative question remains unanswered.

The first performance of *The Seder* was on the final night of Passover, in the spring of 1995. Original music was composed by Mr. Brian Kruman, based on the children's poetry from the book "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" written while interred at the Terezin Concentration Camp outside Prague, between 1942 and 1944. Mr. Kruman used extant melodies and snippets of pieces composed by various musicians also interred at Terezin.



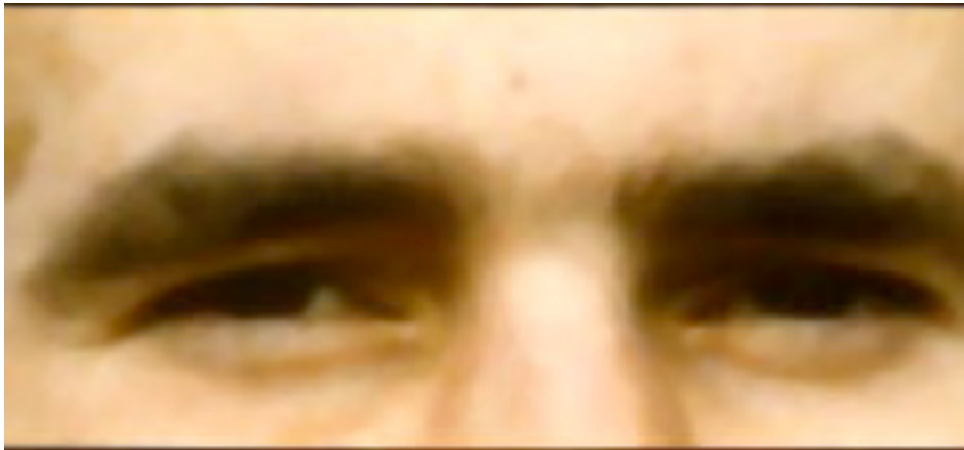
"What would you have done?" The young German soldier begged the Jew to forgive him for his participation in the horrendous crimes against humanity committed in a little Ukrainian village. The Jew however departed from the makeshift hospital room in silence, leaving us, come together within the stone walls of *Three Quarters Below the Street*, to consider what we

would have done. What transpired when The Seder's Rabbi reminded his audience a question dangled amongst them, could never have been anticipated- a spontaneous dialogue amongst the randomly gathered audience members, bringing great moral and intellectual insight to bear upon the thorny issues of guilt, forgiveness and hope. In the silence between the end of the scripted portion of *The Seder*, and the final bites of matzah and harosis, the audience was intimately drawn into the performance. When the last words were uttered, nearly every member of the audience had spoken. By the second set of performances, it became evident there was a profound need for an audience to speak its heart. Everyone, it seems, has an unresolved desire for intimacy, for the next person to know them, to feel them, reach out and be heard, touched. Grateful for this knowledge I began planning my next theatrical endeavor.

grid, ink. produced ***David, a documentary*** at *Three Quarters Below the Street* the following spring, 1996. The piece portrays the plight of a single character suffering from the terrible mystery known as schizophrenia. Eponymously named for my brother David, who suffered from this disease, the main character is loosely based on David's life. The character in the theatre piece however, inhabits a clear, plastic, sphere-like bubble, a private planet, a mirror, yet difficult to see clearly. Psychologically, the character is separated from himself; theatrically, he was separated from the audience; and the audience was likewise separated from one another, each member placed five to six feet apart and only ten people permitted to sit around the bubble each nite. The text moved back and forth between David's parent's home, the street, and the various psychiatric wards David inhabited. *David, a documentary* struggled to create an intimately charged emotional and intellectual connection to each audience member. Taped voices (parents, brother, friends, other schizophrenics, psychiatrists) and slides, added tremendous depth and poignancy.



David, a documentary and *The Seder* provided a solid emotional context for people to reveal themselves. Though the material was emotionally charged, the theatre actually became a safe haven. Neither performance was in the face of its audience, nor did either broach their sense of privacy and trust. Each piece kept a safe distance, even though that expanse was measured only in inches. Separating the audience for *David* allowed each member to cultivate a personal relationship to the material. When the performance was over and the audience was asked to remain, they were only too happy to speak. In the case of *David*, there was a profound longing to release the intense emotions that had surfaced during the performance. There was a need to find resolution, and underlying this need, was a potent desire for intimacy. *David* and *The Seder* reminded me of the great emotional impact theatre can have, yet I learned an even more powerful lesson. I learned theatre can provide the very path toward intimacy and resolution people everywhere desire:



"I don't believe theatre practitioners sufficiently understand the critical role intimacy plays in the relationship they maintain with their audience, nor the inherent responsibility they have to assist their audience, who are left to digest the emotions that surface during a performance. By nature,

theatre allows a certain distance between the stage and the audience. In David and The Seder, that barrier became rather transparent. All that remained of the so called fourth wall was the natural respect any stage must maintain for its audience. Perhaps a fundamental recognition by the theatre community needs to be made: each person in the theatre space, performer and audience alike, are human, each of them share the same emotions and intellectual considerations—the full panoply of nuances we see enacted by the performers—that we are all a part of a community and this community needs more than a cultural activity to bind it, more than entertainment; this community, from time to time, requires the intimacy all individuals desire. There is no necessity for theatre to provide this outlet. Nonetheless, when a structure is created which allows a certain intimacy to arise without contrivance, nor attempts to impose itself upon the audience, the performer has a rare opportunity to reach a new dimension in their performance, as the audience does, with their experience.”



