

*The stage unveils the secret of reality
We see ourselves as in a magic mirror
Theater as the affecting symbol of life*

—Clemens Krauss & Richard Strauss, *Capriccio*, a conversation piece for music

No Theater. There was no theater to perform in. No was such a 70s word. Not Theater. There's an enormous amount of theater that you should say no to. Richard Maxwell thinks people are emotional but don't express it, it's held inside. *I'm looking at your body. You got a funny body. Oh? Yeah. Look at it. You said you were interested but a lot of times people say they're interested when they're not really interested. Excuse me, I'm busy right now. I don't know your name. Song: I, can't be a ghost / When I, am a secret to most.* The voice of a singer is real, in theater the voice is masked. The performance space is neutral, not conveying an investment in what's being said. You have to pay particular attention to the punctuation of Maxwell's text. Pay attention to the rests. It's like music, not a script but a score.

We never attempt to transport the audience, to convince them that this is anything other than a performance. We don't have a director, 3 actors with a 3-point perspective, not very efficient. We always have the out that it's an experiment, 3 people performing in 3 different plays. We're trying above all to be present with each other in the space. *You had all your starter pieces chosen for you, right? What's on your mind, Angelo? Anthony. People are confused. About what? Well, it comes down to whose system, whose model you want to use.* Everything in the performance is totally nailed. Still part of the mix comes from the audience. The air held in by the audience changes the way the lines sit. We're presenting parts to a puzzle that you get to put together. *Great things come at a price. There's nothing you can do about it. It's a cold reality and there's nothing you can do, son.* There's a plaintive cry for attention throughout the piece. It can feel like the audience is the therapist, trying to listen without judgment. Then someone starts a sad, silly song almost Dr. Seuss-like, and the illusion, if there was one, is shattered. Also like opera, melodramatic recitative followed by an illogical burst into song, including duets and trios. The songs often require you to reach out of the range of your normal voice type, screaming. *Song: I cry myself to sleep / By the night / I'm where I want to be / Day into night.*

A mocking, self-aware tone in the script (contrary to the blithe Krauss/Strauss view quoted above) makes you wonder if you're the one playing the fool. Jerked around we snicker but are suddenly hit by the pathos of a scene. *But I also work out. The chickens weren't working out, exactly. You gotta work out. So? That's all. You know. The play is earnest, meant on some level to be taken seriously. What is heard when we speak to someone, how do we listen in return. But I'm a very passionate person. (Pause.) Yeah, you are. I've seen it. Right? I've seen it, too. But I mean in real life? What? In reality. I don't know what you mean. Song: Please believe it's hard for me / I mean it too / I love you. Is there an ending that is not trivial?—to borrow a final line from Strauss's *Capriccio*.*

Craig Harbison, February 2013

No Theater performance of Richard Maxwell's *CAVE MAN!*

Conversation with Roy Faudree

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