

October 16 1979

David,

BEVYA
ROSTEN - 1

We made it!

To many more moments--
each one more exhilarating
than the last --

To a continued moment
of consciousness -

Happy Opening Night!

Love,
Bevya

Elegy for Berya
NYU Memorial Service
Wed., May 12 '04 6 pm.
Abr. Burrows Auditorium
721 B'way

BEVYA
ROSTEN - 2

My name is David Cole. I'm a playwright. A play of mine, The Moments of the Wandering Jew, was the first script Berya ever directed. This was back in 1978-1979, and Berya was just making the transition from actor to director or, as I think she herself might have put it, was only then discovering her true vocation.

During the next 2 decades, Berya directed an extraordinary variety of productions all over New York and all over the map of world dramatic literature: Chekhov farces at the Henry Street Settlement House, musicals at La MaMa, a Kafka adaptation at Westbeth, and ever there was a list went on and on! In our theatrical culture where not a few directors go from one dysfunctional family drama to the next, Berya's range of taste and temperament was breathtaking — as were, often, her productions themselves.

Who would have supposed, till Bevyia showed us, that All My Sons, that most housebound of scripts, could seem nowhere more at home than in a park off Avenue B? Who would have imagined, till Bevyia imagined it for us, that Gilgamesh, that farthest-off of poems, could attain in our theatre the unforgettable immediacy she gave it in her own adaptation, staged first at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and, later, downtown at the Open Center.

However, it is not as a theatre-goer or -chronicler that I wish to speak of Bevyia's work but as a playwright, because I suspect that it was only to the playwrights she worked with over the years that her greatest gifts ^{were} fully visible.

For a playwright, a director is not first of all someone who elicits good work from actors or reconceives stage space or any of the other indispensable things directors do. For a playwright, a director is first of all someone who speaks for your work better than you can do and — let's be candid — sometimes better than the work itself can do.

By "speaking for" a script, I don't mean simply advocacy of it (though Berya could be a fierce advocate) nor simply interpretation of it (though Berya could be a luminous interpreter). By "speaking for" a script, I mean a kind of finding in oneself of the voice in which a dramatic text would address us if dramatic texts spoke in a single voice. At this kind of directorial "speaking for" Berya had, in my experience, no equal.

BEVYA
ROSTEN -5 4

Well, this or something like this, I would have liked to say at Bevyæ's funeral last spring; but, as Yeats said on the occasion of a friend's death, "the thought of that late loss took all my heart for speech."

Now, a year later, I still haven't much heart for speech on this subject; but I wanted to speak, this once, for my friend, who spoke so often and so well for my work and me.