

DAN  
SELTZER - 1

Feb. 18, 1978

Dear Dan,

Perhaps you remember an exchange of letters we had three years back (Jan.-May 1975), in which I wrote asking your advice at the moment of my departure from a teaching job at Yale, and sent you a copy of my book and scripts of two of my (then) recent plays. You wrote back that you --and Michael Kahn, who was at that time associated with you at Princeton-- had "enjoyed the plays immensely," that you would like to see any new work of mine, and that "Michael specifically asked me to find out if you have any other scripts at hand, as he is very interested in your work and would like to read more of it." I replied that I was at work on a full-length play about the Wandering Jew, which I would very much like you and Kahn to see when I finished it "about a year from now"--"now" being April, 1975.

Well, you haven't heard from me since--because I just finished the play last month! I'm not sure how much the situation at Princeton may have changed: I don't know if you're still running the McCarter; I don't know if Michael Kahn is still there. But I remember your interest; I want you to see the script; and I'll be very interested to hear your reactions to it.

Whether this constitutes "submission" to the McCarter I guess depends on what your relation to the McCarter is at the moment. If you think the play is a possibility for the McCarter, I'd appreciate your showing it to whatever people that implies --including Michael Kahn if he's still with you. (Incidentally, if he's not, I'd like to know--in view of the interest he expressed in my earlier work--where I might mail him a copy of this script.)

Since my own knowledge of the McCarter is all at second-hand, I can't swear that it and The Moments of the Wandering Jew are made for each other. But what I do know gives me reason to feel that a context such as the McCarter might be right for this play, and vice versa. The Moments of the Wandering Jew is very far away from anything that is going on in the American theatre right now--and I include off- and off-off-Broadway in that statement. It seems to me that only a company which is attempting to mediate between the New York professional theatre and a more ample vision of theatrical culture would want --or would have the skills--to become involved in production of such a play. The McCarter is the only company I know ~~that~~ of that is genuinely trying to assume something like this mediating role.

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One practical point: The script is long, and if there is some interest in the play but not enough for a full production (or not right away), I am certainly open to the idea of a staged-reading or workshop production of an excerpted section or of selected scenes. (I think as you read along in the script you will see the feasibility of this sort of excerpting.) The idea was recommended to me by Stanley Kauffmann, who --impressed by the play, but also by its difficulties--thought this might be a good way of building up interest toward a full production.)

I will not commit myself in any other direction until I've heard from you. The McCarter seems to me, for the reason I said above, genuinely my best prospect, and I wouldn't want to get tied in with anyone else until I know how things stand there.

Thanks for your continuing interest in my work, Dan, and work apart, my warmest regards.

Yours,

David Cole

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(out of town March 22-  
April 2)

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DAN  
SELTZER - 3

February 23, 1978

Mr. David Cole  
137 Cottage Street  
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Dear David,

It was lovely to hear from you again, and also to have your excellent new play. Please excuse the brevity of this letter, for I am swamped with a hectic schedule, but wanted you to hear from me without too much delay.

I resigned as Chairman of the Board of McCarter in 1975 in order to have time to develop the curricular Program here, to act more in a professional way, and to teach--and also, to be frank, to be free of the incessant demands for fund-raising on behalf of a type of theatre the goals of which, honestly, no longer seemed to me to suit the actual needs of the art in this country today. But there is no doubt that McCarter has become one of the better regional theatres, and my relationship with Michael is still cordial (indeed I remain a member of the Board of Trustees); so I have forwarded your play to him with a very affirmative cover letter.

My own life is busier and busier, it seems, since one must raise money for the curricular program, too. We have a rather innovative teaching-ensemble of professional actors as part of our staff now, working with the students and simultaneously preparing a production of The Three Sisters (in which I am doing Vershinin); and I am teaching still in the English Department, too, so I wear several hats and try to stay out of trouble; but as I said above, one's daily schedule is absolutely chaotic.

Do keep in touch and let me know how things are. It would be good to see you again when an opportunity arises to get together.

Best always,

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Seltzer  
Professor of English  
Director, Program in Theatre & Dance

DS/b

DAN  
SELTZER

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March 10, 1978

Dear Dan,

I'm so pleased with your positive reaction to my play. And I greatly appreciate your sending it on, with your recommendation, to Michael Kahn.

How well I understand your need to pull back from institutional commitments in order to make a space for your own work. Institutions are supposed to be there to help us get what we need--so how come the first thing we always seem to need is more freedom from the institutions? If I knew the answer to that one, I might still be in the academic world.

Your teaching-ensemble approach sounds terrific; that's the way to do it, all right. I think you're brave to take on Vershinin. I've always felt there's an enigma smack at the center of that character.

Dan, I want to thank you again for taking an interest in my play--and for acting on that interest vis-a-vis Michael Kahn. I've been alone with that script for a long time; your kind, and quick, response has made me feel a lot less alone.

Best,

David Cole

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