REHEARSAL NOTEBOOK N

Play: The Responses

Period: March 1990 - December 1996

THE RESPONSES

(5) March 20, 1990 → Dec. 11, 1996

N

144 pages

National® Brand

Narrow Ruled
Eye-Ease® Paper
Single Subject

33-002
80 Sheets
7¾ x 5

Dennison National Company, Holyoke, MA 01041

1990

ATLANTA/EMORY 1

Wednesday, March 21, 1990

3:30 p.m.] Ellie met us at airport, we went to pick up black stool/~~[illegible]~~ and rostrum and green rhomboid bench (for Robbi) which Emory shop obligingly built for us.

E. already had alone boys she'd made + jackets she'd got for COURTOA

6:30 - 11 p.m.]

E. showed us where reading is to be: a small "black box" theatre like Lodz E experimented.

We went for rehearsal to a lecture-room in Bishop Hall (Emory Div. Sch.), where we pushed back chairs.

[CAST]

RABBI - Richard Ward, trained as an actor at Northwestern, now teaches Biblical narrative at Emory Div. School. Small, bearded, very friendly; not a very deep actor, gets intonations right often, but doesn't get to any deep level

SCRIBE - CHRIS Kayser, a tall, thin, dark, haired narrow-faced professional actor w/ an Atlanta company. Very talented, takes direction beautifully, adept at understanding and suggesting right quality, raises good questions, makes suggestions - inclined to argue in a good way.

COURIER - Stephanie Wilkins, a senior dance major, blond, broad-shouldered, pretty, a little blank, conscientious about taking direction

also:

Will Basset, Lights. an obliging techie

~~Course~~

Stage Manager (EQUITY) Laurie Dahl - She wasn't there tonight so our hours didn't count against the 16 (!) L.O.R.T.-Equity contracts allow.

Before rehearsal, Ellie sent me and the actors into a little room to become acquainted.

Chris (who has a terrible chronic sore-throat/cough - I suggested he looks into possibility of yeast-infection) raised question of the what extent RAB is dining thing for SCR. I pointed out Posnick's insight about teacher taking pupil to ~~meet~~ where he is, so he (teacher) can go on

(*) Chris said so does Christianity. He later said he had had nothing to drink but water all thru Lent.

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Richard stuck by this; but Chris said he didn't think this was what was happening.

I called their attention to p. 12 "it stands now with thee as with me then" which helped.

Chris brought up Buddhist Master-Disciple relation; I said I thought this was relevant. Later, he raised question of nigglingly quality of questions; I said this was Koan-like, pointed out that Judaism liked unresolvable questions (*)

rehearsal itself — SEE MT PAGES of NOTES, in ENV.

E. spent the bulk of the time "working through" to fix the blocking they'd already worked out (Very elaborate for a staged reading.)

e.g. At one point, E. told him: "each inch of stage you cover is millions of miles of landscape"

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In Richard's case, though, working on blocking elicited a good deal more than movement; when his body was "set right," his performance got a depth & clarity not otherwise in evidence.

Chris didn't need so much of this kind of work.

Ex. p. 19 "And I w/ only 7 questions to approve" E. like a scrolling

Ellie has real talent as a director explains things beautifully in actor's terms, and works surprisingly well "through the body" on details of gesture, posture.

She's blocked a lot of moving around stage for both SKR and RABBI. This gives considerable fluidity to their changing relation.

I was consulted mainly for pronunciations (little textual points (I had asked Ellie at dinner before what decorum she wanted me to observe in comment. She said: not to interrupt when she hadn't interrupted, but when they stopped OK for me to comment.

→ [Speaking of "dinner before," there E. & I continued our disagreement about (p. 19) "It was the total RESP-process."
She doesn't go w/ my whole explanation of Rabbi's eloquence as an attempt to make SCRIBE see.]

Ellie had COURIER in succession of cut-away morning-suit jackets of different colors, and moving w/ burlap → many colored → white bag. This is OK. Stephanie's movements are too dancer-like; Ellie worked w/ her to and end to bring the dance-grace within movement.

At break I said to E.: "You can do this, i.e. direct." She flushed w/ pleasure. Later I went into me detail.

At break she asked me what ~~[illegible]~~ bothered me, if anything, I said: "opening 4-5 pages." SCRIBE had gone through letters very quickly; he needs

I said, to ~~[illegible]~~ "lay it out" for RAB. Also, he can take delight in RAB's answers.

RAB needs to think of his answers. And we need to see ~~[illegible]~~ RAB's weariness/cynicism more.

She asked me to tell actors all this, and I did after hours. Opening got much better.

E. interestingly obsessed w/ "Katovan Rabbinical Board," asked Richard what he saw at up to this. He drew a blank; she suggested very sinister behind.

(pp. 5-6) Ellie wanted SCR to show he already fears "Great Decision" ~~[illegible]~~ be his Rabbi in speech.

Chris was afraid this might spoil punchline, but they tried it; it worked well.

Lots of problems w/ how SCR moves in final question-barrage, which Chris does brilliantly. Ellie at her best here in suggesting questions coming thru, taking over SCRIBE.

E. worked w/ Richard on (pp. 10-11), to build it. I pointed out to Richard it's all one speech for him.

They worked a lot on when & to what extent SCR abandons scrolls. (Ellie not [illegible] real scrolls)

(pp. 19-20) Ellie helped Chris to get p/ SCR's "dumb suggestions" (the Landing Party — "like a TV show") to deeper level on (19 bot - 20)

(22) Chris queried me on "California hip" ~~dight~~ diction of "caught in buzz." I told him it expressed ~~Rabbi's own~~ SCR's scorn here

(24 bot) Chris asked how SCR could take hands out of ears if, earlier on page, it was so painful.
I said: he needs anxiety here, more than he fears pain.

On question-barrage Ellie herself read questions.

Chris disinvolved to hear SCR can't hear question-barrage (i.e. he wants to go with Rabbi)

They worked a lot on whether SCR should move naturalistically betw/ RAB + COURIER, try to move with RAB, not more

(12:30 AM) Back at Ellie's house.
She said: "this play is always ahead of our work on it" — gave example of how they'd work forward an action — and then

find it — stage
discipline

She asked how I
know SCR can't
hear question-arrange.
I said: my instinct
for dramatic logic
tells me SCR can't get
to where RABBI does —
only RAB can move
through the sound.

Thurs., March 22 | NO REHEARSAL
TODAY

Ellie mentioned
she wanted to talk to
Bettina K. rapp about
publishing all 3 plays —
book in same volume as
At Lon.

Fri., March 23 |
(2 p.m.) Susan + I at
church w/ Ellie at a Deli
in Atlanta.
Ellie + I argued about
(p. 19 bot) — she really doesn't
like "process," says it
reminds her of Camp David
Peace process, thinks it will
deflate audiences' interest.
I think this is over-exaggerated
reaction, and not the point
anyway: she wants to cut
whole explicit identification
doesn't see it as moment in Rabbi's telling, etc
of Roan (p. 19 last 4 lines).
We compromised on changing
~~cutting~~ "It was the total
response-process" to "It was
the response-texts."

7pm - midnight, Rehearsal
small experimental theatre
(black box) where reading
will be done.

Susan & I got there
a little late. Ellie was
running tape of voices/Roar/
ocean/sea-bird-at-end, that
sound man Don had made.
This is first time I've
ever heard actual tape of
my specified effect.

First of all, it can
be done technically - with
4 track tape & a synthesizer,
Don said.

Secondly it's most
effective & beautiful,
when they ran it before
rehearsal, it was too loud,
forcing Chris (who has terrible
laryngitis anyway) to
compete w/ tape.

But when at end of evening
they took levels down, it
was beautiful.

Ellie practised her opening
speech, in which she summarizes
my long opening S.D., has
actors come on demonstrate
Sarile's letter-opening & Rabbi's
"Search." I told her later,
& she agreed, to drop my
reference to COURIER - just
let courier enter.

As rehearsal went on,
Lighting designer experimented w/
diff levels. Ellie told me
later she'd never worked w/
a lighting designer before, but, she
said, she ruined up giving
him all the cues.

Opening 7 pp. were much
better: Chris/Sarile really
laying it out; Richard/Rabbi
really finding answers (Ellie
told him to listen with hand
up as an "antenna, catching it out
of air," only to search w/ hand as
[illegible] each question got [illegible]

pp. 8-10 still lacks a sense of story-in-fragments coming back into RABBI's mind. I had a talk w/ Richard about this after rehearsal, pointed out that all R's phrases in 8-10 recur later (I showed him examples). Also I said: "It's like if you were just coming out of a coma, and I heard you mutterings: "Evening & Morning of the 2nd day"... "things that creepeth on the earth"

I also told him the story of the play in chronological order (he's interested in story-telling, teaching a course in Biblical narrative at Chandler School of Theology at Emory)

pp. 12-14 Ellie did some nice work with them on these pages.

pp. 14-20 Here something beautiful happened.

Ellie spoke of Rabbi cupping his hand, & being able — almost! — to bring Scribe through but Scribe drew back.

On this point, Ellie's work w/ actors began to resemble the kind of event the play itself is: a leaking to another level (I told Ellie & the actors this later).

Two nights ago, it seemed like the first week of rehearsal; tonight like the 3rd or 4th — but that's the least of it. There was real "lift off"

Unfortunately, Ellie had to stop ~~after~~ running through after (p. 70) as so. It was late. Chris' voice — despite penicillin + steroids — was weakening, and there were many ones to set.

But there was a kind of delicacy reached between Rob + Sa as master/disciple which was something potential in, but very much brought to fruition by Ellie.

After Chris left, Ellie worked w/ Richard on big (p. 20) ("I shut my eyes to see") speech.

Again she got tenderness by having SCR kneel, RAB pass hand over ~~RAB~~ SCR's eyes (At first she had him touch ~~RAB~~ SCR's forehead — but dismissed this as "too Christian." Interestingly,

since Chris had left, I stood in (as kneeled in) for SCRIBE here.

Before Chris left, he did find speech against tape with tape breaks much lower (as I'd suggested). It was great.

Ellie's engagement with material is deep and continues to deepen. Her physical-leading, image-centered way of directing comes upon subtlety after subtlety.

~~She~~

Ellie, stage-manager (Lauri) and light ~~guy~~ guy, were still working on sound-light cues at midnight.

Sat., March 24 [written up Tues., March 27, back in NY]

(5-7 p.m.) Full dress rehearsal in the Studio Theatre. No stopping, for nothing.

This was a beautiful rehearsal. Chris, unfortunately, was audibly losing his voice. But Richard reached a level of inward communion with the RAB's vision that he had shown no signs of before. I complemented him afterwards, and he claimed it was due to what I'd done last night, telling him the story = chronological order so he could feel it as a story. But I felt it had much more to do with — comment Ellie made to him last night, namely, that actors, when they don't know what else to do, ~~get~~ take it bigger, whereas

here the RAB. must take it more inward.

The sound ran a little short, but it works: voices, chord, sea-noise, bird-noise. It is the right ending.

I thought Ellie would maximize the break time, but she had lots of notes (Susan had helped her take them) for actors + tech. She gave Chris his first; they mostly concerned the moment she ~~did~~ marked last night: SCR Kreuling, RABBI pushing hand over his eyes + he closes them. Also, they clarified final blocking.

Richard asked me again — he's asked every rehearsal — about RAB's attitude ~~toward~~ in final line. This time I think he understood possib. of ambivalence

8 p.m. "PERFORMANCE"

Black-box studio theatre set up thus

About 40 people were in the audience.

The evening began with Alice Bentsen, Ellie's Chairman, introducing Ellie as the person who set up the program of which this was to be the first example.

Then Ellie herself did the set-up of the play — a condensation of my opening S.D., preserving my wording at key moments (e.g., "the Search"). Actors are on, sat, demonstrated as she spoke (she proposed, at my suggestion, did not mention Courier.

Then lights came down & back up again, and it started.

(COSTUMES)

RABBI - old shiny suit, which Ellie partly tore up the back, strong tie (which Ellie, Susan & I picked up at a costume shop) and my black belt (Richard & I switched — and switched back after show

SCRIBE - grey, tattered morningcoat, grained grey pants

COURIER - white leotard/tights
1st entrance: tattered mourning coat, burlap bag - staggering motion
2nd entrance: non-tattered grey mourning coat, whitish bag w/ colored patches
3rd entrance: all white, incl bag.
(Ellie told her to be like a Buddha on second entrance, smiling on 3rd.

~~Rem~~

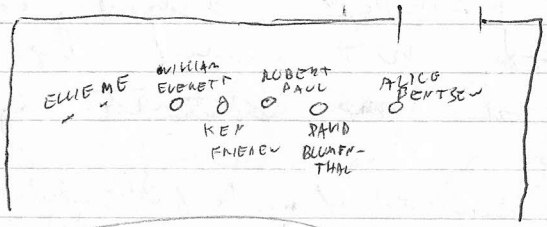
The performance itself was considerably below level of the 5-7 p.m. rehearsal - Richard lost 50% of that "interiority," and Chris voice was really in trouble.

Still, by any other standard than that suggested by the immediately preceding rehearsal, the performance

was a miracle in comparison to where they'd been 4 days ago.

Audience laughed loudly at opening questions. They seemed "held" - not obviously restless anyway.

~~Ex~~ Discussion, following, had us laid out like this:



TRANSCRIPT of DISCUSSION (taken by Susan) ↳ in ENVELOPE

[10:30 - 12:00] WINE + CHEESE PARTY AFTER READING.

Jim Flannery - shook hands, said nothing. Ellie told me later he could make nothing of the play (Susan + I had had lunch with him; at his invitation, by the way)

KEN FRIEDEN | asked to read WJ, said he would send me something of his

Tanya, [student in Ellie's class] (there w/ Edward, another of Ellie's students) said, (apropos of some "it's not dramatic" comments in discussion): "If they're questioning whether it's dramatic, it's a success"

Two young women students - came up + said they'd liked it

Lauri, the stage-manager | said she'd enjoyed working on it, had been telling people about it all week.

midnight - 1:30 AM | Back at Ellie's, sat around eating cheese + chicken

E. very upset about Alice Bentsen not having said anything specific to her.

E. said play is dense, could perhaps use "combing" in its middle section - "not cutting of locks," she said.

I told her about the cut version worked out for earlier [Posnick] reading, said I'd considered showing it to her but they'd already started working; she said she'd never thought to ask....

see WJ decs ex

Sunday, March 25

7-11 pm Ellie, Susan & I out to dinner

Ellie had said a few days ago, in response to comments from Susan and me on how good a director she made, how she saw no way to pursue this as a career

I said: "You know every theatre-head and literary manager in N.Y. What's to prevent you p/ taking the script to Ellen Stewart, George Bartenieff — even Cynthia Jenner. Why not just bring them the RESP. and say you want to direct it? I mean, of course, at a moment when your teaching and book allow"

"And do you know what they'd say to me?

'Where's the money for it?"

I said: "How about me putting up the money for it? What could I spend my money for better? Would that make it a vanity production?"

Ellie: "I think maybe it happens all the time"

Me: "I bet it does"

[We then got onto discussing production of WJ, not w/ Ellie directing — see WJ this date]

see also WJ decs ex this date

Ellie talked a lot about getting all 3 plays published w/ Bettina Knapp — in the same series as the Atlas.

We discussed what order the plays should appear in (Ellie thinks: "decs ex → WJ → RESP") I listed points I thought would appeal to Bettina Knapp: "American Claudel," "sacred theatre," "only French playwright in America"

Ellie said she'd write Bettina as soon as she

She thought I should arrange all 3 MS in one big binder, possibly w/ a preface note. (We discussed the possibility of her, as some big shot, doing a preface)

Mon, Apr. 9

- letter to Ken Frieden (in envelope) (w/ E-ary panel on Responses reading), sending me his book Friends' Dream of Interpretation, [and asking to see WJ]

Mon, Apr 16

9pm Ellie ~~called to say she was sending the~~ called to say she's been working on a long letter to Bettina Knapp about RESP [+ WJ + deus ex] — it's so long she's not getting anywhere, so has been thinking about sending a shorter letter.

Thurs, Apr. 20 ✓ see WJ this dat

[WJ script to Ken Frieden in envelope w/ letter thanking him for his Responses comment

Mon., Apr. 23

Ellie told me she has written Bettina Knapp about the 3 plays, expects to hear from her in a couple of weeks.

MAY 1990

JUNE 1990

[in New Haven]

Thurs, May 3

[late night] Ellie called

Bettina Knapp responded she's no longer editing the series. Ellie wanted her to publish my plays in

But Ellie was speaking to Mac Wellman: he doesn't know my work, but would like to consider it for a series or anthology he's editing for Sun + Moon Press, or elsewhere.

Tues., May 8

[+ WJ + devs ex]

in folder script of ~~Rec~~ + letter sent to

Mac Wellman
618 A 3rd St
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Sat., May 12, ~~1990~~

in folder letter fr/ Bettina Knapp to Ellie, forwarded to me by Ellie

Thurs., May 24 |

in envelope — letter w/ Ken Frieden [Emory] on WJ, w/ ref. to RESP.

[in NEW HAVEN]

Wed., July 25 |

10 A.M. | Michael Posnick called. He's been asked to do a reading for a Foundation meeting on August 22, is preparing his Talmud-play on Responsa ~~asks~~ thinks they'll chose the Talmud-play since they're interested in community, but ~~sent me~~ asked me to send RESP. anyway.

Thurs, July 26 |

revised [for Posnick] RESP. script mailed 1st class w/ letter ~~to~~ NY to

LARRY MOSES
WEXNER FOUNDATION
41 South High St.
Suite 3390
Columbus OHIO 43215

carbon in envelope

Fri., August 17 (in NY) see also deus ex this date
- visited Bill & Susan Finley in NY w/ Constance & Chris
Bill said he hadn't seen a way to do RESP.

Mon., Aug 20
in envelope letter h/ Larry Moses at Wexner foundation, saying they couldn't use RESP. this time but maybe at another conference

Mon., Sept. 4, 1990 | see also {WJ / deus ex} this date

in envelope

letter h/ MAC WELLMAN, returning RESP [+ WJ - but - not deus ex], he can do nothing for me.

Fri. Sept. 14 | 6:45 - 7:15 pm (in NY) | met Ellie told her I felt insulted by Wellman's letter. She read it, agreed: "he talks to you like a beginner in theater."

She did also say she'd seen Mac, + seems he would have considered my scripts for has been discontinued.

She also mentioned she sounded out Tim Wiles at Indiana Press about publishing some new (e.g., my) plays - but he only wanted stage-proved work, which disgusted Ellie

OCT, 1990

NOV DEC } '90
JAN FEB } '91

(in NT) — see also
- WJ
- deus ex } this date

Fri Oct 5, 11 pm

Susan & I ran into Ellie & Jim Leverett at the Public Theatre, at Sophie Trendwell's Machinal

Jim & I talked for 10 minutes or so — our first read talk lives in 8 or so years of knowing each other, ~~in~~ re: Experimenter & American Theatre

At the end of it Jim said "you know I'd really like to read your plays. Could you send them to me in Iowa [where he's teaching this term?]" I said of course.

Wed, Oct 17, 1990

Script of RESP [+ WJ + deus ex]

(carbon in envelope) and letter:

Jim Leverett
Theatre Dept.
Theatre Building
North Riverside Drive
Univ of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242

Thursday, March 28 |

RESP [+ WJ] scripts
in folder back ~~to~~ w/ letter to
Helen Merrill

in NY

Sat., March 31 |

12:10 pm Bevyn called to say David Willinger had a product prospect for RESP, would be calling —

see also WJ this date

12:45 pm David Willinger called
He has an elderly man, Alex Racolin, who has produced several plays ("nothing you've heard of") wants to produce a play on a Jewish subject.
"He's sent me several scripts, including a re-write of Merchant of Venice, which are terrible. I want to interest him in Responses. But I lost my copy in moving; could you send me one?"
I said, sure. (over)

asked if he'd any idea what sort of theatre Mr. Racolin had in mind. Don't think so.

David's new address

DAVID WILLINGER
940 Amsterdam Ave.
NY NY 10025 Apt #9

[see list]

David also mentioned had had an actor Milton Carney ["Jewish, despite his name"] who'd be perfect for the part

Fri., Apr. 5

Script sent to David Willinger for Alex Racolin IN ENV. with letter

Sat., May 3 |

David Willings called
He said Alex Rawlin had
told him he (Alex) knew
he'd received something
by David, but couldn't
find it (!) David asked
bring (David's) another copy to
send to Mr. Rawling (!!)
cl said cl would

Wed., May 8 |

Another copy of script
send to DAVID WOLLINGER
940 Amsterdam Ave
NY NY 10025
(no cover letter)

Sat., Sept 26

(8:00 pm) dinner w/ Bevya, who has just begun this theatre company - Fin-de-Siècle - to do Steven Fechter's adaptation of Kafka's The Castle.

She said she wants to do 3-4 more plays in this season:

"And I want David Cole's The Response to be one of them."

I said that was nice;

NOTE: Mr. Alex Raclin (of the David Willinger affair) is B.'s chief backer.

OCTOBER 1992
NOV 92
DEC 92

Tues, Oct 6 — see also WJ, devs ex } this date

→ message on N.H. machine for Ellie that she called Terry Cochran at Wesleyan UP (he used to be at Min—) about publishing RESP [+ WJ + devs ex] as "Three Visionary Plays" — and he's interested enough to want to see the plays: I should make up 3 fresh copies.

Mon., Oct 19 — see WJ, devs ex } this date

→ brought scripts of RESP [+ WJ + devs ex] to Ellie in Brooklyn, all 3 bound as one w/ title The Moments of the WJ + Other Plays for him to send to Terry Cochran at Wesleyan. We discussed who should write Preface — hers or me. She said she'd have to crib from me, I said it seemed counter-productive for me to imply my works needed a Preface. I said I'd want to be seen in context of Emerson, Whitman, Stevens. I asked timidly, if she thought

I would use what I'd always wanted as title for my collected plays: They Think They Are The American Theatre, But I Am; but she felt (as I realize) I can't because it implies "the others" are Nazis.

She said (re: Preface) Cochran's decision wouldn't stand or by folks by (who wrote) it.

Thurs, Oct. 22

(8 pm) ran into Marc Robinson & April at Long Wharf Month = Country

No ref. to my plays

1993

January 12, 1993

LESP (& WJ & deus ex). sent, w/ cover-letter essay by Ellie to Terry Cochran at Wesleyan

copy letter in folder

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FEBRUARY 1993
MARCH 1993
APRIL 1993

55

(in N.H.)

Wed. Feb 24

(noon) Ellie called to say she had a message in to Terry Cochran at Wesleyan asking if he'd get scripts/letters sent on 1/12/93

MAY 1993
JUNE 93
JULY 93

May 17 93

in folder

letter f/ TERRY COCHRAN at Wesleyan U.P. rejecting RESP [+ WJ + dem ex] for publication forwarded by Ellie Fuchs to me

early August '93

Ellie Fuchs told me she'd asked Glenn ~~[illegible]~~ Young about trying to get my plays published somewhere with a subvention. Glenn said: ~~that~~ because ~~[illegible]~~ unpublished plays wouldn't be reviewed, they wouldn't even be bought by libraries.

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SEPT 1994
OCT 1994

(N.H.) WRITTEN UP SEPT 25 94 61

Thurs., Sept. 1 94, (5 p.m.)

Bergen called

She asked how I'd feel about ~~[illegible]~~ Mandy Patinkin playing Rabbi in RESP. "Great!" I said; "it's a big song, an aria — and he's a singer."

B. said she'd got to know Mandy's wife, Catherine [?] Grodie, also an actress, at the Writers' Room — could she give Catherine the script for Mandy? Yes! I said.

She also said she wanted to apply for funding ~~[illegible]~~ from the Nathan Cummings Foundation (guy there had seen + liked her Sacred Prostitute) that does not fund plays directly, but ~~but~~ funds the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, headed by Richard Siegel, ~~to fund the~~ which would then fund the production

(CONT.)

I then told B. whole history w/ the Foundation & Richard (?) lecture for them at "F" (Michael Posnick's Theatre) in 1988 and in Philadelphia — plus the reading of RESP at Posnick's theatre in 1988, while the NFJC was funding it.

(in NY)

Friday, Sept. 21 brought Bevya 3 copies of RESP and showed her all Richard Seigel / NFJC / Posnick / NY-Philadelphia lectures of mine for them

(in NH)

Thursday, Sept. 22 (5 p.m.)

Returned Bevya's call. She'd spoken to Catherine Grady, Mandy Polanski's wife, at Writer's Room, about Mandy doing RESP.

Catherine said Mandy would probably do a night club act or movie after doctors-series he's on now (i.e., in April '95). But, she [Catherine] went on, she + Mandy had got very emotional about ~~that script~~ their Jewish heritage this past Yom Kippur — so she'd send the script [and, said B., implicitly decide if Mandy would like it]

NY

Sat., Nov. 26 | 4pm.

Coffee w/ Borja at Vivaldi on Jones St.

B. told me she'd talked to Mandy Patinkin's wife, who said she "couldn't read" the play, had tried several times, but couldn't. Besides, (P.'s wife went on) Mandy would be doing "something else" afterward.

She also told me she'd been in Richard Siegel at National Jewish Foundation.

Wed., Nov. 30 | 3pm.

meeting w/ Greg Gunter Literary Manager of New York Theatre Workshop (220 W. 42, 18th Floor, NY, NY 10036) re: W.J. He asked to see other scripts of mine, & said I'd send (Deus DESP [+ deus ex]) for him

New Haven

Thurs., Dec 1 94 late night
Talked w/ Ellie about meeting w/ Greg Gunter of N.Y. Theatre Workshop (re WJ)
When it came to his suggestion of publishing a play of mine — Yale/Theatre
Ellie said: "Why not the Response? I was asked to recommend plays, too for that — I don't know why I didn't think of that. I'll mention it to Erika"

Tues., Dec. 6 94 | late night
Ellie called — she'd mentioned RESP. to Erika Munk at Yale/Theatre

Fri., Dec. 9 94 (NY) | 1:30 pm
left off script of RESP [+ deus ex] letter in envelope
for: GREG GUNTER
Literary Manager
New York Theatre Workshop
220 W. 42 St 18th Floor
NY NY 10036

(in NY)

Fri, Jan. 13, 1995 | 4:30 p.m.

- Returned a call from Bevya. She'd finally heard from Richard Siegel at the National Foundation for Jewish Culture (after only 5 months!)

- The letter seemed to raise difficulty after difficulty about her directing RESP on their grant, e.g.

① Grant is for workshops only, not production

② Grant is for developing new scripts

③ applying Jewish Theatre has to have had tax-free status for 2 productions in years

(Bevya's Fin-de-Siècle not really Jewish, did both its productions in one year.

- BUT a single puzzling sentence for Richard, saying he remembered me + would want to hear about degree of playwrights involvement, made it →

sound as if he were encouraging us to apply.
Bevyn said she'd call Richard for clarification

Wed., Jan 18 (N.H.) (10:30 AM)
- Bevyn called
She'd called Siegel.
None of the difficulties raised above [see JAN 13] are difficulties; he was very encouraging
B. asked me to send her (1) an updated resumé
(2) a synopsis of NESP
(3) a statement about my involvement in production process
copies in envelope

Thurs., Jan 19
spent all day writing up, and sent on to B. by Fed. Express at 5 p.m.,

Friday, Jan. 20
4:30 pm Bevyn called, having received resumé, synopsis & statement this A.M.
She liked synopsis, thought some material could be removed from resumé (e.g. details of Nathan-nomination process) & implied first that my statement of involvement in process was too general, but then, when I suggested specific additions, said that bureaucrats eyes glaze over at specifics
I told her I'd be in NY next Tues Jan 24 if she wanted to meet or talk further (Grant application is due on Fri Jan 27), said I'd call her when I got in (about 11 AM)

(in NY)

Tues., Jan 24,

noon, ~~Beaya called last night~~ I met Beaya for lunch at French Roast (11th St + 6th Ave) to go over her draft of grant proposal for RESP.

National Jewish Fund

It was good but rough — we did a lot of rewriting on her lap-top.

We started agreeing we'd a good shot

(in NY)

Tues Jan 31,

7 p.m. Beaya called to say Foundation needed another sample of my writing — by tomorrow! I said I'd fax them WJ scene of "false" WJ tomorrow.

B. also wanted to discuss casting, asked if RABBI had to be old bearded. I said no — important thing was Master-Disciple relat

New Haven

Wed., Feb 1,

12:30 pm, From Hall-Benedict in New Haven, I faxed a copy of WJ (II, ii — 73 pp) + cover letter to

(in envelope)

MATT PRICE
National Foundation for Jewish Culture
FAX #212-629-0508

(NY)

Tues., Feb 14, 6 pm,

Beaya called

(1) to say she'd received some additional material for the National Foundation that implies we can do almost a performance-type workshop

(2) to ask if I'd think about writing something for her that linked her work on Greek Tragedy + mine — I suggested "theatre of consciousness."

Mon., March 6, 1995 (NH)

Xerox in envelope letter to:

GREG GUNTER
La Jolla Playhouse
Box 12039
La Jolla California
phone: 1-619-550-1070

asking why he hadn't contacted me re: WJ, and, at end, asking if he'd yet read RESP (+ deus ex) which he'd asked to see + d'd bright him on Dec 9 94

Friday, March 10 | 10:30 p.m. | see WJ this date

GREG GUNTER called, said that owing to his illness he hadn't yet read RESP (+ deus ex) but was having them sent from NY (NYTW), would read them soon, + get back to me in late March

(in N.Y.)

Thurs., April 27, (11 p.m.)

Bevya called. Some weeks ago, she'd asked how I'd feel about André Gregory & Wally Shawn doing The Response.

I said: great!

She said she ran into André from time to time in her neighborhood, would look for a time to broach it.

Well, she said, last night she'd run into him, broached it. He said he was busy till end of July, but would like to read RESP. then.

Meanwhile, Mandy Patinkin's wife came up to her out of the blue, said "Mandy's back in town, I'm going to give him the script."

"So, David," B. concluded, "the universe has not forgotten you."

~~Wed~~ Thurs., May 25 (in NY) ~~(late night)~~
message on NY machine ~~that~~ from Bevya: "David, you won't believe this but we got a partial grant for The RESP. from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

When I returned B.'s call, she said it was for $2,000; she'd thought all grants were for $5,000. I said, maybe it represented a judgment that this was a small play, small cast, etc. B. agreed.

We decided to meet tomorrow & discuss what to do

Fri., May 26 (noon) → B. gave me a xerox of letter re. grant xerox in NY envelope
lunch w/ Bevya at Dojo's. We agreed there isn't too much, beyond a reading, we could do, w/ $2,000.
She said she was thinking

of approaching the Public Theatre — I said I thought this was an excellent idea — about doing a reading.

I said I'd thought of CSC + the Renaissance Theatre (David Herskovitz's Theatre, on Varick + Spring). B. was interested by CSC, but we both agreed Public Theatre was best tack.

Also B. said she'd thinks about M. Pantinkin. (I told her I saw an article saying he was restless on his T.V. series, Chicago hope

in envelope, too.

~~[illegible]~~

Mon., June 12 | (11 am) Berya called

She hasn't yet received the grant-check, now thinks we should approach the Jewish Museum about a reading. She has a contact on the board there, thinks we'd be lost — shuffle at the Public.

I asked her how she'd feel about my telling Ellie we now had grant — she said OK, if I wanted to.

(in NY)

~~Sat. J Fri~~, Fri, June 29 | ~~At~~ Coffee w/ Berya at La Latterna di Vittoria on MacDougal St. She asked if I'd yet told Ellie about grant. I said no — I hadn't had a chance to speak to E. about this yet.

(in NY)

Sat., July 1 (6:30 pm) Just as Susan & I going out, Bergo called to say she'd "spilled the beans" & told Ellie about our grant for RESP., "but not in detail. She asked, 'why didn't Dad tell me?' I told her, I'd asked you not to. I also didn't go into much detail"

(late night) I called Ellie & told I'd been sworn to secrecy by B. I also said it was only $2,000 — maybe enough for a staged reading.

I told Ellie I'd felt pressing knowing all this while, but felt I had to operate within B's wishes, that I'd been just about to tell her on phone last night when her houseguest fell.

(See WJ, Fri, June 30 '95, late nite) E. did not seem upset. We

then discussed not telling Bevya about WJ actually

(See WJ, Sat July 1 95, late night)

Thurs, July 6) Susan + I went to see Robt Wilson one-man Hamlet with Bevya.

B. said she'd called Jewish Museum about RESP. reading, but that the Committee that makes the decision doesn't ~~[illegible]~~ meet again until August

(in NY)

Wed., August 16) 8 pm) Bevya called to say we have a theatre and dates (The Theatre) — NADA on Ludlow ST (that did the Faust + Hamlet — marathon the last 2 seasons. They'd been after Bevya to do one of the Faust — readings, then to do her Sacred Prostitute — piece B. suggested RESP instead ("it helped that the head of the theatre is a young Jewish Guy.") The young Jewish Guy read RESP + loved it. So — we have dates:

Nov. 16–19, '95
Thurs → Sun

(in NY)

Tues., Aug. 22)

7:30 pm) Bevya called to say she can't really think of you for Robbie but Mandy Patinkin ~~[illegible]~~ André Gregory (whom she's just written) (CONT)

"But they're both longshots
"And if I can't find someone good, better to put it off — we have a year (I'm just saying this now so you won't be disappointed)"
She asked if I had any actor-ideas. I said no, I don't really think that way.

(in NY)

Fri, Sept 8!

- called Beroza, on ready NY, to see what was going on. B. said:

(1) she's giving up on Mandy Patinkin — "his wife is too much of a tiger at the gate, and I can't see him working at NADA"

(2) "Andre Gregory left a message on my machine: he can't do it, he's going to be out of town — he sing some things about the play I'll tell you when I see you."

(3) "I'm trying to get Wally Shawn's phone #"

(4) She'd participated w/ Isaiah Sheffer (who runs Symphony Space) in a read of a new translation of a Yiddish play and, tho' he's not an actor, liked his work — "and he knows a lot of actors"

(from Sy - Symphony Space's Selected Shorts series

(7) She has a message into Jeff Weiss
But he had a wonderful, ironic quality. We can't ask him to read, but I'm trying to reach him

(5) She's going to call Joanna Merlin for some free help.

(6) She's been in contact w/ 2 other actors rec. by NADA, but has "bad vibes" about one

Sat. Sept 9 | 2:30 pm |
B. called to say she'd sent up auditions for the 2 other actors rec. by NADA, one of whom she had bad vibes about at NADA on Mon. aft — would I stay over?
She hasn't heard back from Merlin or Scheffer yet.

in NY

Monday, Sept. 11
2 - 3:30 pm | Bevyn & I held auditions for RESP at NADA. — on Ludlow St, just below Houston
First we talked with Aaron — the head of NADA.
Very nice man — like Robin Hirsch minus the touchiness
Very much likes RESP.
In fact, want to do Courier in our Staged Reading.
The theatre (NADA) is tiny, — a basement on Ludlow, just east of 1st Ave & south of Houston — tiny, but well proportioned & not wonderful looking
Aaron wants to change the reading - dates to mid-Jan '96 (rather than: mid-Nov. '95)
This would be great for me (as I said); Bevyn not so enthusiastic, but said she'd think about it.

The 2 actors we heard were recommended by Aaron — he's worked with them before.

they worked together as heads of the Portland Oregon Shakespeare Festival & Come to NY together. They were:

ALAN BENDI(K/T) - small, bearded, intense, difficult to work with, it seemed

HAROLD THORSON - small blond gentle, round-faced.

B. had them each read each role.

They were both so-so:

As Aaron well said, ALAN showed you the journey "there", HOWARD showed you: ~~getting~~ being "there."

B. said afterwards she didn't think they could hold an audience's interest at most & thrilled either.

Footnote: later tonight I had dinner w/ John Leubsdorf

at the Sou-en on 13th St and one of the waiters was — ALAN BENDI(K/T)

Mon., Sept 18

11 AM B. returned late-night - Sun. call ☺

ISAIAH SHEFFER is in the hospital can't do reading, but asked to see script (He was on the National Foundation for Jewish Culture Committee that gave grant, but didn't read RESP.)

JOANNA MERLIN recommended
- Fred Neumann
and
- Mark Zeller (who played Pischchick in Cherry Orchard Susan made what in Directors in Rehearsal)

B. said, she is coming around to the mid-Jan. date.

(in NY)

Tues, Sept 19 (11:30 AM)
in NY for the day I called B. to see if there are any new developments. There weren't

(in New Haven)

Thurs, Sept. 21 (late night)
Ellie called fr Milwaukee
I asked if she had RESP. casting suggestions
She suggested for RABBI, a young, slight intense Hispanic actor, very good w/ words ~~[illegible]~~ who played Louis in the NYU workshop of Angels in America. She couldn't think of his name but said Jim Leverett would know — the guy lives in Jim's building?
For the SCRIBE, she thought maybe PAUL ZIMET "because of his obtuseness"

(in NY)

Saturday, Oct. 7,
(10:30 pm) drinks with Bevya a Cedar Bar (after Susan + I saw the 2 Adrienne Kennedy plays at the Public)
(1) Bevya had run into Richard Siegel, head of the National Foundation of Jewish Culture. She reminded Richard they'd given her a grant, "You mean," said Richard, "a commission."
(2) That afternoon, at theatre (Mike Leigh's Ecstasy) B. ran into Isaiah Sheffer, whose read RESP., likes it, and wants to talk to B. about doing it at Symphony Space (B'way + 95th) which he heads. I said Symphony Space would be be a wonderful way for me to reach non-theatre-oriented people who'd like my work.

Tues., Oct, 10 (in New Haven)

6 pm Called Beverly Gas she'd asked me to do, because she was going to talk in more detail with Isaiah Sheffer.

She said, it was disappointing — he doesn't feel RESP. could fill the 850-seat Symphony Space But he held open the possibility of some sort of co-production w/ Temple Anche Chesed on 100th St

(I said I didn't want a production done in a temple — too "Jewish" — but liked a co-production idea)

Sheffer also recommended for the RABBI, Ron Rifkin & David Margolies.

I told B. I liked Rifkin, and thought that it had been Margolies who'd read RABBI in the 1982 American Plane reading of RESP.

(New Haven)

Sun., Nov. 5, 1995

3 p.m. MARYA BRADLEY came over to respond to Response (She'd asked to see it when she was over a month or so ago, & Susan gave it to her when they took a walk. [We also discussed Marya's astonishing poems & her Tempest essay]

She very much liked the play, compared it to Shelley, wanted it "to end in the sublime — at the [initial] 'I am without question'"

She especially liked the passage that equates writing to "moving through the space"

She spoke of the speech/silence dialectic in relation to Beethoven's deafness — which I told her had always fascinated me & ~~which~~ I'd referred to in my first play

She asked about the Rabbi's refusal of "wonder"

She said she couldn't imagine the Rabbi making the initial gesture with his hand only; I said, in fact, actors working on it had always gravitated toward whole body recovery "prolepping" the recovered memory of roar.

She asked why it hadn't been published, performed...

NB see also WJ this date [re: Woodruff]

(in New Haven)

Mon., Nov. 64 (6 pm) Bevan called.

She said she wanted to see the [Posnick] revised version of script I'd told her about — I said I'd send it to her, She said she had impression script was "going back over same ground"

She then said she was gravitating back to NADA. I said that was fine with me, that I'd liked them & always regarded the various uptown possibilities (Symphony Space, Anshe Chesed) as supplement to ~~the~~ it, rather than alternatives.

She mentioned she's getting away behind in her thesis. I said it would be OK with me if we did the NADA reading later than Jan. (as now scheduled) [I was thinking: in case the Woodruff NY Tho reading of WJ does happen in Jan.]. She said, maybe Feb or March. I said: On even the spring. But then I

thought & asked her: "don't we have an April deadline to use the grant by?" She said she'd forgotten if or when there was a deadline, but that she'd had a request for info for the Foundation newsletter recently.

Then we got to what was really on her mind.

Several months ago, pre-NADA, B. had sounded out New Dramatists about doing the reading there — and had heard nothing. Then recently she got a call from a woman there, ALANA GREENFIELD, who read the RESP liked it (tho' seeing problems) — and thought ROBERT WOODRUFF might like to direct it because he's now interested in Jewish mysticism!

Beverly was (rightly) furious that when she'd approached New Dramatists about a grant she had to produce & direct a play, they should want to pass it on to another director [it was not clear to me from B.'s summary whether Alan Greenfield had actually gone so far as to contact Woodruff — see WJ this date].

I said Alana had probably thought B. was only producing play. But B. replied — again rightly — that Alana had no right to contact directors for a play without telling the director.

B. then asked: "Have you met Robert Woodruff?" in that suggested to me she knew all about Woodruff/WJ, either from Alana (who maybe talked to Woodruff) or maybe Jim Leverett FOR MY ANSWER, see WJ this date

see also WJ this date for sequel to -x telling B. about Woodruff

(in NY)

Sun., Nov. 12

(noon) met Bevya at Union Sq. Barnes + Noble for lunch.

→ [for WOODRUFF/WJ aspect of this conversation, see WJ ~~this~~ - notebook this date]

① She told me she'd heard from Alana Greenfield at New D ~~matters~~ again and - no, there'd been no mistake: Alana had known B. was RESP director when she said she'd send it to Woodruff - she just thought Woodruff would be interested! In view of this B. asked if it would be all right if she told Alana G. that

the playwright (i.e. me) requested she (Alana) would not send his script to anyone without checking with her (Bevya). I said: of course.

② B. ~~at~~ said she was more + more coming to feel (because of delays with her dissertation) that she'd like to put off reading from Jan. to a month or two later. I said (thinking of Woodruff/NFTW Jan. workshop as a very outside possibility) that this was fine with me. She said she'd check on this with Aaron at NADA

③ She said she'd had recommended to her JOSH MOSTEL for Rabbi. I said I thought this was an excellent idea

(cont.)

(4) We discussed the revised version of script (w/ Posnick 1984 reading) I'd sent her, at her request, last week.

She hadn't understood, despite the clear note — the title page — that the handwritten marginal notes were not the textual changes — these appear in the text.

She asked how I felt about using this revised (as opposed to original) version from the start.

I said: she should read it + we'd discuss this.

(5) B. said she'd just recalled André Gregory's phone-message to her re: RESP script: that he admired it but it was too formal, stiff. "And I knew what he meant, listening to those actors read at NADA," I said: the formality was pretty much limited to the letter salutations etc. — Uh-oh!

(in NEW HAVEN)

Mon. Nov. 20, 10:30 AM, Bevya called to wish me a Happy Birthday, and to see she'd left a message for Aaron at NADA that we wanted to do the RESP/ workshop later, but hadn't heard back from him. She asked again if I did want to postpone it to post-Jan. I affirmed I did.

see WJ this date

Sat. Nov. 25, 15pm Bevya called me in New Haven.

(1) She's heard — 6 months belatedly — w/ Jewish Museum. They're not interested because they're only interested in doing readings related to their exhibits.

(2) She has a contact at Playwrights' Horizon — TIM SANFORD the new ~~[illegible]~~ head, formerly the literary manager. "They're awfully waspy, but it might be worth a fax"

(3) re: NADA. She said she'd left several messages on Aaron's machine (also their box office machine), and he hadn't call back. She said she thought she should tell him we wanted to postpone the production "indefinitely." I suggested she say "until spring": "indefinitely" sounded too like a squirming out of it.

for upshot see MAY 24 96

(in N.H.)

Tues. Jan 9, 1996

4 pm Berya called

(1) She's had a call-back for her context at Playwrights Horizons, TIM SANFORD, the new literary manager. They're interested in seeing the script, asked her about co-production. She asked me for a new copy script

(2) She ran into Isaiah Sheffer of Symphony Space, who asked how it's going

(3) She has calls in to BILL MILLER, the film actor for Scribe + RON RIFKIN for Rabbi [This came up in NOV-DEC, but I neglected to record it]

NOTE: Feb. 27 → March 31 entries ~~notes~~ all written in p/ notes on Apr 2 96

FEB. 1996

(in NH)

Mon., Feb 27 | late night

Bevyn called.

She was to a reading of a new play by Robin H. Hirsch at his (Cornelia St.) café; he asked her, afterwards, if there was anything she'd like to do a reading of, she told him about grant for RESP, he suggested a date in April.

Paul Hecht was in Robin's reading, did well — B. is going to ask him.

She's also still pursuing Ron Rifkin, whom Robin knows.

She also got script to Skip Lupate, the composer.

(in New Haven)

Thurs, March 7, 1996 Benya called
8pm Paul Hecht "not in the mood"
- B. going to try Mandy Patinkin's wife again
- She's also going to try Mark Zeller (I told her Susan had liked him as a person writing Cherry Orchard for her book, though he wasn't such a great actor
- She also mentioned Josh Mostel — and Bill Raymond for SCRIBE

Playwrights' Horizon has logged the script, but won't get to it for 2 months

Wed., March 13
(11pm) Benya called
- Patinkin still in California back May 17 — wife asked if she should send him script
B. said yes.

- Bill Raymond not sure if he has time, will read script
- Mark Zeller happy to read script & B. will mail it to him
- Alan Nebelson (h/ B.'s product of The Castle) is possibly interested, for Smile
- B brought up Fred Newman but said he's not a good reader.

(in NY)

Fri, March 15,
(3:30 - 5:30 pm) Coffee with Bevya in Bryant Park.
More casting talk, nothing definite
We discussed music by Skip LaPlante, I said ~~he~~ I was concerned he not add extraneous sound to a play about vocal sound. B. said he wasn't that kind of composer; he'd find ~~the sound~~ "the sound of the sound."

We discussed a woman RABBI, e.g., Ruth Malecczk
I agreed to use the shorter version of RESP. - i.e. the version prepared for Posnick reading in 1987.

(in New Haven)

Wed., March 20,
(10 AM) B. called
- Mark Zeller won't do it. He called RESP. "interesting" but "Not a play yet"!
- B. trying PAUL ZIMET, despite some reservations
- B. also trying DAVID MARGOLIES (who I said I thought had read it Am. Plane in 1982 - B. did + thinks so.
B. said he's "very methodic"
- B tried Isaiah Sheffer again - still no - and he says he can't get actors for his Sy-phony Space reading

(in New Haven)

Tues., March 26, 1996 | ~~10:15 AM~~ | ~~Bev~~ 10:15 AM | Bevyn called
- David Margolies hasn't read it yet
- Bill Raymond - gave script to others, but they turned him down: "too complex." He gave 3-4 others names to B., but they turned him down
- Paul Zimet can't do April 16 has agreed to read play, though - he's free after May 17.

Thurs., March 28 |
9 AM | B. called,
- Robin went ahead + printed/mailed - flier for April 16, tho' he knew we have no actors. B. is mad
- David Margolies has read "part" of script, finds it "interesting," but sees "problems" has to go to Virginia, will call Friday

(in NY)

Sat., March 30 | 4 p.m.
- David Margolies willing to do a reading, ~~but thinks~~ at B's House next week but thinks play should have more action (:) "why can't the Rabbi eat an apple?" he asked.
So we'll have some sort of reading at B's house next week

Sun., March 31 |
4 pm | B. called
She's got an actor, Joel Rubs, for Scribe for next week's reading at her house, but he can't do April 16.

Meanwhile, she's got another actor interested for Rabbi Norman Rose, he sounds nice + willing.

in New Haven

Tues., April 2, 1996.

4 pm: B called.

reading ~~is set~~ at her house is set for 1:30 Thurs. w/ David Margolies + Joel Ruks. Joel definitely can't do Apr 16 reading at Cornelia St.; David probably won't.

She's got another Scribe-prospect - an actor of Scottish/French descent who loves words.

We're using the shorter script. Thurs., will work moment-to-moment.

Thurs., Apr. 4

4 pm: Bevya called.

NORMAN ROSE will do the Rabbi. He said:

(1) "I can do it swimmingly"

(2) "It's not a play - it's a poem."

(in NY)

Fri, April 5, 1:30 - 4pm at Benya's house.

We did a dry-run, sit-down reading w/ 2 actors neither of whom can do the April 16 '96 reading at Cornelia St:

DAVID MARGULIES - Rabbi
JOEL ROOKS - Scribe
(B. read (some) stage directions.)

Before actors got there, B. said to me: "I don't know if it's the abridged ['87-Pusnick] version or what, but I just reread it this AM and - I don't see what the problem is" She also said: "The SCRIBE is a Shakespearean fool."

The actors arrived - DAVID M. first. He said to me: "Our paths have crossed before," but we

couldn't figure where (he's not the actor who did Am. Place reading in July '82) It turns out we've one "friend" in common: he did lead in Seymour Sinckes 7 Days of Mourning. He also said I looked like Austin Pendleton - whom he suggested for Rabbi.

We asked if he knew Norman Rose. He said Norman is "very accomplished, but doesn't get to act much, he's so busy doing voiceovers. He's the Voiceover King - makes $500,000 - 1 million a year." He admitted he hadn't yet finished script.

JOEL ROOKS very down-to-earth, friendly.

READING ITSELF: Very competent, not very exciting. David dealt with his insecurities by assuming a "Master's"-tone — which loses Rabbi's last searching quality (?) to assured.

Joel was "just right"

Joel said afterwards that Scribe is Sancho Panza — and he (Joel) has trouble when Scribe gets more Don Quixote-like at end.

I talked to them a little about Posnick's idea of teacher who takes student to next level — I so is able to advance to his next level (B. told me afterwards she wasn't sure about this. She also said, I take on a strong NY accent when talking to actors, "as if you're trying to show what a regular guy you are"

→ NOTE: David Margulies said yesterday out of blue, "Beverly, this doesn't need music"

(in NY)

Sat, Apr 6

(4 pm) B. called

(1) SEBASTIAN ROCHE [pron. "Roh-sháy"] will do Scribe, sees the humor in it.

(2) B.'s been meeting w/ SKIP/HOMEYER (Composer) — they're thinking about 2 others.

(3) She thinking about asking Aaron Bell (of NADA) to do COUNTER

(4) She'll be invite 30-40 people — doing mail-out and calls. She asked me to think of people — I said I'd talk to Ellie

(5) B. said she came away w/ yesterday's reading thinking: "David, you've had enough readings you need to see it done."

(6) B. said; "You know, David, you'll get some money out of this at some point." I told her to minimize my share

(7) B. asked me about Courier. "A mysterious presence," I said. "I don't know who he is"

in New Haven

Sun Apr 7, (late night) I asked Ellie for people to ~~invite~~ invite. She recommended
(1) 92nd St "Y" Reading Series people
(2) Bonnie Morrison + Gautam who might publish RESP in their "WORD/PLAY" series

Mon., Apr 8, (late night) B. called I told her Ellie's suggestions. She saw no point in "Y" people, but did agree to invite Bonnie/Gautam
She's also inviting ↳

- Public Theatre
- Playwrights Horizon
- NYTW (ironically!)
- Nat'l ~~Jewish~~ Foundation for Jewish Culture
- Ed Cohen's Jewish Theatre

in NY

Sat., Apr. 13, noon → 5pm
FIRST (of 2) REHEARSAL for Cornelia St. Café reading The ACTORS:

(RABBI) NORMAN ROSE, 70's, crumpled, "human" face, rich voice. Said to me on entering: "This is a poem, not a play. I don't know what the fuck this play is about."

(SCRIBE) SEBASTIAN ROCHÉ 30 ish, handsome, bilingual actor in French + English ~~at~~ Trained at Paris Conservatoire, acts in "RSC-English" - English

(BD.) + COURIER/ERIC RASMUSSEN, like a Chekhov graduate student,

knowledgeable — Jewish matters (pointed out correct pronunciation of Halakah

We read thru the play twice, first time at table, second time up on "stage" of Cornelia St. cave.

FIRST (AT TABLE) READING:
Sebastian wonderfully clear, intense exact.
Norman very much — a "finding" mode, letting the language impinge on him, and through him. He missed many points, but he is an authentic, "feeling" actor.
Bevyn worked with them to encourage "relationship," told Sebastian he could "~~make~~ have fun" with the questions. (I suggested he could relish the Rabbi's question.

2nd (semi-blocked) work-through
On tiny "stage" of Cornelia St Café basement, with stools. Courier/SD-Reader on stage left, Rabbi stage right, Scribe center.
Norman, this time extraordinary, "got" most of his missed points, ~~on~~ Bevyn urged him to daven, chant, but he said: "it's all in the words" — and then proceeded to read the words with just the musicality B. wanted from him. He (rightly) brushed away B.'s suggestion that Scribe would be having trouble with pronunciations, etc: "He's an expert."
Sebastian, urged this time by B. to be a little more of a common man, did it a little cockney. He was more aggressive + pursuing of the Rabbi. He also helpt asking B + me

about just when the Scribe is speaking for scrolls when he's speaking from within — in other words, he was trying, as an actor, all the characters' problems

Norman rose, touched Sebastian's a lot; Sebastian also very clear in his physical impulses

These are without doubt the 2 best actors who have ever done The Responses

(in NY)

Sunday, Apr 14 [noon → 4pm]

2nd, + final rehearsal, at Cornelia St. Capt for Apr 16 reading.

Norman Rose (RABBI) announced he only wanted to do it once today ("I'm improvisational, I get stale"), but we wound up doing it once time partly through for music cues and then a run-through.

(1st time; music work-in)

Skip LaPlante, composer was there with a cardtable-sized, microtonal, plywood zither. He + Bevya had worked out some music + cues + he added more. His music is delicate sweeps over the zither, that, at best, sound like the rustling or quickenings of the text itself.

Norman + Sebastian Roche (Scribe) at various times complained that the music was in their way — and with some justice

For Norman, problem was music on: "And then I heard the Roar." He complained that if music came first it superseded his hearing — and his vocal "music" — on "roar." Skip (a really flexible, gentle guy) fixed this by coming — after him.

For Sebastian, the problem was that ~~that~~ in his question — barrage the music broke his concentration. (But in run-through, he kept concentration).

Sebastian also suggested that Courier/SD readers say before each of Scribe's questions up thru p. 12 (except the one on p. 10): "He opens cotton scroll & reads." This, since Sebastian isn't doing much scroll-writing business, really helped.

Beogen not much of opening SD. She also isn't doing — isn't staging or having read — the action of the Rabbi's rising & moving at the end. But, given the tiny space of the Cornelia St. "Stage," this is probably inevitable.

~~Bet~~ Between 1st & 2nd run-thrughs, Norman told me about a poet's videotape he'd produced with Richard Wilbur, Richard Howard & Kenneth Koch reading & talking; he also asked for the name of my 2 books. Sebastian told me he'd written & directed a film that was shown at Sundance and that his grandfather, a writer-diplomat, had worked for (and liked) Paul Claudel — but had been intimated from publishing by Claudel's example

The 2nd (final) run-through? Somewhat disappointing, I thought: Norman rushing a little, not feeling the impulses as deeply; Sebastian's energy sometimes turning brittle & aggressive.

Still and all, these guys are good; this should be one hell of a reading.

~~Tues, [illegible]~~

(in NY)

Tues., April 18, 7–8^{15} p.m.

READING of (Posnick-revised) RESP. at Cornelia St. Café basement.

RABBI – Norman Rose
SCRIBE – Sebastian Roché
COURIER – Eric Rasmussen

The reading took 45 minutes (And it took 10 minutes of the 45 to reach: "What were you doing on this beach?" p. 10)

MUSIC – Skip LaPlante on his microtonal zither.

The reading went well – not so good as the last rehearsal Sat., but better, on the whole, than the last rehearsal Sun.

Norman was very "feeling," vocally musical (as B. wanted him to be & he insisted Bat. he wouldn't be.). When he ran low on energy, things got unclear and he fell back on vocal (and physical) tricks.

Sebastian started cool and "outside it," but his interest and vehemence and energy grew and grew – he was (as the SCRIBE should be) the "engine" behind the action.

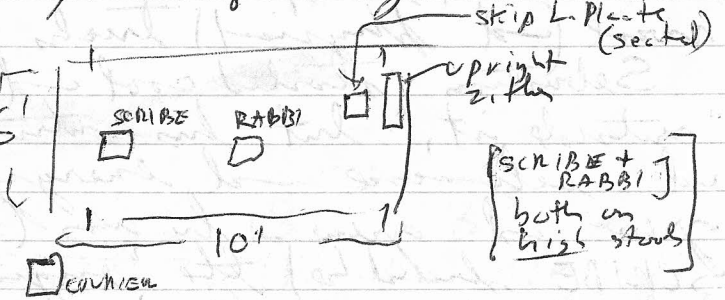
Eric did his SD's competently and was extremely enigmatic as the COURIER.

SKIP was (almost) unfailingly tactful and reinforcing.

It began with Robin Hirsch introducing the series & speaking of his own long association

with the play, and introducing Bevya. B.
Bevya thanked Robin, thanked the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, introduced the actors and read the prefatory note about the Response process.

Layout of stage:



There was long, sustained applause!

The audience of 20 or so was as follows (those who spoke to me I made the comments — few specifics)

REBECCA + GENE SCHULL (she was magically complimentary. It was really nice to see her again, 17 years after WJ + her success in the TV sitcom WINGS)
JOHN LEUBSDORF (who said: "you should be proud")
JOAN SHANKAR, (the playwright, invited by Bevya at the last moment — she said she'd have to leave in advance + did so.)
JOE CHAIKIN (looking very well 10 years post-stroke)
MATTHEW MARTIN (Susan's ex-student the actor, who admired play)
MARYA BRADLEY ("it was wonderful")
RICHARD EDELMAN (wonderful to see him! He said he could tell (from 15 years ago!) that there'd been city, changes. He said he'd have like Skip to do more.)

(cont.) →

ROBIN HIRSCH (who said what he likes about play is is its "mystery"; "it's ineffable, for all the language" (I said: "its much-talked-about ineffability") He also said he thought Norman Rose tended "to take refuge in voice")

MYRRA? (film ½ makes friend of Berya's, said the most complimentary thing of all: "you should be very proud")

SUSAN? (another friend of B's)

RICHARD SIEGEL (for) the National Foundation for Jewish Culture — I didn't see him afterwards, but talked with him before. He asked how much play had been changed since he'd seen it (= 1987-88?). I said: in some places, quite a lot; in others, the same.)

He also gave me news of Michael Posnick: that he is teaching

at Merryvent Manhattan College)

SUSAN COLE ("I'm honored to be married to the man who wrote that play")

(in NEW HAVEN)

Wed., Apr. 17

9:30 AM Berya called, to tell me

(1) RICHARD SIEGEL (of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture) had told her he'd liked it

(2) JOE CHAIKIN had left a message on her machine, which she played me. Not too intelligible, but I could make out the words: "Tell David... liked."

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[in NY] → see JAN 9, '96

MAY 1996

Fri., May 24, 9:30 pm. Berya showed me - letter she'd got f/ TIM SANFORD at Manhattan Theatre Club, rejecting RESP, but saying: "it's not as wordy as it looks," "main character is a "sort of Talmudic answer man," but it's not right for our audience - besides isn't it under (the) (in NEW HAVEN)

Tues., May 28, 9 AM, message 137 on Machine f/ MICHAEL POSNICK, to the effect that JOE CHAIKIN has been asked to do a Jewish play at MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB and would I please send Joe "Resp. and any other Jewish play, but especially RESP."

He added: "They're concerned that it be a new play - I know RESP. has had several readings."

- MICHAEL POSNICK 212-873-0515
- Joe Chaik.
463 West St
NY NY 10014

late night I called Ellie in Milwaukee about this: quasi-committed to Berya to do RESP., in fall, unlikelihood of Chaikin understanding my work. "Plus," said Ellie, "unlikelihood of Manhattan Theatre Club." She recommended frank dealing all around.

Wed, May 29, 8 pm (in New Haven)

I called Michael Posnick.

Michael told me he'd run into Joe ~~on~~ last Saturday (May 25) and Joe had told him that Lynn Meadow at Manhattan Theatre Club is looking to do a Jewish play and asked Joe to propose a project.

Michael immediately thought of The Responses and told Joe the whole story of it. Joe, apparently, gave no indication of ~~[illegible]~~ familiarity with it even though he just heard a reading of it 5 weeks earlier: Beryas, at the Cornelia St Cafe!

I told Michael the whole history of Joe reading & liking Responses in 1981, and of Beryas' recent work on play. He agreed Beryas' involvement was the main awkwardness about sending RESP to Joe

He advised sending WJ & BLACK/WHITE to Joe with a note explaining why of nosi + sending "the play Michael Posnick had told him about."

I asked Michael if he had any idea whether

(a) Joe could/would himself read script sent him

(b) someone of Manhattan Theatre Club would read it + thus get to know my work

Michael didn't know. I asked whether Joe could read at this point. Again, Michael had no idea.

I asked whether, since Jewish play at Manhattan Th Club was Lynne Meadow's idea, not Joe's, they'd consider another director, i.e., Berya. Michael said ~~so~~ he didn't know but suspected they might want Joe.

JUNE 1996
↓
Nov 1996

(in New Haven)

Sun., June 2, (5 pm)
I called, Bevya, explained the whole Posnick - Chaikin situation.
She agreed we might use it to get RESP. done - or at least considered - at Manhattan Theatre Club.
She said she'd give some thought as to whether to talk to Joe Chaikin or going directly to Lynne Meadow, or whatever.

(in New Haven)

Wed., June 19,
(8 pm) Bevya called.
She decided to write Lynne Meadow directly, mentioning Chaikin's interest in the play and her knowing Chaikin, + proposing she direct RESP.
She got back - personal note b/ Lynne Meadow saying she (Lynne) or someone on their literary staff would read the play

In New Haven

Wed., Dec. 11 | late night

Bevyn called.

She'd just been to the Writers' Room X mas party, seen Mandy Patinkin, wife, Catherine, who said: "By the way, I don't think I ever told you Mandy & I were first interested by that play you got — it's difficult but interesting."

She then asked B. what was happening with it. B. mentioned Lynne Meadows', interest.

Catherine said: "Oh, I'll see Lynne next week. Shall I mention it to her?" B. said yes.

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David Willinger
Dept. of Theatre + Dance
City College of New York
138 St. + Convent Ave.
New York, NY 10031

Cynthia Jenner
3 E. 9 (basement)
Jenner / Schie [Ernie Schie, man she lives with]
982-9289

Robin Hirsch
102 Garfield Place
Brooklyn, NY
11215
1-718-965-9514