

8 Stops

A Performance by DEB MARGOLIN

Thursday, February 1, 2018, at 7 p.m.
Joyce J. Camilleri Hall
University of Southern California



“Performance is a theatre of inclusion—anyone can do it! You see all sorts of people doing it, not just little cuties or big hunks or people of just one hue! Anyone can do it! You can be large or gay or weird! You can be Jewish! You can have a fat rear end! You can be tone deaf, starstruck, hamstrung, anything! Performance is a theatre of inclusion. If you have a body, a memory, and a big endless desire: Performance. And you don’t have to audition in a little outfit; just find a place on the street, an open mike, a coffee house, a living room. Performance.”—Deb Margolin

ABOUT DEB MARGOLIN

- ◉ Deb Margolin is a playwright, actor, and founding member of Split Britches Theatre Company.
- ◉ She is the author of the plays *Imagining Madoff*, *Turquoise*, and *Bringing the Fishermen Home*, as well as 10 solo performance plays.
- ◉ She won an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Performance.
- ◉ She is Professor in the Practice of Theatre at Yale University.

PERFORMANCE AND FEMINISM

Solo performance is an artistic form that dates back to Homer. But Deb Margolin traces the modern rebirth of solo performance to women’s political activism in the 1960s and ’70s.

The second wave of the U.S. feminist movement, which can loosely be defined as occurring from the 1960s through the 1980s (the first wave was the suffragist movement that earned women’s right to vote in the early twentieth century), was in part a response to other social-justice movements of the time, in which women’s perspectives were often sidelined or silenced, and their roles subordinate.

“We weren’t welcome to discuss birth control at the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) meetings in the ’60s,” Margolin recalls, “because the men weren’t interested. Women began meeting in living rooms and parlors, basements and churches, to tell their stories, to find voice.”

Women’s perspectives had been unheard in so many spheres of society for so long that finding voice and articulating how gender shaped women’s experiences of every aspect of life was a major facet of second-wave feminism. Women all over the country gathered to talk about their personal life experiences and draw connections between those experiences and the ways power was constructed and distributed in society. These groups were called “consciousness-raising” sessions, and they built on a practice of consciousness-raising that many women activists had learned in the civil-rights movement. While it had its downsides—including an ironic and unfortunate, but perhaps unsurprising, tendency to replicate power dynamics that participants had internalized from the larger society in which they had spent their lives—consciousness-raising was a hugely influential force in modern western feminism. It was the way that women developed together, at the community level, the core feminist theory that “the personal is political.”

Deb Margolin sees a clear link between second-wave women’s activism and a resurgence of solo performance. “The ascendance of the individual voice gave way to the present forms of solo performance,” she says.

Margolin also sees a feminist aesthetic to the theatre that emerged out of this movement: “My work is all about the interstitial moments, the moments when nothing ‘happens’ in the traditional, Aristotelian sense; I believe this is a feminine/feminist kind of theater, in which an emotion or thought can serve as a plot point.”

SPLIT BRITCHES

Split Britches is a feminist theatre troupe that Deb Margolin, Lois Weaver, and Peggy Shaw co-founded in New York in 1980. The group developed its own unique form of theatre, transforming the landscape of queer performance to create a space in which non-normative genders and sexualities could exist and coexist while exploring a wide range of subject matter, from love to class to national politics. The group’s aesthetic blends cabaret, satire, vaudeville, cutting-edge performance art, and more, in pieces built on “moments rather than plot, relationships rather than story” (www.split-britches.com).

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ Deb Margolin has said, “All plays are about love and all plays are about death. That’s what we write about.” Do you agree?
- ◉ Can you think of other art forms that seem to have grown out of political movements?
- ◉ Why do you think Margolin perceives the use of an emotion or thought as a plot point as a particularly feminist or feminine kind of theatre? In this framework, what would be a masculine kind of theatre?

TO LEARN MORE OR GET INVOLVED, CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

- ◉ Deb Margolin online
www.debmargolin.com
- ◉ *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*
www.womenandperformance.org
- ◉ Los Angeles Performance Practice
performancepractice.la
- ◉ Performance art and theatre at REDCAT
www.redcat.org
- ◉ Los Angeles Women’s Theatre Festival
www.lawtf.org
- ◉ The Women’s Center for Creative Work
www.womenscenterforcreativework.com

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

RASHELLE NAGAR of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight’s performance. She would like to thank Professor Melinda Finberg for her contributions to the Selected Books section.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS FOR 8 STOPS

- ◉ Gates, Anita. “Finding Humor Amid Hardships: [Review].” *New York Times* (New York, NY), April 22, 2015. Database: Global Newsstream (ProQuest)
- ◉ Feldberg, Robert. “FOR PLAYWRIGHT DEB MARGOLIN, HER LATEST WORK IS HIGHLY PERSONAL.” *Record* (Bergen County, NJ), April 12, 2015. Database: Global Newsstream (ProQuest)

VOCABULARY CORNER

FEMINISM: There is no single definition of *feminism*. Some define feminism as a movement for equality between men and women within the existing structures of society. Some define feminism as a belief in the inherent peacefulness or divinity of women who would naturally run an entirely different society than the societies men have created. Some define feminism as vision and action that sees all forms of oppression—sexism, racism, capitalism, militarism, ableism, and every other form of social and economic hierarchy—as deeply interconnected, and they work to transform society to liberate everyone from oppressive power structures. And so on. The word *feminism* is applied to an extremely diverse array of ideas, actions, artistic practices, and ways of life. Feminisms are different in different times, cultures, and communities, and also can be vastly different within a single time, culture, or community. So we can’t define it for you here, but we encourage you to explore the rich bodies of feminist thought, art, and action of the past and present and find your own definitions.



Split Britches: Deb Margolin, Lois Weaver, and Peggy Shaw



www.womenscenterforcreativework.com

- Pressley, Nelson. "‘8 Stops,’ ‘Redder Blood’: Superb in the suburbs." *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), July 20, 2016. Database: LexisNexis Academic
- Rutter, Jim. "‘8 Stops’: Mortality looming, she makes mothering her work." *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 29, 2014. Database: LexisNexis Academic

PLAYS WRITTEN BY DEB MARGOLIN

- Margolin, Deb. "Clarisse and Larmon," in *Humana Festival 2007: the complete plays*, edited by Adrien-Alice Hansel and Julie Felise Dubiner. New York: Playscripts, Inc., 2008.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PS634 .H85A 2007
- Margolin, Deb. *Of All the Nerve: Deb Margolin, Solo*, Critical Performances. New York: Samuel French, 1999.
GRAND DEPOSITORY: PS3563.A648 O37 1999
- Margolin, Deb. *Time Is the Mercy of Eternity: A Meditation in Four Acts*. New York: Samuel French, 2007.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PS3563.A648 T5 2007

SELECTED BOOKS

- Batra, Kanika. *Feminist Visions and Queer Futures in Postcolonial Drama: Community, Kinship, and Citizenship*, Routledge Advances in Theatre and Performance Studies 17. New York: Routledge, 2011.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PN1590.W64 B38 2011
- Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator in Action: Feminist Criticism for the Stage and Screen*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
CINEMATIC ARTS LIBRARY: PN1995.9.W6 D62 2013
- Harding, James M., Jr. *Cutting performances: collage events, feminist artists, and the American avant-garde*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PN2193.E86 H37 2010
- Martin, Carol, ed. *A Sourcebook on Feminist Theatre and Performance: On and Beyond the Stage*. London: Routledge, 1996.
GRAND DEPOSITORY: PN2270.F45 S68 1996
- Radulescu, Domnica. *Women’s Comedic Art as Social Revolution: Five Performers and the Lessons of Their Subversive Humor*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012.
DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PN1590.W64R34 2012
- Wolf, Stacy Ellen. *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
MUSIC LIBRARY: ML2054.W64 2002

RECOMMENDED JOURNALS

- The Drama Review
- Modern Drama
- Theater Journal
- Women & Performance

