

# THE SQUEEGEE FINAL REPORT

## By David Diamond

"The Firehall Theatre rocked. Laughter, anger, frustration and sadness filled the place, and a generosity of spirit came from both sides of the stage. I was amazed at the professionalism of the performers. It was an exhilarating but disturbing evening. Personally, I have to figure out what I'm going to do about the squeegee kids at Main and Terminal, an intersection I go through almost every day. There's no way I can look away, look embarrassed or fiddle with the radio. That corner will never be the same again."

Review by Jo Ledingham, Vancouver Courier, May 30, 1999

"The empowering nature of Squeegee was clear. The street involved youth that developed the production were given a voice and a safe environment in which to express their experiences. As an agency dedicated to the increased education and general health of our children, it was a pleasure to be able to lend support to the project. Thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm. It is inspiring."

Letter from Michelle Fortin, Special Services Co-ordinator, Watari, May 31, 1999.

"Squeegee is only about 20 minutes long, but it's Shakespearean in its tragedy (and, by the way, in its comic relief). Squeegee is good theatre. It's also an indictment of Vancouver's mean and clean civic values."

Review by Anne Fleming, Georgia Straight, May 27, 1999

"I applaud Headlines and the youth who performed for a courageous project. The images from that night have resonated on many occasions since seeing the play and I know that the insights shared will remain with me for some time. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard."

Excerpted from e-mail from Susan Ferguson, audience member June 22, 1999

"Once in a while, a group of people will come together and present work that is truly visionary. This does not happen often but when it does, it creates opportunities previously unseen. Those involved with Squeegee have created many opportunities. It is now up to the rest of the community to join in, seize the opportunities and make a real investment with respect to the next generation."

Angelo Lam M.S.W., Coordinator, Centre for Integrated Personal & Community Development, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

The cast members of Squeegee wished to have only their first names used in the program and media material so that they could not be tracked down easily by family members who had been abusive towards them. In order to protect their confidentiality further in this report, I have changed all of their names. This applies to all of the cast except Michael Halverson, who was also the Youth Co-ordinator on the project, and who has agreed to be identified.

In May 1998 I offered to do a one day freebie workshop for The Gathering Place, a community centre in Vancouver's downtown core that has a high street youth demographic. Wendy Wood, the Youth Programmer and her Youth Committee were delighted with the prospect of bringing street-involved youth and Vancouver City Police together to spend a day investigating the interface between the two, with the day finishing in a public Rainbow of Desire event that looked at some of the issues raised in the workshop. We called the event Cops and Sneakers.

When I showed up for the workshop there were eight youth and no police. They had agreed to participate but didn't show up at the last minute. What were we to do? I talked with the youth and we agreed that while the Cops were not in the room, they were still in our heads and so we decided to go ahead with the work and to turn the evening performance into a Cops in the Head event instead.

The evening started with a series of theatrical images. The first image was a young girl in the back of a Police car, being beat up by the Police. Alone. Helpless. Real. The second image was a young man, handcuffed, on his belly, being beat up by the Police. Alone. Helpless. Real. We animated these images with the audience and the reaction was, of course,

very strong.

We offered them two stories and they chose this one: A young man (Wanky) comes down the stairs at the Hotel that is his home. A guy in a Biker Jacket stops him, demands his ID. The Biker is an Undercover Cop. The Young Man has been identified as a Coke Dealer by a woman who is working on the street. He is innocent. The woman has "fingered" him because she doesn't know him and needs to "offer up" someone to keep herself "safe". In the moment, instead of keeping his cool, he gets very aggressive with the Police, which just makes matters worse.

Even though the audience was small, engagement was very high. The internal voices in the exercise offered (the Cops in the Head) were insightful: A friend who was saying "Just give them what they want", a father who was saying "fight him", a mother who was saying "dump your frustration on him" and a Macho Hollywood Movie Icon that was saying "blow the Cop away".

Analysis of these different voices and how to deal with them was terrific. A suggestion for how to deal with the frustrated mother voice was to take the frustration and work it out on the dance floor in a club -- not with the police where it would lead to more trouble. An insight into the friend voice that was saying "just give them what they want" was to acknowledge that this was a very defeated place for this Youth....."where does it stop?".....giving in this deeply will lead to further oppression.

After the event people hung around and expressed their gratitude for the insights. The workshop participants said over and over again what a great time they had had.

Wanky's story stayed with me. Shortly after, Vancouver City Council started passing new by-laws and reinforcing existing ones that made a number of activities harder to do in Vancouver. Namely, busking, panhandling and squeegee-ing. The criminalizing of these activities that poor people (in particular street-youth) do was part of a trend that was sweeping the country.

It occurred to me that my home was getting invaded at least three times a week by newspaper companies, carpet cleaning companies, all kinds of legitimate businesses that were calling me at all hours trying to sell me something that I didn't want and it was perfectly legal, but if a kid walked up to my car at a red light and tried to sell me a perceived service (cleaning my windshield with a squeegee) this was now illegal. What was going on? What was it that was being made illegal? Aggressive selling? Or in-our-faces poverty?

And so the idea of doing a play with street-youth on issues of criminalization of youth was hatched. I talked with Wendy, Wanky and some other people in the community, some of whom eventually formed a community partnership committee and got great feedback. A proposal got written. Fundraising happened over about a year.

We managed to raise \$44,000 from various sources: The Vancouver Foundation was the first to come on board, then VanCity Credit Union, Human Resources Development Council, the McLean, Hamber and Koerner Foundations, the Georgia Straight. We subsidized another \$25,790 of the budget with operating grants and a small surplus from the previous fiscal year. The amount of funds were necessary partly to create infrastructure. It was obvious, for instance, that if the actors were street youth, they were going to need shelter for the duration of the project. Otherwise, how could they focus? It was also going to be important to pay them a living wage. Minimum wage for Canadian Actors' Equity Association is \$386 a week. We set salaries at \$500 a week. We were also going to need a full-time youth co-ordinator and a counselor on the project to deal with the various issues that were bound to arise.

I hired Michael Halverson as youth co-ordinator. Michael and I met in an elevator going to a meeting with DanceArts Vancouver. We both had shorts on and were carrying black briefcases. We got to talking. Realizing he was in his early 20's and that he was connected to the issues (Michael had come out of the street himself and was now involved in lots of youth action) I told him about the project. He already knew about Headlines. It was a natural fit. Michael organized shelter, networked almost all of the participants, organized follow-up programs, and helped with publicity. He was also (unfortunately) to get drafted into acting in the play three days before we opened. He was invaluable.

I also hired Sam Bob to be the project counselor. Sam did OUT OF THE SILENCE (family violence) with me in 1992 as an

actor. He has been through pretty much the same process this cast is going to go through. As well as understanding THEATRE FOR LIVING, he also recently got his counseling certificate from the Native Education Centre, and has been working with Street-Youth at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Perfect.

We ran a graphics competition in the street. A young woman named Ivy won. Winning meant getting \$300 plus another honorarium for her time, and being put together with our graphic arts team, Five Smooth Stones, to turn the graphic into a postcard, poster and bus shelter. The results were great. Ivy learned a lot and the poster is a "true voice".

In 1998 when Headlines was producing *The Dying Game*, we came very close to realizing an experiment with Legislative Theatre. Augusto Boal initiated this process in Brazil, while he was a Vereador (MLA) in the Legislative Assembly of the District of Rio de Janeiro. I decided that because the issues that we would be dealing with in Squeegie (issues of criminalization of youth in Vancouver) were obviously being affected by recent by-law enforcement by the current City Council, that it would be both valuable and very interesting to try to realize the experiment again.

How would it work? We would attach a lawyer to the project. His/her role would be to attend all the performances and function as a scribe, notating all the interventions from the audience that had to do with youth safety -- particularly those that could be interpreted as a Legislative impulse -- a desire for law or by-laws that really created safety in the street. These notes would be gathered over all the performances, collated, and then translated into a report that spoke in a language that could be readily understood by Legislators. The report would be presented to City Council. It would be a way for the public to communicate their concerns and desires regarding these issues to Government through a creative process. The theatre. Legislative Theatre.

I started talking with various staff-people at the City, in both Culture and Community Services. The feedback was cautious but positive. I spoke with a City Councilor who thought it was a tremendous idea and who offered to help. I brought the concept up at a community meeting that we held with stakeholders in street-youth issues. Two of the people present at that meeting were Adrienne Montani (Child and Youth Advocate for the City of Vancouver) and Rina Zweig, (lawyer and youth activist). Response here was very enthusiastic.

With this support, I decided to approach the Mayor's office. I sent him a letter asking that the City endorse the project in a simple way: by agreeing to designate a person to deal with the media, whose role it would be to say "Yes, we know this is coming and we are very interested to see what it will be," and to agree to look at the report officially when it came. No commitments beyond that necessary. Silence. I spoke with the City Manager, who is very familiar with Headlines' work, and who offered to try to help. I sent her paper. Silence. I spoke with the Chief of Police who asked for and got paper. Silence.

I called Adrienne. We agreed that although my first impulse had been to not do the experiment without the overt support of the Mayor and City Council, this, in fact, was not necessary. The supportive Councilor and some Staff were already telling me to "just do it" anyway. Anyone can make suggestions to the City. Adrienne was the Child and Youth Advocate. Certainly, we agreed, it was in her job mandate to involve herself in something like this. She could be the conduit for the report. We decided to forge ahead. I spoke with and hired Rina Zweig to be the Lawyer who would create the report.

One week before the workshop started Michael, Sam Bob (counselor), Bree Wellwood (Technical Director) and I did interviews with the 15 youth who wanted to be in the project. If someone wanted to do the workshop they could. The reason for the interviews was to decide on who the cast would be, and also who would move into the technical side, helping Bree with design.

I didn't want the THEATRE FOR LIVING workshop to be an audition. Having the participants in the workshop thinking that if only they could "perform" really well they would get into the play would be a bad dynamic. If people wanted to be in the play (not all did) I did some improvising with them. My decisions, though, were not based solely on the improvisation. My task was to put together a "family". Five people who I thought could really do this together, bring various perspectives to the play, who looked different from each other, and also who sparked an interest in me. Its a gut decision, in the end.

The cast was: Shelly (21), Jake (19), Tom (17), Linda (16), Maggie (16). All of them needed to sign various contracts and release forms both to be in the play and on TV. Not all of them could legally do this for themselves or had accessible

parents or guardians to go to. We worked our way through this, contacting guardians across Canada and in Vancouver, and also dealing with Government agencies. April 26, 1999

Introductions point and turn balancing hypnosis stand/walk blind lead the blind blind cars/busses complete the image fox in the hole sculpting partners groups of 4 image of the images circle

We have begun! Fourteen out of the fifteen participants showed up. Pretty good.

We started with all the personnel in the room -- all the participants, Headlines' staff, the photographer, Sam Bob, Mike Keeping from Rogers Community TV and Adrienne Montani. I wanted everyone there so that non-participants could come and go without disrupting the group. It took about an hour to lay out the history both of the work we were embarking on and the possibilities of this particular project.

The games went very well in the morning -- high engagement and energy. By the time we got to lunch we had started playing with the idea of images through the Complete the Image game. As soon as the group started making shapes the violence started. The very first shapes were violent. By the end of the game they had created a complex image of "criminalization" and were, I think, genuinely moved by the simplicity and depth of what had come from them.

Some of the images from Groups of 4 were very, very powerful. In one of them, the Police were making a bust and had a Youth on his stomach, the Policeman's knee in the youth's back. I asked if any of the participants had ever been any of these characters. Almost the whole room lined up, their bellies on the floor, in the same position as the youth being busted. When I asked later how many of the participants had experienced what they believed to be random, unprovoked violence from the Police, every single one of them raised their hand.

Later in the exercise a young woman made an image.....two men in cars on either side of her. One is leering at her, the other is talking on a radio. She is looking at the leering man and has pulled her sweater off her shoulder. She is a child, hooking. This image opened up a long discussion about options on the street and how the message from authorities seems to be that they would rather that youth were invisible -- doing whatever is necessary to survive behind closed doors -- as long as it doesn't tarnish the City's tourism image. I have been doing a lot of thinking about this very thing, and that Vancouver has become known as a global child sex destination -- the "sexual exploitation of youth" conferences are happening in BC for a reason -- so interesting that it came from the youth on the first day of the workshop.

At the end of the day many of the participants seemed exhausted. In the circle, though, many expressed how wonderful the day had been, how supportive and creative the group was and how the process "kicks ass".

Knowing they don't have money we issued all of them \$50 cheques to help see them through the week, along with bus fare for the week. We are also providing food every day and they will all get \$250 honorariums for the workshop.

#### **April 27, 1999**

discussion clap exchange knots blind magnets glass bottle auto sculpting clap exchange effective hand magnetic image circle

They all came back. Some of them were a little worse for wear -- the \$50 we gave them having gone straight into partying.

We moved through the games in a light-hearted way, and with a lot of engagement. They loved the glass bottle, many of them trusting people to "catch" them for the very first time.

One of the cast members, Linda, has a cat attached to her at all times. The cat is in rehearsals, and is in heat. Everything we are doing is to the backdrop of her roaming around and rubbing herself against everyone and moaning.

Auto sculpting is not an exercise I use very often anymore. It is very emotionally draining, very deep. I used it today to

investigate the moment of "ejecting", as it has been named in the workshop. The moment the participants decided to leave home and landed in the street. Many of them wept buckets of tears. Through five separate animations we saw various versions of terrible family experiences, being physically beaten, emotionally degraded, psychologically abused. They cried and held each other and came onto the stage to play each others parents and foster parents. "You think you're smart? You're not!" "You think you're perfect? You're not!" A very revealing and "naked" discussion about how many of them ended up doing what they did not want to do: leave. They held on and held on and hoped their parents would want them to stay, but they didn't. Feeling unloved they "pressed the eject button, without knowing where they would land". They landed in the street.

We also started the Magnetic Image exercise today, but did not finish seeing all the groups. I asked them to make group images of being criminalized. So far we have had an image that was an internal view, smoking dope (which they relate to just like having a beer and do not seem to understand being illegal), and being harassed by the Police for it so terribly that the Police beat them up -- then took the dope and smoked it themselves. I questioned them about this and they insisted, many of them, that they see the Cops smoking dope often. Another image was also of physical Police brutality.

I have a concern. In casting from the interviews I went for "authenticity". I know why I made this choice -- it is stronger to put real street-kids on the stage, than kids who know about street kids but are not, really. Trouble is that the life, the malnutrition, the neglect, and all the other hazards also lead to a numbness in the individual. I am concerned about two of the cast and their ability to do this. My hope is that as the work progresses they will "awaken" from the fog they are in. At the moment they can't stay awake, can't focus and don't seem to be able to stop pretending -- giving me what they think I want to see in improvisations. We talked a lot today about the difference between that and telling the truth. This play can't sustain artful lies, which is what gets put on Vancouver stages most of the time, in my opinion. It will only work if the actors are out there telling the truth.

#### **April 28, 1999**

fear protector boxing glass cobra the intestine fox in the hole finish magnetic image couples investigation Rainbow of Desire hug tag circle

I got there today and they were all waiting. Maggie had brought her "suicide doll". She explained that the doll fell out of a window and almost landed on top of her. It didn't because it got caught by the rope around its neck and hung itself. She and two other of the participants were playing soccer with the doll, kicking it all over the room. When they were done, Maggie picked it up and cradled it like a baby. The depth of the theatricality of the Image of this stunned me. It is so much who they are. Somehow, this will end up in the play.

They are getting better and better at the blind games. Moving about with ease. They love to play. They also really loved the Intestine, although allowing themselves to be put through the human tube, to have the others in the room hold their weight was obviously a big deal for almost all of them.

I am getting impatient with one of the cast. She is almost never "present" and I am getting worried about the decision to put her in the cast. Is it asking too much? Then, in the middle of the day she announced that she had to leave to meet with her probation officer. She came back very excited -- and announced that through some series of decisions that I don't know about she is NOT going to have a criminal record. This knowledge put many things into perspective. I just have to be patient, patient, patient.

It seemed important, considering the discussions in the previous days to investigate what happens to a couple who are in the street. We did Magnetic Image again, but this time the shapes were based on what it feels like to be part of a street couple -- taking it for granted that they deal with stresses that are somehow different than couples who are not in the street. All agreed that this is true. Fifteen people (14 workshop participants and Matthew Deacon Evans, the project DJ/Musician) formed three groups. The improvisations were different but all had similarities. All contained the stress of never wanting to be apart but at the same time, wanting to have private time and not being able to reconcile this. Makes sense. These kids ejected from home. They are very needy but also very hurt and distrustful. It must be so easy to "fall in love" with someone who seems to understand. All the improvisations revolved around drugs somehow. Buying drugs, doing drugs, escaping the police over drugs.

A very scary conversation (scary for me) came out of one improvisation. One of the cast members has a friend who robbed a grocery store with a gun to get drug money. Later, the police raided their home, breaking all the windows and roughing all the inhabitants up, looking for the gun-toting friend. The feeling is that this was an overreaction, and it may very well have been. When I asked why, though, the answer was that it was a toy gun. We entered territory where some of the group agreed that no one had any way of knowing whether the gun was real or not and it is unrealistic to think we can "fuck with people" and not have them react strongly. Others -- particularly the one with the friend, did not see it this way at all -- even if you do armed robbery, people should somehow know that you are "not dangerous" and not hurt you.

This is an instance (the soccer game with the doll is the same, in a way) of the group "showing themselves" to me in a way that (I think) they don't intend to. I am wondering what it all means to the play.

We did Rainbow of Desire on a moment where two good friends have been severely roughed up by the police. The storyteller's friend had a lot of acid on him and, by some miracle, the police never found it. Later, the friends meet in a coffee shop. She never expected to see him again. The police are outside. She tries to get him to leave through the back with her. He keeps telling her to "chill" -- he doesn't care. One of the moments was particularly poignant. Two fears in a scene. They are both terrified that the other is going to do something stupid and get killed. They both think they are the stronger and know how to deal with the situation. They are both holding onto and pushing the other away at the same time. When I asked the group how many of them had friends who had died through some violence, every one of them raised their hands.

### **April 29, 1999**

discussion clap exchange #2 leader of the orchestra vampires choose a leader diagrams song of the mermaid circle

We are all, myself included, so tired. We started at 9 AM today in order to be able to stop at 4 PM so that some of them could get to another project, Ultimate High, that they are involved in with Mortal Coil-- once again they all showed up on time. It is hard to describe how impressive this is!

The most interesting part of the day for me today was the plays they made. I asked them to make the plays about the most important aspects of being in the street. Two of the three plays are about an abusive home atmosphere that led to pressing the eject button. One of these two includes the initiation a "twinkie" (a new street kid) has to go through in order to be accepted.

The third play was about how violence gets cycled around and was very brutal. It starts with a girl pan-handling and a guy walking up to her and telling her he will give her \$20 if she gives him a blow job. This same guy gets beat up by skinheads later. Then, one of the skinheads gets jumped by another gang. One of the gang members has a girlfriend, and around and around.....one of the points of discussion out of this play centered around both boys and girls selling sex and how expected it is. Especially if they get desperate, which happens easily.

I have been thinking about adding a cast member. A certain girl from the workshop who has been making very valuable contributions. My sense is that she will balance out the energy in the cast. I didn't put her into the play originally because of my desire for authenticity -- she is not in the street and never has been. She is what gets called, "street-involved".

For the last few days Montserrat (Headlines' General Manager) and I have been playing with budgets, trying to jiggle money around to see if we can come up with another actor salary. It won't be easy -- we are already over budget on a few line items -- but we can by shaving costs away from other areas. So, I brought the cast together after work today and told them that I was thinking of adding someone. They all went on alert and wanted to know who. Ruth. They were all really, really happy. They have been noticing the same things as me and also mentioned, on their own, that they thought she would really balance the energy of the cast out! Having got their permission, I talked with Ruth. She wants to do this so badly. I was very straight with her, telling her why I was asking her, why I hadn't asked her before and also about my meeting with the cast and what their response had been. She cried. I asked her to think about it seriously overnight before she gives a final answer, but it seems pretty obvious she will say yes.

### **April 30, 1999**

discussion bears and tree planters the fall Rehearsal and Forum Theatre The Dream cheque ceremony circle

Ruth said yes. Today was the end of the five day THEATRE FOR LIVING workshop. We are in a very good place.

They loved the Fall, falling backwards off a table into each others' arms. Then we went back to yesterday's plays and did Forum. We could have done this all day. They loved it and got more and more engaged. I had to insist many times we leave a moment and move onto the next. I think they really liked the ability to try something, analyze it, try something else -- classic praxis -- a cycle of planning, action, reflection. Their improvisational skills have improved, too. This was very heartening to see.

Today was payday. Instead of just giving them the cheques, I used an idea from a friend, Mukti Khanna, in Colorado; something I saw her do with graduation certificates. I gave each person someone else's cheque. A person came into the centre of the circle and called the person in who's cheque they had, and, before giving it to them, said a few words about their impressions of the journey the person went on in the workshop -- appreciated them. This was wonderful to see them do. They really liked it, full of laughs and mock insults. Sam also commented that he thought it removed the "employer/employee" hierarchy of the money -- handing it all over to them in a very nice way.

We finished with a closing circle and very important and generous encouragement from those who are not in the cast to those who are -- affirming their rights and responsibilities to carry the truth onto the stage. I also made it clear that the participants were welcome to drop into rehearsals any time, they don't need to feel cut off. Also, some of them are continuing with Bree in design and another, Devon, asked if he could help in any way -- we discovered that he likely knows his way around a computer well enough to take over formatting the programme that gets handed out to the audience at the show. He is going to start in the office on Monday.

### **May 3, 1999**

First day of rehearsals with the cast and it was really hard. Everyone was there right on time, but also very, very tired. Lots of partying over the week-end. We spent a little over an hour sitting around a table. I wanted to get their impressions of the issues that had come out of the workshop. What are the bases the play needs to touch on?

We made a list, and it was very similar to a list I had imagined from my own impressions of the workshop. Listening to what they were saying, and basically putting an order, a journey, into the list we had made, I presented a possible journey that starts with a person ejecting, then initiation of the "twinkie", then becoming accepted and part of a couple and trying to find ways to survive. There are lots of drugs. The characters are brutalized by the police for panhandling, squeegee-ing. The female (and possibly the male) end up hooking in order to eat and feed their habits. This scenario also provides lots of internal space for the complexities of street relationships, inner voices, and also judgment from outsiders.

We agreed that this was someplace to start from, knowing that we would make a really rough series of scenes.

I suggested that the ejection could be done with a series of images that might get repeated over and over again. We started making them. It was important to the group to show reality. We created 5 images, starting with a seemingly "happy family". I started them from here and then started asking, "what's next?". In image #2 the father is drinking and everyone is on alert. In #3 he is going after his 12 year old daughter and the 16 year old is trying to bar his way. In #4 he rapes the 12 year old, while the mother slaps the 16 year old for talking about it. In #5 the family is fractured, the father says "I'm sorry", and the cycle of 5 images starts again.

We can loop these, live, getting faster and faster until the 16 year old can't stand it anymore. After four repetitions we are left in dark, tight light on the sisters. The 16 year old has her sister in her lap and tells her that she will take care of her from now on. We fade into black.

Two police officers enter with flashlights. They find the girls and want to know how old they are etc. the 16 year old tries to lie but the Police know better. After asking a series of questions the 16 year old steps forward and addresses the audience and says....."they separated us and put us in foster care. No way I was going to put up with that shit. I hit the

streets. Don't know where my sister is. Hope she's ok".....and we are "in" the play.

I suggested to the group today that we not allow interventions from the audience in this section, so we HAVE to deal with street issues during the Forum. They were very excited by this idea.

Various members of the cast cried throughout the day. Doing the images over and over was very hard for them. They want to do it -- they want to make it real -- at the same time they don't want to "go back there". We had a series of conversations about performing it from a place of power, knowing that if they can convey the emotion of it, the audience will be deeply affected and this is where possible change comes from. They want (of course) to put the solutions into the play. I can't let them. Its Forum and this will rob the audience of their participation and learning. Even though we did Forum during the workshop and we have discussed this many times, I am not sure they understand the concept fully.

We worked out a press release with them today. Mirjana (Communications Director) needs to get it out -- a release that announces the cast etc. Of course we ran the release by them and they had numerous requests and suggestions. One that took me by surprise is that most of them only want their first names used, even though they know they are going to be on television. Why? So that certain people from their past can't track them down through the media. We are dealing with far more than in a normal community project. In the midst of all their bravery and honesty, we have to keep them safe.

One of the cast just phoned, as I was typing. I talked to them today about not being afraid to call me at home. He has had a problem with where he was staying and has been looking for another place. He found a possibility tonight. Normally, welfare would cover the cost -- but this landlord won't deal with welfare. He wants to know if there is money to cover his rent for the month. I will work it out with Montserrat in the morning and give him an answer when we start tomorrow. (We ended up covering most of his first month's rent.)

#### **May 4, 1999**

Another hard day. We had to have a talk. I got there at 10 AM and 3 out of the six were there, one of them fast asleep. We waited and waited. Finally, at about 10:30 we started making phone calls. Sam went to get one downtown, who had been asleep. The other two showed up after 11, one quite sick. There had been some very serious partying the night before.

We tried to work but it was impossible. I decided to break early for lunch and get some food in them in the hopes that energy would appear. Sam took the one who was complaining of feeling sick to a nearby clinic. It turns out she had spun out on heroin last night and had a visit from paramedics. There is great impatience among the rest of the cast over this as it is, evidently, cyclical behaviour.

I am aware that heavy issues are arising for her because of the nature of the material we are doing. I sat and talked with her in the afternoon, after she got very upset at me ending an improvisation she was doing. Problem was, she was falling asleep during it. We are in a pattern of her insisting she wants to do this but never being present. My response tends to be that I am not going to force her or coerce her into doing something she doesn't want to do. She insists she wants to. I cannot babysit her, though. It just will not work that way. I am starting to think that doing this might be too much of a challenge for her in her current state and that we should bring in (as Michael Halverson suggested today) another counselor who knows her well. I am trying to weigh this against what it would mean for her to drop out and the potential failure that would be. I had a frank talk with her and told that that coming into work in this condition was unacceptable, and that if it happened again, she would have to leave. I asked her if she understood what I was saying and why it was necessary. She said she did, that everyone had to commit and focus and be able to work and trust each other.

One of the other participants spoke up later in the day and said, "you know, this isn't some little thing we signed up for at Dusk to Dawn (a downtown centre) -- it is something we all said we were really committed to and we are getting paid \$500 a week for -- its time to take some responsibility."

I suggested we do shorter days for the rest of this week -- coming in at 11 and going until 5, knowing though, that we have to keep to a schedule, focus and get the work done. The hours are meant to be 10 - 6. The cast agreed with coming at 11, but still want to work until 6. OK.



We did get some work done today. Two short scenes:

After the police finish with the girls, Maggie gets her doll and starts to step all over it.....mashing it into the ground. Linda asks, what's with the doll? Maggie just tells her to get lost. Linda asks if she knows where she can get any free food. Maggie responds that she can pan-handle like the rest of them, or if she's really hungry there's the dumpster. Linda thanks her with a "fuck you". Maggie picks up the doll, embraces it and says, well, fuck you too. Through all this, Tom and Shelly are off to the side, watching Linda.

Linda crosses the stage (near to Tom) and starts to pan-handle. Jake and Ruth enter, animated. Jake has found a full pack of cigarettes. They notice Linda. What are you doin'?, they ask. What does it look like? she answers. You're in our spot. Too bad. Yeah, it is too bad. Get moving -- Jake nudges her with his foot. No. Go on -- Ruth kicks her a little harder. Linda and Ruth start to argue. Jake grabs the hat and takes the money out of it. Linda jumps to her feet -- it is all she's got. Jake throws the hat to Ruth. Tom spins Jake around and plows him in the face. Jake falls. Tom gets the money out of Jake's hand and crosses to the girls who are fighting. He parts them, getting them to stop, not wanting to attract the police. Jake is on his feet. Tom gets them off "his" corner. He asks Linda if she's OK. He gives her the hat. And the money. He asks her name and introduces himself. He asks if she wants to go for a beer. You got any money? she asks. Yeah. OK. You hungry? he asks....as they walk off.....him having taken "possession" of this new girl.

Got home to a good phone call. A friend, Virginia Greene from GoDirect Marketing, has taken an interest in this project. She has wanted to organize some people who have money and power to see the show. She is blocking off 80 tickets for opening, and is talking with the United Way who will organize a special reception.

### **May 5, 1999**

What a relief. We turned a corner today, it seems. They were all there on time and awake. We did some games, which I think are a good thing to keep doing -- that hadn't been happening for the last two days. An error in judgment, I think, on my part.

The corner we turned is that they "got it" today in some new way. It was evident in the commitment to finding the truth of the moment from all of them -- some of it complex.

We started with a long talk about how they find places to sleep, where those places are etc. We settled on a lane in the downtown, but off a busy street. Then we talked about what kinds of things the police have done while beating them up. Terrible things. Cracking ribs. Hitting them with batons through magazines so there will be no bruises. Picking them up in their sleeping bags and "sending them for a ride". Smashing and kicking them in the head. It went on and on. Why do the police do these things, I asked? Because they're pigs, because they are on power trips, because they can, because they're assholes. This was a harder part of the conversation. Two of them were going to have to play police. In order to do this they had to get inside it -- otherwise it becomes a cartoon and also really hard to do Forum on. We talked about how people don't tend to do things because they think they are doing the wrong thing, they tend to think they are doing the right thing. Hitler thought he was doing the right thing.

It was Ruth who commented first that this made sense. That although they all thought the police were monsters, she could see that from the police perspective, maybe they thought if they taught the street-kids hard lessons they would scare them straight or something. Misguided but possibly true. Tom agreed. They are playing the police. Here's the scene, which I verified for reality every step of the way:

Jake and Shelly and Maggie are asleep under an awning in a back lane. They are all passed out, having partied heavy the night before. It is raining. The police are doing their morning clean-up -- waking the kids up before the business day starts. The kids know these Cops by name.

Ruth Cop nudges Maggie with her boot and tells her to get up. Nothing. Again. Nothing. She takes her by the ankles and hauls her into the middle of the lane. Maggie wakes. Her doll rolls out of her grasp. This upsets Maggie who complains through her grogginess that she's sore. Well, what do you expect, yells Ruth and kicks her in the face. As Maggie holds her nose, Ruth goes and picks up the doll.

As this is going on Tom Cop is nudging Jake with his boot. Jake and Shelly are sleeping spoons to keep warm. Tom recognizes Jake (his character name as of today is "Louse") and says, Hey, Louse, hard at work, are you? And kicks him very hard in the back. Louse groans awake. Shelly bolts awake and tries to protect Louse, begging Tom to stop and saying that Louse is already messed up (we made a discovery today that the Louse character has a mental or chemical imbalance and, if the programs were in place he would likely be in some kind of care, but is in the street instead. He is a pain in the ass for the Police.) Tom kneels down to check Louse's pockets and Louse loses it and crashes his fist into Matt's face. Tom goes ballistic, picks Louse up and throws him into the middle of the lane, yelling that he should never, ever hit a police officer. He pepper sprays and arrests him. Shelly tries to save Louse but Tom throws her off him, asking her if she wants to get arrested too. As Tom is cuffing Louse, Ruth has come back to Maggie with the doll. She asks Maggie if she wants the doll. Maggie reaches for it. Ruth pulls it away. She is suddenly "kind". She says she will give Maggie back the doll if she promises that she will clean up her act and get out of the street. Maggie agrees. She gives her the doll. Maggie gathers her stuff together and starts to stumble away as the police take Louse and Shelly cries in the rain. Maggie stops and turns back and comes back to Shelly. Shelly says that all Louse needs is his meds (medication) and he's fine, why do they have to treat him like shit? Maggie comforts her and asks if she wants to get high, she has her rig (for heroin). Shelly says no, she doesn't want to get into that, Maggie tells her it will warm her up, heroin keeps you warm in the cold.....Shelly doesn't care anymore and agrees. They go off to get stoned.

We worked this over and over and over again. They insisted. They wanted to get it right. It is physically very demanding and the timings have to be right or it turns into chaos. They were great.

They were so excited. The scene is very real for them. In the circle today they talked about how the play is going to "rock" and people are going to have to see what's really going on. Jake also talked about how things have changed from yesterday -- that he is seeing the power of playing the characters, and that it is giving him a perspective on events in his life and he feels stronger and better.

Finished getting the wording right on a letter of invitation to the Mayor and City Council. It went through three rewrites with Adrienne, who has been great. My first two drafts were too aggressive. I am having a fantasy that one of the possibilities out of today is that the City has to look into police brutality issues towards children in the street. Theatre is always political. This is getting deeper and deeper.

"Given Vancouver City Council's initiation and support of the Civic Youth Strategy, we would like to extend this special invitation to the Mayor, each City Councilor and the Chief of Police: You and a guest are cordially invited to attend any performance of Squeegie.

Firehall Arts Centre, 280 East Cordova. All shows are at 8 PM Preview: May 19 Opening night: May 20 Performances: May 21 and 22 Closing night and live TV broadcast: May 23

We are very excited about how this production has come together. It has strong community support and the potential to create real change by providing a true voice that speaks to issues of street youth. The cast range in age from 15 to 21 and all have deep street involvement. We are providing shelter for the duration of the project for those who have no fixed address. A full-time counselor is attached to the project. Post project education/employment programs are being made available.

We are proceeding with our Legislative Theatre experiment and feel that this initiative can only positively support the stated aims of the Civic Youth Strategy. It is our hope that recommendations regarding street-youth issues arising out of the public community dialogue in the Forum Theatre process will be heard by the Mayor and City Council in the supportive spirit in which they are intended.

To reserve your two complimentary tickets or for more information call our office at 871-0508 and ask for Mirjana Galovich.

Your attendance will mean a great deal to the youth in the cast.

Sincerely.....

**2 May 6, 1999**

After the great work of yesterday, this was a terribly frustrating day. Sometimes I felt I was asking too much today.....sometimes just wanted to scream "focus"....which I did once, rather loudly.

I had to spend some time in the office this morning and it took longer than anticipated. That's OK -- called and left a message for Bree and Sam to get the cast to run what we have a couple of times in my absence. Seems it went well.

Wanted to get close to finishing the play today. Had an image last night of how this could happen, based on conversations that have come up so far: Tom and Linda come into traffic to squeegee. They need money. We have a stylized scene where they encounter a varied array of people.....some nice some rude, some scary. It has a lightness to it, though.....its kind of clowny. So much heavy stuff has happened in the play so far, theatrically we need a breather or we will, I think, lose the audience. We talked about this, I explained what I wanted to try and they were enthusiastic. We jammed on what kinds of people they would encounter and came up with:

1. A woman who is very enthusiastic about squeegee kids.
2. A mafioso character who pulls a gun and says....."get away from my car!"
3. A man who is driving completely naked.
4. A very stoned rasta, who has no money but hands over a joint.
5. A person who just stares straight ahead, no matter what you do.
6. A person who starts yelling in their car, pounding the windows, losing it.

These are all experiences they have had. If we could choreograph this we could turn it into a traffic dance that would build into them all yelling, pounding their windows.....out of this Linda starts to yell "6 up!", which means that the police are coming.....they are after Tom. She tries to help him but he yells at her to run for it and so she does. They beat the crap out of him.

There was no way to get even close to doing this. We kept getting stuck in the minute details of real situations, and as much as I tried to explain, demonstrate, etc., it was impossible. We all just kept getting more and more frustrated. Part of the problem is that they don't believe it will work.....and so it never will. There was no way they would/could commit to it. I started to realize that I was asking them to be "actors".....to function in a style other than realism and this was very confusing for them.

We tried to piece it together once, it didn't work and then we talked and talked. Finally I suggested we move on to a next scene.....sometimes you just have to let go of something.

They suggested that the next scene would be Linda panning alone -- again, trying to get some money. Various people pass her. Again, we jammed on this for a while, them physically offering different things they know about. All these characters are played by two people:

- a person walking by jingling change in a pocket who says, "sorry, no change". - a person who yells, "get a job". - a person who comes and sits and asks if she is ok.....have you accepted God into your life? - a person who asks if she needs any change. Yes. Just checking, as he walks away. - two "valley girls" who talk about how giving her change is a waste of money - a drunk who sits down and wants her to come to his place for sex.

This went well. Then the police who caught Tom come in. They remember Linda. Jake and Shelly wanted to be the

Police. They harass her for panning, "making an example".....cuffing her on the street and throwing lots of bylaws at her.....they take her skateboard and her squeegee.

There was no way to make this real. We worked it and worked it. At each turn there was someone who would not take it seriously -- commit to it and see it through. Always someone different, moment to moment. One person would get frustrated and yell at the group and a minute later, when someone else decided to focus the first person would be joking around. I asked, I pleaded, I reasoned, I demanded and I tried to ignore it but nothing worked. We got nothing done. Then, Tom decided to show everyone how to do it and, as the Cop he laid into Linda. His focused energy broke through her joking. It turned real and riveting. In character he stripped the Linda's character of her dignity out on the street, in public. This was why they wanted to do the scene, why it was important to them that it be in the play. It was what happens and it was heartbreaking. The room was silent. They "saw it".

We talked about how that is what needs to happen in ALL the scenes. That kind of commitment to the moment. If we can do that we will change people's hearts and that will create change.

We finished the day by going to the theatre to see the space. I wanted the theatre to become real for them now, not on the first performance day. They were very excited. They were the children that they are. I had them stand on the stage and talk to me in the back row, getting them louder until I could hear each one and trying to impress on them that this had to be the volume. This might have been scary, but I think it will pay off.

They all readily agreed to come in at 10 AM tomorrow (not 11) because we are behind now and need to "crack" the rest of the play. A really good thing that happened today was that in all the frustration, I stopped at one point and said.....look, it is important to understand something here.....this happens when people are making a play. They get stuck sometimes. Almost all the time. I want you all to know that I am not mad at you. I am frustrated, like I know you are with me, but I am not angry. I asked if they knew what I meant. Their faces got really soft and Linda said.....yeah. You want it to be good. We do too. We looked at each other for a while, a moment of worlds meeting, really, and we went back to struggling.

## **May 7, 1999**

Wow. End of the second week. Such a roller-coaster.

We needed to start at 10 this morning instead of 11 and they were all on time! I don't mean this to sound patronizing. It needs to be understood in context. They got paid full cheques yesterday. All their friends know they are making good money. Most of them got approached numerous times last night to party hard and they were very proud of themselves that they didn't because they had to be in rehearsal the next morning, and they were! Bright and energized.

They are starting to understand the reasons for daily runs. Tom said today that doing runs is good, because he is noticing that as we do them the early material is getting better and better and making sense of the material to come. (Yes!)

So we did a run first thing and it was good and they incorporated notes on yesterday's run into this one which was also good. I am understanding that because the first few scenes are so powerful we can give the audience some more "space".....for instance the scene that starts in the lane in the rain.....we can just watch them asleep for a while.....perhaps a VERY slow fade up of lights.....sunrise.....then the police come on their rounds.....not expecting to find them.....try to wake them THEN all hell breaks loose.

I decided to leave the squeegee-ing scene alone over the week-end, to let it brew a while. One of the actors mentioned today, though, that she thinks she understands now what I was trying to get them to do style-wise and that if they can do it, it will probably work, and so she is willing to try to do it.

We did some good work on the last pan-handling scene today, including the "making an example" of Linda with the police. Three of the women are playing all the passers-by -- about nine of them. I want all the characters to be different and so took each one through an exercise: Who is this person, how does s/he walk, where does s/he lead from (chin, forehead, shoulder, belly, knees, etc.). Once we got this going they loved it. It unlocked clowns in them. Clowns some of them didn't know they had. They had great fun with it. The challenge will be to keep the characters that large and exuberant. They are

like grotesque cartoons walking by Linda, various reactions, different worlds. The two guys are now playing the Police for this. We are also using Linda's cat from now on. They strip her of her dignity. They know how to do this -- it has happened to each of them. There is a beautiful moment when Linda thinks they are going to take her cat. They have taken her squeegee and her skateboard. This little girl who has been trying to be very tough says, "please don't take my cat."

We also found the next scene. We sat down and I asked them, "what happens next?" "where is the next scene?" "In a squat", many of them said, almost in unison. So, after the police let Linda go, we go to almost black. The guys roll out a large carpet that is covered in garbage. They lie down. All the girls except Linda have their back to us and light candles, and come onto the carpet from different parts of the stage. They are in their squat. Everything happens by candle light. It will be beautiful.

Tom (who is now named Freddy) and Louse are both in bad shape. Maggie is taking care of Tom. Ruth is sitting silently with Louse. Shelly (now named Shyanne) is starting to feel "sick". Maggie is fixing and she offers to share with Shyanne. We are going to see this with rigs but without actual needles. Linda enters with a candle and is furious about her encounter with the police and very concerned about Freddy.....(it was lovely today -- she hugged and kissed him in the scene today).

Freddy is in a lot of pain. They have no money. They won't go to the hospital because Freddy won't deal with the authorities. They can't call an ambulance because of the secrecy of the squat. He needs "medicine". They have no money for medicine. Shyanne knows how to get money fast, but she doesn't want to go alone. Who is going to come with her? They all look at Linda. No way, she says, she doesn't do that. "He's your boyfriend" Shyanne says. Linda looks around the room for help. No one will. she looks at Freddy. He says "I'd do it for you." Shyanne tells her that she will help her, that it'll be easy, that they'll be back in 20 minutes. Linda agrees and asks Freddy to take care of the cat.

The two girls leave the squat and enter a pool of light. Shyanne tells Linda to look happy. They won't want her if she doesn't look friendly. She fixes her ragged clothes. She goes over a menu of prices and activities. She tells her that she will wait for her on the corner, and she leaves her there. We watch Linda waiting for a while, scared. Maybe there are echoes of the sound from under the images of her family exploding from the beginning of the play as we fade to black.

In the closing circle today many mentioned that they are really happy about how the play is turning out. Maggie is beside herself with excitement -- even Linda, who is so guarded said....."yeah, this play thing is gonna be OK..." they were VERY glad it was Friday. They want to party tonight. Of course they are going to. We (Bree, Sam and I) asked them to please be careful.

## **May 10, 1999**

I am sitting here in my own crisis, not really knowing what to do, expecting the phone to ring. I realize that doing this writing helps me gain a perspective on the day, so.....

The day started very hard. I had an appointment at 10 AM this morning that couldn't be canceled, but forgot about it when we set start time on Friday, and so left a message with Bree (Stage Manager) to run what we have a couple of times. When I arrived at 11:00 everyone was in a circle, doing a check-in. Most of the group was in really rough shape. Lots had happened over the week-end.

Tom had ended up in a drunk tank on the week-end (evidently strung out on PCP). All had partied really heavily.

Mixed in with partying they got caught up on news that is happening in their community and Various people had died (yes, died) or been beaten up. I wondered to myself at the time if the instances of this had really increased, or if the actors in the play were seeing them differently because of the work we are doing. One mentioned that she was sick and tired of the street and that life and didn't want to go back there, another that her friends all seemed like they spent the whole week-end whining.

I reminded them about the work that Michael has done to make sure that opportunities are there for them to enter

employment or education programs once the play is done. I also said that while the \$500/week we are paying them over the three weeks of rehearsal and performance isn't a lot of money it is a lot of money and encouraged them to use it in the most positive ways -- to use it to help themselves.

We agreed to start a run. They took their positions to do so, but looked miserable. I looked at them for what seemed like a long time and asked if they thought they could do this right now. Some said no and so we started talking again.

Out of this came the news that Tom is really uncomfortable playing the police in three scenes, and that each of them has something in the play that they don't like doing. Jake talked about how this is inevitable -- we are making a play about difficult things and they all have to play those parts. This is a hard subject because, of course, what Jake said is true. At the same time, I keep asking them as we cast things if they can/want to play the roles they are getting and there have been changes made when necessary. Tom is playing a police officer in the "making an example" scene because we all agreed that it was important in the play. Others tried the role but couldn't do it. Tom understands it. He does it really well and in the Forum it is going to be essential that people doing interventions have something "real" to push against.

Tom continued that over the week-end he had considered just packing his stuff up and leaving town. One of the things he is worried about is the Police coming after him because of the things we are showing in the play. This, of course, is a real concern. I didn't know how to respond to this, really. He might be right. The cast expressed concern that it is already possible because the police all seem to know about the project. Some of them are planning on leaving town when it is over. The only thing I can think of suggesting, (and have) is that Michael talk with Adrienne, who might be able to function as a "door" into the City and try to find a way to ensure that this doesn't happen.

We agreed to break for lunch, come back and try to cement the rest of the play. I went to Tom and mentioned that I was concerned about how he was doing -- that if he was really thinking of leaving town over the week-end that that seemed serious to me. He said that if he had been serious about it he would have done it, and that he was OK -- he wasn't going anywhere. I asked about playing the police. He said that its uncomfortable but he knows why he's doing it.

Over lunch I did a TV interview for Rogers, and when the cast returned, we gave them a scene to shoot.

Then we did a run and it wasn't bad -- in fact there were some very good things in it. It bogged down in the squat scene -- a sign that we don't know what it is yet. We started working things there. The conversation early in the day proved very valuable. I wondered if Louse might not come back. Maybe we learn that he has died. They agreed. Its so real. How has he died? There was a discussion about whether he has OD'd accidentally or killed himself purposefully. The group came to the conclusion that it made more sense that he killed himself purposefully, shooting heroin. Then I realized that this changed the opening of the scene. Shelly realized it at the same time and excitedly started explaining how someone could come in and say that he had been found beside a dumpster with needles in his arm etc. She understood this. I asked her if Shyanne (her character) could be the person who brings the news in. Yes.

So we rehearsed this and it took some time to find, but it made sense and it works and out of it came the realization that Ruth's character is now all alone. No one really relates to her. When Maggie's character shoots up Shyanne, does Ruth explode on them? Yes. Ruth did this yelling that none of them really cared about Louse, no one knew him, now here they are using him as an excuse to get high. This led to them yelling at her, kicking her out of the squat. She meets Linda on the way out (we don't see this) so Linda enters wondering what's wrong with Ruth. They tell her that Louse is dead. She doesn't care, and we see how disposable Louse was. The scene continues then the way we rehearsed it last week. They need to get something for Freddy's pain and Shyanne and Freddy convince Linda to hit the street and hook.

Shelly (Shyanne) had come in having worked this all out in a really good way. She puts lipstick on Linda. Tells her she will "take care of her" (an echo of the first scene where these two actors play sisters who have just ejected from home). She tells her to smile and how pretty she looks. She gives her a price rundown -- \$40 for a blow, \$60 for "half and half" and \$80 for a lay. She tells her that she will wait for her on the other corner. Linda says that she really doesn't want to do this and Shyanne gets really short with her and says that everyone is depending on her and she better not let them down. She leaves her there. Linda stands under the light for a long, long time and then the lights slowly go down. They were both amazing in this scene today. Sam and I both told them so.

During the day we stopped many times, me asking them not to direct each other -- that each actor needs to work out his/her own roles. What happens is that everyone always has ideas. On the surface this is great, but we keep getting so diverted all the time. We'll agree to try one thing and then someone will say, well, what about this other idea and then another idea and in the end the actor has been "directed" by three or four different people and has no idea what to try and we have to start all over again. Or they each want the other in a scene to deliver a line a certain way, but the actor needs to deliver the line the way they can deliver the line and if they get too much input from everyone in the room they get paralyzed with too many ideas. A play can only be directed by one person.

When we finished we had a circle and Tom and Maggie both talked about how stressed out they are and how they're sorry if they snapped at anyone during the day.....it is frustrating working all this stuff out. I mentioned that I know how hard the work is being, but that it is also clear that out of the hard work we are making something really important and thanked them for hanging in there. Turns out it is Sheryl's birthday today. We all wished her a happy birthday as we went around. I wish I would have known, we could have done something for her. Maggie suggested we have a group yell after and so we did. When we split up at 6 PM people were laughing.

I got home at 7 and the phone rang. It was Michael. I mentioned to him that I was just on my way out the door -- I had planned to see a show with a friend tonight. Two of the cast, though, were with him and were crying. Sheryl seems to have gone out and shot up again, another has been talking about killing himself. I say "seems" because (Michael agrees) one or both may or may not be real.

Michael mentioned that some of them are feeling like the play has to be perfect. I realize now, writing this, that I am not certain if this means they are putting this pressure on themselves, if their peers are doing this from the outside, or if they feel I am doing this from the inside, or perhaps all of the above. For my part I think we are still in a stage of discovering what the play is.

Michael has suggested we meet early in the morning tomorrow to sort things out. I agreed. In the meantime he is going to try to track people down and find out what's really going on. We got off the phone and immediately I realized that I couldn't go anywhere. I also, though, couldn't reach Michael again. All I have for him is a pager number. I called it and left a message for him to call me back two and a half hours ago. I also tried to call Maggie and Linda at the Murray Hotel, where they are staying.....no answer at the switchboard. Called again later and talked with the Manager. He had seen Linda and said she seemed fine.....I left a message for either her or Maggie to call me. I left a message for Jake on his voice mail.....did manage to talk to Bree, who is also surprised by the news, canceled a morning meeting with Mirjana, left a message for Sam.....I don't know how to FIND the cast.....so here I am hoping the phone is going to ring, but also, in a way, hoping it isn't.

I am wondering if this roller coaster is just a natural part of this journey, or if we should seriously think about stopping it, because there isn't a way to do it without asking (perhaps) too much of people. After all the writing I am not any closer to knowing what to do.

## **May 11, 1999**

Its 10:30 PM. This morning I felt kind of like the guy on the raft going up the river in the movie Apocalypse Now. This day began terribly, went into hope, fell apart somewhat and ended wonderfully.

First, the wonderful. After rehearsal Matthew (musician) and I spent over two hours together, him showing me what kinds of sounds he has been coming up with, as we have been struggling to make the play. We have been trying to do this for a couple of days now, but there has been too much else going on. He's done some very nice things. We had a great, creative time together. It was really a joy. The rhythmic, emotional and subtle underscoring he is working on could be terrific. I'm impressed.

A concern got expressed first thing this morning, by people outside the rehearsal process, that the play we are making has been predetermined by me, and that I am forcing the Youth into something they don't want to do.

I was, of course, very upset by this. The concern could have been expressed to me privately, or Sam or Bree who have

both been in every moment of the process could have been consulted. Neither of these options happened. Instead, Michael facilitated a meeting for which Adrienne, Sam, Bree and others were also present. Sam and Bree explained in various ways that they thought the accusations were unfounded. Sam also talked about how the cast, being street-youth, are obviously going to have problems with authority and that in the room I am the authority and that it would make perfect sense that they would be leaving the rehearsal hall and complaining, venting, etc. at night. We are all doing that in our own ways -- Sam and myself included.

This portion of the morning was until about 10:30. I talked about it being absolutely true that I had impressions of what the play would be as we were getting started. How could I not? Everyone who came into the process did. It was always going to be a play about criminalization -- that's what we raised money to do. We used those words with everyone in the interviews. I have, I believe, been really careful, though, to make sure that the things that ended up in the play have come either from the workshop and have been certified by the cast, or directly out of rehearsal conversations about the casts' experiences. Some of my original impressions are in the play and some of the things in the play are things I never thought before we started working. Some of the things I thought would be in the play, aren't. Part of my job as a director is to take the ideas and desires of the workshop participants and the cast and theatricalize them.

After 10:30 Michael, Adrienne, Bree, Sam and I had a facilitated (by Michael) meeting with the cast.

We talked process -- are there ways that we can communicate better -- me listening more, not trying to move on so fast so people feel really listened to, also I have gotten frustrated a couple of times and have gotten louder than one of them in particular felt comfortable with. They also acknowledged that, like the rest of them, I had a right to get frustrated and needed to be able to express it, and that when I got loud it was never at anyone in particular. On their end we talked about them trying to focus and not going off on long tangents about all kinds of things that are not related to what we are working on at the time so much.

In the midst of this I suggested to Michael that I just be straight and told them about the concern expressed in the morning and said we really needed to talk about that. This led to the cast trying to get Tom to talk about what was on his mind -- he was really reluctant -- I offered to leave the room if it made him more comfortable -- he said no, he had been through it three times already this morning with various people and he got mad and went for a smoke. Michael explained. Turns out some one had told Tom I was lying to the group and had planned the whole play beforehand. We took a break.

Eventually everyone came back. I said the same to them as outlined above in the first meeting. I really wanted, though, to talk with Tom so before they broke for lunch I asked if he and I could have a minute together alone. I told him that I didn't need to know who had said this to him and that the really big concern for me was whether or not he felt he could trust me. He said that there was a lot going on for him and that when he heard this it had stuck.....we sat for a moment and talked and I assured him that I was not acting out some huge, complex lie. Our conversation was very friendly and straightforward and they all went for lunch.

Michael did a Vancouver Sun interview over lunch.

After lunch, Michael suggested we go around the circle and each talk about what we can do to help each other, to contribute to the project. We did this and I had one concern as this happened, which I voiced and that was that there will come a time, very shortly, when the play cannot be directed by committee. We can't get bogged down in each person having a say in each person's acting moments, because we will get nowhere. I am afraid to say I am a bit fuzzy on agreement on this, but Jake did talk about each person needing to be responsible, in the end, for their own parts. I think that this is contentious for this group because they all care so much about what happens in each moment. It is a really fine line to traverse, as we move through, someone needs to be the director. That person is me. Bree and Sam and Matthew all talked about this.

A concern got expressed from inside the cast again that there is going to be serious retribution on the cast from the Police. We talked about this for a while, there were varying opinions in the cast. I said that there was, in fact, no way we could guarantee that that wouldn't happen. Adrienne suggested that we try to make sure that the cast's concern gets mentioned in every interview (good idea) and I have asked for her and Mirjana to discuss a possible press release about it. Adrienne has agreed to mention it to the Police Inspectors she knows. It was here that Adrienne had to go. We thanked her.



I still thought it was important to deal with the concerns expressed in the morning and so I asked that we go through each scene and talk about whether or not it should stay. With each scene I asked:

Should the scene be in the play, or not? If yes, why? If yes, are there problems people are having inside it? I stressed that it was OK for any scene to go, and that I wanted to do this because we needed to start to be able to rehearse and I did not want them doing things they didn't believe in, want to do, etc. Michael also asked them to say so if they felt uncomfortable or wrong about any characters they are playing.

They unanimously said yes to each scene. Some scenes have internal problems, of course they do, all of these things can get dealt with in rehearsal -- they are not structural to the play -- they are character and prop/set and minor plot things.

Then, I asked them if there was anything missing from the play. Perhaps we were all getting tired by this point -- it was coming up to 3:30.....they couldn't think of anything but we agreed that there may be things missing that need to get layered in and that we can discover them as we go.

So, I asked each of them if they felt that this was their play. They all said yes.

We agreed to try to "crack" the squeegee scene -- the only one we don't have, and took a break. Michael had to leave at this point. We all thanked him. He did a really good job.

We talked about the scene for a while, they wanted to try the idea we had been working on before. We floundered around for a while. Finally I asked why they thought this scene should be there? What do we get from it? Through this we found a way to mesh some of the first idea with some ideas that Tom and others had:

Maggie, Ruth, Jake and Sheryl are drivers. They are at the Main and Terminal stoplight. Reality (this is the name Linda wants for her character) and Freddie come out into traffic to squeegee. As Freddie visits three cars, Reality gets (Maggie) a woman who is very enthusiastic. She has just driven over the Coquihalla and it was stormy and she can't see out of the windshield and isn't this a wonderful way to be welcomed into Vancouver? and Oh! you know what would be nice? You could get approval from the City and have official squeegee badges and uniforms and welcome people off the highway by doing their windows. It would be great for tourism!.....and on and on..... and then the woman thanks her very much and drives away. No money. The actors drive their cars. The squeegee-ers get out of traffic.

The actors are at a red light. Different characters. Freddie squeegees. He encounters Jake who is extremely afraid of him. Sheryl who thinks he makes more money than her. Ruth, who agrees to have him squeegee, but then, on purpose, sprays him with windshield fluid. Maggie, who runs over his foot. The actors drive their cars. He gets out of traffic.

Jake and Sheryl pull out to become police. Maggie and Ruth are at a red light. Ruth drops coins on the road on purpose. Reality notices the police. "6 UP". Freddie is caught. Reality is going to try to help him He yells at her to run. They get him and everything goes into slow motion as they beat the crap out of him in a pool of light. The lights fade slowly as this is happening and come up on Reality, panning with Mary Jane, her cat.

In the midst of making this Tom and Maggie had a terrible fight. It started over a snide comment one of them made to the other and escalated really quickly. Others tried to get them to stop -- we had talked all day about respecting each other.

Then the camera guy came from the Vancouver Sun for the photo to accompany the story. Sam had had, much earlier in the day, the (very good) idea of giving the press the moment of Maggie's character stomping on her doll. Very theatrical. Everyone liked the idea, including Maggie, except now she was a mess. I told her she didn't need to do this if she didn't want to -- she insisted on doing it -- soldiering on. Then he took a group shot, except, as we discovered earlier in the day, Linda doesn't want to be photographed without her cat, who Bree took to the vet this morning (on Linda's request) to be spayed.....we won't have the cat for a few days.....aiyaiyai.....I just realized what this means.....we can't have the cat in the final couple of scenes if she is recovering from surgery, can we?.....how long does it take a cat to heal from this?? O boy. Anyway she wouldn't be in the photo and Maggie, having done her bit wouldn't join the group photo because she

was still angry. He took it without the two of them.

After he left (I can't imagine what he was thinking.....he walked into the tail end of the fight), we all talked for a bit. There is so much energy flying around the room. Maggie finished the day in a really hard place.....I feel like I watched her back herself into a corner, having blown up, knowing it was a strong reaction to a small moment, but it being attached to so many other things she is struggling with and not knowing how to cope. Various people tried to comfort her (including me) but she really wanted to be on her own. She left saying that once this project is over she is going to leave town.

The rest of the group was really upset at her and we (me, Bree and Sam) tried to talk with them about her needing some space and understanding. Things calmed down a little, but not entirely.

Tomorrow, I need to find a way to alter the energy in the room. Find a way to start this new phase of rehearsal. We have the play. This part (the hardest part? God, I hope so.....) is over. We need to have some fun getting it to work. It could be stupendous. We need to have some fun.

Its after midnight. Gotta sleep.

### **May 12, 1999**

Better energy today but boy, are we behind. Started slowly. We had a CBC Radio interview at 9:30 AM. The reporter arrived with four dead batteries. We rescheduled for tomorrow.

Maggie was first to arrive. In good spirits -- they remained that way all day. Linda and Tom (who appear to have become a couple), stayed at Tom's new place last night. They didn't wake up. We couldn't rehearse anything without the two of them. The cast hung out. Bree dealt with some costume stuff.....I fretted. At about 11:30 Sam went to get them. They arrived close to noon. I did a ritual with them about entering a "new phase" of rehearsal. I asked if anyone could make an image of this last week of rehearsal. Maggie made an image of two people pointing guns at their own heads and each other. Everyone agreed this was an image of the last week of rehearsal. All together we yelled and screamed at the image, and said goodbye to it. Some of them thought this was lots of fun, others, I think, thought it was silly. Perhaps it served its purpose, though.

It didn't make any sense starting rehearsal and then having to stop 30 minutes later, so we broke for lunch.

We started again at about 1:45 and had, oh, 15 minutes of great rehearsal. They were really focused.....then one of the cast started to "disappear". I went over to her and asked if she was OK. She was finding body lice on her. It is a very physical show. We were all scratching all day.

Sam went with her to get Kwellada and help with laundry and all that.....she would be gone for the rest of the day, obviously. This had to happen, as the rest of the cast wouldn't go anywhere near her. We rehearsed the only two scenes she is not in for the rest of the day. We got one done and the other one part way through. There are six scenes.

Then we were supposed to have a production photo shoot, but didn't have the full cast or some of the costume items (police hats) that we needed. We did some lobby photos with those that were there and rescheduled the production shoot.

During the lobby shot shoot the photographer was taking shots of each cast member one at a time. Jake said he wanted to go next, but he got involved in something else and so another cast member went before him. When he realized this he got extremely upset, packed his belongings up and started to storm out. When I asked him what was wrong, he started yelling that someone had "jumped ahead of his turn". I tried to reason with him, but he was too upset and walked out. We needed, however, to do this with the photographer, who has his own busy schedule, so I went after Jake and resorted to telling him that he was being paid to be there until 6 PM every day and I didn't care how upset he was he wasn't leaving. He came back and did the photo shoot. After, when he was calmed down, he apologized for being unreasonable, I accepted the apology and all was well in the end.

I wanted to include this anecdote here because it is so telling of how explosive things have been (and, I guess, will continue to be) in this process. Jake is one of the least volatile in the group. Things like his explosion have been happening with various cast members almost every day.

What rehearsing we did get done was focused, though. When we can actually get to work, there is a strong commitment to do this -- we just have to be able to do it now. I am very concerned about how far behind we are, and that we just are not going to be ready to open.

### **May 13, 1999**

Feels like we are coming out of a dark tunnel. We didn't get as much done today as I had hoped, but the work we did do was very focused and fun -- even though the content was heavy. We are working well together.

The body lice crisis is over. According to Michael there is a contentment settling in.

I had a conversation with a friend tonight and started telling her some things about this project, and realized that although doing the kind of work I do there have been many intense experiences, this one is far deeper.....working with a cast where members have spent the night in jail during rehearsals, have come in whacked out on heroin from the night before, had to exit rehearsals because of lice, the ongoing shelter questions, the "what happens after" questions, and the deep physical, emotional, psychological violence of every cast member's life experiences and the rocky group chemistry that is created as a result of that.....its actually a miracle that we are into the third week at all in some ways.

There were some wonderful moments today, both in rehearsal and with the media. Most of them gathered around a woman from the Georgia Straight this morning. I busied myself making coffee and phone calls for some of the discussion. It was hard not to overhear, though. They were really excited about the theatre work we are into now. One of them was telling her how I am trying to get them to "stop acting" (big laugh from the group) and then she went on to explain how this also translates into their lives -- how being in the moment is so hard for them but that they have to learn how to do it for the interactive part of the play, and how they have made a play that "tells the truth" and how excited they are about showing it to people.

I am trying to direct them now in a way that is very different from the workshop or the play creation process. Some of this is very technical -- like being able to see them, or not having three different things happening on stage at the same time. Some things, though, are asking them to try a different emotional approach to a moment or even "sharing" the emotion with us -- allowing themselves to feel it in the moment instead of keeping the emotions flattened. This is very challenging for some of them but they are really trying to do it. It is all about what gets communicated to the audience and they are, I think, coming to understand the difference between what they might be feeling and what they might be communicating.

We are about one third through the play. We need to do the same kind of detailed work on the rest of it tomorrow. Absolutely. Michael and Sam both talked about this at the end of the day....about how hard it is to have gotten paid today but needing to stay alert, about not partying, about being at work tomorrow on time and ready. I found myself telling them in our circle at the end of the day how each of them "letting me in" to make this theatre with them has touched my heart.

Tickets are selling. We are overbooked for opening night. Yahoo! Yikes.

### **May 14, 1999**

We had a good day, although there things to be concerned about.

They were all there on time....in body if not in spirit. Some of them partied pretty hard. One in particular.

We have a habitual heroin user in the cast. Michael tells me he informed me about this before the interviews. He may very well have. I don't remember receiving this information. I do know that if it would have "sunk in" I never would have cast this person in the play. It is just too hard for all of us, including her. Having said that, she keeps working and trying and

often is doing tremendous work. It is heartbreaking to watch. Sam and I have had numerous conversations about what to do and there are many sides to the dilemma. Although I have already told her that if she comes in stoned again she will have to leave, cutting her out would create a terrible failure for her. Another in a series of failures, from what I understand. She really wants to do the play and wants to succeed. Keeping her in the cast has created and continues to create lots of stress in an already stressful situation. Cast members have been supportive, but also very frustrated with her.

Montserrat and I discussed it on the phone today. We are both concerned for her. As I said to Montserrat, my hope is that she will see this through, because she wants to so much, and then directly after, we may be able to get her into a recovery program. Sam is spending more and more time with her and she is appreciative of this. We have no control, though, about what happens with her after work. She appears to have a boyfriend who has a very negative influence on her.

We did detailed work on all of the rest of the scenes today. Then, we did our first run of the play, putting it together from beginning to end, with light and some sound cues. I have always been saying the finished play can't be more than 20 minutes. This first run was 20:47. And they did great! I figure we have at least three minutes to shave off it in tightening the scenes.

One of the workshop participants, who is working on design with Bree saw the run. She was, in her words, getting chills through her body in parts of it. She was extremely impressed and gave me a big hug before she left. Nice feedback.

Some of the good things today: We got the squeegee-ing and panhandling scenes. They are very, very technical. In order for them to work, the actors have to take on a very extended style of performance. What they wanted was for the audience to see what they see when they squeegee and panhandle. They wanted to show the ridiculous people, the assholes, the overly nice ones.....when we did this as realism, it was deadly boring. So, I worked with them to construct broadly comic vignettes, making the characters grotesque -- each passerby or car driver a different person. This was very hard for them and the squeegeeing scene in particular caused us the most problems in the creation process. Now Tom is saying its his favourite scene. After all the laughter of squeegee-ing, he gets stuck in traffic, while the police are after him. They catch him and in slow motion, in a tight beam of light, beat him up badly.

I have always felt that in the theatre we have the ability to tickle people in the ribs and then smash them in the face. We get them receptive and then say, "here -- look at this". This sequence does this. When the cast do it well, it also shows their talent off in a way that, content of the play aside, is very important.

We were having a problem working the making an example" scene. The actors had got cranky, tired, and were fighting each other. I stopped rehearsal and talked about generosity on the stage, using a moment in the scene as an example. Jake Cop has to pull Reality's skateboard out of her hand. In running the scene, she wouldn't let him. The more he pulled, the more she resisted. I explained that if she was being generous on the stage, she would let him grab it from her, but also get upset that he had grabbed it, not be pleased that she won't let him have it, because for the scene to work he HAS to get it from her. The room got really quiet because they knew they were all doing this -- messing with each other, manipulating each other so that they could look good at the expense of each other. They took this note to heart during the run. It really was great.

Michael videotaped the run and it was good, I think, for them to see themselves. I should say, I made a speech before letting them see the video. Doing this is scary with a cast just starting to do runs. It is always hard for people to see themselves on TV. We are all very critical of ourselves.....do I really look like that? sound like that? have those mannerisms? Of course, the answer is yes. I said they could watch the video as long as it was to get a perspective on the journey of the play -- and that if they started coming to me after and asking to change things because of seeing themselves and not liking how they are doing things, that I was warning them in advance that my response would be to tell them to trust my outside eye, not their impressions of seeing themselves on video. They were howling at some things and transfixed at others....."right on" and "this is the shit" (which means this is good, not this is bad.....how language changes.....).....if they like you they tell you you are "the shit".

**May 15, 1999**

Of course there is news. The morning started off beautifully, everyone arriving except Tom and Linda. I remembered that Sam was picking them up because Linda was bringing MaryJane the cat back into rehearsal after her surgery. The cat has bounced back nicely and Linda feels she can be in the play. We waited.

After 30 minutes I decided to call there and Sam answered the phone. Turns out Tom had been jumped by a stranger late last night. He has stitches in his head, cuts on his face and mouth, a black eye and a broken nose. The doctor wants him to have plastic surgery on his nose in the middle of the run. My immediate response to this was that, somehow, although he is integral to the play, we need to replace Tom. I told him that the play was not as important as his health. No way. He won't have any of it. He is insisting on continuing.

They all think I am over-reacting. My concern is that it is a very physical play and he does a lot of the rough stuff. How do we not hurt him? Is this safe for him to do?

Wendy Wood came to visit today. She didn't seem to think it should get in the way of him doing the show, either. I sat down with Tom and agreed that we would continue, but that I would really be keeping an eye on him -- not because I wanted him out of the play, but because I have a professional and moral responsibility to try to take care of the people in the cast. Sam is investigating the Equity insurance, to see if this kind of thing is covered.

We did a photo shoot today. A group shot of the cast on my car, a production shot of the violence in the lane, and a production shot of the "making an example" scene. All were shot outside.

Then we did a run. It was groggy. The structure is there, but the heart wasn't. We did notes and did another run. This one was better, but by now the painkillers (Tom had not taken any of the prescribed painkillers because he didn't want to get groggy) were kicking in and I started to lose both Tom and Linda, who, it turns out, took the painkillers with him.

Oh -- in the midst of all this Matthew blew a speaker, which meant we couldn't layer the sound in. CR, one of the workshop participants was there and ran home to bring a speaker in for the second run.

I had hoped to do four runs today. Two was the limit and neither of them were particularly useful. We have so much work to do. When are things going to settle down? Or are they just going to get more and more crazy? I feel as if we might have hit a plateau with rehearsals, because time is running out. Mike Keeping (Rogers Community TV -- he will be the Director for the broadcast) was there for both runs today. He agrees that there is tremendous potential in the play. Lots of interesting moments etc., and that we have to find a way to "do it" now.

We need to start rehearsing Forum on Monday. There is an invited audience on Tuesday and then we move into the theatre Wednesday and have a preview that night. Going to try to take a day off and come back into it with some perspective.

I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope I hope they take care of themselves tonight and tomorrow. I know some of them won't though. I managed to talk to Dusty at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre today -- there is a hot band playing tonight that the cast all love. They all got free tickets.

### **May 17, 1999**

I think if I wasn't doing this writing each night I might have exploded by now.

What's one of the worst things that could have happened today?

We lost a cast member. It's terrible. I've been seeing it coming and now think I should have dealt with it last week. Hindsight is always 20/20.

Everyone was there on time today and in good, clear spirits. Except Sheryl. We waited for about half an hour and then

Sam went to try to find her. In the meantime the cast and I started an interview with a guy from the Christian News.

Sam called. He found her and she was high on heroin again. I told the group.

They were very angry and hurt and generous and frustrated and many other emotions. We all knew we had to write her out. It was staring all of us in the face. We talked briefly. A sense of urgency filled the room. None of us were happy with the decision. We all agreed, though, we had to do it. Some very fast choices needed to be made and we needed to do them as a group.

I think this was the right decision for more reasons than the obvious. Even if I had said she could stay, I don't think some of them could/would have worked with her. The frustration levels were too high.

Michael was there. I was already formulating in my head the pros and cons of going to a cast of 5 and working around her absence. The math of it created seemingly insurmountable problems with what this would mean to the cohesion of the character relationships (a week of rehearsal, at least), and so I asked him how he felt about coming into the play. I could feel the room go to attention. He thought he could do it. What would it mean? We started planning through the scenes with all of us coming up with some solutions. They were great. When we got to the squat, we bogged down and I suggested we start reworking from the beginning and let the process help us find out where it had to go.

We worked Michael into the Images. Now its a little boy getting battered. First Night Out is the same. Tom is now on the street alone at the top of the Twinkie scenes.

Sheryl and Sam arrived. I don't think Sam had told her -- he couldn't have, he didn't know the decision. She knew, though. She pleaded with us. It was heartbreaking. I had a quick meeting with Sam and Michael and asked their advice. They were both really clear. The answer had to be no. I agreed.

Each and every one of the cast tried, in their own way, some with kindness, some with a kind of generous anger, none just angry, to explain to her why it was best for everyone, including her, to leave the play. Over about an hour and a half Sam also talked with her, I talked with her, Michael talked for a long time with her. He was able to calm her the best. I called Adrienne and the office to let them know.

We had to get on with our work. I knew there was no way to do that with her there. No way to focus. We couldn't just say....OK...goodbye, though -- she needed to be with someone she knew and trusted. Wendy. Not at work. I ended up talking to the Executive Director at the Gathering Place -- who also knows what we are doing and knows Sheryl. Trouble was, Sheryl was high. No admittance. This was going to be the case for many places in which she would feel safe.

Someone mentioned a place with initials for a name.....can't remember them now. Sheryl reacted very badly. Obviously not there. Someone mentioned a certain Nurse who Sheryl likes. She lit up. Called her. Not there, but Sheryl figured she could go somewhere to get her cellphone number. For the moment this would have to do. Through the course of all this various people in the cast spent time hugging her, stroking her, trying to reassure her that they love her. Before Sam left with her he and I agreed that bottom line, she could not be left on her own tonight. She and I had a big hug. She held on really tight and she said thank you. I walked her outside. She left with Sam. Inside we all just sat for a while.

I should mention that Tom looks much better today. Amazingly so. I might have underestimated the resilience of youth. He and Linda were both in good spirits, all things considered.

We got back to the play. We removed Shyanne from morning wake-up with the Cops. This meant quickly reworking some fight choreography. It was going to be too complicated for Michael to fit into the sense of what she was doing. The scene is lonely without her, but it will work. We discovered that Michael is covered up in a corner of the stage during the beating and Monzi (this is what Maggie's character is called) goes to him after and the drug scene happens in a different way.

Michael does what Sheryl did in the squeegee scene and also in the panning.....a Christian man now instead of a woman and also a Valley Guy instead of a girl. These were both challenges I watched Michael take on and he had fun (and I think

will continue to) developing them.

We got to the squat. It was OK until Reality arrives and we talk her into hooking. Kablam. We struggled and struggled. Bless them they were so focused -- working through frustrations. After a while I realized something and said I thought I knew why we had bogged down. We had to go back to the reasons this scene was in the play. The source of this was a very powerful Image in the workshop of Sheryl's. It had stimulated a lot of discussion and other images. Every person in the cast has things that are really important to them. This was Sheryl's. Considering she was now gone, was there a reason for the scene to stay in the play? There was a short silence and then various cast members started to talk about how none of them had had this particular experience but they all knew lots of people who did and that they had a responsibility to the other street-youth out there to show this stuff. Someone, I can't remember who now, raised a point that we should also do it to honour Sheryl.

OK -- if its important, how do we do it? We plotted out how to exert the pressure on Reality. We tried it. It didn't work. Reality didn't feel pressured. She couldn't say yes. She was right. It had to be more. I talked to them about how the others needed to give her more emotionally and she had to have a few less defenses.....could they meet halfway? I am mentioning this moment because Linda and I connected here. She really looked into my eyes and it was obvious she knew deep inside what I was talking about and smiled ever so slightly and nodded. We ran it and they were terrific. Especially her. She understood something about acting tonight.

Part of the solution to the end of the play was Maggie coming forward and saying that she knew how to play the scene and it made sense for her character and she had lots of good reasons that thread through the play. She's doing Sheryl's part. It's a lot of the same words, but its really different.

We finished reworking the play, took a break and did a full run. They really put their hearts into it, incorporating so, so many of the notes over the last few days and all the new work. There are rough spots but they really pulled it together tonight. I was so impressed with them. Before they left some of us talked about Sheryl and how we felt really bad, but not guilty. It was important to acknowledge this. I repeated that I felt I should have "called it" a week ago and that I bore some of the responsibility. It was interesting to hear from them that they thought the timings were exactly how they were always going to be, and that we had all tried our best. Many of them hung around for a while, decompressing before hitting whatever adventures this night holds.

Bree was running around for things almost all day today and arrived near the end of the run. She needed filling in on events. She already knew about pulling Sheryl, but not about what had happened at the rehearsal space. We talked for quite some time. During this she mentioned that her beeper had gone at about 7:00 PM and it had been a partial message from Sam that he had dropped Sheryl off but there was a problem. Bree had no way to reach us (we can't be called after 5:00 PM because the office upstairs at Greenthumb closes and we started working nights today.) Sam hadn't left where he was or a phone number. It was about 9:00 PM. I immediately called Sam at home. He wasn't there. I left a message on his machine for him to call me at home. Bree and I talked a bit more and she called again. Someone (not Sam) was there. She left a message for Sam to call her or me when he got in.

Talked to Sam. Aiyaiyai. He says he fell for the oldest trick in the book. I would have to -- my heart goes out to him. He let her go to the bathroom alone. She shot up again. He couldn't find the Nurse. Sheryl being high made it impossible for her to "go in" anywhere. Evidently, because she is legally an adult, there are only two ways to have her in care. Either she commits herself somewhere or we lay charges against her. She isn't going to commit herself. Sam wasn't going to (and I understand why and agree) lay charges. There seems to be no where in this City for her to go. This doesn't appear to be a surprise to Sam but it is to me. As cynical and as plugged into the news as I am I haven't really understood how much the safety net has collapsed -- or perhaps never existed.

He took her to a restaurant and fed her. He says she ate and ate and ate. He didn't feel he could take her home with him. He's concerned for his own kids. So he took her to her place and waited. Eventually Jake and Michael showed up from rehearsal.

Sam told me about how they talked during the day and he thinks she understands what has happened and that it is a good thing in the long run. He managed to contact the Nurse's colleague, who is going to see Sheryl tomorrow. He left her

with Jake and Michael who also live in the building. There is no way to call there (only pay phones that only dial out) and getting in to the building will mean banging and banging. They are going to keep checking on her till morning.....which means they are likely going to be a mess tomorrow for rehearsal. Sam is going to go back there in the morning and stay with her until the other Nurse arrives and hopefully, she will be able to help with something. Its terrifying and infuriating that there is no where for her to go. I considered suggesting she come here, but, what good would that do? She needs to be with someone who understands how to cope with where she is, and anyway, I have to go to rehearsal. There are so many agencies out there. Why no where to go?

I knew this project would be hard. Never had I imagined how hard.

**May 18, 1999**

Our last day in the rehearsal hall! Unbelievable.

We spent the morning working the rough spots from last night's run. This went pretty well until we got to the squat. We have lost the fire of this scene and struggled again to try to find it. I asked again if it was important to keep the end of the play the way it is and again the cast said yes. The bind we are in is that because we have an audience tomorrow night (!) we don't have the time to go all the way back and completely re-invent this section of the play. The scene must fulfill certain functions though, most important, pressuring and convincing Reality to prostitute herself. It doesn't feel to me like this is happening anymore -- she is going because she knows she has to in order to do the last scene. Circumstances have put us in a position of me having to ask them to be "actors" and to invent the chemistry. This is precisely what I don't want to do. Unless I can find a solution between now and tomorrow, it is what we will end up taking to the stage.

Sam spent a lot of the day with Sheryl. He also had a good meeting with the Nurse and together they might be coming up with a program that she can enter, if she wants to.

We took our first stab at Forum tonight. Five people came for the open rehearsal. Not as many as I had hoped, but enough to work. They were very helpful. The cast's improvisational skills were very good and they handled the strange reality of interventions well, staying in character and being truthfully inventive.

My challenge, apart from moving the production into the theatre tomorrow, is going to be to find the right "framing" for the Forum. My first impulse is to ask people to intervene if they have an idea about "how to create safety" in the unsafe situations in the play, by replacing a character who is struggling to achieve safety. I also think, though, that because we have mounted a project on "Criminalization of Youth", I should be asking people to intervene on behalf of youth who are being criminalized and try to stop that from happening.

This is a hard Forum. I decided, and the cast liked it a lot, to start the Forum after Reality has left foster care and hit the street. The character has ejected from a terrible situation. She is in the street because going home is not an option. It should not be an option in the Forum, and in that way force us to deal with the street.

What happened tonight in rehearsal with this is it naturally stimulated a series of interventions that shed light on how terribly hard it is to survive in the street. There are not easy answers. For instance, someone replaced Reality and asked Monzi if she had "a list" that she could give her of places to get free food. Monzi replied, "No, and if I did I wouldn't fuckin' give it to you." Talking about this with her she explained that there are already not enough places that give out food, and those that exist don't have enough food. Reality is going to decrease Monzi's chances of getting food. It is competitive out there. (It occurred to me later that in Joking this I could have latched onto the desire of this intervention and asked if there should be more places that give food, if instead of bus shelters advertising expensive consumer items, should some of them be lists of resources for homeless people? This kind of thing is good to feed to Rina, the lawyer who is doing the Legislative Theatre experiment with us.)

We did Forum on about half the play and then I stopped. No point burning them and me out more than we already are. The actors are called at the theatre for 1 PM tomorrow for a cue to cue. I will be at the theatre at 10:30 AM. Bree is getting there at 8 AM.



**May 19, 1999**

Sold out preview! It feels like we had opening night.

Tech went very well. When I got to the theatre most of the set was up and it looks really good. Bree and her helpers from the workshop did good.

It took longer to set the cues and the light specials than we had hoped. We managed to do a cue to cue with the actors, but the media call happened before we managed to get a run in. It didn't seem to matter. The cast was great. Really focused and flexible. They were very excited, checking out the graffiti they had done on the cloth hangings on the set, taking possession of their theatre. I did notes with the actors from last night's run. The really rough spot had been the squat scene, but I (finally -- better late than never) had an idea to fix it. I took Monzi and Bailey (this is the character name Michael chose) and Freddie aside individually, and worked out with them intense, secret reasons why they each need Reality to start hooking.

We did a run and it was pretty damned good, for a first run in the theatre. There were some traffic problems but it hung together and the squat scene and the prostitution scene had a life to them for the first time since we lost Sheryl. The giving of secrets seems to have been a key to re-enlivening the squat scene.

We broke for dinner and then came back for a full run. Sam commented on how strong the play looks in the theatre.

Oh -- Sam spent time with Sheryl today. He says she has gone into the next phase, and is feeling that all of us betrayed her now. The cast is concerned about her boyfriend being around. Many feel that he is a very bad influence on her. The situation remains that there is no where for her to go.

When the doors opened they just kept coming. The theatre filled with a rowdy crowd. I had kind of been hoping for a 50% house, to be honest.....this was my chance to figure out how to joke this Forum. It was great, in the end, that it was full, though.

The play was pretty tight. Some sound and light problems but the actors were really "on". I was especially relieved when the laughter started on the squeegee scene. It is meant to be a release in the middle of the play and some of the cast (I know) didn't really think it would work. I could see them come to life -- fill the characters in the way they need to, feeding off the loud response from the audience. They were terrific, and obviously had fun doing it. This was very gratifying for me.

When the play finished there was lots of applause and then we started the Forum.

Yup. This is a hard Forum. We ran the first scene and nothing happened. This has happened with other projects. No reason to panic. I rewind. Before we started again, a woman asked about the definitions I was using. "Criminalization" for her meant specifically "crime -- justice system". She wanted to know if I was using the term more broadly. Yes.

This time the interventions started. People trying to soften Reality's landing -- trying to find friends in a hostile environment, looking for resource information.

We got into the first police brutality scene and a woman (Saeideh, who used to work with Headlines) yelled stop. She insisted on replacing the female police officer. Is she being criminalized, I asked? Yes, of course, she said. OK.

Once the male police officer started kicking Louse, Saeideh stopped him and a long conversation ensued about morality and kids and following orders. It was very emotional. Tom was great as the male officer. During it, Monzi and Louse escaped and then Monzi came back for Bailey. In discussion after the intervention it was agreed that there are police like this, who will put themselves on the line with their colleagues to protect street kids, but far too few, according to the people in the room, and that Saeideh would probably put herself in danger with her colleagues in the Police force for this action.

Many times I stopped and polled the audience, asking them to translate what they had just seen into concrete change in structure. For instance, there was a lovely intervention in the squat from a woman. She replaced Monzi and worked and worked and worked at convincing the others to take her to a hospital because she was so drug-sick. No one would. Finally, Vanessa did (this is Ruth's character name), except we discovered that the hospital wouldn't really do anything because they were not equipped to deal with the realities of someone wanting to come off drugs. This led to calls for more detox centres, for detox inside hospitals with caring staff, for faster facilitation into detox. I watched Rina write.

I woke up this morning with a very bad sore throat. There has been a cold going around. Need to get to the homeopathic pharmacy and get loaded up with stuff. I will supplement that with good old Tylenol cold tablets for the show tonight. At the moment I hurt all over.

Go Direct is bringing a very powerful group of people (Virginia called me this morning), including Judge Gove, of the Gove Report on Youth Violence to opening night. There was an in depth article in the Westender today, the headline reads "Diamond calls for inquiry into police brutality". (This was not really the tone of the interview. It was a comment I made at the end, as a response to a question regarding what kinds of things I wished would come from the project.) Its going to get interesting. Wish I wasn't sick.

### **May 20, 1999**

Got throat medication for myself and Maggie today, who has also come down with the dreaded bug. She was waiting at the theatre when I got there. We had a 6 PM call so we could do notes and a run and clean up some last minute details. At 6:30 the whole cast had finally shown up.

They wanted to talk. They didn't like the kinds of interventions that were coming from the audience last night. Sam and I explained that there was no way to determine what kinds of things came from the audience, but if they thought the intervention was stupid or unrealistic the most powerful way to respond to that was from inside the scene, staying in character and expressing their outrage from there.

They were upset that I hadn't run my introduction past them. Although I had done the introduction in the technical rehearsal, I realized that I had not specifically made a point of saying what it was at the time -- they may not have noticed it. I apologized and went through it point by point and asked if there was anything they didn't like in it. It turned out that no one had a problem with the actual content. They had wanted to be consulted about it first.

They also felt they hadn't been given enough opportunity to speak from the stage and that some of the things I had done were "cheesy". Sam and I asked what they meant by "cheesy" -- could they explain some instances -- but they couldn't be specific. We had a long talk about moving through the Forum. They understand time is limited. Do we have to make it to the end of the play? Yes, we do. I agreed to make more space for them to speak but asked that it not go on too long each time.

Augusto Boal, founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre, is really strict about this in his work, I think, for a reason. He allows no discussion at all, because it stops the theatricality of the event. I have always felt differently, thinking that some analysis helps deepen the nature of interventions as the event proceeds. The task for me has always been, having made a decision to allow discussion in the Forum, to try not to let it out balance the active interventions. It is a theatrical event. As the Joker (facilitator) part of my responsibility is to attempt to sculpt the arc of the event -- in other words, make sure it has a beginning, middle and end.

The cast asked if they could make a short speech of their own as part of the introduction. Of course. Ruth wrote it and Linda read it. It was beautiful and spoke of the fact that they are "Kids. Just kids," and asked the audience to hear them. The text of this speech is part of Rina's Legislative Theatre Report.

Of course, sorting through all of this took time and meant we did not get notes from last night or a run and notes in as I had hoped before the show.

The audience arrived. Having been told for days that we were oversold on the opening night and concern from all sides

about what we were going to do with all the people, we had about a 60% house. Almost all people in "suits". Evidently, here is how this happened:

Go Direct had bought 80 seats of a 150 seat house. That group booking, added to RSVP's for opening, sold tickets and the 25 free tickets set aside each night for street-youth, added up to an oversold house. The Firehall Box Office had been turning people away on the phone for days. We all had had a concern about the street youth showing up at the door and not being able to get in, or having turned people with reservations away. Trying to avoid this chaos, calls went out to Headlines' "friends" who had RSVP'd to opening night complimentary tickets, asking them if they would move to another night. At the same time, the Firehall also called people on its list and asked them to give up seats for opening, AND, it turns out Go Direct called 30 of its people and asked them not to come, too! But word of being sold out must have kept the street-youth away from this show. Two came. There were at least 15 to 25 at all other shows. What a fiasco of lack of communication!

It was an audience of observers. The world onstage was utterly foreign to them. It was great for them to be seeing it but how could they participate? Instead, everyone wanted to talk. At various times in the evening arguments broke out between cast and audience members. After the show one woman mentioned to me she felt the "audience had been on trial". I disagreed with her and said I felt it was the other way around -- the cast had been on trial and had defended themselves with vigor.

There were about half a dozen interventions in the whole evening. Most of our time was spent in heated discussion. Although the information that got put out in this Forum was good and the cast felt good about speaking and I felt good for them, I do not think the evening was good theatre. It was a raucous and theatrical town hall meeting. I am struggling with this because we are a theatre company presenting a theatre event, not a social service agency hosting a meeting.

The cast are taking control of the Forum and this both pleases and challenges me. I feel I have a responsibility to instill a sense of safety in the room so people can come onto the stage and also to move through the play. We have to vacate the theatre at 10:30 -- there are real time limits on what we can do.

The cast hung around for a while for the opening night reception but just as the Forum was foreign territory for the audience, this crowd was now foreign territory for the cast. Their own community wasn't around. I did have a long talk with Judge Gove who was very moved and impressed. I should mention that none of the invited politicians or police were there.

(postscript) Actually, the police were there, incognito and never identified themselves.

## **May 21, 1999**

The Executive Producer for the Community TV Broadcast called early this morning. There was a fire in the remote unit that makes it possible to broadcast live from the Firehall. She doesn't know if the unit will work or not. Even if it does, though, she has, in her words, "deeper concerns". The Community Station is trying to change its image. She is worried about the violence and language in the play and the fact that it is slated to air in a family viewing time slot -- 8 - 10 PM. An Executive decision has been made, three days before the broadcast, to cut the live, interactive part of the project and go to tape, airing later in the evening from 10 PM to midnight. I have to tell the cast.

I had a long talk with Sam Bob on the phone about last night's show. He also felt that the town hall meeting aspect of the event had gone too far. We discussed the areas of the project he is working on. Check-ins continue with Sheryl. She is surrounded by supportive people and still shooting up. None of us have the power to force her to stop, and that approach would not work, anyway. He has got her seeing the Nurse who she already has a relationship with and very, very tentative conversations are starting about entering a program. Sam is also scheduling Tom's surgery. Tom has bounced back over the last few days, the cuts are healing amazingly rapidly and he is no longer on any pain killers. He is laughing and joking around again. There is a walk-in clinic called "Plastics", where he is scheduled to go when we are done. Evidently it will take three hours of his time and they will reset his nose. This is astonishing to me.

The cast were pretty angry about the broadcast news. I agree, of course. It should be families who are seeing this play --

part of the reason for doing the project is that the issues are hidden away and they are being hidden away again. It is obvious, though, that the airing will either be at 10 PM or not at all. Better to get it to air. We have to pick our fights. I should say that Mike Keeping, the TV Director on the project is not happy about it either.

140 reservations coming into tonight. In the dressing room before the show we had a short chat about last night. Some of the cast, Jake in particular, also thought that the talking had swung too far the other way. The process is being very challenging for me. It was Jake who brought this up. The cast was split over it, but they listened to each other. I decided to wait and see what happened onstage.

It turned into a great night. It felt like the show "arrived" tonight. We found a balance between action and dialogue. This balance is very different than I am used to in other Forums, but perhaps it makes sense in this one. This cast comes from an ultimately more silenced community than usual -- even in my experiences working with various groups of other oppressed youth.. They are exploding with things to say and, of course, with a 20 minute play created in three weeks, there is no way that everything everyone wants to say can be in the play. I am trying to encourage them to express themselves first through their characters in interventions. The expression has a dramatically visceral impact this way and I believe it communicates to the audience on more and deeper levels than pure discussion. Then, if there are things that the cast members feel need to be said, we are taking time for in depth and sometimes heated discussion after each intervention.

The challenge in this for me is how to Joke it. I am learning that the discussions go in waves. Someone will say something and it will spark a wave of comment and debate that may run for 5 or 10 minutes. My only chance to move on in the play without antagonizing the energy in the room (cast and audience) is to move back to the theatre between the waves. If I don't catch it at the right point it means waiting until the next one. There was no way to prepare for this; no way to encounter this energy in the rehearsal hall. The entire run is going to be a continuation of rehearsals -- not on the play for the cast, but on how to Joke this Forum for me. I'm exhausted, though. Literally, I feel empty. All I am doing is sleeping and doing the Forum each night.

One of the great interventions tonight led to a discussion of "Cop Watch". This is something that evidently tried to start here a few years ago but fell apart. It is in the U.S. Local, concerned citizens with video cameras keeping an eye on the police. Good idea. (Cop Watch came up every night.)

## **May 23, 1999**

Rogers did their set-up in the theatre today. Five cameras and a different kind of remote unit outside the building. The run tonight is their first rehearsal. We called the cast for 7 PM. They were really pleased about this, a sign that they are doing well. They all arrived at 7 sharp. At 7:05 Linda started yelling. No way was she going to wear a microphone and a battery pack. She was already speaking loud enough. The sound people were confused, to say the least. I told them to leave her alone and to mike up everyone else. Sam went to talk with her. I don't know what he said but at around 7:30 she agreed to wear a mike.

The run was great tonight. Really tight. I sat and watched it and thought of all the struggles we had putting it together; of the terrible situation of losing Sheryl days before opening and working Michael in and how the squat scene had fallen apart and how hard it had been to find the squeegee scene, etc. etc.....and here we are in the middle of the run and they know this play backwards and perform it with extreme confidence. It is obvious in every moment that the play is theirs.

The Forum was filled with attitude, especially from Linda. She really showed herself to the audience tonight and some of it wasn't pretty. As I have written this it sounds harsh, but it isn't meant to be. My sense of what is happening is that over the last four days the cast members have grown into being onstage in front of 140 or so people and having their attention. The cast are very creative and courageous survivors. They are also filled with anger and rightly so. They are talking openly about being abandoned first by parents and then by Society. That anger gets splattered sometimes on anyone in the vicinity. In rehearsals it was on each other and me. Now there is the audience and the Rogers crew -- these strangers who also have opinions and needs, sometimes supportive sometimes not. This stewpot is a learning experience for all of us, every moment.

A Youth counselor who knows many of the cast came to me after the Forum tonight and wanted to know how we had managed to accomplish what he saw on stage throughout the evening in only three weeks. He was dumbfounded. He really sees the distance they have traveled, not expecting them to be "polite". The conversation with him was interesting for me because, of course, I am buried in the project. He sees their focus and their confidence and their ability to work together and also to let strangers into their world and work with them. All stunning accomplishments in his eyes.

There was an intervention tonight that I want to mention: CR, who was in the workshop, intervened in the squat. He replaced Bailey and in a very poetic way mourned Louise. This injection of humanity into the moment changed the whole rest of the play. Vanessa didn't storm off. Something harsh broke. Monzi gave Freddy the heroin hit. There was no pressure on Reality to become a prostitute. Not ideal, but movement.

### **May 27, 1999**

Only Jake and Sheryl (and Sam and Michael and me) showed up for the video night. Welfare Wednesday. Speculation is that people were out partying. They had all told Michael they were coming earlier in the day. The video looks good. We all agree it would have been great if what went to tape was Friday or Saturday's Forum, Sunday seemed quite subdued. Oh well -- there is no controlling that.

Sheryl seemed more centered. We didn't talk about programs -- I am leaving that in Sam's hands. We did talk about employment follow-up. Michael is planning meetings with employers and cast/workshop people for next week. Sam is on salary for the next two weeks and Michael for the next four, in order for them to do this follow-up work. (Michael's employment was extended two weeks in recognition of his involvement in the play and not being able to get the final organizing done because of that.) Organizing continues to get Maggie into housing. There are a number of options and we are trying to sort out the best one with her.

Adrienne called today and had had a very similar conversation with Inspector Dave Jones from the Vancouver Police as I had with Constable Boyle. Apparently, he is "the boss" she spoke of. We appear to have hurt their feelings with the way the police were portrayed in the play. The potential for a meeting between the workshop participants, cast, advocates and Police is building for the week after next. A dialogue. My hope is that it will be more than this and that real change can come from it. In order for this to happen, I think the Police are going to have to come to terms with what is really happening in the street.

I had a conversation with Constable Boyle. We agreed to nix the "drive around" and a meeting between me, her and Inspector Jones, as we do not want it to pre-empt the larger community meeting.

Word from Michael: Maggie's application is going in today for residency in housing. This will get her off the street and be, hopefully, a springboard for her to get where she wants, which is more the Commercial Drive area. Sheryl is entering Detox and will continue her work with the Nurse.

I had a conversation late in the day with Virginia from Go Direct. Some good things brewing. She is asking to forward Rina's Legislative Theatre report to her contacts in the United Way, many of whom came to the play and would like to use the report as input to adapt their services (these are representatives of 43 agencies) as they relate to the street. This is potentially a wonderful, concrete chance for change.

Also, Judge Gove is asking if there is any way to show the play to groups of Judges. He was impressed. Doing it live again will be difficult, but we can use the video, bring some of the cast to do discussion before and after. This also could lead to changed attitudes in the court system, and, Judges being who they are, perhaps changes in consciousness in the political realm.

### **June 30, 1999**

I have been out of town, first giving some workshops at a Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in NY, and then at PACT's (Professional Association of Canadian Theatres) yearly conference in Ontario.

The meeting with the Police is on hold. The Chief of Police has been fired. He was going to co-chair the meeting with Michael.

I am very concerned that in the long run this will mean that the energy from the play will not translate into movement inside the police force. >From Headlines' perspective the timing could not be worse. Speculation is that this Chief was dismissed because of his attempts to reform the force and that he will be replaced with a much more hard-line Chief.

### **July 20, 1999**

This will be my last entry in this report. There are good things and disappointments:

No Civic Politician or the Police Chief came to any performance, although some City Staff did attend. Rina's Legislative Theatre Report is finished and with Adrienne. We are waiting for it to be submitted to the City. It is also part of this report.

The meeting with the police has not happened. Now we are waiting for Inspector Jones to get back off holiday, so he can help co-ordinate the meeting from inside the police force. I fear that the great energy generated by the play is going to dissipate because it is taking so long to have this meeting. Many people have called the office wondering when/if it is happening. The organizing of the meeting is now out of my hands.

The follow-up work opportunities have not happened. Michael reports that some of them vanished because money for programmes got pulled. Some of them turned from paid work into volunteer work.

As requested the Legislative Theatre Report has gone to Go Direct for distribution to the United Way and Judge Gove. I have made myself available for meetings with them if desired or needed.

I continue to run into people on the street who saw the live performance or the televised event and were deeply moved by it. Many tell stories about how it has changed their relationship to street-youth in general and to squeegee kids in particular -- they say it is no longer possible to turn the other way, or to de-humanize them. This is an intangible change out there, one that, hopefully creates islands of safety in this wealthy city that has such a hostile relationship to poverty.

I have written letters of introduction for each cast member (Michael's suggestion). Something that they can give a potential employer or program co-ordinator. I offer in the letter to talk with the person if s/he calls, regarding my experience with the cast member.

Maggie is still in housing, doing well, and talking about going back to school. Ruth is working in a fabric store. Sheryl has been in and out of detox twice. Michael is talking about staying in Vancouver and going to animation school. Tom and Linda are in Montreal and Jake is somewhere in the east.

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