

CORPORATE U FINAL REPORT

Corporate U was a very successful roller coaster ride. Feedback from audiences has been tremendously positive, with accounts from many of how the Forum event challenged their perceptions of the issues of globalization, reframed their definitions of their own complicity in the issues and stimulated conversations for many days after the event. Media-wise, we got a 3 1/2 (out of 4) star rave review in the Globe and Mail and a pan in the Georgia Straight. There's the breaks. We had eleven Forum Theatre events -- in my opinion, nine of them really engaged and lively, two of them (including opening night) very quiet and a "Joker's nightmare". (See report entry for December 8.)

The telecast with Shaw TV went very, very well. The web cast (a first time experiment with Tao Communications) was a success in that we took an intervention from Croatia, but also problematic in that the software requirements shifted hours before going to air, as did the server, and this created chaos for people all over the world who tried to view the play. We did clock 542 hits on our web site the three days leading up to the event.

926 people saw the play in the theatre. We played to 58% houses. The people at Shaw estimate that 25,000 people see a broadcast. This one got a lot of publicity, so the numbers may be higher. There were also the 542 hits on the web, although it is hard to know how many of these people were able to view.

I did a lot of experimenting with Joking in this production. Corporate U was the most highly "produced" Forum Headlines has ever done -- also the most symbolic in ways. Our mandate was to take the big issues of globalization and translate them into human terms. I think we were very successful in doing this. In the Forum it meant that I was going to the audience more than usual, asking them to translate the human intervention (a moment between two or more people) into a global moment (a scenario between nations). Judging from the response most nights, people found this very easy and very stimulating to do -- perhaps easier for them as I learned, throughout the course of the run, how to do it with ease.

I also never used the words "oppression", "oppressed" or "oppressor" in this Forum. The issues are way more complex than that. Instead, I invited people to engage in the internal and external struggles of the characters. This led to "magic" interventions sometimes, but no more often, I think, than when using Boal's traditional language. On the other hand it helped open up great insights into how we are all, each and every one of us, complicit in the large issues.

In the original proposal for this project I had planned to create three scenarios: one "human issue" scene, a more symbolic and systemic scene, and a third possibility, that would come from the audience each night. As we worked this format became more and more untenable.

Artistically, it was more beneficial to be able to tell a coherent story, rather than create three separate scenes, and so the systemic issues became reflected in the human story. Once this had been accomplished, it became apparent that there was not going to be enough time in a two hour Forum Theatre event, to solicit a short scene from the audience each night. This is when I lit upon the idea of returning to the Corporations in Our Heads experiment (report at end of this report) during the play, and decided to do it from within Nikki's monologue. Once I figured out how to do this (it took about four nights) this worked very, very well.

Best, though, to start at the beginning:

September 1, 2000

It seems like a good idea to start this now, before the real chaos of production kicks in. Especially as something happened this week that could greatly affect the project:

We have been waiting to hear about our Direct Access funding from BC Gaming. The process used to take eight weeks. Because of a terrible backlog of applications, we have just been told it could take up to twenty-four weeks to hear about the grant. How can this be?

I have talked with various staff at the commission, to MP Libby Davies' Executive Assistant; to David Perry, Joy MacPhail's MLA (Minister Responsible) Executive Assistant; left a message for Jenny Kwan MLA and had a long chat with Ray Parks, the new Executive Director at Gaming. Here's what I know:

There is a systemic flaw in the process. Gaming now needs a Society's information to be complete before a file is open. This was not always the case. Because Societies generally need to wait until their audit is done, and fiscal year ends tend to be March 31, applications tend to go in by mid-June. It takes this long to get the year-end books done, get the audit done, have an AGM to accept the audit and then do the forms in a timely and responsible manner. Certainly this is the case with Headlines.

Summer is also the time when the staff at Gaming take their holidays. I was told by a staff-person that "well, you can't get in the way of people's holidays!" What organization on the planet plans staff holidays at the very time of year when they know they are going to be the busiest? Evidently, staff have been asking management (the Provincial Government) for permission to do overtime and/or hire more staff -- because they are very stressed out over the back-log being almost half a year long, and the knowledge that this means that real people are going to lose real jobs in the charitable sector. Hiring and overtime have been refused because there "is no money". How are organizations supposed to budget?

The backlog means, in Headlines' case, that I had to "gut" the budget for this project, which opens in December -- the same time we might hear about the funds. I cannot and will not commit to spending funds I don't have. I am "gambling" (it is Gaming \$\$ after all), that we will get at least 50% of our request. I have, however, reduced my salary until the year end, Siobhan has offered to not go to a five-day week, remaining at four, I have eliminated a full week of rehearsals from the creation schedule and reduced the publicity budget. As of this writing, though, we are still \$13,000 short of the bare bones budget and fundraising madly.

November 5, 2000

With all the best intentions, I didn't get to this again, and now the THEATRE FOR LIVING workshop starts tomorrow. SO MUCH has happened:

We have the funds, although we still haven't heard from Gaming. Siobhan and I went into overdrive on fundraising and the BC Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration came through with \$13,000 and some other funds came through also and so we have the week of rehearsals back and, instead of taking my salary back right away I put more funds into design and publicity.

We accepted Mirjana Galovich's (Communications Director) resignation early in October and the scenario that unfolded, bringing Candace Batycki in as a freelance publicist and starting Jessica Peart on full-time early as Community Co-ordinator, was an expensive option -- nothing to do....I

think I will get my salary back in the long run.

There are many good things happening, amid the usual surprises:

I hired Craig Hall as Technical Director and lead designer. He is a recent graduate of Studio 58, came highly recommended. We met, got along and I followed my gut. I have given him a production budget and asked him to hire the rest of the team (lights, costumes, slides, crew). He is very happy with this task, as it gives him leeway to "fly". He has brought on Shane Droucker for lights, Christine Hackman for costumes and Tim Matheson (Tim worked on Mamu a few years ago) for slides. I also hired Kelley Creelman as Stage Manager.

Kevin Millsip (Check Your Head) and I interviewed approximately 30 people in three days. Over 40 resumes came in applying for positions as workshop participants and actors. This is the fruit of Jessica's work. Great. No way to interview them all, though, so we vetted the resumes. We have room for 18 participants including the cast of 4. If someone wanted to be in the play, they had to audition by doing improvisational work with me and Kevin. Almost half did. We looked for as much diversity in the group as possible, in every way. The workshop group consists of hard-core activists and also people who are concerned about the issues but lack knowledge and are paralyzed by that. People in their early 20's to people in their late 50's. A cross-section of gender, orientation and ethnic origin.

We also chose the cast during this process: Kevin was always going to be in the play. The three other are: Emme Lee -- Emme was in my training session this August. She is an activist and also a model, struggling with this irony. Valerie Laub -- Valerie was in the theatre many years ago. She left to become an art therapist and is toying with coming back. She is not an activist. She is one of those people who are very concerned and doesn't know what to do.....except she lives a very simple life (doesn't have an answering machine!) and rides her bike everywhere. Charlene Wee -- Charlene has been working with the Rice Girls, a group of South Asian women doing theatre on globalization. Headlines has facilitated money for the Rice Girls.

We had two dinners at my place over the last couple of months. At the first was Headlines' staff and Kevin and Lyndsay Poaps from Check Your Head. Our mandate was to come up with a title, as we had to get the graphic competition going and start on press releases. Out of lively discussion came Corporate U, and the idea that we could turn the Firehall Arts Centre into a campus that has been overtaken by corporate marketing.

After this dinner I went into a mini-crisis. Having made this decision, it dawned on me that there was a flaw in the thinking: if this was a Corporate Campus, why was it "teaching" anti-globalization courses? The answer? We are activists who have occupied the campus!

At the second dinner, which included the guests of the first and also the design team, I put this forward and we played with the idea. This is where putting bar codes on everyone's wrists came, and also lots of ideas for the lobby and front of the building. We had to be careful here to deal with structural things and not content of the play, as this really had to come from the community workshop.

The graphics competition for this project was a bust, but it yielded a great graphic. A bust because there were two entries. It never took off out there, mostly, I think, because we were going to the wrong places and Jessica came on too late in the process to be able to fix it. Luckily, Pat Harrison was one of the two entries and had submitted his spectacular graphic.

The printer for the posters made a colour error on the first run of 1,200 posters and so did another run. We had 2,400 posters for this show -- a HUGE number. We did manage to use about 75% of them.

We finally got confirmation from Rogers (in the midst of transforming into Shaw) that the telecast would go ahead. This was up in the air until very late because of the change over.

I also started wondering, because the play is about globalization issues, about the possibility of a live, interactive web cast. Could we stream the signal live over the web and create chat space where people could communicate with our tele/web actors and through them, intervene from anywhere on the planet? As it turned out, Jessica was part of an organization called Tao Communications -- a group of politically active net folk. I brought them and Mike from Shaw together and we agreed that yes, it could be done, no one had ever tried it before with Forum Theatre (the pornographers do this on the web already) and that it would be GREAT to try.

The Firehall box office person informed me last night, at the opening of another show, that they are already getting inquiries about tickets -- a month before we open!

November 6, 2000

Balancing hypnosis find the spot lead the blind blind cars complete the image sculpting partners groups of 4 circle

We have begun. I was really nervous coming into today -- such a long buildup into the start of the workshop....I am feeling a lot of pressure on this piece. It is a great group, though, very focused, and we did good work today.

The moments that really resonated for me out of the Images today:

A group image, early on, that came out of group sculpting, an image not made consciously by anyone, in which there were many people looking at the sky....someone in the workshop said, "it was as if a bomb went off"....this led to a conversation about how many people have a sense that something big has happened recently when they weren't looking....in fact the bits and pieces of the globalised world have been being put into place slowly over many years....but too many haven't been paying attention. Now, because the effects are becoming so apparent, it seems like it is something that has just happened very suddenly...like a bomb going off. There were comments from people that this is also the feeling when the picture comes into focus -- that life altering moment when it is possible to see clearly, and one is never the same, can't go back, can't not know anymore.

Another very clear image of a very gentle struggle.....a puppeteer -- a person who has another by strings and two others are controlling one character. He tries to break free and with a gentle firmness, they surround him, tightly, restricting his movement, forcing him to remain and do what they want. This was a very rich Image, some people seeing it as foster care, others as school and other learning institutions, me as World Bank policies, others as family violence. This led to an interesting conversation about how many of these various visions of the image fit together...that the microcosm of violence in the family is the macrocosm of World Bank and IMF coercion.

People seemed happy with the work at the end of the day -- very reflective -- challenged

perhaps by what they had seen and felt. The group may want more process than I imagined they would -- ie -- more safety structures built in -- confidentiality things, and agreements around sexist, racist etc. language -- something I had not thought would be necessary with this group -- this may be an indicator of the number of facilitators in the room -- we ran out of time today but are going to talk about it tomorrow.

I also have decided to plan an hour at the beginning of every day to talk about the issues of the previous day's work. I do this in training sessions (about techniques) but have never done it on issues -- it seems important on this project, and I hope it will be the place to do the analysis necessary on globalization connections that can't happen in the emotional content of the images....I will also use these discussions to help me decide what to do that day, instead of planning the day, as I would normally do, based on my own conceptions of the previous day's work.....another way that this process is going to be more "in the moment" than other projects.

November 7, 2000

discussion fill the empty space clap exchange effective hand glass bottle finish groups of 4
autosculpting circle

I need to try to find a way for the discussion time not to be suggestions for scenes -- this is far less valuable to me at this point than focusing on what core issues arose in the previous day.

The group was very surprised by the depth of feeling today. I watched many of them throughout the day hold back the tears, and it has struck me how much this group needs to cry.....we deal with so much grief -- the grief of shattered lives, shattered nations, a shattered environment, a shattered planet....and we are so busy organizing, when do we mourn? hmmmmmm.....maybe this has real relevance to what we need to do.....

One of the strongest images today was, well, I can best describe it as a sacrifice. A child/woman (a nation, the Earth) is lying on the back of another woman...on an altar....being offered to rape. We are all complicit in the ritual... in the Image all the "players" participate in their own way.

In another Image an old woman is lying (in the street? in the hospital?) Someone is trying to get to her but all the surrounding chaos makes it impossible. She is dying....I read this Image very strongly as the disintegration of the health care system under free trade -- no one else did -- many others saw it as taking place in the street.....

Another idea that rose up today -- putting some video cameras in the lighting grid - -they don't have to work, even, just be there, pointed at the audience. Something to make people think.....

November 8, 2000

discussion fear/protector glass cobra the intestine finish magnetic image oppressor families
rainbow of desire circle

A very powerful day today that had laughter, tears, experimenting, confusion, clarity.....

I continue to do games with the group and mostly they really like them. I believe strongly that the games are integral to the work -- to creating an environment where we can do deep work -- experience tells me that when the games are shortchanged, the investigative work suffers.

A very powerful Image and improvisation came from one of the last Magnetic Images: A man and a young girl. She is on her knees, her thumb in her mouth, reaching up for a wallet that the man is dangling in front of her. He is hiding a drill behind his back. Very disturbing, this, and multi-layered: There is the pedophile aspect of the Image on the surface. Deeper into activation it becomes apparent that she is (as has happened before) also a larger symbol....she is all consumers, she is a People, a Nation.....he is "consumerism", a transnational, a bank, ...where are we?...the playground, the street, in front of the TV, in a car, in an airplane, at a concert....anywhere, including in our sleep. Deeper in, as we turned it into an improvisation, it became apparent that the girl, although "naive" is also very intelligent, able to manipulate, etc.....and she thinks that she can "win", that she can trick the man -- but simply by wanting what he has, she has lost -- she is already trapped.

I did an experiment today, and the group was great, went with me -- this is the only way I have of developing new techniques: I had them become someone in their lives who is pro-globalization. Could be someone they know, know of, imagine.....walk like that person -- make it bigger; make a sound that is the character, and a gesture....create a caricature. When they had these, I asked them to walk around as the character and see if they could recognize each other -- create "families". They did. Then, as these families, they made improvisations about how the families dealt with the activists out there who are organizing against globalization. Some of the groups had a very hard time with this -- it was not specific enough and missed a step -- should have had them make images as an interim step -- but two of the improvisations were very valuable:

Four powerful dictators are sitting around trying to out-power each other.....discussing the merits of torture, threats and what it all means. It was chilling and very funny. Everything they talked about has been done to people....burying them alive....cutting off fingers, killing their children..... There is something here that is of value to the play -- the larger, terrible picture.

A large, dysfunctional family has gathered together for a portrait, so that they can convince the public to vote for the patriarch, who is running for office. They squabble and almost kill each other, as the photographer tries to photograph the happy family. The idea of what is really under the surface of the organized "enemy".....understanding that we are redefining what/who that is, was very valuable.

Then we did Rainbow of Desire and it was great, and the group loved it. The story involved a woman and her ex-lover. The ex is upwardly mobile and they have an argument about a present that they are buying for the woman's son. The woman wants to make sure it is not made with sweatshop labour. The ex doesn't get it. The layers are very complex.....having to do with how we don't listen to each other, how we react to the issues becoming personal, to having our values challenged, our choices challenged.....many things.

We are all exhausted. So many of the group said this in the circle. Tomorrow we will make plays and then on Saturday we will do Forum.

I had a talk with the cast today, before we left. We haven't been able to get together, just us yet, but I have been watching them and know that they are nervous. What we are doing is, of course, still so unclear. Various cast members are feeling inadequate at the moment....not being "experts" on the issues. I reminded them that it is not the function of this workshop to develop material -- but to mine emotional content. It isn't the function of the play to give lots of statistical information -- give people a pamphlet for this.....the play needs to make people cry, and question themselves -- and so we have needed to cry in our exploration....and to get angry...and

question ourselves....and be grossed out....and laugh.....etc.....I can see them filling with material. They agree this is happening, but are wondering "why them"? I explained that each of them brings their own specific attributes into the process -- but the thing they had in common was their ability to be "in the moment" in the audition. The first two days (or more) of rehearsal we will spend at a table, hashing out the journey of the play -- this needs to happen, then this, then this....in order to fill the mandate of the workshop.....keeping in mind that once the workshop is over we have to take the material and make ART.

November 9, 2000

discussion leader of the orchestra choose a leader the fall song of the mermaid circle

I asked that discussion today focus into the large, core Images in preparation for Song of the Mermaid, and, finally, we got to these.....I think it just took this long to get from the general to the specific because of the nature of the issues.

Some of the things mentioned:

how we oppress each other and are complicit in global issues denial seduction, indoctrination, particularly of youth and now, infants by way of logos on diapers, infant mobiles violence being dressed up beautifully how do we make images applicable to the middle class? the use of language, especially in media...that erases power relationships what we are informed of and what we are not informed of freedom and "well-being" are being commodified corporate feuds over ownership of Images unification of thought and identity by wearing the same labels the absolute power of patenting being told we are "panicking" "Green washing" trusting the Corporation but not the person beside us...or friends, family... the "spiritual values" of banking, shopping...."shopping is good"...the new banner on the Bay, downtown protest itself being co-opted into "special" 1 day events. creating and maintaining community is itself a revolutionary act do we/how do we exist outside the system?

These and the photos that I have been taking of the Images and other issues already on the wall....like the idea of being sacrificed, all went into the "pot" for the Song of the Mermaid exercise. What came out were three very strong plays. These plays are not what will end up on stage at the Firehall. They are all part of the research process.

#1 A family is at home. The police bring a teenage girl home who has been caught shoplifting. Her mother has had it...she is fed up.....the police mention that they know the mother is on welfare, has a record....that they are starting an assessment as to whether or not they will have the child taken from her.....the mother's lover is all for the girl shoplifting, just not getting caught. While they argue, the TV starts to talk to the girl....suggesting she turn him on...once on, he starts to throw things at her through the screen....things she "must have" but cannot afford. As the argument escalates, we see that the Police are listening....as the lover is talking about tearing down the system, blowing things up....the girl is asking her mother, who is threatening violence for the things from the TV, she can't have them, she storms off to her room and pulls out razor blades.

#2 A waiting room. Two women are behind the counter. One is symbolic of the "rest of the bureaucracy", one is on the front line with the public. No one gets what they want or need. As the tension builds, the public start to fight with each other, but the guy running the corporate workshop for staff gets through no problem. A woman who needs a form signed so she can

enter hospital collapses.

#3 We are in India. the manager of a shipyard is talking to his N. American boss, trying to get shoes for the workers in the yard, to protect their feet. He makes arguments about productivity, to no avail, and is told that there are no more funds because the company is expanding and all profits are going into that. If he can't work within his budget they will find someone else who will.

A one armed man comes and kneels before him. He lost his arm at this work, but wants to come back. The manager refuses him, because he has no value as a worker. The man goes home to his son, who is writing poetry -- he explains to his son that he cannot work, but that someone must. The son puts down the paper and pencil and goes to kneel in front of the manager.

We are taking Friday off so people can attend a big biotech conference. On Saturday we will do Forum on these plays.

November 11, 2000

Discussion Boxing Forum on plays Discussion Circle

Last day of the community workshop. The morning discussion was quite rich, coming off of seeing the plays on Thursday. Discussion boiled down to a central desire: If the audience for Corporate U can leave the event with a new understanding of how we are all complicit through the seemingly small decisions in our everyday lives, then we will have accomplished a lot. Complicity has come up again and again.

Forum on the plays was strong and a good thing to do as I think it provided some closure on the week for the participants who are not cast members. An interesting theme in the interventions was the fine line between people taking responsibility for the situations they are in and solving the problems themselves -- because they have to live -- and not letting large corporations and governments "off the hook". This is always a complex balance to find in issues like this -- and will be one of the challenges of the play.

We have two days off now, and then start the final creation process on Tuesday. We are all feeling a bit daunted by the task -- the workshop came up with so much....I talked with the group about expectations today and told them that there is no way the play can be about everything we talked about this week -- that it is now our role to make decisions and to make art.

I am looking forward to letting all the Images and discussion percolate for two days...going to try not to do any work on the play.

November 14, 2000

Well, its just us in the rehearsal hall. Kevin, Charlene, Valerie, Emme, Kelly (stage manager) and me. We had a hard day, although the group was happy at the end of it -- I felt really constipated -- in a creation kind of way.

I always knew we would be facing this dilemma with this project and now we are here. Our task is to invent a play that synthesizes the material from the workshop. We are not, as is usually the case with projects like this in my experience, making a play about the people in the room. The play is "in the room" -- we can all feel it -- there to be discovered.

We kept getting bogged down in too much detail today. We need to be working in broader strokes.

We believe that we have the following: After setting up the occupation, we see Emme, hidden in a sweater with a hood, on the street. She is for sale. Her first time. Who is Emme? She is a young woman up against the wall. She is also Canada: Open for business. Selling her attributes. Behind Emme is a slide of The Bay and "Shopping is Good", their new slogan.

Valerie enters laden with Xmas gifts, rushing back to work after lunch. They crash into each other. As Emme helps her pick up the gifts, it becomes obvious that Valerie cannot "escape"...in a guilty rage created by no one but herself, Valerie gives Emme \$40. "Here. I want you to have this. Just, keep it". And she rushes off.

Kevin and Charlene are finishing a meeting in which the Transnational that Charlene represents is buying Kevin's company. Isn't there a way that at least some of these jobs can stay in Canada, he asks. No. Economics in the New World Order are explained. Charlene leaves. Valerie enters. Kevin is her boss. After getting through her "terrible" experience, Kevin has good news for her: she is being promoted, and will be responsible for co-ordinating the shut-down of the Vancouver office/plant. Five hundred layoffs. But...we made so much \$\$ last year.....exactly....and we have got to seize the opportunity....blah, blah...she does not want to do this, but if she doesn't, someone else will, and she has a mortgage, debts, etc.....

We think that the other two, Kevin and Charlene also encounter Emme on the corner -- and when they do we follow each of them into their "life"...into how they are complicit with the various aspects of globalization.....and we eventually follow Emme. It would be nice if we could orchestrate them all coming together at the end.....

At the moment, this is the possibility.

November 15, 2000

We had a really productive day today, and MIGHT have the rough structure of the play. We have been working from central images that came from the workshop:

1. we are all complicit.
2. we are sacrificing ourselves and each other to an economic "god"
- 3 we are in denial
- 4 global violence and domestic violence are linked
- 5 the oppression inherent in all of this is passed down and across on all levels
- 6 the "poor" are criminalized
- 7 the violence is dressed up beautifully
- 8 we are seducing and indoctrinating youth at a younger and younger age
- 9 creating and maintaining community is, in and of itself, a revolutionary act

We have come up with a series of scenes that, interestingly, have "biblical" titles -- interesting because we feel the planet is engaged in ritualistic sacrifice. Keep in mind.....everything is still up for discussion....lots will change. We are playing with time a lot....and there are slide images under scenes, juxtaposing the content of the scene...sound possibilities....video possibilities.....scenes need "hard content"...statistics sometimes, \$\$\$ info, etc....(not a lot of this, but where appropriate)....also a deep emotional reality.....

The audience enters a traditional looking lecture hall with a podium and screens on either side. They have all been bar coded and scanned. The lobby is filled with Corporate info. On the screens in the lecture hall are an endless loop of advertisements. There are video cameras in

the lighting grid. We all have bar codes on our wrists. We set up the occupation of the campus, and that there is something we need to explain, to show the people in the lecture hall.....this can all be really tongue in cheek.....we KNOW we are in a theatre at a play...this is a theatrical convention....we can have fun with it.....

1. 1st denial

Emme is standing on a corner, under a streetlight....

The doors of the theatre are flung open. It is Dean Wee.....what do we think we are doing.....a fast exchange about how the corporate agenda has taken over the campus.....we agree that she and we need to do what we need to do...she will call the authorities.....(what about my tenure???) we understand that.....

We start again.....Emme is standing on a corner, under a streetlight.....its OK for the audience to assume she is a prostitute. Who is Emme? She is a young woman up against the wall. She is also Canada. Behind Emme is a slide of The Bay and "Shopping is Good".

Valerie enters laden with Xmas gifts, rushing back to work after lunch. They crash into each other. As Emme helps her pick up the gifts, it becomes obvious that Valerie cannot "escape"...in a guilty rage created by no one but herself, Valerie gives Emme \$40. "Here. I want you to have this. Just keep it". And she rushes off.

2. Lighting the Fire

Kevin and Charlene are finishing a meeting in which the Transnational that Charlene represents is buying Kevin's Hi-Tech company. Isn't there a way that at least some of these jobs can stay in Canada, he asks. No. We get a passionate, evangelical lesson in Global economics. Charlene leaves.

3. Preparing the Alter

Valerie enters. Kevin is her boss. After getting through her "terrible" experience, Kevin has good news for her: she is being promoted, and will be responsible for co-ordinating the shut-down of the Vancouver office/plant. Five hundred layoffs. But...we made so much \$\$ last year.....exactly....and we have got to seize the opportunity....blah, blah...she does not want to do this, but if she doesn't, someone else will, and she has a mortgage, debts, etc.....Kevin convinces her it is the best thing, and assures her that she is safe.

4. Worshipping the Gods

Charlene crosses by Emme, on the street. She stops. Emme's presence -- an Asian woman on the street -- enrages Charlene, who is from Singapore. Emme represents everything Charlene has worked not to be. Charlene degrades Emme. Once Charlene has gone, Emme creates a cardboard sign for herself that says..."Need help with your Computer? Ask me."

5. Offering the sacrifice

Emme talks to the audience, She explains that she had a job -- a good job -- at Kevin's company -- but she and everyone else got laid off because they moved the operation to (some other country). Don't tell me to fight back...she tells the audience....I'm too busy adapting.....I have a daughter...

As we have been hearing this we have been seeing the daughter (Charlene) in front of the TV (Kevin). The TV is her baby-sitter and is dangling objects in front of her...as Emme breaks away from the pole and enters her home, this scene comes to life....her daughter wants all these things and won't listen to reason.....she "needs" them.....the TV remains a character throughout....as Emme loses it and beats her daughter.....the "bubble" of this scene ends with Emme back on the corner.

6. Shattered Community

Valerie leaves the building, re-encountering Emme. Valerie has just been laid off, having completed her task of laying off the 500. She is in shock, angry, shamed. She and Emme have an exchange in which Emme tries to give her advice on coping.....Valerie lashes out at Emme.

In the midst of this, Kevin arrives.....and there is silence.

We do Forum. At 9:30, regardless what is happening, Kevin's cell phone rings. The police are at the gates of the Campus. In riot gear. The response is much larger than we thought it would be. They have to get through a line of students first.....we have about 25 minutes.....

At the very end of the Forum, during the applause??? at least as we are winding down....the Forum needs to be OVER -- the doors open again. There are shields with Corporate U logos on them? The Hi Tech Company logo?.....taped sound of batons banging.....slide images of the Hyatt....Seattle....

.....this is the theatre but it is all real.....we don't need to deal with the police tonight.....not tonight.....

Even as I articulate the last 2 day's work here, I know there are things that are missing, and lots might change -- but this is something to stand up in a really rough way and start to work on.

November 16, 2000

We had a great day today and were all, I think, shocked by how much we have. The cast committed really deeply to the material and, although of course it was the first time we had tried to stumble through any of it, a lot of it will work and some of it was very powerful.

We also found things that were missing and have added two concurrently running scenes:

After Charlene's exchange with Emme, where she berates her for having no job and being on the street asking for money, Charlene addresses the audience -- she breaks out of the play and becomes an activist occupying the campus. She acknowledges that the audience probably thinks her character was hard on Emme.....and asks that everyone with a red bar code follow her and Kevin into the lobby, where they want to show them how things are in Guatemala, Philippines, Singapore....(decision TBA).. all audience members will be bar coded when they

come into the theatre -- every tenth one will get a red code. These two scenes will run concurrently:

Lobby: Charlene becomes a worker in a factory in a Free Trade Zone in Guatemala, Philippines, Singapore....(decision TBA). She has not been producing at a high enough level. She is in a chair. Kevin yells at her about production, and that he has to teach her a lesson. He canes her and forces her to apologize and then to ask to keep her job. She goes back to the factory, as an example of what will happen if the workers don't increase production.

Theatre: Valerie sits in her living room, wrapping Christmas presents. She holds up a toy that her son "needs"...."do you know how hard these are to find? Why can't there be more of them? And then she starts to rehearse how to fire people -- she goes through cycles of trying different ways -- they are funny -- they happen faster and faster -- and under it we are hearing the yelling from the lobby..... Emme circles around and finally sits in front of Valerie -- and Valerie tells her that she is being laid off because the plant is being moved to Guatemala, Philippines, Singapore...

The others come back into the theatre. Emme returns to her place. And starts the monologue...."so don't tell me to fight back....I'm too busy adapting.....which leads into her beating her daughter.....

So we have found the international connection.

November 18, 2000

We've had a couple of very good days. Characters are defining, as are relationships, locations defining. I also have let go of the idea of taking the audience out of the theatre and into the lobby. Its a good idea but way too much work in practice. Instead, I have discovered a way to interweave the two scenes (wrapping presents, practicing firing people -- and caning the unproductive worker). They are linked these two, and the power of seeing them together is central to understanding the larger issues. Also, Emme's character (Nikki) moves straight from this to the scene with her daughter....it all flows together. Moving the audience in and out will make the flow impossible.

I am needing to discover the specific ways that each cast member needs to be directed. Some have more performance experience, others more issue experience, another deep life experience.....sorting out how to use their strengths in the play -- to help them feed off of who they are in relation to each other while still serving this particular story is proving a challenge. It wouldn't be so important if the play was straight performance -- they could "lie" their way through the play, "acting" their hearts out. Because this is Forum that is impossible. In interventions they are going to have to know and tell the truth of the character -- not invent it. Finding the connections for them is making the play stronger -- and is also being very challenging for them -- and part of the current excitement, I think.

November 22, 2000

A lot has happened. I have been too busy to write -- but its all good. We have come a long way in solidifying the play and are starting to make "art", although there are still practical information holes to fill. We spent a lot of the day today doing improvisations "outside" the play -- building history for the characters: Oh...we have names:

Kevin is Andrew Hamilton (Hamilton Pagets), which means we are doing this in the Andrew Hamilton Hall of Communications at the Corporate U Campus. After Andrew made his millions he donated \$\$ to the Campus.....:))). Kevin is also the line manager in the Free trade Zone who canes the worker (no name yet)

Valerie is Claire Emme is Nikki Charlene is : Tan Mei-Ling (Tan is surname) the woman from Amerasia Trading the 14 year old worker who gets caned (no name yet) Mia, Nikki's 8 year old daughter.

History improvisations included:

-Nikki and Mia out buying groceries and bumping into Claire -Mia's 7th birthday party with 2 friends -Mia asking Nikki about her dad -Mei-Ling's initial long distance call to Andrew -Andrew interviewing Claire for her job - Claire's first day on the job -Claire interviewing Nikki for her job - Claire laying Nikki off -Andrew laying Claire off

We have also been doing runs and working bits, knitting it all together. The characters are getting a continuity and evolving as we work. We are making sense of Claire's situation: Although she earns \$70,000 a year she also has a \$300,000 condo (3 bedrooms -- her and 2 kids). Her severance turns into \$31,000 after taxes, so although this is a good sum it doesn't make her secure, because her expenses are so high. Her EI is 55% of her income, so after 6 months, say, of no work she will be living near the edge, unless she sells her home -- which she can't do. At 47 it is highly unlikely she is going to get hired easily, because the market is glutted with younger people who have more current skill sets. Once Claire loses this job that she has been at for 6 years, she is in a very vulnerable place.

We are working in this kind of detail with everyone. Doing the detailed work is creating "real people" on the stage. The cast are being great.

We are also starting to make "pretty pictures" in a staging sense and this will only deepen as we get more and more confident with the statistical and emotional content.

The media is also starting to bite, which is great -- print stories with The Vancouver Sun, the Georgia Straight and the National Post.

November 25, 2000

Its been a tough couple of days.

The journey so far has been really creative and positive. The THEATRE FOR LIVING workshop, the two days spent distilling story and how exciting that was -- feeling that we were really taking what happened in the workshop and creating theatre about that -- standing it up and all the discoveries in that....and also people's reactions to it, how strong it is and how it deals with the issues.....this last few days has had to be very technical -- working smaller and smaller moments. As we have done that, we have been losing the emotional core of the scenes. They have flattened out. The runs have been getting flatter and flatter. We are not making theatre that is literature based -- it is not about the language -- it is about the emotion on the stage -- and today, when I started suggesting it was time to re-integrate the emotions with the technical flow of the scenes it was very hard for the cast.

At the root of this, what I see and interpret from talking with them together and individually, is that they are afraid of what we have done on numerous levels:

-Afraid to feel the scenes. The play paints a desperate picture. A real picture, I think, but one that has little hope. This is OK -- we need to show the problems, not solutions -- the more we show solutions the more we rob the audience of their involvement. The cast needs to allow themselves to feel it. Charlene needs to have a good time playing Mei- Ling....Kevin a good time playing Andrew -- these people don't strike the deal, manipulate people and events around them, because they think they are doing the wrong thing.....they are right in their own minds, and if it wasn't also fun, they wouldn't do it. Likewise, Emme needs to surrender to the confusion, desperation and the violence that is in Nikki, Valerie needs to surrender to the self-interest that propels Claire, and the abyss that Claire faces at the end of the play -- she is very vulnerable -- they are US -- any of us who, with a series of bad circumstances, could end up in the street. Without all this, the play is just words -- and not "great" words at that.

-Doubt about what we have done. We are committed to this material now. The designers are working away on set, lights, costumes etc. Have we made the right play? It could have been anything and it is this. Our mandate was to make a play that took the global issues and made them personal. In doing that have we made a play about Globalization? Or not? If we don't trust the material, how can we commit to it? There are going to be people (this was always the case) who are going to criticize us for what is not in the play. It was never going to be able to contain everything. It contains the most important things that rose up out of the workshop -- but is it in a form that will be recognizable?

-What happens in the Forum? This is going to be a very challenging Forum piece. What do people do???????? The solutions, if they are going to affect more than one person, are structural -- but the moments in the play are personal. My task as Joker is going to be to constantly connect up to the larger issues....take the singular intervention to the global....am I capable of doing that?

I have been having a hard time working with Emme on the monologue. Think I came up with a solution -- we did a lot of improvising around it and then I asked her to write it down on paper. I then took it and reshaped it, editing, adding some things and then gave it back to her to learn like a traditional scripted piece. Here it is:

"I know what you're thinking....what you see when you look at me....I'm lazy....sponging off the system.....I hear it every day.

250 of usI run into people from the plant at the EI computers. 250 from one plant -- and you know, there's lots of plants -- we're all lining up together for the same jobs. we run into each other in line-ups over and over and over again.....its sick. Its like a bomb went off and we didn't see it coming.

EI was 330 a week, but it didn't take long for that to run out....so .. welfare. \$896 a month. rent is \$600 even though I moved into a basement..... what the fuck am I supposed to do?....looked at a place -- \$450 but.....you don't wanna know.....and my welfare would go down, so

and bills have to be paid -- there's heat and hot water...its cold outside ...I'm lining up for hours to get food....couldn't afford to keep my phone, so now I'm lining up for that, too and I need every quarter to buy things I can't get from handouts.....the food only lasts a couple of

days....I have to walk everywhere....downtown's an hour and ten minutes....YOU make an appointment on time....no one takes me seriously...I can't be reached by phone....I look like shit....they leave messages at a voice box -- but they, they know its for poor people....they just look at me...they just leave...they just leave messages....not enough experience.....how can I....how can I....if I can't.....no one gives me a chance.....I have to prove I'm looking for work....fucking welfare....what about shoes and warm sweaters..how am I supposed to...how am I supposed to.. IT TAKES SO LONG JUST TO GET ENOUGH FOR US TO EAT.

so don't tell me to "get organized" don't tell me I'm supposed to be fighting back. I'm busy surviving. adapting. I have a daughter."

I have given the cast two days off. I think this is the best thing to do right now. Get some distance from the material. We are, perhaps, too close to it. And they are tired.... and I also need some "space" to regroup and prepare for the final week -- into technical rehearsals, slides, light cues, costumes, etc.....it has been very, very busy with lots of non- Corporate U things taking time -- way too much time -- "Through a Clear Lens " came to fruition so late and has needed too much of my focus -- I feel really scattered. We left the rehearsal hall today that way - - kind of fractured.

December 2, 2000

It seems like ages since I have had time to write. Working 12 - 14 hour days. So much has happened.

We seem to be in very good shape -- unless I am deluding myself. We did our first invited Forum in the rehearsal hall last night for some alternate high school students and some of the workshop participants and the Forum was GREAT. They loved it, and the students were amazed, really, so enthusiastic about the process and the content and what they learned in it.

Its been a week of very, very hard work. The cast has come a great distance.

Emme has been struggling the most - - In order for the monologue to work we have to see/feel her confusion in it. The language is very scattered. She has to be "inside" it in order for it to be real. If she "performs" it it seems really artificial.....and being in it feels like shit. It has to. She needs to go there every time. I have been working and working with her to help her do that and we get it and then lose it, get it, lose it.....today I had the rest of the cast gather around her and try, really try to drag her to the ground. Her task was to get through the monologue, never stop, and never let them get her to the floor. At the end she was sweating and out of breath and ready to burst into tears. Do it now. It all flowed out of her -- it was brilliant -- she made us all cry, which is what needs to happen -- but then in the run only about 60% of it was there.....we still have a few days. Maybe I am being too demanding.....but I am convinced that if she lets herself -- stops stopping herself from feeling it, that she can do this.

We have done emotional work on every scene in the play, and have found layers to them that we didn't know existed. Charlene has a much better handle on Mei-Ling and the deal-making has come to life. Valerie is really invested in Claire and Kevin is also doing wonderful work.

The caning/present wrapping scene is very complex and multi-layered. We have worked and worked and worked on it and some lovely moments have emerged, subtle connections.....serendipitous....like after the line manager chokes the 14 year old girl, she is

coughing as Claire is asking about a woman's daughter (she is laying the woman off) who has been in the hospital....is she alright....small moments, connections....the play is full of this kind of detail.

We are using real company logos and I am trying to be very careful. At the top of the play they are advertisements in the Hall of Communications. The logos are not attached to any content. At the top of the caning scene there are specific companies, about 10 of them, who have recently been named in a class action suit for human rights abuses in sweatshops in Saipan. I also found great photos on the web (taken secretly) of lines and lines of women in a Nike sweatshop that we are using.

Props and costumes are starting to arrive. I finalized all the slide Images today and am hoping they are going to work -- they have the potential to create a very powerful and elegant level in the piece and offer content that we can't in the play.....a global context.

We worked all the transitions today -- this was a good thing, we won't have to do it during tech -- this eats up lots of time in the theatre and this is precious. Kelly is being a great Stage Manager -- we are working really well together.

We have been working the intro a lot -- it needs to be "light" -- fun -- and set the tone for the event, and yet real enough to hold water in terms of us occupying the space. Its a fine balancing act. We know its a deceit, the audience knows its a deceit, we know the audience knows.....I am very pleased with how this is tying into the end of the evening.....as the police are getting nearer to us in the Hall of Communications.....the very last thing I will do is say that we have learned many things making the theatre-piece....that the theatre belongs to "us", that we can use it, and that the theatre is full of magic.....the bar codes wash off.....the police are not coming tonight.....slides of police in riot gear.....not tonight, to the Firehall Theatre....but they do come..the Police do come. We have let go of the idea of the doors opening and there being shields with logos on them -- too hard to pull off with the money we have -- it will look corny.

I've set rehearsal for 11:30 tomorrow instead of 10:00 in an attempt to let the cast get some sleep -- they are exhausted, as is Kelly. Tomorrow is our last day in the rehearsal hall. We will rehearse some moments, do some runs and then have another invited Forum audience. The next day is "off" -- except for all the other work that needs to get done and also an interview for Kevin and me. That is the production team's day to get into the theatre, get the lights hung, the set in....I am hoping I can get away with not having to be at the theatre...can give them my pager # if there is an emergency.

The next day we will do cue to cues and then get the actors in doing runs...feeling their way in the new space. The show will fall apart -- this is to be expected coming out of the rehearsal hall. Also a media call.

The PR has been going really well, except for the problem of not having anything for photographers to shoot. Last year with Squeegie the cast themselves were so dramatic looking, all we had to do was take a photo of them! This problem comes with the territory of working in such an organic process. No script to work from, the designers can't get to work until very late, if someone wants a photo there is no context for the photo in the rehearsal hall. Still, there is a big buzz on and more coming. This is great -- a combination, I think, of the subject matter hitting the nail on the head (we don't call it Headlines Theatre for nothing), the credibility of working with Check Your Head, and Candace doing a really good job.

December 4, 2000

Made a really hard decision today. There is too much material in the play. In the two Forum rehearsals we have had to skim through the Forum, not having enough time to get into anything in depth. Something has to go. In consultation with the cast I have cut the scene between Nikki and Mei- Ling. The reason the scene went into the play was that all the characters were, at one time, going to encounter Nikki -- all be connected to her. The play turned into something else, though....we don't get anything from the scene that isn't "available" in other scenes already. We see Nikki panning.....(o yeah....she is no longer "standing on a corner". She is panning now: "Merry Christmas, spare some change?") We can intervene in the 1st scene.....we know from Nikki that people are verbally abusive to her.....we can explore her search for employment in her two scenes with Claire.....we get the international connections in the restaurant, the office and the sweatshop scene.....its not that Emme and Charlene aren't doing good work in it -- its a lovely scene -- but we have GOT to have more Forum time.

December 5, 2000

OK. We are cookin' with gas. Lots happened today. The volunteers are finalized for the lobby. This is good. The 'zine is done (the program for the play) and being photocopied, stapled, etc., did an interview for CBC TV that should help, all this (and more) going on in the office... got reservation figures today -- the word from the Firehall has been that tickets are selling well -- this is true for opening, but not, in my opinion for the rest of the run -- the figures took both me and Candace by surprise. Folks in the office are going into high gear on the networking, while the production crew were working away in the theatre, day two of focusing light, getting the set in, etc.

We did a cue to cue without the actors, set light levels. Should have been able to do slide sequences at the same time but they are not ready yet. (!!). This is going to have to happen tomorrow -- very late. Cue to cue went well, though, and then the actors arrived, we took about 30 minutes to familiarize them with the set, new spacings on entrances and exits....

A big glitch is that the information we got about sightlines was wrong -- once in the theatre it became obvious we cannot fit 155 seats...and CERTAINLY not the 175 we committed to for opening. We have to remove 9 seats, taking the maximum down to 146. The problem is three instead of two rows in the centre section on the floor. Because we have scenes played sitting on the floor, the actors will disappear for the third row. Really vanish. Unacceptable. Spent some time trying to solve this, moved the spike marks further upstage for all the scenes, which meant refocusing all the lights, but it didn't give us enough. The row has to go.

Still, we did manage to get one run in (we were hoping for two) after cue to cue and the cast and crew were great. Spectacular. Kelley (Stage Manager) is really organized, the cast fit into the new space and went for it. Emme worked on her monologue all week-end and it shows....it was really good. The play does not miss the cut scene.

We still have a lot of work to do -- more, possibly, than we have time for....The lobby needs a lot of work -- got a call from Craig at 11:30 tonight -- he was working on CEO quotes and needed three more -- I found them in notes from previous reading -- the front of the building looks great (Corporate U Banners hanging from poles on the building -- decals on the doors), slides are a big worry right now -- they are going to eat time tomorrow -- costumes arrive at 11:30 AM, this is going to eat time -- the cast getting used to being in them -- we have never really been able to

do the caning without the padded costume for Charlene..... we have a media call from 2 - 4 -- and have to get runs in before the preview at 8:00. Its a preview -- have to remember its a rehearsal. I need time with the lobby people to go over script.....it seems chaotic, but we just have to keep breathing and get through it.

Now that we are opening, I can explain what happens with the audience BEFORE they come into the theatre:

As you walk up to the theatre building, there are large, beautiful banners on the theatre that say "Corporate University" and they have a logo. The logo is a bar code design. This logo is also on the doors to the theatre. When you come to the box office there is a sign, "Corporate U Registration", and you are asked to pay your tuition fees, and then a bar code is stamped on your wrist. Everyone must have one. Every 10th person gets a special bar code: red instead of black.

When you enter the lobby of the theatre, all of the art that is normally there on the walls is gone and has been replaced by logos of companies (Microsoft, IBM, Shell, etc.....) And there are signs that say, "this stairwell donated by _____" ... this corner, this doorway.....everything. Also in the lobby, on the walls, are framed quotes from CEO's of real companies, saying terrible things about consumers, and ways to make more money, exploiting the environment, human rights, etc., with dates that they graduated from Corporate U.

There are video cameras peeking out from places in the lobby, looking at you.

When you buy something at the bar, you pay money and your bar code is scanned. When you go downstairs to the toilet, they are filled with advertisements, even under the toilet seats!!

Also in the lobby, near the entrance to the theatre, is a "shrine" (this is where the photos of the actors would normally be). A shrine to Andrew Hamilton, Graduate of the Millennium -- the most famous graduate of Corporate U. There is his photo and he is holding a pager, and under his photo is his biography (see below).

On top of the entrance to the theatre, is a large sign, "Andrew Hamilton Hall of Communications". When you enter the theatre, your bar code is scanned. On the seat is our 'zine, there are no theatre programs given at the door.

Then we come onto stage.

December 6, 2000

75 people at the preview tonight.

We had a spectacular night tonight! And a long day.....we are all exhausted and exhilarated. We did manage to get two runs in today in the midst of the chaos of the production crew getting the set finished and the fine tuning on light focus, placement, lobby display, etc. We also did a two hour media call, CBC TV and Shaw taking video footage, a local radio station as well.

Kelley has been great and figured out how to program the slide computer because the person doing the slides hasn't been available as much as we would like....and we HAVE to sort out the

slides. Almost all of them are in place now, the sequences are almost there, and she has been playing with the duration of transitions in order to give me what I want on cues. The only slides missing altogether were the food line-ups and Siobhan showed up at the theatre today -- asked if there was anything she could do -- and I sent her out to get the photos, because our slide person obviously wasn't going to -- and from what I understand, she got them. This is great. (Thanks SB)

I am in a very wonderful place -- feeling proud of what we have done. The audience LOVED the show tonight and the Forum was very lively. This is one of those rare moments when I feel like a group of talented and committed people, both production crew, actors and office staff have come together and helped me realize a vision. I say this with humble caution -- it has been a few years since I felt this -- times at Headlines have been hard. This has been a process of discovering the play and the world around it and it is complex, quirky and circular, and I am proud of all of them and proud of me in this moment. My lighting designer and TD/designer came into the dressing room after the show and they were on fire! They had never seen anything like what they witnessed in the theatre tonight. You could see it all over them, and it was wonderful for me -- they were like children discovering sweet.

Sometimes its been messy -- this is the nature of the creation process -- but we have created something very special -- I know this from sitting in the audience for the first time tonight and listening to people gasp (literally) at the images in the play and then listen to them howl with laughter and also get silent in "that way" in the Forum. We did really good tonight.

Some interventions:

A very business oriented guy intervened on Andrew's behalf in the contract signing scene and started to re-arrange the deal. He really knew what he was doing. He got Mei-Ling to agree to think it over because he was able, in concrete terms, to explain how investing in PEOPLE was going to translate into viable profit. He was working off of a different model and it was terrific.

Also a very moving scene at the end where a woman replaced Claire while sitting with Nikki, and tried to make a real friendship with her. This led to the possibility of them living together, sharing expenses, etc. Then Andrew arrived and the scene continued, with the woman berating Andrew. This led to someone replacing Andrew and this led into a conversation where Andrew and Claire went off to have dinner in order to try to work things out, leaving Nikki still on her corner! It was so "real" in the symbolic sense -- what happens because we are, generally, filled with this self-interest both on a personal and global level.

Things to work on? They got confused in the Corporations in Our Heads moment tonight -- maybe I need to intro it differently. Cutting the third scene was the absolutely right thing to do -- I still need to move through the early part of the Forum faster, because the "main meal" starts at the mid-way point. Things to work on as we work through the run.

We have some work on the slides to do tomorrow and also one of the scene changes (into the TV scene) is taking too long -- have to find a way to speed that up. The actors were spectacular tonight, though, including Emme who aced her monologue. I have called the cast for 6PM tomorrow -- no need to do runs. They will work some transitions and do a line run, talk through of the play, without doing a physical run. Kelley and the production people and I will be there at 5 and run the slide sequences, finish light and the lobby. Actually, I imagine Craig and his crew (designer) will be working on the lobby for a lot of the day.

CBC TV was there (again) tonight and will air a national story, which I think will be very positive tomorrow at dinnertime.

When I got home, this e-mail was waiting:

"Hello David, Beth here. I work with Mark Achbar on THE CORPORATION and I had the pleasure of being at the preview of CORPORATE U Thursday night.

What a powerful idea and encouraging environment to flex our democratic muscles! Unfortunately, my producer and I had to sneak out after the interactive sweatshop-scene as we had to pick up our crew at the airport.

Mark and I will be in touch with you regarding filming next week sometime. I personally look forward to being part of the CORPORATE U experience again.

Many thanks oh, and...'Break a leg'.

Beth Pielert, Assistant Director/Project Coordinator"

December 7, 2000 108 attendance.

I hate opening nights.

After the real high of last night tonight was so hard....we were a little "off"....nervous maybe....the performance part of the event was "surfacy". Lacked the depth that it can have. I also got really nervous in the opening....don't know why....think I need to have WAY more fun with it than I did. Then we got to the Forum and it felt like this crowd was, to a large extent, there to observe and judge the event -- not to do it with us. The energy was very subdued. It was really hard work.

Some of the interventions:

We started off badly. A woman took Claire's place off the top, when she trips over Nikki and throws money at her. She sat down with her -- wanted to know why she was in the street..."where is your mother", she asked...she tried to give her her shopping....Nikki was great -- she yelled at her -- told her she had had a job, she didn't want the clothes, which she wouldn't wear anyway, could the woman get her a job???? This is when she stopped her intervention -- and we got into a short conversation about Liberal guilt. When Nikki asked for what she really needed, was when the woman said no. Happens on the streets, happens with Foreign Aid.

The problem, the reason I say we started badly, is that the audience's negative (and understandably so) response to the intervention scared the audience, I think.

I am questioning doing the "corporate voices" section -- having trouble making it coherent. The audience is having trouble understanding it. Going to play with it for a bit, but, we'll see. Part of the problem is we are so pressed for time -- having to skip over the surface. I think I need to only take one intervention in each of the first three scenes, so we can get into the middle of the play faster and then settle in there for a while. The event goes so fast!

Another intervention, in the caning scene was a woman who was sitting onstage as one of the

workers yelled "stop" and insisted on being caned instead of the girl. She sacrificed herself, hoping to inspire the others in the room -- but didn't -- they remained silent, afraid of repercussions, having families themselves, needing the jobs. This, though, led to an intervention from someone in the audience who replaced Claire, wrapping her presents, who needed to start thinking about what she was buying. I missed an opportunity here -- I should have asked what happens if we boycott the products -- which is something the workers, in fact, do not want -- they want the jobs -- they want to be treated fairly at the jobs.....

Anyway -- we are open. The task now is to keep building the audiences, to keep the networking going, to keep the coverage happening, and to keep the show fresh.

December 8, 2000 36 people

What a difference a day makes. We had a wonderful show tonight. Our first standing ovation.

The house was small but not bad at all for "second night". Most important, they came to do it with us, not to watch and judge. Houses will build.

On our end, we were relaxed, way more relaxed than last night. The show carried the emotions that it should. Audience members were crying during it.....

Some interesting interventions:

Well -- one happened before the Forum started! During the caning one of the people we brought onto the stage to be a sweatshop worker, grabbed Kevin, after he caned Charlene for the first time -- I had to intervene and tell him to let us play the scene -- he would get his chance later.

Later, in the Forum, he did yell "stop" and insisted on replacing Kevin! When I asked him if he believed Kevin was engaged in a struggle, he said yes, and so I allowed the intervention. He played out a beautiful scene that started as an internal monologue about how conflicted he was, but about how he also had a family, children, and if production didn't increase he would lose his job.....I sent Kevin in as his boss at this point, to find out why he wasn't disciplining the worker as instructed -- he was told that if he didn't, he would be fired. He bailed out at this point, but the complexity of the moment was apparent.

Then, another person replaced Claire in this moment, and worked into a boycott situation. This opened up a great discussion about the pros and cons of boycotts -- are they effective? The workers in the sweatshops NEED these jobs.....they don't want boycotts, they want to work and be treated with respect -- not for the companies to move somewhere else.....

I also think I figured out tonight how to do the corporate voices.....I asked the audience if they could come and be the voices in Nikki's head, in that moment of silence in her monologue. I only talked about voices that were shouting in her head....not CORPORATE voices. Once people were there, and they came quickly, I had them do internal monologues, and then sentences, and THEN asked if it was possible to put brand names on the voices. And, of course, people could. The sequence was right.

There were many wonderful moments tonight. The cast and I were relaxed and felt really supported by the audience -- we really had a wonderful dialogue. When I got home, this e-mail was waiting for me from Alicia Barsallo, Head of the BC Latin American Congress (BCLAC) --

Alicia was at the show tonight and does a lot of work on police brutality and other human rights issues. Quite militant in the human rights community - - not what one would call naive:

"Congratulations, again: (she talked with me after the show) professionally done. I find it's an analytical and an emotionally explosive play. The audience is prompted to respond genuinely -- to run away from the liberal tokenism and affected soul searching. I found the scene where Claire is talking to herself about the gifts while back in Thailand (or somewhere else) a kid is being beaten for not obeying her bosses enough, particularly breathtaking, masterful." Regards, Alicia Barsallo.

December 9, 2000 . 97 attendance.

An e-mail came this morning from my friend, Jale, in Turkey. Here is a part of it:

"When I got to my university today the police want me to show them my identity card if I want to enter the campus. on Thursday, I had a quarrel with them, very gently, and ask them a written notice... but I did this quarrel without knowing that three undergraduate students are arrested because of not showing their papers, and the police and the university together are investigating them... it is very very fascist thing. When I was an undergraduate student in another university, we had had this before, but worse than this, we had to open our bags and the police were searching our bags... this is a small thing of course but small things are getting bigger and bigger if you don't resist and accept them without questioning.."

I am going to start reading this e-mail at the closing of the play, to help make the international links.

We had two terrific shows today -- so different from each other.

The matinee attracted about 130 people. The box office tells me there we 60+ reservations and over 60 walk-ins! This is amazing. It was a great crowd and there was a lot of laughter in the event. It was quite light hearted.....but serious things also happened. Because we had two shows I am having a hard time remembering interventions from the matinee, but there were people there who had flown in from Ontario to see the show (!) and word through Kevin is that they want to talk about it touring into Ontario. They loved it. The Georgia Straight came to this show, and I think she really enjoyed what happened....we'll see the review.

I heard today that there is a very strong negative review coming from the WestEnder who was there opening night.....she saw an ugly Forum.....I am experiencing a lot of anger over this.....and am wondering how to reframe Headlines' opening nights so that this kind of thing does not happen again, with such audience dependent work -- an invited audience who is there to observe and judge, but not do what the event demands of them in order for it to have a chance of success.....

Did some work with Nikki on her monologue again today. Its there, but she has started playing the end at the beginning.....worrying about reaching the emotional state so much that she starts at the end point and has no where to go. I found a way to help her calm down at the start and let the material take her into the state. It was brilliant tonight.

The evening performance was smaller, maybe 50 people. It would have been really good if the numbers were higher on this, but they were a great group, nonetheless. An interesting mix of

activists and business people. There was a very strong business sense in the Forum.....they really knew what they were talking about! My sense is that this was (partly) a real Saturday night crowd -- I think the interactive nature of the event took them by surprise -- they had come for a night of more traditional theatre....but they warmed up to what we were doing really well. They gave us our second standing ovation.

This audience really latched onto the options that Andrew and Claire had to reframe the deal. Numerous models arose out of the evening of different ways to imagine "profit"....what it means, how much is necessary, ownership models. This came from business and union people.

After the show two very nice things happened -- a man from Victoria asked if there was a way for it to tour to Victoria....(is this show going to have to tour?) and an elderly gentleman, very distinguished looking, in an expensive looking suit -- a Brit -- came to me. He said that he has sat through a lot of theatre in his life, and that his children had brought him to this against his will. It had been the most exciting evening, he said, he had ever had in the theatre. He wanted to know about the bravery of Joking the event.....he was very struck with the risk that I was taking. I told him that it was just a matter of trusting the audience. He wanted to shake my hand. Its funny....this moment had great resonance for me.

I am getting sick. Shirley, the House Manager at the Firehall has had a terrible cold, and I seem to be getting it. Have gone onto homeopathic remedy, hoping to avoid.

December 10, 2000 24 people

Starting with the preview on the 6th I have been asking audience members at the show to take postcards and posters and help with networking. They have been taking big bundles of them with tremendous enthusiasm. Yet, this was our smallest house. About 50 last night (Saturday night) and 24 tonight (Sunday). These numbers are not good, and hard to understand. We know that word about the show is great out there. I know that their response to Jessica and Siobhan's calls to over 100 organizations are that they are doing the networking and that people are coming.....Jessica is concerned that they are getting tired of her following up with them.....but houses should have built over this week- end, not got smaller.

There were lots of good preview articles. TV coverage, (CBC, that only used the "heavy stuff" from the show, even though they shot lots of laughter and fun in the preview Forum) PSA's, radio (no CBC, we seem to be blacked out from there for some reason) The reviews are just going to start showing tomorrow.....a rave in the Globe and, from what I understand, a pan in the WestEnder. The Courier came tonight and will publish on Wednesday, The Straight will publish on Thursday, still trying to get the Sun to review -- the reviewer doesn't think its theatre.....What else can we do that we are not doing?

We set aside 10 free tickets each night (except opening) to network through organizations, so people with no money could see the play. As of tonight, 6 performances out of a run of 11, one of these tickets has been used. When are the other 99 going to show? (See Outreach Report, following this report)

So, a small house tonight, but we had a wonderful Forum....a different Forum from any of the others. Tonight felt like a real "educational night" for people who knew very little about the issues. It felt a bit like the ¿SANCTUARY? project in 1989, when we were using Forum to teach people about the realities of refugees. In the caning scene, for instance, they all "quit their jobs"

in the sweatshop, and were shocked to hear the realities.....that there are tens of thousands of people lining up for these abusive jobs, that they often pay fees to GET the jobs in the first place, and that management of the factories are backed up by the military.

The audience seemed to have a great time with us, and lots of them stayed to chat after, with thank you's and stories about how incredible they thought the event was, requests to bring the production or the concept into other places -- schools, unions, universities....

When I calculate total figures we are playing to aprox. 51% houses right now. But when I take out complimentary tickets (remove opening night entirely from the calculation, and figure in the two 2 for 1 shows) we are playing to aprox. 30% paid attendance. We budgeted conservatively at 40% paid attendance to break even. Considering the amount of PR and networking there is, though, the numbers should get to (I think) 65 or 80% houses. What do we do?

December 12, 2000 146 attendance

Great night tonight. A sponsored show, by the Endswell Foundation -- an activist party using the play as a centre-piece. One free bar ticket per person -- the brainchild of Candace (publicity) and Joel from Endswell. A wonderful idea and we were sold out! Congrats to all.

We had a raucous night -- very big laughter and a sense of people really being with us in the room. Lots of movement "heavies" in the house tonight: Valerie Langer from Friends of Clayoquot, Tseporah Berman from Greenpeace, Murray Dobbin from Council of Canadians and many, many, many others. They loved it -- great for us onstage to feel that involvement and also to be "adored" in the lobby. This might sound trite but we are all tired (folks in the office, too) and the hugely positive feedback is energizing. Tonight felt like what opening night should have been -- maybe there is a lesson here about who those invites should be targeted to in the future.

Joel and I talked about how important it is to bring "us" together to be creative and have fun -- he was really happy that the activity also had content. We also talked about getting labeled as "playing to the converted" and I got a new bead on this old complaint: There are hundreds of thousands of "us converted", we are not some marginal fringe group, we exist in the mainstream. "The converted" is a legitimate constituency. This insight alone, for me, made the evening really worthwhile.

One thing that I noticed in the Forum, and other people also asked me about this at the party, was that in this crowd there were very few (one, I think) interventions on behalf of Claire. The interventions were either for Nikki or for Andrew, especially near the end of the play when the three of them are onstage together. Some of the people I was talking with at the party thought this was because Claire really scares people -- they do not want to see themselves in the character, attached to her vulnerability and her self-interest. Its "safer" to replace Nikki, or a sweatshop worker, because its possible to think "I will never be this".....or Andrew because it feels good to get him to "do the right thing" and fulfill our desire for social justice in a magic way. I was really pleased that the evening stimulated this kind of analysis.

Now the hope is that this activist crowd, who have real contacts and networks out there, can and will help us fill the house for the rest of the run. Nice review in the Courier today. This could also help, and the Straight comes out tomorrow. I know that Siobhan and Jessica and Candace are beating the drum as loudly as possible.

Building up into the tele/web cast now. Final preparations, figuring out placement of phones and computers, script for phone actors. My biggest challenge is going to be getting through the play in the time we have. We started almost 15 minutes late last night because there was a jam at the door and finished at about 10:20. We can't do this on Saturday, we go to air at 8:00:00 and off-air at 9:59:59 regardless of what is happening and also have to find time in there for credits roll. Very exciting, though.....

December 13, 2000. 104 attendance

Got news this afternoon that reservations for all the remaining shows doubled today. This is great news.

Had a wonderful show tonight -- about 100 people there, very respectable for a Wednesday night, and they were really engaged. Its so much fun, after a rough start I am going to be sorry now to have this end. Another standing ovation tonight.

One of the really interesting moments for me was in the restaurant scene. A "man in a suit" replaced Andrew and started to try to find a way to modify the deal, so that it served the workers in Richmond better. An audience member yelled stop and wanted to replace Mei-Ling in this moment. I asked him if Mei-Ling was engaged in a struggle of some sort. "Yes", he said, so, OK I said, and he proceeded to block the attempt at making a more equitable deal. I let this go on for a while because it was fascinating, on the surface, to watch these two characters, one in a business suit, the other, unshaven and really scruffy, play roles opposite to the cliché of their outward appearance. It turned out that the audience member who replaced Mei-Ling simply wanted her to "oppress more" which I clarified we were not there to do.....but the symbolism of the moment was really striking.

I feel like a few days ago I hit my stride in figuring out how to Joke this particular show. It takes time to do this.....I am going to the audience in this Forum much more than I usually do, asking them at key points to expand the sense of what we have just done/seen into a global picture. People are coming to me after and talking about how challenging this is for them (in a good way) and how it is making them think of links hitherto unthought of.

December 14, 2000. 53 attendance

Had what I think is one of the worst nights of my life joking tonight. (Is it the case that if I write that things are going great they are bound to be the opposite the next day??) We all had a bad night -- were all off centre. We even lost one of the projectors just before starting. The show was flat and in the Forum I was adrift.

I know what the core of this is for me -- I made the mistake of reading the review in the Georgia Straight, which was really negative, and I let my confidence get thrown. Should know better than this, but....there you go. It doesn't seem to matter that so many, so many compliments have come from people -- the power of print, even though it is one person's opinion. Even though there was also a rave in the Globe last week.....

There were about 48 people there tonight, a dramatic drop from yesterday. The snow didn't help -- we have been hit by severe (for Vancouver) weather and for certain, people were not "going out".

Still, it was an interesting, if very subdued, crowd. What comes first, me being off balance, or them being quiet and distant? Again we had a really diverse audience -- people coming from very different economic and political (I think) backgrounds. A mix that I think is great. We are certainly not attracting just "the converted".

They were very quiet -- their interventions were quiet, even a "revolution" in the caning scene was "polite". I am reminded that one of the strengths of this work is that it can meet the audience where they are. Maybe that was part of my problem tonight.....we have had a few nights of large houses and informed interventions, and this was a small house with a lot of people who are not deeply involved in the issues.....at least a lot of the interventions were done by these people. Maybe I was disappointed tonight, falling into the very trap that I warn the cast against, not giving this audience the space to process at their speed and understanding level.....wanting them to be last night's audience.

Still, many of them came to me and other members of the cast and expressed their gratitude and talked about how wonderful the evening had been. They are people who have never experienced Forum before, and I forget what an intense and intimidating experience that can be.

I need to shake this feeling of inadequacy before we get to the broadcast in two days.

December 15, 2000 101, in a snowstorm!

Well -- had a GREAT show tonight! The director in me gave the actor in me a talking to this afternoon and it worked....talked about how one person's opinion can't mean this much to me, especially in the face of such a mountain of praise. Also talked with Donna Spencer (Artistic Director at the Firehall) who mentioned that she has stopped reading reviews altogether (as has Kevin Millsip). Also had an e-mail exchange with Mauro Vescera, from the Vancouver Foundation who saw the show last night and mentioned that he and his wife had had a great time.....so.....hey, David!

Got to the theatre in a good mood and the people from Shaw were setting up for the broadcast tomorrow. Its like the circus has come to town....five cameras a large trailer in the parking lot and cable everywhere. James, the TD at the theatre is being great -- he is excited about Corporate U, really likes what's been happening in the theatre (he is in the booth most nights) and loves the idea of the tele/web cast....he's been a great help.

We took three of Headlines' imacs to the theatre -- two for web actors and one for the truck. Blaine and Will showed up from Tao to start setting up the web equipment. Blaine and I went over the interface of the web page and I have asked for minor changes to make it clearer....."click here to view" instead of "new students" stuff like that.....he is trying to follow the theme of the play, but it looks too confusing.

The cast were a bit stressed about all the new people. We sat and talked about keeping focus, doing our show, and me and Kelley protecting them as much as possible from the chaos of live TV. We also talked about the energy yesterday -- I talked about my day and realization, and gave some notes about last night's show -- which had flattened out again. Its hard in a run -- the actors (all actors) tend to get used to the material and start "telling" people the story instead of living it. They all agreed that this has been slowly creeping into the performances. Really, its about having fun again, doing what we have made, but re-inventing it each night.

We had a great Forum. It started very dramatically. A man yelled stop and replaced Nikki in the first scene after Claire has fallen over her and the bags are everywhere. He got up, screamed at Claire for not looking where she was going, and kicked each bag up in the air and across the street! It was both hysterical and profound. Of course the audience was howling, but then we were able to get into a short discussion about the invisibility of the poor, both individuals and nations, and what it would mean if "the poor" really were able to express their anger. We talked about the imposition of foreign aid. It was a great jumping off point.

The evening was very lively after this and the cast were great -- Charlene in particular, as Mia when someone replaced Nikki -- and they got into a scene about how Nikki was panning (this rarely gets discussed) and Mia launched into how hard it is for her at school because everyone knows how poor she is.....there are not easy answers in this play -- but why should there be?

I worked really hard to get us down in time, as preparation for tomorrow. Was only about two minutes over today -- which is an improvement. Tomorrow we will take timings of my extro and also the credits, so I know exactly when I need to start winding up. It is going to be a huge challenge. We have so much material to cover, and there is going to be the added layer of interveners from the phone and (hopefully) the web.

We ran into an unforeseen technical glitch today. The camera that we were going to use to digitize the image is not compatible with Shaw's equipment. (!) Blaine and Michael are trying to sort it out.....if they don't, which I don't really want to imagine, we may not get onto the web after all. There are options, including some guys Kevin and I ran into doing an interview at 11:00 PM tonight for web radio....who have LOTS of equipment and might be able to help.....

December 16, 2000 139 attendance Telecast aprox. 25,000 Web cast 542 web site hits

We had a spectacular, sold out night tonight!!!!!! The big news is that we took an intervention from Croatia. Where to start.....

The problems with the equipment continued. Mike Keeping brought in a digital VCR that would translate the image, but then something was wrong with the cable modem. Don't ask me, I don't know. It was looking like there would be no web cast at all, but the folks at MYCityRadio (above) agreed to move our signal through their server. (I am oversimplifying here....there is a lot to all this that I don't understand!). This meant that we could get onto the web, but that the software that people needed to view it was different than we had been telling them -- and this change was happening, literally, a couple of hours....nay, minutes before going to air!

Jessica will be sending an e-mail notice out explaining and asking about what people experienced. I know that Augusto Boal was frantic in Rio de Janeiro (there was e-mail for me when I got home). He had been in chat space with Blaine earlier in the day, but then I think the "rules" changed and he couldn't watch the show. He wanted, of course, to be a part of this. Jale Karabekir in Istanbul also went into chat space and tried to view, but the image and sound were so degraded she could only make out some things sometimes, it was too hard for her to understand what was happening. Sigh.

It was the first time, though, that anyone has tried this and there were and are lots of lessons to learn from it. Blaine and Will and Jessica were great and worked frantically (hats off to them) to knit the system together. I think there were too many variables. In the end, the fact that we took web interventions at all is a terrific accomplishment.

The Shaw crew were also terrific. Mike and I have done these TV broadcasts together almost once a year for over 10 years now, and it shows. We came in for rehearsal at 4:30 and did a run for them, some lighting cues were changed to accommodate the cameras, nothing major, some problems with the mike packs we were all wearing sorted out, how they impacted costume changes....did briefing and rehearsals with the tele/web actors.

I revised my opening to include all the TV and web notices, and had a good idea: I asked the TV and web viewers to start calling in their interventions right away, as soon as the play started, because there was going to be a time lag in processing them. The audience waited until the second run, as usual. This worked very well -- there were lots of phone/web interventions, about 50/50, audience members and telephone actors.

The audience was really activated all night. Perhaps the most poignant intervention came from a woman from China. She had a very strong accent and struggled with her English, so I assume she is a fairly recent immigrant. She pleaded in the sweatshop scene for Canadians to not do things to shut the sweatshops down in developing countries, but instead to start legitimate businesses in countries like China. Canada has such expertise and China is so far behind. She talked about how she had worked in a factory, had not been beaten there but had been beaten by a family member -- she knows about human rights abuses throughout China -- she was crying by now, asking for Canadians to give their expertise. Her courageous presence on the stage made the dramatization of the issues very real -- she grounded the play in a harsh reality.

There was also lots of laughter and applause all evening. From my end, my comfort level with all the chaos of live TV was better than it has ever been. What a roller coaster from one day to the next! I managed to get into a groove of working with the audience and the cameras, it seemed to easy.

And then one of the web actors ran into the theatre and yelled "Stop. I have an intervention from Sasa in Croatia!". I looked at the live camera and said, "Hello Croatia!" and the audience let out a whoop and burst into applause.

Of course, the pressure of ending at 9:59:59 -- that's off air then, we had to back up for credits and my extro, this meant that I pushed through the piece. I do feel its important to get to the end, to have a closure on the event. I finished my wind-up and went to credits on the exact second last night. The exact second. This might not have great meaning to you, dear reader but it is a phenomenal accomplishment for me!

Mike was very happy with what they shot -- I have yet to see it, but a few people have called and sent e-mails and said they thought it looked great. Lots of people stayed for the reception at the Firehall....much merriment and congratulations.....and now, except for the final reports and all the "tidying up", Corporate U is over.....EXCEPT that there have been what seem like serious invitations for it to go to Ontario and Quebec. This will get investigated.

I have had a chance to view the video and while it does look really good there is one major disappointment. The slides are almost gone entirely from the video. I know why this happened, the screens are hard to shoot and the cameras want close-ups of the actors, but in this production the slide images are an integral part of the story, which is now missing from the record. The lesson for me is that I should find the time in set up for the TV (!!???) to watch a run in the trailer, so I can have input into what shots are being called.