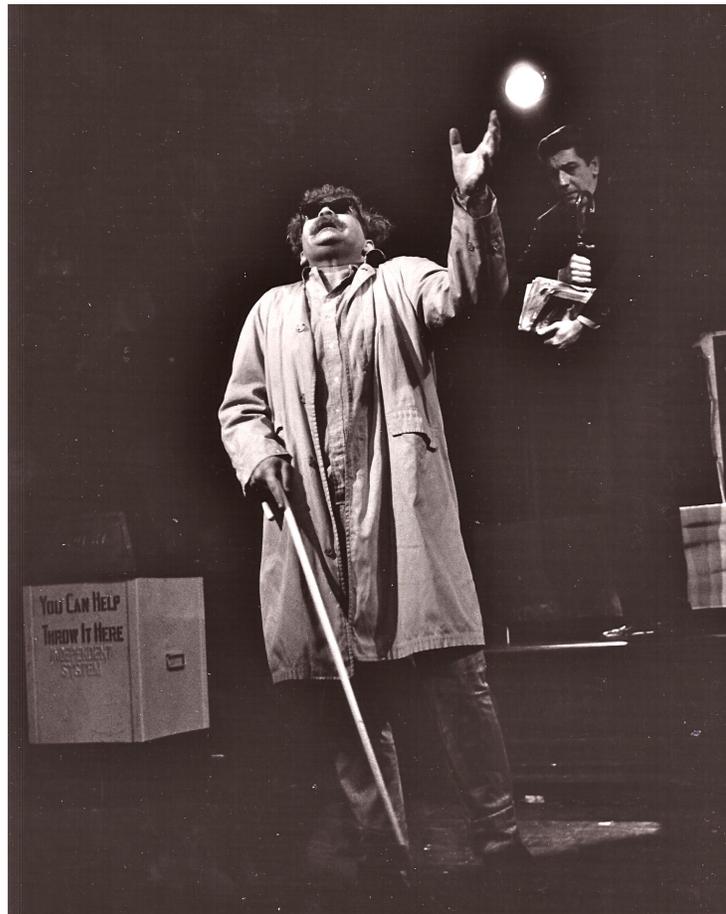


***EXCERPTS FROM FOUR OF MY DECADES-OLD-
PLAYS THAT SEEMED TO PRESAGE MY
CURRENT LOUSY EYES:***



***“Conerico Was Here To Stay,” “The Prince Of Peasantmania,”
“The Total Immersion Of Madeleine Favorini” and “The
Private Eye Of Hiram Bodoni”***



From *CONERICO WAS HERE TO STAY*
[First off-Broadway play, 1965)

(A deserted NYC subway platform.
Circa 1965. YAM alone.
He has amnesia. His hat is down on the tracks.
He's afraid to go down and get it.
He's afraid of other people.
A tapping is heard. YAM, frightened,
sits down on the bench and doesn't move.
A BLIND MAN enters, tapping the cane as
he inches along.)

BLIND MAN

I'm gettin' near that spot, goddamnit! The point of no return. Now I gotta go through the crazies. Steady, big boy! You counted the steps and you know where you are. . . . So why are you beginning to shake? —Because you know the crazies are coming on, you stupid bastard! So just concentrate on gettin' to the other side. There's no one to help you.

(Listens)

Is there?

(Pause)

Is there someone else here?

(Pause)

Goddamned antennae aren't working. That crap about the other senses taking over is CRAP!

(YAM sits very rigid.

BLIND MAN feels around as he talks—
and heads for YAM.)

My hearing's lousy. Can't smell for mustard greens! Touch didn't improve! But I'll tell you one thing *HE* sharpened—the big braille bastard in the sky: Pain! PAIN, GODDAMNIT!

(He is almost touching YAM
who slides down to the other end
of the bench and knocks over
the umbrella)

There's someone there! Good.

(Gropes in the air toward YAM.
During the next, it becomes a dance
with the BLIND MAN groping and YAM
eluding him)

Now, look. I'm blind. You got that?

(Lifts dark glasses; shows whites
of his eyes)

And I want you to grab me by the arm

(Offers his arm to the air)

BLIND MAN

(continued)

and lead me out of here. . . **WILL YOU STAND STILL, GODDAMNIT!** . . . Now, look . . . I'm always okay up to this point. Then the crazies begin. So help out a guy, will you? . . . —**FREEZE, FREEZE, YOU DOUBLE-JOINTED TRANSVESTITE!** . . . Look! The whole goddamned city's changed. They keep rippin' it up. So it's noise. NOISE! And it's done somethin' to my ears. I'm not hearin' right. Right? Not any more. And then, every so often, it goes crazy. I call it "the crazies." It's like my head becomes a balloon and there's bees inside and there's a fingernail scrapin' on a blackboard and then a thousan' Johns start flushin' an' then *HE* mixes in an avalanche of rocks, an' people start gargling an' throwin' up and Maria Callas hits a high C and —**I'LL PLUCK OUT YOUR EYES IF I EVER LAY MY GRUBBY HANDS ON YOU!** . . . List, list, O list; I come down here to get to the other side of the street. I can't cross up there any more. There's all them cars. **THE THIRTY NINE TRILLIONS OF 'EM!** . . . And, anyway, all the old chums are gone, because they ripped everything up and everyone out. So now, **NOBODY WANTS TO HELP ME CROSS UP THERE!** . . .

(Pause)

Okay, you pimple pecker punk! I'm goin' myself!

(He pulls himself together and, cautiously at first, walks. He walks in the right direction for a few steps.)

Ah HA! I SHALL CONQUER IT!

(Suddenly he holds his head. We hear all the noises he described: Bees, fingernails scratching across the blackboard; Johns flushing, ETC.)

The BLIND MAN panics. He loses all sense of direction. He heads for the edge of the platform. YAM cringes against one of the signs, and covers his eyes.

The BLIND MAN almost steps over the edge of the platform, but stops in time, turns, finds his balance—loses it; just avoids falling off again, walks to the ledge, etc. He resembles a tightrope walker, executing difficult stunts on the wire.

In fact, the cacophony fades a bit and we hear the roll of the circus drum, accenting the BLIND MAN's turns.

The BLIND MAN falls to the platform.

All noise stops. Pause)

You wait. . . . You just wait. . . . If there's ever a God again, he'll punish you.

(BLACKOUT)



From THE PRINCE OF PEASANTMANIA
[1969: The Milwaukee Rep)

ACT 1

Scene 1

Discovered: The JESTER. HE
juggles. Dances, in a fantastic
light show.

A HUGE EYE APPEARS

JESTER

(Stops juggling)

There! There! See it? AN EYE! Shot full of bloody arteries! Forever staring! Just hanging there like — what? God's surrealistic yo-yo!? Like some pop-art Christmas ornament!? But where's the string? Huh? Where's the TREE? — God, wouldn't you love to stab that eye? See tons of syrupy fluid oozing down from that celestial gash? Thick pupil-pus, making fingers that spider along in slow-motion waves? Pickling the populace for posterity?

(Shift)

Say, how's that for bullshit rhetoric? Well. I'm a Jester. And part of my job is to screw around with language.

(Shift)

Of course you'd love to stab that eye! Everyone would love to stab an eye! Sometime in life!

(EYE — out.

JESTER juggles again!)

Stab? Eye? What eye! Don't be spooky! **THIS — IS PEASANTMANIA!** A grrrraaand place! A Gemutlich place! A Gay place! **THIS IS PEASANTMANIA!!!**

(WALTZ MUSIC. Lights blindingly up on stage, as WALTZERS in black and white dress EXPLODE onto stage. EACH wears a black and white mask.

Black drapes fly in.

LORD GREGORY enters; very disturbed)

JESTER

Once upon a time — on the Island Kingdom of Peasantmania — a Prince finally came home!

(WALTZ MUSIC -- OUT!
The DANCERS freeze, as
PRINCE INNOCENT *runs* in!)

INNOCENT

Lord Gregory! Just what kind of a dirty place is this?!

GREGORY

Dirty?

INNOCENT

As in “depraved!” “Degenerate!”

GREGORY

With all due respect, Prince Innocent: The night is heavy with treachery. So there is no time for—

INNOCENT

But someone put a tongue down my throat!

GREGORY

Who did?

INNOCENT

HOW WOULD I KNOW? You haven’t allowed me to meet anyone! I don’t know anyone by name!

JESTER

Dites-moi, Prince Innocent: Si c’était un homme, ou une femme?

INNOCENT

Une femme, certainment! She just invaded my rooms!

JESTER

Here only three days and twenty-two hours and already some woman has tried to lick his throat! I've lived here most of my life, and I can't even get anyone to lick my STAMPS!

[Here's another short excerpt from THE PRINCE OF PEASANTMANIA]

PINA, THE HAG

And THIS, baby!!! WHAM WHAM WHAM!!!

JESTER

Aaaaaaaah!!! I'm TWISTED TWISTED TWISTED!

(CROWD: GASPS AGAIN)

PINA, THE HAG

And don't ever call me, "*Baby!*" I'm Ms Pina to you!

JESTER

You win! You win, Ms Pina! Just don't whammy the crotch!

PINA, THE HAG

You're lucky I don't whammy your eyeballs, you little fart!

[Below is the last scene from THE PRINCE OF PEASANTMANIA, when the eye returns for the last time]

ACT II

SCENE 5

INNOCENT and
COUNTRYMEN

INNOCENT

Lord Gregory is dead. Jeremiah Agate is dead. Pina is dead. Sister Magda killed herself. My dear friend and the Jester are dead. And I killed my brother, Prince Rudolph, in the sewers of Peasantmania. This is a litany of horror that mustn't be ignored. But it happened. When. . . . Oh, in another time. And we'll take the time to mourn them all when we are free.

(HE places the crown on his own head)

Now to our country's business. We've received word that our defiance has perplexed the Mainland. They're not quite sure how to handle us. We can keep them off guard if we engage them with the kind of ferocity we only used to use on each other. Turn them back once and we may have turned them back forever. I can't promise you victory. But I promise you we'll win. In any case: THE TIME HAS COME TO FIGHT!

***(The EYE appears above.
INNOCENT grabs a sword, runs to
the EYE and stabs it. It cracks, resembling
stained glass)***

Now we can fight.

(They all hum a resolving chord)

CURTAIN



From *THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF
MADELEINE FAVORINI*
[1980's]

**[In which thirty-eight year old Madeleine Favorini
journeys from dutifulness to rebellion on a
gynecological examining table that takes wing.
In this scene she has just had a confrontation with her
Nonno — her grandfather— who has run off to Sicily
“to die.”]**

MADELEINE

Nonno! No! Take me with you! Nonno Nonno please don't
abandon me I cannot see O I CANNOT SEE! I'm blind.
I'm-fee-ling-the-air-in-space-because-I-am-
blind. . . .I'm feeling around the ground on my hands and
knees . . .because I've been stricken blind. But why, why? I
NEVER MASTERBATED! —Well once maybe, but only
boys went blind, I thought, and I can see again I CAN SEE
AGAIN! I'm not blind anymore. What a . . .relief?

(Madeleine takes in her new surroundings.
Slow discovery as the images drop in)

MADELEINE

(Continued)

Alone. On a Mediterranean Cruise. Abandoned. Single lady once again, using up her savings, to cruise her bruised self back together again. Long days and nights, with silk scarf headkerchief breezing about her face, she leans on a rail and looks at the sea omylook. O my, look; a silver school of silver fish moving past. Like an oil slick omy. O My! They're whatchamacallits! Rubbers! Condoms! A school of condoms in the Mediterranean?! No! I don't want to see that! I want to see— . . . *him*. HIM! Captain Marvel! There. In the ballroom. Through the porthole. See? Captain Marvel. That's his name. Really. The Captain of this Cruise. There; dancing the tango with his white even teeth, and even more even crease in his pressed uniform; and Lady Buxom in his six-foot-two-arms, pressed against the two thousand ribbons on his chest, because tradition demands he service the top-deck ladies first—until he works his way to below-deck me. He kissed my hand, you know, when I came aboard. Well, it is true he kissed all the ladies' hands. But mine he lingered over; and I could see he wanted to lick my knuckles. I pulled my hand away. I didn't want him to get into trouble. But, it's clear, throughout the cruise, his darting tongue's been making thrusts at me. . . .

AND FINALLY. . .



From the original television play, *THE
PRIVATE EYE OF HIRAM BODONI*
*[Recently discovered manuscript,
never Televised]*

*[The famous detective is inspecting some murders in a
1969 television studio]*

BODONI
(Confronting camera)
You again.

NOISE OFF. BODONI TURNS. A BLIND MAN IS DOING
SOMETHING WITH A LENS OF A CAMERA.

BODONI

Who are you?

BLIND TD

(With British accent)

I'm the TD, old sport.

BODONI

TD? What does that mean?

BLIND TD

Technical Director. I control the cameras.

BODONI

Aren't you blind?

BLIND TD

Yes.

BODONI

Aren't you British?

BLIND TD

Yes.

BODONI

Isn't that unusual? For a man who controls cameras to be blind? . . .And British?

BLIND TD

Not at all. I have a brother living in the Bronx who is the world's champion typist. And he has no fingers. But he has, in fact, very long and very nimble toes. Seventy words a minute with each foot. Also, he's very

BLIND TD

(Continued)

adept at back spacing with his heels. . . .And
he's British.

BODONI

You'll forgive me, but I'm suspicious,

BLIND TD

I forgive you, but you needn't be. Suspicious,
I learned camera techniques *before* I was
blind. Even when I could see, I could do what
had to be done with my eyes closed. So to
speak. I'm the best there is, still. Really.

BODONI

How can that be?

BLIND TD

I'm not hung up on seeing, you see. I'm free
of it. So I can be *more* creative, not less. I
have no seeing man's prejudices about
reality. For example, would you mind
standing in front of this new lens? Then, if
you'll look off on to one of the monitors about,
you'll see an interesting version of yourself.

BODONI

(Moving Away)

No!

BLIND TD

(Turns lens in direction
of Bodoni's voice)

Come now, don't be afraid.

BODONI

I don't want to.

BLIND TD

(Laughs)

Relax. You really can't escape anyway. This is a wide angle lens.

BODONI

No, No. NO!

MUSIC: ELECTRONIC.

CUT TO: BODONI, AS IF SEEN IN A KALEIDOSCOPE — THEN TO SPLIT SCREEN — THEN SPLIT SCREEN BLURS — THEN ELECTRONIC MUSIC, OUT. WHEN THE BLURRED DOUBLE IMAGE COMES INTO FOCUS, WE SEE FOUR IMAGES OF TED AHEARN.

OH!

And if you decide to peruse more of my rewritten plays at www.gaglianoriff.com/page/plays — and happen to discover other recurring themes and subjects that could presage more grief for me — I'd appreciate your keeping them to yourselves.

FG