Cultural Daily

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Warren Bodow's Second Act

Jaz Dorsey · Thursday, September 6th, 2012

"At 73," says playwright Warren Bodow, "I am what I am, so I have determined to write plays about older people who face issues, problems and conflicts that are largely the result of living beyond the traditional retirement age of 65."

With these words, Bodow, it seems, speaks not only for himself but also for an entire generation of amazing American theatre artists who are more likely to be found in the director's chair than the rocking chair.

Born in 1939 in Syracuse, New York, Bodow's initiation into drama and music began when he was seven with a Stromberg Carlson AM-FM short-wave radio and record changer console which was the heart of family time, enjoying shows such as Jack Benny and Burns & Allen. On his own, Bodow tuned in to *Superman* and other youth-oriented adventures or eavesdropped on his mother's radio soaps and recalls the profound effect that radio had on the imagination of his generation. The record changer was kept busy with the family's classical and semi-classical collection.

These cultural elements no doubt laid the ground work for his future career in broadcasting.

Bodow was also a film fanatic who remembers to this day in which theatre he saw which film and who, for the past six years, has led seminars on classic movies for adult ed groups.

After graduating from Syracuse University in 1960, Bodow embarked on a career in broadcasting. His path took him on an adventure that included two years (1965-67) at WKNR in Detroit, which he remembers as "a great place to be at that time since the Motown sound was at its height," and eventually landed him the rather amazing title of President and General Manager of the *New York Times* radio stations WQXR FM/AM, a position which he held from 1983 to 1998. Like any true New Yorker, he reveled in the NYC theatre scene, where he met and dealt with people such as Gerald Schoenfeld of the Shubert Organization.

In 1998, Bodow says he retired from broadcasting, but talking to him it sounds more like he just switched careers. Over the past 14 years, he has penned four plays, three of which have received productions in NYC and beyond.

Working with acclaimed dramaturg Anne Hamilton of Hamilton Dramaturgy, Bodow wrote *Fronting the Order,* which looks at a group of four encyclopedia salesmen on the road in 1959. *Fronting* has had a production in Tucson, AZ. *Race Music* is about a young African-American man who wants to become a classical DJ. *Race Music* was seen at the Samuel Beckett on Theatre Row in 2009.

"Harry the Hunk Is On His Way Out," says Bodow, "deals with my observation that those of us born in or around 1940 may be the luckiest people in America because we came of age at the

height of America’s dominance, which provided great opportunity for those with the guts and drive to grab the golden ring.” *Harry* had its premiere at The Cherry Lane Studio in 2007. Yet to be produced (for any of you up and coming producers looking for a hot new property) is *Deelmaker* (that’s the main character’s dot-com), about a 65-year-old media broker who wants to keep doing what he’s been doing but is faced with a client base that is shrinking and a world that is telling him he’s on his way out.

Of his “second act,” Bodow quotes a good friend who said recently “Life is wanting. You stop wanting, you stop living.'” “Even at this age,” says Bodow, “with a full and fortunate life behind me, I want more. Writing a hit Broadway play wouldn’t hurt. Once, just once, it would be fun to be a principal at a Broadway opening night party.”

To which I can only say, “Amen to that, Mr. Bodow!”

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