



Denver Center
Theatre Company

Inside Out

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Jamie Horton & Kathleen M. Brady • Photo by Gary Isaacs

BERNICE/ BUTTERFLY: *a two-part invention*

Jan. 15 - Mar. 1 • The Ricketson Theatre

In a modern day ghost town, in America's Heartland, Bernice holds court during the morning shift at the O-Kay Diner. She is full of understanding and advice for the regulars who populate her days as she serves humor and hash browns with equal aplomb. There is a sense of comfortable routine as she recounts the years she's seen in this small, Kansas burg.

Same town, different location, Randall is a visitor here. We meet him as he addresses the American Philosophical Society with much success. Speaking on the Chaos Theory and The Butterfly Effect, he strings together the beads of his own experience and demonstrates for us the random nature of life.

In a deteriorating town that holds little promise for either of them, they sort through remembrances of people and events that have shaped the life they know today, and come to grips with the dreams that have turned to fantasy.

"It is eternity now. I am in the midst of it.
It is about me in the sunshine;
I am in it, as the butterfly in the light-laden air.
Nothing has to come; it is now..."

Richard Jefferies (1848-1887)
The Story of My Heart (1883).

"Invention [in music]: the similarity of style in two different pieces or parts. The term was thought to be used first by the composer J.S. Bach."

Harvard Dictionary of Music, p. 422.

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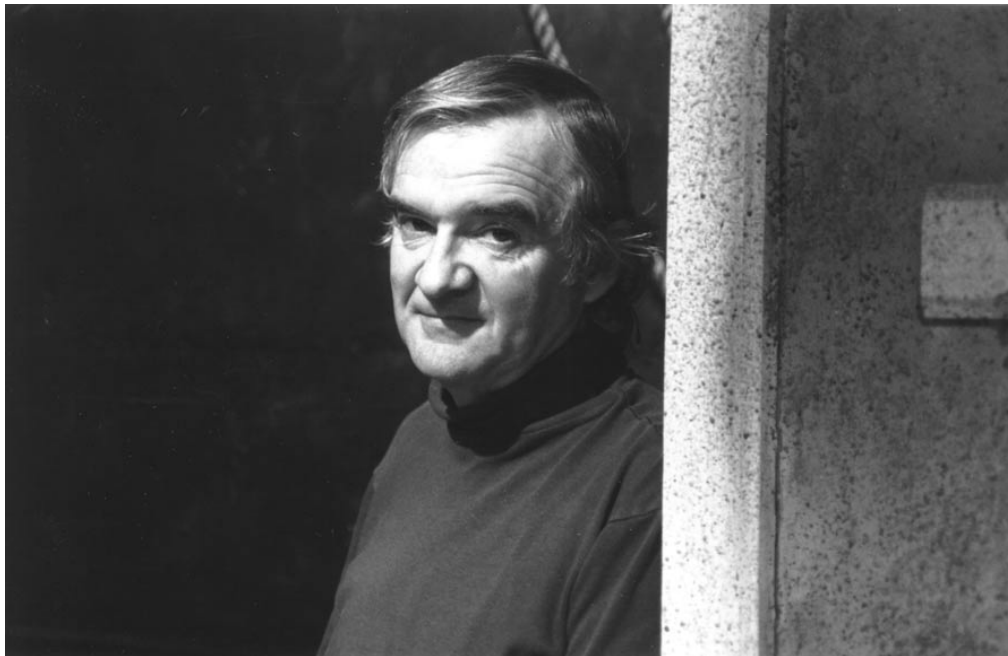
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Nagle JACKSON



Nagle Jackson is the first American to garner an Onassis Foundation International Playwriting Award, presented to him by the President of Greece in Athens for his play, *The Elevation of Thieves*. The play premiered in 1999 at the Denver Center Theatre Company (DCTC). His play, *The Quick-Change Room*, had its world premiere here in Denver in 1995 and has since been performed in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Hong Kong. *Taking Leave* premiered at the DCTC in the 1997/98 season and was nominated for the American Theatre Critics Association New Play Award. Six of Mr. Jackson's plays, including *The Quick-Change Room*, *Taking Leave* and *A Hotel on Marvin Gardens* have been published by Dramatists Play Service.

Mr. Jackson is the Principal Director of Shakespeare-in-Santa Fe. He was Artistic Director of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton from 1979 to 1990 and before that of the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. He has been a guest director at major regional theatres across the US, has directed in Norway and Russia, and is an Artistic Associate with the DCTC. Last season at DCTC, Mr. Jackson directed his new translation of Edmund Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Mr. Jackson resides in Princeton Junction, NJ, with his wife, Sandy. He is a member of The Dramatists Guild and The Society of Stage Directors, and holds an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Whitman College.

The **EXPENDABLE** *Rural* **Community**

“I dreamed constantly of my home country, of my grandfather’s farm – I would find myself returning – and those dreams were associated with a sensation of warmth and security and satisfaction that was almost physical.”

Louis Bromfield, *Pleasant Valley*

For many, the popular perception of America is the nostalgic memory of the simple life, the childhood farm, the rural school and the small town community. It is fed to us in advertisements for everything from automobiles to eggs. Images of grain in golden fields, windmills and water towers, a faded red pickup truck from the 1940s and a long highway leading into the infinite sunset. Reality is often very different from what Madison Avenue would have us believe. “This is a fundamental illusion of American culture: the persistent celebration of rural life in the midst of its destruction,” writes Harland Padfield in *The Dying Community*.¹

The kind of community Padfield refers to is rural, but not necessarily an agricultural setting. Although agriculture was not the only basis of community settlement in the United States, it was historically the most important. After the 1800s, the free land supply of Western Expansion ended and the frontier was closed. Though the frontier experience was

instrumental in establishing images of freedom, rugged individualism, and the capacity to deal with the natural world, it also produced a sense of distance from the greater political-economic world.

A second wave of rural communities cropped up with the rise of industry, many of which exploited natural and exhaustible resources, like mining. Other frontier industries such as cattle, railroads, trapping and trade led toward settlement, making the rural community a central, geographical point for rest and socializing en route to points beyond. The ideology of growth and individualism was validated by the inhabitants’ personal experiences; therefore, the rural community became the symbol of American opportunity. Towns sprung up to service industry, yet when the job was complete or the work dried up so did the town that lived off of it. So despite the supportive role rural towns have played historically, their reward is usually economic insecurity.

The decay of many communities is closely related to the operation of capitalism. “This system results in a pattern of wealth and income in which individuals and groups struggle for power that will be used to improve one’s chances in the economic game.”²

Many of our inner cities, once centers of power, wealth and culture, have undergone their own decay sparking the trend toward urban renewal. Decay in both areas, urban and rural, stems from the same cause. When the financial forces that create and sustain a community move on or cease, the upper and working classes follow the money and abandon the neighborhood. A sense of disenfranchisement,

loss of individual identity and a lack of purpose settle in and, with it, a physical and emotional disintegration. In cities, as real estate values rise and usable land becomes more scarce, an eventual gentrification and renewal takes place. Modern business expansion has created the enormous mass of suburbs that surround cities, allowing the population to

or a massive influx of young families, [the town] is in a situation of natural decline.”³ When economic disability becomes reality, frustration develops; the broken cannot be mended and a feeling of powerlessness pervades the individuals left in the dying community.

“It is impossible to escape the melancholy conclusion that man’s belief in himself has become weakest in the very age when his control of environment is greatest.”

Robert A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*, p. 22.

remain and commute. Suburbs attract growth with more opportunity and their newly-created infrastructure and though there is sameness to them, one feels a sense of connection, culturally and emotionally with the “Host City.”

In a rural community miles away from another city or town, sustained by a single industry, the loss of that industry is devastating. The population dwindles with young males and families leaving first and decreasing childbearing adults. This diminishes the replacement capacity, leaving more people dying than are born and a natural reduction is inevitable. “Barring a dramatic rise in fertility

LOSS *and* Denial

“Work is the closest thing to sanity.”
Sigmund Freud

In the play, both Bernice and Randall suffer the loss of knowing their place in the world and they deal with it through fantasy and denial.

Bernice’s work defines her as she engages with the diner’s patrons like a mother or a best friend would. She comforts, consoles, compliments and criticizes them with the intimacy reserved for those one’s known for a lifetime. Without her position as “shoulder to cry on, service with a smile,” the psychological and emotional rug has been pulled out from under her in a struggle to grasp the truth of her new reality.

Randall, who has invested a great deal of time, money and energy to become well educated, feels very vulnerable as the loss of his job is the loss of his life’s work. In Randall’s case, he ponders the validity of his efforts in the face of a random act he feels was unfairly judged. Bernice and Randall’s stress is familiar to others who have experienced job loss, though their responses to it may be in the extreme. When asked what their former jobs provided for them, many individuals responded with statements such as: “My identity, a sense of who I am...a sense of accomplishment...security...self-confidence...a place where I fit in...a challenge...self-respect, friendships, recognition, validation, self-expression.”¹

Both characters deal with reality using the psychological defense mechanism of denial. A simple form of denial is “the failure to see what exists in reality” and can be expressed through “enacted daydreams the satisfaction of which may replace the disappointments of reality.”² A second, and more complex, form of denial involves the construction of a new perception of reality, based on personal fantasy or seeing the world as one wishes to see it. This altered perception of reality replaces the disappointing or painful

**“That loss is common would not make
My own less better, rather more
Too common.”**

Alfred Lord Tennyson.
In Memoriam. VI.

truth of reality with the manufactured viewpoint of one’s desires. This denial is often so strong that it prevents the individual from believing anything but what he/she has created. Pleasant experiences from the past are the fabric of Bernice’s denial, while the cloak of erudition shields Randall from his shame. Each dons a type of costume to enrich the experience of their reality and like the near-sighted Clarke Kent who ducks into a phone booth to emerge as a Superman; they too, hope to save their world. In the formation of a new relationship, through the tentative beginning of their connection, they may — or may not — be able to carry on.

Names *and* PLACES

SANTA FE TRAIL was a trade route used by merchant-traders during the early 1800s. Manufactured goods were transported from Missouri to Santa Fe to be traded for the furs and other items available there. Nearly 800 miles between Independence, Missouri and Santa Fe, New Mexico, Council Grove, Kansas was the only trading post. It provided the rendezvous point for westward bound travelers, freighters, caravans of traders who were crossing the plains. The region from Council Grove to near Santa Fe was the most hazardous part of the trail.

BENT'S FORT, trading post of the American West, is on the Arkansas River in southeastern Colorado. As the fort on the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail, it was the dominant point of trade for Native Americans south of the Black Hills, the Mexicans and the arriving Americans.

SAINT BERNADETTE (1844-1879) is a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. She was born Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. When she was 14, the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to her 18 times and told her to make known the healing powers of the springs of water in Lourdes. Bernadette joined the Sisters of Charity in 1866. She was beatified in 1925 and declared a saint in 1933.

HEGEL, GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH (1770-1831), a German philosopher, was one of the most influential thinkers of recent times. He tried to develop a system of philosophy in which all the contributions of his major predecessors would be integrated. In *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel viewed a variety of outlooks as so many states of mind and regarded these as stages in the development of the spirit/mind toward ever-greater maturity.

MARTIN HEIDIGGER (1889-1976) was a German philosopher who exerted a tremendous influence on the philosophers of continental Europe, South America and Japan. His work is an attempt to understand the nature of Being (Sein in German). To study Being, Heidegger analyzes human existence (Dasein), the form of Being we know best. In his attempt to understand Being, he often seeks enlightenment in the origins of words and the insights of poets.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER (1788-1860), a German philosopher, became widely known for his fine prose style and his pessimism. His philosophy is atheistic, but Hinduism and Buddhism profoundly influenced him. He described "blind will" as the ultimate reality and he sought release from suffering through the contemplation of works of art and an ethic of sympathy. His main work is *The World as Will and Idea*.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE was a French existentialist philosopher who examines the meaning and purpose (or lack of it) of existence through his novels, plays and short stories.

"E AVANTI LUI TREMAVA TUTTA ROMA" (And before him all Rome trembled) are words from the opera *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini. At the end of Act I Tosca stabs Scarpia, the chief of police in Rome, who wants her as his mistress. She screams/sings the words at his death.

The **BUTTERFLY EFFECT** / *the Essence of* **Chaos**

Not long ago, it was believed that all processes were either deterministic or random. Some things could not be predicted accurately. The more you know about the initial parameters, the more accurate your prediction will be, but a tiny deviation in the initial conditions will only cause a tiny deviation in the final outcome.

“A new conception was being made...that whatever fundamental units the world is put together from, they are more delicate, more fugitive, more startling than we catch in the butterfly net of our senses.”

Jacob Bronowski,
The Ascent of Man

During the mid-20th century, the math and science world began to appreciate that things were not truly random, and many simpler systems could be described by a few simple equations. On the other hand, they seemed to not be predictable, because starting with the same initial conditions did not always generate the same end result. A third category was created, called chaos, to describe these processes.

Scientifically speaking, the word chaos differs in meaning from its general usage as a state of confusion, lacking any order. With reference to chaos theory, the word denotes a seeming lack of order within a system that nevertheless obeys particular laws or rules. In the early 20th century, physicist

Henri Poincare discovered a synonymous condition, which he called dynamical instability that refers to an inherent lack of predictability in some physical systems. The two main ideas in the chaos theory are that systems — no matter how complex they may be — rely upon an underlying order, and that very simple or small systems and events can cause very complex behaviors and events. The second idea is known as sensitive dependence on initial conditions, discovered by meteorologist, Edward Lorenz.

In his attempts to theoretically model and predict weather conditions, Lorenz was running computerized equations. After running a particular sequence, he decided to replicate it, reentered the number from his printout and let it run. Contrary to his expectations, upon his return the results were radically different from his first outcome. He had, in fact, not run precisely the same number, .506127, but the rounded figure of .506. At the time, all scientific thought would have expected that the resulting sequences should have differed only very slightly from the original trial. Lorenz concluded that the slightest difference in initial conditions — beyond human inability to measure — made prediction of past or future outcomes impossible, an idea that violated the basic conventions of physics.

In a 1963 paper, Lorenz gave to the New York Academy of Sciences he says, “One meteorologist remarked that if the theory were correct, one flap of a seagull’s wings would be enough to alter the course of the weather forever.” By the December 1972 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, DC, the seagull had evolved into the poetic butterfly and the title

of his talk had become: Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil set off a Tornado in Texas?

For Randall, we may assume he is pondering this theory, this Butterfly Effect to make some sense out of the one small event that has created chaos in his otherwise predictable life. Small changes have huge consequences.

“Think of it as a scientific version of *It's a Wonderful Life*, that classic Christmas movie. Remember how different everyone's life would have been without George Bailey?”

SOURCES

pg. 3	N O T E S & S O U R C E S	pg. 5	N O T E S & S O U R C E S
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pg. 6	S O U R C E S	pg. 7	S O U R C E S
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