

Sunday, January 23, 2011, 7pm
Zellerbach Hall

Strictly Speaking

Wallace Shawn



Jared Rodriguez

Real World, Fake World, Dream World

Cal Performances' 2010–2011 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

WALLACE SHAWN wears two hats. Beloved for his comedic roles as a film and stage actor, he is also a playwright and essayist, revered for his exploration of difficult, often controversial themes. Much of the writing in his collection *Essays* (2009) has the same cadence as the dialogue in his award-winning plays and screenplays—bold assertions, often provocative, that outrage and even startle.

Our Late Night was his first play to be produced in New York. It was directed by Andre Gregory at the Public Theater and won the 1975 OBIE for Best New Play. *A Thought in Three Parts* was produced two years later by the Joint Stock Theatre Group in London, directed by Max Stafford-Clark. *Marie and Bruce* was directed by Les Waters at the Royal Court in 1979 and at the Public Theater in New York in 1980. *Aunt Dan and Lemon* (1986 Obie for Distinguished Playwriting) was directed at the Royal Court and at the Public Theater by Max Stafford-Clark in 1985. Its 2003 Off-Broadway revival (directed by Scott Elliott) was described by *The New York Times* as “shiveringly theatrical.” Mr. Shawn performed *The Fever* in New York in 1990 and in London in 1991 (it also won an Obie). *The Designated Mourner* premiered at the Royal National Theatre, London, in 1997, with Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson and David de Keyser, under the direction of David Hare, and it was directed in New York in 2000 by Mr. Gregory, with Mr. Shawn, Deborah Eisenberg and Larry Pine.

Mr. Shawn wrote the libretto for Allen Shawn’s opera, *The Music Teacher*, which was produced in New York by the New Group in 2006, directed by Tom Cairns, and Scott Elliott directed his translation of *The Threepenny Opera* at Studio 54 in the same year.

Wallace Shawn and Mr. Gregory wrote and performed in the film *My Dinner with Andre*, described by *The Washington Post* as “cinema’s quintessential conversation.” Mr. Gregory also

directed Shawn in *Uncle Vanya*, which became Louis Malle’s film *Vanya on 42nd Street*. In 2009, the Royal Court presented Mr. Shawn’s most recent work, *Grasses of a Thousand Colors*. About Mr. Shawn’s relationship with the Royal Court Theatre, *New Yorker* critic John Lahr wrote: “The Royal Court, one of the most influential theatres in Europe, is doing for Shawn what the Beatles did for Little Richard: rediscovering for a new generation a singular American talent who had been marginalized in his own country. In the United States, Shawn, as a playwright, is a relatively unknown quantity without an artistic home; in England, his works, which prey on both consciousness and conscience, are published under the rubric of ‘contemporary classics.’”

In 2005, Wallace Shawn received the PEN/Laura Pels Foundation Award, for “show[ing] the way to a new kind of theater, a theater able to contain sex and politics and history and heartache and remorse, longing and confusion, the horrors of self-knowledge, deep and complex thought as well as deep and complex feeling.”

As an actor, Mr. Shawn has appeared in many films, including *Manhattan*, *Clueless*, *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills*, *The Moderns* and *The Wife*. He regularly appears on the television series *Gossip Girl*.

Mr. Shawn’s *Essays*, a collection of nonfiction that looks at high art, war, culture, politics and privilege from Mr. Shawn’s personal perspective, was published by Haymarket Books in June 2009.

In *Real World, Fake World, Dream World*, Mr. Shawn reads from his plays (the world of dreams) and from his recent book, *Essays*, in which he discusses the world as he believes it really is, and the fake world, which is presented to us by those who would like to exploit our gullibility and our almost incurable drive toward self-deception. He also reads from the work of some of the authors who have inspired him over the years.