

Author: [Allegra Hanson](#)

Posted date: Saturday, November 24, 2007 12:36:20 PM EST

Last modified date: Saturday, November 24, 2007 12:36:20 PM EST

Total views: 4 **Your views:** 2

[< Previous Post](#) | [Next Post >](#)

[Show Parent Post](#)

Richard Foreman, knowing nothing about him before, came off as an eccentric character who *would* say something as preposterous as “Stories hide the truth,” in explaining his unorthodox form of theatre. Despite the typically unconventional response (what are artists if unconventional?), his provocative statement presents an interesting idea. Does a play need a story line in order to reveal a message to the audience?

Normally, yes. Following the average human thought process, a linear formula of $A+B=C$ is normally presented in order to gain knowledge. Many theatrical plays and other mediums which involve a plot utilize a similar formula appearing as introduction, climax, and resolution. As an independent thinker, Foreman strays from this notion of $A+B$ equaling C and presents the concepts outright, similar to the way in which a painting is just there, staring at the viewer, demanding interpretation without any other hints.

Foreman’s sentiment that the linear formula hides meaning, while a provocative concept, I find inaccurate. I’ll agree the linear formula makes it easier for the viewer to follow as well as eases them into an idea, but meaning can still be accrued. For individuals such as myself who require specificity and take the abstract literally, the linear formula is an excellent means for us to understand intended meaning, else we are made to feel stupid and uncultured. What Foreman ought to have suggested was that *his* productions offer a more immediate and challenging truth and don’t let the viewer sit back and receive information. I’ll applaud his challenge and accept the initiative, but his opinion is a little condescending.

Author: [Charles Bookman](#)

Posted date: Saturday, November 24, 2007 11:48:18 PM EST

Last modified date: Saturday, November 24, 2007 11:48:18 PM EST

Total views: 5 **Your views:** 2

[< Previous Post](#) | [Next Post >](#)

[Show Parent Post](#)

Richard Foreman doesn’t like to develop things because development can take away from the brilliance of the original idea. I believe he said he develops things very

thoroughly now, but tended to do this less when he was younger. When he says “development”, I think he means revising, editing, and building upon his ideas. Development is so important in writing that people have expressed the idea, as Foreman said, that this art form is not writing as much as it is rewriting. Development is usually necessary because ideas are not usually fully developed when they are dreamed up. The way people think and come up with ideas is very disorderly, which is why people must organize their thoughts into more coherent forms so they can express themselves to the audience effectively. People also rarely have fully-formed ideas when they have moments of creativity, so they must change their ideas so they can fit into the larger framework of the piece or work. This is necessary because people must be able to understand the artist’s ideas and work. Development is also a way of expanding on ideas so as to make them not just clearer, but to make them better as well. In this case, Foreman thinks that development may make things more clear, but will not necessarily make them better. He was talking about the notion that this type of development can impair the brilliance and pureness of the original idea. It must be noted, however, that undeveloped ideas are easy to incorporate into “absurdist” plays just like undeveloped musical ideas are easier to incorporate into avant-garde music. If a play has little structure, then it is easier to implement new ideas that aren’t yet developed or organized because they have to fit into something that is also not organized. For works that are very specific in terms of genre and structure, an idea must follow certain rules in order to be incorporated into the work more seamlessly and effectively. This means that ideas must be developed in order to make them similar to the other ideas being used in the work. While it can easily happen that an idea is developed so much that its original feeling, emotion and brilliance can be lost, artists like Richard Foreman do not have to worry about this as much because their work can incorporate many structures, genres and various other loosely-defined aspects. Development is so important in writing because writing usually has to be clear and understandable, as well as the fact that writing has more rules and traditions than virtually any other art form. Ideas must be developed so they can fit into the narrow, preexisting framework of the literary piece. This applies to almost forms of writing except more avant-garde forms like those of Richard Foreman. This is why he can use undeveloped ideas and explore the effect these ideas have on his work more than most other writers. This is what makes his work and his artistic process much closer to other forms of art and artists’ processes than most literary works and authors’ processes.

Author: [Gabriel Tennen](#)

Posted date: Monday, November 26, 2007 5:39:23 PM EST

Last modified date: Monday, November 26, 2007 5:39:23 PM EST

Total views: 4 **Your views:** 2

[< Previous Post](#) | [Next Post >](#)

[Show Parent Post](#)

3. The fact that Richard Forman has not been to a play in 20 years is kind of

disheartening, to say that least. It is not that he cannot, or did not in the past, produce great theater, as he is one of the most influential avant garde playwrights of all time. The fact that he finds nothing in the theater inspiring or worthwhile is just sort of disappointing for the younger generation of theater enthusiasts who missed out on Forman's golden era. Despite the few adults in the audience, telling a room full of college students that their contemporary era has produced absolutely nothing of value is certainly a bold statement and did not make me lose faith in Forman's ability to make great work, but instead made me lose faith in Forman himself. Any person who presents themselves as that jaded and bitter obviously doesn't care that much about their craft anymore. Forman is still capable of producing great theater, but his lecture made it sound as though he had no interest in doing so just because of the current state of that same outlet. I will be excited to read the reviews of his new piece to see if he still has "it," but if the reviews are lousy, I won't be surprised. I found it kind of insulting that he chose to tell us he rarely went to the theater and did so only so people didn't think he was a jerk. With age often comes bitterness, though, so I'll wait until I'm 70 and see where I'm at.

Author: [Vanessa Soudan](#)

Posted date: Monday, November 26, 2007 7:27:16 PM EST

Last modified date: Monday, November 26, 2007 7:27:16 PM EST

Total views: 6 **Your views:** 2

[< Previous Post](#) | [Next Post >](#)

[Show Parent Post](#)

Foreman stated that twenty years ago, he stopped going to see plays. How do you think this has affected his work? Do you think that it is important for a playwright to see and experience the work of other artists? Does the work have to be from the same field?

When Foreman first stated that he hadn't been to the theatre, purely in the role as audience member in over twenty years I chuckled a bit and assumed he was making a joke. When he again restated his decision to stop going to the theatre, that in actuality he rather dislikes the whole scene of it, I found myself beginning to second guess the almighty pioneer director Richard Foreman.

Foreman's conscious decision to extricate himself from the current scene of the theatre world is disrespectful and ego centric. I feel that it is essential as an artist to observe one's surroundings and evolve with the medium of choice. Foreman spoke of being categorized into always basically doing the same things in plays and that he in fact commends such critique, stating that he is meticulously defining *his* style of theatre. No wonder the critics made such judgments, he hasn't been to a play/production in twenty years! I can understand that while one is in the creative process outside influences may

be distracting and one could lose focus and purpose; however sometimes seeing someone else's work can be inspiring and ignite new ideas. Either one of these situations is of personal nature and process, but for either one I firmly believe that once that piece has come to a close the artist should immerse themselves back into the art world.

In response to the final part of this question I feel that it is absolutely beneficial to be knowledgeable in all fields/mediums of the art world. Recently I have been broadening my spectrum in my personal growth as an artist. My field is dance but lately I have been looking outside the sometimes restricting box of concert dance performances. In developing a richer and more in depth knowledge of the art world I feel that my work through the medium of dance will reach higher grounds.

All in all Richard Foreman, over his 40 year career, seems to have created his own stylistic approach to directing theatre and he is sticking to it...no further influences needed?

Author: [Nathaniel Morris](#)

Posted date: Monday, November 26, 2007 11:19:32 PM EST

Last modified date: Monday, November 26, 2007 11:19:32 PM EST

Total views: 4 **Your views:** 2

[< Previous Post](#)

[Show Parent Post](#)

Do you agree that modern [traditional?] plays “try to socialize the audience”? And what did he mean by that? Why, like Bresson, is he not interested in personality?

If by socialize the audience he means entertain them, then I think he would be correct, I think theater like the majority of film and other art forms (outside the avant-garde) depend on entertaining the audience in a digestible fashion, traditional plays might have more financial considerations or perhaps the directors are less willing to take risks than avant-garde directors like Richard Foreman. But since plays are put on for an audience, to develop a style which intentionally ignores that audience is risky and could never gain ubiquity.

When foreman spoke of socializing the audience he meant catering to their interests at the expense of content. Richard foreman made clear his admiration for the French filmmaker Robert Bresson who had a particular style of crafting characters which are devoid of personality, Foreman recalled that Bresson called his actors models. “Bresson did not want to show personality but what was underneath it” Bresson encouraged his actors not to think about what they were saying, because he was trying to prevent the actors from

coloring the dialogue in such a way as to lead the audience in their impressions. Forman acknowledges that this method of writing is often unpalatable by theater going audiences and in the early days of his work it was not uncommon for 2/3 of the audience to leave before the play had ended. Most directors and play writes would be tolerant of such an audience drop out rate for obvious reasons.

Forman explicitly stated in reference to contemporary dialogue that he “does not want to be seduced” he does not wish actors to be overtly likable or detestable but for them to be real in such a way that the audience is left to fill in the blanks left by the ambiguity. I think this style is not entirely uncommon and has had a strong tradition in theater and cinema, filmmakers like Michelangelo Antonioni made a name for themselves using ambiguity of character to tell stories with what was left out, and we know that Antonioni did not face the same sort of rejection that Forman seems to be so proud of. I think Foreman’s style is admirable and interesting, but like any other avant-garde technique one cannot expect it to be found in mainstream theater, if it did then it would loose the impact that made it original and interesting.