Richard Manley Returns to Ashland for ANPF’s Production of Quietus

Richard Manley is the playwright of ANPF 2012–winning play This Rough Magic (now in production under the title The Truth Quotient). Manley is returning to Ashland with his new play Quietus for a staged reading on April 15 (see page 3). In a recent e-mail exchange, Manley shared his thoughts about coming back to Ashland:

“It has the charm of a small town without being provincial. A friendly, well-read population; services and entertainment within easy walking distance; good food; and a comfortable architectural style.

“The town—the people themselves, but also the culture they support, and the activities available—loves the world of the stage play. I could feel its sincerity and enthusiasm every time I had a conversation with a resident after a reading, or in a café or a local restaurant, or even when I was stopped on the street—all unusual and delightful experiences, by the way.

“It gets what a café should be all about—a hangout, workplace, and reading room but with a personality, which is hard to find in so many of the theater venues I’ve visited. Noble Coffee, for example—and that’s just one of the several you have. It may seem like a small point, but I think of that kind of café as a symbol of the town’s lifestyle—civilized in the best sense of the word.”

Above all a playwright is a storyteller, and Manley used the following story to explain why he enjoys ANPF so much.

“My immediate family was dysfunctional in many ways. We didn’t get along and, as I got older, had very different priorities and ways of looking at life and responsibility. And then, around age 10, I met my aunt (mother’s only sister) and her husband. She was funny, charming, sophisticated, and affectionate (new for me), and he was a former boxer and a pilot who built his own plane, with a skeet range in the backyard and a wide variety of other fun and interesting stuff in his life. They were curious and passionate. They laughed a lot. And yet it was obvious that they took life and their family seriously and that they had been successful. I wanted them to adopt me.

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Reading Committee Is Tackling a Record Number of Scripts

ANPF 2013 is already under way, as our 50-person Reading Committee is poring over an unprecedented number of submissions.

We received 273 scripts for ANPF 2013, up more than 50 percent from 2012. Undaunted, our intrepid volunteer readers are hard at work, searching for the four jewels that will be presented at ANPF’s main event in October.

ANPF’s play selection process takes place in two rounds of reading. In round 1, each script is read and scored by five readers. The three dozen top-scoring plays in the first round are designated semi-finalists and move into round 2, during which all plays are read and evaluated by all readers.

In both rounds, readers have the opportunity to meet several times in small discussion groups for heated debate and great good fun.

After second-round scores are tabulated, all readers convene in a general meeting to discuss the relative merits of the semi-finalists. At the conclusion of the meeting, readers vote by ballot, and the 12 top-scoring plays become the finalists. These are then given to Artistic Director Douglas Rowe. From this list, he will design the 2013 festival.

The ANPF Board of Directors Is Mapping Out an Ambitious Year

The bells ushering in 2013 had barely stopped ringing when the 14-member ANPF Board of Directors met with newly elected president Fred Wright, vice president Linda Young, and secretary/treasurer Dolores Marx.

A dynamic blend of individuals with years of ANPF experience and new board members bringing fresh ideas and perspectives has revitalized the entire organization. “This is absolutely the most active and enthusiastic board I’ve ever served with in my many years of theatre,” says Artistic Director Douglas Rowe. “There’s no sitting back and yawning on this board!”

Volunteer bookkeeper Nina Winans joined the board in December 2012, bringing a wealth of professional financial experience and know-how to keep meticulous records of ANPF’s increasingly complicated finances.

Although Jim and Marguerite Schellentrager have also been on the board only since December, both have taken on leadership roles in vital areas: a yearlong calendar to keep us on track and plans for theatrical readings during the year in addition to those during our flagship festival in October. Jean Collonge, our new volunteer coordinator, is hard at work identifying folks who are interested in being part of the ANPF team. (Let us know if you can help!)

This is a “happening time” as ANPF committees meet and plan a year of exciting events. John Rose and Gray McKee are guiding the 50 volunteer readers through the selection process, while Sunny Anderson’s Theater Talk Committee is finalizing details for this year’s
work, Quietus. Ken Albers, Denis Arndt, Cate Davis, and Michael Elich have graced the stages at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in major roles for decades, and now they come together under the direction of yours truly. I have always felt that a director’s success was 75 percent casting. In this case it would be 99 percent. The other 1 percent would be directing myself as the reader of the stage directions. I have worked with and understudied Ken in The Man Who Came to Dinner, I shared the stage with Cate in Chicago, and in 1997 Michael and I did OSF’s production of Death of a Salesman, which ANPF reprised as a reading in 2010 with OSF’s original cast. This will be my first show with Denis, but we share something else—a grandson, thanks to our children McKenna and Jackson.

Over the past three years at ANPF, we have received and evaluated nearly 700 plays, so it is no mean feat to reach the final four that we choose to present each year, many of which move on to productions across the country. We first met playwright Richard Manley last year, after he was selected as one of the winners for ANPF 2012. His play This Rough Magic was seen and enjoyed by many of you last October. It recently had a successful run in New York, so highly of a work-in-progress, but the combination of this play’s compelling intrigue and this cast’s brilliance makes it a definite must-see.

ANPF’s raison d’être as an organization is to help playwrights advance their careers. After a few rough-and-tumble years awhile back, we have rebounded strongly, thanks to a dedicated cadre of theater-savvy readers, a devoted Board of Directors, and amazing actors who bring the scripts to life. Never has the latter been more evident than in our upcoming presentation of Richard Manley’s new work, Quietus. Ken Albers, Denis Arndt, Cate Davis, and Michael Elich have graced the stages at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in major roles for decades, and now they come together under the direction of yours truly. I have always felt that a director’s success was 75 percent casting. In this case it would be 99 percent. The other 1 percent would be directing myself as the reader of the stage directions. I have worked with and understudied Ken in The Man Who Came to Dinner, I shared the stage with Cate in Chicago, and in 1997 Michael and I did OSF’s production of Death of a Salesman, which ANPF reprised as a reading in 2010 with OSF’s original cast. This will be my first show with Denis, but we share something else—a grandson, thanks to our children McKenna and Jackson.

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Get Your ANPF Tote Bag While They Last

Whether you’re schlepping scripts or running to rehearsal, our sturdy ANPF EcoResponsible™ tote bag fits comfortably on your shoulder. Made of 10-ounce natural cotton with contrasting trim and 22” handles, these snazzy bags feature the ANPF logo silk-screened on the outer pocket and have a square cut with a flat bottom. Get yours while they last! We’ll have them for sale at this year’s events for just $10, or you can have yours delivered via first-class mail for $15. Order online at ashlandnewplays.org using PayPal, or send your check to: ANPF Tote Bag, PO Box 3314, Ashland, OR 97520.

Got Time? We’re Looking for Volunteers!

We all value the professionalism of the playwrights, directors, and actors who participate in ANPF readings and events, but did you realize that the work of organizing, staffing, and generally assisting during Festival Week and at our other events is done by volunteers?

There are many opportunities to become part of this lively and enthusiastic group. Whether you want to contribute for a couple of hours here and there or on a longer-term basis, whether you are willing to take tickets or move platforms, whether you hope to be in the thick of things or prefer working quietly behind the scenes—whatever your interests and abilities, ANPF has a volunteer opportunity for you.

Please consider joining us! Contact our volunteer coordinator at volunteer@ashlandnewplays.org.
A new play by Richard Manley

Richard Manley delighted audiences at ANPF 2012 last October with *This Rough Magic*. The play, under its new title *The Truth Quotient*, has just finished a successful off-Broadway run at the Beckett Theater in New York City.

You will have another opportunity to see Manley’s work in April when ANPF presents a staged reading of his play *Quietus*. Directed by Douglas Rowe,* the cast features Kenneth Albers,* Denis Arndt,*† Catherine Lynn Davis,* and Michael Elich.*

*This Rough Magic* took us to a future where emotional needs could be met by humanoids. Your loved ones (perhaps in a slightly more lovable form than the originals) could come back to you in robotic form. *Quietus* foresees a time when bodies can be kept functioning after brain death to enable their use for medical, scientific, and maybe some less ethical purposes. Three characters—a medical researcher, an entrepreneur, and a bioethicist—approach the issue from three very different perspectives. A fourth character, who has a more direct relationship with the situation, brings her own intensely personal experience to the mix.

Telling more about the intriguing twists and turns the play takes would be a spoiler. It is interesting, however, to contemplate the meanings of the title. The word *quiatus* these days is often taken to mean “death” or “release into death” (remember Hamlet’s thoughts on finding “quiatus with a bare bodkin”), but an equally relevant meaning in the context of the play is a final reckoning or settlement of a debt. Like *This Rough Magic*, Manley’s *Quietus* will leave you thinking and talking about the issues for days to come.

The reading is presented in ANPF’s traditional format, which is greatly valued by our playwrights: a two-act performance followed by an audience talkback with the playwright and the actors. The talkback will be moderated by ANPF board member John Rose, host of the ANPF Theatre Talk series.

*Quietus* will have one performance only, on April 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Center, 87 4th Street in Ashland. The reading will be in two acts, with an intermission. Pebblestone wine, ANPF-branded merchandise, and other concessions will be available for sale.

Tickets are $15, and seating is limited. Tickets are available at Paddington Station and Music Coop or by e-mailing tickets@ashlandnewplays.org or calling (541) 488-7995.

“Manley’s work is...thought-provoking...He raises interesting questions about the nature of faith, trust, and love.”
—*Washington Post*

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*Member of Actors’ Equity Association
†Member of Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers
Richard Manley’s *Quietus* continued from front page

What does this family tale have to do with Ashland, you may well ask? Metaphorically speaking, much of my experience in the theater world to date (not all—there are a couple of important exceptions) has been like relations with my immediate family. Ashland is that aunt and uncle.”

When ethics and entrepreneurship collide, what should a company do? Are the practical advantages of using brain dead bodies worth the emotional toll on those involved? How do you balance logic against traditional taboos?

**April 15 at 7:30 p.m.**
Unitarian Center
87 4th Street, Ashland

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