

(takes of mask) I risk my life in support of women playwrights!

(looking around at set) You know, I'm up here. I'm on the set. You're all out there. So, I'm going to put "Stereophonic" on my resume. We should all do it. Who's gonna know?

I'm thrilled to be here today, to help honor Jacquelyn Reingold for her work as a playwright, as well as her advocacy on behalf of all women playwrights. It's probably hard to believe from lookin' at me, but I've been around a long time. When I started doing professional theater in NY, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams were still having new works produced on Broadway. I wasn't in any of them, but they were doing them.

I have read the plays of William Shakespeare (a few of them, anyway; several would be the accurate term), Lorraine Hansbury, Anton Chekov. I was lucky to have grown up in the theater around plays by the immensely talented writers here today: Sarah Ruhl, Theresa Rebeck. Lynn Nottage. Marsha Norman. Wendy Wasserstein. I was in the first play by Robert Schenkkan. None of that changes the fact that Jacquelyn Reingold is my favorite playwright.

In Jackie's play, "Tunnel of Love," a woman who was born without a vagina creates one for herself (we don't need to get into how). Really, she creates one for her nagging boyfriend (go figure), only to then leave him when she realizes, "You only want me for the hole." I've marveled at the precision and insights of John Shanley and David Mamet, but when I read something like that, my responses is, "Thanks, guys, but I'm going to spend a little time over here, looking into *this*."

"Acapulco," is a full-length play, which I classify as an unproduced classic. It takes place in 1966, when 35-year-old Delores is desperate to find a man to replace the one who's divorcing her because in 1966 a 35-year-old divorced woman, with two young daughters and no work experience, was a candidate for destitution. Throughout the play, Delores steals miniature forks, knives, and salt and pepper shakers from airplanes to give to her daughters as wedding gifts later in life.

In "String Fever," a character says, "I stabbed myself in the chest quite a few times. And I didn't die. I've had so much surgery that my heart is wrapped in scar tissue. The only reason I'm alive is I got a heart wrapped in scars."

Some might categorize some of this as absurdism. Some might call it exaggerated realism. The fact is, that failed suicide is a near verbatim account of Jackie's own stepfather. The airline cutlery theft was committed by Jackie's mother. I love Jackie's plays because they mine a life that's full of truths stranger than fiction, to create metaphors more perfect than poetry.

Meanwhile, her plays are shockingly underproduced. Maybe that's because Jackie's had the audacity to continue to practice her craft even though she's no longer 26 years old. She's also had the audacity to help form, along with others here, the organization "Honor Roll," which is devoted to promoting women playwrights over 40, and which is also being honored here today. Jackie helped initiate publication of the collections, "She Persisted," featuring plays by women over forty. Jackie's devotion hasn't just been to her own work. It's been to the playwriting community, and to women who insist on creating opportunities for their voices to be heard.

So, to any artistic directors here today, produce more female playwrights! Produce more work by women over forty! And for God's sake, produce the plays of the supremely talented Jacquelyn Reingold, honored here today with the "She, Herself, Persists" award for extraordinary contributions as a playwright and advocate. I'm also thrilled to announce that a \$5000 gift from Stacey Mindich and The Lillys will be given to Jackie to further the work of "Honor Roll." Please welcome my dear, dear friend, Jackie Reingold.