

It is a great honor for me to dedicate these two one act gems to the memory of the wonderful Harvey Tavel. He was my husband for four years, my family for decades. It is with this revival, as it were, of plays that originated as scenarios written by Ronald Tavel at The Factory for Andy Warhol that I pay tribute to the glorious intuition and insight that Harvey possessed.

Without Harvey Tavel, there would have been no Ronald Tavel, no Harvey Fierstein, no Theatre of the Ridiculous and The Lost Continent and so much more. Harvey brought the true genius of Ronald Tavel to the world. And that is what I meant by The Power behind the Throne.

If the novelist and playwright Ronald Tavel suffered from general mass cultural obscurity, his very close younger brother Harvey was given even less recognition, significantly deserved. Yet this was one of the best directors and teachers to come out of Brooklyn since Sam Levinson. This man was cultured, informed and very opinionated. His knowledge of culture was amazingly astute. A long time devotee of The Metropolitan Opera and other opera houses, he was an encyclopedia of things operatic. Both brothers continue to influence the edgy and independent theater today.

It has been many years since les freres Tavel strode the New York stages, yet their impact reverberates still. I seek to recreate the unbridled enthusiasm which emanated from the original Play-House of the Ridiculous performances starting in those heady mid-sixties.

It was Gerard Malanga who suggested to Andy Warhol that he go to Le Metro Coffeeshouse on Second Ave L.E.S. and hear the poet/ novelist Ronald reading his poems at their open mike night, Thursdays I think. Andy was looking for interesting speech for his new talkies! Ronald's voice had been described "as sounding just like the serpent from the Garden of Eden!". Andy was amazed to see the incredible volume of papers Ronald was reading from that night (just a small part of the original draft of his 832 page novel, Street of Stairs), and sent the famous note over to Ronald - "Do you want to be in pictures? Andy. " The rest, we say, was history.

Andy's aim often was to pull the rug out from beneath Ronald, who he called Ronnie. More branding! Andy would ask and suggest to Ronald what he wanted and then proceed to flip the entire thing on its head.

Andy had just obtained ( not bought outright, but donated by an Angel, most likely Maria Menkin.) his first 16mm sound camera (Auricon) and was ready to make his inner circle clique of SuperStars (his genius branding, again) into real stars that would rival Hollywood's, since Hollywood had snubbed him smartingly. His first male star stud to have sat (actually, been grilled) for what was to become called the series Screen Test was the comely Phillip Fagan. Years later, his nephew Phillip Fagan would create a wonderful documentary, a portion of which is at the beginning of the website I maintain ; [www.ronaldtavel.com](http://www.ronaldtavel.com)

Ronald continued to pen some 22 or so scenarios for the Factory for some months at a furious clip. Not all were lensed or survived the onslaught of cinematic creation, but they remain a testament to the Tavel's genius and their major contribution to American Cinematic pantheon. This truth must be stated loudly and often, for the curse of obscurity has dogged the Tavel's always. The first dramatist appointed play write in residence at Yale's School of Divinity, Ronald's contribution has been written out of all the Warhol books I have read. Talk about a misinformation highway! Finally a chapter was devoted to this flagrant omission of theater history in J. Oberman's book FILMS WE LIKE, published in 2013.

With the stroke of a true master, yes, master Andy suggested to Ronald that he give it a shot and see if these obscure masterpieces could transfer to the stage. This brilliant idea lead to the birth of The Theatre of the Ridiculous. "We have passed beyond the Absurd, our position is entirely Ridiculous!" was the (mantra/statement ).

Ronald spoke of the uselessness of transferring using cinematic terms and titles to the stage work arts. He created his own, such the title scenario for the cinematic script. It turned out that Andy would take the credit for the travail of others done in his Factory, since his was the brand that would turn eventually pure gold. Andy really did very little directing at all, content to let Ronald direct. The times Andy would do any directing the results were awful (So no one has really heard of Ronald Tavel, yet most (some!) of America knows who Andy was. This was a formidable time in experimental underground cinema and theater and all adjacent arts in NYC and it was such a pleasure to be the fly on the wall in those heady sixties.

Both Harvey and I were inserted into Horse, Harvey in The Life of JUANITA Castro. Harvey best screen performance is in the wonderfully cast HEDY, (Mary Waronov, Mario Montez, Jack Smith, Gerald Malanga, Harvey Tavel) which suffered from Andy's directing the camera everywhere that didn't matter. Incidentally, this was the first cinematic use of the Velvet Underground and was their first genuine soundtrack.

The plays you are about to see are pure theatre of the ridiculous, way, way past the absurd ! Nothing really happens, and what's more that is the point. What we have is Ronald's free flowing consciousness addressing the existential question of what really matters in this life, "who am I ?" Who are you? Who am I supposed to know who to have sex with, (when) everyone has the same name"

Norman Glick, 11-11-2014 NYC