

FootLights

ILLUMINATING THE THEATRE COMMUNITY



*Has the lastest, greatest lamp gone out? Leon!
You who walked among the gods again, Leon!
Dumb-struck, we bow our heads
And murmur what we can.*

*O Leon! Our Leon!
Initiates in your great Mystery,
We stood in awe as you raised the dead---
Feasting with sagacious Aristotle,
Calming the stormed and stressful Schiller,
Making even leaden Kotzebue soar again,
Out-Heroding Herod in your Miracles---
We shared your Eucharist and High Holy Days,
As you revealed the Tablets of the Law from Sinai!*

*Leon! O my Leon!
Blinding in your light and warmth,
Beauteous in your glory,
Thundering forth the Birth of Tragedy,
Or lamenting petty merchant Barnwell's fall,
From Saxon Hroswith Christianizing Terence,
To Nero raging away in alexandrines!*

*Leon! O my Leon! Our Leon!
When you spoke up there,
Calderon sang again in tongues,
Mighty Aeschylus shone resplendent,
Kit Marlowe danced with naked satyrs,
And Pixerecourt, "Corneille of the Boulevard," reigned;
Ibsen convened his stern last judgement day,
While Chekhov laughed and worked and wept.*

*O Leon! O my Leon!
Our Leon!*

Michael Zelenak

Leon Katz Memorial Celebration

Monday, June 12, 2017

Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre,
Culver City, CA

YOUR HOST
Dr. Don Marinelli

PRESENTED BY
The Leon Katz Memorial Celebration Committee
Don Marinelli, Debra De Liso, Nausica Stergiou,
James Gardner, Randy Fullerton, Jared J. Stein,
Travis Michael Holder, Mike Kindle and C. Raul Espinoza



July 10, 1919 – January 23, 2017



Leon Katz

(July 10, 1919–January 23, 2017)

was a professor, dramatist,
dramaturg, scholar, historian,
director, producer, and actor—
and a friend, mentor and
surrogate father to countless of
us within the American Theatre,
Television and Film communities.

Leon's Theatre history classes were more like popular speaking series than required courses: Hyperactive students across Theatre disciplines all in one hall, silently captivated by a striking man wearing an unusually large ring, sipping Diet Coke from a Gertrude Stein beer stein and telling us stories—with no notes and only the occasional, erratic attempt at using slides. How artists fortified and confounded the logic of the times and the audiences' expectations—with inventions, deconstructions and bastardizations of form—as they were celebrated, worshipped, ignored, imprisoned, and executed: He revealed to us the history of Western Drama as its own mythology.

And he did so without artifice or conceit. Our silence wasn't required. In fact, he was an ideal collaborator. He could be just as captivating in rehearsals and script meetings, and at the deli or his home. Warm, compassionate, exceedingly generous, and often hilariously inappropriate, he was our sometimes-testy, unfaltering friend.

In some ways, Leon was a throwback to the legendary Jewish communist scholars from his days as a student in New York in the 30s and 40s. According to Leon, then, you were either with the Stalinists or with the Trotskyites; holdover Leninists and run-of-the-mill socialists were the only outliers. Yet his courses weren't political, or apolitical, nor did they focus through or dissuade us from any particular identity lens. From his days in Paris in the early 50s, he was a living connection to the history of modernism, an actual participant in Alice Toklas's salon. The influences were clear in much of his writing, but not all.

Leon's interests were sparked by New York's Yiddish Theatre of the 20s and 30s. He'd go on to write a master's thesis on O'Neill, a doctoral dissertation on Stein, and numerous plays centering on the most ridiculous and vilest human tendencies. But he also wrote children's plays and a script for Roger Corman. Passionately in love with the avant-garde, he refused to marry it. He was a convinced atheist, yet one of his best friends (and frequent collaborators) was a nun.



Aware of his atheism, on a few occasions, Martha Coigney (1933–2016), Director Emerita of the International Theatre Institute of the U.S., told me she thought Leon was still “the most religious person [she] had ever met.” Martha was Leon’s student at Vassar from 1950–1954—forty years before I’d meet Leon, fifty years before I’d meet her.

As he taught into his late 80s, it had long been common for Leon’s students also to be the students of his former students. Toward the end of his career, it was increasingly common for this next generation of students to be introducing him as a lecturer to theirs. It was, perhaps, because of this “religion,” as Martha put it, that he was a link like no other, between every stylistic camp in our field, and why she, like so many of us, never lost touch with him, and why he was such a rare friend.

Leon found as much joy in *Everybody Loves Raymond* as he did in commedia, and as much mystery in hand puppets as in Bunraku. He was an expert on it all because he found solace in it all, as long as it was in tune with its mythology—fortifying and/or confounding contemporary logic and expectations—whether stemming from existential dread or everyday familial strife.

Some of us have joked that Leon got his feet wet during the first weekend of the new administration, and then decided it was enough. The inmates were taking control of the asylum. Leon, however, had contributed enough for multiple lifetimes. As the logic of our times was being handed to the whim of a lunatic, and our culture seemed as divided as ever, it was now up to us.

Jared J. Stein
June 12, 2017

"Tootl-oo, Leon..."

*Love upon love,
Larry, Margaret & Sarah*

Dear One.

*I carry your passion
with me and share
it with my students.*

In Gratitude,

Debra



Leon--

*Huge mind; fierce spirit;
mentor; true companion:*

*[...] if the while I think on
thee, dear friend,*

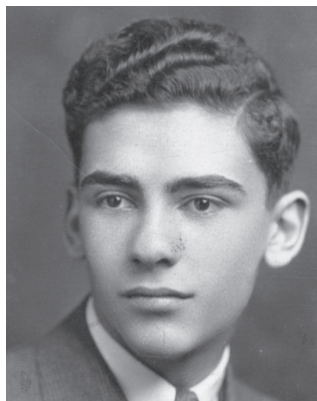
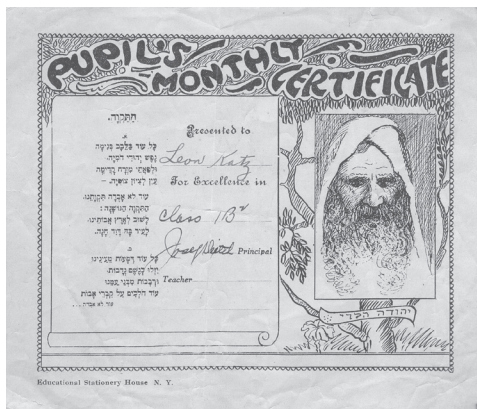
*All losses are restor'd
and sorrows end.*

--With love, Mark Bramhall

*Centuries of alchemical ore
had you, Leon Katz,
distilled as our
Philosopher's Gold.
Thunder was struck,
lightning absorbed, and
you shine still!*

*With ever-lasting love and
admiration, your student,
Meiling Cheng*

Leon Katz



Carnegie Mellon University
School of Drama
HONORS

LEON KATZ

BELOVED TEACHER,
COLLEAGUE, MENTOR,
ARTIST AND FRIEND

“Leon once told us that, when asked at his first university job interview why he wanted to become a teacher, he answered, ‘It never occurred to me to be anything else.’”

Thanks, Leon, for all your help and support in our work.

***David McKenna and Charlie Peters
(CMU 1976)***

“ Good-night, sweet prince;

And flights of angels

sing thee to thy rest.”

With deep gratitude,

Sergei Tschernisch

Dearest Leon,

I will be forever grateful for your friendship, generosity of knowledge, love of life and for your profound trust. You have given so much and now may you rejoice in receiving. ... and yes, I did see you in Havana that day.

Much love, always,

Beau

p.s. may the four of us meet again.

Heartfelt Gratitude to our Angel Donors

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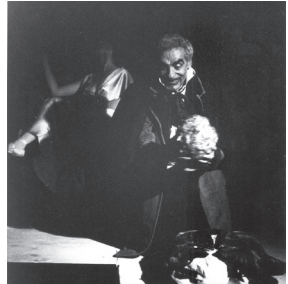
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Leon & Georgi Tschernich - 'The White Devil'



Don Marcelli Adam McHard Kathi Graham Kelli Pfeiffer Brian Johnson Leon Katz Celia Bentley Richard Gilman Michael Zelnick



Review

Katz satanic in 'devil'

Professor acts devilishly well

By ANN WEILL

SP State's production of "The White Devil" proves, among other things, that a college professor can act, and Elizabethan plays are hardly sad bloody.

Leon Katz, English and World Literature Professor, successfully demonstrates the worth of his proposed "retroactive actor as part of a major reduction" plan.

As the Duke of Brachiano, non-vivant of the time scene, Katz is completely captivating as a win the heart things of Vittoria, wife of Cassio.

Brachiano's affair with Vittoria fills his wife's shell with wrath. Her brother, Francisco, discovers the brazen affair, and the merriest begins.

Stephen Zandt, as the revenged brother, is one of the strongest actors in the play.

His presence and force is excellent only by Katz of Dan Caldwell, another principal.

As Flaminio, he keeps the complicated threads flat, including the numerous murders, well fought.

His role is one of the most demanding of the 17th. He, as the prime antagonist, comes in contact with almost every major character. His play is almost as professional as Katz's, though not quite as polished.

Georgi Tschernich, as Lodovico, promises to be a remarkably good actor with a little more sure in major reductions. Last seen in the

GOLDEN GATE
SAN FRANCISCO STATE COLLEGE
FRIDAY, MAY 13, 1966

position, action and spectacle into one smoothly working play. The play completely reflects the attitude of Elizabethan drama, morals, life and love.

These concepts are also brought out by the excellent sets and costumes.

George Armstrong created a fully workable Elizabethan stage with the proscenium. It proves to be effective.

The Elizabethan stage, with its levels, inner and outer stages, entrances, and twin stairway creation, fit the mood of the play perfectly.

Irene Pejer's costumes are historically accurate and dynamic. They accent the settings and bring spectacle to the entire production.

Robert Seigrin uses colors in a convergence of light on the stage to work well with the sets.

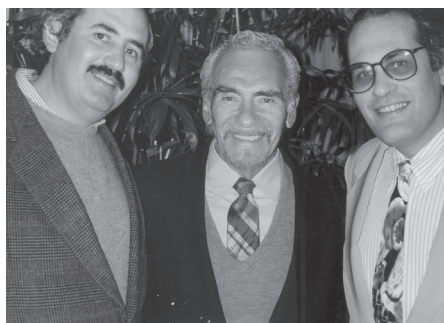
But, the play does have a few faults.

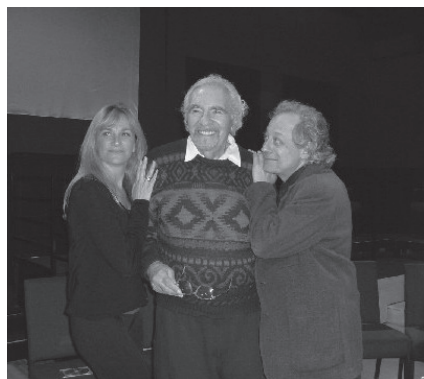
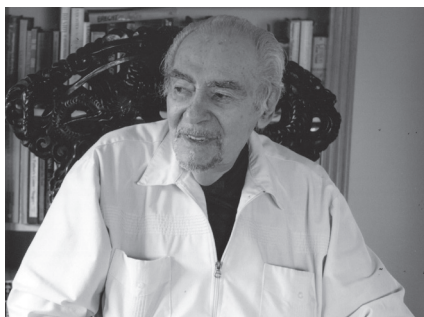
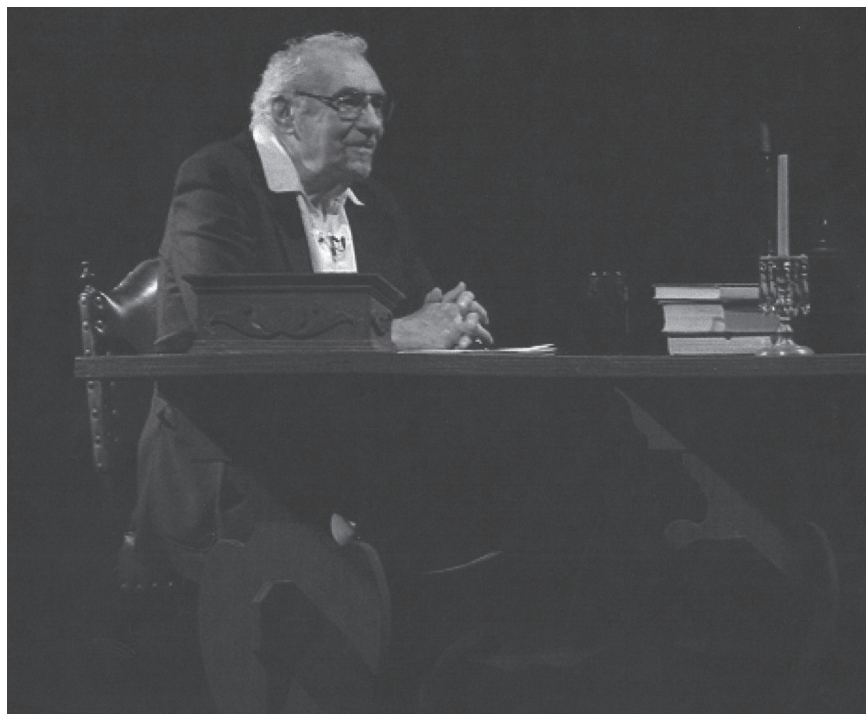
It is extremely unprofessional of actors in costume and full make-up to stand where the audience can see them before the performance. Also, doors to backstage are left open before the performance, so that passersby are presented with the internal workings of the play.

These things are important to those looking out for professional standards in college production.

These standards are seldom lowered on SP State stage.

"The White Devil" is the final major presentation of the department for this semester. It was





The Leon Katz
Memorial Celebration Committee
invites you to support
Leon's legacy.

**The Leon Katz
Dramturgical Creativity Prize**
is being established with and
hosted by the Literary Managers and
Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA)
in memory of Leon Katz.

Full details for contributing to the prize will be
in the lobby after the memorial.



LMDA's mission is to affirm the function of dramaturgy, explore its practice, and promote the profession. LMDA holds the belief that theatre is a vital art form that has the power to nourish, educate, and transform individuals and their communities and that dramaturgy is central to the process of theatre-making. www.LMDA.org

"Sine qua non."

Rick Davis



***"Thrilling in the classroom,
Charming on the stage,
Forever in our hearts."***

**Thank you Leon,
our teacher
and friend**

**Jane Kaczmarek
and the Class of 1982
Yale School of Drama**



LITERARY MANAGERS
& DRAMATURGS
OF THE AMERICAS

salutes

LEON KATZ
(1919-2017)

*for a lifetime of
teaching, writing, and dedication
to the field of dramaturgy*