

SHIRLEY LAURO

February 4, 2009

To Whom It May Concern,

I wanted to comment on my experience at New Theatre in the 2005-6 season when the theater produced the World Premiere of my play, *CLARENCE DARROW'S LAST TRIAL*.

The theater gave me a fine first production of this complicated play, to the point that the play received a Carbonell Nomination as "Best New Play in Florida" for that season. I am now editing an anthology, *FRONT LINES: Political Plays by American Women*, published spring, 2009 by The New Press. *CLARENCE DARROW'S LAST TRIAL* will be included with *THE EXONERATED; NO CHILD ...* and *Hot 'N' Throbbing* by Pulitzer Prize winner, Paula Vogel, among others. Obviously, the importance of the production at New Theatre was extremely important to my career.

The play is complex in terms of set design, lighting, costuming, sound – in short all of the technical theatrical aspects. I found all the designers made great efforts to enhance the play with their contributions. Rafael de Acha directed my play with great respect, dedication and caring – both for the material and for me as the playwright. I was included in all the auditions for the roles and my wishes were taken into careful consideration for each role. The local cast was extremely gifted!

I found that the theater audience was very attentive and interested in the material. In the "talk-backs" I became aware of the enrichment, educational values, and the enlightening experience that were afforded this South Florida audience by virtue of presenting this World Premiere play. I felt the audience was hungry for this type of experience, probably rare in the region.

In addition to presenting *CLARENCE DARROW'S LAST TRIAL*, the theater afforded me a staged reading of a play still in process, *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT*. This was a rare opportunity for me to hear the play before an audience re further development. The theater also presented a reading of another play of mine, *THE CONTEST*, which was cast and directed extremely well.

I think of New Theatre as quite a gem! It is rare among professional theaters in the country now since this theater dares to produce plays for the very first time! In fact, I believe that a good portion of their season is devoted to producing World Premieres. In other professional theaters I've worked in, unless there happens to

be a festival of new work with a few performances, there is usually only one, if any, World Premiere's per theater in any given season.

As economic times grow worse and worse, I think it becomes extremely important that New Theatre, focused on social issues are now hot button issues, remain with us and continue to grow.

Sincerely,

Shirley Lauro