

Women's WORK

Six Directors on Their Lives In the Theatre

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reasons which they explain, while others still serve in that capacity. But regardless of their years of service or their particular success at survival, their candid evaluations of their experiences reflect surprisingly similar perceptions. Recurring themes include the differences between male and female management styles, the importance of retaining control of the board of directors, the sharp contrast between a board's attitudes towards and treatment of male and female artistic directors, and the ways in which these divergent attitudes mirror sexism in the world at large. Each also offers provocative advice to women seeking to enter this field.

anne bogart: Opening Doors

Anne Bogart, now artistic director of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute which she started with Tadashi Suzuki, served in the same capacity at a regional theatre, Trinity Rep in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1989-90. She recalls "an extraordinary year of theatre which gener-

ous season—only with over a million dollars less money. I would have done fewer plays for that, but not nine, because we'd have had to do all two- and three-handers."

Bogart speculates that the board wanted to get rid of her because "they were afraid. The way a woman runs a theatre differs from the way a man does. A woman doesn't become some dark power in a corner making decisions. Rather, she opens the doors and windows and turns on the lights and says, 'What do you think?' She's more democratic. This terrified the board—who were, maybe, four women and something like 26 men. They weren't used to it. The organizations they worked for—banks or law firms—weren't run that way. They also weren't used to a woman managing their organizations or to the person in charge consulting their opinions and talking to them. They were used to being bullied and lied to and manipulated. I kept saying, 'Look at the problems and let's deal with them,' and that scared them. But I served a purpose. They had to take ownership, which they did by throwing me out."

"Today you're seeing boards hiring

taneously disrupting it. In the purest forms of female art I've seen, I find that always there: it's nonlinear, cyclical, one image working against another."

Of course, of the nine plays I did at Trinity Rep, three were by women, and we were going to do the premiere of Paula Vogel's 'The Baltimore Waltz' the following season. The box office did go down my first season because I put too many dark plays in a row during the middle of winter. I told the board the second season would be much more balanced—based on my learning from the first season. We had gotten letters of complaint, and I invited those people in. Many, 200, came in and we talked. By the end of the evening, they were once more so involved. Robert Brustein got away with riling his audiences at American Repertory Theatre because he's a guy and also has more of a track record. But women are trusted less, in general. People are not used to having women in positions of power. If I were a man, I would not have been thrown out after a year. I would have been given a chance to do another season."

Asked if she believes women and

"Today you're seeing boards hiring a woman to clean house, but then they throw her out."

—Anne Bogart, Artistic Director
Saratoga International Theatre Institute



ated excitement and controversy. At the end of the first season, the renewals and new subscriptions were soaring. Yet I uncovered a lot of fiscal problems, a huge deficit which had been hidden. So I went to the board and said, 'We have to deal with this. I can think of four ways to do it. I can do three, but not the fourth.' And the board, as a way of getting rid of me, chose the one solution they knew I wouldn't accept. It looked like I resigned, but I didn't really, because the board chose the one solution I couldn't agree to. They wanted me to do nine plays, the same as the pre-

a woman to clean house, but then they throw her out. Initially, they perceive a woman as less threatening, somebody who can be manipulated. I came to the president of the board, who is now the governor of Rhode Island, with some severe problems, and he patted me on the back and said, 'Honey, you take care of the art, and I'll take care of the business.'

"A woman writing a dissertation on the male bias on Broadway told me the female aesthetic is subversive. I think there's something to that. It's difficult for me to put a moment on stage without another moment simul-

men enjoy an equal opportunity to succeed as artistic directors, Bogart replies, "I think not. A lot of the successful women artistic directors succeed because they're functioning as a man instead of as a woman. A woman who wants to be an artistic director should not try to be a man. Be true to the way you think and feel and the way you believe an organization should be run. But if they're going to succeed, women should be given three years to prove themselves—not one. Or start an organization from scratch, as I have with the Saratoga International Theatre Institute. Or emulate Bob Brustein, who has an advisory board with no power, and then he has the real board of only four people who have the actual power: himself, Rob Orchard, and two officers from Harvard. That's very smart."