ACTORS' ROUNDTABLE

Acting Shakespeare: A Roundtable Discussion with Actors from the Utah Shakespearean Festival 2003 Production of *Measure for Measure*

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Featuring: Elisabeth Adwin (Isabella), Scott Coopwood (Angelo), Michael David Edwards (Lucio), and Henry Woronicz (Duke)

Flachmann: Good Morning. My name is Michael Flachmann. I've been Company Dramaturg here at the Festival for eighteen years and was fortunate enough to be dramaturg on this summer's production of *Measure for Measure*, directed by Liz Huddle. The format for this panel is going to be a roundtable discussion, featuring the following actors: Michael David Edwards, who plays Lucio; Elisabeth Adwin, Isabella; Scott Coopwood, Angelo; and Henry Woronicz, the Duke [applause].

As a preface, I want to make an assertion that I hope will be obvious to everyone who has seen our Tony-Award-winning shows here: The members of the production team—including the actors, director, dramaturg, and designers—ask ourselves many of the same questions that intrigue scholars about difficult scripts like *Measure for Measure*. Because of the demands of our profession, we don't have the luxury of juggling a lot of different interpretations and theories about the plays. We have to make choices, which then focus the script and crystallize audience reactions. Actors, I think, do just as much research as scholars. Some of it is literary, and some of it happens in rehearsals. Much of this research is emotional and instinctive. As a result, what we are doing today is taking a different doorway into the play than we have for the past two days with all these wonderful scholarly papers. I think this is an avenue of inquiry that Shakespeare himself would have approved of.

I want to begin by asking the following question of the actors. Most scholars view *Measure for Measure* as a "problem play." Yet

when you see a first-rate production of the script, like ours, many of the so-called "problems" seem to disappear. So I'd like to start off with Henry and ask what you see as the problems in this script? And how has this production solved them?

Woronicz: There are a number of what we would think of as classical structural problems in *Measure for Measure* from an actor's point of view. It has to do with threading through the story and starting with the motivational events that help define a character. The big question for any actor playing the Duke is why he does what he does. Why doesn't he just stop everything and change the laws? He says, "I've given the city permission to behave badly for fourteen years, and I don't want to look like a tyrant." So this conflict begins his whole journey.

As an actor, you process this to find all the little touchstones that Shakespeare uses in the script. There are two especially important ones, for me, in terms of his arc in the journey. In one of the earliest scenes when he is explaining what he is trying to do, he begins by saying, "Oh no, no, no, believe not that the dribbling dart of love can pierce a complete bosom." Then, at the end of the play he is asking for Isabella's hand in marriage, so something has changed in the course of his journey. He doesn't feel complete anymore. He needs a partner: this young woman that he has fallen in love with in the course of the story.

Flachmann: So you learn in the play that you need Isabella?

Woronicz: The big scene with Isabella, when he explains about his plan to trick Angelo, is always difficult for me because there is a big chunk of that scene where he interrupts right after Claudio and Isabella talk, and she is going to let her brother die to protect her chastity. As an actor, I am always trying to make sure I can differentiate in the audience's mind when this guy is telling the truth and when he is not, because they know he's in disguise. How do you find the honesty of what is the truth and what is a lie to the people around you? If he knows that Angelo had been betrothed to this lady and, as they say in the souvenir program, "jilted" her [laughter], if he knows about this, why didn't he do something at that time to solve the problem? He seems to be afraid of getting involved with the law. He loves "the life removed," like Prospero, and there are several other rulers in Shakespeare who like to remove themselves from the general business of running the state, and they get lost in their books. Why doesn't he do something about that?

Flachmann: So you've got all these layers. You're an actor playing a role, and that character acts in the play.

Woronicz: Yes, that character acts, too. That's always true. The other thing is he seems to be very well acquainted with Mariana at the moated grange. He shows up later that day as far as we can tell in the course of the play. I think this capsulizing of time is one of the problems, although Shakespeare loves to play with time. He likes the plasticity of time and stretching things out. At one point, he said the Duke is going to be here in two days, and then in the very next scene, he says he is going to be here tomorrow. Then Lucio comes in seeming to know that the Duke is going to be here tomorrow. As an actor, that is always one of your problems when you have to make sense of the passage of time. Sometimes you just ignore the problems. You just lean into the slide. Against all instinct, you go that direction strongly and fully anyway to help make the play happen. So when he comes to Mariana and she says, "Oh, here's a man who's long been my comfort . . . ," Liz Huddle, the director, and I decided that she is used to being visited by friars [laughter].

Flachmann: All those friars look alike, anyway [laughter].

Woronicz: Yes, in their robes, and they are always blessing people. And then there's the moment I wasn't convinced was going to work, but I think it has worked for me, where he asks for Isabella's hand at the end of the play. And it's very deliberate. Shakespeare to me is the most deliberate of writers. If he has an opportunity to say something, he will. And when he has a character keep quiet, that's an important choice. When Isabella doesn't speak at the end of the play, that seems to me an awkward choice. He deals with Angelo and wraps things up, but then comes back to her again. I think we have found a way to play this with him as a supplicant to her. He is asking for completeness from her.

Now, what's she going to do? That's the test. He is going to see what she is made of, to see what kind of person she is. When she turns around and begs forgiveness for Angelo, that's an important moment in the play. The greatest of human qualities is to ask for mercy. She says, I will forgive this man. I will be bigger than my circumstances and "look on this man as if my brother lived." And at that moment, I think the Duke is falling in love with her. When he first sees her, he says, "The hand that hath made you fair, hath made you good." His first response is how pretty she is. So Isabella completes the Duke.

That difficult ending has always been a problem in the play, and I think we have managed to make it work. I had played the Duke once before, and the ending was much more ambiguous, which I think is another of Shakespeare's great strengths—his ambiguity. If you are directing, it's another point of view. But as

a character, you look at the problem that way—how you feed off of what the spine of the play is and how you make sense of it.

I love what we call Shakespeare's "problem plays" because they don't tie up all neatly. They have challenges for the actors and directors to work on and figure out. You know you are dealing with this writer who portrays a certain Renaissance form and style, but at the same time he is very modern in terms of how people interact with each other. I always think of people watching this play for the first time, and they must be saying, "What the hell is going on?" [laughter] And then, this whole relationship [gestures towards Coopwood and Adwin] which you both could speak about, the whole sexual power play that goes on.

Flachmann: I think that if the play were crystal clear, we wouldn't even be talking about it. That's one of the joys of the script: It's got some depth and intrigue.

Coopwood: Do you think that's why people say, "Oh, it's a problem—because it doesn't tie up perfectly"? It doesn't have a fairy tale ending, unless you create one. And so people say, "Well, there's a problem because it is not complete." But it is complete because that's the way life is. Life is never cut and dried; life is never complete.

Woronicz: Life is a large problem play! [chuckling]

Edwards: But we always ask much more consistency of our art than we do of our life.

Adwin: That's right.

Flachmann: Scott, any further comments about whether this is a problem play, not only in response to the script, but also in relation to your own character?

Coopwood: I have gone to productions where I thought, yes, there is a problem with this play. And the problem was the direction [laughter]. That was the problem. Or the problem was in a specific performance or in certain choices that were made. And having gone through this experience and watching the world created around me, and then dealing with the audience reaction following that, I don't see it as much of a problem anymore because I think we have struck a balance between the light and the dark and the questions and the ambiguity. I think everything has at least been addressed to some degree. And I think the performances of the people you see sitting here, not to mention all the other supporting characters who are involved, are all very clear. And I think there is a lightness to the production that counteracts the heaviness and the darkness, that gives it a balance, that lifts it up, and that presents it as what it is. And I was concerned because the

script has this reputation. As Joe Cronin (who plays Pompey) will tell you, he was involved in a production that was so dark and so depressing, the comedy was almost an afterthought.

Adwin: I saw that.

Coopwood: You know what I mean? That is a director problem. It is not a problem with the script. I think for Angelo, specifically, the biggest problem that I have is not why he does what he does, but why he did what he did. You hear in the script about the relationship with Mariana. Obviously, there has to be some "event," something had to have taken place. I don't see Angelo as a bad guy. He's not "the villain." It would be too easy to play him as a villain. It wouldn't be interesting to watch, and it wouldn't be interesting to play. I could just phone it in. But it wouldn't be fun. And I'm having a blast with this production, so obviously there's a struggle there.

There is something that's taking place that's making me work every night to get where I need to go. And that's the joy of doing what we do. There has to be something about the relationship with Mariana that you only hear about through Henry as the Duke. And I don't even know if the Duke is telling the truth [chuckle]. You know the brother was killed in a shipwreck and he had all this money, and Angelo allegedly said to Mariana, "Well, you don't have any money now, so I don't want you anymore." That's way too simple for me. So I had to create something, and we talked about this—Michael [Flachmann] and I talked about this when we started rehearsal. What is it, what happened? So I had to create this whole back story about the relationship between Mariana and myself, and that is just something I created to get me where I need to go every night so that when this starts [gestures to Elisabeth], it is a trigger for a lot of other events.

Flachmann: Do you feel like talking about that a little bit?

Coopwood: Sure. Angelo is obviously very, very repressed. And he sees the world in blacks and whites; there's no gray. And he has come to this decision throughout the course of his life as a response to whatever happened to him, in his childhood, in his upbringing. But about his relationship with Mariana . . . I believe they were in the back seat of a car one night, and things went a little too far [chuckling]. So the relationship was consummated, and I believe that event disturbed and disgusted Angelo. That's when he decided that all women were poison, and he created this tunnel-vision world view for himself, and he wanted nothing to do with her any longer because of what he feels she had done to him, what she had let him become.

The laws were on the books at that time. He broke the law; he did the same thing that Claudio did. As he says to Escalus, "I have had such faults." He glazes right over that. So I think that was for me the only way I could get where I needed to go and keep him not completely the villain. He is a real human being, struggling with real problems and real issues, such as this incident in his life prior to the beginning of the play. And for me that incident defines the relationship between him and Mariana, and that's why he leaves her, that's why he abandons her—because he can't face what he did. He feels obviously that he was to some degree trapped into it.

We all have some stories behind what we are doing because they help to motivate us. The nice thing about Shakespeare, though, is that you don't need all this subtext. It's all there in the lines. Shakespeare tells you exactly how to act, when to breathe; everything is there.

Woronicz: But he won't go any farther; he can't say anything about it. And she won't say anything about it.

Flachmann: Speaking of repressed sexuality.

Adwin: Who says that? [laughter]

Flachmann: Any particular problems for you with the character, with the role?

Adwin: Yes, sure. When you first read a play, it's a totally different experience than when you are performing it. These are scripts, not pieces of literature. So the problems that may pop out at you off the page, when you are first reading it before you have gotten all your muscles and mind in there, are completely different from when you are actually giving it life. And some of those problems just automatically rectify themselves when you begin making choices. The process of going from novitiate to nun is quite extensive, and of course Claudio says, "Well, today my sister is going to the cloister," as if she is signing up with the army or something.

I think the most obvious problem, and certainly one that I have seen in other productions, from Isabella's point of view, is that just because she is passionate doesn't mean she has to be an absolute. Her passion for God doesn't mean that she must be shallow of heart or invulnerable. In other productions I have seen, Isabella can often be very cold and unapproachable. That doesn't really work because the audience doesn't feel anything for her dilemma, and her dilemma is at the very center of the play.

Flachmann: And it doesn't give you anywhere to go with your relationship with Henry.

Adwin: Precisely, yes. And she's got to have vulnerability because this man steps into her life and helps her solve her problem.

Their falling in love is a wonderful surprise, I think, for both of them. This intimacy that she is experiencing sneaks up on her in the guise of something else. But I think making her too absolute, too unemotional, turns her into a flat and uninteresting character. That was my main challenge, my main goal. When I first read the play, I said, "Oh God, I don't know how I'm going to do this . . . but I want to play this woman. She's a tough one." She's got so many different levels, and we're getting there. But again I wouldn't categorize it as a problem play. I think it has that reputation because you can't put a label on it. We talked about this before. Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.

Flachmann: Right. So if you just do the play and not worry about categorizing it, you'll be in a lot better shape.

Adwin: Absolutely. I think the problems rectify themselves when you're naturally making choices as an actor. I remember reading about one production that Francesca Annis did for the RSC in the seventies. When the Duke asked for her hand at the end, she gazed out into the audience with this look of repulsion, and then he took his cloak and he literally enveloped her in it. He metaphorically ate her alive. And I felt that was hard core; that was a really dark interpretation.

Flachmann: And you had some nun tutorials. Sister Yvonne, a local Catholic nun, was kind enough to talk with you about how nuns glide.

Adwin: I did.

Coopwood: They glide?

Adwin: Nuns don't walk. Of course, the first time I put on my costume, I wasn't floating. I aspire to float. Yes, you were kind enough to bring Sister Yvonne for me to meet with. It was fascinating to talk about what nuns' vows mean—especially poverty, chastity, enclosure, and obedience. I wanted to talk to the sister about how she viewed God in Christ and whether there was a certain erotic quality in that.

Flachmann: I've got to tell you. The elevator went down about twelve stories in a second and a half. It was a wonderful breakthrough, I thought.

Adwin: She said she did not view Christ as a lover or husband. What she said was that she viewed Christ as an older brother. I thought that was very interesting. I saw Isabella as a young, hot-blooded, passionate woman. And I don't think she is frightened of sex. I don't think she's in denial about sex. I think she's just making a choice. And that channeling is for God and not other human beings until the end. Although I think this relationship

[gestures towards Scott] probably in some subliminal way awakens all kinds of feelings, there's electricity in it. I was curious about that because I think passion has all different kinds of levels.

Flachmann: Thank you, Elisabeth. Michael, I am going to hypothesize that one of the problems scholars have with this play is the perceived awkward mixture between comedy and the more serious sections of the plot. So what are you doing in this play? What is Lucio's job in *Measure for Measure*?

Edwards: I think of the three characters we have spoken about so far, Lucio in contrast to them is much less problematic because his role is principally comic. Within the world of a comic character, inconsistency is a plus because inconsistency generates humor. And I think the comic characters in this play truly embody the humanist spirit in contrast to the world of rules and the kind of puritanical morality that Angelo embodies. I see Angelo and Lucio as polar opposites in the world of the play, with the Duke and Isabella at the center, orbiting around each other. Lucio is completely amoral, and everything about him is the opposite to what we have seen with Angelo, and I think the contradiction there and the dissonance you've got between the comic and the dramatic is what makes the play great.

Dissonance is what makes art interesting. If everything is consistent and logical, what you get is television. This table is very nice because it is all rectilinear, and it wobbles a little bit, but that's okay. And you know that the wobbling is what's making it interesting [chuckling]. If it didn't wobble, it would be completely invisible. And I think the same thing is true in art. Often our tendency is to categorize, to classify because that is how we make sense of the world. But when art is truly great, it defies classification. And that's what we like about it.

I think what we are talking about here is the clash of different points of view. The Duke has a point of view; Angelo has a point of view; Isabella has a point of view; and Lucio has a point of view. They all conflict. The play happens when you throw those people into a situation and see how they respond. That's what Shakespeare was really brilliant at: taking these different points of view and not only making wonderful rhetorical arguments, but giving them a very interesting and dynamic dramatic voice.

The scenes between Lucio and the Duke are brilliant dramatically because not only do you get to see Lucio weaving the web of his own destruction, but it's a great way to reveal what the Duke thinks about himself because he's watching this guy who is completely repugnant talk about him. And what he is saying is

completely opposite to what the Duke has thought of himself. It's a great opportunity because in the very next scene the Duke is asking Escalus what the Duke was like: "What did people say about the Duke? My God, does everybody think I'm like that?" This is a great opportunity for self-discovery. And that comes about in a "comic" scene.

We don't normally think of comedy as being an avenue for self-revelation, but in this play it is. And I think that's another element that makes the play so great. It's messy. And it's about life. The problem of the play is that this guy is going to get killed because he made his girlfriend pregnant. That's messy. And how do we react to that? The play deals with that problem in a messy way, and the conclusion is messy. You know, this play is about what it means to be alive and how we react to moral quandaries. Should we condemn this man for impregnating his fiancée? They were going to get married anyway. Most modern audience members would say, "What's the problem?"

Woronicz: But it is going on in Jacobean times. You know once the vows had been made, that's the end of the trail.

Coopwood: That's not the law though [chuckling].

Edwards: Change the law.

Woronicz: The other big messy thing is that we've got this ruler who can't pull it together himself, so he gives his power to someone who he knows is a puritan, and then he decides to hang around and watch [chuckling]. There's this whole thing about the Duke being a voyeur. I think he is fascinated by the intricacies of life that Michael [Edwards] talked about. He's almost like a scientist, like Prospero; he's involved in his books. He wants to put people in certain situations and then see what they do. He wants to listen to Claudio and Isabella talk.

Flachmann: Yes, we have all that eavesdropping.

Woronicz: Yeah, your sister is a nun and she's come to give you comfort. "Oh God, let me hear what they are saying." He wants to watch it.

Flachmann: Do the Lucio-Duke scenes work for you in much the same way that Michael [Edwards] has explained them? I mean, do they help you find your character or discover the perception the people have of you?

Woronicz: Yes, I think he's taken aback, first by the audacity of this guy, as when he says, "O, I'm intimate with the Duke." And he asks him what pleasure the Duke was given to. There's a sadness in him, I think, when he asks if the Duke were given to any kind of pleasure? "What was he like?" I don't think he knows

himself very well. I think he's like any searcher for the truth—he's always looking for the next answer. But there are no definitive answers. There are only greater observations as you go out into your circle of life. And so I think that's what he's involved with in terms of his relationship with Lucio. And Lucio puts him on that path a little bit. And Isabella also puts him on that path from a physical as well as a spiritual point of view. So the psychological elements get very Byzantine in the course of the play.

You know, actors are interpretative artists. We take what a playwright has given us and we say, "What does this say to us at this time and to this particular audience?" And we take it from there. I remember as a kid, I was given a leather jacket or a bag or something, with a tag on it that said it was made from "fine leather." It said you may find imperfections in this garment, and that's part of it being fine leather. It's a genuine, authentic thing. And I always think of the odd bumps and twists and turns in a play as Shakespeare's little tag saying, "This is authentic." That's one of the joys when you are able to do some of the plays uncut. We get all of those little bumps and imperfections that usually get cut out. You can see the whole piece in front of you, the whole textured canvas. That rarely happens these days because some of Shakespeare's plays are so long. If we hadn't cut 800 or so lines out of *Richard*, we'd still be in our seats [chuckling].

Flachmann: One of the topics we've been flirting with is the legislation of morality. And we have had several good papers on that topic in this symposium. What do you think this play teaches us in modern terms about attempts to legislate morality?

Edwards: You can't. We try. We have been trying for thousands of years. We don't seem to be able to. Just because you pass a vote doesn't mean we are going to stop behaving the way we behave. I don't think anybody in this room hasn't broken the speed limit.

Coopwood: Just because you cover a statue, that doesn't mean there aren't breasts in the world [laughter].

Edwards: I think Pompey speaks the most truth in the play. He asks Escalus, "Are you going to geld and splay all the youth of the city?" It doesn't matter what the law is. You know people are going to behave like people behave, and they will change their behavior when as a group they decide that their behavior needs to change and not when somebody gives them a rule. Usually rules follow behavior; they don't lead to it. People are doing something, and then we say, "Oh, we wish they wouldn't do that, so we are going to make a rule that says you can't do that." So the only thing

that happens is more people get punished. But nobody really changes their behavior. We get speeding tickets, but we still speed. It is a mistaken assumption to think that you can create a set of rules *a priori* of behavior. I think rules are generated out of consensus.

Coopwood: And for a lot of people, we have to come to them individually. I think we understand and change our behavior as we grow up. But who am I to tell you what you can do in your house? It's none of my business.

Edwards: Rules are appropriate for a three-year-old because they don't know; it's our job as parents to teach them.

Flachmann: I think this question impacts all the characters—this distinction between our natural inclinations, our yearnings and urges, and the rules that we're surrounded by. But I'm particularly interested in the way they affect Isabella, especially in terms of your desire for a "more strict restraint." How do you deal with what many people see as an unconscious sexuality in your language? How did that fit into your portrayal of this complex character?

Adwin: Sexual language is certainly inherent in some of her speeches. As far as playing them as an actress goes, I don't think about that at all. I think of it in terms of passionate metaphor. But I'm certainly not aware that she is intentionally trying to arouse anyone.

Flachmann: Maybe you could talk for a bit about your back story, if you have one, on why you are entering the nunnery—especially one that has such rigorous standards.

Adwin: I feel that you have to make a strong choice for her history; otherwise, it probably doesn't work. In the Renaissance, most nunneries were not particularly desirable places to go. In terms of thinking about it for the sake of this production, in my own mind, I had to envision positive reasons for entering a nunnery. Otherwise, it wouldn't really be true. So I believe that she and Claudio probably lost their mother in childbirth, and that they were both very attached to their father who has recently died. So they have lost both parents, but there was a very close relationship with the father. I think they grew up very Catholic, very devout. Perhaps in her father's illness a lot of the money that would have been part of the dowry was lost. And perhaps, because of her beauty and appeal, she had some suitors, but they didn't appeal to her. She's a very fussy girl.

Woronicz: High standards.

Adwin: High standards, and I think she's very spiritual. I think between getting married to somebody you don't really love

and going to a place where you could be contemplative and spiritual, that a nunnery ideally would appeal to her. I don't think that's a stretch at all based on those choices that I made.

Woronicz: It was a refuge for a lot of people.

Adwin: It was.

Woronicz: Choices were limited, in particular for young women.

Adwin: Absolutely.

Flachmann: What about the arc between the passionate devotion to the nunnery that we see at the beginning and, in our production anyway, the passionate devotion to the Duke at the end?

Adwin: Actually, the first thing I said to Liz Huddle [the director] when I had a meeting with her was, "Okay, what about the end?" Because it could go so many different directions. And she said, "Well, they're getting together" [laughter]. For a second, I was a little disappointed, because the play is Jacobean. But she said, "No, I want this." And I said, "Well, Okay, then the challenge for Henry and me will be to find those moments of bonding and love and friendship." We are finding new opportunities every time we do it. And it's wonderful. That was a real challenge. And I would like to think that we succeed in that. So I don't think, based on my preparation and the way that we've addressed that issue in this particular production, that this particular arc is odd.

Flachmann: You really have to build that bridge, though.

Adwin: Yes, and I think we talked about this before, that she is filled with all this passion and these wonderful ideas about her own morality and what is appropriate and justice and mercy, and yet she's got this huge journey to go through, and the Duke helps her get there.

Woronicz: And he also has a journey to go through that she helps him with.

Adwin: That's so sweet. Something is happening to me. And you're [to Henry] responsible.

Flachmann: I think what we're seeing so far is that great productions and great actors solve difficult problems, and that these problems are at the heart of what makes this a terrific play. It's the inconsistencies, the leather jacket with the flaws in it.

Woronicz: Yes. I'd like to return to something Michael [Edwards] touched on earlier. One of the most important issues I think Shakespeare is dealing with in the play is how society functions. In the scene between Lucio and the Duke we were discussing earlier, Lucio says, "Can you tell me if Claudio is going to die or not?" And the Duke has an interesting line here. He

says, "Why must he die, sir?" Lucio's answer is, "For filling a bottle with a funnel." We changed the line a little bit.

Flachman: We changed "tundish" to "funnel."

Woronicz: This is a moment where the Duke suddenly starts to look at these laws in a different way.

Edwards: "The Duke yet would have dark deeds darkly answered; he would never bring them to light."

Woronicz: And the Duke suddenly hears something about himself that he hadn't heard in all this previous chat. Claudio is condemned for "untrussing." Sparrows do this in the eaves. I think this realization pulls the rug out from under the Duke concerning what the law is about. And then when he gets to the last sweep of the play, when he is doing this test, he is talking about an "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," which is the old code. "Measure still for measure": this is how it works, right? And he realizes that you must do what is best for people in specific situations. You can't just lay down these laws as you were taught. As humans, as "creatures," we are messy, and we need to talk and converse and sort things out. And I think there's a moment there that is important for the arc of the play about law and morality and rules.

Flachmann: I love your line, too, about caring for "a thousand bastards."

Edwards: "Ere he would hang a man for the getting a hundred bastards, he would pay for the nursing of a thousand."

Woronicz: He's a passionate conservative [laughter].

Edwards: Obviously, Lucio is a liar and doesn't know the Duke. He describes a man who was of the same appetites as Lucio, who "had some feeling of the 'sport'; he knew the service, and that instructed him to mercy." This is the most important part of that line. You've got to have some compassion. For all of Lucio's immorality, and he <u>is</u> a liar, the one thing he cares about in the play is Claudio. He loves Claudio.

Adwin: Kind of a crush, there? [chuckling]

Edwards: Yes, and that makes him angry. Because, Lucio sees the world as it is, not as it should be. And he is angry because his leader is not seeing the world as it is. I mean that's what all this "ungenitured agent will unpeople the province with continency" is about. It's absurd; this man is being condemned for taking his clothes off. It makes me angry when those kinds of things happen. So, I think for all his amorality, he's really angry that we are punished for simply being what we are.

Woronicz: There's one other character in the play who sees the world exactly as it is and lives his life according to it, which is Barnardine. That odd little grace note is one of the imperfections in the play. Suddenly, Barnardine comes out, and the Duke says to him, "You just look at the world as it is, and you live your life accordingly." I think there is something about that in terms of what the Duke has gone through, that he kind of admires and respects. People should live their lives according to what they see around them. And he pardons him for that.

Adwin: That's right.

Woronicz: And he's got no reason to pardon him, other than he's just being generous. Well, why does Shakespeare put Barnardine in there? Again, it's growth on the Duke's part. Same with the pardoning of Lucio at the end. There is a lot of testing that happens in that last sequence of the play.

Flachmann: I want to ask Scott, "What in particular do you find intriguing about Isabella in the play?" Are you attracted to women in uniform? [laughter]

Coopwood: Well, first of all, she is very beautiful, and she is very passionate, articulate, and committed. And those qualities are attractive: intelligence, intensity, and passion. He has managed to sequester himself away for the last five years since the "incident," we'll call it.

Flachmann: The back seat?

Coopwood: Yes. He has managed to sit in his chair, read his papers, and look at the laws, and wish they would be followed [chuckling]. Why does he say, "Let her in"? That's the question. The sister of the man condemned wants to see you. There's a long pause there. He never thought of Claudio having a family or being a human being. He has a sister; he has parents. This might be problematic. He is a person. Why does he say, "Let her in"? I think probably because Shelby [Davenport, the Provost] says, "She's on the verge of becoming a nun. She is very devout, and you should probably see her." All right. Now, all he would have to do is to say, "No." I am not talking about it to anybody. This is black and white. He dies. But there is no play if he does that.

Adwin: There you go.

Coopwood: But she comes in, and she is everything he is afraid of. But also everything that is exciting. And we all want what we can't have. There are so many different layers to that attraction. And I think he is so repressed, and that incident before scarred him so bad. Somebody gave me this quote from Gielgud explaining that, when he acted the part in 1969, "he felt Angelo

was so repressed that the first time Isabella got close enough to touch him, he had an orgasm right there." That was it; it was over. And from that point forward, he had to have her again. He would do anything to have her. I thought that insight was really interesting, because that's kind of the way that I had felt about the whole thing. To look back thirty years ago, on one of the greatest actors in the history of the stage, and to find the character the same way was a really wonderful experience for me.

Woronicz: A great line you have that always jumps out at me is "She speaks, and it is with such sense, that my sense breathes with it," which is in an image of copulation. And in the Catholic mind, as soon as you thought about it . . .

Coopwood: It was done.

Woronicz: Yes.

Coopwood: So the sin has been committed. Once he steps down that road, there's no turning back. Richard says the same thing, "so far stepped in blood," you know, and Macbeth says it, too. Very often, Shakespeare's characters feel that they have to live out their fate, whatever that may be. When he says, "Blood, thou are blood," he looks at the audience and he seems to say, "I'm just like you. Get over it." To me he struggles with it, he still tries to say, "No." That whole scene is about the struggle. Shakespeare writes it in there as a struggle, an intense battle.

Flachmann: Well, I love the way Shakespeare separates those two scenes. He's got you coming down the stairs in our production, still brooding about this decision, about this choice. "What am I going to do?" And you are obviously obsessed.

Coopwood: Well, I don't know, depending on the elasticity of time that we talked: about, how long it's been. I don't think he's slept at all. He is really tormented.

Flachmann: I want to make sure we get to one of the scenes I think is the most fascinating—the Isabella-Claudio "You're going to have to die" scene. Do you want to talk about that a little bit, Elisabeth? What is your motivation there in terms of why you tell him about Angelo's proposition and why you value your chastity, your immortal soul perhaps, more than his life?

Adwin: Well, that's a huge question in the play, especially for a modern production and a modern audience. How do you get your head around her decision? And you know again, people find it a problem play because that scene appears somewhat archaic and ridiculous. Back then, of course, audiences would have found it extreme, but not ridiculous.

Coopwood: The immortal soul is more important. It's easy. That's what they believed.

Adwin: It's a very tricky scene because of the ironies. Audience members get very uncomfortable in that scene, and occasionally it prompts snickers or laughs. And that's just something that as a performer you have to ride through. The way I justify it is that her chastity represents control over her own body, which is a basic right that should never be violated. She thinks: This is my right as a human being. And women back then expected the men in their lives—their fathers, their brothers—to protect them in every capacity: emotionally, physically, and spiritually. And she's lost her father. She's lost her family. Her brother is the only man she has.

Based on their upbringing, she expects Claudio will understand and will be brave and will do this for her. And it doesn't seem to her to be an absolute question. I think it's incredibly difficult for her, so she walks into the scene with two primary emotions. "Oh no, God, I have to tell him. This is killing me. I would die for him, if it were my life, but this I cannot do. I just cannot bring myself to do this." Her life she's ready to give. "But this is different. This is a right. I hope he understands. Oh, it's killing me." And he's hoping, of course, that with her persuasiveness and articulateness, her female charms, Angelo will have mercy on him.

Of course, she has to break the bad news to him. I know when we looked at the scene, you [Michael Flachmann] and I, we broke it down and noticed great structure; it's a brilliantly structured scene. When she comes in, she's skirting around the issue. Some very elaborate, flowery metaphors are used. And it's quite verbose in a beautiful way, some extraordinary work. But he says, "Let me know the point." He's using very terse, monosyllabic statements to counteract that, and he's asking a lot of questions. I find that very interesting. Then as soon as the secret comes out—"Can you believe this: He wants me to sleep with him"—the whole scene shifts.

As Claudio realizes that he cannot go forward with this, he starts getting frightened, and he gives one of the most beautiful speeches on death ever written. He breaks into verse, which is quite exquisite. Who has the power in this scene? Who has the information? I just think it's such a beautiful scene—terribly, terribly difficult. And every night I do it, I don't know what to expect from the audience because you make yourself so vulnerable, and you hope that people will go on the journey with you. And most people do. I don't think those laughs, if and when we get them, are cruel laughs. I think they are laughs of recognition and ironic laughs. But it is hard. As far as owning her body, it's a basic right.

Woronicz: How much does her entering the Sisterhood influence her decision in this scene?

Adwin: I think it's a huge influence, because chastity is one of the vows she is about to take. Absolutely, so that's another issue, but even beyond that is the fact that rape is totally unacceptable.

Flachmann: I've often heard actors say that they take a little something with them from each role they've played. If this is true for you, what insights into your own life has this play given you?

Coopwood: I've never had a problem with forgiveness and mercy in my own life. But I think every time you stand in front of the dramatic mirror, it strengthens you or it gives you a resolve to go back and look deeper and make certain you really have those qualities. And this play for me is about forgiveness and mercy and what it is to be human. I am a little less judgmental these days just for having played this part because I see, on a fictional level, in my artistic world, how poisonous that can be. Hopefully, I am a better person for having a little more restraint before I pass judgment on anybody about anything. And it's easier to forgive and easier to be more merciful in that forgiveness. I think this play again is perfect for the times we are living in, too.

Adwin: It's really made me look at my faith or lack thereof, at how I view the universe and God. So for me this has just been a revisiting of those issues. And it has been positive, very positive in that way.

Edwards: Watch out what you say to people; you never know who they really are [chuckling].

Flachmann: That's right.

Edwards: There is a lot to learn through playing a character like Lucio, because the role offers a wonderful freedom and license. And there is something very pleasurable about being able to explore the boundaries of freedom and license in a fictional setting. Because I think as much as you can condemn Lucio for his behavior and his attitudes, he has something wonderfully exuberant about him. He is a consumer of life in all its aspects. I find that very vital, and so I receive a lot of energy in playing this character.

For me individually, I think it gives me a shot of exuberance to play Lucio because I feel so joyful doing it. Playing Clarence [in *Richard III*] is a much more introspective journey for me, which allows me to get in touch with experiences like guilt and contrition and repentance. And those are great emotions to explore in a fictional context because you know you have to put the role away after three hours. You can go visit it, and you can have a dialogue

with it. That's part of your work, and it's quite cleansing. And then you can put it away and go home, which is actually very healthy.

Flachmann: Henry, do you have any response to that question?

Woronicz: I have a long and complicated response to that. I think Peter Brook, the British director, said that working on Shakespeare is the greatest school of life that you could know. I've spent most of my professional life working on these plays. One of the greatest things about being an actor is you get to pull the curtain back and experience important events and emotions. It may not be your time to die with your daughter in your arms, but you go through these things in theatre. Working on these plays allows us to get intimate with one of the great minds in the history of the world . . . someone who is able to articulate the human experience in such a beautiful, complex, and profound way.

So the notion is that you come to these roles at certain times of your life because they are right for you. You have to be able to open yourself up to the play. You cannot play a character you do not have inside you somewhere. That's why you are better at some roles than at others, because some just match perfectly with your own life. Taking away that experience of being intimate with this mind and his observations of the human condition is a great gift. And you feel blessed to do that. Lear's "When we are born we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools" is a perfect line. If I had written that line, I would retire [laughter]. But we not only get to speak that, we get to find our way into it emotionally, intellectually, and in the circumstances of the story that is being told. And that is, I think, probably one of the most human things that you can ever do: to tell someone how you feel and to be so open.

In *Measure for Measure*, the moment that hits me the most is when Isabella kneels and says, "Think about this man as if my brother lived." In that moment, I am aware of the great quality of human mercy. If we could all just forgive people and not be afraid of them and open up to them, we would be capable of much greatness. At that moment, the Duke sees that. An actor is an empath; you've got to feel where you are going within the context of the poetic structure in all its form and beauty. We just get to look behind the curtain a little bit, and then it goes away.

Flachmann: What a great incredible thrill and honor to have you all here today. Thank you so much for sharing your lives and your art with us.

Coopwood: You're welcome, Michael [laughter and applause]!