

Mabou Mines' Cascando (radioplay of Beckett's), staged by Jo Anne Akalaitis, music by Philip Glass, at 491 Broadway (Foreman's theatre), April 8- May 2, 1976, with Frederick Neumann as "Opener", one woman "voice", Ellen McElduff, 4 men "voices", Cathcart, Hardy, Raymond, Warilow, Arthur Russell playing the 'cello.

They did it in the small rear room at Foreman's theatre for 40 spectators at a time, tiered, Neumann out front to the left, the young fellow with the cello in the corner behind him ("up-stage, stage-right"), the 5 voices seated around a table, all, I believe, perhaps with the exception of the beautiful-eyed Ellen, hatted & dressed with an outdoor, vagabond (tho not ragged) effect, for a rigorous climate & perhaps traveling, perhaps on the road or on a voyage somewhere they wouldn't, one knew, make, tho' hope was not dead, the climax of the play being in fact an access of hope/anticipation of imminent or not too much longer delayed arrival: the indistinct text, - I mean in the static progress of the thing & what with some of them talking, when (they talked rarely) they talked, simultaneously, & each being into his own thing & not necessarily speaking of the venture uniting them (spatially, if not otherwise) (they knew one another well indeed) when they spoke, - suggesting more some such displacement than e.g. the denouement of a process independent of them or the conclusion of a more definite or actively engaged in enterprise than that of displacement somewhere. The area they lived or rather sat in, - Neuman & another fellow each rose once to swivel Ellen, then talking (ecstatically?) in her non-swivel chair in a slow complex erotic & sea motion, but otherwise they sat, the table was their place (with Neumann near them & the cellist nearby in the corner, sometimes seeming to sleep), their lives seemed to have settled in this seatedness, as e.g. in the crowded salons of channel-crossing boats with many more passengers than cabins, when the weather inhibits turns on the deck let alone sitting on it, - was dense with objects, not new, dilapidated even, yet obviously in course of being used, spread & heaped on the floor, crowding hand & elbow-space on the (kitchen?) table, rather one kind to a person, open books in front of the grizzled old traveller, sometimes weirdly smiling, his craggy features crowding one another also so that their expressions seemed three-dimensional because of the corrugation, & in this limited profundity effusions of state swum through more than clear indications, with placed marked in the books by tools such as screwdrivers, the implements for painting behind & on the table in front of the occasionally dangerously smiling young fellow at the end of the table to the right, - he painted on a hand-held board for most of the time, - a stack of old radios behind the young fellow next to him with his back to us, a kind of

idiot rustic, perhaps more truly dangerous, because slow, than his right-hand neighbour, tho' not impressing one with his danger, but more with ^apuzzlement. This mass of objects seeming in a definite order of magnitude (in fact perhaps 6-24 inches) occupied or seamed the silence (heavy with the peoples' inwardness) that was most of the play: they sat, not even waiting, sunk into their concerns, at some point, I believe after an outburst of the "Opener"'s, Neumann's, followed by an eery turning on all of the lights (shedding a false pretense of normalcy, of day-ness), taking up their hobbies, pass-times or avocations, e.g. Warilow ^{at the left-hand end of the bale} getting his knitting bag out from under the table & proceeding to knit ^{a scarf}, or the fellow back ^{ed} by the burnt-out radios picking up a model sail boat from the floor & proceeding to thread its tackling (some~~x~~ time afterward tentatively raising & lowering a small lacy triangular pennant, tho' not all the way). Neumann sculpturally - massive body - big head - dominating forefront & scene even while the audience is let in by eight is the most steadily, intensively, actively inward active, engaged in an inward dialogue quite a bit into the play - this the ^{spaced} signal for what on the whole still rather scant verbiage eventuates - emerging in/argumentative outbursts addressed to none present except perhaps after all himself (he has opened one thing, then with some vehemence, perhaps pride, points out he has opened the other also: I was made to think it was heads he had opened, finding nothing in them, but also came up with the notion somehow it was his own head he had opened, or heads; tho' this investigation of his was clearly just his own dominant concern, & what HE had done, yet he seemed the captain of them all, & his running-over this in his mind or perhaps his doing or having done this, seemed like a bass or continuo for all their inward lives or pseudo-lives, & a counterpoint to the venture or voyage they all seemed on). Ellen McElduff, behind the table on a high stool or chair, large blue eyes, occasional clear white-teethed laughter, in a manner is his opposite in that she also seems at high pitch inward, but more sopranoly, in a pitch of hysteria (tho only pro forma): she twitters when she has her outbursts; her left-hand neighbour, also facing us (to her right as we see them), a ^ahrd-faced, working-man-faced & -hatted man in perhaps his 30s being primarily marked rather by nervous anxiety & paranoia, a character coming out not so much in his hard-accented, bitten-ff brief phrases, ironic, as in his nervous headmovements & above all in his blue eyes rapid twitchings onto little facts, suspicious & threatening stares, notably during what is the main or only action of the play, an extended card game initiated by McElduff's sharply clattering, noisy shuffling & cutting of the pack, perhaps a 4th of the way into the play, or less & taking up perhaps a fourth or fifth of the time of

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the play, her handling of the cards grating up the accumulation of initial silence. She deals & keeps on dealing (perhaps two decks, which works out as a kind of a joke) & the various players pick up their cards in ways they have figured out to make a business out of it, some theatrical effect, arranging them on the table, peering at them, etc., surrounded by the objects, again & again stopping to focus, suspiciously, accusingly, apprehensively, or whatever, but intently, at one among them doing something or other: the game consisting, it seems in each player building, separately, some manner of card house for himself, quickly & efficiently, slowly & laboriously: the working-man-faced man for instance never getting it together at all, to even join two cards standing (at the very end of the game, faced by their conjoined cumulative wonderment or interrogation - ocular - he manages with shaking hands to join two cards in a vertical V or tent, but up to then he has been too busy being suspicious of what the others are doing), the toughie Sunday painter at the right-hand end with elegant flourishes of his elbows building castles into the air, two, three, four stories: which then collapse (at which the working-man-faced man smiles tightly), the sailboat tackler with his back to us forever extending a one-tier covered maze of cardrooms toward Warilow's small cluttered area of the table at the left-hand end (Warilow interposing a cigarette case upended): but all the card houses sooner or later or repeatedly wiped out by some inattention. The game is elaborated by other business, a hat passed, the players tossing or dropping each a card into it, then McElduff (as I recall) picking out one, watched tensely by everyone, or the players demanding additional cards from her. Throughout the play occasionally one or the other seatee will make a gesture, two joined fingers downward pointed toward the table, a rapidly repeated little indicatory or pointing shake, pointing at something in front of another player, sometimes each in turn or at the same time. From time to time the cellist will scratch a bit of a tune. At one point Neumann, the Opener, turns on a radio set & out of it comes music, an announcement, some speaking of some text, to which he listens with attention, satisfied, it seems with the news: perhaps this is what triggers the outburst from him that seems to induce a momentary euphoria in everyone, a brief affirmation almost like an awakeneing, that they will make it, the voyage (or whatever) will end.

Warilow is the most theatrical and unconvincing (one eye almost closed, falsetto

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tones, in fact the only implausible, theatrical one, the others being most naturalistically natural in their gloomy ingrownness. The end is when the lights turn out, the players leaving while they're out, returning to receive our applause.