“An Extraordinary Artist and Teacher”

Director and playwright Jon Lipsky believed actors and directors could learn from the collaborative nature of theater

By Samantha DuBois (CAS’12)

As a director, Jon Lipsky knew how to elicit the best from his actors. He believed that art lay hidden in the depths of one’s body, one’s soul, and one’s dreams.

“He did not force the work, he summoned it,” says Christopher Bannow (CFA’09), one of Lipsky’s students and a cast member in his 2008 production of The Wild Place. “Magically and reliably, he summoned it.”

Lipsky, a College of Fine Arts professor of playwriting and acting at the School of Theatre for 28 years and the associate artistic director at the Vineyard Playhouse on Martha’s Vineyard, died on March 19, 2011. He was 66.

Lipsky’s keen ability to tap into emotions and translate them to the stage earned him critical acclaim. In 2007, he received the Elliot Norton Award for Best Direction for the plays Coming Up for Air (Alliger Arts) and King of the Jews (Boston Playwrights’ Theatre), which Leslie Epstein, director of BU’s Creative Writing Program, adapted from his novel of the same name.

Born in New York City, Lipsky graduated from the Bronx High School of Science and earned a bachelor’s in English from Oberlin College. He later earned a master’s in fine arts from the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop before joining the Peace Corps and working in India.

In the late 1970s, Lipsky became the in-house dramatist for Boston Theatre Works. During this time, he wrote Beg- inner’s Luck, They All Want to Play Hamlet, and A Matter of Ecstasy. His later plays included Maggie’s Riff, Molly Maguire, Book of Revelations, and The Survivor: A Cambodian Odyssey. Lipsky also adapted Homer’s The Iliad for his play Living in Exile, and Jack London’s novel Call of the Wild.


Lipsky also served as playwright-in-residence at the Museum of Science and the Merrimack Repertory Theatre in Lowell, Mass. Yet the relationships he formed with his students, actors, and colleagues remain his greatest legacy.

“Jon Lipsky was an extraordinary artist and teacher, but I will remember him most for his gentleness, generosity of spirit, and powerful friendship,” says Jim Petosa, director of the School of Theatre.

Lipsky regarded his students as equals, believing that both actor and director could learn from the collaborative nature of theater.

“Jon understood people and artists in a way that allowed him to make connections in a very short period of time deeper than most people can make in a lifetime,” says Collin Meath (CFA’10), another cast member of The Wild Place. “He taught me how to truly take risks and that in taking risks, we can discover the real joys of living.”

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Leonard M. “Lenny” Bloksberg, 81, a School of Social Work professor emeritus of social work, on February 13, 2011.

A professor at SSW for 38 years, Bloksberg will be remembered for his commitment to social welfare policy. He believed that social workers should be trained not merely to implement such policy, but to understand the process of policy formation.

“Lenny was a fine man and a strong voice for social justice and for social policies,” says SSW Dean Gail Steketee. “When he was here at the School of Social Work, he always kept us on track, to remember our roots and our goals. As an emeritus faculty member, his intellect and humor came through in gatherings with friends and colleagues. It was my great pleasure to know him, and he will be sorely missed.”

Bloksberg was born on March 24, 1929, in New York City. He graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School and City College of New York and earned a master’s in social work from Columbia University and a doctoral degree from the Heller School at Brandeis University. He joined the School of Social Work in 1962 and was tenured in 1969. He was appointed a professor emeritus upon his retirement in 2000.

With a focus on social welfare policy, he attacked the problems of poverty,