

TEMPTING THE MIRACLE:

SACRED THEATRE, OR EXPLORING SUZUKI/VIEWPOINTS AND COMPOSITION IN
DIRECTING JOHN PIELMEIER'S *AGNES OF GOD*

AN AUTO/ETHNOGRAPHIC MEMOIR

Matthew Allan Saltzberg

Dr. M. Heather Carver, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

In December of 2008, I directed John Pielmeier's *Agnes of God* as part of the University of Missouri-Columbia's academic year season. I took this opportunity to seize the moment and, through intense actor training and an auteur directorial approach, develop a performative manifesto that sought no less than the revitalization of the live theatrical event within the cultural economy. The production asked, and attempted to answer the following: What is the sacred?; What is its relationship to theatre and performance?; Can it be conjured in theatrical time and space?; If so, how?; and finally: What is the experience that sacred theatre can deliver to performers and spectators alike? For my *Agnes of God* collaborators and me, this involved a full-scale "theatreing of the sacred," an extra-ordinary event tempted – through tenacity, diligence, and a belief in the miraculous – via Tadashi Suzuki's Method of Actor Training and Anne Bogart's Viewpoints training and Composition method of performance-making. This dissertation, conceived as a piece of performative auto/ethnographic writing, explores the accidents and unpredictabilities that made the production process so wonder-full and, in endeavoring to evoke what it names, so tempts the reader's active, subjective and vulnerable participation.