

DRAMATURGS' NOTE

“Our fundamental relationship with objects comes down to war and property. ... If objects themselves become legal subjects, then all scales will tend toward an equilibrium. The natural world will never again be our property, but our symbiont.”

-- Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract* (1995)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I wanted to work with Erika Rundle on plays that feature or concern animals. *Fox Hunt* was written in the early 1970s in Communist Poland and it concerns some very smart and fairly stupid animals and humans. It is a farce, and is not only broad but is even horizontal in its staging. *Far Away* is deeper, both in its scope and its setting. We don't see any animals but their presence is profound and unsettling. These are very different pieces united by their content and concerns. I am interested to see how they work together.

--Roger

Babb

St. Hubert is the patron saint of hunters, archers, foresters, and trappers. He is said to have performed several miracles during his lifetime, including exorcisms and curing rabies.

Polish exile Slawomir Mrozek's *Fox Hunt* (1976) uses the conceit of “universal hunting” to comment on the imperative of species survival and the inadequate ways in which modern philosophy has attempted to theorize it. Mrozek's sardonic wit combines with director Roger Babb's emphasis on slapstick humor and rhetorical vaudeville, illuminating a world where Darwin's insights are trumped by the comic elements of chance, and survival is the ultimate *coup de théâtre*.

In *Far Away* (2000), British playwright Caryl Churchill offers a chilling glance at the potential future of a society where consciousness extends to nonhuman entities, and results in total war. In a world where swiftly changing appetites and alliances shape personal relationships and organize the political realm, where do aesthetic concerns fit in? How do they affect self-knowledge and planetary citizenship? Do we dare to see our own complicity in creating the nightmarish planet Churchill presents? Babb's innovative staging helps emphasize the ways in which survival becomes a type of theatre, and identity has less to do with essences than swiftly changing, unstable political forces.

These short, stunning plays dare us to cast human beings as animals, but also wonder what would happen if animals and objects became “people,” mixing up these categories to the point of absurdity—and horror. They ask us to examine our received knowledge of what it means to be an animal in a global economy, and to imagine a social order in which our relationship with the natural realm has become a matter of life and death.

--Hannah Montgomery and Erika Rundle