

Science-in-Theatre: The Theatrical Realisation of Scientific Ideas in Carl Djerassi's Plays

As director, producer and dramaturg, I have worked closely with Carl Djerassi on the development of all his theatre plays, and was subsequently responsible, as director, for staging the world premieres of the plays in various London theatres. (I was also responsible for the directing and producing of radio drama versions of two of the plays on the BBC World Service.) The plays which expressly explored scientific ideas, concepts and issues were particularly interesting and challenging from the directorial perspective, as ways needed to be found of turning often very complex scientific, intellectual and historical information into more digestible and accessible dramatic action which might speak to a popular, non-scientific audience. Part of the task was to define, in concrete, engaging theatrical ways, and in human and emotional terms, the scientific, intellectual and thematic ideas. This was achieved through the realisation of visual metaphors, the scenography, proxemics, music, sound and lighting, the style of production. Dramaturgical imperatives were also key in this task, the sharpening of the narrative and thematic arc of the action, the honing of a dynamic dramatic structure, the meaningful realising of character relationships, the developing of individual character journeys. With direct reference to a number of Djerassi's plays, and my productions of them, my paper will cast light on the intense and creative collaboration between theatre practitioner and genius scientist.