

Pieces Of Dreams

Video by Michael Pilz
Austria 1999, 55'

In the fall 1988 Jack Garfein was directing four one-act plays by Samuel Beckett for George Tabori's theater in Vienna. Jack had grown up in Slovakia, had survived Auschwitz and begun his theater career with Lee Strasberg at the New York Actors Studio. He successfully directed plays on Broadway, was married to the actress Carroll Baker, made two excellent feature films and several documentaries, taught in the U.S. and moved to Paris in the late 80s.

I met Jack at a seminar he was teaching on the Stanislavsky method, we became friends and he did not mind my filming during the six weeks of rehearsals. In order to show me how he himself works with the text before he works together with the actors he invited me to visit him at his hotel in the afternoon of 3 September. Without knowing at the outset what it would be like I began to film Jack as he was exploring the text of *Ohio Impromptu*, a mysterious encounter of two men. The following morning he began his six-week rehearsals with the actors.

Since then I have used only one sequence from the almost 40 hours of video footage: ALL THE VERMEERS IN PRAGUE made in 1994 includes a brief scene in which Jack talks to the actors about *Ohio Impromptu*.

I watched the recordings of 3 September 1988 for the first time in June 1999 in an effort to distract myself during a difficult phase of the montage of DA CAPO AL FINE (1995/99). In the meantime I had quite forgotten what had happened that day and how I had filmed it. I was surprised, above all by the fact that hardly any changes were necessary and that the unusual sound and colors which are partly due to the aging of the video material underscore my intention of giving the document an additional fictional touch.

Except for a few cuts, what we see now, eleven years later, is exactly what I filmed then, when Jack was trying to fathom the mysterious text and to find his own inner images for it. In a personal conversation Beckett is supposed to have answered Jack's question about the intentions underlying this play by saying, "that's all there is".

Michael Pilz, Vienna, July 1999

An encounter between two men in a Viennese hotel room. An exciting and personal report from 1988 that was recently rediscovered by the maker. How the American director Jack Garfein tried to get into the recalcitrant text of Samuel Beckett's *Ohio Impromptu*. One director meets the other. An intimate moment.

*29th International Film Festival Rotterdam,
26 January – 6 February 2000*

(...) Die bislang vorletzte Arbeit von Michael Pilz heißt **Pieces of Dreams** und wurde, wie DA CAPO AL FINE, mit einer Video-kamera aufgenommen. Es ist dies ein Portrait des Regisseurs Jack Garfein, der 1988 auf Einladung von George Tabori in Wien vier Stücke von Samuel Beckett inszeniert hat. Und wieder: die vertraute Geduld beim Hinschauen und Hinhören, die Vorliebe für

die lange Einstellung, mit der eine Traditionslinie von Bresson bis Straub, von Tarkowskij bis Sokurow, Widerstand leistet gegen die Atemlosigkeit von Hollywood und Videoclip.

Kennzeichnend für die Arbeitsweise von Michael Pilz auch dies: Eher zufällig stieß er kürzlich auf das 1988 gedrehte Material und beschloß nun, daraus mit geringen Manipulationen einen Film zu machen. Planung und Improvisation, Disziplin und Spontaneität, Ordnung und Zufall bilden das Spannungsfeld, in dem Michael Pilz seine Kunst produziert: unspekulativ, frei von jedem Gedanken an Karriere, allein eben der Kunst verpflichtet. Ein Fanatiker im besten Sinn. Ein Narr. Es gibt heute zuwenig davon.

*Thomas Rothschild,
Wie die Pause zur Musik,
Die Presse, Wien, 9. September 2000*

(...) Pilz has a Laotian proverb "Take what is before you as it is, don't wish for anything else, just carry on". Let things happen as they occur. Don't focus attention on something, just be attentive; the eye of the camera as vigil registrar of the moment which forgets its own existence. As in **Pieces of Dreams** (1988/99) where Pilz observes the theater director Jack Garfein preparing a Beckett piece (*Ohio impromptu*) in his hotel room. The room is filled with dialogue and concentration, the manic repetitions of a single text fragment gives way to long passages of tense silence. For a while Pilz appears in the picture himself and becomes an impresario – part of the act in a chamber theatre formation – in that the documentary almost takes on fictional characteristics. (...)

*Mark Stöhr, Nothing left to tell,
SCHNITT – Das Filmmagazin, Nr. 23,
Bochum/Germany, March 2001*

(...) Pilz's work is known today to only a small circle of initiates, probably because he strictly spurns the market and avoids established documentary formats: for example PRISJADIM NA DOROZKU, a travel film that took him all the way to Siberia, is no less than ten hours long. In addition, Pilz's documentary work often includes experimental elements: already in the second part of HEAVEN AND EARTH the form becomes more elliptic, scenes reappear in slow motion, daily tasks are interspersed with lyrical images of the landscape.

His most recent works, quite consistently, continue the same reductionist course. In **Pieces of Dreams** Pilz observes the theatre director Jack Garfein as he ruminates in a hotel room over *Ohio Impromptu*, a late Beckett play, and thereby makes use of every possibility offered by a specific space quite like that playwright himself. (...)

*Dominik Kamalzadeh,
How Things Happen. A Notorious Outsider:
A Portrait of the Filmmaker Michael Pilz
DER STANDARD, Vienna, 10/11 February 2001*



He lived his early years in a German concentration camp. Even there he was like a darling of the gods. It was there also that he learned the art of discrimination.

What amazed me about him on our first meeting was the range of his knowledge and his mastery of English, a foreign language to him. When we meet the sparks fly. He is not only most affable, charming, exciting, but a great raconteur who holds you spell-bound.

His career as a director began quite early, in New York City, with O'Casey's first play, THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN. The school which he later established has turned out a number of excellent actors.

One is not long in his presence before one realizes that, next to the theatre his passion is women. He loves them as a gardener loves flowers. He makes no bones about it, he is a sensualist. And as such, he is like a famous violinist.

Like Napoleon, he believes that the best defense is the attack. He attacks everything with the same gusto. He is endowed with an enormous appetite for life. He devours things, human beings as well.

Talking to him, one feels he had an extraordinary education. He gives the impression of knowing anything and everything – and thoroughly! He probably has prejudices, as do we all, but he does not reveal them. He seems more like a "master" from the Middle Ages than a contemporary individual.

When he talks he sets everything in motion. He says things which stun, startle and confuse you momentarily.

One of his characteristics is that he seems to be beaming, always infatuated with whatever he is doing.

Strindberg is one of his favorite playwrights. He is particularly fond of MISS JULIE, THE STRONGER and CREDITORS. He knows his characters inside out. Just to mention Strindberg or Dostoevsky is to set him talking for hours. Of his students he expects the most. He himself always gives the utmost. Besides, he is never through explaining. No matter how well you may think you know a book, a scene, a character, Jack can explain what you failed to see or understand. He is as ruthless with his pupils as with himself. He can talk as interestingly about the Talmud or the Old Testament as about modern or ancient drama.

He is tenacing as a bulldog, a perfectionist – no letting go until a thing has been mastered.

He is also possessed of great tenderness as well as reverence. In a man whose tastes are so varied and whose intellect is so keen this tenderness of his is or is not a great surprise. One thing he is not and that is an intellectual snob. He is so many things, always involved, always searching for answers, usually for the truth of a situation, that he has become the compleat human being. He is like an organ from which one can wring the finest, noblest music.

He lives on a grande scale, whether he can afford it or not. His heart is abundant and the range of his interests is simply staggering.

If I have not seen him for a few weeks he will in that time have read all the great Russian authors, for example.

Or the Scandinavian playwrights. Or perhaps he will have done some research on the Gnostics. I am always surprised to learn what he has just been up to. He is, to put it simple, a cosmological man. His world is the cosmos.

His female pupils are always falling in love with him and he with them. All for love is his motto.

As a conversationalist he is one of the most stimulating man I have ever known. He is always full of surprises, sometimes erotic ones, other times erudite ones.

He is deeply religious without belonging to church or synagogue. He would have made an excellent rabbi, for example, particularly because of the way he can split hairs.

Being a perfectionist he is somewhat hard on his pupils. He has the endurance of a giant and the knowledge of an encyclopedist.

I mentioned his readings. He is a voracious reader with a retentive memory. When he reads a book he knows it by heart. He retains a memory of books read which is nothing less than phenomenal. And such diversity of reading material! Myself, though I am no longer a great reader, I can seldom relate the story or the plot of the book I have just read. But I can talk about the book – endlessly, it seems.

Jack has two wonderful children in their late teens. The product of a stormy marriage, they show no neurotic strain. Half the year they live with their mother, the actress Carroll Baker, and half the year with Jack. Living with the mother they have seen something of the world. They speak several languages fluently. They are a remarkable tribute to both parents.

Jack's life with Carroll Baker reminds me somewhat of my life with one of my wifes. Stormy, tumultuous, fascinating.

He is deeply religious without going to synagogue as I said before. Again, like myself, I feel. I repeat this bit about his religiousness because at first blush he gives the impression of being non-religious. A great Jewish writer said somewhere – "the man who constantly talks about God is an ungodly man." Precisely. It's when Jack is talking about some simple thing that one feels his godliness. To me he is similar to Krishnamurti, who is against masters and gurus and all so-called holy people. Was it Krishnamurti who once told his disciples not to follow in his footsteps, confessing that his love for God was a vice?

I hope I have made my point clear. To put it more simply still I would say that Jack is in love with his life. But he includes all of his life. There is no "holier than thou" in his make-up. All is holy, and out of evil often springs good. Voila a man after my own heart.

I mentioned earlier that Jack gives the impression of being a well educated individual. Oddly enough it began in the concentration camp. One of the guards took a liking to him and made it his business to teach him what he may have leaned at school. A strange business, this tenderness among the killer Nazis, but a true paradox. On Christmas day, for example, he was treated to a piece of cake and a glass of wine by his jailers. Apparently even monsters

have a heart. As a result of these occurrences Jack has a most forgiving and understanding heart. I believe it was he who once quoted a line of Eckerman's CONVERSATIONS WITH GOETHE. Said Goethe one day: "I doubt that there is crime, however heinous, that I have not felt capable for myself". This from "the first European".

Jack has a mind like a razor's edge and a heart to match. A rare combination. If he had followed his head he might have become a celebrated rabbi; if he had followed his heart alone he could have become a saint, a JEWISH SAINT, BIEN ENTENDU! But he is, as I mentioned earlier, the whole man, the rounded man, the man of a by-gone epoch. Today we turn out great scholars, great pundits, great scientists, even great musicians, but no great men of heart. We turn out men of learning who can also be monsters, masters (in a religious sense) who turn out to be fakers. Everything we touch in this world of today has something phony about it. It's the age of plastics, nothing being what it seems to be.

And now I feel like saying something that may shock some of my readers. I think that Jack Garfein's experience as a boy in a Nazi concentration camp demonstrates that sometimes out of evil springs good. Certainly I know no other way to explain his benevolence, his sense of humanity, his understanding and compassion.

After all, it is so very strange what I have just written. Do not the Christians owe their god Jesus to the treachery of his disciple Judas?

Only the other day, from the lips of a physician who had served in the war, was I informed of the fact, according to him, that over half the guards in the concentration camps were volunteers from other countries than Germany.

But enough of this ... one may begin to think I am making a plea in behalf of the Nazis, than which nothing could be further from truth.

What I am stressing, I must repeat is that good and evil are mixed in the human being. We have not yet seen the perfect man, though we have had some noble examples of a human being. Suffice to say, they were not all saints. We also know that there were so-called saints who were nearer to being monsters.

To change the subject abruptly ... To see Jack Garfein putting his arms around a woman and kissing her is a very special treat. If it was lust which inspired his behavior then lust has to be regarded as one of the virtues.

This is only a feeble example of why I said before that Jack is a holy man. Perhaps a holy man who, out of the greatness of his heart, permits himself to sin on occasion. (And not go through the farce of repenting afterwards). No, his behavior reminds one more of that of a Zen master whose religion is no religion. No repentance, no guilt, no shame! How refreshing!

MY BIKE AND OTHER FRIENDS

Volume II, "Book of Friends", Chapter Six: JACK GARFEIN
by Henry Miller

Jack Garfein

director, writer, producer
(state of 1988)

FILM

The Strange One (Columbia) with Ben Gazzara
and George Peppard
Something Wild with Carroll Baker, Ralph Meeker
and Mildred Dunnok
A Tribute by Cinématheque Française October 1984

THEATER

Broadway

End as a Man with Ben Gazzara (Show Business Award
for best Director on Broadway)
Girls of Summer with Shelley Winters and Pat Hingle
The Sin of Pat Muldon with James Barton and Elain Stritch
Shadow of a Gunman by Sean O'Casey, with members
of the Actors Studio

Off-Broadway

The Lesson by Eugene Ionesco (combined with the film
California Reich)
Rommel's Garden, 1985

France

Master Harold and the Boys by Athol Fugard,
French Premiere at the Renaud-Barrault-Theater,
Paris, 1985

England

The Beckett Plays (*Ohio Impromptu, Catastrophe,*
What Where), Edinburgh Festival, 1984 and the
London Premiere at the Warehouse Theater, 1984

Israel

The Beckett Plays (*Ohio Impromptu, Catastrophe,*
What Where), Jerusalem Festival, 1985

Austria

The Beckett Plays (*Ohio Impromptu, Catastrophe,*
What Where, Nights and Dreams), Der Kreis (George Tabori),
Vienna, 1988

Regional Theaters

Don't go Gentle by William Inge, Premiere,
and *How Tall is Toscanini* by Calder Willingham,
at UCLA Theater, Los Angeles
The Sponsor with Joseph Wiseman at the Westhouse
Playhouse
Anna Christie with Carroll Baker, at Huntington Hartford
Theater, Los Angeles and Tappan Zee Playhouse,
New York
Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw, with
Carroll Baker, at Drury Lane, Chicago



TELEVISION

The Marriage with Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy,
NBC
The Dwarf by Ray Bradbury, NBC

DOCUMENTARY

Journey to Kenya and *On Acting and Directing*,
writer, director, photography
The Journey Back, writer, actor

WRITER FOR FILM

Something Wild, screenplay, co-writer
The Farm, screenplay

WRITER FOR THEATER

August, August, August by Pavel Kohout, english version

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Professor in Cinema Department, USC, 1969–1973
Founder of the Actors and Director's Lab, Los Angeles and New York
Founder of The Actor's Studio, Los Angeles
Lectured at Harvard University, UCLA, NYU and Pacific Archives, San Francisco
In addition, Jack Garfein directed the following actors in various productions: Herbert Berghof, Jean Stapleton, Uta Hagen, Bruce Dern, Gary Merrill, Steve McQueen, Susan Strasberg, James Dean, Pat Hingle, Alvin Epstein

PRODUCER

Broadway
Avner the Eccentric, 1985
The American Clock by Arthur Miller, 1980–1981
The Price by Arthur Miller, 1979–1980

Off-Broadway

Childhood with Glenn Close, 1985
For No Good Reason by Nathalie Sarraute, World Premiere, 1985
Rommel's Garden, 1985
Ekkehard Schall, Berliner Ensemble, American Debut, 1985
Kurt Weill Cabaret with Alvon Epstein and Martha Schlammme, 1985
Endgame, 1984
Rockaby with Billie Whitelaw, 1984
The Beckett Plays (*Ohio Impromptu*, *Catastrophe*, *What Where*), 1983–1985
Hannah with Blanche Baker, 1983
With Love and Laughter, 1982
Chuck's Hunch, 1982
A Chekhov Sketchbook with Joseph Buloff and John Herd, 1981
These Men directed by Zoe Caldwell, 1980

Paris was Yesterday with Celeste Holm, 1980

Flying Blind, 1979
California Reich and *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco, 1978–1979

Founder and Artistic Director of the Harold Clurman Theater, 1978

Regional Theater

The American Clock and *The Price* by Arthur Miller, Spoleto Festival, Charleston, South Carolina, 1979–1980

Off-Off-Broadway

Produced eight productions by new playwrights and a revival of *Two Character Play* by Tennessee Williams, 1979–1981

England

The Beckett Plays (*Ohio Impromptu*, *Catastrophe*, *What Where*), The Warehouse Theater, London, 1984

Ohio Impromptu

by Samuel Beckett

World Premiere on 9 May 1981,
 Drake Union, Stadium 2 Theater, Ohio.
 Vienna Premiere, 20 October 1988,
 Der Kreis (George Tabori), featuring Klaus Fischer
 and Rainer Frieb, directed by Jack Garfein.

(L) Listener and (R) Reader
As alike in appearance as possible.

Light on table midstage. Rest of stage in darkness.
Plain with deal table, say 8'x4'.
Two plain armless white deal chairs.

L seated at table facing front towards end of long side audience right. Bowed head propped on right hand. Face hidden. Left hand on table. Long black coat. Long white hair.

R seated at table in profile centre of short side audience right. Bowed head propped on right hand. Left hand on table. Book on table before him open at last pages. Long black coat. Long white hair.

Black wide-brimmed hat at centre of table.

Fade up.

Ten seconds.

R turns page.

Pause.

R reading:

Little is left to tell. In a last –

L knocks with left hand on table.
 Little is left to tell.

Pause. Knock.

In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long together to a single room on a far bank. From its single window he could see the down-stream extremity of the Isle of Swans.

Pause.

Relief he had hoped would flow from unfamiliarity. Unfamiliar room. Unfamiliar scene. Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared. From this he had once half hoped some measure of relief might flow.

Pause.

Day after day he could be seen slowly packing the islet. Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather and old world Latin Quarter hat. At the tip he would always pause to dwell on the receding stream. How in joyous eddies its two arms conflowed and flowed united on. Then turn and his slow steps retrace.

Pause.

In his dreams –

Knock.

Then turn and his slow steps retrace.

Pause. Knock.

In his dreams he had been warned against this change. Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words, Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you.

Pause.

Could he not –

Knock.

Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words, Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you.

Pause. Knock.

Could he not now turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they were once so long alone together. Alone together so much shared. No. What he had done alone could not be undone. Nothing he had ever done alone could ever be undone. By him alone.

Pause.

In this extremity his old terror of night laid hold on him again. After so long a lapse that as if never been. *Pause. Looks closer.* Yes, after so long a lapse that as if never been. Now with redoubled force the fearful symptoms described at length page forty paragraph four. Starts to turn back the pages. Checked by L's left hand. Resumes relinquished page. White nights now again his portion. As when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till – turns page – dawn of day.

Pause.



Little is left to tell. One night –

Knock.

Little is left to tell.

Pause. Knock.

One night as he sat trembling head in hands from head to foot a man appeared to him and said, I have been sent by – and here he named the dear name – to comfort you. Then drawing a worn volume from the pocket of his long black coat he sat and read till dawn. Then disappeared without a word.

Pause.

Some time later he appeared again at the same hour with the same volume and this time without preamble sat and read it through again the long night through. Then disappeared without a word.

Pause.

So from time to time unheralded he would appear to read the sad tale through again and the long night away. Then disappear without a word.

Pause.

With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one.

Pause.

Till the night came at last when having closed the book and dawn at hand he did not disappear but sat on without a word.

Pause.

Finally he said, I have had word from – and here he named the dear name – that I shall not come again. I saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power.

Pause.

So the sad –

Knock.

Saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power.

Pause. Knock.

So the sad tale a last time told they sat on as though turned to stone. Through the single window dawn shed no light. From the street no sound of reawakening. Or was it that buried in who knows what thoughts they paid no heed? To light of day. To sound of reawakening. What thoughts who knows. Thoughts, no, not thoughts. Profounds of mind. Of mindlessness. Whither no light can reach. No sound. So sat on as though turned to stone. The sad tale a last time told.

Pause.

Nothing is left to tell.

Pause. R makes to close book.

Knock. Book half-closed.

Nothing is left to tell.

Pause. R closes book.

Knock.

Silence. Five seconds.

Simultaneously they lower their right hands to table, raise their heads and look at each other. Unblinking. Expressionless.

Ten seconds.

Fade out.

Original title	Pieces Of Dreams
Country of origin	Austria
Shooting time	3 September 1988
Location	Deutschmeister Hotel, Vienna
Date of completion	July 1999
Producer	Michael Pilz
Production	Michael Pilz Film
Concept and realization	Michael Pilz
Cinematography	Michael Pilz
Sound	Michael Pilz
Editing	Michael Pilz
Featuring	Jack Garfein
Literary words	Samuel Beckett, <i>Ohio Impromptu</i>
Music	Franz Schubert, parts of <i>Winterreise</i>
Vocalist	Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau
Original format	Video 8, PAL, color, mono, 4:3
Tape format	Beta, DV, PAL, color, mono (Ch1 = Ch2), 4:3
Language	English
Subtitles	no
Running time	55'
Special recommendation	For dramaturgical reasons the video sound and the proportion of noise it contains are fully intended and we recommend listening to the sound through a stereo or PA-system
Financial support	Austrian Federal Chancellery, Department for the Arts
First screening	Rotterdam, 30 January 2000, 29th International Film Festival Rotterdam
Festivals	Rotterdam, 29th International Film Festival, Graz, <i>Diagonale</i> , Festival of Austrian Films, March 1999 Duisburg, <i>Duisburger Filmwoche</i> , November 2000 Antwerp/Belgium, Museum of Contemporary Art, 17–19 November, 2006 Shahrecord/Iran, SUREH/Institute of Art, University of Esfahan, 14 October, 2007 Esfahan/Iran, SUREH/Institute of Art, University of Esfahan, 15 October, 2007
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