

## Charles L. Mee talks *Big Love*...

***"...I thought instead of trying to predict the future, I'd go back to one of the earliest surviving plays in the western world and see if it still speaks to us.***

***And, of course, it does."***

***-Charles L. Mee***

CFT was recently fortunate enough to conduct an interview via email with award-winning playwright and scholar, Charles L. Mee- the man responsible for CFT's forthcoming *Big Love* and 2008's *bobrauschenbergamerica*. Other works by Mee include *A Perfect Wedding*, *Summertime*, and *Wintertime*, to name just a few. A Chicagoland native, Mee shares his ties to Chicago, insight into his creative process, as well as the theatre artists that inspire him worldwide.

CFT: You have graciously shared in interviews about there being "no such thing as an original play" and "my plays are broken, jagged, filled with sharp edges, filled with things that take sudden turns, careen into each other, smash up, veer off in sickening turns. That feels good to me. It feels like my life. It feels like the world." How has your writing evolved since you started writing plays? What new things excite you?

Charles L. Mee: *I've been doing to the Avignon Theatre Festival almost every year for the past eight years, and so I've seen the latest work there from Europe, and I've been crazy about the kind of dance/physical/theatre made by Pina Bausch and Alain Platel from Belgium, and Pippo Delbono and Romeo Castelluci from Italy, and Constanza Macras from Berlin, and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui from Belgium, and others. Mostly in the western world for a couple of thousand years we have thought you start to make a play by writing down things people say to one another--that is to say, we use the left hemispheres of our brains. But dance and physical theatre and spectacle come from the right hemisphere. And Bausch and Platel and Delbono and the others are making theatre using both right and left hemispheres--using their whole brains. And that's fantastic.*

CFT: Can you share the process of the re-making of *The Danaids* by Aeschylus? Was there a particular personal experience that led to the creation of *Big Love*?

CLM: *Michael Dixon from Actors Theatre of Louisville called me in 1999 and asked me if I'd write something for a Humana Festival in 2000 that would be a "millennial festival," and I thought instead of trying to predict the future, I'd go back to one of the earliest surviving plays in the western world and see if it still speaks to us. And, of course, it does.*

CFT: The women and men in *Big Love* have different opinions on gender inequality, love, marriage and all its complexities. How do you feel these issues resonate with the current concerns of the culture now that the play has been around over a decade?

CLM: *They still resonate. These are all still things at the center of our lives after ten years. Not a surprise, since the issues are still alive after Aeschylus first wrote about them 2500 years ago.*

CFT: You were born in Barrington, Illinois? Do you still have any Chicago ties?

*CLM: I have a niece with her husband and two daughters living in Chicago, and my daughter acting in Sarah Ruhl's play at the Goodman at the moment, and my oldest childhood friend still living in Barrington--and I talk to him every few weeks, and visit every few years.....*

CFT: What are you working on now?

*CLM: I'm always working on several plays at the same time, so I can get up in the morning and get a cup of tea and go to my desk and whatever catches my attention is what I work on. So I never have to force myself to go back to work on something that has come to feel like an annoying burden. There's always something I'm really eager to work on. So I have no sense of discipline at all--and, by the end of the year, I've written more than I should have.*

For more information on Mee and his works, visit [charlesmee.org](http://charlesmee.org).

Special Thanks:  
Charles L. Mee  
Kate LoConti  
Christopher Kriz  
Nilsa Reyna  
Mieka van der Ploeg