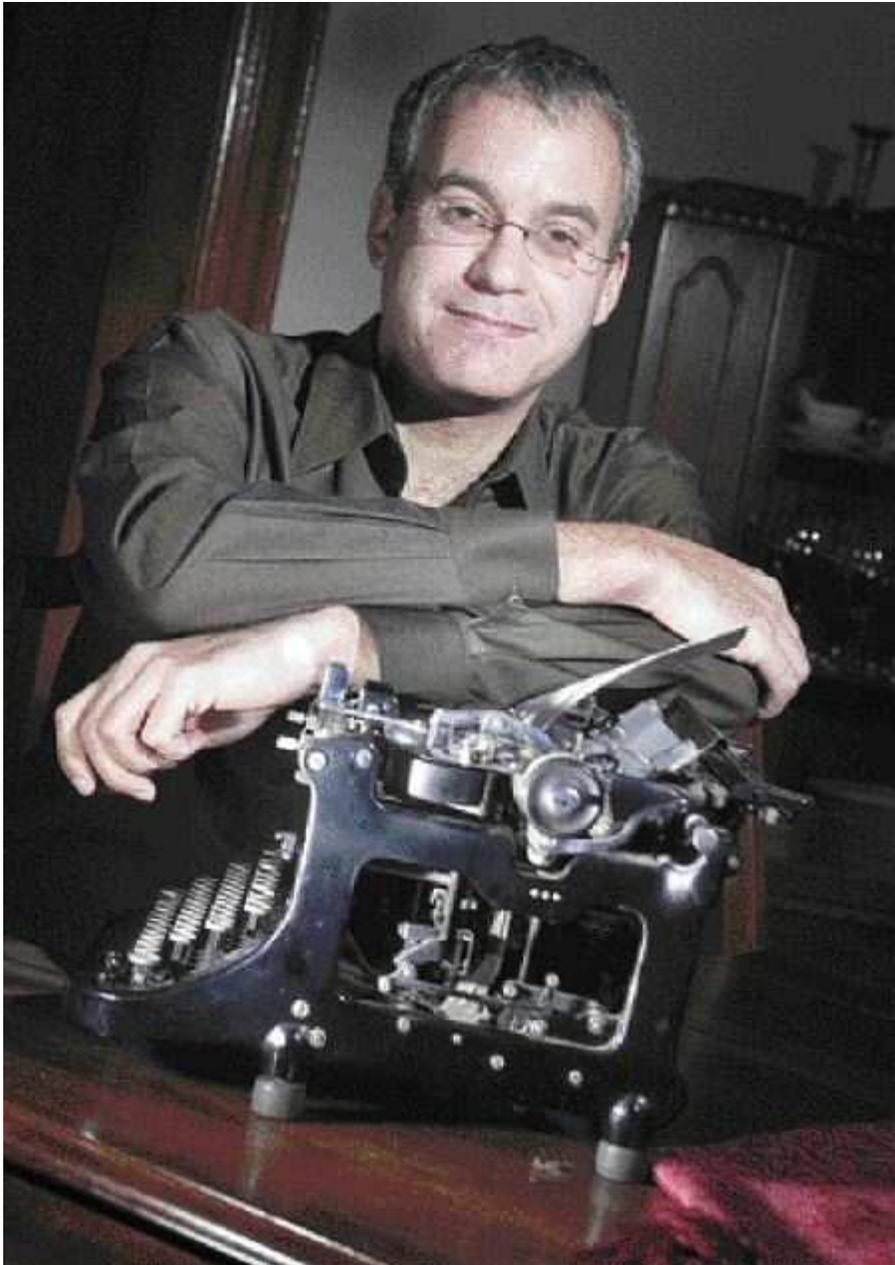


Playing with words

Playwright Lawrence Aronovitch on Spock, Scrabble and the Camino with Rosa Parks

BY BRUCE DEACHMAN, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN FEBRUARY 1, 2009 5:02 AM



Four items for a desert island? 'Laptop, iPod, hand-crank generator and a satellite Internet connection.'

Photograph by: Bruno Schlumberger, the Ottawa Citizen, The Ottawa Citizen

1. When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A garbage man, as I announced to the world on TV at the tender age of five. I grew up in Montreal, and there was a TV show called Little People or something like that. It was a talk show for kids that was hosted by Jack Barry, the game-show host in the States who was caught up in the game-show

scandals. He came to Canada to live in exile for a few years, and then went back to do *The Joker's Wild*.

Anyway, for some reason I was on the show and was asked that question, and that was my answer. I can still remember seeing my mother's expression -- she was in the audience watching me.

2. Given the foreknowledge of your boat sinking and your subsequent stranding, what four items would you take with you to a deserted island?

My iPod, my laptop, a hand-crank generator for them, and a satellite Internet connection. Blissful solitude in which to write!

3. Who inspires you?

Martin Luther King. I still get chills listening to his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

4. What was on your bedroom walls when you were a kid?

A very large poster of Mr. Spock from *Star Trek*.

5. Finish this sentence: "In high school, I would have been voted the person most likely to ... "

Colonize space. I actually went back to dig up my old high-school yearbook, and it does in fact say that.

6. If you were to spend a two-week holiday inside any one play, which would you choose and why?

It's cheating, maybe, but in this final stretch before it opens I'd have to say *Galatea*. I'm head-over-heels in love with each of my four characters and would cherish the chance to spend as much time with them as possible.

7. What's your guilty pleasure?

Brown sugar cinnamon Pop-Tarts. I never see them here any more, so I smuggle them in from the U.S.

8. What is your favourite line that you've written?

In general: "When we met he had an ass the seraphim had sculpted to tempt Eve herself."

From this play: "Dear God. I have a rice cooker older than you."

9. If you could take credit for a line written by someone else, what would it be, and why?

Just about anything by Stephen Sondheim. "You always are what you always were/Which has nothing to do with, all to do with her." "Then you career from career to career." All of *Send in the Clowns*.

10. What celebrity did you have a crush on as a kid?

Definitely Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Boulevard*. How can you resist someone who says "I am big -- it's the pictures that got small."

11. If you could choose one thing at which you could be better than anyone else, what would it be?

Scrabble. Especially against my trainer at the gym, who consistently beats me at it on Facebook.

12. What one thing ARE you better at than anyone else?

Insufferable wordplay.

13. What three people, living or dead, would you most like to go on a road trip with?

Rosa Parks, Moses Maimonides and Barbara Cook.

They're just interesting people. I thought of Rosa Parks when thinking about Martin Luther King for your other question. He was a great orator and all that, but she was just an ordinary person who refused to sit down at the back of the bus and changed the world.

Maimonides I studied growing up. He was a great thinker and wouldn't it be fun to have him to talk to?

And Barbara Cook just because I adore Barbara Cook, and have had occasion to chat with her in the past.

14. Where would you most like to go with them?

The Camino de Santiago in Spain.

15. If you could be one fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?

Daniel Deronda, the main character in George Eliot's novel of the same name. He has to struggle with who he is, who he should be and who he wants to be.

16. What comment most often appeared on your report cards?

"Needs to participate more in class discussion."

17. What do you wish you had more patience for?

Bad manners.

18. If you could change one decision you've made, what would it be and why?

Going for my PhD at MIT. It wasn't exactly a waste of time, but it certainly didn't take me in the right direction.

19. If you could eliminate

the entire body of work of any one artist -- musician, painter,

writer, actor -- who would you choose?

Julia Roberts. I'm sure she's a perfectly nice person, but I can't stand watching her act.

20. What would you like your headstone to read?

"Rosebud."

© Copyright (c) The Ottawa Citizen