

Playwright Anthony E. Gallo Discusses His Road to the Theatre

Holy Rosary parishioner, a former economist, turned to playwriting, screenwriting

The Dramatist, a magazine devoted to reporting on the business and craft of writing for the theatre, recently interviewed Holy Rosary parishioner and playwright Anthony Gallo. Aside from writing plays, Gallo is also a screenwriter, librettist and lyricist, whose 21 full-length dramas include Margherita, Eugenio, Lincoln and God, and the Easton Woman. His plays have been performed in nearly 40 venues and excerpts from his four musicals were performed at the Kennedy Center Page-to-Stage last year.

Below, in excerpts from The Dramatist, Gallo discusses his road to becoming a playwright.

"I am now 77 years old. Eighty is around the corner. When I approached age 60, I decided that I wanted to do something different for the last third (well maybe) of my life, after being a well-published Federal economist and historic preservation builder for a third of a century.

After much introspection, I decided to

go into religion, but realized that pulpit duty would not be my forte. I would become a Judeo-Christian playwright on the caveat that there are a million roads to God and hope that I am on a right one.

All my plays and musicals are written for general audiences. Agnostics and atheists more than welcome. Also, my plays are more about sinners than saints. The former make for more interesting characters and plots than the latter.

I had to begin from scratch, earning the equivalent of 120 hours of playwriting, theater, drama and related courses. I am now a full-time playwright, not a retiree writing plays as a hobby. As an economist I worked eight hours a day, and another eight hours in historic renovations. As a playwright, I work 24 hours a day—in my thoughts, in my dreams, in my relationships, and in my conversations. And then to the computer. And I love it, and will write until I drop.

Age plays an important part in my writing today. I tried this craft in my thirties, and my efforts failed. Now because of the perspective I have gained, my approach is fresh.

I didn't feel I had anything to say then. My reason for writing plays that I wanted to be a playwright. This approach did not work. At 35, a year of hard work produced a wretched half of a scene. I abruptly resigned from the profession one day, with promises never to return again. Therefore, there should always be hope for younger playwrights who feel the need for a break and returning to playwriting someday when the inspiration may return.

The years have taught me some humility. Age also gives you a greater understanding of human behavior and human interaction, and thus can facilitate the understanding of conflict within your characters. I feel that I have more to say than ever because I have met so many more people, suffered so many other setbacks, and seen so much more.

Do I feel discrimination and imbalance because of my age? No, I do not. The adage "The theater is an evil mother," applies to all regardless of socio-demographics. There are so few theatre companies relative to the number of plays written each year. Therefore, I immediately turned to self-pro-

duction, as advocated by Gary Garrison, an award-winning playwright.

The Seventh Street Playhouse has produced my plays, either as production or staged reading nearly 150 times in over 40 venues. I have gone from being a playwright to also being a producer and director. My web site, <http://Aegallo.com>, now averages about 50,000 visits a year."