

FACEBOOK TRIBUTES

RENÈ AUBERJONIS

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The death of actor Renè Auberjonois (at age 79) is another sad RIP instance of a recent extraordinary theatre personality who once touched my life. In 1968, John Lahr asked me to take over an Adult Ed class he was teaching in Dramatic Lit, at NY's Hunter College. I had never taught anything, anywhere before — and was nervous. I decided to start the class with “King Lear” *because I had just seen the production at Lincoln Center, with Lee J. Cobb as Lear.* Renè Auberjonois was the very physical, very clear spoken, very funny, Fool in that production. I invited Mr Auberjonois to the class. He accepted. I wish now I could remember the one question about his role and about the Lincoln Center production that I was dying to ask him — and DID ask him in the class; but I can't recall it. I do know that Mr. Auberjonois delighted the class with his Shakespeare/Lear/intellectual, and practical theatre, expertise, and that his appearance stimulated and relaxed me into opening myself up to a life of teaching, as well as writing.

And in reviewing the Clive Barnes 1968 NYTimes review (which beautifully brought to life that production), I discovered that there were actors in that Lear that had been in my plays; and that John Gleason (who had designed the lighting for my “*Father Uxbridge Wants To Marry*” Off Broadway, had done the lighting design for “*King Lear.*” It was probably Gleason who helped arrange for Mr. Auberjonois to visit my class in 1968. Gleason (who died young) was a close associate and colleague of that rare man of the theatre, J Ranelli, who died some weeks ago, and to whom I paid tribute in facebook. J had a more involving through line in my life than Renè Auberjonois. But that opening touch of Renè Auberjonois . . .Well . . .

