

INTRODUCTION

ELLEN BURSTYN READS POEMS BY D.H. LAWRENCE

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I am a totally academic person, a professor in a field, the history of art, far removed from those represented here this evening—poetry and the theater. My chief claim to the privilege of introducing Ellen Burstyn is merely personal: my wife and I have been friends of hers for many years (far too many as we all somewhat ruefully agreed at breakfast this morning).

There is a certain impersonal appropriateness in my being here, however, and not only in the fact that Ellen holds two honorary degrees (I don't hold any, and I'm older than she is!). For, notwithstanding her physical beauty and the passion and grace that transpire through everything she does, the truth is that in the end, Ellen Burstyn is an egghead. Her caring and thoughtful intelligence is of course apparent to anyone who cares enough to think twice about what happens when she performs. It is also apparent in the way she lives—the time and effort she dedicates to her profession and to learning and teaching her art to others (as you will see from the biographical sketch included in your program). Above all, however, it is apparent in her absorption in and devotion to the life of the mind. I who spend my entire life with books am always enthralled to visit Ellen and discover the most wonderful treasures on the shelves and strewn about her quite enchanted house. I belong to that benighted category of semi-illiterate intellectuals who didn't even know that D. H. Lawrence also wrote poetry! I learned that fact only a few years ago from none other than Ellen Burstyn herself, who actually has a very special relation to the poetry of D. H. Lawrence, as I am sure you will come to appreciate now.