We have to experience a painting, see a play, read a novel, watch a movie before we can legitimately pass a judgment. The most a critic can do is create an appetite which leads us to the direct experience of the work of art.

One might read 100 reviews of an art show, study its gallery brochure, participate in the opening of the wine that opens the show — but until one had seen the works one could not judge the show.

Put this way it seems so obvious as to be trivial. And yet I've heard arguments that go on and on finally to be climaxed by the admission "well, I've never seen it (read it) but I know it's awful." Direct experience is a necessary condition for an aesthetic judgment.

What that means is that it is absolutely necessary for us to open up to work of art — to respond to them with all of our senses and intellect. We may learn from the critics and commentators but we must take our own senses into direct contact with the art works in order to begin to know what they are or how good they are.

Vatzlav is a good example. Many people have never read the script. Most have never seen a production. It does not have a long critical history in Canada, and is therefore to be judged on its own, or at least without preconceived notions of what it should be.

Take a chance. See a play you know little about. Remember, seeing it is a necessary condition for judging it.