

# EMERGENCY

13 AUGUST 2000

# GAZETTE

## LISTINGS

### THEATER OF BARE WALLS



Entertain: (v), from late Latin *inter-tenere*, from Latin *inter* among + *tenere* to hold.

Art is entertainment; that is, art must entertain. Not amuse, or puzzle, or insult, or disgust, or divert, or charm. If it fails to take hold of you and thrust you, wriggling with whatever conflicting thoughts and emotions, into the heart of some ontological riot, however disguised, then it has failed—to be art. Whether its stuff be the social, the personal, the natural, the political, what have you, art entertains in us the simple question, What does it mean to be?

In three half-hour performances on July 18<sup>th</sup>, a piece called PHASE 1, created by Ryan Bronz, Yehuda Duenyas, and their many cohorts, gave form to the question, What does it mean to be a performer or an audience? as well as such adjunct questions as, What is one without the other? What is one that the other is not? Does theater demand some strict delineation between the two, under threat of the whole enterprise's disintegrating? and, above all, What is the nature of the strange bond between them?

The piece—perhaps "event" is the word—was not, mind you, some lazy attempt at so-called audience participation, as when Mr. & Mrs. Paycheck are called upon to provide bogus evidence in a bogus investigation into a bogus murder, having paid \$50 apiece for the privilege of becoming fictional characters among fictional characters. When you and ten others are locked in to a 42<sup>nd</sup> Street storefront window during rush hour and compelled to watch whatever transpires outside, and when you have paid nothing for the privilege—well, what do you call such impressment?—For impressment it was: we're off to sea, folks, on a dangerous exploration, whether you like it or not.

When passers-by slow down and gape and point and laugh at the clutch of motley individuals standing or sitting where you'd expect to see dummies (ha-ha) or toiletries or magazines or lingerie, who is the audience? When the event culminates in the auctioning-off of the literally captive audience to the highest bidder, to provide him with applause on demand, does this not say that the putative audience, as the putative performers, is doing neither more nor less than acting a part?

It's not as though anything that happened on the street during that half hour was so very compelling. The effects of PHASE 1 rose from its layering and colliding of elements, all of them held in tension by the arrangement of the event. A warring couple leaping from a cab; a trio dancing in the middle of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street; the Grim Reaper meandering along under a scaffold; a thin, spectacled suit jerking to a stop before the window to suppress some deep internal tremor; Big Bird (drunk?), Barney, and Batman attempting to claim their share of attention—not one of these elements was worth much more than a chuckle. But when a pair of hustlers unfurled a banner and taped it beneath our window-cage, the import of the proceedings became clear. The banner read: SELLING OUT TO THE BARE WALLS. And when a group of svelte creatures in khaki settled into a perfect mimicry of the Gap billboard across the street to observe the auction, how could the intended reversal become any plainer? Forget art-as-commodity; the ultimate, fundamental commodity is a pair of captive eyes, a pair of mechanically clapping hands that simulate adulation to the point of identity.

In ordinary theater events, the audience pays to be controlled—to be owned. By selling the audience (we were, I remind you, imprisoned *gratis*) to a sheepish guy with a bright smile and a knack for juggling, PHASE 1 exposed the usual dynamic. The mock Gap models blinked up at us from the crowd of bidders, as if to say, We, too, own

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you; you can buy us all you want, but you are only buying a deeper and deeper servitude. This is not to say that the economic vagaries surrounding art and other consumer goods bore the brunt of the event's attack. Rather, the deeper object was, perhaps, to ask just who should be held responsible for the creation of a world that makes possible in the first place the paving over of art and khakis and thought alike under a smooth surface of dollar bills. Not how this has happened, but why, and according to what relationships. What deeper condition, pathological or otherwise, does such an occurrence indicate?

The event's conclusion, then, summed things up quite nicely. The performers launched into a dance routine to the tune of "...don't be afraid to clutch the hand of your creator" (through a sheet of transparent plastic?). But to whom were they addressing this command? To the audience that had just been sold for \$700, cheap? To themselves?—after all, deep down, Broadway-type show numbers involve a superlative degree of self-reflexivity; even when they pressed themselves snarling against the glass of our cage, they could barely meet our eyes. There was no need of it. We were all implicated, all guilty, all creators of each other, all chattel.

So: who makes who, in the market, in art, in life? PHASE 1 gave us scant answers. But at least it forced us to entertain the question, held us right up in it while keeping us truly entertained. Art = entertainment.

Gregory Ford

### THE BLUEPRINT SERIES

The legendary Ontological Theater hosts 3 emerging directors. 2 shows per night.  
KASPAR, dir. Jyana Gregory.  
THE BADDEST NATASHAS dir. Tony Torn, and  
COLD POLE dir. Ryan Brown, Franklin Laviola, and Brian Walsh.  
Aug 9-20, Wed-Sun at 8pm.  
Ontological Theater, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave & 10<sup>th</sup> St. 533-4650. \$10.

### SUMMER CAMP 6: NEW WORKS IN HEAT

Soho Rep presents a "New Play Development Series." The next show is AR-CHIPELAGO, by Lecoq-trained company, The Flying Machine.  
Aug 11-13, Friday and Sunday 7:30PM, Saturday 3 PM & 7:30PM  
Soho Rep, 46 Walker St., 334-0962.

### AMERICAN LIVING ROOM FESTIVAL

Through August 26<sup>th</sup>.  
At the Festival's "Directing Cabaret":  
Aug 12 and 13<sup>th</sup> at 8pm:  
TEASPOON SUN AND OTHER DANCES, dir Elizabeth Haselwood.  
AN EXCERPT FROM THE COLD SPRING NEWS wri & dir Don Jordan.  
BIOGRAPHY'S TOP TEN PEOPLE OF THE MILLENNIUM SING THEIR FAVORITE KURT WEILL SONGS dir Alec Duffy.  
At the Festival's "Performance Series":  
August 11 at 8pm:  
MARGUERITE'S FIXTURE  
Performed by McCormick Templeman.  
JJ: ANOTHER STRANGE BEDFELLOW? Performed by Amy Guggenheim.  
HERE, 145 6th Ave, 647-0202. \$12.

### NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL

In its fourth year and going strong, the Fringe Fest presents hundreds of shows in 11 days. From the stupid to the sublime, anything is possible in the festival that runs on chaos. This year, many shows from Austria, Germany, Australia, Mexico, Canada, and other exotic ports. Texts by Artaud, Bernhart, De Ghelderode, Ellen McLaughlin, among others. New York regulars include Trav S.D., The Drama League, 63<sup>rd</sup> Dimension, and Charlie Victor Romeo. Get a full schedule at any Manhattan Barnes & Noble, or call 420-8877; outside NY call 1-888-fringenyc. Aug 16-27. All shows \$12.

### DELI DANCES IN TIMES SQ.

Chashama presents this 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual invasion of Times Sq, including subway performances & window installations.  
ALL DAY MARATHON: August 18.  
For more info, call 765-6574, or see TonySilvaDanceAndMusic.com.

### ROBERT BECK MEMORIAL CINEMA

Aug 15 An "outdoor" screening of BEACH BEAST by Bill Storz, a super-8 feature monster movie, w/ Luther Price.  
Aug 22 SCIENCE PROJECTS: short films, all exploring the calculatory nature of cine-mathematics.  
Collective:Unconscious, 145 Ludlow St., 254-5277. \$5.

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### THEATRE FATALE

A game for two.

U: Bring out the tempest.

I: I Beg your...

U: Bring it out to wet the planks of this moribund place.

I: How would I know that you know that I know I am dead?

U: I Beg your...

I: I do not pardon. I can't. I beg you.

U: I am not a beggar.

I: That is rather surprising.

U: You should have seen how they mocked the way he used to look back to make sure we grabbed the goods he had thrown at us hoping there would be a next time which will never come.

I: That wasn't me.

U: Who said that it was you?

I: They are celebrating.

U: That is why I came, to find you alone, looking out over the wall, imagining a parallel world at the other side that will hide you from my wish for more words.

I:

U:

I: That would be theatre.

U: Don't go there.

I: Are you...scared.

U: You make me laugh.

I: If I were wise I would say you are in love.

U: Be a fool, then.

I: Haven't you noticed that they can all see you now.

U: It is my maddest fantasy.

I: But this is real life.

U: It is theatre.

I: No, it is...life.

U: Then....drop dead.

I:

U:

There is noise; and then the curtain rises silently and surreptitiously.

Milton Loayza

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