

August
31,
2000



THE THEATER OF SILENCE

Theater decorates tension with words and gestures. Tension exists a priori; the people on the stage and the things they do are vehicles for it and, ostensibly, its resolution; of course, at the moment of resolution, the play, the event, dies. Everyone applauds. Noise and motion have brought about a satisfying death.

Noise and motion: the necessary ornaments of tension. Theater claims them as the marks of its essence. It deplores silence and stillness—the marks of repose. Above all else it deplores silence: the silence that begins at death and has no need to go

THEATRE OF PRINCIPLES

- 1.) Ten minutes from Shakespeare. Actors playing the roles. 1 extra actor is added to the stage, but without having a role or character. Then what to do is up to him/her, to be witnessed by the audience.
- 2.) Four men/women acting. They talk, they move. But no reflections between them, like eve-

farther; the silence that neither wants nor needs anyone's attention or approval; the silence of an inkblot or a stone or dust or light. Theater cannot stand silence because silence, unalloyed, not a punctuation of noise, obviates the well-ordered clangor and static that are theater's very bones. Silence repudiates theater, and vice-versa.

It is therefore necessary that we create a theater of silence.

The theater of silence need not be silent. Dwelling in the heart of silence, it explores its domain using whatever tools are at hand. Yet even that exploration will partake of the qualities of silence: absolute conduc-

rybody is alone. They can call directly to each other, or stare at each other in close range. But everything goes on like in a mirror. Even in those very few moments when they respond to each other, it is also an isolated act, like talking in an empty Space.

The above play can be adapted to the street version, thus engaging stranger participants: Standing near a street vendor with no re-

sponse to him/her, or sitting at such a place, again with no response.

3.) Theater of things can be composed by moving the things in Space. Continuous Moving, continuous enjoy.

David Chikhladze
July 14, 2000. New York.

LISTINGS

HENSON INTERNAT'L FESTIVAL OF PUPPET THEATER

Punch & Judy & the avant-garde. This exciting and well-funded fest includes: **THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOON** Robert Lepage, music by Laurie Anderson. At the Public Theater, Sept 7-10, post-show discussion on Sept 8. \$35-40. **EVERYDAY USES FOR SIGHT: NOS. 3 AND 7**

Dan Hurlin, music by Dan Froot and Guy Klucsevsek. Contains nudity, thankfully. At the Kitchen, Sept 20-23 at 7pm, 23 at 1pm, 24th at 4pm. Post-show discussion Sept 22. \$25.

LATE NIGHT CABARET A showcase of artists, new & veteran. At PS122. Sept 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23 at 10:30. \$17, \$13.

AND MORE: Companies from India, Cuba, Japan, France, Russia, Hong Kong, the UK, and even Minneapolis. Some shows for kids, too. For tickets, venue locations, and more info, call Ticket Central at 212-279-4200 or visit www.hensonfest.org

SEX, VIOLENCE, SCIENCE AND GOD

The season at NADA Classic continues: **AMAZONS IN CHAINS** written and directed by Frank Cwiklik. 3 guys, a lesbian and a time machine. Thurs thru Sun, at 7:30pm, Aug 24—Sept 3. \$12.

SKETCH COLLISION Members of GCW and DMT collide in regular evenings of disturbing comedy sketches that will leave you on the floor or out the door. Sept 8 & 9 at midnight. \$10.

THE VIOLENT YEARS written by Edward D. Wood, Jr., adapted and directed by Ian W. Hill. Part of NADA's Ed Wood Fest. Aug 31-Sept 2 at 10pm, Sept 3 at 3, Sept 7, 8, 9 at 10pm, Sept 10 at 8pm. \$10. Nada Classic, 167 Ludlow St, 420-1466.

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH ART & PERFORMANCE SERIES

The Downtown Arts Festival & The Kitchen present: **LES SPECTACLES VIVANTS SAMPLE** A four-artist-sampler. September 14-16 Thu-Sat at 7:30pm \$15 **SHATTERED BOXES** Ibrahim Quraishi & Compagnie Faim de Siècle. A multimedia adaptation of Heiner Müller's MEDEAMATERIAL. Wednesday, Sept 13 at 8pm September 14-16, Thu-Sat, & 20-23, Wed-Sat, 10pm. \$20 For festival info: www.simonsays.org

AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES

Written, composed and performed by the weird and talented Rinde Eckert. A high-class re-mount of the show, first shown at DTW last spring. Aug 30-Oct 1, Tues-Sats at 8pm, Sun at 4pm. 45 Bleecker Theater, Bleecker & Lafayette, 307-4100. \$25-\$45.

SLAY THE DRAGON

Created and choreographed by Jody Oberfelder. Music by John Zorn and Tchaikovsky. Sept 14 - Oct 7; Thurs-Sats at 8pm. The Flea Theater, 41 White Street, 212-226-2407, \$20/\$15.

DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Genesis Repertory Ensemble's short run of Marlowe's masterpiece. Last week! Aug 31, Sept 1 & 2 at 8pm. Jan Hus Playhouse, 251 E. 74th St. (& 1st Ave.), 718-932-3577. \$10.

ROBERT BECK MEMORIAL CINEMA

PICTURE BOOKS FOR ADULTS Lewis Klahr presents his four-part Super-8mm cycle and promises some special surprises to accompany this seldom seen and fragile treasure. Sept 5 at 9pm.

THE ANGEL AND THE INFERNO

Tom Chomont presents five recent videos. Sept 12 at 9pm. Collective Unconscious, 145 Ludlow St, 254-5277. \$5.

As our first anniversary approaches, the Emergency gazette is expanding to the internet. We are still seeking editors, writers and designers. Contact us at emergency@notnow.com.

THE EFFECTS OF TEA ON MR WILSON

Forever.

Bright turning brighter.

The stage is a camera—face down in a tea cup. Fine China.

The audience is film, trigger, a shot.

Mr Wilson <sipping tea>:

One leg over the other, slender slacks sweep the calves as one leg teeters and totters above the other in a languid, content and savvy fashion.

OFFSTAGE: MR WILSON RECEIVES A LETTER

If: America can be defined by "hot" and "cool". These two words cover the whole land from black to white, a redneck sun to blue glass, green grass.

Love,

Jim. CALL ME.

open at his command. Neither do the others, he surmises in one look. He turns to the fake window and contemplates the landscape outside. Bright. Brighter. A picture snaps. Mr Wilson regains his place at the tea table. Won't somebody join him? He sips his tea. He sighs. The tea grows cold. His heart beats faster. He takes out a photograph and breaks it in half. Snap! Real birds fly in through the fake window. Mr Wilson sips his tea.

Mr Wilson looks plaintively at the audience: Don't you understand, says Mr Wilson, I haven't read Wittgenstein. Oh it's worthless. Will you leave, he continues. Leave. Please leave, he commands. Then Mr Wilson, seeing that the audience is not moving, breaks down and cries, sobbing into his tea in an ugly manner unbecoming actors and kings. Tears and snot drizzle like sand castles onto the perfect pattern of cucumber vines on the linen tablecloth.

Getting a hold of himself, Mr Wilson proceeds to peel the shell off a hardboiled egg, first banging it against his high forehead. He eats the egg brusquely. Then wipes his yellow mouth with a corner of the linen tablecloth.

Matvei
Yankelevich

TO THE EDITORS,

I picked up your terrific, provocative 8/22/00 issue while waiting for a Fringe show at Collective: Unconscious yesterday. As someone who reviews theater, I have installed Amy Fusselman's great theater review outline in my permanent "keep" file.

What bothers me, however, is Luna Zeygman's article on Fringe. Not that it doesn't have a bunch of smart things to say, but the central premise—about the meaning of "fringe"—is wrong-headed and seemingly unaware.

To quote Learned Hand: "Don't make a fortress out of a dictionary."

Fringe, as the term is used in theater, refers to real estate, not content. In London (where the term seems to have originated), Fringe equals what we call off-off-Broadway. In festival parlance, it emanates from Edinburgh, where the Fringe Festival started—as a low rent expansion of the Edinburgh Festival. Equating fringe with avant-garde or experimental theater is mixing apples and oranges. Fringe should be about providing venues for ANY sort of theatrical expression, not a specific type.

This does not mean there are not issues about the Fringe selection process (and goals), and perhaps they should be addressed in your pages in detail. It also doesn't mean that the current state of avant garde or experimental theater is healthy. It strikes me that we have become pretty lazy, and that (with notable and glorious exceptions) there's not a lot of experimenting or "avanting" going on.

But don't "fritter away precious energy" obsessing about someone's choice of words.

Regards,
Les Gutman

Mr. Gutman's and Mr. Lumelsky's letters are in response to Luna Zeygman's article, "The Fringe," which appeared in the previous issue of THE EMERGENCY GAZETTE (No. 21, August 22, 2000). The editors wish to thank both Mr. Gutman and Mr. Lumelsky for the sincerity with which they reacted to Ms. Zeygman's essay, and also for generously sharing their opinions with our readers.

DEAR LUNA ZEYGMAN,

In your Fringe editorial (8/22) you said you "can't locate a commonly held core belief" among these new theater brats except in "some surface tradition of theater as a harmless expenditure of energy." I think I've seen something else! For about two years I spent a lot of time at two open mics: Rev. Jen's at Collective Unconscious and Face-boy's at Surf Reality. I came because they were buzzed about as "alternative comedy" incubators, and I liked the sound of that. It wasn't always comedy, but there was a feeling, something consistent and really "alternative," about what many of the regulars were doing. Then I looked around and it seemed like half the theater south of 14th street and east of Broadway had that same feeling. The conclusion I reached was that the off-off-Broadway stage was in a race to see who could not give a fuck the most (or best) in a performance. That may sound like the theater of a generation without guts. But I bet if you looked around long enough you could still find someone who's a hip artist but also crazy enough to set themselves on fire. However, the time is not right to care about something in such a straightforward way as to set yourself on fire for it, so they would wave you away.

The shameless vaudevillianism of CLOWNS IN THE VAGINA OR HOUSE OF TRASH may seem like "a harmless expenditure of energy." Likewise, the stooopid capsule summaries for 75% of the shows in the Fringe catalog may make one tired and irritable. What institutions will this art upend? one thinks. How will this unravel my daily life and make cars crash into telephone poles? Not easily. But neither is it running along in seamless parallel with JERKYLL & HYDE and the global entertainment industry (I hope).

It's not a lack of talent, ideas, or passion. It's not even necessarily a lack of ambition. But the talent, ideas, passion, and ambition are pointed into these stooopid activities whose usefulness is not immediately apparent but may make sense eventually. Perhaps in returning to vaudeville values and pure, cynical entertainment, a lot of downtowners are trying to rediscover a base of realism from which to start over (despite the burden of curdled irony which you often do it). Meanwhile I would hesitate before calling this trend decadent or childish since I've seen it make some forceful and cunning statements.

Keep in mind Nietzsche's stern command to always pay attention to the people who take nothing seriously. Taking nothing seriously is harder than it looks—just try it and see.

COMPENSATION: A LITURGY OF FACT:

by Sergei Kurghinian; translated by Carolyn Kelson, with Alex and Helena Prokhorov; directed by Carolyn Kelson and Alexandra Lopez; Presented at the New York Fringe Festival, Aug 16-27.

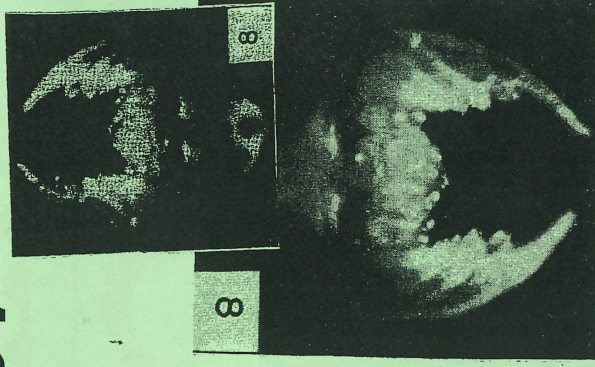
COMPENSATION is about the Chernobyl accident and the humiliating, tragic and deadly manner in which the Soviet government dealt with providing for its victims in the aftermath. Gathered from what seem to be personal letters and recordings of interviews with a psychologist, the text is disturbing and thought provoking.

However, the show is constructed on the pretense that, as the radio announcer explains, these texts of witnesses "have not been subjected to artistic interpretation." Unfortunately, this idea is a fallacy. Slide projections, the collage insertion of a poignant (but overplayed) line from Walt Whitman, the radio announcer behind dark glass—all of this is a product of artistic interpretation and it is compelling.

The directorial take even seems promising at first, but something snaps when the actors come in and attempt to show their identification with the victims they portray. This, I must say, is typical of plays about the horrors of our time, whether the Holocaust or nuclear disaster. You can't just put that stuff on stage and expect "the facts" to have a direct impact.

The artistic interpretation inevitably points my attention to the manipulation which the facts have undergone already in various historical revisions, and to the way this history is being used today, on this stage, to support a particular politics or simply to make such entertainment meaningful with the authority of horror.

Matvei Yankelevich



---10---

By Kevin Augustine; Lone Wolf Tribe; Red Room, as part of the Fringe Festival; to be re-mounted at HERE, Sept 26-28, Oct 3-5.

If the miracle of common expertise is oxygen for theater, 10 turns commonly into poison for the Fringe Festival audience. A distant cousin of FRANKENSTEIN, 10 is for and about thousands of individuals wanting to be God, trying to create living things, and discovering their anonymity.

The play takes a powerful theme buried in the book—the monster as both a thinking child and a sculpture/novel/song/invention—and literalizes it into a spongy brown puppet, alive and awkwardly beautiful in its way, but dependant on visible hands. In this version our hero (Kevin Augustine) is neither a scientist nor any one species of artist, but a "creator." He wants to win a slot in an International Creators' Conference, where living creations celebrate the gift of life in front of judges and become eligible for mass production. After waiting in line for attention, losing money, and failing to teach the puppet its life-loving dance or even what is going on, the creator becomes alcoholic and cruel.

The company plays with the idea that an artist must take the miracle of common experience and mutilate it until it becomes even more recognizable. From start to finish, 10 is full of angry, tender, mutilating creativity, with Augustine in the supervisory "genius" role, manhandling his puppets like a cruel father; at the same time it breathes an infectious despair on the subject of creativity, on the "value" of being a creator or a creation. Likewise, Augustine seems to do good acting out of fear of the lurking possibility of bad acting; he doesn't make it look easy. Even while he flawlessly acts out four different characters in one scene, the same controlling nervousness blares off the stage. Under the blitzkrieg of the creator's fear, the puppets' pathos is not sentimental but very sad. The way the production uses unstable emotions to reanimate and de-familiarize the story is inspiring.

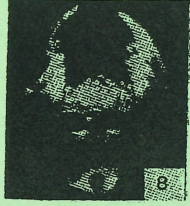
Mike Lumelsky



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Published by Ugly Duckling Presse, makers of fine artists books and the poetry almanac 6X6.

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