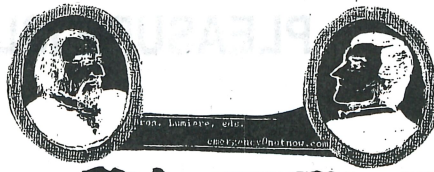


# The EMERGENCY

FREE

September 15, 2000

anniversary  
issue (#23)

## (theater) GAZETTE

### RESISTANCE TO FEAR: OTPOR!



"I am the sticker that resists!" reads the slogan featured below. Hundreds of thousands of similar stickers, posters, and graffiti are pasted or inscribed on every available surface in cities and villages of Serbia.

The inscribed messages vary, but all of them feature a clenched fist, the sign of the "OTPOR!" [Resistance!] movement. Over the past few months, this crudely sketched fist has become the most recognizable political icon in Serbia. At the same time, possession of any item that features this icon—whether button, T-shirt, sticker, or shopping bag—is almost certain to result in its owner's being detained by police. However, this does not prevent thousands from joining the movement. This causal relation embodies the simple idea behind OTPOR!—as repression increases, so does the resistance.

Outside of Serbia, the perpetual resistance to the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic has often been overlooked. In many respects, the 10-year war in the former Yugoslavia started in the streets of Belgrade in the violent conflict between anti-Milosevic protesters and police and army units. Before they went on to Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the army tanks roamed the streets of Belgrade in March, 1991. In the ensuing years, the streets of Belgrade became the stage for brutal police repression against protesters. The series of uprisings culminated in the three-months long demonstrations in the winter of 1996-1997, and OTPOR! was formed in the fall of 1998 by a dozen students. Two years later, it became the movement that represents the most serious threat to Milosevic's government ever to appear on the Serbian political scene.

The principal goal of this movement is as simple as it is pragmatic: ousting of Milosevic's regime. This goal is based on three much broader ideas. The first is individualism. OTPOR! is, paradoxically, a mass movement that insists on teaching the citizens of Serbia how "to use their own head." It doesn't have a hierarchy, rigidly structured program, and official leaders. This loose structure makes the movement corruption-proof and at the same time represents the crucial attestation of movement's idealism. Anyone can join the movement, anyone can form a local group, anyone can take charge in an action. (This makes OTPOR! a field day for followers of Deleuze and Guattari's political thought.)

Second, OTPOR! recognizes that, in order to oust Milosevic's bloody regime, it has

not only to promote the ideas of basic human rights which in Milosevic's Serbia exist only on paper, but to engage in what they call "abolition of fear." Resistance means absence of fear. In the words of one of OTPOR! activists, citizens of Serbia are enchained and immobilized by the most archaic, medieval forms of fear: death (war), starvation (food shortages), and plague (absence of basic medical protection). One of Milosevic's most effective techniques of governing is the so-called "chaos management," which boils down to perpetual production of crises and constant sense of danger and uncertainty. The generation that started OTPOR! came of age in this perpetual catastrophe and learned how not to be afraid of it. One of their refrains is that they have nothing to lose and that they are fighting for their own future. The third idea behind OTPOR! is ACTION as its mode of existence. Over the past two years OTPOR! evolved into a broad grassroots movement. Its members are no longer just students, but also workers, retirees, housewives. (This summer, mothers of the detained OTPOR! activists formed a group called "RESISTANT MOMS"). More important than membership in OTPOR! is readiness to create and undertake actions of resistance. OTPOR! activities fall in three broad groups.

**ACTS**> Wearing a pin or a T-shirt that features the clenched fist is already an act of resistance, and so is pasting of stickers in the elevators or posters on the walls. Police detains anyone caught in an act of resistance.

**ACTIONS**> More complex acts demand a higher level of organization. However, they still remain simple, symbolic, effective, and most importantly, creative. For example, this summer, in the city of Kraljevo (some 100 miles south of Belgrade) a group of local OTPOR! members went to a blood transfusion clinic. Explaining that the "regime appreciates the youth only when it bleeds," they donated blood. Their donation was accepted, but the government-appointed director of the clinic prevented its officials to talk about this in the media (regime is especially concerned about humanitarian actions of OTPOR!). Dozens of similar actions are organized throughout Serbia almost on daily bases.

**PERFORMANCES**> In order to gain public significance, resistance has to be conceptualized. The earliest public statements of OTPOR! were in the form of conceptualized public performances:

In the fall of 1998, after the regime appointed a new dean of Belgrade University, a group of students went to look for him in a local zoo.

The latest performances attest to the movement persistence in adapting its activities to the repression targeted against it. On September 4, 2000, police forces raided the office of OTPOR! located on the main thoroughfare in downtown Belgrade. In this late-night raid, police con-

fiscated computers with OTPOR! databases and archives, as well as a large amount of OTPOR! propaganda materials. OTPOR! named this police action "UNLOADING 2000" and announced its own performance, "LOADING 2000" to be held September 6. On that day, a group of journalists was invited to witness a group of young people carrying cardboard boxes with OTPOR! insignias into their demolished office. Out of nowhere the police appeared, made a quick arrest of the box movers and confiscated the boxes. Only then did they realize that the boxes were empty. Exposed to the laughter and mocking of the large group of people gathered in the street, policemen carried the empty boxes to nearby garbage containers.

As September 24 parliamentary and presidential elections in Serbia approach, repression against OTPOR! increases. In the ten days preceding the unloading/loading performances, police arrested some 200 OTPOR! activists and supporters throughout Serbia. Arrests are usually accompanied by interrogation and severe beatings. In spite of this, the activities of OTPOR! are intensifying.

OTPOR! activists are convinced that increased police brutality proves the regime cannot come up with an appropriate method of dealing with the subversive power of their movement. "They fear us more then we fear them," activists often repeat. They like to recall the collapse of Poland's military regime in the 1980's which came about from the realization that the Poland lacked the number of prisons it would take to lock up all its discontented Poles.

Branislav Jakovljevic

For more information  
about OTPOR! see  
<http://www.otpor.net>.

### ACTION: PROTEST IN NEW YORK

During Milosevic's rule, many young Yugoslavs were forced into exile. They are being prevented from participating in the coming September 24 elections, which are of great importance for the future of Serbia, Yugoslavia, and the Balkans.

For this reason, a group of exiles are organizing a "protest vote" in front of the Yugoslavian Missions throughout the world: Toronto, Munich, Budapest, Zurich, Thessaloniki and Prague, and even as far as Sydney.

In New York the protest is scheduled for Saturday, September 16, at 11:59AM in front of the Yugoslav UN Mission, located at 5th Avenue and 67th Street.

EMERGENCY is a FREE and BI-WEEKLY gazette, providing an immediate response to what's really happening in theater, film, and performance. EMERGENCY is not a consumer guide. The idea: To liberate the form of critical response from the limitations of conventional review etiquette. EMERGENCY seeks: essays, run-on reviews, manifestos, dialogues with colleagues, and proposals for impossible theater. Please send us word of open rehearsals, guerilla acts, collaborations, shows, and screenings.

readings:

Saturday, Sept.16  
at 3 o'clock at  
Soft Skull Bookstore  
107 Norfolk Street

Edmund Berrigan  
Arkadii  
Dragomoshchenko  
Filip Marinovic  
Julien Poirier  
Genya Turovskaya

hosted by  
Ugly Duckling Presse  
6 poets X 6 pages  
f r e e

# LETTER TO THE EDITORS



Luna Zeygman complains (in Emergency Gazette, 8/22/00) that the NEW YORK FRINGE FESTIVAL has "contradictory

desires: to be entertaining and profitable AND to advance radical new work". But should theater not be 'entertaining', in the broadest sense? Even A DOLL'S HOUSE was entertaining enough to keep the Norwegians in the theater. Moreover, I'm not aware that the Festival, a not-for-profit corporation with a largely volunteer staff, aims to be 'profitable' in any sense of the word. It's understandably trying to survive.

I don't know if the Festival claims to be advancing 'radical new work'—but judging from the handful of productions I saw, and from the promo, it's not doing so. And Mademoiselle Zeygman is quite right to bemoan the fact. We who work in the fringe have by and large failed to supply the new forms that our generation demands.

But why does Fraulein Zeygman criticize the NYFF for "a lack of unity"? Whatever its faults (and they are myriad), the great strength of New York theater is its eclecticism, a variety of form unsurpassed in theater history. We refer to every form from Greek tragedy to Absurdism, and make up new ones when we choose.

There are more important issues to be examined vis-a-vis the NYFF. The first question we have to ask is: is the work good? Again judging from an arbitrary sample, it must be said that some of it is to real theater as plastic beads are to pearls.

If quality is lacking, could the fringe be contributing to the theater in another way? Consider: hundreds of people every day were attending the theater casually—choosing brief productions with the same whimsy with which they might order at a tapas bar. For two glorious weeks, theater was woven into our day. No seventy-five dollar tickets, no dinner first, no celebrities distorting the stage picture with personal fame. If the audience were disappointed, they crossed the street and tried again. COULD THIS BE AMERICA?

We have to thank the NYFF for creating, however briefly, theater that we could take for granted. In every epoch that's produced brilliant theater, theater was firstly woven into the fabric of society—only secondly were there masterpieces. We must have more theater before we can have better theater. Europeans gorged themselves on melodrama before they feasted on Ibsen.

As for the quality issue: there's no excuse for the slipshod quality of some of the work. But the fact is that it takes a torrent of fringe kitsch to produce a pearl. Consider a single example: the NYFF gave us this year a production of two plays by W.B. Yeats. This is what the fringe is for—not just for the avant-garde, but for all theater that could not otherwise meet the demands of stage life. Can you imagine a production of PURGATORY under other circumstances? Even if the scripts were not well produced (and they were), we at least had the chance to decide for ourselves if these blasted "masterpieces" are stageworthy.

And so I find myself applauding a largely second-rate series. Oh but this is wondrous strange!

Steve Capra

# PLEASURE ISLAND

Dr. Noon  
Mr. Hip  
The Mute Cat  
The Raccoon-Dog  
Mrs. Horny  
Mr. Jack Sock

(MRS. HORNY AND MR. JACK SO-CK. SOCK LOOKS STRAIGHT AHEAD AS HORNY WHISPERS IN HIS EAR:)

MRS HORNY: Pardon. Pardon. Ex-cusez-moi. Je suis desolee. Je suis des-olee. Je m'excuse. Excusez-moi. Je vous en prie, excusez-moi. (PAUSE) Pardon. Pardon. (SHE CONTINUES AS:)

(DR. NOON ENTERS)

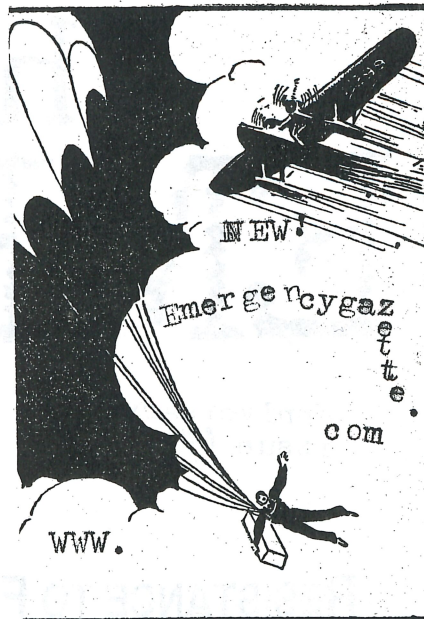
DR. NOON: Relentless! Flip the switch Charlie! Somebody turn off that goddamned music! (CHAOS BREAKS OUT)

(CREATURES ARE RUNNING ALL OVER THE PLACE. A FEW ARE BLOWING HORNS. SOME ARE SCREAMING "Money! Money!" ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THEY SCREAM IN HORROR OR DELIGHT. RACCOONS CHASE DOGS AND TRY TO FUCK THEM, TO GET A FIRM HOLD ON THEM SO THEY CAN DO THEIR WILD BUSINESS. OVER A LO-UDSPEAKER, WE HEAR:)

VOICE: Be quiet. Don't move too much. Be the toad. Be the earthworm. Slow down your heartbeat, because we'll be here a while.

(THE "VOICE" HAS APPEARED. IT IS THE MUTE CAT, WITH A MICRO-PHONE. HE IS TALKING TO US.)

Yelena Gluzman



## Friends:

We have been here one whole year. Now we're broke. We need a xerox machine. Can you help?

Sincere as always,

the Lumieres,  
Louis & Auguste

# LISTINGS

## HENSON INTERNAT'L FESTIVAL OF PUPPET THEATER

Some of the most exciting theater in NYC. EVERYDAY USES FOR SIGHT: NOS. 3 AND 7

Dan Hurlin, music by Dan Froot and Guy Klucevsek. Contains nudity, thankfully. 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. PS122. Sept 15,16,22,23 at 10:30. \$17,\$13. AND LOTS MORE: call 212-279-4200 or visit www.hensonfest.org for info.

## AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES

Rinde Eckert. Aug 30-Oct 1, Tues-Sats at 8pm, Sun at 4pm. 45 Bleeker Theater, Bleeker & 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.

## CABARET RE-VOLTAIRE

DADAnewyorkDADAnynyDADA. Sept 15 - Oct 1, Fri-Sun at 8:30. Theater For a New City, 155 1st Ave., 254-1109. \$10.

## CONTEMPORARY FRENCH ART & PERFORMANCE SERIES

For festival info: www.simonsays.org. SHATTERED BOXES

Ibrahim Quraishi & Compagnie Faim de Siècle. A multimedia adaptation of Heiner Müller's MEDEAMATERIAL. Kitchen, 512 W.19th St., 255-5793. Sept 14-16, Thu-Sat, & 20-23, Wed-Sat, 10pm. \$20

## ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

Sun Sept 17  
HARRY SMITH'S short pieces at 7pm and hour-long "No 12: Heaven and Earth Magic" at 8:45. Sat Sept 23  
JACK SMITH'S "Scotch Tape" and "Flaming Creatures" at 5:30. Anthology Film Archives, 32 2nd Ave, 505-5181.

The EMERGENCY gazette seeks unusual writing about unusual events, acts [natural & unnatural], films, and experiments in opinion, form, love, the treacherous terrain of the mind. Send all post to: Lumiere Bros. eds. 733 Amsterdam Ave. #21H, NYC, 10025

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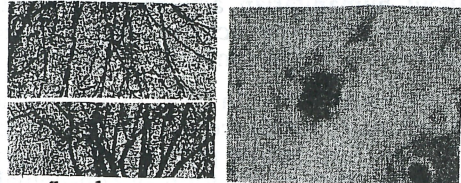
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- °Anthology Film Archives °Galapagos
- °Labyrinth Bookstore °L Cafe
- °The Read °Collective:Unconscious

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