We are invited to a space where you and I will react on a personal level to performative art. Where you and I are not censored by the Editor of conventional reviews. Where we can talk about theater past the superficial event. You and I should not pass up the opportunity, we should exploit the freedom of this conversation. EMERGENCY requires your reactions to what you've seen, your thoughts about making or watching performative art, historical movement/s, your manifestos, essays, dialogues with friends and colleagues, raw footage of ideas. The gazette also reserves a special section for <u>impossible theater</u>: projected theatres of the mind, of the imagination, of tomorrow and yesteryear, of not now and never. Most importantly, send us hasty news of your productions, events, collaborations, open rehearsals, guerilla performances, so that you and I may veni and vidi.

Gazette No.3

Send submissions, reviews and listing information to:

Bros. Lumiere, eds.

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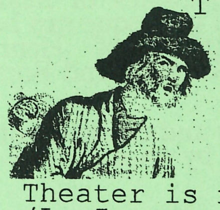
EMERGENCY

* a gazette of theater matters ***

IMPOSSIBLE THEATER



THE CELLPHONY

Theater is not a dialogue (L. Zeygman, EMERGENCY No.1). But discoursing via supermodern technology is a dialogue. Thus the cellular phone play, a play that is part play and part symphony, or cellphony.

The actors upon stage begin some worn-out common play. Any play. It doesn't matter which play. "Medea," for god's sake.

Suddenly, a cellular phone in the audience rings its familiar ring. Owner of phone is mortified, humiliated, hisses into phone: 'I'm at a play.' But the person on the other end: she is adamant, hysterical. 'You are not!' she screams. 'You're with that-'

The man can barely contain his horror. Everyone is staring at him. What shall he do? He insists, 'I am watching Medea,' and holds up the receiver to catch the sounds of acting. The actors resume their Medea, the man is vindicated, everyone is pleased.

But wait! Another phone is ringing. And another. A cacophony, a cellphony. People buying, selling, beseeching: all the pathos of cellphony. Audience members calling one another. Upon stage, Jason's phone rings. The actors are in on it! Jason furious. 'You've caught me at a terrible time.' Medea outraged, eats phone.

An old trick, the audience-is-the-actor trick? Your mother's an old trick!

Nothing's old that employs the newest technology. People checking their email over their cell phones; surfing the internet; making love. People playing soccer on their cell phones! Everywhere the joyous timbre of the cell phone ringing! A symphony? A cellphony.

At the conclusion of play, actors bloody audience with their hands.

Keith Gessen

A director was talking about a play he directed. He said, "I wanted to have a sort-of mad feeling about that scene, and I knew that we should throw in some surrealist elements." This "throwing in," using a style or historical form as a pinch of spice, is actually a throwing away of any real meaning or thought. It is lazy and insidious, and it infects the theater with a deadly complacency.

One of the worst things I ever did was in math class. The professor would introduce a formula—$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, let's say—and, after demonstrating how it is used to solve the silly made-up math problems, he would eagerly offer to derive the formula. I, in the back of the class, would quietly groan and immediately disconnect. I was not interested in where the damn formula came from, the proof of its truth; lazy, lazy, lazy, I just wanted to know how to do the problem, how to get through the class, how to use the formula.

At this moment, I am sitting at a computer. In my apartment, and in this city, I am surrounded by machines and buildings and cars and car alarms. All these things are constructed using the formulas I refused to understand and, therefore, I am surrounded by a world of mysterious, inaccessible objects. All these things, the computers and elevators and car alarms, are for me nothing more than their most obvious function. Because of my lack of understanding of the principles by which they are made, they are empty objects, meaning nothing and cluttering my world.

A theater director can decide to spice up his production with a little Butoh. Maybe he does not take into account the social, economic and spiritual state of the post-WWII founders of Butoh, nor the fact that Butoh movement developed as a reaction to the horrific experiences of Japanese bombing victims. This hypothetical (or, at least, anonymous) director thinks that Butoh movement looks cool, that it is a good vehicle for Ophelia's mad scene, and he uses it to connote her madness. He throws away the origins of the form and, with it, discards its potential for meaning. The production is left with an empty form, a borrowed gesture that, at best, fulfills a single, most obvious function (to evoke a feeling of madness, say), but remains superficial, inert, and fake.

This is a big deal. Not only is a pinch of surrealism or a dab of Butoh cheap and empty, it is an enormous disrespect to the lives and experiences which necessitated the form's development. More importantly, this type of facile borrowing only solidifies an already stagnant collection of cliches and simplistic definitions.

Our world is built upon the math formulas of my adolescence as much as it is built on the forms and images of surrealism and Butoh. These forms, and the images, behaviors, and conventions that they produce, dictate how we live. When the derivations and origins of both forms and formulas are not investigated, the result is the senseless two-dimensional clutter that slowly suffocates us.

Luna Zeygman

If you believe, as we do, that you cannot go on without our little gazette, please rest assured; you can always find EMERGENCY at the following Manhattan locations:

* St. Mark's Bookstore
* The Pink Pony
* The Drama Bookshop
* St. Mark's Church
* Applause Bookstore
* KGB Lounge
* Labyrinth Bookstore

If you'd like to add your bookstore, cafe or arts organization to this list, please contact us right away.

To receive EMERGENCY at your doorstop, send a check for $15, payable to M. Yankelevich, for a year-long subscription.

LISTINGS

ONE SECOND HAND
Sasha Pepelyaev's Kinetic Theatre from Russia: Movement theatre meets with the music of celebrated minimalist composer Alexey Aigi, and texts by Russian conceptualist poet Lev Rubinstein and postmodern hero Alain Robbe-Grillet. Dance Theater Workshop, 219 W 19th St, 924-0077. Oct13-15 (Wed-Fri) at 8pm, Oct16 (Sat) at 3pm. $15.

PERFORMANCE ART MINIFEST
Sho Kazakura, Seiji Shimoda, Mamiko Kawabata, Kazuhiro Nishijia, Smelly. Japan Society, 333 E 47th St., 832-1155. Oct 15 & 16 at 8pm. $12.

AVANT-GARDE-ARAMA
Spending too much time with the bourgeoisie? Catch up on your monthly dose of avantism at PS122's mini-fest of performance, theater & film. Oct 15&16, 8:30. PS122, 477-5288, $12.

LIFE IS A DREAM
Royal Lyceum Theater stages Calderon's classic. Catalan director Calixto Bieito. In English. Oct 12-16 7:30 & Oct 17 at 3 BAM, 718-636-4100. $20-$50.

ODIN THEATER, COPENHAGEN
Danish theater company, founded in 1964 by Eugenio Barba, perform six works in rep. Oct 14th-31st. La MaMa, 74A E 4th St., 475-7710. $10-$20.

HAUTNAH
Felix Ruckert choreographs a one-on-one, choose-your-own-dancer café adventure. Oct 20-24th, 26–30th, 7-11pm ongoing event. Joyce Soho, 155 Mercer, 431-9233. $10 cover includes 2 drinks. Any further ticket price is negotiated between you & your individual performer.

OPERATION: ORFEO
Danish company Hotel Pro Forma's US debut. Music by Cage, Holten, Gluck. Oct. 20, 22, 23 at 7:30. BAM, 718-636-4100. $15-$30. BAMdialogue with director: Oct 22 at 6.

KRYSZTOF KNITTEL & JOHN KING: HEART PIECE
Heiner Müller. A Double Opera. Poland/US collaboration. The Kitchen. Oct 20-23 (Wed-Sat) at 8pm, $20. Post-performance discussion: Oct 21.

ALSO VIVIANE
Belgian/German collaboration by Viviane De Muynck & Jan Lauwers, presenting the internal world of Joyce's Molly Bloom. Oct 22nd & 23rd at 11pm. PS122, 477-5288, $15.

TEN NIGHTS IN A BAR ROOM
A temperance play directed by Ian Hill. Mon-Wed at 8, thru Oct 20. NADA, 167 Ludlow St., 420-1466. $12.

CZECH PUPPETRY MINIFEST
Amazing Czech puppetry, for adults & kids. Four special events including TWELVE IRON SANDALS: Oct 14-17, 21, 23, 24, 28, 30, 31 at 7pm. Bohemian National Hall, 321 E. 73rd St. (between 1st /2nd) 631-3518. $15, $8 under twelve.

GREENLAND Y2K
Animation, video and digital effects, and a Y2K bug. Susanna Speier wrote and performs. David Cote directs. Fri and Sat at 10:30pm, thru Nov. 6. HERE 145 6th Ave., 647-0202, $12.

TULPA
A religious figure with surprising powers prepares to meet her destiny. David Herskovits directs Todd Alcott's text. Tue–Sun at 8pm, through Nov 20th. HERE, 145 6th Ave., 647-0202, $12-15.

NORTH ATLANTIC
The Wooster Group's latest resurrection. Tue-Sun at 8pm, thru Nov 21st. 33 Wooster St., 966-3651. $25.

CHARLIE VICTOR ROMEO
Text taken from "black box" cockpit voice recorder transcripts of six major airline emergencies. Oct 21-23, 28, 30; Nov 4-6, 11-13, 18, 19 at 8pm. Collective: Unconscious. 145 Ludlow St. 254-5277. $10, $7 w/invite

SHOCKHEADED PETER
Upscale "junk opera theater," based on Hoffman's fairy tales. From UK. Thu-Sun, call for times. The New Victory Theater, 330 W.42nd St., 239-6200. $25.

THE TIGER LILLIES
British cabaret band, who "fuse the spirit of punk with the passion of chanson." Catch them here, in between their gig at SHOCKHEADED PETER. Oct 18th & 25th at 8:30. PS122, 477-5288, $15.

SHOWY LADY SLIPPER

1999 OBIE-winner Richard Maxwell's newest, about American girls. Oct 14-17, 21-24, 28-31, Nov 4-7, Nov11-14 at 7:30. PS122, 150 1st Ave., 477-5288. $15.

THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN

Belgian choreographer Grace Ellen Barkey does Bartok's piece as a funky Chinese opera. Internat'l cast. Oct 21-24 at 8:30. PS122, 477-5288, $15.

GENESIS P-ORRIDGE

Once founder of COUM Transmissions/ Throbbing Gristle/Psychic TV. This performance artist crucified himself on stage, & pioneered industrial and cut-up music. Student of Gysin and Burroughs. Secret history of art & ideas embodied. Oct 22. Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St. 219-3006 for exact time and tickets.

VOICES

Dutch company Theatergroep Hollandia presents a one-man show based on text by Passolini. Oct 26-30 at 8:30, Oct 31 at 3pm. PS122, 477-5288, $20.

HOUDINI THE GREAT

"A street opera for four singers and six musicians." Composer Andy Pape. Part of the Danish Wave Festival. Oct 29, 30 at 8pm, 31st at 3pm. Miller Theater, 854-1633. $25.

THE SITI COMPANY

The SITI Company teaches Suzuki Method and Viewpoints "drop-in" classes every Wednesday night, thru Nov 15th. The SITI Studio, 10 E.1st Ave., 477-1469. $12 for 1 class, $20 for both.

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Your fave SITI stars present a staged reading of Orson Welles' infamous radio play. Co-directed by Anne Bogart and Darron L. West. Oct 30 at 8pm and 10pm. The Laurie Beachman Theater. 407 W. 42nd St., 279-4200. $20.

DISTINGUISHED BEAUTY ELECTRA

Last year, Jenny Schwartz adapted and directed an exquisite Iphiginia. Now, Schwartz is back with the Electra story. Oct 27-30th. Horace Mann Theater, 120th & B'way. 854-3859. $10/$5 students.

L E T T E R S

To whom it may concern,

I was unfortunate enough to come across your recent issue of EMERGENCY on one of my sojourns to the Drama Bookshop. As a regular attendant of the best of the New York theater I must say that I hope with all my heart that your house lights never dim while I am in the audience. I cannot imagine the dismal display that would ensue. Such issues as "intentionality" and "source" will never create great theater. All this "manifesto" claptrap is a poorly disguised attack on decent, moral theatricals. I, for one, am not at all bewitched by your highbrow posturings.

"Impossible Theater," what on earth can that mean? What is desirable about that? Are Gilbert and Sullivan "impossible"? I should say not (difficult perhaps—such delightfully fast little songs they have), but certainly not impossible. And Shakespeare? Once you get the proper costumes you are halfway there. Just write very thorough program notes and you're sure to have a hit.

Please, don't try to make the theater difficult. Theater should be about the wonder and whimsy of our daily lives. Nothing more. It should be light, enjoyable, and forgettable. It should present itself as the mirror of all that is good in our world, so that we may strive to emulate its high ideals. If it must be tragic (as we all know life can sometimes be) then it should be redemptively so. As a good Christian, I am aware that there are evil forces at hand looking to undermine us at every turn—but the theater should never, ever, in any way, present these motivations. Theater is about laughing and crying for all the right reasons. Theater should, above all, be emotional—but with temperance. Actors should try to present the beauty and pathos of characters such as Robin Williams' Patch Adams. (Why hasn't Patch Adams been done on the New York stage?) We need more balloons in the theater. What can it profit us to witness such unrivalled horrors as Hedwig and the Angry Inch? (I shudder even to type it!) I can only thank our Lord for the Irish. At least their beautiful and harmless plays can still pull my heartstrings in all the right directions. These Irish playwrights are the consummate artists. I know upon entering the theater that I will have a good tweed-filled story to listen to, and that I will have several appropriate opportunities to laugh and cry throughout the evening. For this alone I can forgive them their drinking.

Judging from what I was able to read of your little "mission," I am quite certain that your idea of theater is dark. Dark, dark, dark. I imagine nakedness, and lewd displays of sexuality amidst unfeeling social outcasts. Well, that is just not the sort of world we live in. Things are pretty darn good down here on planet earth, and I will not stand idly by while you and your ilk attempt to drag us all into the muck of your depraved little scenarios.

Dangerous—that is what your repellent little gazette is: dangerous. Manifestos, utterances, essays, impossible theater... etc. This is all a bunch of idle excuse-making for overly zealous dilettantes. And don't think for a moment that I failed to notice the surnames of your onerous collective: Zeygman, Yankelevich, Gluzman, and Marinovic. Obviously a cabal of Eastern European social agitators here to fulfill some sinister agenda. Well you have shown your hand. In case you did not know, all real Americans changed their names at Ellis Island.

I am sending a carbon of this letter, along with a copy of your publication to our fine mayor. He may have lost the battle in Brooklyn, but the war is quite obviously not over yet.

Yours faithfully,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

P.S. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words. Proverbs,15:26

L I S T I N G S
F I L M

CINEMA FROM NEW EUROPE

Indie films, digital video, cult horrors from many European filmmakers. Call for details. BAM Rose Cinema, 718-636-4157, www.bam.org. $8.50/$5 students.

FILMS AT ANTHOLOGY

MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA*
Dziga Vertov, 1929. Sat, Oct 16, 5:30.
JIRI MENZEL—A RETROSPECTIVE
The Czech director appears in person at
CLOSELY WATCHED TRAINS
Thursday, Oct. 21, 7pm.
FILMS OF MARIE MENKEN!!!
Rare experimental 50s-60s film artist.
Two Programs: Oct. 22 and 23, 8 & 9:30
$8/$7 *Essential Cinema/$5 Students
Anthology Film Archives, 2nd & 2nd, 505-5110

EXPERIMENTAL FILM AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

The program of 1950's film includes:
Saturday, Oct 16:
Noon: DANCING&THE STREETS
Shirley Clarke, Maya Deren, etc.;
2PM: IN THE CITIES (archit of NY)
includes Francis Thompson, a rare screening of Sidney Peterson's Architectural Millinery (1954), William Klein
4PM: IN THE STREETS (of NewYork)
4 films by Rudy Burkhardt&Joseph Cornell!!
Larry Jordan, Ken Jacobs, Pennebaker.
Thursday Oct 21, 6PM:
PULL MY DAISY, Robert Frank!!
SHADOWS, John Cassavetes
The 1960's program starts Oct 29th, and runs through Dec 5th. 570-3676.
Whitney Museum, Madison & 75th St.

GODARD AT THE YWCA

WEEKEND
Le fin de cinema. Oct 16, 17 at 4pm.
FIRST NAME: CARMEN
Girl w/gun, 1983. Oct. 23, 24 at 4pm.
YWCA, 735-9717. $7.

HOU HSIAO-HSIEN

The films of the Taiwanese director. Thru Oct 27th. Walter Reade Theater, 875-5600, $8.50.

FREAK THEATER

Freak theater resides at the intersection between Utopian Theater and Theater as Metaphor. It is not a theatrical project that exceeds physical possibilities of staging, nor is it a mere figure of speech. Freak theater exceeds the conventional idea of theater as a spectacle. It retains some essential aspects of theater, while everything else is changed, distorted, mutated. While not being theater itself, freak theater may preserve, say, theatrical gesture, spatial relations, or theatrical perception. It is theater that emerges where least expected and when least wanted.

Freak theater is theater produced by non-theatrical means. Freak theater is not a monster theater, a distortion of a conventional proscenium theater. Freak theater is not opposed to mainstream theater, avant-garde theater, or experimental performance. Freak theater is immune to the age-old theater/anti-theater controversy. Freak theater is theater fitted to survive in a hostile environment: it flourishes where conventional theater perishes. It is a desert plant, a strange entity that exists not despite the impossibility of existence, but because of the impossibility of existence. That is why, historically, freak theater preserved the idea of theater when it was physically eradicated. In that sense, we can say that freak theater is the theater itself; it is a fundamental theater.

The following are certain aspects and examples of the freak theater:

1. Freak theater is characterized by the absolute impossibility of the project, which is at the same time inseparable from its own theatricality. However, the project doesn't have to constitute a theatrical performance as such. Examples of this theatrical non-theater of pure impossibility can be found in Raymond Roussel's novel "Locus Solus".

2. Often, freak theater is characterized by its magnitude. The very proportions of the work dwarf any known theatrical form. Normally, work of such magnitude would overpower the author himself. However, through a process of sublimation it becomes the attribute of the author's divine power. Instead of being an all-powerful and invisible presence, the author becomes the actor, agent, within the work. The most accomplished examples of the freak theater of great magnitude are the lifelong projects of the art-brut artists such as Adolf Wolfli and Henry Darger.

3. Freak theater often crystallizes around a single organizing idea. This idea has the power to distort, restructure, and reorganize the entire experiential reality. In other words, freak theater is characterized by strong conceptual and totalizing impulses. They are manifested in hermetic images such as Kafka's "Great Nature Theater of Oklahoma", in projects that unify eschatology and art such as Scriabin's planet-preserving theater, or pragmatic inventions such as Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre.

4. Freak theater frequently appears as an acheiropoetic image: it is not a product of conscious and sustained artistic effort, but an event that appears by its own design. If it is not man-made, then it has to be man-perceived: freak theater is a theater of perception, and it is often achieved through disciplines and procedures of alteration of perception. Surrealism explored certain techniques of observing (not making!) freak theater. Breton's "Nadja" is one instance of simultaneous uncovering and destruction of a freak theater. Artaud's Tarahumara cycle is an example of recording freak theater through perception. It also offers a paradigm for a theater of mutual dependence of performance and spectator, where the observer creates the performance through perception.

5. Freak theater borders on the grotesque in its original meaning: an image in which the human body is commingled with its surroundings. Through its cavities the body opens towards its surroundings and intermingles with animals, plants, and inanimate objects. This body is often fragmented, and it becomes a part of a fragmentary world, a world-collage. Examples of freak theater as a radical grotesque can be found in the prose of Henri Michaux, Daniil Kharms, and Bora Cosic.

(This list of aspects and examples of the freak theater is by no means exhaustive).

Branislav Jakovljevic

APPENDIX TO FREAK THEATER

Freak theater is not:

1. A freak show, side show, medicine show, or a dime museum
2. Neither Brecht's "Street Scene" nor Evreinov's "Theater for Oneself"
3. Environmental theater
4. Performance art experiments with endurance
5. S&M parlors
6. Science fiction
7. Gothic story
8. Film noir

L I S T I N G S
F R E E

D.U.M.B.O. ARTS CENTER

A 2-day festival in Brooklyn's most intriguing neighborhood: Down Under Manhattan Bridge Overpass. Performances include NaCl's ASPHYXIA AND OTHER PROMISES, 3:30–4:30pm. Oct 16&17, 2-6pm. 69 Washington St. 718-624-3772. FREE.

TOY THEATER

NYU's Dept. of Performance Studies presents 10 toy theater performances, as part of a Toy Theater Workshop. Oct 17 at 7pm. NYU, 721 B'way, 6th Floor, Performance Studies Studio. FREE.

LORCA ETC.

Columbia grad. directors present:
Lorca's THE LOVE OF DON PERLIMPLIN FOR BELISA IN THE GARDEN. Oct 13 & 14 at 8pm.
BLOOD PACT
by Valle-Inclan. Oct 13 at 7pm.
BUSTER KEATON'S OUTING
by Lorca. Oct 14 at 7pm.
Schapiro Hall, 615 115th St., 854-3408, FREE.

We are now accepting applications from fine cafes and bookshops that would like to advertise in this space.

EMERGENCY is a production of the Ugly Duckling Presse, singular books and zines, ugly.duckling@pobox.com
EMERGENCY, 733 Amsterdam Avenue, Apt.#21H, New York City, New York, 10025 emergency@notnow.com