

EMERGENCY

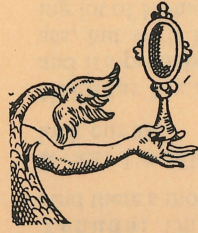
fed on meat

March 14, 2002

issue #38

GAZETTE

towards the anxious object



A + A = A

1 + 1 = 1 or 3 depending on the weather and the Dow Jones index
cut + knife = pain

No narrative.

No collage either.

How to say something differently from the traditional way of putting two things next to each other. How to escape this flatness.

You can allude to that which is your object. You can constantly go around it, like in sex, you know what I mean. You should be silent about this object, because it's something that cannot be said. And language is only interesting in this respect:

How does it say that which cannot be said with language

and said
is already predigested for you
spoken
too easy

You can ask questions about this object, and it will ask you a question in response, the answer implied is what you are looking for: the anxious object.

What does it mean to have no narrative? To have death first, and then jealousy; just shuffling the cards won't do. This doesn't mean getting out of the two-dimensional prison. We are not assembling beads on a transparent string.

No montage either, Mr. Eisenstein, right though you may be about cut + knife. Leave this affair to hieroglyphs, that's language too. In montage, $x + y$ is always z , and that's too conceptual. What happens next is that the reader/viewer will still try to squeeze the image into a narrative of some sort. That's all he knows, he and his uncritical mind.

We are not even going to surprise him; this is fairly easy too. We should try to go beyond that. We are not concerned with the one who is concerned with the story. What we want to do is make a space

where language can play, simply to create, as Donald Barthelme would have it, certain kinds of sentences—that's all. The layered nets of context deprive the sign of multiplicity. Whereas the word at play reaches out to all its possible meanings and engages new relationships. Theater is a model of such an environment, where $1 + 1$ can be 3. For theater is not the mind where everything is set in motion by means of hidden but predictable working mechanisms. In theater all connections and disconnects are visible.

[Stein says: you can make a story out of anything, the story is only interesting if you like to tell or to hear a story. But what is happening? And how do we know what we know? How is meaning created and perceived? I would like to make the relationship between word, gesture, sound, light, and movement the essence of what is happening. The only way to focus on this relationship is to ruin it, to negate it, to make it visible, not habit. To make it scream at you. The destruction of acquired relationship between word or gesture and the signified brings the necessary freedom, creating room for variable meanings. Theoretically, a play should be about physicality, about saying or comprehending text, about the space on stage, about the nature of repetition and its impossibility, about the layers of now. Theater is a product of the viewer rather than playwright, director, actor. I would like to give the audience a chance to choose the end of the play, or the order in which the scenes are played. This will allow me to side-step narration, to side-step choices, the inadvertent imposition of meaning on the viewer, to avoid $A + B$. This will only leave me with simple demonstration of a landscape. No verbs, only nouns. I would like to make the play happen to me.]

Of course, after all, when you think about it, all that is possible in art so far is $A + B$. The only process we know is summing up. Unavoidable. Fine.

But then think about poetry. By means of the given, it points to something else, unsaid or unspeakable. Yet it stubbornly seeks to create an autonomous zone where the word can be free, to transcend the flatness of $A + B$. Whatever is happening in the poem is happening now, in real time. And that's what we want of language. If you can't avoid putting two things together and trying to sum them up in order to see what the child will look like, have the child right there, in-between A and B, in-between breath and breath—not a shock, not a revelation, but a surf of thinking being washed by a wave from all sides, every time a new wave, so that $A + B$ can mean different things at different times of the day. That thing in-between thinking is the anxious object.

Inna Giter

Inna Giter is directing the upcoming Paperless Book production of SNOW WHITE, adapted from Donald Barthelme's novel. "Towards The Anxious Object" was written while working on this play. See details in LISTINGS.

REVUE D'HISTOIRE DU THÉÂTRE

On March 12th, 2002, Yelena Gluzman interviewed some of the brothers and sisters who comprise The National Theater of The United States of America, a theater company in residence at chashama. Amid the sawdust and wet paint of their rapidly developing set, the company spoke of their history, their philosophy, and their upcoming show PLACEBO SUNRISE: EPISODE 17 OF OUR FATHERS GARVEY & SUPERPANTS\$. See LISTINGS for show info.

Yehuda Duenyas: Ryan and I collaborated on a piece two summers ago, the window piece that you guys wrote an article about [in EMERGENCY #20].

It had no text. All we had was this window [a large store front window at 135 42nd Street], and the question of what to do with it. Actually, it started when Anita [Durst, Artistic Director of chashama] wanted me to direct something in the window five months earlier. And I was trying to stage something in the window, but I found it really boring because I didn't understand. I felt that the relationship of the audience just walking down the street, and looking at something through the window was pretty boring. We put it away for a while, and then Ryan and I were sitting in the window one day, sitting inside the window looking out at the street, thinking of ideas. And we thought, "Wow, what if the audience was in the window?"

Jesse Hawley: That was also a first experiment with having "a cast of thousands."

Yehuda: Yeah, we had like forty people in that piece. Plus the variable...I mean, nineteen people sat in the window looking out at the street. But it was happening everywhere: across the street, cabs pulling up. So the public was a huge variable in the piece. That was exactly what I wanted to experiment with. I didn't know what would happen; that was fun. And then we had a story to go with it, where these guys come in and they try to sell the audience. And we didn't know what would happen. We don't know; we have no idea.

Ryan Bronz: Even when we are in a more enclosed space, we are always concerned with risk. In PLACEBO SUNRISE we're playing with different elements that we never played with before. Physically—I don't want to give anything away—but you know, trap doors, stunts...*(laughter)*

Jesse: And also, very important is the relationship with the audience. Like, for this piece, we thought a lot about ticket prices. We like to place the audience in a certain direction as soon as they walk in, not just "Why don't you sit down and watch the show." They have a role in it, whether they're in the window or sitting in the nosebleed seats.

Yehuda: Right, everyone in the room is implicated in some way, everyone is an active player in the piece.

Jesse: We've always spoken about it: Why do it?

Yehuda: Why is the audience going to come to see this?

Jesse: Why do it now? Why do it in this space?

Yehuda: In hors-la, I think that really broke through. hors-la was this piece we did in the basement of 111 West 42nd Street. In pitch, pitch black, the audience had to find their way to a teeny light. That was the way you entered into the piece.

I don't know. We've tried to figure out ways to describe it, but it looks terrible on paper, like "A Total Theatrical Environment," or like "A Complete Experience," or something like that. But it's an experience where you walk into a place and you actually have to use an instinct, or you have to feel around in the dark or something.

James Stanley: With these last two pieces, we've tried to embrace the idea of bringing people into a theater, to make it a ride. It's a ride. You come down off 42nd Street, surrounded by some fancy places and you walk into a deli or a shoe store. You're in a theater, but it's sort of like a hypertheater. And one of the things we're going for is to create a club of sorts, in which we are all the hosts and they are all the guests, where everybody gets treated like a VIP, and the cheap seats are also amazing seats. It's embracing that idea of theater, making someone really excited to go to the theater. I think one of the references we were using for the last GARVEY & SUPERPANTS\$ was "Remember back before we were born? When it was really exciting to go to the theater?"

Ryan: We want to bring that back. So that it's not a chore and it's not because your uncle got you tickets or it's not because a star is in it, or it's the thing to see, because everyone's got to go see *The Producers*. It's like they want to come like they're going to a rock concert.

continued. VERSO.

EMERGENCY GAZETTE

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VERSO: What? To Do!

BIGGEST LOVE ON BACK!

Biggest Love



The Bomb

The Internat'l WOW Company
Directed by Josh Fox
Clemente Soto Velez. Until March 17.

Everything about this play is big. There are huge crowd scenes, tender duets, dance breaks, vast naked sequences, avant-garde symbolist props, historical recreations, insane diatribes, soap opera plots, thirty-five actors and hundreds of costumes, along with plenty of interesting sidebars, many of which could be developed into complete plays. Written by the cast, the script is full of many more surprising, quirky moments of sudden depth than a single playwright usually generates.

Like the Bible, THE BOMB is a dense and tangled collage of styles, voices, images, references, and arguments. The show runs for three hours, rolling through climax after climax, gathering resonance without following any clear path. Also like the Bible, it is composed of two Acts but many more chapters, distinct enough from one another that they deserve to be called Books. The Book of the Southern Township. The Book of the French Brothel. The Book of Eastern European Jewry. The Book of Oppenheimer. End of the Old Testament. Intermision. In this scheme, 9/11 takes the central place of Jesus, its bloody sacrifice opening the door to the New Testament—right on through Revelations.



Yehuda: I don't feel like we answered your initial question, though.

Yelena: That's okay.

Yehuda: I want to try to answer. It was the question of what is it we need to make theater. What physically do we need?

Jesse: Money? (laughter)

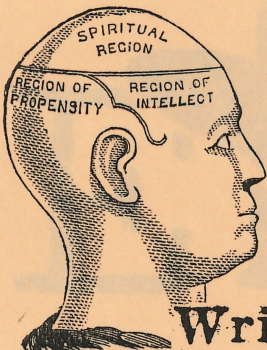
Yelena: How much money do you need?

Jesse: Well, I think zero and I think we've done it on zero and we've done it with trash and our own hard-earned dollars and—

Yehuda: So that's not zero. (laughter)

Jesse: It is zero! That's the problem! No, I think in addition to that we keep challenging ourselves; if someone has an idea that "Oh my god we've got to have this guy and he flies in at the end and then there's a pool and then there's a big explosion and the Civil War happens!" and, at this point, you know what, fuck it. We're going to find a way to do the whole civil war. So in that way yeah, we're looking for more money but, at the same time, we'll do it if we don't have any money.

Yehuda: Ryan brought up a really interesting question the other day that I've been thinking about for a while which was, we're building this set and we're all broke, but we've got a chunk of money that was donated to us for this show. And Ryan was like, why are we building all this shit, but we're still starving? We could have just done something in an empty space with some lights.



Write for our



Strangely, for all its ambition and size, there is a certain lack of imagination. For an "international" company, the perspective is decidedly American, with the final scenes focused primarily on four white businessmen as protagonists. Whether these every-men jump out of windows, have their bodies painted, get beat up, befriend homeless bums, or contemplate the benefits of terrorism, they remain, after the dust clears, the same Old Boys. They are meant to be transfigured, changed forever, but in the end, THE BOMB offers little in the way of real proposals for change.

In fact, the greatest tragedy of the imagination is the way in which sex is offered as the only possible antidote to the existential angst of contemporary life. It is clear that THE BOMB intends to offer love as the solution, but its construction of "love" is so weak that sex would be a better word. Is it love when the repressed small-town reverend smooches the blindfolded French girl at the town fair? Is it love when two strangers, traumatized by the events of 9/11, have a desperate fuck in a Manhattan apartment? In the penultimate scene, the "suitcase nuke" man harangues a small Japanese woman with a devastatingly intense rant on the fucked-up state of things. Throughout the scene, she remains as silent as the Afghan women who appear in the background, watching through their burkas. The scene ends with his declaration of love for her: "You have the most beautiful eyes..." For a moment I hoped that she would smack him for being such a self-involved psycho, or at least mutter "no speak English" and walk away. Instead, she leaps into his lap like a perfect silent geisha. Love conquers all.

Yehuda: I wonder what sound bite is going to be pulled from this?

Jesse: You are always worrying about the end result!

Yehuda: I think to make theater, we need us. We need an idea to start with. We need a space, because we like to create pieces specifically for specific spaces. So the word that came to mind when you asked was that we need "proximity" because something that really determines the way a show's made is the proximity between us and the audience. And how the two things face each other.

Ryan: And the proximity of the location. The fact that we're on 42nd Street really influenced the last piece. So if it was in Brooklyn somewhere, it might have a completely different—

Yehuda: This building (125 W. 42nd Street) was originally built as a Masonic temple. Now it's split between this part, which was a clothing store, and the Fresco Tortillas next door.

Jesse: So it's all about tacos—

Yehuda: It's about tacos and Masons. No, I wanted to create the feeling that you're walking into—not a temple, but a place of, not worship, but somewhere that makes you... I don't know, I can't describe anything that I think.

Jesse: Okay, but another thing that you were talking about that keeps coming up is that we're doing this in NY, we're not doing this in Alaska or wherever. So there are ideas that come out of this particular place and time.

Yelena: So what's the relationship of a "national theater" to what you guys are making?

Yehuda: Our lawyers asked us the same question.

Jesse: Well besides being the finest theater company in the nation—

Ryan: And we will take on any other theater company! (laughter) We were actually thinking of having—they do this in high schools—we were thinking

THE BOMB's frequent physical nakedness is only rarely complemented by emotional nakedness. For the most part, the wild atmosphere of the show is too romantic to make room for genuine intimacy. Instead, there's just sex, lots and lots of sex. When the bomb drops, have sex. When the terrorists win, have sex. When you can't deal with the reality of suffering—have sex. Have sex because it cures loneliness. Have sex because it will make you politically aware. Have sex because it is a symbol of intimacy.

Of course, what is missing from this portrait of love is everything non-sexual. Even homosexual sex gets some airtime, but non-sexual love simply has no place. There are no families, no siblings, not even any real friends. All intimacy is sexual. Most importantly, there is no vision of a community of love, and therefore no possibility to suggest the powers of resistance that can come out of strong communities. There are no real relationships, just a kind of general loneliness: "I want a boyfriend! I want a girlfriend!"—as if that were a radical proposition for difficult times.

Fox has spoken harshly of the dispassionate and cynical irony that dominates experimental theater such as Richard Maxwell's. I couldn't agree with him more, but I can't find any more powerful optimism in THE BOMB than the suggestion of a spontaneous orgy in a hair salon. Of course love is the answer, but it is not an easy answer, and the frantic cravings of trauma victims for a warm touch represent only the very beginning of love's truly radical possibilities.

Ben Spatz

to do³⁸

Mothers, Attention!

WARRIORS

A new media / live theatre experience by Michel Garneau, dir by Chris Cortez. Mar. 8-9, 13-17, 20-24, 27-31, April 3-6. The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St., www.warriorsnyc.com

MABOU MINES RESIDENT ARTIST SERIES

An annual laboratory for artists to experiment with performance ideas. Every weekend in March. TORONADA, 150 First Ave., 473-1991. www.maboumines.org

SNOW WHITE

A paperless zine adaptation of Donald Barthelme's empty novel. March 28-30, 8pm, Red Room, 85 4th St. 777-6088. \$8.

$\pi = 3.14 \dots$

The School of Hard Knocks Presents: A true story. The administrator's nightmare.. A comic choreographic mystery. Hiroshima/Belgrade/Sarajevo/Kabul/NYC March 14 - 31, at La Mama ETC 475-7710 - www.lamama.org

PLACEBO SUNRISE

The National Theater of The USA's Episode 17 of our fathers Garvey & Superpant\$—see interview verso. March 14-April 20, at chashama, 125 W. 42nd St. 726-3054 - \$3-20.

FANATICS

Ellen Beckerman & Co. based on the life of Galileo. March 7 - April 6. HERE, 145 6th Ave., 647-0202. \$15.

TALK

by Carl Hancock Rux directed by Marion McClinton March 29 - April 28. The Public Theater/NYSF www.thefoundrytheatre.org

TUMOR BRAINOWICZ reviewed on our web

site:

www.emergencymagazine.com

of having a "playoff" against another theater company, like a duel.

Jesse: But not a dance company.

Yehuda: And not a physical fight either because plenty of people could kick our asses.

Yelena: Like who could kick your ass?

Yehuda: Ahh...I bet like, I bet—

Jesse: I don't know actually—

Yehuda: I bet the Radiohole people could physically kick our asses—

Jesse: No, they'd be too drunk.

Yehuda: Oh yeah, they'd be drunk. And there's more of us.

Ryan: I would say the Rocketts could kick our ass.

Yehuda: My ass has been kicked once and it's probably pretty easy to kick my ass, but we'll fight anyone in the parking lot of Home Depot in Queens.

Jesse: We fought really hard for this name. The lawyer was like "You guys can't have that name. You're not a national theater." And we were like, "Well, why aren't we a national theater? We're technically from all over the nation and technically what we're saying has to do actually with being in America at this place and time. And why the hell not? Just because we're not going around touring in middle schools?"

Yehuda: We're not sanctioned by the government.

James: A lot of things that are sanctioned don't represent what we're interested in or what's good for us or what's good for a lot of people.

All: Yeah!

Yehuda: We don't know what we're talking about at all, by the way. (laughter)

Jesse: No, no, James does.

Yehuda: James does.

Jesse: James does. That's why we made him write the play.

THE FIRST DECADE

1970s experimental video from the archives of Electronic Arts Intermix. Videos by Bill Viola & Gary Hill, critiques by Ant Farm, Martha Rosler, & others. Sunday March 17, at 1, 3, and 5. Program through April 30. Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9480.

DADA newyork: CABARET RE-VOLTAIRE ENCORE

by Chris Tanner & Lance Cruce. April 5 - April 20. Theater for the New City, 155 1st Ave. at 10th St. 254-1109. \$10.

BENDER

Radiohole says "I might not get laid but I sure get fucked up!!" March 21 - March 31. The Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. (718) 599-5022. \$10 cash.

Lucinda Childs: SOLOS

A retrospective of her solo work, including collaborations with Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, Susan Sontag, and Sol LeWitt. April 3 - April 20. The Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street. 255-5793. \$25

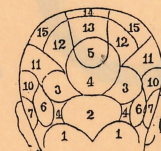
INSIDES/OUT & MELOTRAUMA

Anatomy and hospital corridors inspire these lovely dances. March 14, 21, & 28. WOW Café Theater, 59-61 E. 4th St. 777-4280. \$8

(also a free perf. of MELOTRAUMA: April 1 at Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Square South, 539-2611)

THE BOMB

Reviewed in this issue. Ends March 17, 8 pm, also at 3 pm Sat. The Flamboyant Theater CSV, 107 Suffolk St. www.internationalwow.org. \$15.



Cook Book.