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EMERGENCY  
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Bros. Lumiere, eds.

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 limitation of conventional review etiquette. EMERGENCY seeks: essays, run-on reviews, manifestos, dialogues with colleagues, proposals for "impossible theater". Please send us word of open rehearsals, guerilla acts, collaborations, shows, and screenings.

GAZETTE No. 5

NOVEMBER 10, 1999

# EMERGENCY

there's no pretzel like show pretzel \*\*\*



Something is going on. I felt it three years ago, but doubted myself. Doesn't everyone think they are in the midst of a movement? Isn't everyone projecting their fin-de-siecle megalomania on the perfectly ordinary events of the day?

No no, I say. Something is going on, most definitely, and I see the proof falling from above and rising from below.

Looking above to the "establishment," it is clear that Broadway isn't it. The Great White Way does its own thing and, more than ever, stays out of everyone's way. The real New York establishment is comprised of institutions like BAM and Lincoln Center, both at one time "art projects." As an institution (which we all know to be inherently evil), BAM is amazingly responsive to what it perceives as the needs of New York's "intellectual" community.

Take, for an example, the recent NEW EUROPE '99 FESTIVAL, the brain child of Joseph Melillo (BAM), Mark Russell (PS 122) and David White (Dance Theater Workshop). The festival brought dozens of YOUNG European directors, choreographers and performers to New York, presenting work that most of us have no other chance to see.

This is not Pina Bausch. The artists (like Sasha Pepelyaev, Krzysztof Knittel, and Felix Ruckert) are not our old favorites; they brought work still steaming with the smell of chaos, just-grasped ideas thrown onto a stage and not given a chance to settle.

The best of the NEW EUROPE shows I saw was Grace Ellen Barkey's "THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN" at PS122, performed thrice in mid-October. The piece, based on the opera by Bartok, had four beautiful actor-dancers running around the stage, screaming at the light-operator/director, taking off limitless pairs of underpants, breaking into sublime synchronized dance at the most unlikely moments, and systematically destroying the title character, portrayed by a flabby non-dancer type getting on in years. Wack, wack, this show was wack. It maintained an imbalance throughout, as if everyone in that room had fallen into the red-light district of Wonderland.

Seeing THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN is enough to give anyone hope, but, ladies and gentlemen, that is not all. As I said before, SOMETHING IS HAPPENING, and the event is not limited to BAM's benevolent offerings.

Coming from the City's underbelly, from the dirty alleys and the dimly-lit basements is (can you guess?) Political Theater! No, not the deadly issue plays of the late eighties, but the

kind of stuff that allows the ideas to affect the structure of the event!

So: you heard it here first. The Right Good "Reverend Billy" (who you may have seen perform at the NY Fringe Fest this past summer, or bumped into him after the show, leading his audience into the Disney Store, where they over-ran the place while talking on imaginary cell phones about their childhood) hosts a week-long festival called MILLENIUM'S NEIGHBORHOOD, and subtitled "NOT a Celebration of the Malling of New York."

The festival will be based at JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH, and will feature both street performances and staged shows. Some of the intriguing offerings include: The PERMITLESS PARADE, which kicks off the festival on December 4th (with luminary participants like the Bindlestiff Cirkus, Al Ramos and the Macadees Choir, The Flying Machine, and the Lower East Side Coalition); performances by Charles Dennis (PS122 founder) and Rinde Eckert (quoted recently in EMERGENCY); daily pranks, including performative absurdity at a local McDonald's, a tour of the faux street lamps in Washington Square Park (which are really security cameras) and billboard "touchups." The event ends with a spectacular countdown at midnight and the descent of "the elephant dung-caked disco ball."

These here are good times, folks. With Giuliani around, we all have something to agree on. With no funding, no support, and most people more interested in shopping on the computer anyway, people seem to be saying, "Fuck it! Let's make art!"

So go make some art! Don't be afraid! Something is happening, and the important thing is not "Why?" but "WHAT?"

Yelena Glusman

## LISTINGS

### THE JEW OF MALTA

Christopher Marlowe's disturbing play by a company of Marlowe enthusiasts. Through Nov 13<sup>th</sup>. Thurs-Sat at 8. Musical Theater Works. 440 Lafayette Street. 465-7428. \$15.

### MEETING RACHEL BARRACUDA OF THE EMPIRE STATE ARTS COUNCIL

A play about government arts funding. Thu-Sat 8pm, Sun 3pm. Vital Theater Company, 432 W.42<sup>nd</sup> St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 592-4508. \$12.

### 1839

GALE GATES et al. present a multi-media extravaganza, including sophisticated sound and puppets. Starting Nov 11. Tue-Sat 9pm. 37 Main St., B'klyn (F train to York) 718-522-4597. \$15-\$25.

### DIVINE WORDS

Text by pre-war Spanish playwright Ramon Valle-Inclan. Directed by Josefina Estrella. Nov 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, Wed-Sat 8pm, Sat 3pm. Horace Mann Theater, 120<sup>th</sup> St. & B'way, 854-3408. \$5-10.

### THE HOUR WE KNEW NOTHING OF EACH OTHER

Peter Handke's beautiful play text with no dialogue, describing an hour of passersby at a town square. Staged by the Mad Dog company. Thru Nov. 20. Thu-Sat at 7pm. Five Myles 558 St. John's Place, B'klyn. (2,3,4,5 to Franklin Ave.) 718-783-4438. \$15.

### SANKAI JUKU

Butoh group, much lauded. Nov 10-13 at 7:30, Nov 14 at 3. BAM, 718-636-4100. \$15,35,45.

### BUNKBED COMMANDO

A puppet play with the Elementals. Nov 12, 13 at 8, and Nov 14 at 3. Dance Theater Workshop, 219 W.19<sup>th</sup> St., 924-0077.

### MORNING, NOON & NIGHT

If you're into Spalding Gray, this is his newest. Sun, Mon at 7:30. Vivian Beaumont Theater. 150 W. 65<sup>th</sup>. 239-6200. \$25-45.

## VERSO:

Richard Foreman

### I LOVE DICK

Mabou Mines present Chris Kraus' play, adapted and directed by Leslie Mahn. With Jan Wesley Harding, among others. Nov 3-28 at 8pm. PS122 - Mabou Mines Studio, 151 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. 718-398-4882.

### IN THE BLOOD

Suzan-Lori Parks' new play begins the Public Theater's surprisingly interesting season. Tues-Fri 8pm. Sat 2pm & 8pm. Sun 2 & 7. Public Theater. 425 Lafayette. 239-6200.

### HIGHWAY TO TOMORROW

Elevator Repair Service. A work in progress directed by John Collins & Steve Bodow. Nov 11 thru 14 at 8pm. HERE 145 6<sup>th</sup> Ave., 647-0202, \$12.

### NORTH ATLANTIC

The Wooster Group's latest resurrection. Tue-Sun at 8pm, thru Nov 21<sup>st</sup>. 33 Wooster St., 966-3651. \$25.

### OH, THE HUGE MANATEE

Tom O'Horgan's new form opera. Thru Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>. LaMama Annex 74A E 4<sup>th</sup> St. 475-7710.

### EDWARD SAID

His lecture, entitled: "What is Humanism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America?" Presented as part of Miller Theater's Theater of Ideas series. Part 1 Nov 29 at 8pm, Part 2 Nov 30 at 8. Miller Theater, 116<sup>th</sup> Street & B'way, 854-1633.

### MILLENIUM'S NEIGHBORHOOD

An alternative festival to the Times Square Disney-led millennial celebration. Hosted by the Right Good "Reverend Billy." Dec 4-11. Based at Judson Church, 55 Washington Square South. Call 414-5071 for more info, or see www.revilly.com.

### FILMS AT ANTHOLOGY

13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MIX FESTIVAL  
Longest running lesbian and gay film festival, with 150 international works. Nov 10-14. Call for details.  
FILMS OF KENNETH ANGER\*  
Sun Nov 14 at 4pm.  
BELSON/BAILLIE/CROCKWELL\*  
Essential abstract cinema. Nov 14 at 6.  
FILMS OF MAYA DEREN  
A breakthrough in American experimental filmmaking. 1940's. Nov 18 at 8 and 10. Nov 21 at 6.  
AFRICAN DIASPORA FILM FEST  
Nov 26 - Dec 2.  
\$8 / \*\$7 Essential Cinema / \$5 Students  
Anthology Film Archives, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>, 505-5110

### EXPERIMENTAL FILM AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

The program of 1960's film runs from Oct 29 thru Dec 5 and includes films by JONAS MEKAS, ANDY WARHOL, JORDAN BELSON, RON RICE. Call for exact film schedule: 570-3676. Tix \$6, or \$12.50 including the exhibit. Whitney Museum, Madison & 75<sup>th</sup> St.

### LA VISTA

The downtown cinema club; "The problem is not to show experimental films, but to show films experimentally." Films every Sunday at 7:30. 303 E.8<sup>th</sup> Street, #1R. FREE.

## IMPOSSIBLE



an unsuccessful play

## THEATRETHEATERTHEATRE

Petrakov-Gorbunov comes on stage. He wants to say something, but he hiccups. He begins to vomit. He exits. Enter Pritykin.

PRITYKIN: The honorable Petrakov-Gorbunov would like to info... (he vomits and runs away)

Enter Makarov.

MAKAROV: Egor... (Makarov vomits. He runs away.)

Enter Serpuhov.

SERPUHOV: So as not to... (He vomits and runs away.)

Enter Kurova.

KUROVA: I would be... (She vomits and runs away.)

Enter a little girl.

LITTLE GIRL: Daddy asked me to tell all of you that the theater is closing. All of us are getting sick!

### CURTAIN

Daniil Kharms (1905-42)  
transl. by M. Yankelevich

**RICHARD FOREMAN SAYS:  
"I WANT MORE.  
I WANT MORE!"**

RICHARD FOREMAN is the director of the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre in residence at St. Mark's Church. The following is an excerpt from a talk he gave to a group of theater students on October 25, 1999.

Of course there are those people who say I've been doing the same play over and over again for thirty years. I think I have, in a sense, because Francis Bacon had been making the same thing for years. An artist has a style. But, that being said, even though I don't think I've been making the same play over and over again for thirty years, this year I've decided to do a play I thought maybe we could tour—because I used to tour when I did plays in Europe—but, my MacArthur's running out, how are we going to get money for the plays? So I thought, I'll try to make something somewhat more accessible to tour, and to be popular. And it sort of was, you know, and it toured. It was called Hotel Fuck in Europe. In America it was changed to Paradise Hotel because I was told by the people who tried unsuccessfully to raise money for me that it would never work.

But anyway, after doing Hotel Fuck—and I have a play I'm doing this year that I think will be a little different—but I really felt, "Oh god, I don't know how many more plays I'm going to get to do, how can I force myself to do something different?" Which I thought for many years. But this year I had a new idea. The person who's been my administrator in New York for many years, a woman by the name of Sophie Haviland, also is a director. And I always wondered if she wanted to be a director, why doesn't she direct more plays? And she says, "Because I'm spending all my time trying to get your shows up."

So I had this notion that maybe—I had been asked to Cal Arts and I was going to do this old surrealist play but I'll tell you what really happened. We were in Europe. I had to go to Paris for one day to the theater where they were going to do my show a couple of months later. And we were walking all around Paris and talking about our lives and at one point Sophie said to me, "Can you recommend good contemporary erotic poetry?" And I said "Well, there's the surrealists. And there's this Greek poet Cavafy. But Cavafy is more triste, sad." So then we went on, and later I was sitting around thinking "Oh my god! What an old fool I am!" She wanted some erotic poetry and I couldn't really think of anyone really very good. And then I thought, why don't I try to write some. So I did.

And then, we were both talking about various traumatic romantic moments in our lives: she had broken up very traumatically with a guy a couple of years ago, and various things, so I wrote this erotic monologue. And I thought, through the years, there has been a tremendous synchronicity between Sophie and myself. Isn't there a way to exploit that? If both of us generate material that is really very personal, on this subject of anguished love, and I proposed to California that instead of coming out and doing another boring play, that I do this project where we're both writing. And, then, we're both directing, in a way that interferes with us. Our first notion was that I'll direct a scene, and she'll come in and make it better. And she'll direct a scene, and I'll come in and make it better. And I won't interfere; so each of us—she'll have three hours, and I'll have three hours. We'll be allowed to subject the other person's staging to our own whims. And maybe that will be a way to give her a chance, to put up or shut up forever. And give me a chance to maybe be forced out of some of my habits. I don't know if that will happen or not, but that's the idea...

It's really an effort to do something very different. Because, the play that I'm doing next year is going to be somewhat different, not that different... it's called BAD BOY NIETZSCHE; it's vaguely about Nietzsche throwing his arms around a horse. You know every year I try to make things different, and in the end, ah, it needs this it needs that and it turns out... And I don't know how I feel about that at this point, except I know that I'm 62, so I figure how many more plays am I going to make. So I really want to try and do something different, but of course I don't know if I'll have the courage, in the end, to let it be bad, you understand the problem. I don't think I'm making things too awkward and ugly anymore, for me. I think a lot of people say I do, because obviously a lot of people are

still angry about my work.

You know I don't want to be bored. I want to make it denser and denser because I can do things where, after two weeks, I think "That's pretty interesting," but after four weeks I'm bored, I want more. I want more! They say "Yeah, but people [the audience] are coming for the first time." Well, I don't care; I'm doing it to keep me excited and I have to hope that, subliminally, even though they don't see everything, they're picking up on just the richness and the density. And I realized that, essentially, I have seen a lot of art, and I am more and more impatient, and I am more and more likely to say "I get it" and why does it have to go on like that for five minutes instead of "Okay, I got it after thirty seconds." So I'm a jaded, you know, alcoholic or drug addict who needs a bigger fix. And I need such a big fix that maybe, it's true, it's hard for people to take who aren't prepared for that.

I am looking for great actors. But I'm looking for great actors who have the arrogance to say, like somebody like Chris Walken, I'm doing my thing and I'm doing it the way I want to. As opposed to actors who say "what do you want? What do you want?" Young actors, who I feel are trying to convince me, "yes yes I'm really feeling something, yes I'm really going through these things." Actors think "I'm going to do Hedda Gabler." They are coming in to audition for me, so [the actor says] I'm going to try and study Hedda Gabler and create this character. But, if you [the director] are at an audition, you're going to see, if you're lucky, five people who could play Hedda Gabler. But you're waiting to see that one person who, they're trying to do Hedda Gabler, but they're just (gasp) wow! That particular energy, that particular rhythm with Hedda Gabler, that would really make something happen. So all you should do in an audition is say, arrogantly, "this is what I am, this is what I do." And then, somebody is going to have a use for you.

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My sources are pretty much everything, but not so much theater. In other words, when I was a young man, I started making theater in grade school because I was very shy, and it was a way to go and be able to look at other people and talk to them. So I started doing these plays. And then, very soon, very young, I realized that I thought there were many more interesting things happening in painting or in some writing that I would read, or in music of a certain kind, than what was happening in theater. For the rest of my life I was convinced of that.

I did fall in love with Brecht, when I first heard about him when I was fifteen, which was in like 1950 or something. Nobody had ever heard of Brecht, but it was said that his

theater was not based on empathy, but a theater of a sort of scientific examination, and for me it was like, oh my god, is that possible? Can that be true? I grew up in America which especially in those days and still in these days is based on this kind of encounter-group notion of "reach out over the footlights (in private life as well as in theater) and just, whatever is happening, look. I'm really not a bad person. Like me. Love me." I'm even infected by that in my private life. When I was a young writer getting out of Yale, I used to admire Sam Shepard in his interviews. Whenever people would talk to me, I would be a good little boy, I was good in school, I would do some crazy things, but I was polite and nice and Sam Shepard was just like, when they'd ask him a question, he'd say [Foreman imitates Shepard slouching in his seat] "Yeah." And I thought, oh wow, why can't I have that arrogance.

Because, to me, the theater is completely corrupted continually by that need to reach across the footlights and get a group response from a lot of people. I have absolutely no faith in a group response. I think it is always pulling everybody down to the lowest common denominator, which is the perversity of being in the theater. But when I go to the theater and people are laughing—I can't laugh in the theater, I can see that certain things are funny, but I don't laugh, I have some inhibition—so nevertheless, I'm there in the theater and everybody's laughing and, even if it isn't funny, if I don't think it's funny, I just, you know you pick up the bodily rhythms, so I'll sit there and everybody's laughing and I'll go [does a sort of shudder, as if almost laughing]. Your body just has to respond like everyone else responds, and I think that's the end of what I consider to be serious and exciting art of the twentieth century. I think you don't make great art looking to say "Hey! Can we all agree that this poem by Paul Celan is really good?"

Now I for years have made plays—and I don't put myself in the same category as Paul Celan, the great poet of the twentieth century perhaps—but nevertheless I've been making plays of a similar idiosyncratic difficult nature that demand for people not to figure them out, but for people to watch and register what is happening all the time. And a lot of people aren't comfortable with that. Nevertheless, after doing this for thirty years, I know that the corruption of the theater has snuck into me, and I know that my plays are easier to swallow these days than they were twenty years ago. Maybe that's good maybe that's bad, I don't know. But I know that there is that corruption, and that means that I am somebody who, in a sense, should be cast out of the temple of the theater.

Except that I find theater very interesting, more interesting than film, as

a place to work, because theater is closest to life. So if I have rarified notions of what I think is good for my, I'm not going to say for the audience's, soul, what kind of structures, what kind of organization, what kind of aesthetic is good for my soul, which makes me more alert, which makes me more energized, what is good for me is what I have to keep doing. And again just hoping that, but I don't know, I'm going through a period now where I feel very, I feel I'm old and that I just don't get it, a lot of stuff that's happening I don't think is good, and yet in the back of my mind I think "Well, I'm probably just worn out."

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I think in general young artists seem to be pulling back from any old-fashioned modernist commitment to finding some sort of mythic spiritual underpinning. I mean everything seems to be the cleverness of affectlessness. Like, movies exist so people have something to talk about... so, movies are a frame of reference. I work with young people, most of whom I'm older than their parents. But I'm working with them every day; I like to think they don't think I'm that old. Maybe I am. So, a movie they all loved was HAPPINESS. HAPPINESS seemed to me empty at the center. I didn't like it. And it seems to me that affectlessness which is so clever and hey, cool to a lot of people, is really a pulling back from the dangers of agony and anguish of the real spiritual and emotional commitment, which for years has been what they've been saying about my work. I don't think it is. I think my work is all closeted religious drama, in a sense. So that's a problem. But then I think, well maybe the human psyche, the human consciousness is being restructured; out of this 'floating on the surface'—a kind of affectlessness—maybe another configuration, in terms of what it means to be human, what the possibilities are of human life and consciousness,

**LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS**

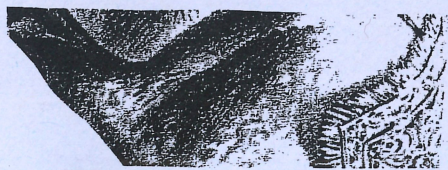
To the editors:

We've been enjoying your gazette and thought you might like to see our own publication (if you don't know it).

Perhaps it can be mentioned in an upcoming number? (Few people know we exist and are dedicated to "experimental" work and ideas.)

Thanks,

Tom Sellar  
Associate Ed.  
THEATER



maybe something new will arise from it, I don't know. So I'm open to it.

What are they working from? Because that affectlessness is working from media, clearly. There's a lot of stuff in media that was supposed to have a great affect, and they are correctly saying: "No, we've been sold a bill of goods, you know when all these people, these actors are doing these great things, and they're shaken by all these tremendous things, it's really corny, it's not true." I suppose somebody like David Lynch started making fun of that. Now a lot of people are picking up on a cooler version of that, even in literature. Literature often has this, "I don't feel it. Oh yeah. Look at that. Momma killed my pet dog. Oh yeah. Well. Why don't we kill Momma instead. OK. Cool." And I understand the power that is generated by that. So who's to say? I guess you can not find an escape from generational commitment in a sense.

It's interesting to be in that situation to reach a point and think, well, maybe I just can't. You reach a point where you think, well, do I have to simply deepen and exploit my particular prison that I am in of necessity of my particular background and my inheritance, or do I try to stay open to what all the young people are doing?

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Stay tuned for PART TWO, where Mr. Foreman responds to questions about:  
\* controversial theater  
\* teaching  
\* giving up  
Look for it in EMERGENCY No.6



Dear Tom,

Thanks for your note. It's nice to know you have an EMERGENCY in New Haven. We have been voraciously reading your last few issues, and are particularly taken with the most recent one on Apocalyptic Theater, guest-edited by El-inor Fuchs.

Keep up the good work.

Bros. Lumiere  
Editors

*Auguste Louis*

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