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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 #7

December 8, 1999.

EMERGENCY

✠ Happy Birthday, Alex Abramovich ✠

VERSO:

FILM IN FLUX
DIS - CONNECTIONS
MORE LISTINGS

FROM THE NOTEBOOK

Watched Ionesco plays, staged by graduate acting students. Embarrassed by the degrading sexual vulgarity of *THE FUTURE IS IN EGGS*, and then horrified as hundreds of golf balls roll onto the stage during the play's final moments.

The play is driven by the problem of how to get a couple of young newlyweds to procreate; the families of the two try to educate, coax, and threaten the couple into productive sex. When, at the end, the deed is done, the bride's eggs fill the stage as the families run around, rejoicing at the potential soldiers, lawyers, bureaucrats, and omelettes contained within the eggs. What I saw, and what was the source of the horror, was not Ionesco's characters propagating bourgeois society, but a group of actors celebrating the continuation of their own line. I saw the actors working, sweating till their eyes bulged, and I couldn't understand why. Still, each egg contained the seeds of more actors (and more and more) to embody the already senseless personas of soldiers, lawyers, bureaucrats, omelettes.

Jay really had it right when he said that no one took responsibility for the play; it was a classroom project, performed as a method of training actors, and was not meant to be a full production. In the final analysis (on the level of what actually happened to me in the room watching the play), the construct was perfect. The play is about LEGACY, and it was done in the context of a classroom—the main social structure for passing along information, habits, morals, and lifestyle. Because of this context, Ionesco's indictment of the bourgeois instinct to multiply and continue extends to the same absurd impulse in acting, in the theater.

It is a mirror, this play. It turns its face to you and you think: Oh god. What am I doing? What are these arcane and grotesque systems I cling to, these protective ideas of virtuosity and so-called theatrical convention?

I was thinking the other day, after talking to Lee about the worth of making theater, about the old idea that to create a play is god-like, as close to an act of creation as possible, outside of making a child. I don't usually feel this when I direct plays; instead of the euphoria of power, I feel the panic of responsibility. Instead of the strength of righteousness, I feel myself grasping for the hierarchical construct that allows me to speak in a rehearsal.

Yet, there is something to this idea,

the analogy of making theater as an act of creating the world. Not so much in the creator/s feeling god-like, but in the possibility of making a living alternative to the encrusted paradigms of living that surround us and fill us.

To create a performance is to propose a model, a different system of rules. To create a performance that lacks a proposal is to create a world built either on hopelessness or on a condonation of the "real" world.

I don't know what an actor should do on stage. I want actors to bring a personal investigation to the process of making theatre; I want to know why they are there. Most often, it seems that actors are performing because they have been taught to perform, and performing has simply become a part of their lives. It is unquestioned and unquestionable; the struggle is about how to land the good roles, how to get paid, how to be respected as an artist and a human being. But why does an actor get on stage in the first place?

Talking to Const. a few weeks ago, she proposed this analogy: Actors are like Christ-figures. They take on the roles of suffering people and thereby take on the grief of these characters. They absorb this grief into their own bodies and display it for crowds of people. The crowds can experience the grief, but at a distance. Because of the actor's emotional and physical sacrifice, the audience can experience a frightening or disturbing event, but go home

safely. Why do they do it? For the love of humanity? For the rush of feeling a real emotion in public? To escape from their own lives/heads/personas?

If making theater is an attempt to create an alternative, a living (if transient) model for the world, for society, for human communication, logic, physics, then every aspect of making a play is part of the model. For example, the way I (as director) speak to actors can either attempt honesty, or can admit the impossibility of honesty. This, then, becomes a rule that the world of the play is built upon. It seems to me that this is key: every act creates a rule that directly translates into the kind of society (ultimately represented by the performance) that must follow from those rules.

It's interesting that Declan Donnellan (artistic director of Cheek by Jowl) said in an interview that laws are necessary only because we can't consistently love each other, that laws are, by nature, evil. Without laws, though, we would kill each other, and so they are a necessary evil for the continuation of humanity. Back to EGGS, eh? We continue (desperately, adamantly) because we know no other option.

Luna Zeygman



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LISTINGS

PEARL RIVER

Stacy Dawson and David Neumann (both seen in Annie B-Parson's exquisite dance-theater adaptation of "A Simple Heart") create a wacky & probably wonderful dance-theater piece of their own. Dec 8-11 at 8pm, Dec 10 & 11 at 10pm. Context, 28 Ave A, 777-3394. \$12.

MILLENIUM'S NEIGHBORHOOD

An alternative festival to the Times Square Disney-led millennial celebration. Hosted by Reverend Billy. Thru Dec 11.

ROMEO SIERRA TANGO

Rinde Eckert. Today! Dec 8 at 7:30.

THU, DEC 9, TOMORROW'S PRANKS:

Rev. Billy & LES Co. ritually destroy a Levi-Strauss ad; also, sidewalk plastic surgery with Melissa Rayworth.

SAT, DEC 11, at 6: TIMES SQ. NIGHT:

Many plays (incl BOX, dir. by Tony Torn), films, readings and the descent of the elephant-dung-caked disco ball.

Based at Judson Church, 55 Wash Sq. S. Call 414-5071 or www.revilly.com.

SEX

Mae West's play, finally published a few years ago, is getting its first NYC revival since 1926. Directed by Elyse Singer, with music by Sex Mob. Dec 9-19 & Jan 6-16, Thu-Sat at 8pm, Sun at 3pm. Gershwin Hotel, 7 E.27th, 439-8122. \$12.

MONKEY IN THE MIDDLE

A new play by Brighde Mullins.

Directed by Mark Wing-Davey.

An NYU Graduate Acting and School of Design production at Tisch.

Last night, Dec 11 at 2pm and 8pm.

Atlas Room Theatre, 111 2nd Ave. 3rd Fl. 998-1921. \$7 / \$3 students.

IS THERE LIFE ON MARS: A MYSTERY PLAY

Legendary Russian performer Piotr Mamonov "may be the closest thing to anarchy Moscow has tolerated since 1917," said Rolling Stone. Two performances! Dec 17&18 at 8. Tribeca Perf Arts Center, 199 Chambers, 346-8510. \$35-70.

IMPOSSIBLE THEATER



In an underground room, lit by a bare bulb, the Theater Workers meet to discuss their plight. The Impossible Theater, they say, and they all nod and shake their heads simultaneously with fraught diagonal movements. The Impossible Theater.

One of the younger folk begins to weep. We are so small! the youngest cries. Another, this one who has been around the block, she says, If it was not worth it, it would not be worth it -- but why are we here! She is not asking a question. These theater workers, they wearing rags, they are hungry. They are pale from temping in offices with fluorescent lighting. Our audiences are so small, another one says, weakly. Can we change the world? The Impossible Theater.

A small boy enters the room. Where has he come from? How did he

know they were all here? He is not human, he is a specter. Their thoughts have summoned him. His name is Cinema. Cinema is sucking on something, is it a lollipop? He is orally fixated, that's for sure. It's a luxurious Haagen-Dazs bar. Those Theater Workers who are not fatally dehydrated begin to drool.

Whatcha doin', he says.

The Impossible! the one who has been around the block snaps. The Impossible Theater!

Theater! he says. I know what theater is.

No! someone yells. You don't know! This is the Impossible Theater!

The little boy giggles spectrally. All the Theater Workers cringe. This is the giggle that haunts their dreams.

Nothing is impossible, the little boy says, with a little money and a special effect.

The Impossible Theater has no special effects! The Impossible Theater's effects are all extraordinarily special!

The youngest theater worker looks at the little boy closely, he is so familiar. There is always something impossible, she thinks. What is the impossible film, she asks him. What can't you do?

The little boy stares at her, not moving. He is glowing, he is translucent. The bare bulb does not cast light on him, he fades in its glare. He is flattened against the wall, the shimmering little boy.

What is impossible for you, the youngest one says, wiping away her tears.

Outside, the world is humming, clicking, whirring. The Theater Workers look into one another's eyes. The little boy becomes a silhouette of light, the little boy goes out.

They are still there, they are still haunted by a luxurious specter. The Impossible Theater.



Eli Rarey

BOX

Open salon every Saturday, 10pm till late. Says James, "Sometimes I'm in my underwear, people knock on the door, and the performance begins."
Also: OVERTURES
Starring Miss Murphy. New Year's Eve. Call 212-875-7171 for info.
BOX, 70 Commercial St. (& Box St.), Storefront 102, Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

JOHN ZORN: DARTS

Legendary game piece for five all star dancers for five dancers and musicians.
December 11 at 8 & 10. \$20.
Washington Square Church, 133 W 4th
Part of the 8th Annual Improvisation Fest
Through December 12. 212-539-2611.

CONGA GUERRILLA FOREST

Susana Cook writes and directs seven women and an angel. Astonishing prophetic paraphernalia. Dec. 19-30 at 9.
WOW Café. 59 E. 4th, 777-4280. \$10.

REQUIEM FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Branislav says: "If you have never seen Kazuo Ohno, who must be about 90 now, this is a must for the Outstanding Performers of the 20th Century list."
Thur-Sat, Dec 9-11. Japan Society.
333 E 47th St., 832-1155.

ASPHYXIA AND OTHER PROMISES

NaCl uses strong characterization, dedicated physical acting, sound, and post-apocalyptic myth in this ambitious show.
Dec 9-19, Thu-Sat 8pm, Sun at 4pm. The Piano Store, 158 Ludlow, 946-5734. \$12.

A NIGHT AT THE TROJAN WALL (A COMEDY?)

Conceived & directed by Jane Nichols. Gods, heroes and clowns. Thru Dec 15,
Mon-Wed at 8pm. Present Company,
198 Stanton, 539-7661, \$12.

ENTER THE NIGHT

Maria Irene Fornes' play, from the early 90's, is a delicate delineation of the sick and the sicker. Directed by Sonja Moser.
Thru Dec 19th, Tue-Sat at 8pm, Sat and Sun at 3pm. Signature Theater, 555 W.42nd, 244-7529.

DIRECTORFEST '99

The Drama League presents 4 one-acts by young directors, incl. the rarely seen AT THE HAWK'S WELL, by W.B. Yeats, dir. Sonoko Kawahara. Dec. 11-14 at 8pm. Dec 12 at 3. \$11.
HERE, 145 6th Ave. 647-0202.

PUBLIC THEATER

Three potentially interesting shows at the Public Theater, running concurrently?
Hard to believe, but true.
IN THE BLOOD
Suzan-Lori Parks' adaptation of The Scarlet Letter.
HAMLET
Andrei Serban directs Leiv Schriber.
SPACE
Tina Landau always has interesting things to say; this is a piece she wrote and directed.
Public Theater. 425 Lafayette. 239-6200.

TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS

Not often: Odon von Horvath's classic. Dir. by Avra Sidiropoulou.
Dec 8-11, Wed-Sat 8, Sat 3pm.
Horace Mann Theater, 120th & B'way, 854-3859. \$5-10.

THE DISASTROUS ACT

Pooh Kaye/Eccentric Motions.
Dec 16-19 at 8pm.
Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer, 334-7479. \$10.

LOVE SONGS

David Rousseve and REALITY stage a ballroom where "memories mingle with mythology." Dec 8 - 11 at 7:30. BAM,
718-636-4100. \$15, 30, 40.

SPEED IS NO MAGIC

FREE night of DJs, performances, electronics, installations, plus free fruit and gunpowder tea. Thur, Dec 16, 8pm-2am.
Also: CROOKED BACK REESE'S DIME MUSEUM. Dec 18, 8pm. \$10.
Then: UNCONSCIOUS@MIDNIGHT Film; music; robots. Dec. 18, 10pm, \$3.
Collective: Unconscious.
145 Ludlow St. 254-5277.

1839

GAle GAtes et al. present a multi-media extravaganza, including sophisticated sound and puppets. Thru Dec 18.
Tue-Sat 9pm. 37 Main St., B'klyn (F train to York) 718-522-4597. \$15-\$25.



Yoko Ono did this thing. In 1966 she got 300 people to strip naked and walk in front of a camera which was focused on their behinds.

Like many Fluxus films, BOTTOMS is called by a number, No. 4. Indeed, the screen is divided into four sections by the creases of the butt cheeks and the horizontal line where the ass meets the legs. Everybody's butt is different, the artist contests, but really they are excruciatingly the same, after a while. I find it hard to believe any of that crap about the individuality of the butt's person. It seems to me to be a comment on the impotence of the screen's attempt to ascribe humanity to the celluloid face. The face, in other words, is just another ass.

Over the steadily bouncing images we hear a collage of conversations that took place in the studio between various actors or non-actors who craved to or absolutely would not participate in this film. All kinds of responses, you can imagine. "It's lude." "It's funny." "The expressiveness of every ass." "The most boring film with a moving image ever made." "Nobody will go see it." "I'm a model, so my ass costs a lot of money." "I like Yoko's films, but I don't like this idea." "It's sexy!" The voices provide insight into what people think about art, what is worthy of their attention, what constitutes a film.

Even today, the Fluxus films of the late 60's still challenge our precepts about film, about observation, and about going to the movies.

A face out of focus. My God, man, what is a camera for if not to focus! And the face is not centered either: I can only see the jowl and chin, part of the lips. In Chieko Shomi's film, motion is imperceptible but persistent. The image will fade away. These films are traces of films. The dust makes traces. The film (a medium first implemented for documentation) documents itself, its own movement, its own filmy matter.

A sign reads ENTRANCE. George Brecht's screen is completely white. Blinding. And slowly, almost imperceptibly the whiteness fades, it becomes grayer, you cannot remember how bright the light had been. Then slowly darkness descends. Again a sign appears: EXIT. The screen is white. Blinding. Between these extremes we have traveled through countless gradients.

Or let's count. Did you ever count to a hundred when you were only four? Have you ever counted the

seconds, I mean really, the very seconds for it to happen. Count sheep? James Riddle makes a film about what 9 minutes is. In fact he makes a film that IS 9 minutes. I watch the bright white numbers appear on the black screen, 0 to 59 and another minute has passed. I reflect on the many thoughts one can think in these seconds, how they go by, how they disappear just as the minutes do, one after another after another.

Time slipping by, we are conscious of ourselves watching, conscious that this is film, the sprockets show its perforated nature, the holes in its continuum. We are in flux between watching and being. When have you ever seen such blank space as when you expect that space to be filled with figures? We disappear into the whiteness—Zen for film.

Something is disappearing. Is it our ability to observe, to focus, to evaluate? Think again of the disappearing face. John Cage tried to take the composer out of the music. Ad Reinhardt took the painter out of painting (so did the Action painters he hates, though they didn't know it). The flux film, perhaps, has taken the filmmaker out of the film.

Aside from the epic, 80-minute BOTTOMS, these are short films. Some say—bantering at the back of the theater—"Of course, because they couldn't sustain your attention longer." This "couldn't" is moot since not one of these filmmakers is striving to "sustain attention." Is that all a film is good for, nowadays? And attention for what? Commercials? Who says we need 2 hours or bust? Does the amount of merchandise/ideology you can advertise in a film dictate its length?

A case in point: The other night I was one of the few lucky people to see a theater piece that lasted one whole half-hour and I felt perfectly satisfied. The space had been used up. The potential for the theater was exhausted. All in one half hour. The Greeks used to sit for days on end at the theater. Rear ends on hard stone. But times have changed and, personally, I might consider vomiting after an hour in a blackbox, a kind of camera obscura that pinpoints you, your personal eye, as its victim, focusing all light upon you as if you were an ant and it was a magnifying glass catching the sun's rays. And movies? Will it take even longer to tell the same important story? Anyway, what is this idea of telling stories? Is there any way out? America, it seems to this foreign observer, is sunk in a mire of storytelling that only serves to suffocate the true story which is that there is no story to tell.

Louis Lumiere

Review!

DIS-CONNECTIONS

Written & Directed by David H. Milch at the J.E.T. Theater see listings for details

If the biblical Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, then the biblical Jonah fought the battle of Responsibility. In David H. Milch's new play DIS-CONNECTIONS, the present day Jonah does the same.

This remarkable short play marks the inaugural production of the new Relatively Theatre and if the quality and character of this first attempt is any measure of things to come from Relatively, then this new company's audience has much to look forward to.

The secret to cracking the play's "code of understanding" is getting inside the subtitle of David Milch's performance/theatre piece. The English translation of the Yiddish subtitle is "You can't dance at two weddings with one tuches."

Jonah's Grand-ma Mae (Christopher John Andersson) is a Mae-West-wannabe with Chesterfields, lighter and spare Edna-like eyeglasses tucked safely in her cleavage. She, along with the buffed and tan Leatherboy (Craig Skelton) of Jonah's pubescent masturbatory fantasies and adult life Spike Bar reality, spills out from Jonah's subconscious and leads him to the awareness of who he is as a gay man. Can, he wonders, a gay boy live out his life as a Jewish man with 5000 years of "ya can't be gay" tucked away inside his brain? Will, he fears, he have to have a split identity or live in separate worlds?

Ultimately Jonah discovers that, in fact, one can't have one's ass in two places at once. He is responsible for his life on this planet. He must be reborn as many times as it takes to "recapture the sparks of light" that are his identity, his personality, his soul. In a beautiful duet between Jonah and the Leatherboy, Jonah realizes that the leather straps which bind the tfillen to his biceps, forearm, and forehead are not unlike the leather straps gracing the chest of the Leatherboy. Dualism can be overcome. Integrity can be achieved. Grandma Mae can finally rest.

David Roberts



REVIEWERS WANTED
REVIEWERS NEEDED

FILMS AT ANTHOLOGY

NEW RUSSIAN FILM FESTIVAL
MOLOKH, Sokurov on Hitler, Dec 11 at 3.
Dec 12 at noon: SHORT FILMS incl. "parallel cinema" by Yukhananov, et. al.
MEMORY OF BERLIN, John Burgan Dec 9 at 6, Dec 10&11 at 8, Dec 12 at 5.
BENEFIT CONCERT: John Zorn's BAR KOHKBA. w/ the Maria Montez film, COBRA WOMAN. (\$15 benefit.)
Friday, Dec 17, 6&9pm.
Dec 22 at 9: THREE IMAGE FILMS!
\$8 / \$5 Students
Anthology Film Archives, 2nd & 2nd, 505-5110

EXPERIMENTAL FILM AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM (OUR PICKS)

Tuesdays:
Brakhage (11:30am); Cage, Cunningham, van Meter (1pm); Jack Smith's FLAMING CREATURES (3pm); UNDERGROUND NEW YORK (4:30)
Wednesdays:
Pennebaker's film on Dylan (1pm)
Thursdays:
Andy Warhol's MY HUSTLER (1:30); Political & structural films from 60s-70s incl. Yoko Ono's FREEDOM, start at 3.
Fridays:
Brakhage (11:30am); Norman Mailer's MAIDSTONE, 1969 (1pm); Jacobs, Kuchar, Land & others (3pm); Breer, Baillee & Chomont (4:30).
For more info: 570-3676.
Tix \$6, or \$12.50 including the exhibit.
Whitney Museum, Madison & 75th St.

PRATT FILM SERIES

FREE, every Wednesday at 8:30pm.
Today, DEC 8: CINE-POVERA:
Propositions on film by Luis A. Recoder.
Pratt Inst. of Art&Design; 718-636-3422
Engineering bldg. 379 Dekalb, rm. 371.

MY FRIEND IVAN LAPSHIN

Alexei's Guerman's mesmerizing 1982 picture, shelved by the soviets.
December 12 at 7 and 9:30
Ocularis @ Galapagos. 70 North 6th (between wythe/kent), 718-388-8713. \$5.

ROBERT BECK MEM'L CINEMA

Wack films Tuesdays at 9. Call 254-5277.
Collective: Unconscious. 145 Ludlow.

LA VISTA

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

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**O T H E R E
OR FREE**

DREAM HOUSE

La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela open their dream house to the public to experience seven years of sound and light. Open Thursdays and Saturdays, 2pm - Midnight. 925-8270.
275 Church Street, 3rd Floor. FREE!

SOUND PAINTING

The Walter Thompson Orchestra's SOUND PAINTING, an on the spot composition language created by Thompson, has a detailed vocabulary of over 600 gestures with which he conducts the dancers, musicians and actors.
Dec. 13 at 8pm. \$12.
HERE, 145 6th Ave. 647-0202.

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- *St. Marks Church

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