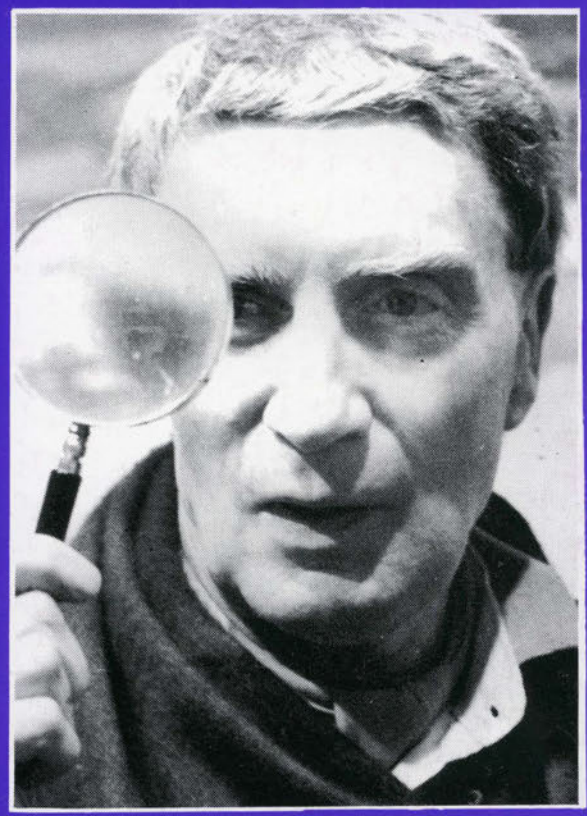
PERFORMANCE
Magazine

No. 11 60p



Brion Gysin, European Theatre of War, Stuart Brisley, Lizzie Cox, Artworks, Steve Paxton Freehold etc.

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JUNE 10-21 1981

ALMEIDA FESTIVAL

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Anna Scher
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Steven Berkoff
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Tickets mid-May - info: 01 354 2091

Midland Group

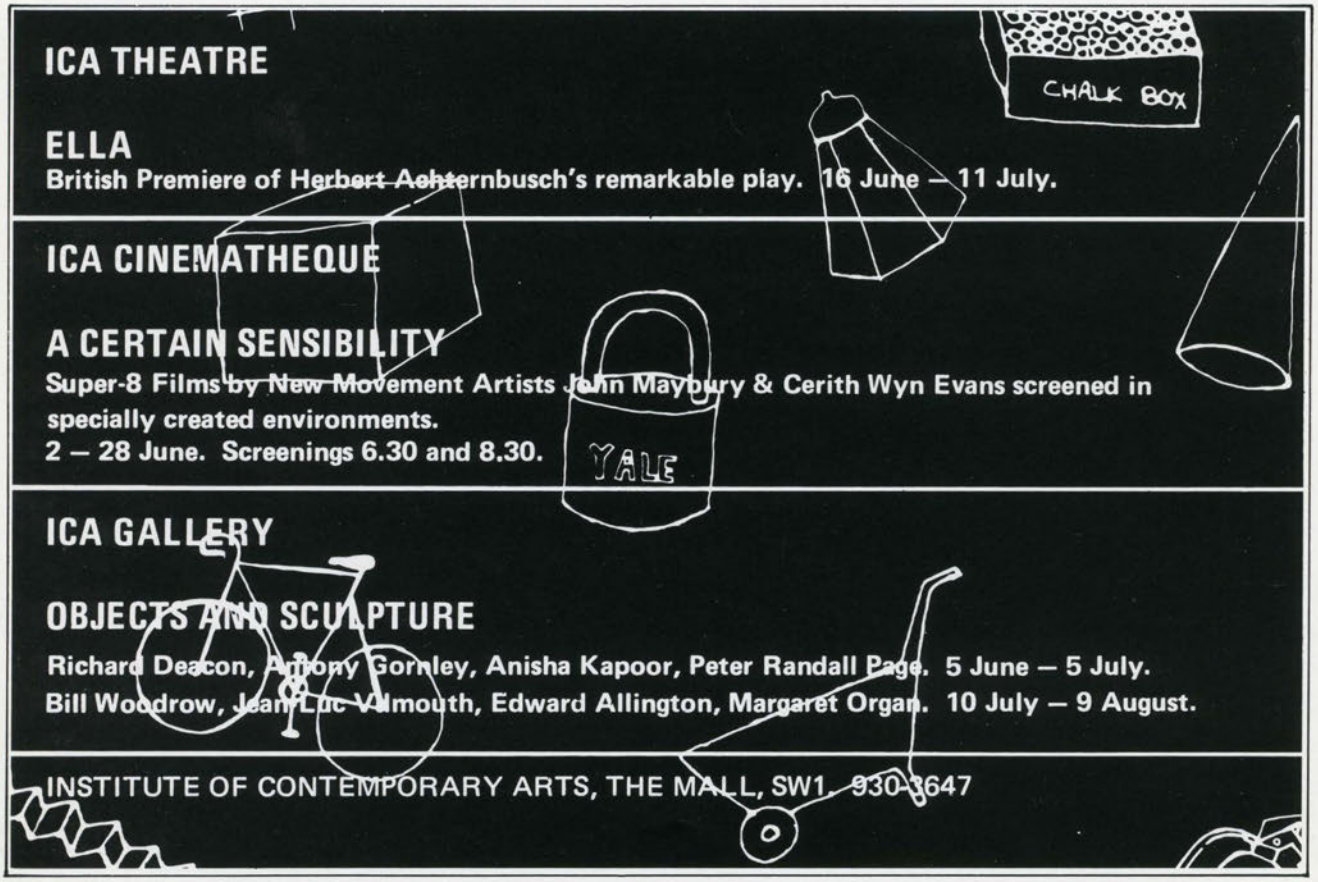
JUNE 6-7 PERFORMANCE ART WEEKEND

A weekend of performances talks and debate

DAY 1: 2ND ANNUAL NEW PERFORMANCE ART PLATFORM
The platform provides the opportunity for artists working in Performance, but who do not receive grant aid, to have their work publicly presented in a major regional centre. The performances are selected from an open submission. (Closing date for entries, May 8th)

DAY 2: GODLESS CEREMONY
A one day conference on meaning in performance.
The conference will focus on a new paper by Jeff Nutall entitled "Godless Ceremony". The paper will be published in the May/June edition of Performance Magazine. Guest speakers have been invited to present their own replies to Godless Ceremony. Speakers include Roland Miller, Jacky Lansley, Carlyle Reedy, Pip Simmons and Richard Strange.
Chairperson Jeff Nutall
(Lunch available)
Anyone attending the conference is invited to submit their own written responses to Godless Ceremony. These should be sent in advance to be made available at the conference.
11.00 a.m. — 6.00 p.m.
Tickets: £2.50 per day or £4.00 for the two days.
Assistance can be provided with booking overnight accommodation.
For further information and booking details please contact Platform Co-ordinator.

Further details of all events from Stephen Rogers, Midland Group, 24-32 Carlton Street, Nottingham (582636)



ICA THEATRE

ELLA
British Premiere of Herbert Achternbusch's remarkable play. 16 June — 11 July.

ICA CINEMATHEQUE

A CERTAIN SENSIBILITY
Super-8 Films by New Movement Artists John Maybury & Cerith Wyn Evans screened in specially created environments.
2 — 28 June. Screenings 6.30 and 8.30.

ICA GALLERY

OBJECTS AND SCULPTURE
Richard Deacon, Antony Gormley, Anisha Kapoor, Peter Randall Page. 5 June — 5 July.
Bill Woodrow, Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Edward Allington, Margaret Organ. 10 July — 9 August.

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS, THE MALL, SW1 930 3647

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Announcement.
Please note our new address: Box 421 London NW1 0RF. The telephone number remains the same: 01 485 7476. We apologise to performers, readers, venues, and advertisers who have been unable to contact us recently. This is because of a delay by the GPO in moving our phone. We also apologise for the shortened length of this issue and the lack of listings, both for the same reason. No 12 (July-August) should be back to normal. Listings, letters, articles and adverts should be in by the start of the second week in June.

Cover Photo: Brian Beresford

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LETTERS

Please note our new address is Box 421, London NW1 0RF.

The Spread of Misery

One of the organisations recently cut by the Arts Council was IMOFTA, the Informal Meeting of Fringe Theatre Administrators.

Since this was one of a package of cuts and we were not privy to the decision making process whereby the package was put together we could only surmise from press statements why our grant has been withdrawn, as no reason has been forthcoming from any of their officers.

In recent articles, it would appear that the ACGB now states that grants were withdrawn for artistic reasons and/or to 'Stop the spread of misery'. As IMOFTA is not directly involved in any artistic activities it is obvious that this was not the reason. As to 'Stopping the spread of misery', IMOFTA is actively involved in helping venues and companies with publicity and the sharing of technical resources thus enabling many groups to spend the money available to them in a more productive way than would be possible if undertaken individually.

Therefore we could find no good reason, as yet, for the removal of our grant. In this instance, a decision was reached without proper consultation, prior warning, reasoning or assessment.

Julie Parker, IMOFTA.

Censorship at the New Contemporaries

Censorship is divisive and messy wherever it is applied, no more so than in the arts where sensitivity to 'freedom of choice' is highly developed as the symbolic representation of 'individual freedom' regarded as implicit in Western Society.

Recently it came to the fore again at the selection for the New Contemporaries exhibition at the ICA. Mona Hatoum proposed a work utilising parts of the male and female public toilets in the foyer of the ICA. Hatoum has been involved in speculations concerning human behaviour, sometimes using herself in front of an audience, and at other times implicating the audience, drawing them to participate. Carefully conceived and structured, the work touches upon questions of sexual identity. There is no doubt that Hatoum is engaged in lifting the lid, be it ever so gently, on sexual matters which in social terms we collectively shy away from.

The 'New Contemporaries' committee for the 'third area' (a division of film, photography, video, performance etc.) accepted her submission. The proposal had been carefully structured to ensure that the public would not be unnecessarily embarrassed, remaining free to choose whether they wished to participate or not, Hatoum being naturally sensitive and responsive to potential problems which might obstruct the work. The ICA's director of exhibitions took exception to the proposal and declined to give it house room. This decision begs one or two questions, which could be examined if the New Contemporaries are to hold their annual exhibition at the ICA in 1982.

What is the relationship between the ICA as hosting body and the New Contemporaries as guests? Should 'New Contemporaries' committees' decisions be overuled by the ICA? If they are to be overuled — on what grounds?

As the matter rests Mona Hatoum's work has been censored for reasons other than merit (if we are to assume that the work was selected by the committee on merit). Her 'freedom of choice' as an artist to make a work has been summarily curtailed, as has the decision by the committee to accept her work in good faith. Of course this isn't exactly shattering news, as we have heard it before and will no doubt hear it again.

The notion of 'individual freedom' in the West is obviously not the prerogative of everyone.

Joseph Antin

We asked the ICA to comment on this letter — This was their reply:

Mona Hatoum submitted 2 works to the New Contemporaries. The selectors agreed to show the work and hoped that it would be possible to put on the proposal to the ICA public lavatories. The proposal was discussed by the ICA programming staff who felt that there were practical difficulties in carrying it out. This was then discussed with Mona Hatoum and with some of the New Contemporaries selectors. It was finally resolved to put on her alternative video proposal which was presented 'very successfully' in the ICA Cinematheque. The documentation for the first piece was hung in the concourse gallery.

Sandy Nairne

Cameron and Miller

I was very disappointed to read Lynn McRitchie's article about my work & the work of Roland Miller in our recent show at the Oval. There are many things I could say about it, but I shall try to make clear my main concerns, which are:-

1. Working with children: Lynn McRitchie makes me sound silly & indulgent in doing this, & so I believe has misunderstood the politics of the situation, and my politics. A woman with children & insufficient money to pay for adequate child care often finds it hard to go on working. I have always, from the birth of my twins 6½ years ago, found great difficulties in continuing my work as a performance artist. My main solution has been to have them in my work, to adapt my work to them if necessary & to try to make a virtue of this constraint, to use it. I thought I was successful in the Oval show, but Lynn McRitchie implies otherwise. She sees only a literary meaning in the presentation, missing the visual effect — the twins each in a large pyramid, one lit brilliant blue & green, the other red & orange. Also the bikes & clothes blue & red, & the 'music' they played. She saw only an, unpleasant to her, family gathering. I think we offered more.

2. The structures/sculptures: but not ill made props as Lynn McRitchie pictures them. That is one of the things I presented that she mentions only disparagingly. 'Homemade' she calls them — yes, I made them in my studio which is in my home — should I have made them in a factory? I can say that they were not badly made (technically or visually). Before working as a performance artist I was a sculptor. I studied sculpture for four years, where I did learn how to make things, in metal, wood, plastics etc., and this is my main skill. So, I am offended by Lynn McRitchie's remarks. After leaving College & before taking up performance I exhibited my sculpture in several galleries, so I was even fairly successful.

3. Theatre or art? I believe Lynn McRitchie 'judged' our presentation at the Oval as straightforward and 'poor' theatre. I do not think I am that.

4. Knowledge about performance art: I do not know Lynn McRitchie and so do not know when or how she became involved in, & even an expert on, performance. I have read some things by her that I liked. This is the first presentation by Roland Miller & myself that she has ever attended, and this, with the specific purpose of writing about it, it would seem.

I was introduced to her after the performance she attended, and the first thing I said — it just came out — was, 'Are you really interested in our work?' I suppose she looked sort of alienated, on her own where most people were with friends. However she said yes and I agreed to do the interview — (which comes first in the article).

I have been working as a performance artist for over 10 years and have done hundreds of different presentations in public spaces and specialist venues, galleries & theatres. I have worked very hard — I have made sacrifices, i.e. giving up reasonably secure, well-paid employment, and although it is an absolute right for anyone to not like my work, it is not their right to treat it as carelessly as Lynn McRitchie has done. She could have seen more of the work, in different situations perhaps, to get some feel & understanding of it. With a broader political view of society & culture, she would see that artists are a group with very little power, who, just because they can so easily be knocked down, or eliminated to make way for 'important' activities, because they are vulnerable, need critics who make constructive, intelligent comments. I personally feel I need support, & in Thatcher's Britain I could easily find myself not able to work.

To return to my first point about working with children, even though I have done this for 6½ years, it is now harder than it has been, because they are at school and, even more problematic, I need to buy fares for them to travel with me now they are over 5.

I have written to four of the many people who expressed enthusiasm for our presen-

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tation to ask them also to send their impressions of the show to Performance Magazine for publication — (one of them is Ian Hinchliffe who hints that he enjoyed the show in his Performance Magazine writing, but does not names (our) names). Yes, it was possible to enjoy the show because it actually was very funny in parts — something that one would never guess from Lynn McRitchie's description.

I think I've conveyed my mood, and some of my thoughts. I have not said everything — the title she uses is even a misquote from me, what I said was, 'the dangerous area in between', and there are several such mistakes, but that I could put up with — understanding faulty tape-recording very well as I also often work with cheap equipment. No, it's the other carelessness that makes me angry.

Shirley Cameron

About the performance at Oval House:

A highlight for me was the entrance of the children, bicycling around the space weaving about the collapsed walls of cages, and mounds of leaves, their bike lights shining. They took their places, one in each of the cages on either side of the space, (cages where Shirley Cameron had spent so much still time earlier in the show), and played their pipes. These children's sounds ended the show.

Earlier, I enjoyed the slide show of Maggie Thatcher's birth place, Roland's homemade mechanical working harness, the polystyrene brick wall, the brightly lit triangular cages, Shirley's headresses of last year's leaves, her still, controlled balances, and hers and Roland's total visual madness each working in isolation from each other.

But most of all was the sudden and complete break out of the wierd chaotic visual world, to listen to them talking normally amongst themselves, bringing themselves back to the present time situation of Oval House, and the entrance of their children. They seemed very real, very true and very honest, and as they told them when to come in, as they watched them and as they told them when to stop, they were very real, very true and very honest.

I think we are making positive moves in performance work, when we can catch the *real* moments shared between people, and that shared between parents and children is the most basic to life.

So, to Miller and Cameron — thank you for helping to open up a whole area of women's work which is usually kept behind the scenes of the art world. It appears that women who are artists are just about accepted by society, and women who are mothers are accepted, but women who are artists and mothers — is it possible for the rest of the world to believe that they might hold the keys for a new form and expression in performance art? (If only there was a little more help with childcare and a little more money to explore the possibilities!)

I want you to know that I support and encourage you in what you are doing. Your determination to portray the struggles and joys of everyday living with children, in your work, is not only an important statement to make in the world of Art (which still acts in complete ignorance of the bringing up of the next generation), but is vital to the liberation of working women.

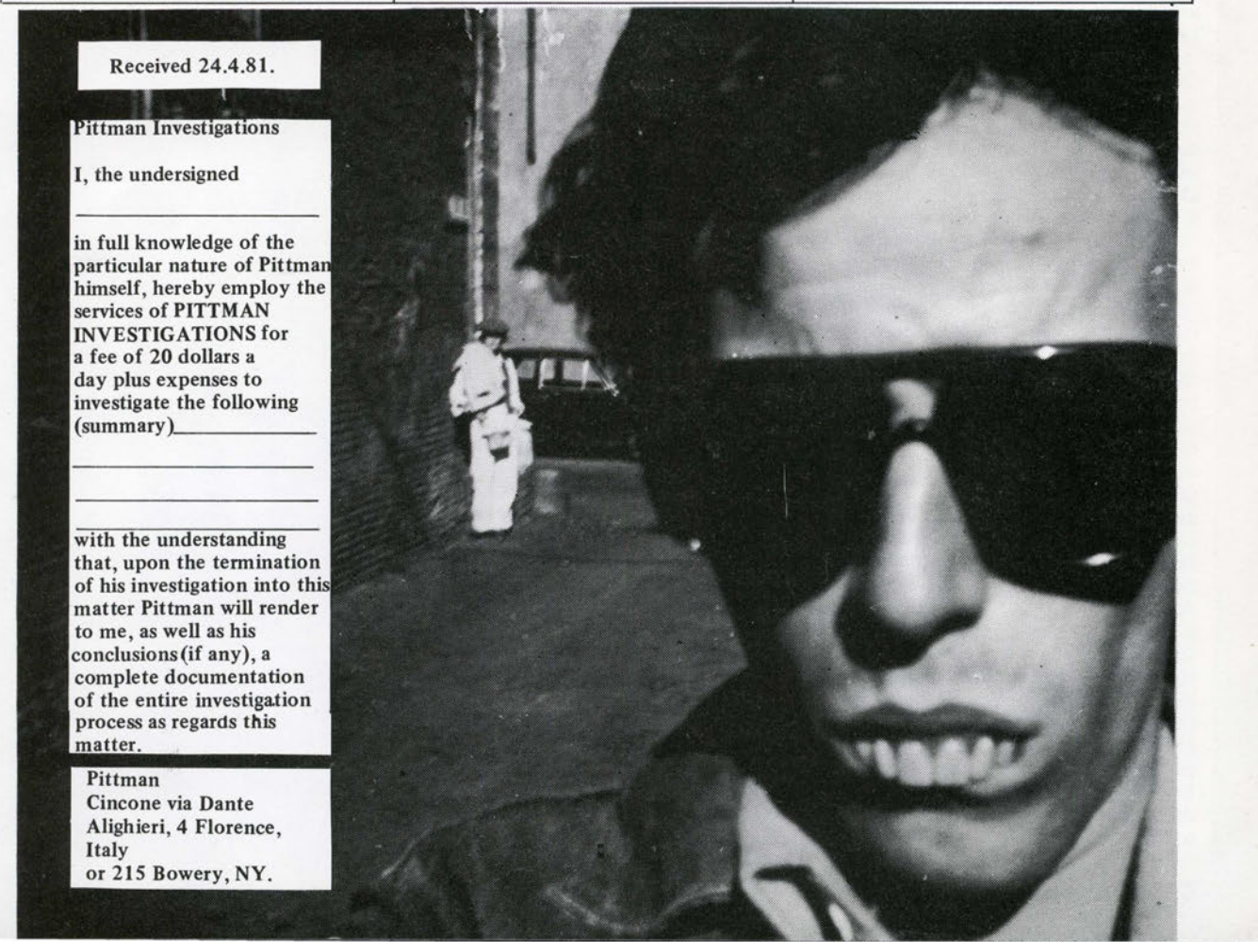
Emilyn Claid

I was not happy with Lynn McRitchie's writing about 'Headcase' — the performance given by Shirley Cameron & myself at Oval House last January. Shirley has written for your columns about her objections to the review section of the article, which appeared in Performance Magazine 10. I also found the review short-sighted & misleading.

I want to draw attention to other problems. The transcription of Lynn McRitchie's interview with us contains several errors. Some seem to be mishearings; 'Knots & Crosses' instead of 'Noughts & Crosses' — the title of one of our performances, correctly written in Performance Magazine August/September '79. Such errors should be cross-checked. In the most serious error, the name of the Czech performance artist I referred to should be *Petr Stembera* — not 'Peter Stanbrook'.

Anyone attempting to write about a subject as broad as performance should have some knowledge (Stembera is possibly the best known artist in his field in Eastern Europe), and failing that, should have enough respect for the subject to research new names.

Roland Miller



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Performing Fields and Orange Sheep

Lizzie Cox — Somerset
A year in the life of a field

Outside the Arnolfini gallery in Bristol it is a blustery spring day in 1981 but inside, in a small fabric box, it is September 1976 and the end of a long, high and hot summer. In the sunlight the sheep glow orange amidst the stubble of a harvested field. Soon the bright colour will be washed away in the outburst of rain that has been so long awaited, and for an hour the annual cycle of life in this Somerset field will be recreated in visual collage, dance and music.

Lizzie Cox's 'Somerset' derives from a visual diary Cox kept of life in a field near her studio in Nettleton through 1976 and '77; a diary provoked by the powerful image of the orange sheep on that first September day. Pages from the diary were displayed at the Arnolfini throughout the run of performances. Cox is a trained mime and a postgraduate in fine art printmaking of the Royal College of Art and it is these skills that transformed the sketches and notes so meticulously kept into a performance that recycles them into an interpretation of the original events. It is not Cox herself who performs however, though she has done in the past in works she has devised, but the dancer Kirstie Simson, as a deux ex machina manipulating objects, decor and through them time; within the eight foot wide cube. With its front wall missing the box is redolent with old-fashioned theatricality, like a theatre from childhood constructed from cornflake packets and scraps of material, Simson as both puppet and the fingers which control the scene. Though a work of immense technical sophistication and polish, the freshness and wonderment of a youthful perception of childhood shines throughout and it was no surprise to see some very young members of the audience enjoy the performance as much as their adult companions. In association with the performances, part of a season at the Arnolfini, Cox and Simson ran a series of workshops for local schools, which clearly extended the work's accessibility and its audiences.

This is fabric printing as performance, an animated collage of soft materials, with an intricacy of pockets and panels, velcro and slip-knots, all deceptively three-dimensional. Cox is working primarily with the flat surfaces that make up the sides of her cube, onto which she hangs, ties and sticks the various pieces of fabric that manage to create the illusion that what is in reality a box becomes, during performances, an open field. The appearance of the third dimension is created not by tricks of perspective but by the use of a few genuinely three dimensional accessories such as fabric seagulls and bales of hay, and, mostly, by the animation provided by the dancer.

As I have implied the dancer functions at once as both a part of the changing scene and as the outside force generating those changes. Through the eighteen sections of the performance, Simson takes on the ritual and symbolic significance of a character from an early fertility play, a 'life force', 'earth god', 'mother nature' or what you will, controlling a cycle of activity that includes the very fundamentals of life — sun, seasons, death and rebirth — the universal themes again, unusual concerns

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for the white-boiler suited fraternity of performance artists.

A one-time member of the Rosemary Butcher Dance Company and now with the X-6 Dance Group, Kirstie Simson moves with a grace, delicacy and precision that never allows her robust body to appear in any way cramped or constricted by the spatial limitations of the box in which she dances; indeed her exploitation of such a comparatively minimal space is highy skilled and always interesting. Her dancing and the music of Stuart Gordon (ex-Sticky George, The Shortwave Band and the Korgies) does much to develop the abstract qualities of this beautiful work for this is far more than a series of representational images of specific moments in the natural cycle of the field. Much of the visual satisfaction derives as much from the abstract patternings and shapes of the performance as from any sense of narrative or ability to understand exactly what is being depicted.

An extension into contemporary performance of a long tradition of English art concerning itself with the countryside, 'Somerset' is a profound work lightened with wit and genuine humour. New growths are teased from the ground in the new year like pieces in a reluctant pop-up book, and at what is structurally the climax of the piece the grown barley briefly before being laid on the ground becomes the missing wall of the box through which the spectators have been gazing. It is then that Stuart Gordon's sound tape reverts to silence before the entry of a brilliant red combine harvester — Simson in a vivid red Samurai-like costume — harvests the crop and bales the field. Like everything else in the work the combine harvester is seen not as an intrusion but as another part of the natural sequence of events. Lizzie Cox, on the sidelines throughout, helping with costume changes and bringing various objects to hand, now enters the field to build haystacks from the bales left by the dancers, herself bringing to an end a year that she has observed minutely and a performance that she has created from those observations.

Luke Dixon

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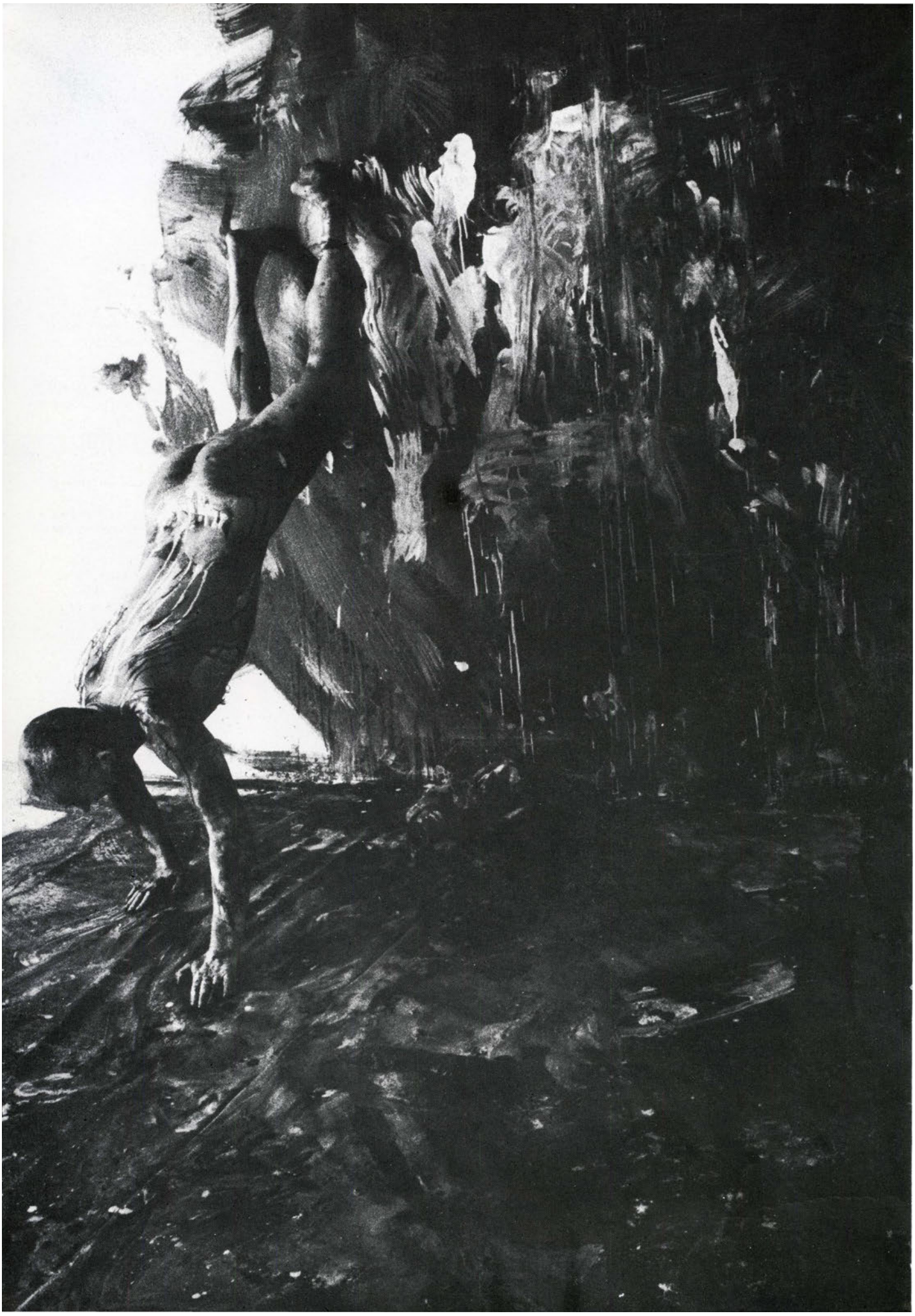

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Stuart Brisley Why The Legend?

Lynn McRitchie takes a closer look and raises some questions about the performance artist who currently has a major show at the ICA

Stuart Brisley must surely be the first performance artist, at least in this country, to be granted that art world accolade the 'major retrospective'. In one of the introductory essays in the exhibition catalogue, Paul Overy even calls Brisley 'not only one of the best performance artists, but also one of the best artists working now in any medium'. How is such a status achieved, in the apparently ephemeral area of 'live' work?

Not many people can have been personally present at all of Brisley's performances. Many of them have been done abroad, some as far away as Australia. Many who now revere his work were surely too young to patronise the art circuit at least when the earlier pieces were presented. Thus, to gain any comprehensive idea of the scope and nature of his work, it is inevitably necessary to turn to reports and comments in the press and art magazines, with their accompanying illustrations. Whilst denying, in a recent videotaped interview, that such means can ever even approach the experience of a live performance, Brisley has shown himself prepared to 'collaborate' with the recording device in such works as 'Moments of Decision and Indecision' performed before a fixed camera regularly recording the piece as it enfolded, and his continuing interest in and use of film. The power of the means of mechanical reproduction, and indeed their necessity if performance work is to have any recall for future years is thus recognised and used. The nature of Brisley's work is such that in regarding its photographic record, one is inevitably regarding, time and time again, the image of a (usually) single male figure, sometimes clothed, sometimes naked, engaged in activities involving the body in various acts of endurance, confinement, besmirchment, etc. Such photos are often accompanied by texts which use words like 'ritual', 'endurance', 'degradation', 'catharsis', etc. — the language of an exotic folk tale rather than the terminology of form and colour usually utilised to describe an artist's work. The content of the work, what Brisley actually does, and the reproduction of that in photo and text seem to have been sufficient to ensure the growth of what almost amounts to a legend around this performer.

Perhaps a personal recollection might throw some light on just what kind of process is at work here. In Edinburgh in 1971, I saw a piece by Brisley which I only now know to have been part of the 'Locations, Edinburgh', exhibition. Staged in Alexander's car showroom, opposite the Usher Hall, I passed it by as I regularly passed the showrooms on my way into town. I can still remember the white painted interior of the showroom, the wrecked bodies of Ford Consuls also painted white. Figures sprawled on the cars, bandaged, splotched with more white paint. It was an image of destruction and waste, sited opposite the home of some of the city's most prestigious cultural events. I can remember the piece, but at the time it did not really affect me profoundly. Because it was 'live', it had all the vulnerabilities of 'pretence'; it seemed not so much shocking as fairly obvious, almost oversimple.

A year or so later, however, I happened to see a photograph in the art press of Brisley's work 'And for today....nothing' done at Gallery House in 1972. I found myself rivetted by that black and white picture of the artist in a bath, lying fully clothed in filthy water, surrounded by chunks of meat and entrails. More water was shown pouring over his face, blinding him, plastering his hair to his forehead. That small photograph had a profound effect on me. I began to scan the art magazines for similar works. I discovered Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch and Gina Pane. The photos and accounts of their 'actions' seemed to hint at possibilities and processes so different from the staid world of Edinburgh College of Art as to have for me

Anderson

almost compulsive fascination. I read and re-read about Gina Pane climbing barefoot up ladders of razor blades, about lamb carcasses 'ritually disembowelled' in Nitsch's 'Orgy/Mystery Theatre' (if I remember the name correctly)..... IT was such accounts, and their accompanying photographs which indeed brought about my commitment to a medium, which, when I first became fascinated with its possibilities, I had never experienced at firsthand. The power of such images seems to be that far from being merely a mechanical 'memory trace', (which they obviously cannot be for work that has not been seen) they become rather the vehicle for a personal projection, a fantasy about what might have taken place. The powerful effect of such fantasy, especially when as is the case with Brisley's work, it is coupled with writings or statements about political commitment or the body as the site of confrontation, must surely have had its part to play in the creation of the present aura which surrounds his work.

Brisley's own statements in print about his work have been few. In one, made jointly with Lesley Haslam in the catalogue for the 'Arte Inglese Oggi' exhibition held in Milan in 1976, the term 'Performance Art' is rejected. 'Performance' in the sense of making or doing, it argues, is a part of the creation of all art work, and further has uneasy connotations of the theatre, a connection Brisley has always been anxious to deny. The work must rather be defined as 'Having to do with others'. 'Collective action' in performance and understanding, will provide a political dynamic which Brisley and Haslam argue was essential. This hoped-for 'collective statement' acquired a fusion of 'process, social context, political consciousness and collective action'. Should such a fusion not be achieved, 'The activity decays, to become one of the more obvious aspects of decadent individualism, no more nor less significant than other activities which have not transcended individuality to become common'. This is a remarkably succinct sketch of the pitfalls inherent in embarking upon art work that, in its own terms of definition, requires from its audience a high level of understanding and commitment, while, by its rejection of more familiar terms of reference, providing few clues to the nature of that required response. The history of the development of Brisley's work charts the contradictions of such a project, which in its stated

Photo left: Haslam

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commitment to 'response', largely fails to question the nature of the audience itself.

Brisley's early collaborative pieces often involving many other participants, were done in the late sixties and early seventies. 'Celebration for Due Process' was part of the 'Come Together' festival at the Royal Court Theatre in 1971. Bandaged figures clambered around towering scaffold from which 'Their leader', as Irving Wardle described Brisley in his 'Times' review, 'climaxed the event by vomiting repeatedly on the floor'. Wardle found this 'ceremony of nausea' puzzling. But a glance at that same issue of 'The Times' reminds us that the Vietnam war was then still raging. A common element in anti war protests of the day were event-like 'happenings' which by presenting some violent physical experience somehow attempted to construct response to that experience as a stand against authority. In the West, the desire to protest against tyranny has often taken the form of metaphorical rather than direct action — the famous 'events' of May '68 are an obvious example of this phenomenon. The language of protest was far simpler for Madame Binh, negotiator of the abortive Vietnam peace talks which were in that very same issue of 'The Times'. She simply called President Nixon 'a scoundrel'.

Without the consensus of protest in which it was formed, the continuing usage of bodily functions as part of art work presented a problem which Brisley recognised. Although continuing to maintain that all his work is about power, especially as expressed through institutions, Brisley has also stated that it is necessary to work within those institutions in order that the type of work he has chosen to present might continue to be taken seriously as 'art'.

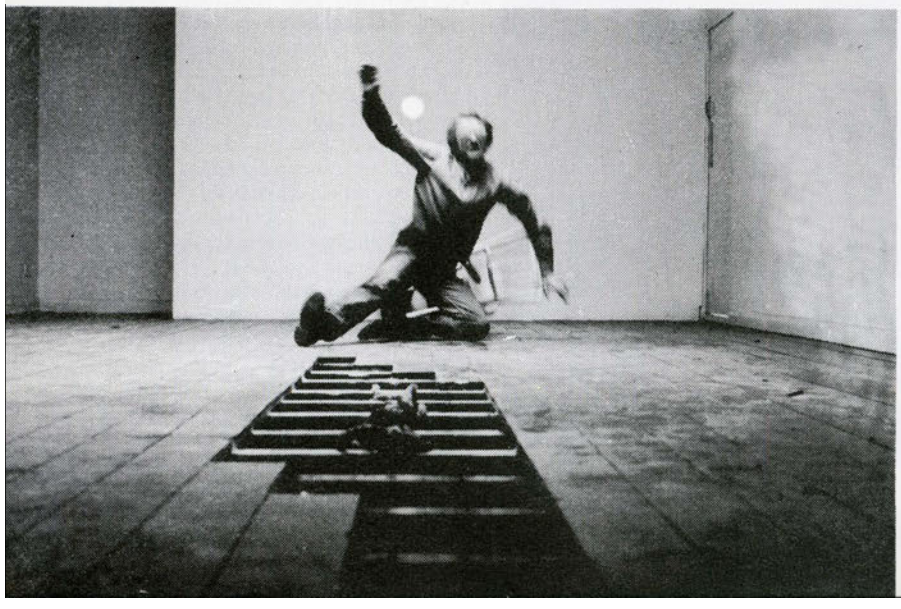
Seen outside an art gallery, self induced vomiting, nudity and mess making would be construed the behaviour of a madman. At first sight, this argument would seem to make sense. Certainly Brisley has shown himself very adept at the cunning conjunction of place, time and context in order to make work with considerable impact. Good examples of such conjunctions are the piece presented at the Hayward Annual in 1977, in which Brisley and a collaborator took turns hanging upside down from a rough wooden frame, having paint, plaster and water poured over their maked bodies. Or at Documenta Six in Kassell in 1977, where Brisley did not take up his allotted place next to Walter de Maria's drilling rig (sponsored by a Texas oil millionaire to the tune of $250,000), but took himself off to a separate site, dug a hole by hand (this time with a young German collaborator) and lived therein for several days. These are the sorts of 'actions' which, with their combination of personal effort and endurance and what appears to be a fairly direct political content have struck such a chord in those who value performance art's ability to turn action into metaphor. But surely a question must remain. What *is* the social value of such metaphor? What *is* the reality of the 'political content' it canvasses? For the apparent 'questioning' of an authority (which must ultimately be the authority of the state) while accepting the necessity for working within the very structures that authority maintains can be a dangerous game. Coum's 'Prostitution' exhibition at the ICA, which also questioned a kind of authority — the dominant sexual mores, seen through their darker, hidden aspects — was closed down in scandal, and cost them their access to such venues at least for the immediate future.

Has the subversive aspect of Brisley's work just not been noticed? Or is there more to the question than initially meets the eye? Brisley himself believes that the artist has no political power. His work is rather 'a gesture towards the possibility of change'. The components of the gesture are the use of his own body and actions as a metaphorical battleground where the subjection of the individual to various social pressures can be explored. Thus his work takes on a didactic function. This has often been described as its 'ritual' content.

Look again at the photographs. There he is, running, hanging, paint besmeared, alone, or with a younger collaborator. Latterly, the group works have been replaced by work done alone or with a single collaborator usually a younger male. Some how the male quality of this work is overwhelming. One can almost smell it. Often the photo catches the artists motionless, looking at what he has done, mouth hanging in exhaustion, open staring unseeing at the mess he has made. What does this look like? It looks like a child, a boy child, looking at well what? Its difficult to know what really. In initiation rites, those rituals so beloved of Brisley's commentators, it is usual for the young man to go through a ceremonial death and rebirth before joining the tribe as a man.

For young men, initiation rites are their passage to social acceptability. For women, the experience of exclusion from those same rites embodies their exclusion from the social function as a whole. The ultimate effect of ritual then, not apparently noticed during its enthusiastic incorporation into the art text, is the maintenance of the status quo. No matter how 'savage' or 'cathartic' their content, rituals celebrate the social structures within which they are allowed to exist. Brisley's work likewise by its very dependence on established venues, and the particular frame of reference they inhabit, nullifies its horrific content. In a gallery or art setting, a display of endurance or suffering does initially seem exceptional. But the shock effect quickly wears off. And the materials used to achieve it — paint, wood, the human body, clothed and unclothed, are ultimately perceived as the common elements of countless 'works of art' through the ages. Even the inclusion of 'real time' as part of the structure of works such as 'Ten Days' or '180 Hours' is metaphorical in that its duration can be arbitrarily assumed. The 'actions' of such detainees as Jimmy Boyle or the protesting prisoners in the H Blocks of Long Kesh or the cells of Armagh Jail have as their 'time base' the state-imposed duration of prison sentences lasting many years.

The ultimate effect of trying to look back over Brisley's work over the years is to perceive the slow but steady incorporation of a deliberately shocking and challenging content into a more familiar guise — artist as hero. Thus in the film 'Chance, History, Art', Brisley is seen emerging into the noise and light of Covent Garden after his confinement in the Acme Gallery during the piece 'Work for Two People A & B'. The audience empathises as he sniffs the air — we enjoy his enjoyment, we are pleased that he is free. Our lives, for a brief moment, seem to have been touched by his experience. In its filmic context, the same works well — like a traditional screen hero, Brisley momentarily embodies an aspiration — strength, endurance, ultimate triumph. The point however is that this is not a screenplay — and the gallery from which Brisley has emerged is neither a theatre nor a prison. To invite an audience to assume however briefly, that it is, which is what the film effectively does, misses what is surely the ultimate point — that the same authority, the same state, builds and maintains both, and more than a 'gesture towards change' is required to make things any different.



An interview with Stuart Brisley by John Roberts appears in the current 'Art Monthly'.

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European Theatre of War

Didactic Performance and Disarmament

Robin Morley

I would hope that when the Establishment, such as it is, takes one of its periodical examinations of the thorns in its flesh, that performance art and fringe theatre would still stand out for its septic malignancy. Along with its partner in media-induced discomfort, the Mole, its strength has been its undisputed delight in upsetting the applecart (along with the excreta of the carthorse) and risking the fruits of the bitten hand in treating the status quo as public enemy number one.

The fringe has a long and distinguished record of giving a voice to a plethora of causes and pressure groups. It has always seemed to be in the front-line of any battle for change. And it has been remarkably effective in dragging the media by the nose, and making it look at issues that it would prefer to ignore. This is a testament to its ability to select a well defined target, and to develop ways and means to hit this target in the right way, at the right time. To do this the fringe has displayed the dexterity of a mental-acrobat, developing from its original didactic forms into the realms of the musical and rock, into the currently popular cabaret style.

Maybe this can be taken for granted. But maybe taking it for granted is the worst thing that can happen.

Now what should prompt this tone of grim foreboding? I will explain. The fringe is one of a number of weapons in the hands of the radical Left, it is tried and proven, and, most significantly, it has the ability to respond quickly — to sprout up all over the place once it has latched itself onto an issue. If we were to examine the burning issues of the day, I am certain that anyone with a radical commitment would place nuclear disarmament amongst their top three priorities. And this is the nub of my argument: if this is commonly agreed to be one of the most important issues of our times, and if the fringe is such an important voice of dissent, the theatres, streets and shopping centres of Britain should be inundated with anti-nuclear performances. The problem: they aren't. I hardly think that I'm exaggerating when I surmise that more noise is made by gleeful back-slapping in the corridors of power at the lack of dissent, than is made by the dissenters.

Now why should this be? If the landed gentry can raise a stink about Cruise missiles being planted at the bottom of their rhubarb patches, why can't radical performers raise a whimper about the enforced depopulation of the world? The answers are many and varied — the welling tide of conservatism in the universities taking the sting out of campus radicalism, the fact that nuclear armament isn't a new issue, but an old one that has come back to life, the fact that the radicals of the eighties find themselves campaigning for four or five causes, rather than one. But do these resemble more excuses than reasons? True, virtually any radical work in the arts has (consciously or unconsciously) been brought close to the point of extinction at the hands of the funders, but issues like this don't go away because nobody wants to fund campaigns. Is the anti-nuclear campaign going to be deprived of a whole opportunity for careful *and* entertaining analysis? Is the limit of trying to build a broad and popular sense of discontent going to be C.N.D. and Rock Against Bomb-ism?

There is a real need for theatre and performance which defies the blinkered stumbling into hyper-armament, which register the connection between massive unemployment and the preparations for

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war, which refuse to let everyone sit idly by whilst governments pose, posture and sabre-rattle, and which supplies an 'upper' to counteract the valium-based propoganda which is dozing the world towards terminal apathy.

We don't have to be living in the build-up to a world war, but with the amount of interest that is around at the moment, we might as well be. So what's the fringe doing about it? Well, there have been 'The Last Anti-Nuclear Festival' and a tour of the 'Power Plays' by the Almost Free Theatre. There have been the odd shows from established groups, and

On the negative side there the inevitable 'post-apocalypse' absurdist productions

sporadic outcrops of street theatre by both the well-knowns, and the instantly formed groups — which is a very welcome sight. But that's nearly all. On the negative side there are the inevitable 'post-apocalypse' absurdist productions, which only serve to compound the problems. Indeed, they are living manifestations of the problem, because they not only exploit nuclear devastation for their own devious purposes, they also *accept* the war. And that is precisely the problem. Now, just before you slip a couple of cyanide tablets into your coffee, let me say that this isn't quite all that is going on at the moment. The last few months have seen one bright spot emerge on the horizon in the form of a theatre company, made up of performers from a number of groups, working together under the heavily ironic title, *The European Theatre Of War*. I call them a bright spot merely because I hope that they will be the first of a number of performance groups formed specifically to fill the gaping canyon that I have been describing.

As with any group worth its salt that is formed around a campaign, *The European Theatre of War* have chosen their target audience, and are not intending to be *the* group to take up this issue. They are aiming, rightly, towards the unconverted, and are experienced enough to know that that means going out to find a public as well as expecting one to come and see them. They therefore offer a street performance as well as an indoor show. They aren't afraid to go over the 'same old arguments' because they intend to go over them to people who don't know them, and their style is, by and large, a punchy raw kind of stand-up that would hold its own against a back-drop of traffic and shoppers. As I have indicated, they aren't the only kind of group that is needed, but their commitment (as well as their ability to eke a survival out of this circuit) should be an encouragement to others, whatever their theatrical cup of tea is.

I managed to see them at the *London Musicians Collective* where the audience was, not surprisingly, more or less converted, and so missed out on the more interesting audience responses. The performance I saw was their (rather misleadingly titled) Cabaret. A more accurate description might be agit-prop revue, and I must state from the outset that agit-prop is not my favourite serving of theatre. My argument against it is that it encourages an over-simplification of characters that *may* be amusing in damning enemies, but can be positively offensive in dealing with potential allies. Their performance fell straight into the trap, arousing a wave of tut-tutting to equal O'Toole's Macbeth. That aside, and taking into account my cynical view of agit-prop, there were still many sketches in the performance which struck home, some because they caused involuntary spasms of hysterical laughter, some because they hit the nail squarely on the head. As well as the good, there were liberal splashings of the indifferent, and one or two of the downright dire.

The performance began with the most stunning entry of a marching band I can recall. Brilliantly extracting the best out of this form, they made a very passable rendition from Kurt Weill, turning neatly into a drill display that would pickle the cockles of anyone unfortunate enough to have had to suffer National Service. Subsequent sketches communicated their commitment to a cause, rather than their expertise at carrying off a revue. In explaining their viewpoint, it soon became apparent that they had plumped for the 'twittering flowers, and blooming birds' approach, so reminiscent of those halcyon days of the hippy-eco sixties. Not to decry the ideology underlying an ecological policy, there are ways of saying the same thing that verge towards a realistic cynicism that seems to be shared by ninety-nine per cent of the population, and there are ways which revolve the guts of all but one per cent. But, fair enough, they are working in an area which demands having a risk-ridden approach to the audience, and if you're in for an inch, why not make it a mile?

If a handful of men can destroy the northern hemisphere in four minutes - surely you can find something to do.

And to be even fairer, they did consider their audience. They would not let us be mere spectators, but considered us part of the debate. Thus, they had to take the risk of involving us in the action they created. This varied from what felt like the worst of pantomime, to the genuinely disturbing.

The second half fared better. Starting with a stunningly aggressive delivery of Rumour's speech (I refer to a little backwater of English drama — Shakespeare's Henry the Fourth Part Two) adapted with contemporary insertions by Robert Stredder into one of the most devastatingly accurate realisations of the folly of British parliamentarians that I can remember. Not to let the audience go, this was followed by Dave Rappaport's drily irreverent vicar's sermon on the theme of 'If a handful of men can destroy the Northern Hemisphere in four minutes, surely you can find *something* to do' — the extrapolations ranging from the obvious to the not-so. Much must be said for this excellent entertainer in keeping the whole proceedings tottering along on a very good line of his own wit.

The action throughout was sustained with a barrage of pyrotechnics, horror-flicks of Hiroshima, and some good music.

As I have said before, more important than the individual merits and defects of their performance, *The European Theatre of War* has done a great service by its existence alone. Quite apart from what they have achieved in terms of this particular issue, they have made a bold step towards opening the door for a re-emergence of those small-scale theatrical ventures that managed to lift their heads above water, and in spite of economic and political gloom. Bad

There's no point in trying to play by the rules of the provider because they've tossed the rule book overboard.

times need exciting and dangerous theatre — and whilst there is no need to snub the groups that are already established, one would hope to see new groups and a whole new mentality in their work that expresses the feelings of the times. What is there to lose? We've all seen that good reputation and long-service are no longer a guarantee of bread and butter in the future. There's no point in trying to play by the rules of the providers, because they've tossed the rule book overboard.

And the time is certainly ripe for a form of performance that is as vibrant and shocking as the first onslaught of Punk. Why? Because the well-oiled propaganda machine is the weapon used in the war of attrition on the minds of the public, and no battle was ever won by adopting the tactics that the opposition had chosen to suit *their* ends. If being reasonable leads to such ghastly ends, be unreasonable. You don't have to be a trained performer to express this kind of dissent any more than punks needed to be classical musicians. In fact it helps not to be. But I would hope that people from all areas of the arts would have the gumption to realise that uninhibited imagination was their main skill, and that if actions are to take place that seize the public's imagination, that they ought to be out there with the rest. But if they aren't — don't wait for them. Anyone can let their dissent be seen and anyone can let it be heard. Ignore good taste, and let your imagination run riot. What does it matter about closely argued arguments? Give the public a rush of creative energy, and they might adopt a sudden taste for life. One thing's for sure, the powers that be could never have got away with what they have, unless they had manufactured a depressed and worried population. So if we can get them smiling and laughing in the streets...!

Pete Shelton

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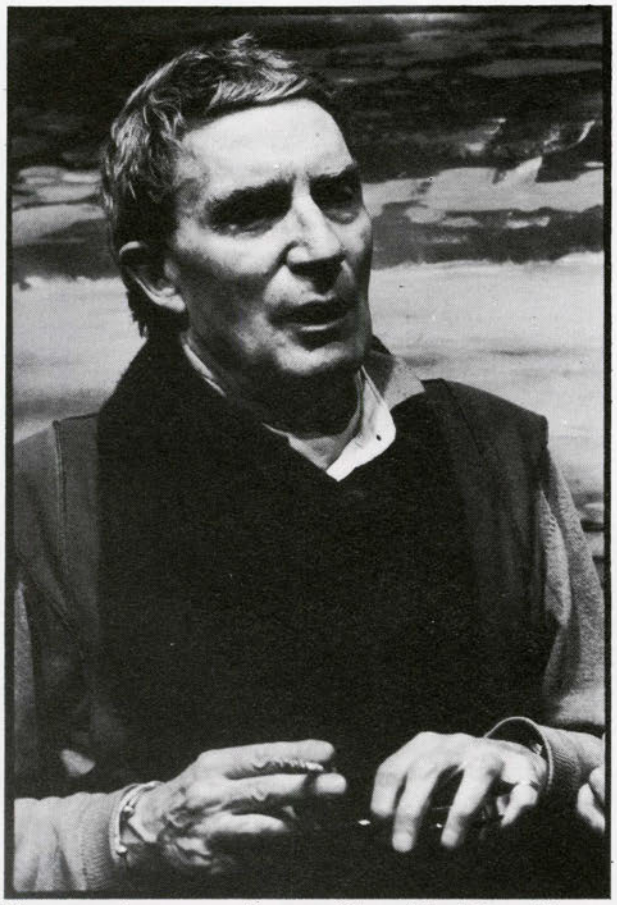
The Deceptual Art of Brion Gysin



Brian Beresford

No one contemporary artform could possibly stake a claim on the work of Brion Gysin. Since the Thirties he has been a visual artist, composer, musician, inventor, restauranteur, popular novelist, poet, and performance artist. His collaborations with William Burroughs and others have inspired innovative activities in film, pop music, performance, and a seemingly endless stream of academic dissections and underground literary ephemera. He and Burroughs were pioneers in using tapes and slides in multi-media performances in the late fifties and early sixties at the old ICA and other such venues. Along with mathematician Ian Sommerville, they regarded their work a genuine scientific experiment in the use of time and the effects of cut-up images on the human psyche. While Burroughs was the acknowledged father of the cut-up in literature, Gysin was one of the earliest exponents of sound poetry and is well remembered for early BBC broadcasts of this. His most widely read book The Process is centred around a sound poem 'rub out the word' which when played as a tape loop could destroy whole segments of history. The Process also reflected his and Burroughs interest in cults at the time, notable the Scientologists and the ancient secret Brotherhood of Assassins.

His arrival in London recently marked a full circle in his life, as he was here to open an exhibition of his paintings at the October Gallery. Some forty-five years previously his work was accepted, put in the catalogue, for the major Surrealist exhibition in Thirties Paris, then rejected on the orders of Andre Breton, for disrespect. Talking to him half an hour before he was due to catch a plane, Rob La Frenais and Graham Dawes asked him about this early incident:

Rob La Frenais What exactly happened when Paul Eluard and Andre Breton refused to hang your paintings after including them in the catalogue?

Brion Gysin Not a lot. I should have broken the windows or the doors or....

RL What happened, was it pronounced, or what?

BG No no, there was never a trial, nothing fair like that in surrealist circles.

RL Do you have any vivid memories of that time?

BG I was shattered, naturally. Shattered. However I had my revenge by having my first one-man show at the same gallery, in the spring of 1939, then the war came along and I was in Switzerland, and afterwards in America. And so that whole period became *pre-war*. Overnight. (laughter) It became pre-war.

RL What happened to you in the war?

BG The most important thing that happened was that I was given to learn Japanese for a couple of years. And so it had a great deal of influence on my attitude towards surfaces, attacks of ink onto the paper and brushwork and all that sort of thing, which has very much applied to my painting ever since.

RL Were you drawn into Scientology along with William Burroughs?

BG No, I introduced Burroughs to all that by telling him my... my *ludicrous* story which is caricatured so hard in *The Process*. Scary Mary really exists and is said to be running the whole thing today, I don't know whether it's true; Ron Hubbard is supposed to be dead and embalmed on the boat. Scary Mary's really running it and Susie Meyer, whatever she's called, has gone to jail in the States which is a good place for her.

RL Exactly how many of those characters from *The Process* are real characters?

BG Well.... Hamid is very real — that's Hamri the painter, and everything.... as he said to himself when it was read to him.... everything is true!

RL What, even the Lear Jet?

BG No no, *his* part.

RL Ah, that part. I wondered if anything out of the second part was based on....

BG Oh yeah, yeah. Everything. Most everything. I don't write about things that don't happen. Experience.... some people can but I can't.

RL What do you think of some of the attempts to perform yours and Burroughs work.

BG Well, we were the first to try and do it. At La Boheme, which was a sort of attempted Cafe-concert sort of thing in '59 in Paris. And lots of attempts have been made all round, one of them being the occasion to meet these people who are running this gallery.

RL Is this the *Theatre of all Possibilities?*

BG Yes.

RL What did you think of that attempt? I've seen it.

BG I prefer very much what they did in the following year, the Billy the Kid piece where William and I are characters in the final episode. Did you see that?

RL No, I saw the one they did in England two years ago. I've forgotten the name of that particular.... the Wild... no I'm thinking of this other group, the one that did the *Wild Boys*. Have you seen the other... the Belgian lot, *Le Plan K?* What did you think of their attempt?

BG Well.... well, they're good boys. Ah... it's the *word* that always gets in the way.

RL That's exactly what I thought. It hinges on a lot of the things talked about around our magazine on the nature of Performance.... as opposed to acting. Getting across ideas in a live way. I'm interested to know what conclusions you've drawn from seeing this work performed.

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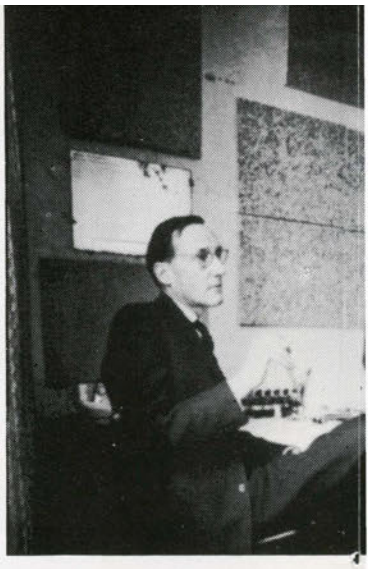

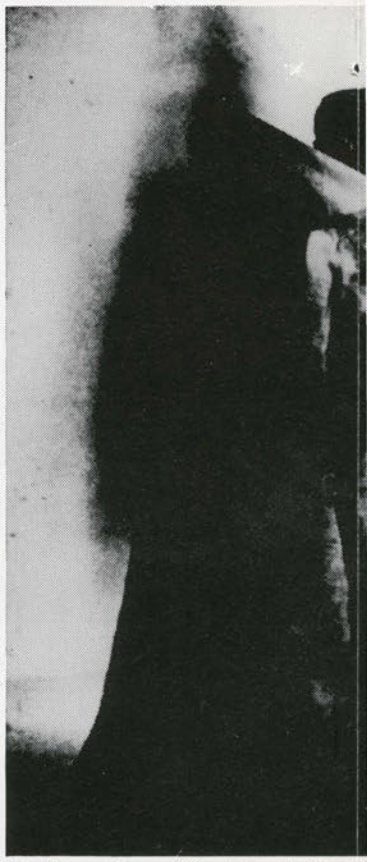

Left to right: Le Domaine Poetique - Projections, 1960. Burroughs and Gysin in the Beat

BG Well I've always been.... let's see. I've worked in the theatre ever since I was a kid. And first of all on scenery when I was very young I was an assistant to people and things like that, and then afterward again on costumes on Broadway in those big musicals in the first years of the war. I immediately took a theatrical attitude towards the... the group which had been organised by someone else but which I practically took over which was called the *Domaine Poetique* in Paris which was a take-off from the *Domaine Musicale* which had been introducing electronic music to Paris in those same years just previous to that and.... we were successful enough to be categorised by Georges Mesunis in that elaborate book that he wrote about *Fluxus*... under several headings. And the most flattering one was under the heading of Expanded Cinema. Partly because he made a mistake and thought that we *had* made films. At the time the slides which you saw the other night... did you see the slides?... well some of those were part of a show that we put together so *seamlessly* as manipulated by Ian Sommerville, that he may have thought it was a movie. He may have... sort of... been in a daze that evening, but it did approximate that theatre which has gone around now, the kind that you must be interested in yourselves, the kind where people work into projected film.

RL There are a whole range of experiments going on in that area. At the moment it is difficult to describe it.

BG Well, my solution has been to dub it all *Deceptual Art.*

RL Deceptual Art? Ah, that can go into the headline. (laughter) On this basis, some of the incidents, some of the research into the use of tape, slide and film, and specifically the writing, suggestion an actual physical basis to experiments that seem quite subjective and theoretical; things like time travel for example. Have any incidents taken place that suggest a physical basis?

BG William has a great story about closing down the Maple Leaf Cafe, or something or the other, in Dean Street or some such place as that. He hexed it out of existence, but I've forgotten the

Photos left to right: Nicolas Tikhomirov, Loomis Dean

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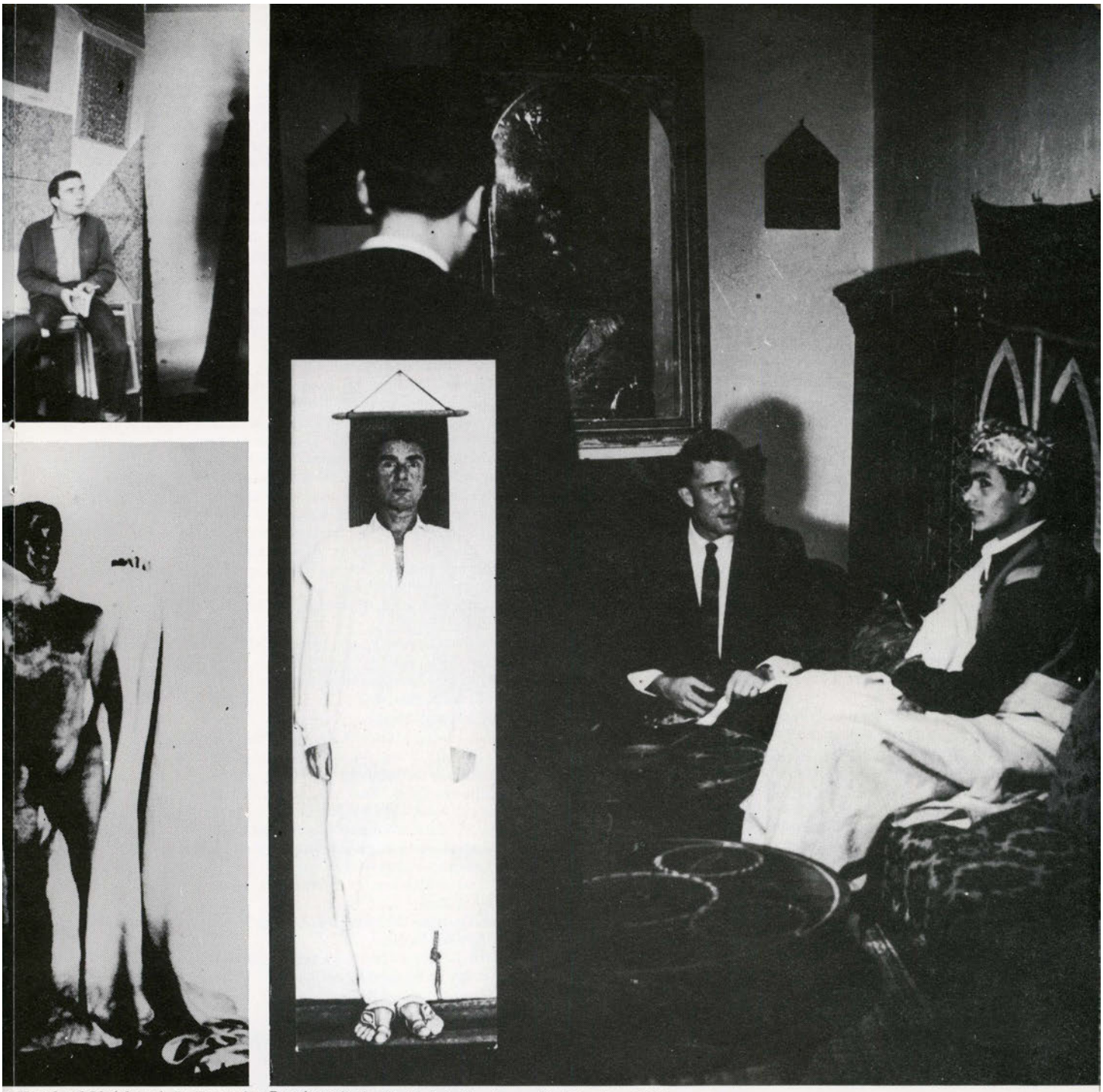

at Hotel, 1959 (above). Le Domaine Poetique (below). Gysin's Restaurant in Tangier, 1956.

name of the place.

RL What did he do?

BG Well he was poorly dealt with, or poorly served there, so he vowed vengeance on them and recorded all sorts of noises of breaking glass and fights and things like that and went around playing them up and down in front of that place until somebody did smash their window, and then eventually the whole place went out of business, which was what he'd intended. (laughter)

GD One area that might interest the Performance Magazine is what you did with the Domain Poetique, with the projections. What were the poems, the permutated poems?

BG Yeah, they were both recorded, and given live by me, and images of myself were projected on myself, as you see on the poster for the show. It's a photograph of myself three times-two projections of the same face — one on the wall, one on my face, and a photograph across my face too. Looking ten years older, in fact looking more like I look *now*. Take a look at it. That's what I really looked like that day, and that's exactly the same face projected on my own real face.... and look how I look, much as I am today. So this is playing with time... with my own age.

GD And you also did.... I saw the thing about the ICA performance in 1960 where you had a cut-up prose tape going and.... you did some painting at the same time. Was that this?

BG Yeah... oh that was done in, let's see, must have been in '63 at the Paris Biennale. What we did at the ICA was also to.... because one didn't have the equipment to sort of throw sound around, one had a loop going here, and another loop going there.... in order to distract people from where the message was coming from. They were obviously *visually* more attracted than aurally, because most people except musicians are, so they watched what was going on, and when I finished it and just stood still they became aware of the fact that there was something else going on down there, and I simply moved away, and when they looked again, I had to all intents and purposes *disappeared* in front

ean (above), Nicolas Tikhomirov (below) and Herbert List.

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of their eyes. That was playing with time, and the nodes of human perception.

RL What was the reaction when your tapes were being broadcast by the BBC in 1960?

BG It got the second worst reception they'd ever had from their panel of listeners. What was *worse* actually was something by Auden on Britain, but we got the second lowest marks ever achieved.

RL How did it come by, that you made that broadcast?

BG Because George Macbeth,....does he still work at the BBC?

RL I've no idea.

BG I guess in January or February 1960 he had read 'Minutes to Go'. He wrote to me and asked me if I would like to come over and read some of it on a programme of his. At that time I said I had a great many other things to do, but I didn't have the equipment to do them with. So if he introduced me to Douglas Clevedon, who was still producing elaborate sound things like Dylan Thomas's 'Under Milk Wood' and stuff like that.....So he fixed a date for that summer, and they were hoping for some new sixteen-track machines, which were tremendous news at that time. We would have a chance to work in the 'Footsteps' studio in Shepherd Bush, you know, where they make sounds for haunted houses, and wind and waves and birds and creaking doors and things like that. And that's what the technicians were able to do, the very elaborate overlays that were necessary at that time. Now you can just push a button and do all those things with a great deal more ease. We did first of all the 'Pistol Poem' which was their revolver shot; I had brought a cannon shot with me, not realising that it would be too long....I mean naturally....because here we began dealing with sound as material measurable in centimetres, even in feet and inches, and the whole point of the exercise was to do things treating sound as if it was material...tangible material; as indeed it had become since the invention of tape. And so we went to work, we did the pistol shot one metre away, two metres away, three, four, five metres, and then a permutation of those numbers produced a pistol poem, and then later, on the same principle but with speed changes, which were very difficult to achieve in those days...I mean practically somebody...Douglas himself had to put his finger in some place; sort of slow up the machine gradually, or speed it up or vice versa, or slow it down and re-record that in the opposite direction so it's not being recorded speeded up and all that sort of thing...So that took a whole day or more, and that was *'I Am That I Am'*.

RL Yes I've heard that tape in Ullises Carrion's shop in Amsterdam. And Junk is....

BG We did *Junk Is No Good Baby* and *Kick That Habit Man*.

RL I imagined myself in 1960, listening to the Home Service, or was it the Third Programme? And hearing that coming out, I imagined myself being quite startled by it.

BG Well, the sort of people who were not startled were ladies who had worked in textile factories and found it very like the sort of thing they were used to with the warp and the woof, weaving things, and they wrote a lot of charming letters about how....they realised....they realised semi-unconsciously that this was sound being used as material, so they compared it to their work with material. And the most interesting person that answered wrote to me first, then came, and moved into the next room at the Beat Hotel, even got married in there the first time....David Allen who then went on to do *Soft Machine* and *Gong* and wherever he is today...where is he?

RL Recording as an individual artist I think. Have you ever used ritual magic in your work? Actual, prescribed ritual?

BG Neither of us....well I'll speak for myself certainly are very interested in Aleister Crowley, no.

RL Well it's not just Crowley. There is a tradition of ritual magic, casting spells etc. that is of interest in performance work.

BG Sorcerers apprentices and other stylish figures.

RL Have you ever experimented with that sort of thing?

BG Well naturally in Morocco it's a part of daily life, so... I've seen a great deal of it, yes. The biggest influence that...that it ever had on me was when I lost my business over some magic... talisman, you know...I found in my kitchen which had been recently whitewashed, so recently that I asked if anyone had oiled the ventilation fan, and they all said 'Oh yes Mr. Brion we oil it well'. And I said — 'Right, get me a ladder, I'm going to see for myself'. And when I got up there I found that there was an object so freshly laid there that there was just a very little soot on top of it and it was the anthropologists delight! It was just a little package about as big as a pack of cigarettes and around it it had seven seeds, seven shards of mirror, seven something else, I've forgotten. And I opened the package, which was glued together with some nasty mixture which looked like chewing gum and menstrual blood, hairs in it, and....found an illegible text in it. Also inside the package were two little pieces of lead which had been carved with a sharp penknife, and one of them was the head of a bull, and the other was a very recognisable profile of myself, about as big as my little fingernail, each one. And I took the paper to show to two Arab friends, one of whom was very emancipated and he had...like, a German mother. He invented a system for learning Arabic, as I say, as I say he was a very emancipated person and he was *horrified* at even the sight of this...this... wouldn't even touch it at all, so I said, 'Well, don't touch it but can't you read something there?' So, the writing was from right to left horizontally, and then given a half-turn, and then was rewritten to form a grid, which you find all over in lots of my work, in a sense. And the sentence, as it was read, *could* say, could be calling on the Demon of Smoke to leave the...'Let, may Ibrahim (Brion?) leave this building as the smoke leaves this chimney. And it was in a matter of *hours* almost, I was out on the street with my shirt on, having been ripped off completely by these Scientologists who made me, enviegled me into signing a piece of paper da da da de da you know *helping* me, helping me out

RL What?

BG Yes helped out. I was helped right out of the house! (laughter).

RL Ah, so you *have* had dealings....

BG Well, there you are.

RL But not any longer.

BG Well, I looked at this thing, I said 'this has brought about a disaster so what...when you...if disasters, if they have occurred already, can only be returned over the other way into some sort of...something gained. What's lost is regained, so I turned the grid into all of my work here. (indicates paintings) It's evident here. The roller is a little invention which came later in '61 which has also produced an infinite grid surface. And so that was my main... most interesting contact with magic. Oh, I've had lots of others, you can't live in Morocco for a minute without being wrapped up in...it's all around.

RL Finally, what do you think's going to happen in the next decade? Any prediction?

BG Is there going to be one? That's the main question, isn't it? Is there going to be another decade?

Nicolas Tikhomirov

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Artworks

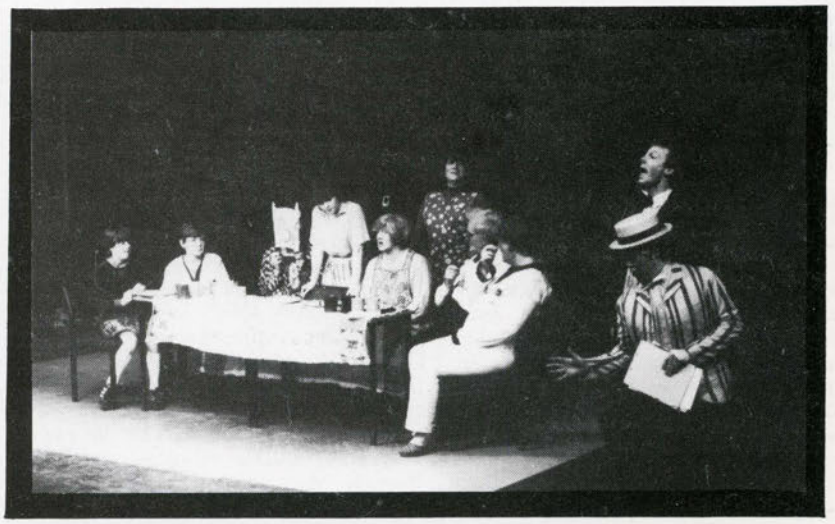
In a tough working-class area of Glasgow, twenty inhabitants of rival communities are re-enacting Zola's "Germinale". Two hundred and fifty local people celebrate Halloween at Kirkcaldy by burning down the Gates of Hell, a giant environmental scultpure. In Liverpool, the defeat of a gangster's scheme to turn Bootle into the Las Vegas of Britain is played out by a cast of one hundred and ten. All these events are the product of Artworks, a unique combination of a performer and director who seek to channel the powerful emotional response they find in totally deprived areas into a natural self expression. To do this, they produce environments, spectacles and shows that involve a large cross-section of the local populace. Fascinated at the challenge of how a small team of artists produce work in conjunction with literally hundreds of local folk, I travelled to Bootle where I met Artworks members, Neil Cameron and John Bolton.

I asked Neil about the background to their work. "My commitment comes from a deep emotional involvement with the tribal, Celtic sense that the Scots still retain. I still maintain that Scotland has not been made into a European state and it still retains the remnants of a strong religious culture which interests me more than anything else. The only place I find it anymore is in hard working class areas and I'll work anywhere that I think I'll find it. For example, the only redeeming feature of a 60,000 people slum in Easterhouse, Glasgow, is in the fact that it has a community and there's a feeling there that exists in Scottish working class areas that is to do with being part of a community, of having links, of obeying codes and practices. There's a universal subconscious that's working in a much stronger way in these areas than you find anywhere else outside of them. In Scotland it's tribal and that feeling is very important for our work."

Artworks do projects regularly around Glsagow and Edinburgh which they regard as their home base. It's this relationship to specific areas that keeps up their artistic impetus. Moving outside Scotland for the first time, they had found in Bootle a deprived area with more than its share of problems.

With the decline of the Liverpool docks, the strongly Irish-Catholic community there has an unemployment level of 53% and its long roads of terraced houses have a desolate air. Local government reorganisation now means its fortunes are controlled by Southport Borough Council, a comfortable middle-class suburb of Liverpool, which seems to have little understanding of its problems.

I mentioned a personal feeling that this way of working in a community of which



Phil Hyde

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one was not a member was open to dilettantist input and glib initiatives. John agreed: 'We're not completely happy about this project, partly because we're a long way outside our usual home base, and partly because here the network s aren't sufficiently strong enough for this to be the seed of something else. Whereas in areas where we've worked before, there's always been a strong local group that's kept going and produced other performances. But we work in areas again and again. There are five areas around Glasgow and Edinburgh that we have regular projects with and the group in Easterhouse is now doing work that would put most professional actors in the shade.'

Artworks concentrate on performances by people who have had no contact with acting or traditional drama. They shy away from amateur dramatic societies, loaded as they are with preconceptions about performing. When commissioned to work in an area, the group gradually infiltrate, discussing ideas with local people and assessing particular skills and attitudes. There is no problem about local involvement. Within three weeks of a seven week project, they have to turn people away. The structure is then devised by Neil and John from the local input and fleshed out with improvisation work. John was vehement about rehearsal technique — 'Drama games are out! Traditional ideas of getting people relaxed and trust games are just not on. Once we've found the situation and the performers, it's just go and try it. Straight in at the deep end.'

How then, did they overcome resistance to performing in role? 'For the big musicals, we often use the family structure as the vehicle for people to go through the story,' Neil replied. 'So a mother plays a mother, kids play kids so in some ways they're not acting. They play themselves and there's a straight emotional response to the audience.' I wondered if this incurred criticism for perpetrating stereotypical roles. 'Such criticism would come from a completely middle class background. The theatre establishment never sees any of these shows, they're never reviewed so no-one would come who would make that comment. In Scotland, the family is not seen in that light, it's still the strongest unit working in society. I believe we've reached a post-political period where politics have ceased to have much meaning in people's action to make their lives better amongst the most squalid conditions. The average person living in Britain would not believe how people are living in these areas where we work. You would just not believe it. Questions of the family being a good social thing or not does not apply to these people. People coming from the outside with a liberal, political stance and middle class cultural values would see our shows politically as being in every way prejudiced. The typical roles of women in our shows would be heavily criticised by a feminist viewpoint but the reality of life in a working class area like this is that the women run it and almost all the work we've ever done stems from the power and activity of women in a local area.'

'We shy away from making definite political points in our shows,' continued John. 'I hate to have our work labelled as left-wing stuff — for me, that's the death of theatre because of the dogma and the forced style of trying to make something theatrical out of the statistics. At the same time, it's immediately apparent that our work isn't right-wing, either.'

As Brecht says: 'Artists should be allowed to entertain....

Despite this, Artworks is not apolitical, but due to the delicate situation between the locals and the Council, they had to avoid tackling issues in Bootle that would have been more challenging. The local venue, Hornby Hall, had only been booked after a stiff session with the council Chief Executive and his solicitor present. Instead, they show themselves to have the straightforward approach that is the hallmark of a radical attitude. They have not sought any revenue or project funding. Instead, they insist that the local community vindicates its intent to work with them by raising the fee through local fund raising and application to funding bodies. The group insists on remaining small and flexible so it can respond to local need and ability. They reject any notion of a 'house style' so that each show is designed around the ideas and contributions that come from the participants. Above all, they seek to bring out the direct performances of people who have probably not even stepped inside a theatre, let alone on a stage.

Half an hour before 'Forever Bootle!' starts at the Everyman, the foyer looks like the local labour club on a Friday night. Folk sit about supping ale and kids plead for pop and crisps. Newly fledged stage managers dart up and down, marshalling the under-sevens towards the green room. John Bolton has a few sharp words for some twelve year olds who have chosen the time honoured cure for pre-show nerves of a glass or two of whisky. Inside, the band, made up of musicians from the Liverpool club circuit, is warming up the audience. Despite packing Hornby Hall for three nights, the show has drawn a full house to th Everyman. Soon the story of the Murphy family's struggle against Big Jake Barrett's casino building plans starts to unfold.

The performance is done on an empty stage with few trappings and the large team soon prove themselves equal to the task of carrying the full attention of the audience and of specifying the different locations. The story has the simplicity of a tabloid banner headline, 'Heroine Daughter Takes On Exploiter Landlord', and with Good and Evil polarised and personified in Sandra Murphy and Jake Barrett respectively, the scene is set for a classic confrontation. Sub-plots develop intriguingly: the bailiffs turn out to be a comic knockabout duo and Sandra falls in love with Jake's son, Bartholomew. Flashback episodes remind us of how Bootle people have withstood invaders before in Roman times and during the Blitz. The whole story builds to a climax with Jake kidnapping the Murphy twins as ransom against their moving out and is denounced in his nightclub by the family disguised as a cabaret act. In the ensuing tussle, Bartholomew is shot and Jake is exposed and arrested. It ends on a tragic but triumphant note and everyone crowds the stage to belt out the final song with unashamed enthusiasm. The audience responds with equal fervour. The elderly woman next to me declares 'it beats the telly any night'.

It certainly did. Despite being a full two hour show, it kept me totally engaged. The pot-pourri of styles was fascinating, combining heroics and pantomime, clowning and melodrama, soap opera and satire. It became like an alternative variety show. The clearly focussed scenes, each acting as a self-contained episode made for accessible watching but by way of contrast one had to work hard to follow the complexities of the quasi-Elizabethan plot and sub-plots. But at times the show was too cosy, it lacked bite and tended too much towards being good family entertainment at the expense of challenging the public.

Nevertheless, it's an impressive achievement for Artworks and local people. As Brecht says, 'Artists should be allowed to entertain' and why should artists have all the fun? Given intelligent parameters and direction, the collaboration of artist and layperson works well. Artists had begun to work within a community setting during the late 60's. Believing that the arts had an essential role to play in social development, they had encouraged local involvement in art forms that would have been either foreign or inaccesible. This notion of social enhancement through active participation is not in favour today. Instead, the gradually pervading emphasis is on the 'artistically unwashed' travelling to 'centres of excellence' where they will experience artists of 'quality' purveying work of the 'highest possible standards'. In 1973, Albert Hunt wrote '...the theatre itself, by emphasising its own professionalism, runs the risk of adding to the mystique of the expert.' He was calling for a demystification of the theatre so that it became a tool of practical self-education 'giving people understanding, control and the power to make decisions about changing their environments'. Armed with ideas such as these, a whole body of work had developed throughout the 70's. It was labelled community arts and its practitioners initiated murals painted and designed by the people who would see them everyday. They created shows from conversations recorded in shops and launderettes. They believed that the experience of making a piece was as important as the product itself. Today there is clandestine disapproval for community arts. It is accused of substituting 'relevance for quality'. Will it stay in good health during the 80's or will it ail as support and funds are reallocated?

Phil Hyde

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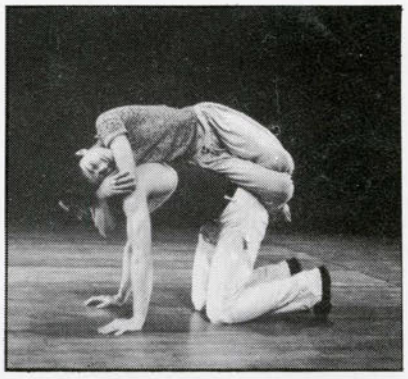
The 'Small Dance'

Liz Stolls looks back at recent performances by Steve Paxton and others at Riverside Studios



Steve Paxton and Lisa Nelson

Chris Harris

When it comes to the arts we British have a tendency to hang on to what we consider 'new' long after it has been established and overtaken elsewhere.

In dance we are especially unadventurous. The Graham technique for instance, though established over twenty years ago, still has a very firm hold over the way we think about contemporary dance. It is widely taught in dance schools as *the* modern technique, and still has a major influence over many British dance companies.

In America since the 1960's, generations of Cunningham and post-Cunningham choreographers have been working and evolving their own ways of moving but they have had only an impact on the fringe in this country — on groups which are rarely seen in performance because of the lamentable lack of small dance venues in London and elsewhere.

There are encouraging signs, however, that we are prepared to move on. The recent Dance Umbrella seasons have ensured that new dance has at least been seen by a greater number of people, and venues have shown an increasing interest in bringing over foreign companies, as with the mixture of English and Americans recently at Riverside Studios.

Steve Paxton and his company Freelance Dance were the only dancers to use improvisation in performance here. They are experienced performers mainly interested in improvisation both as performance art and as a means of creating dance. Paxton is one of the post-Cunningham generation who took dance back to its basics. He, like Tricia Brown and Yvonne Rainer, began to work with 'pedestrian dance' — simple non-technical movements such as walking and running — but Paxton's minimalism took him even further. He stood still and played with the minute movements taking place inside his body to keep it balanced while standing up. He called it the 'small dance' and when watching him move, along with his company, you can sense that the initiation for many of his movements come from isolating these tiny twitches and compensations deep inside the muscles. This way of thinking about dance has made Paxton's way of moving a unique one.

He is somewhat notorious in this country for Contact Improvisation in which two or more people maintain bodily contact while moving, giving and taking weight to and from each other. It can be very exciting in that the resulting movement is often entirely innovative because one person's ideas are necessarily distorted by the others' and habits and techniques have to be discarded. CI was included in his Riverside programme and it was interesting to see a highly energised form of moving which differed from the CI I have seen recently over here. The pleasure gained from watching CI is not when the performers 'succeed' in making dance but in seeing the other things involved in performing — trying, attempting, failing, beginning again with another idea. In fact, all the things which performers usually try so hard to hide.

Nancy Stark Smith's solo IN KETJAK to Balinese music emphasised the way his dancers move from deep within their bodies. They have a tremendously strong sense of focus — in their faces and their bodies even when performing gestures, which they use quite often, such a hand curlings, shoulder twitches, tiny foot movements.

Again, in Christine Svane's solo CRYSTAL SET, the sense of 'playing with the muscles' came out strongly. The smallest of movements motivated bigger ones and one wondered how well she must know her body to be able to isolate so many parts of it. Both solos were partly improvised — the company work within the whole spectrum from highly structured to completely free. In Svane's solo the unknown element was the tempo. 'The most important thing for me is to leave open the amount of time the performance takes. I have to be able to feel when something has registered,' she said.

In SALT TALKS, Lisa Nelson and Daniel Lepkoff produced a fantastic piece of improvised voice and movement. It was set to a series of 'songs' — though not in the traditional sense — which are spoken and sung, playing with the vowel and consonant sounds, and the possible harmonies. Sometimes the dynamics of the sound triggered the dance, sometimes vice versa. They played with the breath, adjusting the length from natural to extended, allowing the air to pass over the vocal chords and playing with the resulting sound. In a dramatic and highly charged solo, Nelson sat on the floor inhaling and exhaling making indiscriminate vocal sounds which built to a pitch of screaming and noisy sucking of air until the in-breaths and out-breaths became indistinct. It was an exciting, often funny, and very clever piece.

Paxton's second programme, a full-evening work RAFT, was created by the whole company and was made up of sections, some free some structured. The sections are allowed to happen spontaneously in any order. The transitions from one section to another sometimes go on longer than the actual sections which are identified by an overall image — either physical or mental. The choreographed sections are introduced by one of the dancers which are picked up by the others and emerge in the piece like rocks on which to anchor the 'raft'. Sometimes the dancers got lost en route, sometimes they sank, but when they all caught on to something they liked it was completely satisfying to watch the way they worked with the material.

Rosemary Butcher and company have also worked with improvisation and have produced some interesting work. But at Riverside I found her new piece SHELL: FORCE FIELDS AND SPACES disappointing. She has worked in the past with landscapes and spatial configurations and this work again used a structured performing space. It was a collaboration with music by Jim Fulkerson, performed in an installation created by Jon Groom. The 'environment' was a circular space marked on two sides with screens and 'cut up' by beautiful coloured lines of light. The piece was choreoraphed, although evoking an atmosphere of improvisation.

It opened with a strong solo by Butcher who stood for a long time before her right arm began slowly to move, weaving and cutting the air. She began to walk around the space, circling, cutting it in to straight lines, filling the emptiness with footprints as if to mark out the territory. Her arms began to initiate turns which changed the axis of the circle to different points. When the group entered they filled the circle with faster movements, running backwards and forwards, creating arcs and axes, changing polarities and tensions. The movement was simple and at first, rivetting, but the idea didn't seem to develop. The circle began to restrict the dancers and envelop them rather than leave room for exploration. The tracing of the floor patterns was mesmerising but created a tightness that became uncomfortable. They did not use the larger route in the circle — the perimeter — and they didn't use the vertical space at all but constantly entered into the horizontal circle, the exits seemingly unimportant. I was left wishing she had created another section in which the outside of the space was used. There was also an uneveness to the performers, most of whom moved with completely

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closed unanimated faces while Butcher herself, and Sue McLellan, danced with an opening out and strength of movement which was far more satisfying.

The second American group in the session was a duo, Diane Frank and Deborah Riley who have both worked with the Douglas Dunn company in New York but who have collaborated on three major works so far — two of which were performed at Riverside.

OVERLAP, the older of the two created in 1978, was an unusual piece. It began with a beautiful slowness with moments of stillness as the two dancers explored ways of falling, always entwined, softening the landing with each other's bodies. Throughout the piece they were dependant on one another — the idea behind the title maybe. They played with each other's weight in a strangely formal style, echoing contact improvisation but never reverting to it. There were definite sections involving falling, rolling, lifting, pulling and pushing, but always together, moving around the space in constant motion sometimes slowly and lovingly, sometimes quickly and dangerously. The movement was virtually constant with no preparation, the lifts came out of each other — when one landed she immediately lifted the other; when one rolled into the other she melted her weight into the contours of the other's body to create what seemed like stillness but as soon as she had completely given weight the movement began again. It was a marvellously innovative human jigsaw puzzle as they explored ways of fitting their bodies into each other. It cleverly avoided making the piece look like a set of choreographic exercises and necessitated great technical ability. The movement was precise, economic, and beautiful to watch.

The second piece, LYNX, again demonstrated technique but was disturbing in that it left the audience with nothing to hang on to. It seemed a dance without a reason for being. The music 'enTANGOment' by Martin Kalve was 'an extension of the passions and associations evoked by traditional tango music' but the only tenuous connection between this and the dance was the brassy colourful costumes which reflected the brash, deliberately scratchy sound collage of fragments of tango rhythms and melodies. In all, the dancing seemed irrelevant. Afterwards Diane Frank explained they had worked on splicing together movements, taking one idea for the top of the body and another for the legs. They had not wanted to repeat the close physical collaboration of OVERLAP but the distance they eventually created was alienating.

The second British company represented in the season was that of Siobhan Davies and Dancers. She is one of those unique dancers who, when working in a group, will always stand out. She has an extraordinary face which is both vulnerable and strong, plain and yet beautiful. Her way of moving is dictated by her long strong body which fills any space with big expansive, yet entirely personal, movement. When she choreographs she uses herself mainly as a soloist — even when the company worked in a line it was she who moved alone against the others. This is not ego but an understanding of herself as a performer.

On of her performances — PLAIN SQNG, was one of the most fulfilling dance pieces I have seen in a long time. It was a highly evocative work set to three pieces of Satie music including the Messe des Pauvres (1895). She revealed a strong sense of spatial design, using again movement motifs but concentrating the impact of the piece on the breaking up of symmetry into unexpected shapes and images. She created the kind of excitement one feels in a Cunningham work where the dancers constantly alter the focus by clever changes of direction, level and tempo. With Cunningham, however, the devices of change are hidden; with Davies these transitions are slowly and deliberately revealed. In one section she built up a line of dancers across the space which then slowly dissolved into something far more complicated yet still set against the original shape. The piece was a continual setting up of spatial situations which then dissipated and moved on, developing a new theme. The dancers were dressed in trousers and shirts which gave them an effectively asexual air and it was good to see in both pieces female duets as well as the traditional boy/girl setting. In both works she made full use of the entire company of seven and the linear choreography complemented the wide performance space at Riverside.

The third work presented by the company was THE FIELD OF MUSTARD (1980) choreographed by Richard Alston. He seems to be going a little soft since his days of performing solo and with small groups when he produced some exciting unique work. He is returning more and more to a classical style — whether this is a temporary exploration or not remains to be seen — and this piece for Davies and Juliet Fisher was a simple, almost balletic duet based on images from a short story by A.E. Coppard. Set to 'Six Studies in English Folk Song' by Vaughan Williams, the two dancers went through the usual emotions of playfulness, sorrow, wistfulness, etc. It was beautifully done but I felt I had seen it all before somewhere.

Liz Stolls

Siobhan Davies and Dancers in 'Plain Song'

David Buckland

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Performed Music
A rundown by Paul Burwell

Birmingham Improvisation Group Hopkins/Bell/Hallett trio
Actual Music

First of all, I had intended to include a piece based on a series of conversations (interviews) with Anthony Wood who is the sole organiser behind Actual Music, but due to my imminent and sudden departure to New York, it unfortunately won't be ready until next issue.

The Concert. One of a series at the dentists waiting room in the ICA that they seem to reserve especially for Improvised music concerts.

The trio, comprising Sarah Hopkins 'cello, Sylvia Hallett, Violin and bowed Psaltery and Clive Bell, Flute, Shakuachi and Crumhorn, opened the evening with an enjoyable, well crafted set of acoustic music that owed as much to the performers' classical backgrounds as to Free improvised music. Some sounds seem to give direct pleasure and contain 'meaning' implicitly... an expression of their physical nature — plucked strings, wooden resonating chambers, movement of sound in air, the physical actions required of the performer — all these things sometimes seem enough in themselves, and there were moments during this performance when for me this happened.

BIG have been around for quite a while, but this was the first time I had heard them. All the musicians involved in this project perform in other musical contexts, John Adams, Guitar, Melvin Poore, Tuba, Jan Steele, Alto Sax and Tony Levine, Drums. Their music in this context they see as being their Free Jazz outlet.

The overall sound in the space was a bit muddy, as free jazz never really gets very quiet, which is all that would work in this particular space, and I think they would have been heard to better advantage, and would have responded better to a more sympathetic environment, like the Plough or 100 club. I thought the most original and inventive work came from Melvin Poore, but playing Tuba in a free jazz group, being original and inventive is about the only option you have.

Terri Quaye *Africa Centre*

Terri Quaye is a black woman drummer who is resident in London. The last time I saw her play, she was performing in an all woman jazz trio. This time I saw her performing solo. This concert at the Africa Centre was a repeat of a sell-out concert a few weeks previously — I know it was a sell-out — I couldn't get in. Terri is an expert hand drum player, whose work is based very strongly on African percussion, although she has drawn on other influences and created her own voice through her chosen medium. Her mode of presentation was that of an informal concert recital, and she performed several pieces on a set of four hand-drums (two African drums and two conga type drums from Cuba,) an African xylophone and a sansa — thumb piano. I enjoyed the concert a lot, there is something very satisfying just in the sound of a skin drum carefully looked after and sensitively played — the sound of hand striking skin. The third drum piece I particularly liked, as I thought it was the most original in terms of rhythmic structure. Rather than using a continually repeated phrase and improvising (?) and/or playing variations on the same phrase, she used different repeated rhythmic units to articulate a well thought out overall structure. The set was recorded, I believe for an album, which I look forward to hearing.

The only comment I would make on the actual playing is that Terri, in common with a lot of other hand drummers, is a very one handed player, her left hand was only really used for filling in beats in spaces left in the patterns generated by the right hand, and also lacked the flexibility of movement and accuracy that she obviously demands. This is a minor technical point, however, and I was only interested in thinking of it in as much as it throws relief on the western military-drumming based stick playing, where great emphasis is placed on evenness and uniformity of tone between the hands. Other percussive traditions exploit the difference possible because of being able to use two hands. African drumming has developed one hand and one stick styles of playing, and Indian tabla and mrdanga playing utilise completely different playing techniques for each hand. All this is to a great extent irrelevant to the artistic statements and moving expression that is in Terri's playing, and I will be going to see her again as soon as I can, and also look forward to hearing her in different musical contexts.

Queen Ida and the Bon Ton Zydeco Band
Dingwalls

This was another repeat booking on the basis of previous sell out concerts.

Queen Ida fronts a fine zydeco band with her voice and accordion playing, although the guitarist in fact takes the majority of the vocal work. I don't think I have ever seen a musical group more genuinely eager to please and communicate enjoyment of their music. Zydeco is primarily a dance music, and this does give a certain samey ness to the songs, which is a minor problem in concert or club performance of the music. I know from my very limited knowledge of social dancing, such as Celtic jigs and reels, that if involved in the actual dances, the music is experienced in a very different way, and the sameness of tempo and rhythmic structure as well as the structural possibility of repetition to extend the length of a piece becomes in that context, essential. It was a great joy, however, to see and hear musicians who seemed to be whole-heartedly involved in and enjoying their own music, and with an infectious desire to give pleasure. That evening I had been feeling rotten, and hadn't wanted to do anything else than go to bed, stare at the ceiling and pretend to be dead, but the music completely changed my mood and lifted my depression. Queen Ida and her bon ton band created genuine entertainment that fulfilled its primary function.

Voices
London Musicians Collective

An experimental evening organised by Phil Minton that brought together a diverse collection of voice performers, from the Sound Poet Bob Cobbing through Phil Minton and Maggie Nicols to Marj McDaid and the American Karen Irving (unfortunately about to leave England due to visa difficulties) to Sally Potter.

The evening worked very well, with group improvisations, short solos and duo pieces, each performer drawing on the differences of their musical and performance backgrounds as well as finding the similarities.

It seemed to be a stimulating situation for the performers, all of whom seemed determined to make it work and to perform well, and Phil hopes to put on a performance of a larger voice only group. Since the event, Bob Cobbing and Marj McDaid, who hadn't previously met, performed together at Speakers Corner during the excellent BUSSED SPECTACLES event. I hope Phil does organise more events like this one. At present, there are not enough artists prepared to take risks (even calculated ones) and such genuine, disinterested creativity deserves to be supported.

Obstacles
York and Albany

I saw two performances of the all woman group OBSTACLES since the last issue of PERFORMANCE and prior to that, I saw their first ever performance earlier this year. Of the three performances I've seen, I enjoyed their final night at the York and Albany in Camden Town the most. The venue is very small, and the group comprises seven performers, who had to cram themselves into the space, but were still able to construct different atmospheres and moods. Each performer gets the space to present their own ideas and form temporary alliances or working partnerships with each other.

Sections ranged from the contemplative such as Maria Carlottas' beautiful light projections off water onto a screen, to the humor of Pamela Marres duck laying a dancer 'egg' and Kazuko's puppet theatre.

This group is one of a small number of new performing units involved in a multi media improvisation based work that works from a music based core activity, and isn't afraid to stretch its artistic net to embrace humor and irony as well as 'serious' improvised music and performance art.

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Drip Feed, Song of the Shirt, Still Outside, Stick it in your Ear

It wasn't our original intention to include record reviews in this magazine, but there have been a few records received from musicians and performers that I think do fit into the overall policy of the magazine, for instance an LP by MATCHBOX PURVEYORS called DRIP FEED. Matchbox Purveyors comprise Roger Ely and Ian Hinchliffe, aided and abetted on this record by Ruth Adams, Bernard Kelly and Mike Figgis. There are three sections, Mr and Mrs Jones written by Roger Ely with song and Improvisations from Ian which take up side one, The Message, also by Roger and Mitchellsnow, a monologue by Ian Hinchliffe.

I've listened to this record several times and have enjoyed it each time, although I feel that with this kind of medium that will be replayed by people many times, one can be denser and more complex with the content of the work than might be advisable in live performance. If someone misses a piece of a performance it has been missed forever, but with a record one can miss something several times but eventually come across it. This is one of the reasons for returning to records, the continuing possibility of discovery that keeps the repetition from becoming boring. This record will be released about the time this issue of the magazine comes out and is available for £5.00 from Matchbox Purveyors, St Richards Church House, Sussex Crescent, Northolt, Middlesex. Its an enterprising move into a new medium by two performers and is well worth getting, if only for Ian Hinchliffes' songs and Roger Elys word tangles.

The other records I've been given are all of music, although one, Lindsay Coopers RAGS (ARC Records, RRF 001) is actually a recording of the music she arranged and wrote for the film 'The Song Of The Shirt'. I'll quote from the illustrated booklet that comes with the record:

"This record is based on the score for 'The Song Of The Shirt', A film about the London needlewomen whose sweated labour built the metropolitan garment industry. The score had more to do with *how* music worked, then and now, than with an authentic reproduction of mid-ninteenth century music.'

The record has musical contributions from Fred Frith, Chris Cutler and Georgie Born from Henry Cow (as was), Phil Minton and Sally Potter. Listening to the record reminded me of the film, and seemed to make more sense as soundtrack, although this kind of music has always had a curious kind of fascination for me. I have a lot of interest in the work that the people associated with this album have done with setting 'difficult' lyrical material to music, and their attemps to marry politically conscious material to artistic integrity in a totally conscious way. Georgie, Lindsay and Sally have been working as a trio on written work that I am looking forward to hearing, partly because I have the highest respect for Sally Potters song writing and her vocal work. I think that the strongest contributions on Lindsays album come from Lindsay herself, Georgie and Sallys extraordinary double tracked vocal on 'Stitch goes the Needle'. The record is selling very well, and will soon be in a second pressing.

Alan Tomlinson, who performed so well in the Actual '80 festival last year has just put out his first solo trombone LP 'STILL OUTSIDE' (Bead 17) which includes one track from that concert, plus other material, and is a really strong album. Alan is one of my favourite contemporary improvising musicians, he brings a wholehearted, no nonsense yet penetrating attitude to his work which makes his work stand out compared to a lot of the work that is currently going on in this area at present. He has a beautiful tone and an intense vision of pitch relationships combined with a very open, outgoing performance attitude. The last Album is 'Deep Peace' (!Quartz 007) a solo album by Frank Perry, a percussionist devoted to a contemplative, visionary lifestyle who constructs complex sound textures that function on many levels of existence and perception. This Album is very well recorded, and captures the sonic microstructure of Frank's work. To give short reviews of this and the other records and performances I have mentioned no matter how favourable, can't help but veer towards the glib and superficial, but I really want to communicate my own pleasure in the existence of these works and bring them to people's attention and say at least something about them that might encourage other people to listen and get involved in. Frank's record, and his masterly weaving of sound textures elicited from his array of metallic percussion instruments deserves more analysis than I have time or space for at present.

In the last few years, due to economic pressures and the rise in efficiency of the available technology, a lot of musicians and performers have turned to cassette duplication to disseminate their work. This, however has led to difficulty in distribution. It is so cheap and easy to make a duplicate cassette that the major stumbling block has been in letting the potential market know of the existence of the artifact. There are few retail outlet possibilities for such work and most of the available material has been circulated by individual sales and attempts at home mail order, but no one can write to you and ask for a tape unless they know of the tape's existence and know where to send for it, so the new magazine 'STICK IN IT YOUR EAR', which reviews and illustrates every cassette that the editors can get their hands on provides a much needed 'middleman' function. Issues cost 40p and the 2nd issue is just out. It can be obtained from such places as Rough Track or Duck Soup Bookshop or direct from the editors. The address is Stick it in your Ear, c/o Geoff Wall, 9 Gladstone Road, Scholing, Southampton SO2 8GU Hants.

REVIEWS

Coming Up Old Half Moon

So there were Belt and Braces, for years a beacon of British political theatre, with a production playing to great commercial success in London's West End suddenly cut off without a penny by its erstwhile benefactor the Arts Council of Great Britain. With most of the regular troupe either coining it in at Wyndhams (including artistic director Gavin Richards), or off to seek fame and fortune in the rock world, what were the company to do next in furtherance of the revolution? As they pondered the problem the solutions personified themselves in the unlikely combination of Roland Muldoon, the David Bellamy of alternative theatre, and the antipodean whizz-kid and Diaghilev of the fringe, David E. Thompson. The result was a brace of collaborations.

The first presented Muldoon, fully-confessed socialist and alter-ego of Harold Muggins, in 'Sedition '81' as a Crazed-Red-Dope-Fiend - On-An - Arts-Council Grant. It was the heady days of the Arden-D'Arcy-CAST 'Harold Muggins is a Martyr' way back in that annus mirabilis 1968, all over again. Well almost, but more of that another time.

The second project was as much a business partnership as an artistic one. David E. Thompson, promoter of Alan Pope and Alex Harding (see PM 6) and with fingers in pies too numerous to mention, had recently turned himself, impresarially, into D.E.T. Enterprises and commissioned from Kate Phelps, with Arts Council cash, a new play. Belt and Braces liked the script and decided to co-produce it with Thompson, hiring a cast, director (Phelps herself as it turned out) and designer, in the

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traditional way of theatrical managements.

What is particularly pleasing about the way in which this project came together is that despite being one of the companies on the ACGB's hit list, Belt and Braces, with Thompson, were able to exploit the Arts Council to finance what is not only, on any terms, a fine piece of writing but, as importantly, a fine piece of socialist theatre.

Kate Phelps' recent work has included writing 'My Mkinga' for the Women's Theatre Group and 'Duchess' for the Sadista Sisters, as well as directing for Gay Sweatshop, Pirate Jenny and Counteract. 'Coming Up' developed out of that work and can be seen as the latest in a line of writing that has been a part of political theatre for some years now and which has been found at its best in the plays of Gay Sweatshop.

Though much has changed in the years since Sweatshop launched itself upon an unsuspecting public back in 1975, the central theme of the need to politicise the personal has remained constant. One of the best and best-known plays in this genre, 'As Time Goes By', was written by Drew Griffiths with Noel Greig, in 1977 and was coincidentally published by Gay Men's Press* the week 'Coming Up' opened in London at the Old Half Moon. Hans' demonstration to Kurt in that play, that, in Weimar Germany, their gayness cannot be divorced from politics, is directly mirrored in Kevin's realisation in 'Coming Up' that he cannot stand aloof from the wider issues of state and social oppression simply because, having secured for himself a cosy niche in the London theatrical coterie, he is no longer persecuted for being homosexual. It is a further coincidence that in Kate Phelps' production Drew Griffiths plays the part of Kevin.

Kevin is a working-class gay from Sheffield who has found some fame and a quiet, comfortable life as an actor with the RSC. The death of his father and the return home that necessitates, upsets everything. With his middle-class lover Philip following on the train behind, Kevin goes back to Sheffield and the prejudices and attitudes, in himself as well as in others, that he thought he had banished years before.

At its heart, and at its most successful, this is a play about family relationships and class loyalty, much of it peculiarly British and depicted by Phelps with rare perception and the unblinking objectivity of one who has come to the society she portrays from the outside. Scenes such as the meeting with a mother and a sister not seen for many years, and the preparations for the funeral lunch, were shown movingly, truthfully, and with all the detail of an Edwardian novel. Like Orwell's hero, Kevin is coming up for air only to find that there is not any.

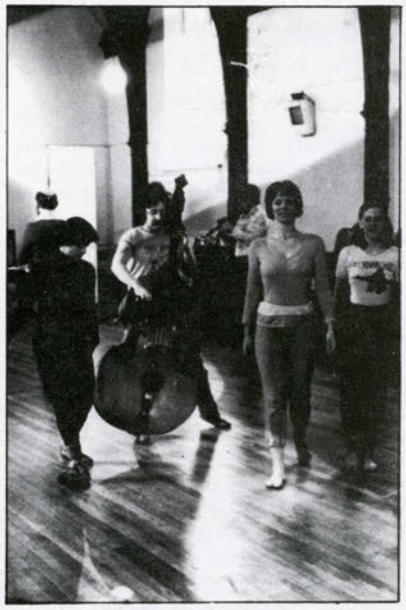
Where the play fails, and it is a crucial failure, is in its dealing with the theme of politicisation. Kevin, uncertain whether to stay with his family or return to his lover and his work, is forced to come to terms with a problem he had previously solved only by ignoring it, that of being an outsider amongst those with whom he feels most at home. That issue, of the clash between sexuality and class, seems to me an important one, yet Phelps avoids confronting it by bringing in a further factor. Kevin's father, so his family and friends believe, did not die of natural causes but was brutally murdered in a police cell. So the dead man , a trade unionist, redundant through Tory monetarism, and beaten up by the police, was also a victim. But having Kevin join those seeking reprisal for his father's death and thus giving him such a potent cause with which to ally his own sexual politicisation, is to make him a special case, and thus obfuscate with the sensationalism of the particular, a problem that is of general concern to many.

With this play, whatever its faults, Kate Phelps has shown herself to be an important writer. And with the production she has given Drew Griffiths the chance to show himself to be a performer of quite extraordinary abilities. **Luke Dixon**

* Two Gay Sweatshop Plays: 'As Time Goes By' and 'Dear Love of Comrades.' Gay Men's Press (27 Priory Avenue, London, N8 7RN). 1981
£2.50 paperback ISBN 0 907040 06 3

Music and Dance
LMC
Duchess of Malfi
Round House

The London Musicians Collective was host to a music and dance performance by dancers Cathy Neiman, Catherine Herisson, Vimala Sherlin, John Golding, and Liz Stolls, plus several musicians. Some of the work was improvised, some choreographed, some 'created'. The last work, 'After Tonight', I was told by one of the dancers beforehand would be totally improvised, starting from only an initial instruction that the dancers would begin by huddling together. She said also that through working with each other the dancers had developed ways of getting along, dancewise, and I imagine that to carry a piece like this, rapports spring up and that in a crisis a familiar movement or collaboration can be called upon. What was exciting about this piece were the moments of resolution, when the dancers would suddenly find themselves in accord, as when two of them discovered themselves detached from the group and facing the audience, and carried out a hand to eye gesture. Or at another point when Liz Stolls found herself stranded in the middle of an empty space, the others all huddled against the wall in a corner, from whence they kept sending Cathy Neiman out on short-lived forays into the centre.



'Ram', by American dancer Vimala Sherlin accompanied on flute by Jim Dvorak, was Indian-based (as she said, Indian Indian and not American Indian), involving sinuous arm and hand movements, minimum footwork; it was fairly slow and measured, an imaginative interpretation. 'Blue's Piece' by Cathy Neiman, was witty and entertaining with dancers gabbling in French, falling over and collapsing, performing to boogie woogie interludes, and carrying each other out.

The Musicians Collective (I have only visited its sister, the Film Makers Co-op before) sported four unshaded lightbulbs and some spotlights, which were handled with ingenuity; It was a bit hard to see at times because the piano jutted out somewhat, but it was a good and varied evening with a total of 6 pieces performed by various members of the group. There was some added excitement before the performance when the laundry underneath appeared to be on fire and a lot of dangerous smells started arriving, but our chance to burned alive passed without misshap, and things got safely underway.

'The Duchess of Malfi' is perhaps not within strict bounds for *Performance*, but I went to see it anyway. An Elizabethan drama, it was long, complicated, bloodthirsty and tragic — also funny. In a corrupt and degenerate court, the Duchess (Helen Mirren) is surrounded by plots and intrigue of every kind; after her husband dies she remarries secretly and, thanks to the telescoped time of the play, has three children within as many minutes. Her brother the Duke finds out, and the trouble begins. She and her husband flee, but are told by the Duke to come back because all is forgiven; no sooner than they get back, and the Duchess is presented with a trolley containing the dead bodies of her husband and son — *but* they turn out to be only wax effigies — although only the audience is aware of this. Next she is sent a team of madmen to torment her, the mad Duke gets madder and sends Bosola (his sidekick, played by Bob Hoskins) to strangle both the Duchess and her maid with a rope, accompanied by grisly jokes on his part and horrible screams on theirs. After their death, the Duke flips completely and thinks he's a wolf; he digs up their graves and talks to their bodies. The husband meanwhile doesn't

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know they're dead and pays a visit to the Cardinal (an evil character who goes about with loose women and has already murdered one of them by making her kiss a poisoned Bible), but unhappily is killed there by Bossollo, who meant to kill the Cardinal but in the dim light got the husband by mistake. Bossollo turns into an avenging angel, frenzied by all the wickedness he's been made a party to, and kills absolutely everyone, including the Duke. But the Duke, don't forget, now thinks he's a wolf, and manages to bite Bossollo on the jugular, releasing a spectacular shower of blood before collapsing.

The play was exquisitely presented, with few props aside from long carpet and throne, but with beautiful period costumes. Despite simplicity of setting, an impression was given of great and almost stifling opulence. All the violence was played to the hilt, and without self-mockery; there was respect shown to the original play and the only irony displayed was that which had been written in. Helen Mirren and Bob Hoskins are also in 'The Long Goodbye', and 'The Duchess' is really the Elizabethan equivalent of the contemporary gangster movie, with obligatory themes of trickery, deceit and corruption. It's important to know as background that for the period in history described by this play (first decade of the sixteenth century in Italy) there was a strict moral code which prohibited the remarriage of the Duchess; without realising this, it's difficult to perceive why the Duke should be so enraged, and also it throws into relief the hypocrisy of the lascivious Cardinal, and the general degeneracy of the hot-house Court.

Andrea Hill

Bloodgroup York and Albany

Much of the material in 'Barricade of Flowers', the recent presentation by Bloodgroup (Womens Experimental Theatre) at the York and Albany, was drawn from improvisation, its sources in 'myth, personal history, subconscious data, texts'.....). Probably for all women the exploration of such sources would reveal similar material to that which this piece exposed. For self-hatred is a common reaction to women's experience of repression, of never being allowed to be real. This is reinforced by the overt language of hatred towards women borne everyday in the street.

Anna Furse and Susie Gilmour show their courage in the use of such language as a 'text' for their piece, thus illustrating their concept of 'colonisation' — women's internalisation of their experience of the violence and power of male society.

Striking visual images provide a powerful counterpoint to the often painful words. A red satin umbilical cord links the two women throughout. A false cock turns into a winding sheet, pristine white at one end, blood red at the other, which links the two women as virgin and whore. A golden fish is suddenly whisked from between the

Jill Posener

'Barricade of Flowers'

thighs of the statue-like image of virtue. The piece insisted on what was almost a sensory overkill of scent and food and mess, as the women, locked together in 'a mirror of the other's self polluted image' shared a guilty delight in the possibilities of subversion. The images of compulsive eating and eternal housework familiar from much performance work by women were pushed to what must surely be close to their limits as the performers ate more and more of their carefully presented but ultimately nauseous meal — (cleverly introduced grail-like apparition in the light of a glowing refrigerator), and tore open the vacuum cleaner to explore its contents, thus transforming it into an instrument which merely made more mess. There seemed to be a brighter future for these two 'fantastic frumps' and indeed it will be interesting to see where this 'sexual and political theatre' in the hands of two such gifted performers, will lead.

'A Barricade of Flowers' can next be seen at the Oval House, late night, May 15, 16, 17.

Lynn MacRitchie

Flying Karamazov Brothers Mayfair

The Flying Karamazov Brothers are neither Russian nor brothers; which leaves 'flying' at most a metaphorical possibility. But indeed on stage these four long-haired Americans flew with all the confidence, energy and exuberance implied by their circus nom de theatre. And, apart from a short strawberry ice-cream intermission, the juggling and cheap theatrics bubbled along at a perfectly pitched pace, punctuated only by a medley of topical, family and risque-near one-liners.

No obvious venue, the Mayfair Theatre, for a group that describes their performance as 'Juggling and Cheap Theatrics', nevertheless the plush red seats were more than two thirds full on a Thursday night with a respectable range of ages in attendance.

Within minutes of the opening two of the 'brothers' were juggling with three sickles each. Not content at that simple hazard they threw them backwards and forwards between them in a combined juggle, with the characteristic comment 'there's only one way to catch a sickle more than once'. Non-stop professionalism was evident through their smart carefully colour-coded costumes (each brother had matching skittles, shoe-laces and belts to go with their black outfits), their functional set and their well rehearsed movements; yet their only real skill, apart perhaps from presentation, was in the juggling of skittles. At this they excelled.

If there was any message in the family entertainment, it was that juggling is music. They created pleasing harmonies by using skittles rigged up with jingle bells, furthermore they demonstrated their rehearsal techniques and how they are developed into slick complicated improvisations that never lose rhythm. The skittles fly fast and furious between all four, they throw them backwards, upwards, off the floor, under their legs, they drop them and retrieve them ('business is picking up'), one of them even walks into the audience interacting continuously with the others. Although all their other routines are carefully devised, it is this, the improvisation, that impresses most.

A surprising balance is reached between an obvious dedication to the art of juggling and never taking themselves too seriously. Nowhere in their show is this better demonstrated than in the challenge issued to the audience to provide the most unjugglable objects they can, bigger than an ounce and smaller than a bread bin. If Ivan Karamazov can juggle the three worst objects to a count of ten then a standing ovation is their reward; if not... The word had obviously got around, for a young boy had come prepared with a thin plastic bag, half ballooned with water. A small bunch of grapes and a belt comprised the other two. Ivan, alas, failed three times (well, you try it) and the audience's prize... a pie in Ivan's face...

As a finale, the following objects, a

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flaming stick, guitar, frying pan, egg, sickle, bottle of champagne, plastic fish and a lethal chopper, all of which had been introduced as terror objects throughout the show, were all juggled with simultaneously, and then instantaneously turned into a banquet. The crowd loved it, I enjoyed it and the Mayfair Theatre is alright. Oh, and I nearly forgot the live chain-saw.

Paul Lyons

Medea
Oval House

"The idea of combining three styles of theatre and teaching a 'straight' classical script to these young theatre anarchists is outrageous, and I could not even tell if it was a good idea until recently. They make it work.' So writes Steve Whitson, the organiser of the latest Oval House Workshop Spectacular — 'Medea'. In the unusually informative programme notes. 'These young theatre anarchists' certainly made it work, but I'm not sure whether *it* is quite the same thing that Steve Whitson, or specifically the whole Oval method, geared up over the years to produce 'epic' theatre from untamed South Londoners, has in mind. What I saw on the wet Saturday night I went to see 'Medea' was some dazzlingly subtle improvised performance dragged screaming and kicking into a turgid, breast beating, hand wringing, and bodice tearing neo-classical edifice called 'The Golden Fleece'. Written by an Austrian named Gillparzer in 1822, it had never before been performed in this country, and I don't really see why these young people should have had the hard luck to do it first.

They will survive the experience though. The performers, mostly under twenty, who all list their dress, occupations, favourite foods, etc. in the programme like it was a copy of ID, are all determined to have their piece of action, and nothing, not even old Gillparzer will stop them. The first, improvised section is confidently strung together with some superbly tangential storytelling which, combined with energetic but laid back physical performance took us in spirit straight down to the Railton Road (now post-police riot, with throwaway ironic references) to the start of a chillingly promising science fiction shaggy dog story. From a mystic encounter in a shebeen, to the four 'heroes' getting together through a web of street comings and goings, and being sent, improbably, a south London gangland figure, to nick this 'solid gold sheepskin waistcoat' from a warehouse in Wapping, we are served up a host of references, many corny, to the Greek tragedy we are to get a huge dollop of later on. These attempts to provide a 'cross-over' of themes are treated with some trepidation and a lot of humour by the performers, who, quite naturally, muff clothes changes and generally wriggle backwards laughing into the Greek mode. The whole gallery of street characters from the first half 'become' classical characters later. The method is this: When the four lads set off in a boat across the Thames, they get 'lost' and turn into the 'Heroes' of the equally felonious mission of Jason and the Argonauts. The Sirens are two bubbly young black girls we have seen previously cavorting around on roller skates with headphones exchanging quips and roller tricks and nearly falling off; a Sea Goddess is a middle aged woman who has it in for the youth and so on. They arrive at a distant land well beyond Burnham on Crouch which is ruled by the young Matriarch, Medea. Then follows an awful lot of passion, stabbing, battles, rituals, incest, deceit, more passion — not necessarily in that order.

And this, halfway into the Byzantine intricacies of the various thematic styles, was where it fell apart for me. We weren't in Crete or Minoa or wherever it was, we were in Dry-Iceland, Oval House circa 1975. (To be fair, there wasn't any dry ice, but there may as well have been, what with all the groaning and wailing and swirling and declaiming and gonging that ensued). While, in my view, the workshop productions here are the only venture of the sort *in the country* that can produce good, non-patronising, truly experimental work by performers of this age and experience, the organisers obviously have a built-in preference in an established working method, or genre. This is no bad thing in itself, as it has provided a confidence which has inspired some truly fine spectaculars in the past, climaxing with the recent production of 'Moby Dick'. The trouble is, this confidence is based on an idea of 'Fringe Theatre' as a cheap but spectacular and slightly bizarre entertainment which possibly works as a stimulus to the workshops, but in performance is shown to be obsolete by the participant's individual brand of confidence. When the improvisation gave way to the rough rendition of 'high culture' renamed 'epic theatre' for the occasion, it only served to underline the unncessariness of the effects, the length, the misplaced gothic intensity that probably started as a joke and ended up looking like a bad day in the Hospital for Overacting. Whereas what I saw in the opening stages of 'Medea' was the unfolding of what seemed to be a whole fresh genre in experimental performance. There was just something.... *there*. If Steve Whitson and the inexhaustible Oval House team could somehow extract the essence of that, they could fuel the next five years of workshop performances on it.

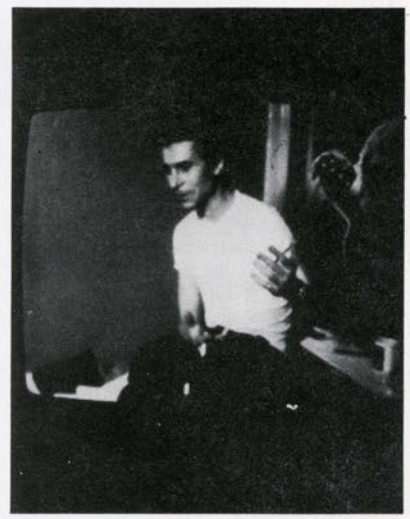
Rob la Frenais

Chance, History, Art
ICA

'Chance, History, Art' is the newest film in the retrospective of James Scott's work which recently opened the refurbished ICA cinema and its new cinematheque. The film consists of interviews with and glimpses of the work of, six artists involved in one way or another in 'performance' — Anne Bean and John McKeown, Rita Donagh, Stuart Brisley, Jamie Reid and Jimmy Boyle.

Double images, filmed from video screens allow us to contemplate the art work and its maker simultaneously, and the use of extreme close up in the interviews gives them an almost dramatic quality. These devices make the often rather vague and discursive mode in which the artists frequently talk much more illuminating. Most concise by far were Jamie Reid and Jimmy Boyle, who seemed to share an accuracy of appreciation both of their current situation and future aims — for Reid, to make as much money as possible by manipulating the system (an ambition surely shared though certainly not stated by many more 'successful' or 'serious' artists); for Boyle, to use his newly released creativity to make his long confinement at least supportable.

Their contributions raised directly the questions the film seemed to hint at in its use of Godard like structuring devices — its division into three segments, the use of captions typed on as we watched etc. Their direct statements were unambiguous, unlike the film's later images which seemed to seek to parallel the exterior of



Barlinnie Prison and the Hayward Gallery. Such generalisation of oppression, if that indeed was the intent, obscures its fundamental roots in class and sex, and substitutes a metaphor for direct questioning. The work of Reid and Boyle would seem to challenge this concept of the eternal function of 'art' in relation to 'chance' and 'history'. For both seemed acutely aware of the limitations of metaphor. Boyle and other inmates of Barlinnie's Special Unit had painted a vista of infinite perspective on the wall facing their exercise bicycle. Vigorous pedalling and the use of the imagination could work wonders. But nothing, as Boyle emphasised, filmed back in his cramped cell, could take away the pain of confinement. **Lynn MacRitchie**

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Godless Ceremony

This article provides the focus for the discussion on 'Meaning in Performance' at the Midland Group Performance Art Platform Conference-see ad for details

Spectrum Photography Group

My last piece in 'Performance' was a list of ways in which the term 'performance art' may be used. My hope was to clear up the confusion arising from artists operating under the same label with widely divergent intentions. My hope also was to see the term scrapped. I would also like to see the terms music, painting and sculpture scrapped. I would retain the term 'art'.

This is because I see art as being the manipulation of experience. That experience can be an experience of anything at all — paint, stone, wood, flesh, words, light, movement, space, sound, harmony, discord (these last two I see as natural facts, not concepts,) sex, food, clothing, odours, landscape, people — anything. Absolutely anything. To separate and categorise manipulated experience into, say, the experience of manipulated paint and call that painting, or stone and wood and clay and call that sculpture, is to obscure the point that all idioms share common principles and are art. So any artist practising in some narrow area like that of paint, or that of stone, or that of orchestral sound, or that of the publicly presented human body, in ignorance of the other areas, is gravely suspect of not being an artist at all but of being a mere craftsman. Art schools are full of 'em. So are Literature Departments. The places where art thrives however have always been inhabited by makers who are aware that the whole of experience is shared material. Picasso, Satie, Appollinaire, Jacob, Braque, Stravinski, Stein, Artaud, Breton, Ernst, Eluard — this group always having been hampered by Breton's idiotic dogmatism. Tzara, Arp, Tauber, Schwitters, Haussman, Monet, Debussy, Mallarme, Renoir. And so on.

If performance art is to continue to be part of a healthy creative scene it should resist categorisation. It makes no sense to set Ian Hinchliffe against Stuart Brisley. It makes very good sense to set Ian Hinchliffe against Freddy Starr and set Brisley against Francis Bacon. Categories should be so loose as to allow for the moveability of individuals. For myself I am fed to the back teeth by being told that I'm *really* a writer, or *really* a sculptor, or *really* a catalyst, or *really* a social commentator, or *really* the author of 'Bomb Culture', or *really* a performance artist. As soon as I hear that kind of groping towards categorisation I know I'm talking to someone who hasn't the faintest idea what the real category, art, is about.

Why am I clinging to this category when I preach the dissolution of all categories? Have I not just said that art is anything? No, I haven't. I've said that art partakes of all experience but it does it in a very particular definitive way. The word 'manipulated' is all important. In art the purpose of manipulation is to place experiences in time and place so as to set up between them the maximum tension and potency of relationship, so that the overall experience is profoundly pleasurable. The trees are planted in considered relationship to the facade at Versailles. A chamber-music group performing there should be placed in order to set its sound against those of fountains and of nature to best advantage. A good conductor can manipulate the time between the phrases of his musicians in such a way as to give a piece the best effect. Yes. Effect. Similarly Roland Miller can set his voice-sounds and his gestures against chosen elements in a landscape with maximum effect. Art is composition and pleasure is its aim because art operates under the belief that pleasure, far from being a hedonistic pastime, is the way into an informed and expanding awareness of the self and the world. It is, in a sense, our most rigorous science. In the 20th Century it is the continuance of religious practice after such practice has been rid of authoritarian and absolute concepts like those of God and Good and Evil. It continues the practice of straining the senses perpetually beyond their usual range and their usual function in order that the faculties may be perpetually re-orientated. It requires an animated and playful dedication. Sanity, morality, scepticism and law attempt static value patterns and are therefore of little use to someone whose mission, yes mission, is the oscillation of awareness that must lead to a mobility of values. In extending experience, experience itself must obviously be our material and pleasure is our closest intimacy with it. Art should claim its total field by retaining a clear sense of purpose and fending off those who would harness it to moral purpose in various agitprop situations, to its own termination in various anti-art situations, or to the shallows of pleasure in various areas of amusement. Art serves the community in the matter of its basic health and not in the matter of its trivial requirements. Performance which is performance art addresses itself to this.

Jeff Nuttall

Is it Art? Is it Theatre?
Is it Political? Can Anyone do it?

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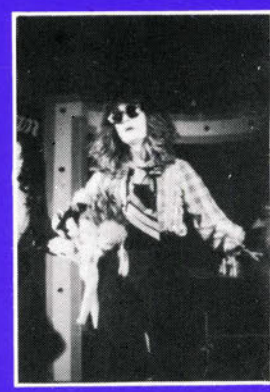

European Theatre of War. Photo Robin Morley.

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