PERFORMANCE
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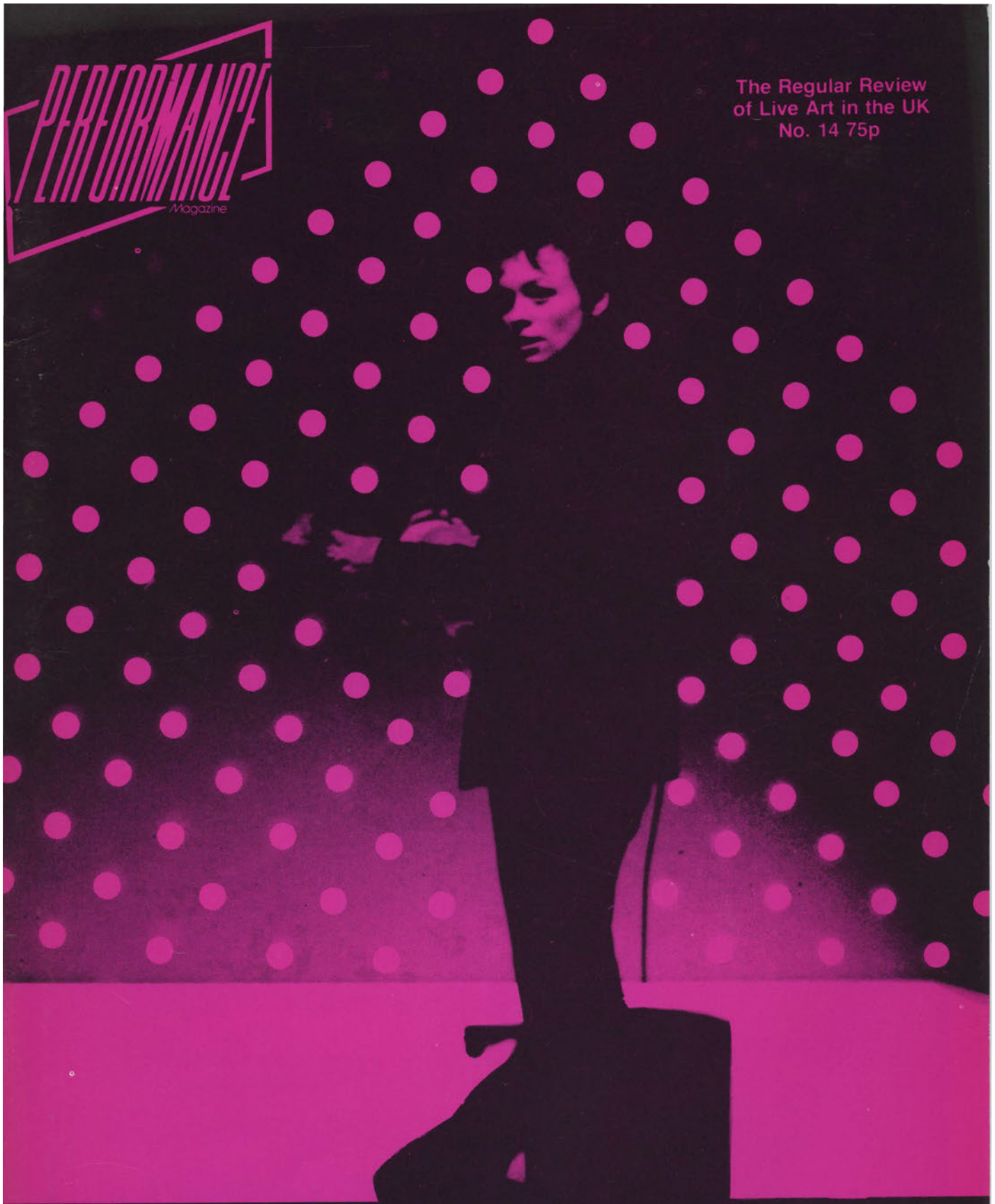

Interview with Laurie Anderson; Jonathan Borofsky;
Performance Art Platform; Tate Performance;
The Acme 1976-81; Miranda Tufnell;
Music, Reviews, Documentation, Opinion, Listings.

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ANY/NOW

Text of the recent presentation by CARLYLE REEDY (Performance Art Platform, Midland Group Nottingham, Oct. 18) made available to Performance Magazine.

Experience I have in so-called 'performance' (I question) 'art' (question) has come about through narrative ability/theatrical/curiosity about space/time. Perhaps. A first performance was a limited tap routine for a girl named Lillian who lived across the street, who at 6 years was older than I, or else I was eight and Lillian was taller, I can't remember. Another performance was of Mary Martin routines, also imitating Imogene Coca, who was with Sid Caesar at the time; so there are my biographical dates, so far. Storytelling was performed with captive audiences of kids I was babysitting for.

I am uncertain as to where biography about Performance Art begins, whether seeing how long I could stay shut in my room without getting bored qualifies. For me, whether it is the biography of an artist, artiste, iconoclast, poet, existentialist, or performer, or, as I suspect, it is simply 'getting on with it,' the general area under discussion is hopefully indistinct, enough to arouse curiosity, partially unexplored, possible, potential...

A phrase from Jeff Nuttall's 'Godless Ceremony': 'Maximum tension and potency of relationship' sounds vital; I set beside it: 'Motility/mobility of values/transitory experience of self-destruct/reconstruct. Page Two. Volatile/Mobile/self-actualizing./.according to: a very ancient knowledge system: that of curiosity. There are exciting not necessarily regulatable creepy crawly energies to be discovered under every old stone on the path./Stop. Parantheses: The People Band/Not only music. Stop. Moreover, where-ever there is use of classical examples/ objects shown to best advantage/I question. I question 'best' and steadied on pictures of 'what art is' at every juncture/question: at all times. I disagree with any statement that what is (sometimes read as) anti-art is its own termination. The terminology is suspect. What is Anti? Art(?)

I am aware of a boundary, a shield-like connective tissue, interlinking many small incidents/facts and artists/people/psychologists. This elastic and fixed, flexible, and not very intellectualizable interconnection has been seen in processes of somatic study and to an extent by Levi-Strauss. The interconnective when it is staticized and read as real is a way to restrict possible new junctures, to maintain not the obvious (hierarchies). But the less obvious restrictive definitions/stereotypings.

Besides the stupid lens of historical memory, which is so stupid, we deal with imposed separations: arbitrary, emotional. We posit and name by 'reason' so-called facets which when integrated to come closer to human experiential reality in its totality. Resistance rules the loss of totality of experience, life as a dynamic, separates life (that swinging dynamo) from art (that staticized definition) and Art (the wide-open freedom!) from Psychology (that old analytical truth serum) and so forth. Out of fear we as a human race commit ourselves to being blinkered, naming the same event several ways to fit into the limitation which a fear of discovery imposes. This is not why I ever entered the arena of 'performance'. To me Performance is simply the recognition of the interrelatability of possible continually emerging factors and let's hope that it does remain as unreasoned out as possible, as unexpectedly social, and as unsemanticized (a preshrunk garment, get your semanticized performance art now) as possible.

Possibly I am/a direct descendant of the disappearance act. With eventstructure research group. In a look. For new ways. Paragraph. I have thought of the Dada non-movement as a chucking out of les ordures in order to acquire a breathing space. To allow for Stockhausen in a circle, (I listen to) or Paul Burwell; for Cage games, for Yoko Ono; for playing the clarinet in a bucket of water; for the discovery of a room's relationship to a performer.

Destructive art and radical therapy were interlinked in the 60's. That post Cage period could be historically interesting to the new category under which our 'performance is now creeping. Art and psychiatry were allied thru their 'radicals' and the more radical and exemplary according to ancient traditions of genuine outrage were the 'existential' psychiatrists. somatic studies contemporary with/radical departures Reich's great work/whose children are/(Perls/Boadella/Gerda Boyesen) mature leaders of the amazing humanist growth movement. This area of human experiential knowledge is, largely because of the use of and experience in the human body in art, moving closer together with the art field. Often junctures/mergers: Behavioural art/psychodrama; sensuous response/Otto Muehl; somatic experiential workshops/non-product oriented art workshop. Paragraph. In the 60's artists such as Carolee Schneeman, John Latham, Gustav Metzger, Yoko Ono, David Medalla, The People Band, and many others accomplished art actions which were cryptic, non-language oriented, celebratory, self-renewing, people-oriented, game-filled, and going directly to and merging with areas left to Psycho Logicians, who decided on their 'side of it' to become adaptable, creative, dynamic, and to live very dangerously (examples: Laing, David Cooper, Timothy Leary).

'PERFORMANCE' / 'PERFORMANCE ART': As. From Experience. Form/Strictures or Definitions/seems to me/a limit, limiting the choices, a stiffening. How do I unchoose them? In 1967 I began to unchoose/event poems/including poems to a floor format/collaborations/Poems without words/Image poems/Or: On stage with nothing to do for 4 hours. /Ageing. Inside a completely transparent framework. These were my works. Then I invented a theatre of dream with written texts/verbal spontaneous/voice over before voice over/narration through action/Facets of multilayered eventstructure/100se, mysterious, inconclusions, conclusions at the time/Surreal/projected/2 dimensional/ or/ a scenario in 3 dimensions, in which I would function as performer, as myself, as reader, as author of. Now development of numbers of Women Characters is part of my work, but I am playing with these, as with ideas. I do not 'do' characters. Experiment defines my history. In that I have some 'qualification!'

PERFORMANCE'?'/"?"'ART'? The words in definition, composite, suggestive. Distribute their meaning over a 'broad area'? HA very funny. Over London, the midlands, lower canada, all of Europe, Australia, brazil, France, Venezuela, Tibet. A very big bottom to this... broad area to which some reference is made. Attempts in language (called the most divisive medium, see my Open Letter, c.f. John Latham) do reduce/demean the knowledge content. A bucket of rubbish/on the tilt. Man carries halfopen box and plastic white bag down street. Schwitters is guiding a blind person in the wrong direction. Marks are too fast, fat/tree climbs, then falls. Golf tees. Disorientation/is a non-turning key to... to what?

Non-turning because it is not by will of intellect, some annotated philosophy from Cage, or an inheritance of written directions from Duchamp or Andre Salmon that an incident of discovery occurs. /The dullest possible form of 'theatre' available is the imitation of breaking taboos. Imagine Fermin Gemier's 'Merdre' as that word per se, in successive years, every night in 2 week runs, repeated at lunchtime and endlessly by the media.

In Referece to Jeff Nuttall's Writing on performance, a should statement from me/might say this: 'performance art' 'should' destroy concepts, fixed notions which have become elevated to a status beyond notions, and the evasive retreat into what are strictures/not structure, which ruin the tendancy of life to discover itself discovering — and this discovery through what we call art.

'If performance art is to be part of a healthy creative scene it should resist.' Another should statement might be: should annoy,

upend, cause unendings to occur, language to founder, reason to question itself, re-orienting viewer participants in time/space. In that quote I don't like the words healthy, creative, performance art or resist. If I take those out I am left with: If is to be part of a scene it should. I question the word should and finally the word scene. Taking these out I'm left with If is to be part of a it. This starts to make more sense to me. This I do with most of what I write.

Water the plants. Check Meyerhold on Theatre, What is missing, from this speech paper, paper speech. Citation copies, other peoples' voices, introductions, my blue portfolio of publicity stunts, pix, of me of course, a composition in the tradition of Walton/Sitwell, very *composed*, the terrible Uppable quality of so-called art.

Next: My magnetic currents/by means of/property journals/Schreyer — No. Schlemmer's murmuring. /F.uke, ummmm... fluke/I can read upsidedown/ Biologics/ Change/ the sp to spanish/ hammer/more home Monster/suggestions that in broken language/thousand joys 'in quotes' the rescuer tomorrow: KURT!

Schwitters Merz text hold/so one tears that/why one must not hasten to conclude, the risk of error being too great Beckett said that in Texts For Nothing (two T's on Beckett please.) Space. The stammering of the emergent extasis expressionist theatre (where was that corpse of speech, what had I done with it DONE WITH IT ''''@*"?*!+??) French copies all through out. Stop. At last I begin to write. There was Maiakovski, Meyerhold, Schwitters, MacLow, Richter, myself of course, Krishnamurti, Tzara, Art, Janco, Eggling, Serner. Three stops. At last. Lenin was introducing his new economic policy, Meyerhold and Maiakovski got together for the Mystery Bouffe and the demo of biomechanics was made public June 1922. Finally. I would shout: Bioenergy!

I must write a letter to Ryn about healers. End Oct begin Nov. Expenses, £69 plus fee £70, the 2431 short of for out in dep 40 yesterday, next monday times xrox. 3 Maybe. ■

Live Art has its Day

'Godless Ceremony'
The Midland Group Performance Art Platform

Is performance about pleasure or pain? Are arts centres a cross between a temple and a jail? Is sport the ultimate manifestation of live art? Is Stuart Brisley a cannibal? Does performance only have a meaning when linked to a political movement? Is performance seeing how long you can stay in your room without getting bored? In the absence of funding would the worst kind of market forces wipe out performance art? Why are performance artists afraid of being classified as theatre? Are painters just craftsmen when they refuse to see beyond the paint? Are people forced to do Performance Art at college? Do ceremonies need gods? Do gods need ceremonies? How is it that these questions can be discussed seriously in a room by round a hundred practising artists for the first time in almost a decade without being dismissed as elitist, indulgent and irrelevant? Does the Performance Art Platform in Nottingham this year mean that live art is finally going to have its day in this country, or are we in for another beating with that famous and symbolic pole, transported to our funders and the media on the heads of three of our sacrificial peers? (DDart are incidentally local to Nottingham, and are rumoured to be making a comeback performance there soon).

The performances the day before the 'Godless Ceremony' discussion were by a selection of artists who had not had any funding. The purpose of this was two-fold — firstly to stimulate discussion the following day, and secondly to give a public airing to new work and to allow an escape route from the well-known funding trap — 'You can't have any money till we've seen the work, but the work can't be done without the money'. The first objective was only partially successful because those invited to speak in Godless Ceremony had not all seen the work the day before. This was a pity, and it would have been better had the speakers been a bit less lazy about turning up, or had the organisers been able to forsee and combat that laziness. It's easy these days, given the lackof obvious rewards for performers to behave like pop stars in these matters, and disheartening for younger artists to encounter. The second objective was more successful. The Arts Council, who helped organise this event, certainly managed to be diligent in attending the work. (Let's hope some get funded). And the artists, themselves a pretty broad representation, seemed to be making contacts with the unusually high amount of interested members of the art community present (for an out of London location).

The artists selected were Sarah Carter and Tricia Durdey, Andy O'Hanlan, Dov Eylath and Lab, Dave Mitcheson, Silvia Ziranek, The Event Group, A. M. Aitken, and Chris Cheek. The performance I found most interesting was that of Andy O'Hanlan, who was most representative of the less experienced artist the Platform is aimed at. An ironic and many layered glance at the flotsam and jetsam that surrounds rituals, tokens, vestments and head-dresses are gathered together with a nonchalance that derides the form. Among the mumbo-jumbo undertaken was the eating of the Sale of Goods Act, and the wielding of a yo-yo in which was inserted a candle burning at both ends. His partner — a woman with a long false nose wearing ludicrous headgear stands placidly as a totem in the centre-breaking her reverie only to douse O'Hanlan — who is getting 'worked up' — with a bucket of water. Surrounded by the brightly coloured debris, O'Hanlan brings to mind cargo cults, worshippers of the Duke of Edinburgh, and dotty Theosophism. Ziranek, though hardly under-exposed previously, had considerably improved her work. Where previously she simply revelled in being kitsch, 'Further French Crosswords (Psst Frozen)' had a neatness and depth, with little gestural movements which said far more than her earlier orgies of word association. 'Surely that's such a British attitude' said from behind a rabbit mask is one of the clues I didn't get. Mitcheson's work was the sternest piece, in which films are projected in pitch-blackness against the artist, naked and blindfolded, while hearing sound of old man talking about ballroom dancing, followed by political vox-pop interviews. At the end a man comes on and hoods and coshes the artist. Effective, but spoilt by the end which is contrived and obviously faked.

It seemed a pity that more artists could not have been fitted in. Firstly, there was a feeling that the selections had been a bit too careful and thus safe, and secondly I think that for this event no harm could have been done by restricting set-up time. This would have been a positive advantage in the case of Dov Eylath, who didn't need the mountain of video gear he used to do the simple though imaginative action he did, (and I can't believe that anyone who has been around video for more than a few months isn't adopting such incompetence as his as a pose) but maybe a bit unfair on the Event Group, who devised an ingenious ticket system to represent a split between rock music and art. On entering the divided room, the ticket-divided audience either saw a piece of simple performance art or part of a rock gig. Communication and conflict then occured between the two halves, the audience still with restricted views. A satisfyingly emblemmatic ploy, though as with Eylath, there were too many touches of affected over-sloppiness.

Jeff Nuttall opened the conference with

a rousing cry for artists, as manipulators of experience, to use all the materials they can get to pursue a pleasurable intimacy with experience. He criticised performance art as an exclusive area in the same way as he would criticise painting, sculpture, or poetry as being too narrow. He was later clumsily but effectively countered in this assertion by Marty St. James, a performance artist speaking from the floor, who said that art objects were like gravestones, Live Art goes straight to the front of the queue, and that Picasso should have been made to work naked in front of an audience. Strong stuff, but maybe the thing that separates the younger from the older generation of performance artists, and also the sentiment needed for the form to survive.

Later on, Nuttall introduced a realistic dimension to the problematic question of class and art, citing the various switches and reversals historically affecting access by the working class to artists' work, now hampered by middle-class notions of taste and bourgeois spoon-feeding through galleries and museums. This effectively complemented the paper read by Jacky Lansley, who dealt with the various historical contradictions suffered by women. For them, performing was a route in the nineteenth century to independence, though bearing with it implications of prostitution. This attitude still lingered for women, and more specifically with the bias against theatre today in performance art circles, which she connected with the nineteenth century distinction between artist and artiste. Many live artists nowadays are driven towards theatre either by this or as a protest against the gallery-based art-world mystique.

One was Peter Godfrey from Rational Theatre, (Ex-Phantom Captain) who used his initial discomfort in finding himself in an art gallery addressing a majority of visual artists to provoke a performance — 'I hate being here — I think you are a rotten audience — I am the only audience member here. Just sitting here is the worst kind of performance art'. He ended with a teasing allusion to Nuttall's title by reminding him that they were both taken to the same Herefordshire village church at an early age to experience another kind of performance art (the words were boring, they were always the same hymns). Much the same thing was said from the floor about sport, which, it was held, was the one area where the boundaries had really been crossed. Aesthetics had hi-jacked the meaning of art since the middle ages, and the original meaning of art was something similar to sport. The olympics were the most spectacular form of live art. But, interjected Paul Burwell, another speaker, the difference was that sport could be quantified, art could not. This caused murmurs of dissent and the start of real disagreement in a conference which was getting seriously in danger of becoming a mutual admiration rally.

Burwell seemed to keep up this role of irritant, even though his arguments were quite reasonable, and thus seemed to fulfill that unspoken need for conflict that conferences need to get them through to teatime. Previously he had made criticisms of Nuttall's drive for decategorisation — excluding what you *don't* do didn't condition what you *did* do — pointed out the different hedonisms implicit in lying in a hot bath and making art, and invoked Brecht against Nuttall's desire to 'fend off those who would harness it (art) to moral purpose in various agitprop situations.'

Carlyle Reedy proceeded to read a paper that was again in itself a performance — without failing to be the most provoking contribution — and the text of it is printed in the opinion section of this magazine. She also delivered a neat cut-up analysis of Nuttall's paper — by removing key words one by one from within the phrases and causing the meaning to skitter across the text.

Interestingly, at the point where some of the most rigorous questions of meaning were being tackled (Are objects themselves performances? Is a stone a stone or is it a slowly progressing time-piece of erosion?) the disputants were brought up sharply by Tom Castle of the Event Group who said that it was precisely this sort of discussion that gave performance a bad name. He then pitched himself into the question of Time, this time from the viewpoint of the growing sport lobby, citing cricket as a carefully timed, five day ordeal or endurance work. Carlyle Reedy quickly followed up with the example of New Guinea Cricket, which escaped the problem of quantification by having no rules and nobody winning. The question of place was also dominant. Shirley Cameron thought arts centres were 'categories made physical' and were by nature territorial. Her co-worker, Roland Miller who was absent having been injured performing in Poland, had proposed in a written submission that performance artists should make a serious attempt to work in urban public places with maximum accessibility. This became the theme in a discussion where people were once more challenging the confines of the gallery and arts centre. This could well have been a new possibility for many of the younger artists present, but one present who had been doing this sort of thing for the last decade, Mary Turner of Action Space, issued the warning that not only do you risk loss of money (people pay to go in a building but not a park) but loss of artistic cachet — important when you need a grant to survive. Steve Rogers of the Midland Group — organiser of the event — thought his venue had already taken steps in breaking contextual categories — they had already had weightlifting demonstrations in the exhibition area — (this Sport thing just wouldn't go away) — and had more radical plans for use of the space.

If anything this conference put paid to the anti-theatre bias in live art once and for all, as discussion never lost sight of the role of the audience. It could almost be said that it went too far that way, with Stuart Brisley's work referred to in passing as a 'human butcher's shop' and that type of genre described as 'cannibalism' by Jeff Nuttall. But if this was not the place to come and find out where Performance Art is going, or if indeed it exists, I don't know where is. And if it doesn't exist, a lot of people left Nottingham that day determined to find it. **Rob la Frenais**

Silvia Ziranek

ROBIN MORLEY

The Acme 1976-81

Jonathan Harvey gives his personal account of five years at the Acme, a gallery where co-operation between artist and administration created a space for work which often made unusual demands on artist and audience.

The Acme Gallery opened on May 6th 1976 with an exhibition of paintings by Mike Porter. It closed on October 17th this year with *'Touching Class'*, an installation by Stuart Brisley and Iain Robertson. During these last five and a half years the Gallery has established itself as the most important single venue for the presentation of performance and installation work in Britain. In this article I would like to review briefly how the Gallery came to be set-up and how its presentation of 'time-based' work developed. I also hope to point out some of the changes that have taken place and to speculate as to what may lie ahead.

Each generation of artists tends to seek out new solutions to the problems of how they will support themselves and where they will exhibit their work. To an extent the existing system can help, but invariably it does not offer the right kind of support for a generation with new ideas and a mind and will of its own. The Acme Housing Association Limited, formed in November 1972 by a group of artists who had just left art school, provided for its founder members a highly practical solution to the perennial problem of cheap space, through the management of short-life houses in London's East End. It provided not only a starting point for the original artists whose position and needs were directly comparable. For David Panton and myself, as founder Directors of Acme, the running of the organisation quickly came to be our 'work' and a direct expression of our ideas and ideals.

As well as providing a cheap service for artists who were my exact or near contemporaries, the organisation also became a focus for discussion and a rallying point for a younger generation concerned with creating their own systems in the face of a hostile environment and a largely intransigent establishment. The formation of the Acme Gallery was a direct expression by artists of the need for a professionally run alternative to the existing public and private galleries. Its concern was to provide a centrally located exhibition space in London to which any artist could apply, and an opportunity for younger artists whose reputations were not yet established to show on a major scale for the first time, as well as for artists whose work was not easily accommodated elsewhere. Our first exhibitions made an uncompromising statement as far as this was concerned, and the Gallery soon demonstrated the large gap in exhibition provision which had previously existed.

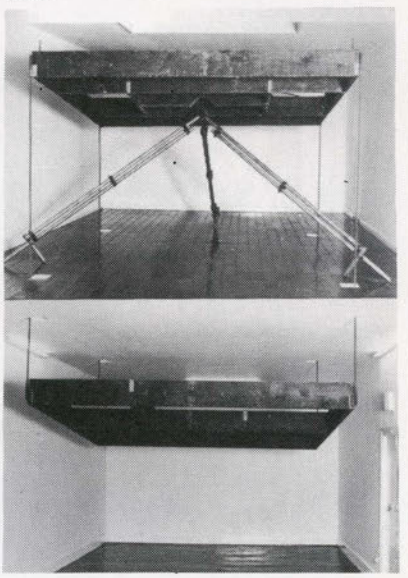
From the outset, since the demand from artists represented every conceivable kind of current activity, we had no wish to specialise in particular areas of work, and, indeed, saw as a positive advantage, the opportunity of a mix of attitudes and audiences against the prevailing tide of separatism. We also felt it important as an 'artist-run gallery', that the policy of the space and the selection of exhibition should be, as far as possible, determined by artists themselves. At first it was felt that as a grass-roots organisation a close contact with artists, and thus with new developments in art practice, would be partly achieved by involving artists on a gallery selection and programming committee. It soon became evident however, that operating within the confines of a committee structure could only serve to constrain their possible input. What had always seemed of fundamental importance, outside of consideration arising from the problems of selection, was that artists should be allowed to determine not only the way in which their work was presented, but also how it should be publicised and mediated; the gallery would provide the best possible context for an artist's work by involving the artist directly in every aspect of the gallery's operation. The artists' contribution to the development of the Gallery's policy would come from how *they* dealt with the problems of presentation that their work would throw up. This was not a gallery abnegating responsibility for controlling the form of its exhibitions, but rather a gallery taking an unusual responsibility, compared with most other galleries, for making the necessary changes to its own structure to accommodate the varying requirements of each artists' work.

The work of the majority of artists that we have shown has demanded a traditional white-walled, well-lit space, for the presentation of objects which have been made elsewhere, and our commitment to these artists is in no way different from our commitment to those whose work is less easily accommodated.

Performance and installation work is essentially ephemeral, for both formal and political reasons. It usually exists or is made solely in the context in which it is publicly presented, and is of fixed and limited duration. It is immediately evident from this that the circumstances under which it is presented and seen are of vital importance, since the context becomes a part of the work itself. An undertsanding of this, together with the Gallery's flexibility and accessibility and the absence of sustained support for it elsewhere, has led Acme to accept a special responsibility for this area of art practice. The responsiblity has been nurtured by a continuing dialogue and relationship with some of the most important of our current practitioners.

The artists involved in performance and installation work who first took up the opportunity of working in the Gallery were Ron Haselden, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Kevin Atherton, Martin Hearne, William Raban, Nina Sobel and Chris Welsby. In February 1077 we hosted the first• 'live-show' of the New Contemporaries, which we vigorously supported

Top: Alaistair MacLennan 'Days and Nights'
Below: Darrell J Viner 'Who Manipulates Who'.



in the face of considerable opposition from its permanent committee, who felt that it should only be a platform for students making painting and sculpture. In May 1977, Rose Garrard created the most integrated and extensive installation to date at Acme, which operated both as exhibition/environment and as a site for performances ('Incidents in a Garden' May 1977).

It seemed essential that the Gallery, as much as it could, should take on the same kind of responsiblity as the artist; that nothing whatsoever could be gained by playing safe; that unusually, the Gallery and the artist were on the same side. Kerry Trengove's *'An Eight Day Passage'*, (October 1977), one of the most important exhibitions to have taken place in the seventies, was exemplary in this respect, and demonstrated the lengths to which we were prepared to go to accommodate a particular artist's needs. As the artist tunnelled his way out under the Gallery foundations from the concrete cell in which he had been incarcerated, the Gallery, open 24 hours a day, provided the back-up and support system on the surface, ensuring that the closed circuit TV and radio link to the immediate gallery audience and the outside world, remained open. This was team-work at its best.

It was important that *'Passage'* was preceded and followed by immaculately presented exhibitions of paintings (Roger Kite and John Bellany) which made more conventional demands upon the space, since this and other work was intentionally pitched in relation to the historical notion of the 'gallery'.

Given the space available here, it is impossible to list all those 'time-based' shows that have taken place at Acme that merit detailed coverage. It is clear that once the flexibility and philosophy of the Gallery had begun to be publicly demonstrated, that other artists saw that it would allow them the freedom to develop their work in ways which had previously not been open to them. The machines which threatened to destroy the actual fabric of the Gallery and the amazing performances of indoor pyrotechnics by Stephen Cripps (April 1978), Tony Sinden's film installation *'Garden Site, Etc. Etc'* (June 1978) and Nigel Rolfe's *'Red Wedge'* (July 1978), together with numerous evening events and concentrated seasons of performance, helped to reinforce Acme's position and attitude and establish for it a national and international reputation.

A number of remarkable installations and performance events followed. In August 1978, Ron Haselden presented his most important work to date: *'Working 12 Days at the Acme Gallery'*. An old ship's life-boat salvaged from the Thames was cut-up and brought into the Gallery. Here it was reconstructed; the decision making process normally associated with the studio had become public. At midnight on Monday 4th September 1978, Stuart Brisley began one of his most uncompromising and significant 'marathons': *'180 Hours — A Work by Stuart Brisley for 2 People'*. Breaking through the floor of the upper gallery into the lower, Brisley developed two separate personalities, A and B, dependant upon which space he occupied at a given time. Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce followed with *'Ancient Forces'*, extending the hole in the floor to build a performance structure which rose from the turfed ground floor, finally appearing through the exposed skylight high above the upper gallery. In December, Brisley re-worked his ten day public fast over the festive season in *'10 Days — a ritualised deconstruction of the ritual'*.

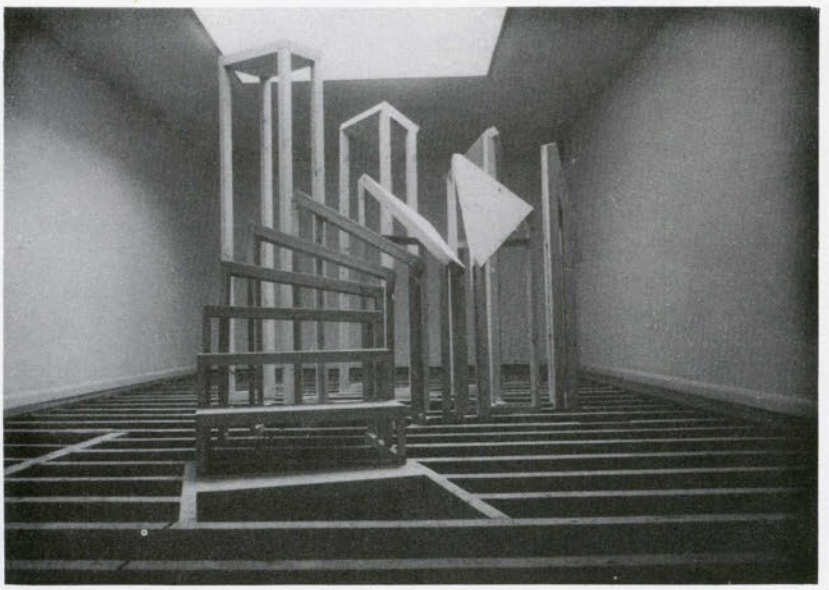
A dialogue was developing with the Gallery taking on a more central creative role. The Gallery was not just a part of a service organisation for artists providing a passive platform for the presentation of work, but was beginning to operate as an active instigator of new work. A new language was beginning to emerge and flourish which seemed to stem directly from the Acme space itself. The space would become a positive inspiration for new work for artists who had both shown with us before and for new artists: Kerry Trengove's *'Solo'*, Alastair Maclennan's *'Seven Ways'*, Julian Maynard Smith, Ron Haselden's *'Turning Scrap'*, The Kipper Kids, Stephen Cripps, Bill Culbert, Martin Ive and many others. A series of banquets with cabaret foreshadowed the alternative comedy and cabaret of the currently successful 'Comic Strip' and other venues.

The titles of shows would reflect quite clearly the continuous and time-based nature of these events; the fact that they were unique to that particular time and place; that they operated in real time: Trengove's *'An Eight Day Passage'*, Haselden's *'Working 12 Days at the Acme Gallery'*, Maclennan's *'Days and Night — 144 Hours'* and Brisley's *'180 Hours'* and *'Ten Days'*.

Support for this whole area of work could not of course have been sustained without some financial assistance from the Arts Council, but in the interests of the artists' work we have rigorously maintained an independent profile and policy. As a public gallery, our responsibility to the public has been to provide an undiluted and uncompromising view of current art practice, and to effect a direct confrontation between audience and work. This year has been a continuation and consolidation of that policy, with new work being presented by Alastair Maclennan *'Days and Nights — 144 Hours'*, Station House Opera *'Natural Disasters'*, Richard Layzell *'Conversations'*, Kieran Lyons *'Dream Ship Sinks'*, Chris Welsby *'Estuary'*, Tony Sinden *'Space Between/Space Beyond'*, Darrell J Viner *'Who Manipulates Who'*, Cripps, Harry Kipper, Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce *'Towards the Real Reality'*, Ron Haselden's *'Graving Dock'*, and lastly *'Touching Class'*, a powerful and haunting work by Stuart Brisley and Iain Robertson; Acme's final show.

As we approach the day on which the bulldozers complete the demolition of the Acme Gallery, a process already begun by Stuart Brisley and Iain Robertson, the end of the Gallery has occurred at the right time. The Gallery has inevitably become part of the established circuit; the place where 'those kind of things happen'. If continued, the freedom which the Gallery had presented would become conversely a straight-jacket; the Gallery trapped by its own philosophy, mocked by notions of its own style, which it had always avoided. Regardless of the strength or pioneering nature of the work it might present, it would become neatly categorised and possibly forgotten. That is the way the system works — a new form has to be found.

Formed by a generation who left art school ten years ago, the rule of the Gallery has changed, developed and matured with



Stuart Brisley and Iain Robertson 'Touching Class'.

those artists with whom it has established a creative rapport. While the Gallery is still part of a service organisation for artists, it would be totally inconsistent to consider that it can respond to a new generation and continue to provide the 'first one-man shows' that represented the essence of its initial policy. Our interest and concern lies elsewhere. The established public outlets (Serpentine Summer Shows, AIR Gallery etc.) are in business to provide that service, though the more vigorous projects in the future will undoubtedly come from the new generation itself, creating their own systems of support.

The Acme Gallery has assisted in establishing 'time-based' work as a serious form and a force to be reckoned with. During the last five years this work has become increasingly integrated into the fabric of the establishment, firstly, in terms of the inclusion of this area of work in the exhibition programmes of major public galleries (though far more needs to be done), and secondly in terms of the apparently expanding commercial market for products from artists whose stance hitherto was strongly in opposition to the object-based tradition of the art market and the art establishment. What problems these may pose for the practitioner remain to be seen, and the issues raised undoubtedly require extensive consideration elsewhere.

While the Gallery has operated successfully, and could maintain its reputation in new premises, the issue actually exists elsewhere, beyond the confines of the Gallery space. There is a need, which artists are beginning to express, for a wholly different confrontation with their audience, which the existing system is incapable of providing. A need to expand the potential audience beyond the self-referential confines of the art-world, whilst ensuring that the integrity of the work is maintained. I am not talking about a process of popularisation (e.g. community and other mural projects), or about plonking sculpture into public places. Artists are seeking new sites for their work in the broadest sense of the word 'site'. Artists have made an invaluable contribution to the development of the Acme Gallery's policy, and we view this as a continuing process. The very close working contacts that have been established will be maintained, and we are seeking to provide the new and radical forms of mediation that their work now demands.

There are two projects with which we are immediately involved. the first stems from my own connection with Television South West (the Company that gained Westward T.V.'s franchise and which goes 'on-air' in January '82). As co-founder of the company in 1977 and as their Arts Consultant, we are pursuing a policy, which is already meeting with success, of creating access for artists to broadcast TV. This is both in terms of access for artists working with video and film, forms which impinge most on the medium of TV, as well as the opportunity for visual artists to make 'art' from the medium itself. The opportunities for radical experimentation open to a small company with modest resources will go beyond those which are currently hoped for from the impending fourth channel.

The second project is a collaboration between the artist Ron Haselden, the De Appel gallery in Amsterdam and Acme. Haselden will be undertaking the construction of a major new work titled 'Thames Project' located on the foreshore of the Thames at Dagenham. The project will involve the building of a structure consisting of twenty-two elements stretching across some two hundred yards. Nets will be suspended across this structure which will be built of scaffolding. As this undulating landscape of nets will be totally covered at high water (and totally revealed at low tide) there will be constant changes in the streaming of the nets due to the interaction of debris left behind from the tidal flow. Construction of the work will begin in April 1982, and the work will remain in place until the end of the year.

Ron Haselden — site for 'Thames Project'

Tate Performance

Lynn MacRitchie reports on days spent searching out the live art at the Tate Gallery's 'Artists and Performance' show

Attending the recent Tate Gallery summation of 'Artists and Performance' was an uncomfortable experience. Not just in terms of physical inconvenience, though that was bad enough because of idiotic scheduling, but mentally, personally. It was almost embarassing, like attending a party full of people you hadn't seen for several years and with whom your friendship had been shaky in the first place.

Somewhat shamefaced, performance made its debut on Millbank. Squeezed into a slot suddenly vacant before the Patrick Caulfield Show, the empty rooms played reluctant host to a form which has been one of the most significant developments for 'modern art' in many years.

There were only two actual live performances the whole show. The rest was taken up with three installations and a programme of artists' video tapes and films which ranged from recordings of performed pieces to work made with the specificity of the particular medium in mind. There was one programme of women artists' video tapes, two programmes of mens', and six films, also of male performers. The two live performances were by male artists. Thus it seems that more than 'About Time' is going to be needed, as many women already suspected, before women get unquestioned recognition in this area in which they have ben particularly strong, their token inclusion through on programme of video tapes was a disgrace. There were a few incidental pleasures about attending a great art gallery daily, like going to a place of work. I made friends with one of the attendants, a fellow cyclist in his youth, who told me of trips to pick bluebells, cycling home with them in the basket, full of scent after the afternoon's rain. I got to see what the Tate is like after closing time, thanks to the popularity of Marc Chaimowicz's performance necessitating two shows, one finishing rather late... I walked past many fine pictures on my way to the performance venues, and became very fond of the beautiful wooden floors.

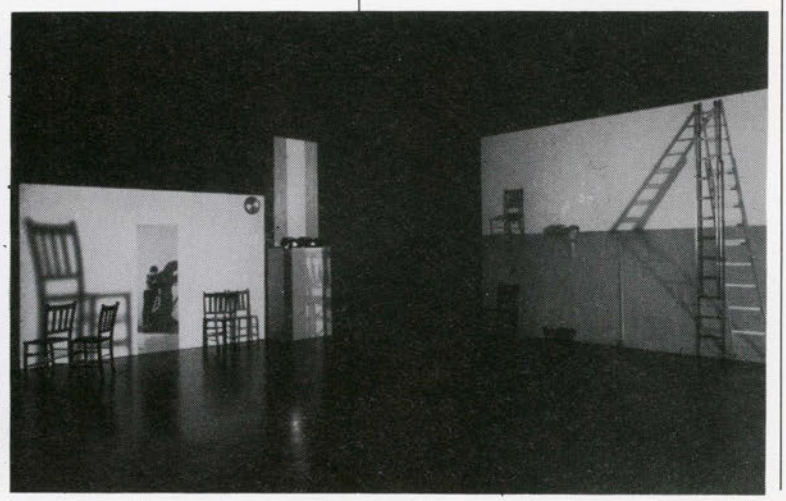
The first installation - 'Shoreline' by Chris Welsby — I missed completely. Misreading the complicated programme, I did not realise that it only ran for one week, unlike the other which ran throughout the show. Richard Francis in his introductory lecture explained that it cost a great deal of money to have six projectors running all day every day simultaneously, and that Chris Welsby had to get up very early to come in and switch everything on each day. The Tate, it seemed, could not afford to pay his fees for longer than a week, or perhaps they were worried that too much early rising might be too much for him. One of the first pieces of 'avant-garde' art I saw when I first came to London some seven years ago was a film of Chris Welsby's, one of his structural landscape pieces which the lecturer then, just like Francis the other day, was keen to place within the great English landscape tradition, which is all very fine as far as it goes, as indeed is Welsby's work, but what has it got to do with performance? Six film projectors do not a performance make, even if the artist does have to get up early in the morning to switch them on.

The other installations were by Tim Head and Marc Chaimowicz. Tim Head's piece had been bought by the Tate some years previously and never in fact assembled. Taking up a whole small gallery, it consisted of slides taken of the gallery walls projected back on to the walls, with various props — ladder, bucket, chair — which appeared in the slides also present for real in the room. Meant to play with the notion of seeing, the role of the camera and illusion, the piece was obvious and gave very little food for thought within the terms of its stated purpose. Marc Chaimowicz's installation was a casual affair, curiously mixed in content. Painted panels of decorative screens in greys and muted coloured dots and squiggles leant against the wall. A piece of sculpture, disturbingly minimal and Tate-like until we were told — Richard Francis again — that it was a writing desk apparently overturned as the result of an unknown incident — occupied centre floor. The cleverness of its device quite hidden within its 'minimal sculpture' form.

Nicest were three glass panels leaning against the wall, with fragments of photos, hand coloured in pastel shades, trapped behind them, changing slides of pure colour played over the glass. Colouring reflection... The room had an atmosphere, of coolness, style and, most welcome, humour — at least once you knew what the desk was. But an installation? More a collection of fragments...

Marc Chaimowicz also presented one of the two performances. 'Partial Eclipse' had already been presented abroad, and privately in England. It was curious to think of a performance which could be toured and put on in such an apparently casual way. There is no necessity for every performance to be a unique affair, but I had a certain feeling of a revival for the sake of the Tate of a work perhaps most relevant in its initial, private, showing. The piece was certainly deeply personal in content. Its form, the artist walking around a screen on which a slide show played, blocking the image with his own shadow as he passed — was simple but effective.

A taped soundtrack had a woman reading extracts from a diary as beautiful images of a domestic interior and its two occupants, a mysterious and androgynous couple, were presented, often framed so that the image was by no means complete but close up, oblique, giving a partial but somehow characteristic view. The audience was afforded a glimpse into a



private experience, an emotional and erotic encounter both anticipated and remembered in the diary extracts. We were not invited to be part of that experience but rather to contemplate it from a distance, sharing the diarists' removed stance as he recalled the subtle incidents and details which give any such encounter its individual flavour. One of the best moments was when a slide of anemones in a vase splashed the artist's face with red as he passed in front of the screen — the passion that the soundtrack had hinted at (and which was later, less successfully, suggested in pictures) there metaphored in colour on flesh.

Charlie Hooker's piece, the only other live work in the show, was the kind of performance that I never understand. Carefully put together, formally complex, I watched it vainly, full of goodwill, but quite unable to perceive any of the metaphoric intent that friends saw in the piece. All I saw were several young men earnestly and carefully carrying out an alloted task — making clattering percussion with sticks to cues given by movements of the artist. The space had been carefully marked out as a three dimensional grid, and fluorescent lighting increased the stroboscopic effect. Performance notes and diagrams were set out in attache cases on pedestals in the room. The piece had been carefully rehearsed and Charlie Hooker, according to the attendants had been a pleasure to work with. The pleasantness I could respond to — also the engaging sound of bare feet on smooth wood. But the preconceptions, obviously evolved over some time and of great concern to the artist and his collaborators, were unfathomable to me. The clash between an impenetrable formalism and youthful enthusiasm overpowered meaning.

The audience applauded at the end of both these performances, unusual in an area where work is so often greeted with silence. It seemed fitting, expressing appreciation of an attempt at shared experience. Much in contrast were the stark early morning sessions with the artists' video tapes — the male artists' tapes, that is. I've never really understood what was meant when people described an art audience as decadent. Not, that is, until I found myself sitting in the Tate Gallery at ten thirty the other morning watching a video-tape of two naked men fighting on a ramp, or a young man shouting and shouting 'Shut up' until his vocal cords would let him shout no more. It was not the actions which we viewed which made me think of decadence but rather the way in which we viewed them — passively consuming events long over, ideas once vibrant with an individual intuition, full of wit or pain and, much that would be impossible to perceive in the ordinary way. Available to glimpse, perhaps in the experience of live performance, such allusive content was inevitably distorted by the distancing process of the video medium. The telly on a pedestal is surely a metaphor for something in a city in which video machines line the Tottenham Court Road. Watching the Brisley/Robertson wrestling match, I felt like the inadvertent viewer of some obscure pornography, responding tentatively and uncertainly to a record of experience now offered to the gaze simply as a sight.

The same feeling of watching visceral experience presented as metaphor attended the all-male artists' films, several of which had a content-vomiting, choking, etc — in which an active feeling of disgust had to be overcome in order to watch them at all. Those films that did not make use of this method of engaging audience attention or concentration — (if only in the effort not to vomit oneself) — had a more humorous approach, presenting fairly slight ideas in a fairly slight way. A bit like jokes, once the point was taken — hiding a naked woman's body from the camera's gaze, turning a man's body into a 'container' for a cat, moulding slithering sand to make a sculpture, — they were easily forgotten.

The programme of women's video tapes was a welcome contrast. Tentative and non-assertive, they explored ideas with a respect almost verging on diffidence. But what a lot of content there was in those grave works. Again and again the video was used as a metaphor for the gaze, with all that's attendant resonance for women so often objectified themselves through sight and ideology. The men's work had been concerned with making statements, with claiming a role-hero (Brisley) — jester (Atherton). The women — Tina Keane, Nan Hoover, Tamara Krikorian, Marceline Mori, Philippa Brown - circled round seeking for the context in which their work could be placed, the very context of their thoughts. Here at last was work which expanded the senses rather than assaulted them, which took account of the demands of the medium, which gave the audience a space to think.

And so performance was seen to be seen at the Tate. But scheduling and a schoolmasterish approach to the mechanics of reproduction — no continuous screenings, no videotapes available on cassette for the audience to choose, rerun, stop discuss etc. ensured that audience response was strictly controlled. As was the context in which the work was approached. In his perfunctory introductory lecture, Richard Francis firmly claimed performance as a visual art. Other aspects, such as more theatrical or interventionist work he dismissed with scorn. So that was how he got it into the Tate. Yet in spite of all this, and the general air of museum induced gloom, it was evident that the initial principles behind performance art — to make a vital means of communicating, to attempt to share experience were very much vindicated in the live work, while its capability for becoming the very epitome of the distance and decadence it can so easily expose was also amply demonstrated. ■

Left to right: Chaimowicz 'Installation'; Tim Head 'Displacements'; Charlie Hooker and performers 'Move In' Basement, Newcastle 1981.

PHOTOS BY PERMISSION OF THE TATE GALLERY

Feature

But is it Dance?

Gillian Clark on the work of Miranda Tufnell

I am reminded of tales of other cultures, other systems of belief, where the dream state is given a value and seen as possessing a reality as strong as that of the material things of everyday, where waking is a transition from one world to another. Miranda Tufnell's recent dances slide easily between these worlds, capturing elements and echoes from each, leading the waking mind to touch the edges of the imagined, the dreamt. But this is not to imply that her work is somehow whimsical or slight, quite the contrary. It has a strength, control and concentration.

Tufnell trained at the London School of Contemporary Dance and has spent time at the Cunningham Studio in New York, but it is skills developed through release work, Alexander technique and the T'ai Ch i that are of fundamental importance to her work as a dancer, teacher and choreographer. She found traditional dance techniques limiting and inhibiting, being concerned with steps and configurations that the body was trained to perform rather than with developing a responsiveness and personal sense of movement. Her early dances used very simple everyday movements in an effort to rid herself of pre-conditioning and to rinse it from her muscles. From this simplicity has developed a personal language in which Tufnell works from the basis of movement information that is stored in the body, from a sense of co-ordinated movement that is accompanied by an awareness of stillness and movement developing from that stillness.

The first performance I saw of Miranda Tufnell's work in 1976 was characterised by the use of walking and rolling; the dancers worked singly and together, approaching each other, moving away, changing direction, in an exploration of the rhythms and connections within what are deceptively simple actions. As a concomitant to this use of very ordinary movement came an awareness of space and a precise attention to the position of the body in space and transformations of that space by the movement of the dancers within it. This sensitivity to space, and to time, has run throughout all of Tufnell's dances.

A vital factor in the development of Tufnell's work has been her collaboration with the dancer Dennis Greenwood. His inventiveness and imagination contribute enormously to a unique working relationship. He has worked with Tufnell since 1976 and although she iniates ideas and acts as a catalyst the dances are products of their working relationship. Pieces are created through lengthy, concentrated rehearsal periods in which ideas are explored and dance possibilities examined and discovered. Through improvisation the landscape of the dance and its structure is discovered and its terms become known, and all that is superfluous is cast out. So, although the performance itself is totally improvised, it is improvisation within a known territory with commonly agreed markers. Steps are not choreographed, but indications are given. This long, thorough preparation period gives rise to dense, taut works which have an intimate relationship with the space in which they take place. The majority of Dennis Greenwood and Miranda Tufnell's dances have been presented in art galleries, rather than theatres and many of their pre-occupations relate to the work of visual artists, for instance their interests in space and recent use of light as an element in the dance.

The austerity, and usage of limited movement in the early dances, gave way to a greater freedom, accelerated by the experience of working with Mary Fulkerson and a large group of dancers at the Little Theatre in Dartington and then in performance at the Acme Gallery; and after a collaboration with Tim Head at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1980 light and props took on a stronger importance. Of the Whitechapel pieces 'Still Life' most successfully developed the dance side of the collaboration. A row of projectors threw shadows from a simple set: table, chair, stepladder, vase of flowers, and whilst Greenwood busied himself with small domestic tasks, Tufnell painstakingly worked her way across the wall, slithering over tabletop, entwining herself round a chair. The two dancers interacted in so much as their activities happened to coincide and they were inhabiting the same time and space. From this work come several of the conceptions behind two recent pieces; shadows and projected light setting up complex visual situations, the dancers each being occupied with their own activities and space — lost in their own personal world.

'Other Rooms' a dance that has been seen in several forms, each altered by the place in which it has been performed, as well as by changes in the dance itself, uses a projector, white light, slides and some simple props, a chair and two tables, to create a magical, funny and lovely setting with which the two dancers interact. Their movements are interspersed with pauses and times of stillness. They dance separately, each with an air of intense absorption and come together, it seems, only because their areas of space or light coincide. Their shadows diminish, increase and participate in the dance, accompanied by the cries of animals on a Wild Life tape by David Toop. Doorways with glimpses of the rooms beyond, chairs, furniture, floors are superimposed on the real furniture, the wall and the dancers' bodies. There are moments of humour — a tiny chair appears on a leg of a seated person — and of magic — Dennis Greenwood leans over an upturned tabletop with a small room apparently caught within it, whilst Miranda Tufnell's enormous shadow moves slowly across the wall. In the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham where the dance was first performed, complexities and possibilities were added to the dance by the space. Real doors were opened and shut, creating additional vistas, and the dancers actually appeared and disappeared as well as being swallowed by engulfing shadows.

The dance made after 'Other Rooms' was premiered in Birmingham in July and has continued to be worked on since for Dance Umbrella. It is showing at the Almeida Theatre, Islington in early November, and is provisionally entitled 'East Wing'. The counterpart of 'Other Rooms', it is also concerned with the creation of a private world where dreams mingle with reality, but is very different in mood and in the quality of the movement which tends to be more abrupt, more staccatto. Four lights hang overhead and are switched on and off by the dancers. Pools of light cut up the performance area and the dancers appear and disappear within the light and the dark. A seated figure reads a monologue that runs through their dance. The atmosphere is one of loss, noncommunication, isolation.

These two dances firmly establish Tufnell as a performer with a strong visual sense and as working within a uniquely personal vision. She originally began to study dance after reading English at University as she was 'interested in seeing things differently than in language'. Precisely because what she reveals is not in language, or even expressed in terms of conventional contemporary dance technique it is difficult to describe. The thoughts and images derive from the movement, which is why I have never been able to accept the statement advanced by some critics of her work that 'It isn't dance'. It very much is dance, but dance that proceeds from thinking through moving, conveying the internal sensations of the body through responsive movements, starting afresh with each day rather than lugging pre-determined and pre-conditioned responses into each performance. It appears that it is this concentration on movement that has a personal integrity and awareness of its sources in the body, that has led to dances that evoke an internal mental world and portray those moments when the exterior and interior come together. ■

CHRIS DAVIES

MICHAEL ABRAHAMS

Laurie Anderson

'She's a Performance Artist — which is a new, pompous way of saying a lady who gets up on stage and does things.' *

The fickle nerve in the British commercial pop scene that takes 'novelty' records unerringly to the top of the charts managed throw up something of real worth recently. Caught up by our national mania for spoon-fed eccentricity (there has even been a spoof record made of it) was Laurie Anderson's complex and haunting vocoder paean, O Superman. You can't dance to it, can't work to it, can't do anything to it except stare into your video display screen until all eight minutes of it is over. Yet somehow it managed to slot into the jolly japes of Radio One DJs and somehow, just by accident bring to the public notice the term Performance Art.

It couldn't have happened in the strictly conventional US pop scene, where, ironically the term is in fact quite accepted and not necessarily a passport to obscurity or elevation to the rarified heights of fine art theory. Here, it produced a sort of backlash, with the New Musical Express referring to Performance having a 'lousy reputation for being either pointlessly provocative or unnecessarily austere' before going on to praise Anderson. The Leveller, again in favour, 'wished she'd take her work out of the precious art-school circle it inhabits', while the Sunday Telegraph stood on it's head trying to prove her connection with 'serious' art and classical music. O Superman certainly teased the prejudices out of the woodwork. Mick Jagger, David Bowie, and even John Lennon have all been classical examples of British pop stars who attempted a crossover between their world and the radical avant garde. But Laurie Anderson, significantly a woman, was already considered something of a performance 'star' probably before she even thought of making a record. This reversal could well mean something of a breakthrough for Live Art in the eighties.

Combined with it being her first visit ever, this made her performances recently at Riverside Studios of particular interest. An economic and careful use of some quite stunning state-of-the-art electronics underlaid a mythical voyage through America projected in sternly gargantuan monchrome. National Geographic country indeed, with Anderson sounding at times like a female Stan Freburg, but pulling away sharply from a fifties techno-whizz innocence to a modern cold war of product versus personality — the artist an alienated surrogate nestling in the 'petrochemical arms' of Imperial America. Despite heavy veiling in symbol and metaphor, Anderson's intentions shine through clearly.

'Language is a virus' says her mentor, William Burroughs — but here, more or less unabridged, is the result of her conversation with us.

Rob La Frenais: Do you think its a good move for live visual artists to become rock stars?

Laurie Anderson: You know, I had some telephone interviews in Amsterdam, really very funny... It's real early in the morning, and at 8am I had three phone interviews scheduled. So 8am someone calls from the Guardian and asks me questions... right from a dead sleep, y' know, pick up the phone and somebody asks, "Can you tell me what Performance Art really is?" and you just kind of go Ah... Y'know I was really tired, sleeping for two hours a night... and it was the phenomenalogical somethings of the somethings... real long pauses you know just duhhhhh! So, by the time the 8.30 call came with some of the other papers, they were less ah, fifteen syllable and... I was a little more awake then. The third call at nine o'clock was from this magazine called Smash Hits.

RL: Great. (Laughter).

LA The requests were a lot *easier*. 'What are you going to wear on Top of the Pops'. Things like that. By that time I'd got *very* articulate .... '*Well*, I'll be wearing a.....'

RL: Well, what do you think about this? Is this a deliberate move, or has it just happened to you?

LA: One of the things that's happened to me in the last couple of years is gradually the audiences have been changing in lots of different kinds of ways, and they've been real motely crews. It's been fun, because it was the art people and then Rock and Rollers start coming and other kinds of people and ah... it's real interesting. I think my particular vanity is... well for example — culturally the United States is AM pop culture, period, and the artists are over here, museums art galleries, art publications, and that whole sort of little elite, and uh... we're not talked to, you know its just sort of real, real fragmented, and my... I think it would be *incredible* if American artists in particular decided to somehow enter their own culture.

RL: Well General Idea have made moves in that direction, in Canada.

LA: Yes. But if you go to downtown Toronto, and you see their publication, or you see where they're doing things, and you look at *Toronto* which is like the most bureaucratic city in the world, you know that that gap is going to be enormous. And, of course the attempts of Mr Peanut to go into politics and things that are real interesting, you know, and there are some museums in the States too that are willing to begin more... say in electronic terms, particularly *the* electronic city Los Angeles, their new museum, it's going to be amazing, it's going to open up for the Olympics, and it's going to be a museum that's not specifically so much a depository, of things, of items, although I think that its wonderful there; big huge blocky buildings that are like pieces of blue, and pieces of marble, you just go there and you ga-ga, it's great. Believe me you don't have to have any reason except that its wonderful, sensually wonderful to go and see it. I completely love that as an idea, but also I don't think that all art is appropriately put there, you know, and that some art is really better in other networks.

RL: As far as other artists are concerned, have you ever been particularly criticised for rehearsing, for putting on a good show as opposed to not making every single specific action unique?

LA: Oh sure. The single specific action. Well there are ways of doing that, and rock n' roll people do that; they do one song then they take a drink of water then they do another song. Or an art performer would do one action and then... you know it's not about the flow it's about *that* thing... I'm going to drop this thing from here and I'm going to do another action but I'm *not* going to be theatre and I'm not going to be slick. You know I'm going to be-have the integrity of doing *this*. And that's, I don't have, you know, the *slightest* objection to that, but I don't... you know one thing that I think is really... I do think is wrong for artists to do, is make rules for other artists — on how things should be done. I mean I wouldn't dream of saying to someone 'You should clean up your act you know, slick it up a bit; why don't you, when you drop that then just go down and you *catch* it'. You know.

RL: But you choose yourself to...

LA: I choose myself to establish a kind of... more of a flow and that may have something to do with theatre it may not; it may have something to do with the piece of music that goes on interminably.

RL: What other artists do you identify with? Working artists, living working artists?

LA: In terms of technique, not many. But in terms of intent, ah, probably people like Vito Acconci. In terms of politics and William Burroughs is one of my heroes in terms of politics, ah and also in terms of style... I think his style is absolute precision, I just admire that incredibly, and ah, he's just not sloppy, in any sense, its incredibly dense, and I love that. I don't like to take up a lot of people's time, too, that's the other thing... I mean it's... the kind of time I like to use is, is one that just... I try to compress it into...

RL: So you've never gone in for endurance work?

LA: It seems too puritanical to me... I'm gonna do this because it's really art and it refers to working... it doesn't even *refer* to working it *is* working, there's no metaphor in it at all. It's not as if I were

* *Simon Bates, Radio One*

CHRIS HARRIS

working, you come and you see someone working, that you know Chris Burden kind of aesthetic, of pain, you know I'm not going to talk *about* pain, I'm going to be in pain, and you know complete, and I think that it's very interesting to kill the metaphor, but I don't choose to work that way myself.

RL: What of your contemporaries?

LA: In terms of music, my favorite music right now is Glenn Branca. He's a guitarist. That's funny because I really think that guitarists are usually sort of irritating, you know like this twangy sort of rock of roll macho, and lyrics that you can't hear, and all of that. Glenn Branca's a guitarist and did do a lot of real strange rock 'n roll stuff which I really like, he used the guitar so well. His Symphony No. I was performed this summer in New York, and I'm sure... he's done some things here but it's amazing the sound, it's really 15 people this guy. Crazy, you just... very, very precise music, the loudest things you ever heard, and incredibly powerful stuff. I love his work. In terms of European performance artists — Maria Abramovic. She's real clear. And of course there's such, I mean each little pocket of space, the wonderful thing about performance art is its just completely... ill defined, which is great because everybody (.....?) So I think it's really kind of exciting all this totally different work and it's all called performance art, because no-one can figure out what to call it.

RL: We have that problem...

LA: I don't think it's a problem really...

RL: I think live art is an easier expression.

LA: Yeah, that's nice and of course then it becomes shady in lots of ways, and it crosses over and in lots of different hybrids, and that's really what makes it live, for one thing. It's constantly changing the rules.

RL: (I'm going to change tack now.) Why is it that you and other American artists can pursue such close love/hate relationships with your country and patriotism? If such obsessions were followed here it would be a bit like playing with fascism.

LA: In what way would it be like playing with fascism for you?

RL: Well, if a performance artist started going on about England, and our culture like that, — in fact that's happened to Gilbert and George, they are about the only ones I know that have done anything of this sort. It seems to me that both yourself, and other artists can talk about Flags, and America, and all this... you can play with these ideas, you may not believe in it, that you can play such a *close* game with them without anyone being offended.

LA: Oh people are offended. First of all, my ideas on politics, to compress them for a second, is... the most important thing to me, in terms of doing my own work is not to be didactic. To create a situation... if political ideas are used I a) am not running for political office, b) I don't have the answers even if I were going to run for political office, and c) as an artist, I consider my job, if I'm interested in politics is a descriptive one, and not prescriptive, you know. I don't have any answers for anybody. I'm of course, as an artist free to work with any materials that I choose, and the danger of anything thats defined as propaganda, and the best example of this I know is... lets say you hear a song. It's an incredibly beautiful song and you just immediately love it, but you can't understand the words; the lyrics... they're buried in it. You listen to this song fifty times, and finally understand the lyrics, and they're against... they're stupid, or they're just against anything that you ever believed, but it is too late. Because you already accepted them. And it's inside you, there's nothing you can do. This is to me the principal difference between ideas and art. Art enters you first of all sensually, through your ears and eyes, and... and it's tricky... it becomes a kind of propaganda if you push it inside someone before they have a chance to say 'No thats not a good idea! That's a stupid idea. Politically I'm against it.' So the situation that I'm interested in creating is yes, a sensual one, but one that's airy enough, so that people can say well, well I'll think about that but I don't have to think about it right now. I'll think about it later, maybe totally disagree with it maybe I don't but I'll just sit back and watch. There's something that isn't like... I'm not up on a soapbox you know, doing anything. Well I am talking *about* the soapbox. I think that art is very inefficient in terms of politics. The last time I tried to work directly in politics was within feminism. In '72 I was a marshal at a Playboy demonstration. At a Playboy club in New York and we're all marching up and down in front of it and the Video was there, all the TV people. And someone who worked at the club came to work and she was going... Oh all these people, what are they doing here? And she asked me, because I was in charge of the communication aspect of this thing — she said 'How come you're all here?' And I said 'Well, we're protesting the fact that women are treated in a certain way', and she said 'Ah look, I make 800 dollars a week at this job, I have three kids, I have no husband, this is the best job I've ever had. If you want to talk about women not making money, why don't you go down to the garment district where women make 75 cents an hour? Why don't you demonstrate down there?' And I said 'Well.... Good idea! Thing is TV cameras don't want to go down to the garment district because their equipment bumps along the cobblestones, and it's too dark, and the women just don't want to go down there because they figure... we want news, we want a beat... we want to *show* our position in the spotlight. This was the last demonstration I was involved in because it was palpably about a certain kind of PR stunt that didn't work. It was ineffectual politically. Stupid. It was co-opted by the news stations to say 'Here are the girls at the Playboy club...' this is a sweet novelty story. 'You know. And it's the same thing for a lot of things that are connected to...

RL: In that aspect you would regard that you are still moving in certain directions in a more indirect way?

LA: There's no way that I can edit out my political ideas from my work. And I don't want to. It's implicit any time one makes anything. Whether they make a painting, implicit in that idea is accepting where it's going to go and who it's going to go to. It's going to go to a rich person buying it. Probably. Or they're going to be... you know in many circumstances painters have to put up with it because they are luxury items in their own culture. And of course all those marxist painters are going to gag on that basically. You know? But then you look at them and you see them at parties with collectors, and there they are! My idea with making things like records too, which first of all satisfied me because as a performance artist I have zero left of a real physical object. It's just wonderful to have... it's skinny, it's small, and it's cheap and it's exactly the piece and everybody gets exactly the same thing and it's *affordable* and... I like that. And I like the idea also, of using a system like a large record company to do it. And I think that... I thought for many months before I did that. Because of course the first thing I thought was — other artists are just going to go — Oh God what a sell-out — You know I talked to a lot of my friends about their positions on that and then decided ultimately to do it and ah... I *think* that I'm glad that I did. I...

RL: You've yet to find out.

LA: I have yet to find out.

RL: I want to ask you some more personal questions. What's your own personal mode of transport? Do you drive a car?

LA: No. I take the train... subway. Mostly because in New York ah that's... I like New York because it's crowded. And you get shoved in with everybody... everybody's on the train. You know. And it's not like LA where you're just absolutely isolated from other people. Which is one of the reasons that crime is very different in LA. Crime there is crazy crime, you go to the desert and cut off someone's fingers and eat them. Crimes of loneliness really. It's what they are. It's cabin fever crimes.

RL: Sorry what?

LA: Cabin fever. You're in your cabin. C.A.B.I.N. You're sitting there, you know for thirty years, you know there are these long winters. And you're sitting across from, you know, your relatives, and pretty soon, you pick up the kitchen knife — you lop their head off. Out of loneliness.

RL: That's a statistic isn't it, in snowy places like Canada.

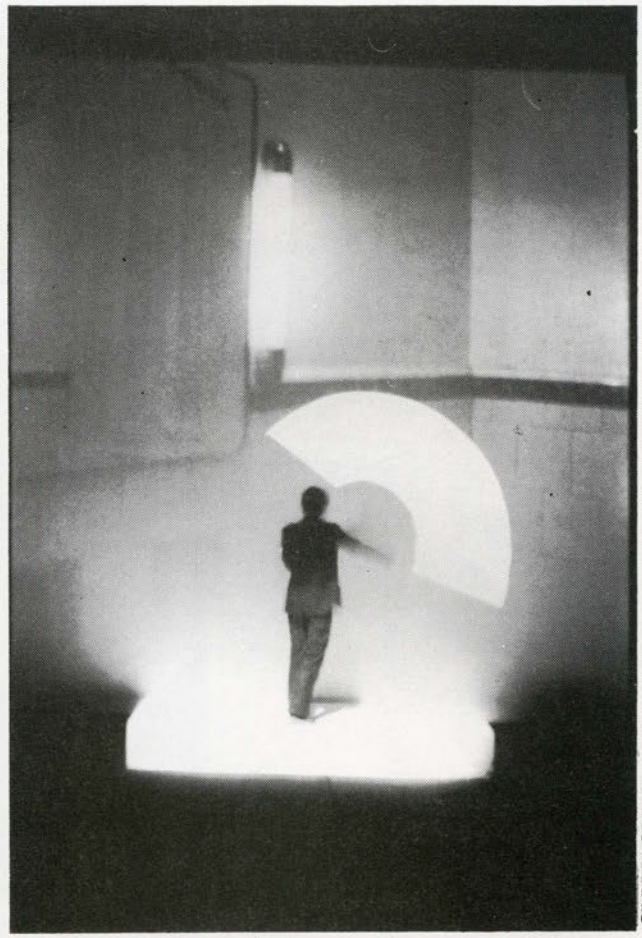
LA: Yes it is. That's what you do. And in New York is much more of a practical thing... I need money, I'll go and stick someone up and get the money, it's nothing personal... you know, everybody's... sorry I have to take your money... but —

RL: So this affects the way you consider the thing about Transport. Transport and crime, interesting connection.

LA: Well, they're *very* connected in New York, at the moment, well because of the underground situation — you go underground — you're literally beyond the pale in terms of rules, you know so...

RL: When I was in New York I found it a bit of a joke really, I went on and there were these guys edging up towards me, and we said something in very loud English accents. — 'I say, do you think they're muggers?' and they ran out of, they ran away.

LA: Yeah, sure...
RL: It seems that everyone was sort of... going like *this*... you know.
LA: Yeah, no that's funny...
RL: Americans would say, no don't say where you're going to get off etc, and we decide to make a big joke of it all.
LA: Well that's perfect. You have immediate street savvy, and that's exactly how to exist there. You did exactly the right thing. And I think that ah... Burroughs too has written some wonderful things about the subway. His book Blade Runner. The theme of this book is in the future, set as all the books are in the future — medical care would be too expensive for anyone to obtain. And if you're a doctor and you're caught with surgical instruments you're immediately arrested. So all the operations are performed underground in the New York subway system, in rooms off the tracks. And the kids — runners black kids in tennis shoes, real fast tennis shoes, are the ones who carry the surgical instruments and run along the tracks — they're the Blade Runners, the ones that deliver them. The brilliant thing about Burroughs is by concentrating — one of his main themes is medicine, junkies, and this and that, and by taking that aspect of the culture and *really* looking at it. What happens when you get sick? That's it. You can look at the whole culture that way.
RL: That was an artistic prophecy because now you've got the Guardian Angels on the subways.
LA: Right.
RL: Another question. Do you have a dog?
LA: No. Never had a dog. Ah...
RL: Cat?
LA: No animals, no... because they leave tracks on my machines! (Laughter)
RL: Right. Why dogs? (in her performances)
LA: Dogs, I guess because ah there's something really very nice about a voice that isn't articulating into words. You know I wrote a song once called I Can't Talk About It Point To It, which was actually for a sculptor friend of mine who doesn't speak he just kind of goes haaaa.
RL: Is it true you are the most expensive performance artist to hire? (Laughter) Is it true?
LA: I have no idea whether other people... how they do it...
RL: Do you have a particular attitude to money in the way you work?
LA: Yeah. I'm first of all not interested in having a lot of money, and I'm interested in having enough to make my work, and that's all complete with the whole... and, and I do my own arranging so my... it's pretty haphazard... you know go from Berlin to South Pacific back to Denver, I mean the tour is completely unco-ordinated and... I also have... ah I also like to pay whoever works with me. I consider it, I think of it, in financial terms as a kind of job, and I have no idea how other people make their livings. I know that I've had lots and lots of different kinds of jobs, I've worked as art critic and as a janitor, and as a university teacher, as a... all kinds of stuff and at this point the way I make my living is doing performances, doing lectures, and... doing books and records. And it's by no means a luxurious way of living.
RL: So basically it's the technical things...
LA: I like, and I *need* machines to work with, they're part of my material. Making prints of films is also very expensive. So, I don't know, I don't think that... it probably averages out in terms of... I mean all the money that I make goes into my work. So, I may or may not have a fee that's higher than other people but I still have the same baloney sandwiches for lunch.
RL: You have the same what?
LA: Baloney sandwiches. You should try them. (Laughter)
RL: Right. What's your attitude to immortality. Would you choose, for example to be cryogenically preserved?
LA: Oh. You know there's a friend of mine that's doing something on a Californian religious sect that's preparing for Armageddon, which many of them ardently wish for because that will justify all their theories of the end of the world. Many people hope for this kind of holocaust again as well as the military because otherwise what are they going to spend their money on, unless people have a fantasy of it all ending that way? Ah, I know this isn't answering your question of would I like to preserve myself...
RL: Yes, this is a personal question.



CHRIS HARRIS

LA: I ah... actually I do like to take a lot of trips to other kinds of places and so that might be interesting. I haven't ever thought about it until this very second, but a lot of the trips that I take I go somewhere with no money and no plans and just see what's going on. The first trip I did like that was to the North Pole.
RL: Ah yes, you hitch-hiked to the North Pole.
LA: And then to places like Kentucky, very low tack places.
RL: What happened when you hitch-hiked to the North Pole?
LA: I got there actually by bush planes. People... I started at the house in a street in New York, left, started hitch-hiking up there and then mostly in Canada I was getting rides with people who were either draft resisters and could never go back to the United States, or people who'd been to Vietnam and had gone crazy there and all they wanted to do was fly a little plane around. So, I was just sitting there in the seat and we'd make these crazy dips and dives all over the place. 'Watch this! Neeeoooww!', you know real suicide type flight pattern. It was a wonderful trip, because it was about being utterly alone, and in a strange place.
RL: What do you consider the principal limitations to any ambitions you might have?
LA: Not being able to wake up in the morning and spend just a couple of hours staring out the window which is what... unless I can do that I feel totally... automatic. So this couple of hours to me is, is... and then the rest of the day I'm my own slave — getting things physically done, which is of course fun, and which of course can be the work, but the work is done in those couple of hours. A time in which I try to become totally at ease and try to think of what's really important to do, and not just try to do what seems important for the moment, but what I alone in a room want to do, without considering any other issues at all, what I would like to see. So that if I weren't able to, to be peaceful in that way, that would be my most severe limitation.
RL: You quote in your show someone saying 'Are you talking to me or are you just practising for one of those performance of yours?'

Continued on page 32

JONATHAN BOROFSKY

John Roberts considers this 'surfeit of imagery' recently presented at the ICA. Photos by Steve White

I am looking at a postcard: the Monkeys fresco from Thera in the Athens Archeological Museum. A group of blue 'monkey-men' swing and dance across a billowing abstract background. The colours are so sharp and the decorative order so modern that it is hard to believe that it was painted 1500 years B.C. In fact one would be hard pressed not to see certain stylistic affinities with recent decorative wall-painting (or recent wall-hangings that look like ancient wall-paintings, *pace* Francesco Clemente). Giving new looks to old forms and old looks to new forms has become a two-fold way of treating the 'return' to painting seriously without consenting to modernist notions of formal progress (just as the pastiche has become the major modus operandi in recent popular cinema and the rock industry). Dekor and New Image have ushered in a revival of interest in pre-modern and archaic forms. The wall-work, with all its pre-historical symbolic load, and its enormous and versatile scope for large-scale statements has become a 'new' area for temporal activities. The last time it was in vogue (though for quite different reasons) was in the late sixties during minimalism's hey-day. Because of the prevailing anti-subjective ideology the wall was inevitably the logical resting place for an art that saw its historical place as a process-based and anti-illusionistic activity. Sol Le Witt was one of a number of artists at the time who used wall drawings in a systematic way. Jonathan Borofsky, whose own background is in minimalism, was encouraged by LeWitt in the early seventies to draw up his autobiographical doodles and sketches on the gallery wall. Although Borofsky uses the large-scale wall-painting (huge black silhouettes of running figures) for its obvious 'primitive' look, its expressionism is confined to the image and not the activity — wherever he sets up psychic home the phantom figures, which are drawn on acetate, are first illuminated on the wall. He then draws around the blow-up figures and paints them in. Painting for Borofsky is a systematic extension of drawing. More important and more specific, like many multi-media artists working today Borofsky is not interested in painting *per se*, but as a link to other visual media.

Borofsky's aesthetics are solidly versed in the rhetoric of Dada anti-form. (The world is too confused and chaotic a place to try and impose a monocular visual order on it). Hence, although the wall-paintings may dominate the gallery as images their status in Borofsky's mind is as provisional (or throwaway) as the other objects, paintings on canvas, video tapes, drawings and kinetic works he leaves scattered around. The wall-painting is no more or less a part of a conglomerate whole. I say whole, but the cluster of images and objects have no internal coherence; as a recent review in *Artforum* rightly pointed out the only 'order' Borofsky's environments possess could be loosely described as rhythmic. But in his recent

installation at the ICA these rhythms were very patchy indeed.

Borofsky lets his whole life — psychic, emotional, political — spill and tumble out all over the place, everything is worth recording and celebrating and everything is worth exhibiting. It is an aesthetic of egomaniac proportions, which as the ICA show exemplified has severe limitations, not least of all the demands it makes on people's powers of concentration. (The English artist Colin Hall who is working in a similar autobiographical throw-it-all-in fashion suffers from the same vexations). But the real problem with Borofsky's ICA environment, beyond considerations of psychic proliferation (in conjunction with the show the ICA have published a collection of his dream drawings — Borofsky has mimeographed these and pasted them up on the gallery walls), was simply one of scale and ambition. The main gallery at the ICA is a notoriously difficult space to fill adequately if you're creating an installation. For all Stuart Brisley's efforts at occupying the space during his recent symbolic sorting and categorizing of rubbish, his installation looked very lost. Borofsky's looked absolutely lost. Putting a ping-pong table in the middle of the floor (a banal Borofskian political symbol) as a focal point for audience participation didn't help at all. In fact it produced too many associations of cold and windy youthclubs. Places that Borofsky has actually worked in as a community artist. Apart from the physical thrill of walking under his gigantic grey shadow figure that he had painted obliquely at the bottom of the gallery where the ceiling drops, one could get just as much out of reading the dreams.

Borofsky may invite chaos but he is also at pains to use it systematically — not by classification but by mensuration. Borofsky's art works on the basic duality of time and space. In 1969 he started counting, handwriting numbers on both sides of sheets of paper which he exhibited as a stack in his first one man show in 1973. 8 years before, the Polish artist Roman Opalka began his *1 — Infinity* series. Beginning at 1 in 1965 Opalka has been filling canvas after canvas with tiny painted numbers. For Opalka counting is an heroic act of defiance against time. Ordering one's life to the point of fanatical absolutism, allowing nothing to intrude in your life's work that may inhibit its pre-given destiny, is perhaps the nearest to a state of spiritual suspension that one can consciously experience. Opalka's grim determinism in fact is an endlessly repeated death. Such zero-level conceptualism could have claimed Borofsky. In 1973 he began to make objects but continued counting by numbering every single thing he made or wrote. He is now almost up to three million. By counting everything Borofsky has got the best of both worlds, of order and chaos. In one of his dreams Opalka actually makes an appearance. Opalka "ate three hot dogs and four cakes and wasn't feeling too good". A premonition of conceptual constipation?

Numbering everything one ever made instead of writing numbers on bits of paper or painting them on canvas is not much of a choice which ever way you look at it. Borofsky's despair for order is really a Duchampian act of self-curatorship. Everything the artist produces is given an instant catalogue number. Borofsky is a bit like the child who having just learnt to count up to twenty wants to count everything it sees around itself. Despite this self-consciousness there was actually something quite engaging about an artist turning his life into a huge public scrapbook. Maybe it was winsome and naive but one could adjust to it if one was prepared to acknowledge its presentiments of good faith. The paintings on canvas were bad, very bad (not even good bad) but one could accept them within the given context, as psychic tokens in much the same way as the dream drawings are. Borofsky talks about being a "space-artist". The feeling that he is talking more about consciousness than physical entities is quantified by his attempts at dumping different media together, as if he were trying to merge identities, the yin of video with the yang of painting. This spiritualist 'healing' has all the trademarks of Beuys. The artist must focus the forces of enlightenment through a language of spiritual unity.

At least Borofsky's art has a sense of humour. The installation at the ICA was full of madcap images, some in the most inaccessible places that took a while to spot. A painted fibre-glass self-figure suspended from the ceiling as if it were flying. A figure hidden behind a glass panel in the ceiling flashing in and out of view. An animated video of a dog walking a tightrope. A huge cartoonesque painting of Leger like forms connected by criss-cross lines, with a self-portrait in the top right hand corner, a blue light bulb protruding through the forehead. Dozens of photocopies of a hand written warning found on the streets of Venice, California, and scattered about the floor. "LITTERING is an indication of sick mind. Who that litter is either sick and can't help it; or an 'asshole' that don't care what they doing to their earth". Borofsky's affection for this kind of wierdness runs through his art. Like his own unconscious ramblings this leaflet was a fragment of disorder, a psychic flashpoint. Ronny H. Cohen included Borofsky in her infamous essay 'Energism: An Attitude'. It takes no great intellectual feat to understand why. Borofsky's art displays an untrammelled, child-like enthusiasm for showing off. How that sustains itself for the viewer beyond the first giggles and guffaws is down to Borofsky's ability to maximalize his resources. The best of Borofsky I imagine is when there is a feeling of surfeit, of being in some Alladin's cave. (This I hasten to add does not mean more of the same but a greater variety of objects and images). At the ICA there was too much empty space and thus little to excite the imagination. ■

Music in Performance

Actual 81: Festival of Improvised Music at the ICA

Review in form of a conversation by Paul Birwell & David Illic

David Illic: I'd like to talk about the problems that exist when you have a festival of Improvised Music at all. Actual Fest was a very brave attempt and there are certain differences that the festival tried to bring out in its reflection of the scene as a whole. One is the experimental nature of the music — there is a continuing process of Evolution going on — it necessitates that improvising musicians constantly re-evaluate their work and try to explore different areas. That is put in direct opposition to those who are aware of the need for spectacle, to get improvised music out of the ghetto which it has been in for so long. The difficulties arise when you put these two together in one venue for a period of time. Whilst on one hand it can be quite rivetting to witness the change in approach, it does not lend a great deal of continuity and flow. Throughout the festival, the performers seemed to be unsure of themselves in certain situations and there was a tendency among some artists to present sets that would have been better presented in a working space, such as the London Musicians Collective....

If a collective is coming together to work, and some of those groups, particularly The Brass Project (Melvyn Poore/ Paul Rutherford/ Martin Mayes), had found a common area in the music that could be developed, then to constantly have to look at the clock would detract from the music, and the music would suffer as a result. That is another reason why a festival of improvised music could be a comic stance in itself.

Paul Burwell: On the other hand, one of the classic ways of promoting Minority activities is to getting publicity and attracting an audience.

DI: There was a pre-conceived idea of presenting and promoting an experimental platform such as The Brass Project and the group of musicians collated by saxophonist Evan Parker (The Parker Project) which played throughout the festival, and I feel that the idea there was not to simply reiterate elements of their music, but to see how those ideas would change given the time for that particular group to sub-divide and you could watch these smaller units progress throughout the festival. I think that that says something about the nature of improvised music itself. However, to put that on a programme against someone like **Fred Frith/Bob Ostertag/ Phil Minton,** who have worked together for some time and have gone beyond the experimental stage into producing work that possesses some kind of spectacle, not simply vusual but lending a strong overall context which would, I feel far more applicable to a festival situation.

PB: I found I enjoyed more of the music this year than the previous year. Again it was good to have a showcase that encompassed a varied selection of experimental work. One noticed current trends, say in the use of composition by improvisors. Several of the groups and some of the individuals were performing specific pieces. I have never seen so much rustling of sheets of manuscript paper in an improvised music context before. Things like the Brass Project and the

ıap of Santos Casani and his part
› a London taxi. Note: the 177 bus

Parker Project could be ways of trying to deal positively with the problems of festivals in relation to improvised music whereby you are trying to make a situation where the music can grow, but also being aware of the fact that in a festival you are trying to present a summary of your work to date, rather than shooting off into unchartered territory. These sort of experiments can be interesting to observe in a less formal situation such as an ordinary gig, following the musicians and watching them explore areas, maybe tentatively, maybe unsuccessfully. It can actually still be interesting for the listener in anything other than a festival situation. In a festival situation it can tend towards the tedious.

1st Day

PB: The festival opened this year with a set by **Melvyn Poore,** who has a monopoly of the avant-garde tuba work. He featured quite strongly in the festival, comes from a classical background and has a classical approach to playing, which shows.

DI: His set seemed to be the most self-contained of the three solo outings of the **Brass Project.** He had thought a lot about what he was going to do and the way that he was going to present it and it was in some ways the most successful because of that.

PB: I enjoyed the piece with the double reed inserted in the mouthpiece and some of the more spacious pieces he did. Every horn player in the festival was prone to avant-gardisms that seemed to be more from the classical influence rather than from the jazz influence. One of the things that distinguishes this music from free jazz is that western classical influences are moderately strong. **The Roscoe Mitchell Trio** even performed composed pieces which were very heavily in the Mid '60's avant-garde style. I have not been able to make up my mind about what I thought of that trio, partly because it was truncated, partly because it was not the sort of music that I was expecting at all.

DI: I think that it is refreshing in a way. Roscoe's set differed from his work in the Art Ensemble of Chicago in that his work was more concentrated and took a much straighter path towards the end result rather than the somewhat tortuous line that the AEOC are renowned for taking.

PB: Although I quite like the fact that it was different, I don't think that I would necessarily go out and buy a record of that sort of music.

PB: What did you think of the **Roger Turner/ Carlos Zingaro** set?

DI: It was one of the experimental sets where the two went out to play for a designated amount of time and unfortunately the ideas that they had were not sufficient to hold my interest for that length of time. I have seen Roger play several times before and I enjoyed his work tremendously, but on this occasion both Roger and Carlos were not content to leave the stage until they had pursued every possible musical avenue, and I think that the set suffered as a result.

PB: I don't feel that they were playing to the clock although they did seem to play for a long time. I think that their motivations were probably good ones in that they did not want to stop until they produced something which they felt happy with, which is fine in a gig situation. In a festival situation, it can get a bit tedious though. They did not play badly, but having heard very good reports about them in the past, I felt that they did not manage to regain their personal peak, and were trying to do so.

I have slight difficulty with that kind of music sometimes. I can enjoy it when it is going well but I do not particularly enjoy improvised music as a style. The nature of improvised music gives you the possibility of transcending things like style. For me, Roger is definitely a player in the avant-garde style at which he is very competent. He is very knowledgeable about drums but I don't feel that he has that ability for transcendence, for saying something through what he is doing, which is something I expect, not just from music but from many other things as well.

Thurs eve.

DI: Perhaps the most surprising set of Thurs eve was a duet between cornet player **Marc Charig** and violinist **Taya Fischer.** Charig seemed to take a surprisingly passive role in the performance, Fischer providing the main impetus. She seemed, at points, to be leading the music. Charig can be a very challenging and forceful player but here he played a very sedate role, which was perhaps fitting in this context but I certainly feel that he did not bring out the charisma which he undoubtedly has as a player.

My main criticism is that there was this imbalance between the two musicians but there were quite a few moments where Taya would lead the music into quite engrossing areas.

The Fred van Hove Septet reminded me strongly of the ICP Orchestra who had played at

Left to right: George Lewis; Diamanda Galas; Tony Wren; Paul Burwell; Paul Rutherford, Phil Wachsmann, Marc Charig, Radu Malfatti.

last year's Actual Fest. There were certain parallels in the music — a heavy jazz orientation to the work and also elements of theatre. One comment I would make on the set concerns the way that Van Hove organised the music. The players were introduced into the set over quite a considerable time, so that the texture of the music was constantly changing and the personalities of those musicians put their own stamp on the rest of the group — as one further member was added, so the music would change.

PB: What sort of theatrical elements were there?

DI: **Paul Rutherford's** clowning around was really the centre of the theatrical activity, throwing instruments and mutes from behind the stage curtain; also the musicians appeared from odd parts of the stage, often starting their musical contribution from a point that divorced them physically from the rest of the musicians.

Martin Mayes' solo performance encompassed certain problems. Some improvising musicians have constantly been trying to extend the tonal range of their instruments by using unconventional playing techniques or using objects. Mayes was using balloons and beer through the flugel-horn. In some ways brass instruments have their limitations, more so than other instruments, the guitar for instance which has been able to accommodate many different approaches, from the minimalist (Derek Bailey) to the highly orchestrated (Keith Rowe and Fred Frith). Mayes' set brought out the limitations of the instruments and was, perhaps the weakest of the Brass Project's.

PB: One criticism I hear of Martin's playing is that he is quite derivative. He seems to have taken ideas from Paul Rutherford and Steve Beresford. Do you see his playing in that sort of light?

DI: This, I think, goes back to the idea of improvised music being evolutionary. Not all musicians are individual geniuses by any stretch of the imagination, and although some players are derivative, in the long term you can only hope that they use those derivative means as a springboard for exploring other areas rather than just blindly following their heroes.

Friday

PB: Friday afternoon was the first chance I had to see the **Parker Project,** and for me, one of the strongest sets of the festival, the trio of **George Lewis, Paul Lovens** and **Alex Schlippenback.** The main reason for my enjoyment of the set was Paul Lovens' playing. He is one of the most creative of the modern percussionists and his playing has a clarity that was lacking in quite a lot of the other percussionists. His ideas come through crystal clear, and you can hear every stroke that he makes. I enjoyed George Lewis more later in the week when he was playing a lot of solo stuff. This trio contrasted very interestingly with the other trio, which was **Evan Parker, Paul Lytton** and **Barry Guy.**

Henry Kaiser/John Oswald — I have played with Henry Kaiser once and I know him on record. John Oswald I had not heard before. I did not particularly enjoy their set. There is a side to improvised music which is trying to improvise electronic music pieces live with saxophones and stuff like that.

DI: Like Musique Concrète?

PB: Yes, it reminds me of the work of people like Pierre Henry and some of the American guys who were working with Moog Synthesisers in the early days. It is an area that does not hold a lot of interest for me.

Keshavan Maslak and **Charles Moffat:** I had never heard of Keshavan Maslak before. A very strong person, he seemed to be in a Tuxedo Moon, Love of Life Orchestra, area. He has located himself aesthetically in the music of the '50's, also in the speech and clothes. He had a certain affinity with a number of the audience, who was the village idiot of the festival, with hipster talk, and played saxophone all the time. The difference was that one was completely mad, whilst the other one managed to maintain some semblance of credibility, i.e. one guy was being paid, and the other was not. Maslak had got his fantasy world far more together. His set with Charles Moffat, a very good left handed drummer, was quite interesting, very much spectacle and very much image, which was Maslak's intention. It was rather strange because it was annexing a musical form of the past.

John Lindberg: He was in a similar division actually — in fact I think they are recording for the same record company (Leo Records). A young guy in a nice suit playing compositions on the double bass, which I quite enjoyed but although they worked well in a festival situation, I think I would have fallen about laughing had he done the same set in less formal surroundings. He had very good technique — everybody has good technique these days and no ideas — terrible! He seemed to be improvising on blues riffs most of the time, very melodramatic stuff.

Saturday

PB: Guus Janssen solo. Who is he?

DI: Next.... **Vario II** (laughter from PB and DI).

PB: Was he the bass player who didn't show up, or the pianist that did? I know I saw one pianist who I had not recognised before, who played a long time, playing compositions, some of which were quite nice.

Vario II; Maarten Altena/Gunter Christmann/ Paul Loyens/ Maggie Nichols/ John Russell. Again, a group that I had heard about before I actually heard them. A few avant-garde heroes and semi-heroes in the group. Again I feel that this group is an example of people playing in the avant-garde style — which is not enough for me. It is simply not good enough having the chops, you have to have something to say with them, something that transcends style.

Klimaat: I know these people and I have played with them all. They were doing composed pieces. None of them are particularly extrovert performers and don't project, and in a festival situation as we have already described, you have to play across the footlights, which they did not do. They just stood there and played... they could have been in a room by themselves virtually. I enjoyed the last piece they did the best... it was the lightest piece, very quirky and enigmatic composition by **Luc Houtkamp,** rapid interlocking phrases and a slightly witty, humorous nature. But for most of the time they were taking it too seriously, which in a way was restrictive to them. I felt that they could have been on top of the situation a little more. It is like people who are playing classical music, not having rehearsed the score enough, really concentrating on getting the score right but not expressing themselves through the music.

DI: Sat eve was **the** classic festival performance, all of the people playing seemed to have some idea of what the end result would be. The most surprising of the three sets, for me, was the trio of **Fred Frith** (guitar), **Bob Ostertag** (Tapes) and **Phil Minton** (voice), Minton was brought in only a matter of minutes before their performance due to the breakdown of Ostertag's gear. Despite the setbacks, the political orientation of the work (dedicated to the horrors of life in El Salvador) gave the piece a strong framework from which the musicians never strayed, and there was terrific empathy between the players. It was totally different to what I had been expecting, having heard a recording of Ostertag and Frith ('Getting A Head' on Rift Records). They obviously had to change their ideas quite dramatically, given the malfunctioning of Ostertag's equipment, yet they still carried it off, presenting a very strong performance that appealed, not only on a musical level, but also emotionally.

PB: I enjoyed Phil Minton, I always get a feeling of sincerity in his attitude to his work, which I find very inspiring. He is definitely an improvisor, as he performed stone cold, he just happened to be in the audience. He got up and performed very well. Great voice... great control. I think he compared very well with **Diamanda Galas** who was down as the star of the show dut to her attempts to become a legend

DENNIS AUSTIN

Left to right: Peter Cusack; Taya Fisher; keshavan maslak (tenor); Charles Moffat (drums); Roger Turner.

in her own lifetime. Everybody in improvised music is looking for a new star and I think she fancies being one and there is quite a large body of support. By the time I came to see her perform I was a little bit jaundiced against her because of the build up and hype.

DI: I think it went against her in a way that she lost an awful lot of tension by having such a long break in between numbers. There was a lot of messing about with technical equipment, some of which I feel should have been done well in advance.

PB: It wasn't her fault that she wasn't able to set up earlier because of all the other things that were going on in the afternoon. In one sense what she did was good. She had a very clear idea of what she wanted and was not prepared to have her work damaged by technical circumstance. People most probably thought that it was more of a prima-donna stance because of the stories about her being somewhat temperamental, the Julie Garland of improvised music. There are many anecdotes about her... Steve Beresford said that he had seen her reduce a sound engineer to tears in Europe. However I have seen situations which Steve has made resolute efforts to reduce sound engineers to ashes, let alone tears and I have done it myself.

I did not see her performance from the best point because I was outside the frame of the four speakers that were situated in the four corners of the room. She was using pre-recorded tape of her own voice, and five microphones for quadrophonic stereo, so that each mic went into one of the four apeakers and one mic went into all four so that she could move her voice around the space very effectively. She used dramatic lighting effects, back-combed hair — her appearance was very much part of it... I felt too distanced so that I was not moved by it, which was rather a shame.

Peter Cusack was pushed from the Sunday afternoon slot to the Saturday evening slot, which was actually put together as being more of a Rock, or Popular orientated evening, a deliberate move by Anthony Wood as the evening clashed with a concert of Improvised Music at the Festival Hall.

DI: That seemed to be a curious twist of fate that worked.

PB: Yes. Peter Cusak seemed to be quite nervous actually, and did not seem to play as well as he can do, but nevertheless, came across very well.

DI: I was looking forward to seeing him because having heard him in Alterations, I felt that with the other three members of that group, or collection of stroppy characters as they wish to be known, Peter was usually in the background, thus to throw him in front of the spotlight is much more challenging. His set was nice and whimsical in a way. It was nice to have humour coming in to the festival. It certainly gave another side to improvisation and I think it brought out his skills as a player much more forcibly than I had ever heard before.

PB: That this is interesting because over the years I have heard him play quite a lot, and during the last year or so he has been doing quite a lot of solo gigs, and has been playing very, very well on them, but he did not play nearly so well at the festival. But again, because of the festival context, it did not make that much difference. There were good reviews of his set, which were deserved, but I don't think it was his best gig of the year. I have seen him perform much better when he has been in more relaxed circumstances.

Sunday

DI: Marc Charig, Martin Mayes, Tony Wren, Larry St Abbins, Paul Burwell: Mama Lapato: I think that this set was refreshing given that so much free jazz has driven itself into a corner where if you go to free jazz gigs, you end up hearing exactly what you expected to hear. There is a certain amount of pre-conception, even playing to formula. Mama Lapato took it on to a different level. I think that there were certain parallels with the work of American group The Lounge Lizards, despite the moments of general cacophony, Mama Lapato seemed totally divorced from the free-jazz norm.

PB: Brass project — Conrad Bauer had not been allowed out of East Germany to play so George Lewis replaced him. I enjoyed the set, particularly George Lewis' playing, Melvyn's too. George did some very nice circular breathing and extended notes that worked very well.

The lecture/debate on the Media and the music was a bit of a shambles. It certainly put us in our place. All the invited members of the media did not show up. The only people who did were members of the alternative media like ourselves, who hadn't been invited. I think that is quite interesting in itself. I mean, is there anybody reading what we write? Is there any point in writing about the music when nobody is taking you seriously because you are not writing for the Evening Standard?

DI: One problem, especially with the British music press, is that there is not a large business contingent behind improvised music. **A lot of the coverage given by papers such as Melody Maker or NME has an awful lot to do with advertising.** With gigs being promoted by musicians (with the notable exception of Anthony Wood who is working against the odds anyway) there is usually no money to support any advertising in these papers. Same with records: there are no improvising musicians of any stature working with the major record companies, so again, no advertising, thus I feel that the media see themselves as having no responsibility or obligation to cover improvised music.

PB: I felt that what was set up was not so much an attempt to start a dialogue between the media that is covering the music but rather to set up a dialogue with the media that one would like to see covering the music, but wasn't. If one got worked up enough about it, one would feel vaguely insulted that one had not been invited — invitations went out to people like Richard Williams who stopped writing about improvised music ages ago, or people who occasionally write one or two reviews. I have been writing on improvised music for about six years, and have been instrumental in a lot of the magazines that have been around covering the bloody stuff, yet that contribution does not seem to count for anything at all. They did not even send an invitation to 'COLLUSION', which is a bit crazy.

Sunday Evening

DI: Tony Oxley presented a trio set with the trombonist **Radu Malfatti** and pianist **Ulrich Gumpert.** It was a fairly traditional Tony Oxley set. I do like his work a lot, even though on this occasion there wasn't as much breathing space in the music as there usually is.

Ulrich Gumpert I found particularly amazing — I've never seen such an incompetent pianist in my life. His technique was totally off the wall, yet what he was playing, and his contribution to the trio was very good. He poured himself into the ebb and flow of the music. Tony Oxley did what you would expect him to do, and Radu Malfatti did some of the best brass playing of the week. Although none of his playing was particularly radical, his contributions went well in the overall context.

PB: That's funny, the set did nothing at all for me, actually... I found it all moderately half hearted and unclear. I hadn't seen Tony Oxley perform for a very long time, and I don't really like his playing, I guess. Malfatti, I thought was quite lost. I thought he was an ineffective player, and I found the whole set ineffective. I didn't see **Howard Riley's** set, did you?

DI: Yes. Again Riley did very much what you would expect from him. He was building up layers and layers of tangled melodic themes which he worked on. It was a very deep set. I have heard him play better, but I enjoyed his set although it contained no particular revelations. The final set of the festival was the complete **Parker Project.** Again, no surprises. It was good to hear all the musicians together, and as such was a fitting end to the festival. ■

ReviewsReviewsReviews

New Anatomies
ICA

Isabelle Eberhardt lived and died within the space of twenty eight years. A life that was an almost continuous battle against the awesome weight of polite society at a time when 'Victorian' morals imprisoned women in 'the golden cage of normality'. Ironically the golden bars against which she railed so desperately were actually beginning to be bent and finally broken by cataclysmic changes of social current throughout Europe: the Tsar was assassinated; Engels wrote 'The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State'; Oscar Wilde was sent for trial; Havelock Ellis's 'Sexual Inversion' was banned on publication; the Labour Party came into being in England; peasants revolted in Russia; Emmeline Pankhurst founded the WSPU and Europe colonised the world.

Extraordinarily, Isabelle Eberhardt imposed her will on her family, removing them from comfortable Geneva to inhospitable Algeria where she adopted Islam, male (Arab) dress and immersed herself totally in the culture of the country. Was she ahead of her time or a forgotten thread in that pattern of change?

Timberlake Wertenbaker's script is an ambitious attempt to illuminate, examine and answer these questions. *New Anatomies* picks up, glances at and then discards idea after idea. There isn't time nor, perhaps, the inclination to examine closely; the result is curious: a headlong dash through too much which effectively slows the action to less than walking pace.

The early scenes revolve around Chekhovian family frustration as Isabelle, her elder sister Natalie, brother Antoine and mother Anna talk at each other and search frantically for love among their inner ruins. It is absent, the restraints imposed are too great for its survival except as lust, incest and pretence. Isabelle rebels against the claustrophobic demands made upon her as a well brought up young woman and against the loveless lifeless existence that capitulation to these demands would mean. Her rebellion doesn't bring happiness, the forces arrayed against her are too great, her own strength is not enough, help arrives too late. Absinthe and despair are all that's left.

The second half is more concerned with the contradictions revealed by Isabelle's chosen life: the modish female impersonator flirts with her patroness at a Paris soiree but retreats into confusion and fright when her heterosexuality is mildly questioned. The lesbian journalist Severine, equally chic in smoking jacket and cigarillo boldly announces that *she* wears male attire so that she can take her girl friends out in public! There are contradictions for her though: 'in order to write seriously, I find I must dress as a man...' Isabelle looks on in drunken bewilderment, her naivety is viewed with contempt.

LESLEY McINTYRE

At the heart of frequently purple prose is a study of incomprehension and empire: Isabelle refuses to understand the patriarchy that seeks to occupy her mind and body; the French colonisers refuse to understand the aspirations of Algerian nationalism; for Isabelle and Algeria substitute women and the world under imperialism and the enormity of the subject becomes apparent...

In the end the haze of uncut prose and unwatered Absinthe is too much for the increasingly frantic Isabelle (Hazel Maycock), they both drown, the former in a freak desert storm, the latter in a welter of words. However, under tons of sand and bathos is a startling character and a work that ought to be clarified, polished and revealed. I hope author Wertenbaker and director Nancy Diuguid might one day have another go at digging out the undoubted buried treasure. Diana Simmonds

Sue MacLennan
Oval House

What an insatiably terpsichorian metropolis this is. As if the great multi-strutted gamp of the Dance Umbrella were not enough to shelter aficionados of the body electric for week after week this autumn, a smaller fringe parasol, Dancers Dance, opened up down at the Oval House south of the capital's river providing refuge for those strangely overlooked by the official festival in its near encyclopeadic comprehensiveness, as well as giving some of those appearing at Riverside and elsewhere an opportunity to do other, perhaps more personal work, on their own terms.

One such was Sue MacLennan. Her programme at the Oval, given twice, was of solo work choreographed by Kirstie Simson, Cris Cheek, Ricky Knight and herself. It was a knockout evening that, if it did not draw the crowds, did bring in a respectable band of enthusiasts, not to mention Fergus Early touting copies of New Dance hot off the press.

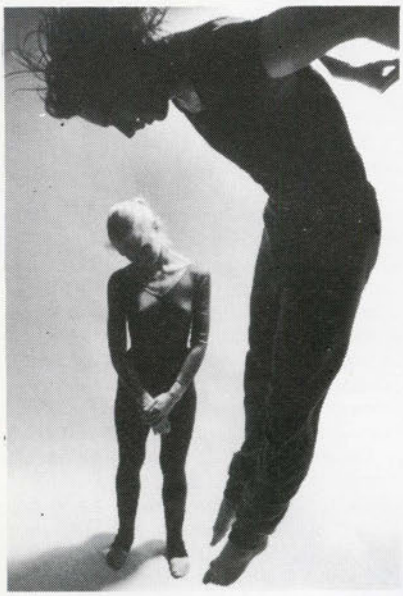
A characteristic of all Mac Lennan's dancing was the way she used her hands, from the child like finger game of Kirstie Simson's 'Running to Catch' to the stylishly limp wrists of her own 'Tapping my Resources', there was a plethora of small precise often delicate movements. Coming first in the programme, the Simson piece was the most aesthetically demanding of the dances, developing from a sequence of slow interlacements of the limbs into some vigorous movement accompanied with words from MacLennan and an accomplice in the audience and ending with the dancer's hunched figure crawling about the floor, (and for a moment about a spectator), after the creeping, spidery fingers of one of her hands. The words, for the most part a litter of verbs but with the phrase 'Running to Catch' refrained amongst them, hinted at a

distant representational origin to some of the movements: running, sleeping, talking and so on, in a gently humorous work.

'Piece for Riverside Control Room' by MacLennan with Cris Cheek, had the air of an obscure rite or incantation about it, with the spectators drawn into an evocative but unspecific atmosphere. In one far corner a fan rustled the pages of a magazine, its shadows thrown diagonally across the performance area in a shaft of light. MacLennan crossed the diagonal with a line of salt poured from a box. To a scarcely discernable sound track — were those distant wolves we heard, and then locomotives or sleigh bells, breathing, the noise of motion and of stasis — the virgin line of salt was disrupted with toes, elbows and fingers until in the end rolled flat and wide with the cylindrical box from which it had been dispensed. Blackout.

There was something curiously erotic about Ricky Knight's murkily filmed 'Blue Shoes' which, despite — or perhaps because of — its technical limitations, I rather enjoyed. Moira Shearer was never, surely, shown on celluloid romping in the woods like this tonguing the trees. More film accompanied 'Metric, Non-Metric', MacLennan at times visibly dancing in silver tap shoes, bowed with red ribbon, their prominence emphasised by the simple black jump-suit she was wearing, and at other times tapping invisibly in the darkness while her feet were to be seen unsynchronised on the screen.

'Tapping My Resources', MacLennan's own work with which she ended her programme, was done to a recording of the Savoy Orpheans playing Gershwin's 'Fascinating Rhythm'. With great style and not a little wit, this hommage to Hollywood hoofing transcended mere pastiche, the upper part of MacLennan's body — the neck, the head, the hands — perfectly posed to accompany the transporting movement below. **Luke Dixon**



REG COX

Spiral Dance Company see page 26

Alaistair MacLennan
The Basement

O.K. It must be said that the idea of watching a man walking round in circles on a surface of black powder paint and white flour for the span of 24 hours is not immediately grabbing, especially given the fact that for the duration of the action the performer had his head and his lower legs, up to the awkward three inches below the knee-caps, inked black.

However, with this particular event all such thoughts were proven irrelevant, not to say totally wrong. People were in fact fascinated by this sight, and became drawn into a powerful piece of work.

A very pure work, the import of the piece gradually changed. In the first place it was a contemplative piece, in which one watched every small nuance of his slow progress around the circuit, (the way his toes clenched at the end of each step, etc.), and became aware that each movement was the product of a deliberate mental decision. He gave the impression that even those actions that are usually involuntary, such as breathing and blinking were being effected through the agency of conscious thought.

After the first five or six hours the atmosphere and the attitude of the audience changed, the work producing tensions that were far removed from the contemplative frame of mind it had originally engendered. It became impossible to divorce what one was seeing from ones knowledge that this man had been executing the very same action for hours, and so, every gesture he made — throughout, all physical movements other than those related to his occassional retouchings of the blacking on his head, were of a minimum, merely slow movements of his legs, and the occassional clenching of his hands — seemed to be the embodiment of his discipline. The extent that McLennan had mentally removed himself through a total absorbtion in every small action was illustrated by his total obliviousness to a heckler who stood there for a while yelling 'you're nothing but an object' at him. As befitting all objects, McLennan didn't even register his presence.

By its nature the work does not lend itself to a full verbal exposition, as it was not linear and verbal in its impact, or intent. Rather, the approach was holistic and emotional. However the fact that it was to a large extent incomprehensible did nothing to diminish the appeal of what we saw. Curiously enough, despite its duration, the audience approached the event as a performance as much as an installation. The audience were there at the commencement, at midnight, some with thermos flasks and other objects neccessary for the maintenance of life in a dark concrete room through the small hours. Many of the audience put in 7 and 8 hour stints, retiring home to sleep and re-emerging in time to rejoin before the end. The atmosphere of the work ended up permeating the entire building, with people constantly coming down throughout the working day to reassure themselves that McLennan was still there, and still walking. A friend described the effect it had in the small hours, when the audience's attention was becoming less focussed, as 'very strange; as peoples attention wandered, McLennan became a part of the room, like one of those illuminated table lamps with moving jelly inside, which grabs your attention when you drift towards it, but doesn't demand it all the time.' As the Basement receives no outside light, a peculiar temporal dislocation took place, it becoming impossible to judge for oneself how long one had been watching, whether for hours or minutes.

Come the end of the 24 hour period the audience were working nearly as hard as McLennan. By this time his actions had gained various random shakes, sways, and other nervous stutters. At every hesitation the audience could be felt trying to support him with their collective will power. At the finish, he merely informed the audience that the work was over, thanked us, and left, with the audience none too certain what had hit them.

It was a piece that, even with its almost catatonic self regard, drew the audience into it, and did not let them go, somehow forcing a commitment to it. In the process it managed to make a lot of other work in this pure performance area look pretty sick, as the committment that is made to its own internal logics was so great as to render any doubts one may have entertained about the validity of such work meaningless. **Dick Grayson**

Touching Class
Acme

This is a truly moving piece. It has heart, it has soul, it is uncompromisingly thoughtful and human. For once, here is art which *has* something to say, and which says it with clarity and passion. From the street, the gallery appears to be closed, the lights are out, there is no-one at reception. There is no-one there because there *is* no reception; the desk, magazines, and other usual attributes of art galleries have been removed. And in any case there is nothing to steal. The entire downstairs room is strewn with builder's rubble. The smell of plaster and unprimed wood fills the dark, daylit space. Look up, and you find the ceiling is missing, through the exposed beams you see the room above, but suspended from the centre there descends a stair-like structure which ends abruptly and out of reach above your head.

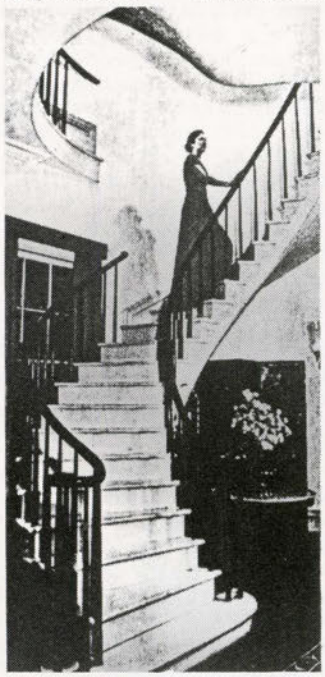
To the left, a solitary, yellowish electric light illuminates the building's real staircase: an invitation to ascend? Upstairs, most of the floorboards are missing. To reach the austerely beautiful wooden structure which occupies the centre of the room you have to edge your way precariously along either of the two walkways which flank the gaping beams. Alternatively you can stand on the platform of remaining floorboards at the near end of the room and

gaze at it from afar. Slim and delicate it stretches up to the Covent Garden skylight, speaking of hope and aspiration. But to look down is frightening.

A simple typed statement on the entrance wall explains that this installation refers to the class structure as seen from the middle position. (The black and white images on the poster and invitation card reinforce this message, the former a photograph of a decaying staircase to a derelict basement flat, the latter an elegant curving indoor staircase being ascended garcefully by a Gloria Swanson-like figure).

This is not a sensuous piece, nor a gay one. It is a committed cry against present social injustice and it works partly because it casts the spectator into the role of performer. To see the work you have to physically experience it, your response alters according to your physical position within the building. To be downstairs, in conditions which evoke many a run-down working class district, is to feel desolation, chaos but also a delight in sheer destruction. Your relation to the Gothic skylight structure is distant and powerless, all you can do is look. Upstairs, (in the middle position?) you have to tread with care, to develop a self-reliant surefootedness in order to reach it. To fall seems dangerously easy. A clear parallel to your relationship to the world according to your social class, the piece has turned the verbal statement into a reality which you can feel.

This work goes beyond being a fitting obituary to the ACME Gallery, a grand final gesture born of its impending destruction. A blend of the anguished expressionist scream and the clear, classical re-ordering of reality, it is art which can move people to understand the social and political injustice of the class system with their hearts as well as their minds. And it is this which leaves one with a feeling of hope. **Christine Lindey**



Touching Class

Spiral
Birkenhead Arts Association

Merseyside's regional dance company has taken on a new look with the arrival of Timothy Lamford as Artistic Director. Spiral's latest programme is innovative, enjoyable and experimental: a far cry from their past work which was firmly based in the Graham tradition.

Two new choreographies by Lamford demonstrated the range of his work. 'Waiting for the Blow to Fall' set in the Far East, presented three extremely different characters and the four possible resolutions of their encounter. Through their movements each of the three dancers emerged as a sharply differentiated character: the simple, passive and occasional moments of dance from the Eastern houseboy, contrasting with the elegant yet angular movements of the woman in black, and the dynamic and far more aggressive runs and leaps of the third character danced by Steinvor Palsson, who emerged as a dancer with technical range and a charismatic performer. It was a joy to watch the performance she gave in this, and in 'Impersonations', a new work by Jacky Lansley. 'Aeon' utilised the four dancers in the company and a movement language at once sophisticated and reminiscent of animal, primitive movement. Design by David Short reinforced this quality; the geometric, brilliant patterns on the costumes, and the strange ritualistic masks being both abstract design and reminders of ceremonial tribal dress.

The design throughout the four dances in the evening's programme was of a consistently high standard and added much to the dance. It was refreshing to see a small dance company pay such attention to the visual presentation of their repertoire, and present work that was complemented by excellent costumes.

Ginny Humphries' costumes for Lansley's dance theatre piece 'Impersonations' were glorious confections. This dance which drew on images from the early music halls was the high point of the evening. Constructed as a series of acts and divertissements, the dance gave us a variety of entertainers. Two female impersonators, with Timothy Lamford stealing the show in a beautiful frock, performed a duet, a male impersonator solemnly strode back and forth pushing a small black and white dog only to break into execrable jokes or sing 'Burlington Bertie' revealing Steinvor Palsson as a dancer with no mean sense of humour, and Catherine Mills was suitably tragic as the serious classical dance artiste. The music which consisted of original music hall songs plus sound effects was compiled by the choreographer and the piece directed by her; the whole confirming for me once again the wide ability and talent that Jacky Lansley has. Elements of clowning combined with ballet, tap and contemporary dance and fused together to evoke a melodramatic Victorian atmosphere in which no one was quite what they seemed, and conventional notions of gender were thrown out of the window.

Kate Flatt's 'Absent Rain' first created in 1979 and reworked for Spiral drew upon folk dance idioms and was performed with strength and energy, if rather expressionlessly by Elaine McKinlay. It is based on a Bulgarian rain bringing ritual in which a chosen girl visits all the farms in the neighbourhood and performs a dance to break the drought. This, with its rhythmic, forceful movement and Lansley's 'Impersonations' neatly extended and complemented Lamford's more abstract works, and enabled the company to show a varied and demanding programme, enthusiastically, if sometimes bemusedly greeted by the local audience.

On the strength of this showing, Spiral are beginning to emerge as one of the most interesting of the regional companies, combining technical expertise with lively, innovative choreography. **Gillian Clark**

Rabbit in a Trap
Oval House

The chance meeting in a supermarket between 'nouveau, poor leftie' Stephanie, a graphic designer coping with unkempt house and several vigorous children after her Barbadian husband has run off with the choreographer of his dance company, and working class Doris of a survivalist outlook, moonlighting from bingo to play the casinos, introduces us, in Sue Jamieson's 'Rabbit in a Trap' at the Oval, to a world of social values examined with the incisive outlook of a theatrical Posy Simmonds. An attraction based on solidarity draws the two women together but as the ceiling falls in and the husband's ghostly intervention from afar exhorts Stephanie to liberate his enslaved ancestors from the cellar, Doris comes more into her own, providing the support that Stephanie has been uanble to find in her life. Having freed the spirits from the cellar, the two women resolve to set up life together in Cornwall where it just so happens there is a legend about pirate's buried silver at the bottom of the garden...

Patricia Donovan gives a lucid performance as Stephanie although Debbie Blackett's Doris needs more depth to succeed in such an intimate studio theatre as the upstairs space at Oval House. Sue Jamieson is a writer with fresh ideas and a good eye for incisive one-liners. Unfortunately the overall impression is one of a banquet where the chef has refused to discriminate and has used every spice and ingredient that has come to hand. Every contemporary social theme is here — oppressive social roles, mixed racial marriages, middle class niceties versus working class immediacy. There are several styles — sitcom, thriller, ghost story — and ventures into several media — radio, taped voices off, slide projection. With so many lines to pursue, the piece could not do justice to all of them and left one wanting to know a lot more about what had been

raised. With a narrowing of scope and a clearer identification this piece would gain immeasurably. **Phil Hyde**

Centre Ocean Stream
Hoxton Music Hall

I made a chilly journey to the East End one Saturday night to see Centre Ocean Stream's performance, 'Forces of the Small', joining a motley assembly of locals old and young and a few West End arties on the hard benches of the old Hoxton music hall. Barbara Laishley came out in front to talk to us. She had a few slides to show, she said, to explain more about the performance we were about to see. People who had been around all day had already been privy to the lengthy making-up procedures the dancers had had to endure, and now Barbara presented the rest of the audience with the background to her unique show. Starting with a slide of her beloved horse(!) and then her mum and dad, she talked about six years at art school, trying to find ways of making paintings come alive. Experiments using growing grass and plants as 'living colour' had lead to attempts to paint on people themselves. This, as anyone who has had their face dribbled on at a community event will know, is not as easy as it looks. Dissatisfied with her efforts — she cheerfully showed slides of the smeary results — Barbara had gone to India to learn the art of face painting from the masters of the Kathkali dance, the first Westerner to whom the art had been taught.

'Oh aye,' said her dad, 'They saw you coming...' The Indian make-up, applied in intricate patterns, was made with natural ingredients, rice paste giving it a consistency and depth of colour that Western make-up lacks.

This lecture was delivered in a most disarming way, punctuated with chats with the audience, questions answered and jokes exchanged. Then there was a break for a cup of tea in case we had flagged a bit. I hadn't flagged, I was just astonished, and clutching my cup of tea, wondered what would come next. When the show began, it was a delight. The costumes, pieced together with patches of material all the glowing colours of the rainbow, were original and dazzling, combining with the coloured face make up to transform the dancers into something very close to the living paintings of Barbara's dreams. The dancers acted out a story about a man who comes face to face with the incarnations of the 'Forces of the Small' — the subconscious desires which motivate our everyday life. The story was simple, almost naive, but sincerely and skilfully presented with a conviction seldom encountered in the world of high performance. 'A grand show' said a ma n in the audience to Barbara.

Indeed it was, I thought, too shy to stay and make the acquaintance of the dancers whose beautiful costumes we were invited to inspect at close quarters as they reappeared to chat with the delighted audience. **Lynn MacRitchie**

GRAHAM CARTER

Documentation

Pigs & Pyrotechnics

The Biddick Farm Pig Jig gave Action Space and friends the structure, people and facilities to produce a spectacular performance.

The day was called the Biddick Pig Jig and our performance 'When Pigs will fly'. The material was collaged from myth, nursery story and recent events. Working in riot torn NW England we felt this was too bitter a harvest to celebrate without reference to the darker side of our present situation. Images of burning fields turned the mind to burning cars, the loss of the Irish mothers whose sons had died on hunger strike, the rioting of unemployed youth celebrating their boredom and anger.

Ceres, the sad old woman who lost her daughter to the underworld and caused chaos on the earth until proper dues had been paid to her is the basis of the autumn story. She is portrayed holding a pig. We built on the pig through proverb, nursery story, Biddick's farm past and the now current use of *pigs* for the police amongst the disaffected.

The material was dense but the production for both afternoon and evening had to be accessible and work on many levels. The afternoon was a country fair with stalls, games, roving performances, Morris Men and home produce. The evening was a Barn Dance with an outside performance after dark using fire and pyrotechnics.

The simple country characters of the afternoon became transformed in the night performance into more powerful figures; the sad old woman who lost her daughter and gained a pig is Ceres but also the Irish mothers, the old woman who found sixpence, Black Demeter in whose absence the fruits of the earth perish and disorder falls upon the cities.

The pig is the embodiment of the corn spirit, a proper offering to the goddess, a policeman, the chaos of the rioters, the three that built the houses of straw, furse and brick and outwitted the wolf. It also dances to Tom's pipe, was stolen and flew down from the sky and was roasted.

Work Diary

Mon. Four of us arrived at Biddick with a van load of material, three red pig wind socks, a mass of ideas in our heads and ran our first workshop with the Washington Youth Theatre, a group of teenagers who usually meet once a week at the centre and

who we had to persuade to put in a week's work on the project. They were to be the crowd for the evening performance and to devise with us their own material for the afternoon which we wanted to look like Breughel's painting of proverbs using pig themes. We also met with a Newcastle play worker who had once been a sculptor and was willing to take a week's holiday to work on the project, Dave Turnbull.

Tues. Walked through the evening scenario to check the feasibility of installations with staff of the centre. Erected flagpoles and flying pigs on the lawn outside the centre to let the neighbourhood know that something was happening. Started building the three houses for the courtyard, making masks and costumes aided by some of the youth theatre and staff from the centre. School children arrived in the afternoon begging to take part.

In the evening worked with the Youth Theatre and met the Peanut Band, a local Newcastle band that performs a revolutionary Barn Dance. One of the musicians agreed to work with us on street events around the town and during the afternoon fair and all of them agreed to lead the company out of the dance to the courtyard for the performance.

Wed. Solid building and collecting of material. Biddick had provided bales of straw and local car dealer a derelict car. Jeremy Shine arrived from Manchester to join the company.

Thurs. Finished building the flying pig, rehearsed street events and Youth workshop. Weather beautiful, work in courtyard attracting local interest. Rehearsed dances with school children. Flying pigs stolen from flagpole.

Fri Rain, rain. Rehearsal day for evening performance. Graham Carter arrives from London for technical set up and photographs. Dave Turnbull drives at dawn to Lake District to pick up pyrotechnics from Welfare State. An evening off in Newcastle to see The Peanuts Band perform.

Sat All day work with Youth Theatre for some of us. Visit shopping centres around the new town with a performance aimed at telling people of the occasion. Evening rehearse the nights performance with great difficulty as gale force winds and rain tear across the courtyard.

Jill Bruce and Bruce Lacey produce their ritual on the lawn and Connoly cuts down straw men with a Samurai sword. There are pig games, a pig roast and free cider. Local musicians turn up to busk.

Between afternoon and evening we set the pyrotechnics and drill once again the Youth Theatre. All the tickets have gone for the evening dance and performance, but local kids are negotiating special entry for themselves.

The Barn Dance starts in the great Barn 7.30 and about 9.30 Farmer Biddick begs the assembled company to come to the courtyard for an autumn tale. The performance was spectacular, very funny and very frightening. Persephone was carried off in a flaming chariot, the Old woman rising to the Irish Lament searches the world for her daughter and meets revellers in excess, corrupted justice, Hecate as Crone who gives birth to her son the pig, an entertainer who retells her story as a one-man show and steals her son, violence and chaos reign as the car is blown up, lines of straw are fired and the flying pig is consumed in ritual flames as the hordes are brought to their knees and Farmer Biddick, perplexed at his harvest, looks forward to a change in the future.

According to the audience it was magic and they returned to the dance and pig roast. The participants were high and amazed at the final coming together of all their parts.

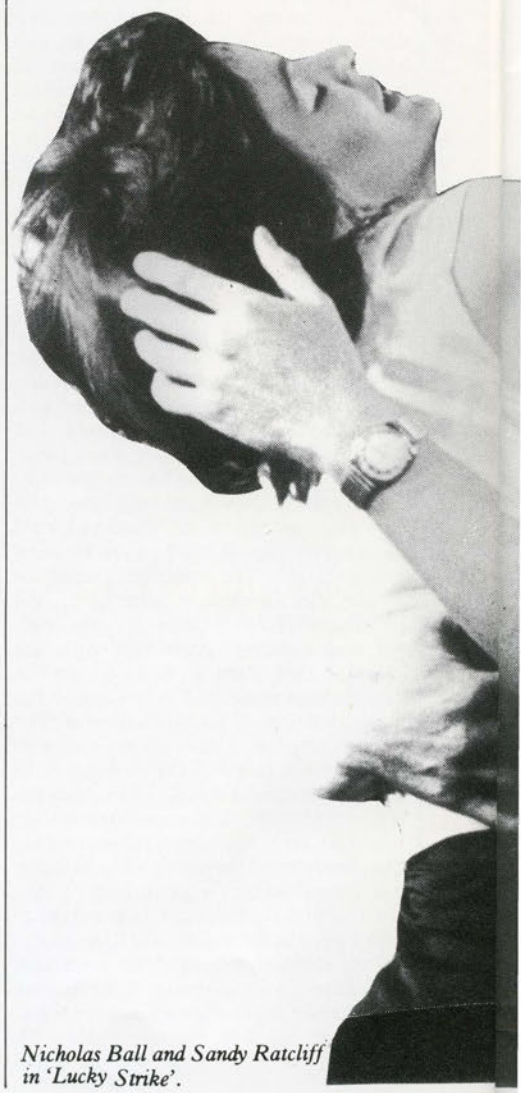
This was a gig after our own hearts. A week's residency with the open ended commission to produce a performance for an autumn occasion. A studio with plenty of building space and the full involvement of all the staff. We could use any or all of the art centre, the great barn theatre, the courtyard and walk way, the car park and lawn, the roofs and the shopping centre.

Over the summer we had meetings with the director of the centre, John Foster, the staff and resident craftspeople and the Friends of the Centre. We took pictures of the environment, we built up a team of collaborators.

The working method created a structure into which any number of people could be built, either as individual items or as part of the performance. It can be seen from the cast list that they came from the centre, the youth theatre, locals and collaborators from previous events with Action Space. A week is a very short time to bring such an event off and it is thanks to the staff at Biddick that proper ground work had been done before we arrived and that the level of support throughout the project was high. Our thanks to them all. ■

Afternoon
Farmer Biddick: Robin Morley
Old Woman: Mary Turner
Piper: Phil Hyde
Rat: Stella Hall
Pig Mover On: Dave Turnbull
Fiddler: Jo Scurfield
Autumn Ritual: Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce
Reaper: R.D. Connolly
Sellers and Pigs: Washington Youth Theatre
Stalls by Local Craftspeople, Friends of the Centre, Milk Marketing Board, Hambro Life (sponsors) etc.
Games by Biddick Art Centre
Morris Dancers

Evening
Farmer Biddick: Robin Morley
Ceres: Mary Turner
Pluto: Jermey Shine
Entertainer: Phil Hyde
Hecate: Stella Hall
Persephone: Sue Scanton
Fire Carrier: Dave Turnbull
Harpist: Brian Hoey
Pigs: Washington Youth Theatre
Pyrotechnics: Nicklos Menis
Music: Peanuts Band
Documentation: Graham Carter



Nicholas Ball and Sandy Ratcliff in 'Lucky Strike'.

HRANT ALIANEK

Luke Dixon launches our new International Section with a profile of the closet movie brat who writes screenplays for live performance.

CHRISTOPHER PEARCE

After creating sensations in Toronto, New York and Liverpool, the man with the anagram name made it to London this summer bringing with him 'Lucky Strike' the show for which we had so long been waiting, Trailing clouds of glory from a much talked about production at the Liverpool Everyman during Ken Campbell's brief but vivid tenure of the theatre, and with the stariest bunch of performers ever assembled for a piece of visual theatre. Hrant Alianek's 'Lucky Strike' fulfilled all expectations. True there were differences from the version which created such a stir on Merseyside. Gone was the environmental element with the ever present stage hands as *dei ex machina;* and gone too was the wide and sprawling setting, the cinemascope of the Everyman forsaken for the 35mm frame of the ICA's studio theatre. But there were compensations: a cast led by Nicholas Ball, less wayward and more appropriately stereotyped than that assembled by Campbell and a possibly final and definitive ending.

An Armenian whose home is in Toronto and whose first language is English, Alianek is best known as a writer in Canada though he prefers to regard himself as a director. He trained as an actor but soon decided he would rather be doing something, anything, else. So he turned to writing and directing. Recently he has performed in a couple of movies, finding to his delight that he has never enjoyed anything more. So much so that he was briefly and miserably lured back to stage performing for a while. Once 'Lucky Strike' had opened in London he returned to Toronto to write a radio play 'for money' and settle down to making definitive texts of the trilogy of which 'Lucky Strike' is the final part, for publication in the new year.

For, though the dialogue is, well, minimal, 'Lucky Strike' like its companion pieces 'Night' and 'Passion and Sin', is painstakingly and immaculately written. Seeing a performance one can easily be deceived otherwise by the English literary tradition in theatre which equates writing with dialogue. Mr Alienak does not write plays, he writes screenplays for live performance. The action is limited in 'Lucky Strike' to a single archetypal scene from a gangster movie — the hoodlum dashing into a warehouse to escape pursuit — replayed over and over again, every time in a different style, with different emphasis, to different effect. A soundtrack of film music and heavy rock gives loud and continuous accompaniment. The meticulous writing, because of the paucity of dialogue, becomes overlooked in performance when it is the rapid progression of visual images that command attention. The writing and the *mise en scene* are one, a concept that, even now, is unfamiliar to British audiences.

Despite the startling originality of his work, (People Show and Impact Theatre provide the nearest though still remote homegrown parallels), Alienak discusses it in very traditional literary terms of a kind that many here at Performance, guardians of a new critical vocabulary, might find heretical. Alianek talks of 'stories' and 'plays' and regards 'Lucky Strike' as a piece of narrative theatre. 'There are no maybes,' he says. 'Every action must have a reason whether the audience is aware of it or not. The characters have motivations which I have to justify. If I can't explain or justify to the actor what he has to do, I have to rewrite. It has to make sense.' It is on this basis that the visual images are structured. 'First comes the traditional plot line, then the images. I always set myself rules and challenges and the rule in writing "Lucky Strike" was that I would have only one scene (salvaged from an earlier unsuccessful project). Why not just take that one scene, I thought, and repeat it to death.'

He allows no one else to direct his shows but earns much of his living directing other people's. And despite the experimental nature of his own work claims that the experimental plays of others do not interest him. Instead he directs commercial fare, with a particular leaning towards American musicals. Of all the performances he saw in London during his stay, the only one he admits to having enjoyed was 'Barnum' the Michael Crawford circus spectacular at the Palladium. It was, he thought, 'great entertainment value' and, after all, 'the main objective of any play is to entertain.'

Alianek's most successful work has been 'The Blues' which he has directed five times. 'Lucky Strike' could overtake that success, with plans afoot for two further productions, one in New York to follow an earlier brief run at La Mama, and then on film, perverse though it may seem to make a movie of a performance that depends upon the exploitation of the conventions of cinema in a different, unexpected medium, for its effect. Alianek, a closet movie brat, has no doubts that it will work. Dismissive of his writing ('I've never been interested in writing') and of the theatre ('I *hate* it') it is perhaps the *auteur* in him that finds live performance frustrating. Who knows what might happen if such a powerful visual imagination, nurtured for years on a celluloid diet, were let loose with the money and resources of Hollywood. ■

Letter from Japan

Traditional Japanese theatre companies were, and often still are, families; they epitomise the rigid hierarchical and exclusive structures which are the fundamental building blocks of Japanese society.

The new experimental dance and theatre companies which started around 12 years ago relate directly to the traditional model. As Kabuki was a reaction to Noh's ossification, so the 'ungra' (underground) companies were a reaction to the sterile 'engeki' (new theatre) which was and still is a dire copy of Western naturalism — juv leads in adaptations of french novels sporting pink make-up and died blonde hair, simply awful. The physical basis of the ungra companies reached back to more traditional work, but the style and content was entirely new. In some ways the genesis of these companies parallels that of The Fringe, Thêatre en marge, Off-off Broadway, Grotowski etc; something really does seem to have swept the world in the late sixties. But the development of these companies has been entirely different, since for their structure they perhaps unconsciously turned to those of traditional theatre and societal models. They rapidly became surrogate 'families', with all the loyalties and complexity of relationships that implies. The director/writer became the father figure, the source to which all others defer. Very often the leading actress became a kind of mother figure since she was very likely to be married to the director — an artistic, if not an actual marriage. The rest of the company soon sorted themselves out into elder and younger brother, elder and younger sister roles. Now the companies are at least ten years on, and with some exceptions the original members survive. Some have had to leave because of the financial commitments of real families and thus have had to leave the theatre all together; a handful have become television stars; a few have started new companies of their own. Losing a few members in this way, the companies have had to take in new younger people, and at the same time becoming more successful have increased their overall number. So now there's a new generation of 'children' fulfilling apprentice roles within the company 'family'. As a result of the exclusive nature of the family company units, there's very little contact between theatre people in this huge city. They rarely see each others work, and of course there's virtually no exchange of staff. Once you're family, you're family. If you should opt to leave that company, it probably means you leave the theatre all together. And its no good wanting to rejoin again later. There's no room for prodigal sons.

The strengths of these ties are deepened by the kind of financial and life-time commitment which company members have to make. Remember that there's absolutely no subsidy from any source for contemporary theatre work in Japan (except the Japan Foundation for foreign touring). Since this is the case, very few members of any company can survive without doing part-time work, perhaps even the majority of the time. Good part-time work is rare in Japan since businesses work on the same kind of loyalty systems. Some are lucky. I've come across a couple of companies where the directors are actually qualified psychiatrists, so they can arrange well paid work to suit themselves. In Tenkei, one actress who has very good French is currently working on a new French-Japanese dictionary; one actor gets good television part time stage management work. I have a feeling that there are a few employers who recognise the difficulties for actors, and actually contribute to the company's work in a way by adopting actors on a part-time work basis as a kind of social obligation, rather like employing the disabled. But such employers are rare indeed, and the vast majority of company members end up working in bars for very low wages. Of course, all this is also true of many actors in Britain; but the social conditions make it quite different in Japan. There is a very limited social security system here, but I doubt if any actor would make use of it if he was able to work at any job, however poorly paid. After all, it has been his choice to work in the theatre. There is no feeling that the state owes him a living. He is lucky to have some opportunity to work as an artist, and to draw social security would be a matter of considerable shame. That's one big difference. The other is that an English actor can always get a proper job (!) if the worst comes to the worst, especially if he's had a reasonably good education: the Japanese company member can't. Since workers do not leave Japanese businesses, those businesses only take in people directly from school or university. After the age of 25 or so, there'll be virtually no opportunity in Japanese business for an ex-actor except low-grade manual. It's not possible to jump in in the middle, or to jump peer groups. So that means that the commitment of a theatre company member, especially for men, is a life-long commitment of the highest order. For the commitment to the company must always take precedence over the need to earn money.

'He even touches her underwear to check if his suspicions are correct. The woman bites his finger to show her disgust' — from the picture book of Tenkei theatre Komachi Fuden which vists the ICA in November. Photo left

Much of what I've described may seem amateur. The organisational methods may be, but the work certainly isn't. It's very difficult to draw a borderline between amateur and professional anywhere, really. Is an English drama school (Guildford School of Acting) actor who works less than half the year in tele bit parts and dire productions above unsubsidised pubs a professional? Probably, yes, although his work may not really be of professional standard. The only way to make a distinction here is, I suppose, whether a company member's main source of income is derived from a career job or part-time work, but even that's pretty meaningless. There are advantages in the Japanese system, too. Rehearsal periods can be as long as you want, usually not less than six weeks, since rehearsal pay doesn't really count. The method of recruiting an audience has four valuable spin-offs: the audience composition is refreshingly broad and lively and over-full theatres always contribute a good atmosphere (no groups of dutiful out-of-work actors huddling in the corners of dark and empty auditoria); the work must satisfy this broad audience and get them to come back and bring their friends (prevents totally mystifying excesses); never any silly haggling over comps (there's no such thing as a comp); and, above all, the reaction of critics becomes almost totally irrelevant. I'm not able to read critics here, but everyone tells me that I am missing nothing. Apparently the level is very poor: descriptive praise in the dailies if they have the space, arid intellectual debate in the theatre monthlies. But of course the companies need some kind of feed-back; instead of bothering with reviews, each member of the audience is regularly given a questionnaire about the show and their reactions. And people really do return them. After performances, you'll see half the audience scribbling in the foyer and posting their opinions before going to a coffee shop to discuss the performance with the friends they have come with.

But of course the lack of finance brings as many problems as solutions. At one end of the scale, I saw a very good company the other day who have been doing a play a year for ten years. This is the one wherein the writer/director is a psychiatrist, and his wife the only actress (the company is so poor and the work so dirty that they can't get any other women to join!). They have their own small workshop theatre, which is not untypical, and also tour in a tent.

The actual show of this company was extraordinary. Two and a half hours long with no interval and a relentless energy which kept my interest throughout although I understood little. The whole thing done in a sandpit so everyone got filthy and then came on in new costumes in order to get filthy again. A visual flair which constantly overcame the poverty of the circumstances. If I get specific in description it will sound pretentious, which it wasn't, so I won't. They did only a week of performances this time round after the tent tour, and each show was crammed with about a hundred audience, but apparently they couldn't have run it longer. Although they are liked by the best critics in the monthlies, that doesn't make any difference to their audience size, which is small. Extreme, rude, anal, with central images of latrines, toilet paper, menstrual blood and sewerage mixed with double-act farce and muck, you can imagine that their theatre does not appeal to a popular Japanese taste. (It was also loosely *about* something, incidentally, the position of Chinese immigrants in Japan and Japan's racial connections with Asia, which is also something the Japanese don't particularly like being reminded of). Ten years and still struggling. I've got a feeling they might give up soon. They said that now they were all in their thirties they couldn't move fast enough any more.

On the other hand, poverty can drive you into commercialism; and that, unfortunately, is what has happened to the Tokyo Kid Brothers. Born of late sixties idealism and the notion of establishing a kind of hippie village in rural Japan, their work has gradually deteriorated from being close to that of Terayama (Higashi, Kid Brother's director, was Teryama's assistant) to re-writes of 'Hair' and now to sentimental pop musicals for school girls. I imagine they are now doing very nicely thankyou, since they are amazingly popular amongst this 13-16 year old audience. Their last show was in a huge theatre for a little less than a week, but they more than two thirds filled the 3000 seats at each performance. The work is just awful. We left at the interval. They don't even have a live band any more. Just bland backing tracks. Ugghh.

There's one other peculiar circumstance which has grown out of the financial situation at the 'ungra' theatre: the companies are huge, regularly 20-strong. Black Tent currently has over fifty, and they say they need more to fulfill all the work they want to do. I've asked a number of the companies why it is that the membership is so large, arguing that if the company were slimmed right down, then they would be able to live by their earnings from theatre alone, and would be able to devote all their time to what they really wanted to do rather than having to do other work for money. They look puzzled and find it difficult to grasp what I mean. This is, apparently, a very Western way of thinking. They would rather have a larger group with two people doing one full-time job part-time, if you see what I mean. Maybe this comes from the Japanese insistance on group activity. Maybe its because in the early days, when the companies were very poor and literally subsidising the work from their earnings, the greater the number the less onerous the financial burden for each member. Maybe they just feel that they need a lot of people for their kind of plays. Maybe they are right and our five-handed theatre born of our financial circumstances is the poorer. **John Ashford**

This letter delayed in the post refers to Andrea Hill's Opinion Column in issue 12

Dear Andrea Hill,

I agree that it is a 'Happy day when disagree ments are aired publicly', however, it might be of interest for me to add that I wrote privately to Lynn McRitchie on first reading her article about my work, and was very surprised and encouraged to receive replies from her - I then went on to write to Performance Magazine and to some people I know who saw my performance. I say surprised and encouraged, and I do mean it. The last time I was angered by something written about my (style of) work I wrote to the critic concerned several times and to the magazine, Studio International, and had no response from either.

No (serious) response, is what I have come to expect, as Roland Miller and myself, (and others I presume) have hardly anything written about our work over the years. I have seen a critic who came to review an exhibition that I was in, in the Walker Gallery, Liverpool, walk past my contribution with her head turned the other way: I assume this was fear of not knowing what to say. When her article appeared, it did not mention the performance contributions at all, needless to say. William Feaver, in 1978, wrote poetically about my work mistaking it for the work of Carl Plackman, a 'known' and therefore easy to write about artist, (whose work was in an adjacent gallery). When I wrote to the Observer, pointing out this error, the response was a small printed apology - no attempt to come to terms with my work as my work.

I was also surprised, and really touched, to read your article 'Critics and Doormats' – my response? A bit like a mild version of the effect of that torture technique in which the tough guy is followed by the nice guy - a variation with women critics, first a tough approach which made me feel like fighting back, then some sympathetic airing of the issues and I feel weakened with gratitude. Not a comfortable feeling.

So to the relationship between critics and artists - you say 'many writers for art magazines *are* artists', well naturally, many artists also write about their own and other people's work. (Feeling this need to write and having no publishing outlets - in 1976 - I start started a magazine, 'Extremes' to enable myself and others to do so. It ran to 4 editions). I very much agree that we need more serious writing about performances - classification holds no terrors for me - I assume that seeing things in terms of their similarities and their dissimilarities is basic to all thought. You say of your writing about performance that you 'go into a bookshop to do a little research and there's nothing there,' and 'it's hell' etc., so why not do the research directly with artists, at our performances or in our studios or homes?

Finally, at the end of your article you say that 'Artists, particularly 'performance artists, have over countless generations defended their right to be abusive, shocking, provocative and nasty,' not, as I often choose to be, personal, emotional, political, spontaneous, humorous, formal or informal - I would like to defend my right to be these and other things. 'Nasty' - no thanks.

Shirley Cameron

Do you consciously allow your work to infiltrate your life and vice versa in that way?

LA: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Because, see I don't divide my work and my life — it's not a question of infiltration: that's all I do. That sounds pretty dull, but it's the way I have most fun.

RL: How do you feel when someone says that sort of thing to you though? Does it think, well what am I?

LA: Yeah, of course. Of course it does. Sure. And it's an odd situation of course to be working in this way. Because basically I see nobody, or a couple of friends, you know, I'm a complete recluse, and then... go into a room where there are lots of people. But I'm not social, in a situation where I have to go to party circuits and that. I do ride the train and go places and meet people that I wouldn't have a chance to meet, normally, in my sort of downtown artworld situation. It is like a dormitory there, it really is. *All* you see is other artists. Well then that's wonderful because I need that kind of contact, seeing what other people are up to and thinking about and that's very exciting... and the reason I choose to live in a dump like New York. (Laughter)

RL: Don't you think that technology has over-reached it's own ability to radically change the world, that it can only really work for a privileged few.

LA: Hmm. Depends on who you consider the privileged few. The main question of course is, what is this new technological innovation, how is it going to improve your life? You have to consider whose life, and who's paying for that life to get improved? OK that's the first question you have to ask. Basically, it's going to do something for someone. Now, in terms of technology affecting people's lives on a daily basis, this is of course what my work is really centred round in a lot of ways. How does a person really cope with being in an electronic world? And of course anyone who just walks into a room, into their apartment or into their house, turns on a light, confronts that, when they turn on a light and it doesn't work you're a caveman. Everybody is unless you're a technician, or an engineer. You're living in a world that's extremely alienating. And you don't know how to fix it. And after this so-called Armageddon if you try to reconstruct even just your electrical situation in your house... forget about anything else — forget about the TV that's sitting there, or *was* sitting there. If you tried to make that... what could you do? And in fact you don't have any skills. You know you have some paperwork skills of some kind of skills, or... or the *phone* that's sitting in everybody's house. I mean everybody's house. And that's not the lucky few, that is everybody's house. And so my work is about what happens when you pick up the phone and try to... The last phone call I got in New York was *very* frightening... picked it up, this is the first time that this has happened. It was a tape. Phone rang, it was a tape.

RL: Someone playing a tape at you?

LA: Yeah. Well it was a tape put out by a company asking me how I felt about a product.

RL: What? That's amazing.

LA: And I don't have an answering machine because I consider absolutely...

RL: That's interesting, you don't have one. I would expect that you would have done.

LA: Well first of all I think it would be too much work answering all the messages and then you would have to spend time, and that would sort of be your fault if you didn't call back. So I'm either there or I'm *not* there, and I don't...

RL: Do you regard this as an advanced response to the technology, or a luddite response?

LA: Yeah. It's a luddite response. It's just ah.... I don't want to use that system, and I know it's inefficient not to use it, but I think that I'd rather not give the information or get it than talk to a machine. It doesn't mean that I don't like machines, I love machines. But I want to learn how to use them well.

RL: How far do you think you can go before it seems, then, that the actual hardware is taking over your work. Do you take it to the limit?

LA: Oh, I don't know. One thing that I do try and do is not dream of equipment that I don't have. I try to use only what I have. And when I started using electronics I used only what I personally could have with me: sixty nine cent speakers... you know there's an electronic junk street in New York, Canal Street has every second-hand spare under the sun. The best example of this is students in an art school. Say they're painters, and they want to make a videotape, they don't of course have any equipment, it's too expensive, every art student is totally broke. So you have to get a deck somehow, and then quickly make the tape, without understanding the medium. It's as if a painter wanted to make a painting and had to go out and rent a brush. You know, think about the painting for months then go out and rent this brush and make it move fast and turn up back at the rental place clean. You're not going to make a painting that's going to have any understanding of what it's going to do. Trying to *force* the material on to something that won't... I mean any sculptor knows that... that you have to work with the material for a while to find out about it. And my own position in terms of points when I'm absolutely stuck and I think I'm finished as an artist, and I'll never have another idea and it's totally depressing and the first thing you do is just try to *unclench* a little bit from that attitude. And second to just play with whatever tools I have. Because your tools will teach you things. So I think the kind of technology I use, I want to be in the situation of knowing how to control them, and how to use them. And not to just to just you know, set them on automatic... then it's just some kind of show you've designed and your just a... (witness?) And it's 'look what *this* machine can do'. Now if I'm on tour and that machine breaks down, I have to know something about that machine so that I can fix it.

RL: And you do?

LA: And I do. I don't know all the circuitry, but I have the books.

RL: What are your views on space travel? Tom Klinkowstein (the telex artist) is so obsessed with it that he's booked space on the space shuttle to send up a small transmitter.

LA: That's true. Well I have this... I'm not wearing the tie I have... someone in Zurich gave me a beautiful picture of the first woman in outer space who is a cosmonaut. Actually I don't know too much about her. I know she went up, I'm not sure when she came back. But she did go up, as I believe several women in the USSR have. And I think there are some breeders, they're considering in the United States, to go up, women.

RL: What, to see what happens...

LA: Breeders, you know, just people who are going to colonise, become colonists.

RL: Biological experiments up there?

LA: I don't know. Of course, it doesn't fit into the thrust idea of outer space to have women go so, you know, as a metaphor it's purely male, and of course that's how NASA thinks of space travel... you know women at home so... Although in America it's not quite so split up as here. One of the things I've noticed about coming to Europe is I always go into a shop and I... because the difference between men and women in Europe is so much more enormous, and in England too, than in the United States, and that there's just a sense of masculinity and femininity that just does not exist in the United States, and that these roles are very established. I go into a shop in Paris and, you know, every single trip I buy one thing, like a dress, a skirt, or some piece of jewellery, you know just because I'm so amazed at these women... they're like *creatures*. Like... 'Bonjour' (high pitched voice). And I go home to New York and I look at this dress and think, *where* am I ever going to wear this thing. I'll never wear anything like this...

RL: Here, (in London) everyone's a bit more shabby...

LA: Yeah, it's most exaggerated in France, maybe Germany too. In Germany I'm some sort of freak because they figure 'a woman who's doing technological things?' I mean the crews that I worked with at first were just going 'OK we know that you're not going to know anything about this so let us take care of it'. Then something breaks and I know how to fix it and they go 'Oh! OK you can sit down here and deal with this'. But initially the attitude is perhaps it's not such a good idea for me to do these things... In the United States its... I mean first of all we're total. We're totally slobs. I mean and one of the things I like best about is that. I'm sure it's obnoxious to other people but that's... Americans have less of a sense of pride, really, and we're more willing to be fools than, say a French person will *not ask* the directions in a place, will try to figure it out for themselves. Or, you're sitting in a restaurant, the waiter comes up to you, he is the waiter and he's nothing else, he's wearing his work clothes, and he's gat the towel, and you are the customer and he is the one who serves and the last thing in the world that would happen is that you ask him to sit down and have a cup of coffee, you know, with

you.

RL: You dedicated your work to Nicolai Tesla, and the Tesla Institute in Yugoslavia phoned you up and asked you to go and talk to them. Have you been?

LA: Yes, they asked me to come because I dedicated a few of the things that I have to Tesla, and also he's something of an American hero as well. And, I met the Yugoslavian delegation, and it was one of the most vague things that I ever have seen... it was actually, I felt it was like some kind of set-up, because it was... walked into this place on the ninth floor, I was a bit afraid, very dark, and there were lots of junkies lying around on each floor, and Mexican families, lots of kids crying, and running around, and I came into this place and it was just lit with three blinking fluorescent lights, and you can't hardly see, and there was a vast plate of potato chips on the table, and I had a kind of meeting with these three guys who all kept... basically just being very very flirtatious, and it ended with that and it was just... I... I never understood it... So I never went.

RL: How funny!

LA: Yeah, it was very strange.

RL: Yet you'd had this phone call from Yugoslavia and it had ended up with that.

LA: Yeah, and then they showed me some movies that were half sort of blue movies and half movies about Tesla and... very very very strange, I'm telling you. It's one of the many dead ends that I get. (laughter) It's what comes of doing things.

RL: It sounds silly, but what do you think of the Soviet Union?

LA: Well, you know, one of the interesting things now that's happened of course is this cold war sort of Boogie-boogie man, US-USSR and so I'm, as an American poorly informed about the USSR because we get very of course *tilted* ideas of what's going on in our press, and one of the reasons that I'm happy to leave the United States in a lot of ways is that I can get different kinds of information. But of course I need evidence. It's very difficult anywhere to get information, even in Europe it's really quite hard. There have been attempts by Americans to do... well there was a show by an artist called Alice Neill in Moscow recently which was very popular. It's a total cliche to say it, but people really do... are very curious about each other, period, and if it's not considered politically strategic to give them that information, they'll try to find out other ways. And one of those ways is through exchanges of artists because it is a kind of... and of course with business too, but that's more competitive in a way, 'Well here's our newest ah IBM computer, let's see what *yours* looks like,' it's just completely world market kind of things but... it would be very incredible if some more of those... You know I was in on planning one exchange that completely fell through, in terms of some Americans going there and... that's worked out with China and a lot of my friends have gone to China and have come back with just some very crazy kind of stories. Meeting people who said things like: 'Do you really have robots in the United States?' And the artist I talked to was something of a wit on this tour, he said 'Yes we do' He wanted to really throw them off the track, so he told them: 'Yes, everyone has lots of robots.' And they said, 'Do many of you live on the moon as well?' And he said 'Yes, a lot of my friends live on the moon, and ah we travel around all the time in outer space.' And this guy said 'Really?' And so, I'm not saying this just to show you that we exchange misinformation (laughter) but to show you that there's absolutely no idea, that nobody has any idea of course...

RL: I was talking to an American recently, and I also read this, that post-war US avant garde art was deliberately exported by the CIA to counteract European Social realism in the fifties. Have you heard that one?

LA: No, but but I think in a lot of ways it's one of our national pastimes to think about what the CIA might be doing, and giving a lot of credit to the CIA that they shouldn't have, because these guys are not very bright, artists are much smarter, and I think one of the things which happened in post-war United States is that suddenly Americans had a sense of themselves that was quite different, and they felt more powerful, unlike at the present moment, and more hopeful, and new, and that they could make their own art, and they didn't have anything to do with what happened in Paris and that they could say 'I'm gonna make a great big giant blue painting. That's it. Or I'm gonna take my brush and go flang flang flang,' Howard Chester, you know, and then of course after that the intellectuals came along, people like Barnett Newman and, by the way this is my half-baked theory about Performance Art and Live Art — my position in the string is that it began with this kind of heroic, gestural situation, and artists who really just like to grunt and drink beer afterwards — 'Ah paint cause ah like paint, feeling paint, like y'know paint. That's why I paint.' Then you get guys like Barnet Newman who was very smart. And he's a person who's sitting in the bar talking to the people who write about art, and who... and he's painting a blue painting, and he's talking about, you know, fifty pages about the meaning of this blue paint. An extremely articulate guy who is capable of saying things like, well his most well quoted thing 'Aesthetics is to me what ornithology is to the birds.' Now in fact he didn't really believe that, because of course much of his work was about talking about the edge, and about you know, the field, and the tension, and this and that, and you're *looking* at a blue square, you know. And so here's a guy who... much of his art is about the language that surrounds it. He's standing by his blue painting talking about and looking at it. And that's, I believe the generation ahead of what's called Live Art. This then is people *really* standing next to blue in real time saying 'Blue is ba ba bam ba...' and coming out of a tradition which has been very *talky*. And so that artists soon decide — well that's so much part of the art, that it *is* the art. And I'm going to continue... I'm going to absolutely incorporate it and make it that way. So the theory is bound into the work itself so tightly that it in fact generates another form of it. Now that's my own half-baked theory. I present it to you.

RL: A couple of explanations now. What is the 'hand that takes'? (from 'O Superman').

LA: These kind of gestural signals... Yeah. In the first section, the transportation section, all the movements, images and sounds are stereo, panning left to right. A kind of windshield wiper that does *this* (arc-like arm movement) constantly. And each section has first of all a direction and a hand signal that goes with it, that is the structure of the work. So the first piece begins with a giant map of the world, and an arrow and dotted line that goes like *this*. And a descriptive section that is about a certain American religious sect that was looking at the conditions of the world during the Flood, and these people decided that because of the way that the tides and currents moved, in order for Noah's Ark to have ended up on Mount Ararat it couldn't have started right near Mt Ararat, it would have had to have started out several thousand miles to the west, which would then locate pre-flood civilisation somewhere in the area of Upstate New York, and the Garden of Eden roughly in New York City. And this arc then is generated by that movement out. It's taken over by a film of a windshield wiper that does this. The violin bow is becoming metronomical so... and continues into a driving situation in which you're lost, and you don't know where you are, and you ask 'Excuse me can you tell me where I am?' — goes into a duet for two microphones high and another one very low. The bow then is extended out this way — it's white — and a series of slides are projected so you don't see where they're projected — they're projected on to the ceiling, and the violin bow cuts into them *here*, makes kind of a very elusive screen, and you see arms going like *this*, midair, because this bow creates the surface, really. And so you have this then... extension, and it goes — 'Excuse me can you tell me where I am?' and so the image is *this* that you're seeing, picked up by the bow. And it goes, with the low voice — 'You can read the sighs, you've been on this road before, do you want to go home, do you want to go home now?' 'Excuse me can you tell me where I am?' 'In our country this is the way we say hullo' It's the diagram of the movement between the two points. The duet continues: 'This is also the way we say goodbye' Lower arm continues to make an arc, flexing muscle of upper arm). It's shorthand for 'last night you were here, but when I woke up in the morning you were gone', in our country goodbye looks just like hullo — say hullo (looks like giving a telegram?) Then you see a diagram that Carl Sagan sent up on Pioneer 10 and its the picture of the earth's relationship to the universe and the guy that's going like *this*, the woman's going like *this* and you see that projected behind, and it goes: 'In our country, this is the way we send pictures of people speaking our sign language into outer space. Do you think that they will think his arm is permanently attached in this position?' Or do you think that they will read our signs? In our country goodbye looks just like hullo' It's the first little section.

RL: So it's a basic semantic device, in other words, that you're refering to?

LA: And also a diagram for the whole piece. Because everything — the slides then are reversals of things — everything is a kind of long, slow, ping-pong game. The second section — the political section, the axis switches to a vertical one, and everything drops — the sound, images rise and fall, a little hammer is used to suggest, work of course, and how people feel about their work, and of course this gesture (flexes arm) is one of power, that's the signal for that, and judgement, and...

It's a sign for each section and to key you into where things are going. To *this* and then *this* and the second thing that this vertical axis... again to suggest upward and downward... social mobility, rise and fall, power. The third section is the money section, and this last vortexed image of the flag going around and around in the washer. It's meant to suggest the shift that's about to happen, in the third section which is money, in which it's like being on a fast road and the images pass by you. And so the physical arm gesture for money is of course *this* (grabbing movement) Towards you and backwards, kinds of sounds quoosshh, suction situation.

RL: Do you think that the human being is going to evolve very fast?

LA: The human being? No. Because I think, lets just take the situation of women for example. And see what women tried to do in the late sixties and seventies. The seventies particularly, and what kind of backsliding has happened since then. I don't think that — just take a situation just as simple as that; half the population of the world being virtually slaves to the other half. Virtually slaves. And that is not something that you can just declare does not exist. And, or legislate it into some other way. Because it's too deep in people. Too deep in women, too deep in men. And in thousands of years maybe you'll be able to be on absolutely equal terms. But that's twenty years of... you know... and then to be able to speak about things like jealousy, fear and competition and to think that anything like that is going to be changed in twenty years.

LA: I would love to think that human creatures could evolve to generous and loving and... and intelligent beings. But I think we're all, we all have so many other things going on and... also it would be kind of boring... you know. I mean I love the variety of what's going on. I'm not particularly optimistic about things...

RL: The future.

LA: Not particularly. No. Because I think that...

RL: That's surprising. Because I would have thought you would have been optimistic. For example I get the feeling from US artists working in communications, that sooner or later everyone is going to have access to communications, and things are then going to be OK.

LA: Yeah. I think... it's so hard to be realistic and then also to allow yourself to say... I mean you have to make the assumption that... and turn your energy toward — you don't have to, but I want to — use my energy to try to clarify my own situation in terms of living in a world like this, and to try to understand it as well as I can. And do what I can about how it feels to live in the midst of wires. And to come to some terms with that and still be a human being. And, I'm not so thrilled by getting linked up to everybody's mind, getting a direct *in* to their brains. Because first of all I like the mystery of not being able to do that.

RL: We're just getting CB here, they're legalizing it, and my immediate feeling is 'I don't want to talk to that person... in the car in front of me.'

LA: Right. Right. Exactly. (Laughter) Do you want them to see into your brain, for another thing?

RL: They're making such a big fuss about it, but I just don't believe the British could be so pally with each other.

LA: The hook-up, the hook-up is really... but I think there are ways that... I mean the first thing is that people learn to talk to each other, and everybody does make efforts. I don't know that it'll help to, to have someone else on a video screen, I think that might alienate people a bit more. You know. It depends on how well used it is, and that's why I choose to work with electronics. Firstly because it's fast like the brain, it's circuitry, and second because it really has become a daily life issue, in my life, and I think in a lot of people's lives.

RL: Finally, why is there such a great US appetite for UFO contactee experience and the like?

LA: We just hope someone comes down and talks to us, you know. (Laughter) We just like to talk.

National Performance Listings

Bristol

Arnolfini Gallery
Info 0272 299191
Plenty of video at the Arnolfini now that their new Video Library has opened — the first in the country. Ring for details of programme. Meanwhile the Dance Umbrella events at the Arnolfini end with Dana Reitz and a music season begins.
Nov 11-12 Dana Reitz
Nov 13 Gavin Byars and John White.
Nov 20 Paul Crossley
Dec 4 John Potter and Philip Pickett.
dec 10 Mike Osborne Septet.

Cardiff

Chapter Arts Centre
Info 0222 396061
November is Chapter Dance month.
2-4 Le Groupe de la Place Royale, Canada's leading contemporary dance company.
5-6 Ian Spink Group.
7-8 Molissa Fenlay.
10-14 Eiko & Soma. A duo from Japan who have recently been working in the USA.
28 Nov, 10.30am Masterclass with Richard Alston of the Ballet Rambert. Lecture/demonstration, 12.15pm.
18-20 At the East Moors Hall, Sanquahar Street, Splott, Cardiff. Live Support System — a live art work devised by 4 artists working in different media. Central to the work is a steel and wood structure which moves along with the performers.
21 Nov, back at the Chapter, Terminal Cafe. This month's alternative cabaret features The Greatest Show on Legs, The Box Brothers, Trevor Stuart, Roland Denning and the Wireless Players, Matthew Bailey and a mystery competition.
24-28 Starless Cast Theatre Company present "Hero of the Hour" a modern fable in an ultra-modern setting, which combines sculpture, video & film, performance and music.
Dec 1-5 Doppelganger Theatre present "London Songs", a show based on the poetry of William Blake.
Dec 11-12 (in second space) Fresh Claim Theatre Company present "The Cure". A new sitcom.
Dec 15 Bert Jansch and John Renbourn (organised in conjunction with the Welsh Jazz Society).
18-19 Dec Terminal Cafe — Special Christmas Edition — full of surprises!
Closed for Christmas, 23 Dec to January 3.

London

Air Gallery
Info 01 278 7751
An installation by 3 Polish artists.

Almeida Theatre
Info 01 354 2091
Autumn season continues into November with an eclectic band of performers. Highlights include:
Nov 1-8 Jack Klaff in 'I Do Not Have the Nagging Doubt of Ever Wondering Whether, Perhaps, I am Wrong'.
Nov 6-7 Black Theatre Co-operative's Musical Evening.
Nov 8-11 Miranda Tufnell and Dennis Greenwood (see feature in this issue).
Nov 9-10 Dana Reitz
Nov 12-13 Mary Fulkerson
Nov 14-15 Lizzie Cox — "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 the Somerset field will be recreated in visual collage, dance and music" (Performance 11).
Nov 10-14 Yoshi Oida in 'Interrogations'.

Battersea Arts Centre
Info 01 223 8413
November 4-7 East-West Theatre Co. — 'Crutch' with Nabil Shaban.
November 11 October Theatre and Objects D'Art.
November 12-13 Mrs Worthington's Daughters — Angels of War
November 18-19 Tara Arts — 'Sacrifice' by Tagore
December 10-11 Moving Picture Mime Show
December 16-24 Cliffhanger and Pookie Snack 'n Burger — Bumper Xmas Cabaret.

Chisenhale Dance Space
Info 01 981 6117
Problems with the fire exits have held up the opening of X6's new home but with luck they should be in business by Christmas. Ring for details.

The Drill Hall
Info 01 637 8270
Previously known as Action Space, a victim of last years Arts Council cuts, this important central London venue returns with a vengeance and a powerful opening event, as well as a new licensed bar and complete refurbishment.
November 11-December 6 'The Pack of Women' devised and written by Robyn Archer, the Australian woman known for her stirring renditions of Brecht/Weill songs, and directed by Pam Brighton.

Old Half Moon
Info 01 791 1141
Nov 1-7 Mrs Worthington's Daughters in 'Angels of War'
Nov 9-21 English Company Theatre in 'A Slight Joke'
Nov 23-Dec 5 Extraordinary Productions with Bryony Lavery's 'Missing'
Dec 21-23 Covent Garden Community Theatre

New Half Moon
Info 01 791 1141
Nov 1-14 Michelle Trembley's 'Hosanna'
Nov 17-Dec 5 'The Dog Beneath the Skin' by Auden and Isherwood directed by Julian Sands.

Heaven (Final Solution)
Info 01 439 1907
2 Nov Mass Disjuz and the Visitors A 4 AD Night.
9 Nov Nico, Eric Random and the Bedlamites, The Room.
16 Nov Unconfirmed.
23 Nov Maximum Joy, Research, Saigon.
Dates from then into December unconfirmed, ring for details.
Some of the best video-by Night-vision — and nicest barstaff in town.

ICA
Info 01 930 0493
Theatre
Nov 3-14 John Ashford returns as director of the ICA theatre after a year in Japan (see his article in this issue) and brings with him Tenkei "a Japanese theatre company celebrated for the power of their visual theatre" in 'Komachi Fuden'.
Nov 18-Dec 5 'War Crimes' from the story by Peter Carey.
Dec 8-19 Moving Being return with their new show 'Brecht in 1984'.
Cinema
From Dec 5 a season of 3D movies with Arch Obeler's 'The Bubble' to be shown in Space-Vision.
Seminar Room
The Radical Tradition in British Art; a series of seminars and discussions to complement the exhibition of new work by Conrad Atkinson. Speakers include Christopher Hampton, Paul Foot, Adrian Mitchell, Trevor Griffiths, Michelene Wandor and Farrukh Dhondy.

London Film-Makers Co-Op
Info 01 586 4806
November 11-15 Beat Festival. Poets, Musicians and Films from the Beat era.
December 4-11 'Celluloid meets Flesh' (Both events in collaboration with the LMC)

London Musicians Collective
Info 01 722 0456
November 19 Clubnight — 'The Big Sparrows' (Clive Bell and Jessica Loeb), 'British Summertime Ends' (Clive Bell, Richard Coldman and Sylvia Hallet).
November 21 'Sorcerers Delight' (Martine Howard Naylor and Others).
November 26 Clubnight (Phone for details).
November 27 John Russell and Sue McLennan
November 29 'Both Hands Free' (Will Mentor, Bob Helson, Mark Langford and Roy Ashbury).
December 4-11 'Celluloid meets Flesh' (Collaboration with Film Co-op).
December 12-13 'The Owl and the Pussycat'
December 18-19 Evan Parker and friends.
Workshops: November 1,8. Voice workshop — Maggie Nichols.
November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. Dance workshop — Doug Gill.
November 15, 22. Music workshop — John Stevens.
Note. If you want to book the space for rehearsals of events phone 01 722 0456.

New End
Info 01 435 6054
Crystal Theatre are in residence at the resusitated New End through November with their latest spectacle 'The Protector' and a tempting selection of late-nights, including Neil Cunningham as 'The Immortalist' and one-person shows by David Rappaport and Heathcote Williams.

October Gallery
Info 01 242 7367
Nov 6 Quickflash
Nov 28 Jeremy Reed
Dec 3-4 Theatre of All Possibilities in 'The Tin Can Man'
Dec 19 Dave & Lilijana Ortolja-Baird with 'Dance from the Balinese tradition'.
Nov 14 Selwa Raja.a from Egypt. Belly dancing.

Oval House
Info 01 735 2786
November
4-8 Combination in 'Happy Lines'.
4-8 'Rabbit in a Trap' (see review in this issue).
9 Anglo-Polski Performance with Roland Miller and Zbigniew Warpechowski.
11-15 British Events in 'Storm Warnings'.
13-15 Skirting Board in 'What do you Do?'
18-22 Staunch Poets and Players in 'In Transit' a reggae musical.
20-22 'One Way of Seeing' Martin Humphries' audio-visual poetry show
25 Women composers
26-27 East West in 'Crutch' with Nabile Shaban
28-29 Akimbo with Deb'bora and Andy
December
2-3 Monstrous Regiment in 'Yoga Class'
4-6 Hesitate and Demonstrate in 'Goodnight Ladies'
4-6 A new performance from Matchbox Purveyors
And then nothing, or so it seems. The Oval Christmas spectaculars have finally had their day and the building is to go festively dark this year.

Theatrespace
Info 01 836 2035
November
3-15 'Chicken Tikka' with Rational Theatre
7 Roy Hart Theatre for one night only with 'Calling for Pam'
17-21 Incubus hit London again with Paddy Fletcher's "epic black comedy" 'The Revenger's Comedy'
17-21 Late-night, an encounter with Franz Van Het Gordijn a Dutch poet and performer who is, we are told, "avant garde and quite erotic"
22 For one night only Franz is joined by Alberto D'Enjoy (sic) in a 'double bill'!
24-Dec 12 Triple Action in ›

'Curriculum Vitae'. After surviving the Arts Council's Christmas cuts by removing to Europe, Triple Action are back briefly in Britain before going west to the US and Mexico. There will not be a chance to see them again over here for at least a couple of years.

Theatre Upstairs

Info 01 730 5174
Nov 1-7 'The Catch' by Nick Darke
Nov 18-Dec 5 That's Not It present 'Mothers Arms' written and directed by Natasha Morgan. And downstairs at the Royal Court, a place that does not usually find itself in these pages, comes the People Show Cabaret for a Christmas season, reworked for the large space into a two-hour, one-interval show. Forget the panto this year and head for Sloane Square.

Tricycle Theatre

Info 01 328 8628
Nov 1-7 'Blood on the Dole' by Jim Morris
Nov 10-28 'Citizen Alyushin' by Kevin Mandry, a co-production with Foco Novo
Nov 30-Dec 12 Paines Plough with Terry Johnson's 'Days Here So Dark'
Dec 14-19 'A Winter Warmer' from Cunning Stunts
from Dec 21 Barry Smith's Theatre for Puppets with kids' matinees and a show for adults in the evening. Ring for details.

York and Albany

Info 01 387 9541
Nov 1-8 The Mighty Honkey Road Show in 'Flood'
Nov 11-22 Seamus Finnegan's 'Soldiers'
Nov 25-29 David Farrell's 'A Slight Joke'

Manchester

Radiator

Various venues
Info 061 224 0020
Nov 13-14 Womens Theatre Group in "New Anatomies", the Gallery, Peter Street, Manchester 1.
Nov 3-4 The People Show Cabaret, UMIST Students Union, Sackville Street, Manchester, M60 1QD.
Dec 11 Sisterhood of Spit — 20 piece all-women jazz band, Birch Community Centre, Brighton Grove, Rusholme, Manchester 14. Also events on Nov 14 — Extra-ordinary Productions in "Missing", Nov 21, Jam Today, Feminist Rock Cabaret, Nov 28, Cathy la Creme and the Rumbas Cabaret, Dec 12 Christmas Party. Ring for times, venues and prices of these events.

Nottingham

Midland Group

Info 0602 582636
November 18 Gavin Bryars and John White. A programme of new work.
November 19-21 Circles Women's Distribution. Six new performances by seven women including November 21, Women in Performance, led by Susan Hiller.
November 28 Hoekatus from Amsterdam. 12 piece ensemble play music — "One can let a doodle, horse or elephant dance to this music" — De Telegraaf.
December 3-4 Impact Theatre — Dammerungstrasse 55.
December 10-12 Transitional Identity — contact improvisation Dance Company — Performance and workshops.

Newcastle

Basement Group

Info 0632 614527
November 4 Rose Lowder — film
November 7 Jan Maadovsky — performance 'La Mer'.
November 11 Bushy Kelly — performance 'Self Image'.
November 14 Dan Graham — performance and lecture.
November 21 Videotapes by Vida.
November 25 Sean Breadin — performance — 'Gathering Crowds'.
November 28 Keith Frake — Tape-slide installation.
December 2 John Spencer — installation and performance.
December 5 Robert Carrington — performance.

Touring

British Events

Info 0225 27558
'Storm Warnings'
"In a powerful brew of fairytale, myth, Shakesperiana, pantomime, Hollywood musical and Wagner, a technicolour Elizabeth Taylor and a post-holocaust Roy Orbison rub shoulders with Lancelot and Snow White. What you might call a small-scale touring Disneyland... A sort of 'Tinkerbell meets Apocalypse Now' ". (Performance 13).
Nov 6th and 7th Chats Palace.
Nov 11th-15th Oval.

CAST

Info 01 487 3440
"A constantly irritating thorn in the skin of the establishment" (Performance 12). CAST's new touring show is 'Hotel Sunshine'. The tour until Christmas is a string of one-night stands so only the barest details here. Ring for more information.
November
3 Lincluden Inn, Dumfries
4 Community Centre, Stranraer
5 Technical College, Paisley
6 Community Centre, Castlemilk
7 Drill Hall, Sauchie
8 Royal Centre Hotel, Dundee
10 Falkirk
11 Stirling
12 Ex-Servicemens Club, Cowdenbeath
13 Pleasance Theatre, Edinburgh
14 Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh
19 Polytechnic, Oxford
20 University of Sussex, Brighton
24 Focus Youth Theatre, Southend
25 Corn Exchange, Saffron Walden
26 Chelmer Institute, Chelmsford
27 St Peter's Hall, Stowmarket
28 Labour Club, Norwich

Extemporary Dance

Info 240 2430
Emilyn Claid is the new Artistic Director of Extemporary and the company is touring an entirely new repertoire "with the accent on exploring new areas of movement and expression". Promises to be interesting stuff.
Nov 2-3 Hilderstone Hall, Broadstairs
Nov 4 Royal Victoria Hall, Southborough
Nov 13-14 Adeline Genée Theatre, East Grinstead
Nov 20-21 Brewhouse, Taunton
Nov 23-25 Nell Gwynne Theatre, Hereford
Dec 1-5 Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds
Dec 10-11 Corn Exchange, Ipswich

Forkbeard Fantasy

Info 0986 3706
Touring with a cabaret, 'British Square Dance' and 'Seal of the Walrus' amongst other gems.
November
5 Tower Centre, Winchester
10 Shaw Theatre, London
11 Trent Polytechnic
12 Bosworth College
13 Chesterfield College
17 Exeter College of Art
18 Exeter University
19 Bristol Polytechnic
20 Trinity Hall, Bristol
24 Matlock College of Education
25 Derby College of F.E.
27 Leicester Guild Hall
28 The Pit, Mansfield
'Library Show' which the lads describe as their first "big build" event since 'Grid Reference Show' opens on Dec 4 at the Tower Centre, Winchester.

National Theatre of Brent

Info 637 5516
'Zulu' continues its tour
Nov 16-21 Essex University Theatre, Colchester
Nov 23-28 Birmingham Rep Studio

York Arts Centre

Info 0904 27129
6-7 Nov Dance work: "New York Connections"
12-14 Nov Cliffhanger: "Captive Audience"
19-21 Nov Triple Action Theatre: "Ulysses"
24 Nov State Sympathy — music, performance, electronics
27-28 Nov Impact Theatre Company: "Dammerungstrasse 55"
3-5 Dec IOU "The Trumpet Rat and Other Natural Curiosities"
17-19 Dec Kaboodle Theatre Exchange "Dorothy's Progress"

Extraordinary Productions

Info 637 5516
'Missing' "an unusual thriller" by Bryony Lavery
Nov 3 Stamford, Georgian Ballroom
Nov 4-5 Newcastle, Polytechnic Drama Studio
Nov 6-7 Whitehaven, Rosehill Theatre
Nov 10 Warrington, Padgate College
Nov 11 Mossleigh, George Lawton Hall
Nov 12 Lancaster, St Martin's College
Nov 13 Preston Polytechnic Arts Centre
Nov 14 Manchester Repertory Theatre
Nov 16-21 Birmingham Repertory Theatre
23-Dec 5 Old Half Moon, London

Rational Theatre

Info 01 624 3296/992 4047
'Chicken Tikka' — "a metaphysical murder mystery"
Nov 3-15 Theatrespace
'Light Finger' — "a Pangalactiv Ecological Adventure". The Rational's return to the Natural History Museum following the success of their Christmas show last year.
Dec 14-Jan 21 Natural History Museum, London

Welfare State International

Info 250 1474
At long last a rare and wonderful opportunity to see Welfare State in London and with 'Parliament in Flames' at that, their bonfire night spectacular. OK so it does mean going to Catford on a Thursday night but what better excuse to make the adventurous journey south of the river.
Nov 5 Blythe Hill Fields, London SE6

Impact Theatre

Info 0532 445972
Of their last show we said: "As novel and exhilarating as anything seen in London for months... a performance of wild originality". The company's new production is "Dammerungstrasse 55" and it could be unmissable.
November
2-3 College of St Paul and St Mary, Cheltenham
4 St Luke's Theatre, Exeter
6-7 Dovecot Arts Centre
9 Loughborough University
10 Nottingham University
11 Durham University
12-14 Unity Theatre, Liverpool
16 Bretton Hall
17 Sheffield University
18-19 Ralph Thorseby Theatre, Leeds
20-21 Theatre-in-the-Mill, Bradford
23 Ilkley College
25 Trinity College, Leeds
26 Leeds Polytechnic
27-28 York Arts Centre
30 Newcastle Polytechnic
December
2 Darlington Arts Centre
3-4 Midland Group
5 The Gallery, London E1
6-7 Theatre Space, London
8-12 Leeds University

Warpechowski & Miller

Info 0476 67248
Roland Miller and Zbigniew Warpechowski join forces for 'The Polish Link'.
Nov 5-6 Art and Research Exchange, Belfast
Nov 7 Orchard Gallery, Derry
Nov 9 Oval House, London
Nov 11 Herts College of Art, St Albans and Luton Community Arts Centre