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Yoshi Oida, The Art of Social Change
Circles, Station House Opera, Dance Umbrella.

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THE ART OF SC

Artists have begun to penetrate the hidden institutions for the mentally handicapped.

In their all-seeing wisdom, not to mention their obsession for creating mini-Utopias, the worthy city fathers who supervised the growth of newly industrialised cities decreed that the preservation of 'polite society' must be paramount. The workers were condemned to slums far down-wind of the rapidly rising new suburbs and terraces — but what was to be done with the *real* undesirables, the people whose very presence would mock this new and refined civilisation? The answer was very neat, precise and utterly inhumane. The imbeciles, the mentally and morally defective were to be placed behind high walls, far out of sight of the city, in institutions which were to be run with the discipline and severity of a man-o'-war, and from which they must never return. They didn't return, and even if they were capable of mouthing complaints, these would never reach the ears of anyone who was prepared to listen.

It is little wonder that in the one hundred and fifty years that have elapsed since this time, the rest of society just plain forgot that the institutions and the people existed (after all that was what was *meant* to happen). Sure, in this time there have been changes — the asylums are now called 'mental subnormality hospitals', but the buildings didn't change, the life-sentences didn't, the isolation didn't. And nor did the dislike that society had for these people, which had been fuelled by ignorance and Victorian attitudes — after all, we wouldn't put people away unless they were dangerous, *would we....?*

Let me clear up one point, I am talking here about people who are mentally handicapped, people who have suffered brain-damage, or have had their mental development impaired by a whole variety of mental or physical conditions, and not the mentally ill (although their situation is depressingly similar).

Now, it might occur to you that with problems like this artists and performers were the last people needed to remedy the situation (after all, what are they going to do — paint a pretty picture on the



SOCIAL CHANGE

Pete Shelton describes their impact on a forgotten world. Photos by Jill Posener.





“Just because a person cannot talk, it doesn't mean that they don't wish to express preferences, that they don't need anything. Likewise, consider the environment the people live in: empty, clinical and drab. Just because it has always been like that doesn't make it what they want or need.”

perimeter wall and pretend that that makes everything o.k.? — Well, no, they aren't). Surely this is the responsibility of Parliament, the D.H.S.S., Social Services, charitable ladies..... but artists?

In fact it is *because* the problems are so vast and intractable that artists and performers are required. This needs some explanation of the real problems.

Mentally handicapped people living in long-stay hospitals get the rawest of raw deals — when the cakes of funding, caring and attention are cut-up, they are lucky if they even get the crumbs. The reality of many of their lives is devastating: sitting in a chair staring at a blank wall for twelve hours a day, sound nullified by Radio One, lucky if they get more than a few seconds of personal attention from (admittedly over-worked) staff who are busier maintaining a routine than caring for people — and remember that many of these people have a mental age, and emotional needs, of very young children. Can you imagine what starvation of human contact would mean to *them*? Then there's the problem of money. Already the poorest relation in the NHS, these hospitals are still the easiest target for cuts. There's just no comparison between the rumpus pregnant mothers would make at a lack of essential facilities, and the complaint that handicapped people *can't even make*. And there's always the problem of the world outside that no more wants its handicapped members than it did when asylums were first built. The list goes on and on, until you're aware of the proportions of the disaster-area. But that's not the worst of it. The epi-centre of this disaster-area is magnetic. It remorselessly sucks everyone that comes near the institutions into the despair they create.

If that's the problem, how are artists and performers the solution? To start with they have no vested interest in these institutions, which surprisingly is an advantage. They are not dependent on the institution for their work or their living, unlike the many nurses, therapists, domestics, and even hospital managers. They know how to work outside the structure of an institution, and it is institutionalisation which is the core of the hospitals' problems. They are able to assess needs with individual and independent minds, and are highly adept at creating a lot from very little (in all

At the edge of communication-Action Space London Events creating a strikingly human environment with handicapped people in a hospital in the London region.

senses). They generate their own energy, and this inevitably means they inspire energy in others. Unlike the staff of the institutions who see only beds, meals, finances and handicaps, artists, and particularly performers, specialise in people, and see people first. In short, they are the direct antithesis of these hospitals, and that is precisely why their involvement is essential.

I am not denying that much needs to be done on the political front to end these institutions once and for all (and indeed much is being done), but there is, and will remain an area where artists can make a unique contribution to the welfare of handicapped people.

At the most mundane level this contribution might be seen in terms of communication, particularly the non-verbal variety, which is clearly essential for working with people who are unable to use words. But this description does little to convey the excitement that is created. Imagine, if you will, 'listening' to someone who is unable to talk. It is possible, but not only that, it's critically important. Just because someone cannot talk it doesn't mean that they don't wish to express preferences, that they don't need anything. Likewise, consider the environment the people live in: empty, clinical and drab. Just because it has always been like that doesn't make it what they want or need. Then imagine the alternative — an environment able to change suddenly and spectacularly, a place full of activity and energy, a place full of exciting colours, shapes, movement, sound, a place where anyone however unable they might seem could develop an interest in finding things, grasping things, and even moving themselves — precisely the form of massive stimulation that these institutions lack in large supply. Fair enough, you might say, but a computer could be programmed to do this, and indeed in one hospital this is precisely what is being done!

But what the hell's the point of stimulating people to the point where they want to do new things unless there are people seeing this change take place, people who are able to use their ingenuity to develop a small response and find new directions for growth? Performers aren't the only people capable of doing this, but they do have some advantages. Experience has shown that they are capable of generating the trust and empathy which any of these approaches require, they are resourceful and able to develop something quite impressive out of a tiny hint, and they are able to use *themselves* as a means of stimulation.

Maybe their most useful asset is one that they don't know they have. So much time is spent on theory, ideas and materials that performers tend to ignore the fact that in doing just about anything in front of people they are pushing out a remarkable variety of emotions, and that these emotions tend to reach their audience without any need for thought or analysis.

Emotional communication isn't necessarily dependent on sight, hearing, touch or any of the obvious means of receiving or understanding information, and as such has a vital place in work with profoundly handicapped people, many of whose senses might be impaired. The whole subject of emotional communication is so new that it would require a separate article to do it justice. Suffice it here to note that it should come as no surprise that the thresholds of our understanding of communication are being pushed back a long way in an area of work such as this — the artists concerned in it are committed to developing their work as an instrument capable of achieving effective change in the quality of people's lives, and this requires a rigorous involvement in experimentation.

And is the work effective? There's little doubt about this — there are numerous instances of handicapped people developing new skills, of doing things they have never done before to substantiate the assertion. What is extraordinary is that these changes can take place in people for whom they are considered impossible. It's certainly true that mental handicaps are not curable illnesses, so how does this happen? The answer is alarmingly, and revealingly, simple. The crushing boredom of these people's lives, their lack of attention, the total absence of a stimulating environment has the effect of handicapping these people to an even greater extent than their mental handicaps. What the hospitals see as their patients' handicaps are in reality a mixture of mental handicaps, 'institutional' handicaps and behaviour problems which these institutions themselves create. The former we can do nothing about, but by showing how institutionalisation can be destroyed the artists and performers are joining the front-ranks of the movement to rectify one of the greatest injustices that our (so-called 'caring') society is prepared to inflict on its least able members. **Pete Shelton**

For more details of working with handicapped people in institutions contact: Action Space London Events, 16 Chenies Street, London WC1E 7ET, or SHAPE, 9 Fitzroy Square, London W1.



Charles Moulton

Feature

The onset of winter saw the Dance U London while we sent Luke Dixon out ICA, Gillian Clark was undergoing 'a criticism course, yet

Not

In its many provincial manifestations — from Glasgow to Brighton, via Oundle — Dance Umbrella was a rather different affair from the sprawling, uncritical, incoherent assemblage on offer in London. Down in Bristol the festival was a far more manageable affair, the programme at the Arnolfini having a feel of artistic thought and planning to it that was lost in the sheer scale and logistical complexities back at Riverside. Of course the Arnolfini, an arts centre with a precise, stylish if limited programming policy, is Britain's leading provincial venue for contemporary dance. Only the crisis stricken Riverside in London, supported by a metropolitan dance audience who will turn out for anything, can rival it. The scale of the operation on the Bristol waterfront may, of necessity, be more limited, but it is correspondingly tightly focussed. Of the thirty-four or so groups to be seen under the Dance Umbrella in London, the Arnolfini picked up five and transported them West, along with London Contemporary Dance Theatre who took over the Bristol Hippodrome for a week. Caroline Marcadé and Dominique Petit were representatives of French dance. Maedée Duprés danced, as it were, for Britain, and the rest of the season was given over to Americans, all of them currently working at the Kitchen Centre in New York: Bill T. Jones, Arnie Zane, Dana Reitz and Charles Moulton. So here was a chance for Bristolians, over a leisurely four and a half weeks, to see some

Please don't shoot the horses

OK, so how did you score? I managed 12 altogether, including Americans, British, Canadians, Dutch and Japanese. No, I am not about to reveal dark secrets of nefarious revelries — but the number of companies I managed to get to see at this Autumn's month-long Dance Umbrella season, the biggest yet (how big can it go?) — and a competitive affair it was too.

As well as the faithful members of London's Dance Audience notching up theatre visits on their programmes and vying with each other in the coffee queues as to how many they had seen, the dancers and choreographers also, coming as they did hot on each others heels, appeared in some strange way to be entrants in one of the biggest and most tiring dance marathons of them all. Not that *they* got exhausted — but we did.

In one respect it was a wonderful event. Never before have audiences in this

country been able to savour so much dance in so many different styles from so many different countries. It was especially interesting to see the latest developments taking place in American dance (but more of that later). However, with all thanks and credit due to the Umbrella organisers for what must have been a mammoth task of organisation, I did begin to feel that by presenting it all together in such a short space of time, the pleasure of it became lost, for the Umbrella gave us the chance in London to see over 21 British companies, with 7 from America, 2 from Japan, one Dutch, one Canadian, and one Swedish group. But it began to feel like a competition after a while and sometimes got to the point where I was giving marks out of ten — instead of just ENJOYING it.

It can be positively dangerous to put so many individual artists and companies together like this. Enjoying them for what they are becomes overtaken by comparing

them to the ones you saw the night before. And some of the subtleties get forgotten in the great debate as to which were the 'popular favourites'. The potential is there for a weakening of respect for the artist's work because one's critical faculties become distorted. Instead of going fresh to a new experience at each performance, one is tempted to judge one artist by another — and playing off a relatively new art form against itself in this way is a potentially destructive attitude unless nipped in the early stages.

I fully support any attempt to give contemporary dance greater exposure — both in London and the provinces — but I am anxious that when this is attempted it should be in the most positive way. I fully understand the need for audiences already wooed by dance to have the opportunity to keep up with current developments worldwide. But I think the safest way to provide this is not by one huge jamboree but by,

DANCE UMBRELLA

mbrella open up again. Liz Stolls joined the crush sheltering under it in of town to report on the festival through provincial eyes. Back at the sharpening of awareness and a honing of the perceptions' at a dance another part of the Umbrella's burgeoning activities.

the flying Karamazov Brothers

of the most interesting of American contemporary dance, contrast it with European work, and take in talks, workshops and classes along the way. It was all nicely organised, civilised and above all manageable for the local audience in terms both of time and money — a season ticket for all the Arnolfini performances cost as little as six pounds. All this and the simultaneous opening at the Arnolfini of Britain's first public video library.

I went down West to catch Charles Moulton, largely dismissed in London as little more than a second-rate, if flee-footed juggler. In fact the 'ball-passing' for which he is best known is but one aspect of his work, and he and the two women who make up his company, are much more than jugglers, and their performance succeeded in being both interesting as dance and fun as entertainment. It was accessible yet not undemanding. True, I did find the impassive, super-cool presentation not to be to my taste, but there were others who thought this added an irony to the entire performance — the adopted pose providing a counterpoint to the exuberance of much of the dancing, particularly the tap routines which one expects to be accompanied by the wide fixed grin so recently and so mercilessly parodied by Sue MacLennan (see PM 14). Still, whatever the reasons, there were moments when one felt one might have been watching automata, at least from the shoulders up, and this did rob the performance of personality.

Moulton works in close collaboration with the musician and composer A. Leroy, the music and choreography developing in tandem and Leroy joining the company on tour and accompanying the performances with tapes and keyboards. As a result the music and the movement really do seem inseparable, constantly feeding off and nourishing one another.

After three years with the Cunningham company, Moulton left in 1976 to develop his own choreographic style. We saw three of his pieces in Bristol, 'Display', dating from 1980 and this year's 'Expanded Ball-passing', in both of which he was joined by Barbara Allen and Beatrice Bogorad, and 'Motor Fantasy' (also 1981) in which Moulton in taps danced with the soft-shoed Barbara Allen.

The ball-passing, which also featured in 'Display', was not perhaps as spectacular as one might have expected — this was a long way from The Flying Karamzov Brothers — but it undoubtedly utilized the simple tension implicit in endeavouring to pass balls from one person to another, however tight the formation, without dropping them. The *legerdemain* was as eye-catching as the dancing itself.

'Motor Fantasy' demonstrated the integrity of Leroy's music and Moulton's choreography, the taps of the dancer being an important sound in the firmly beaten, otherwise electronic score. It was danced with great panache and an easy grace against a white cinema screen. **Luke Dixon**

say, three or four Dance Umbrella seasons every year. This would make it more accessible, more enjoyable, and a good deal cheaper! The capital outlay for a true fan for this year's Umbrella must have been phenomenal. The tickets were reasonably priced at £2.50 each but you had to have an understanding bank manager to book for the whole lot in advance.

If the seasons where spread throughout the year another problem would arise. Do you make each one a world-wide selection — or do you concentrate on one continent for each? I prefer the latter. It is not possible to get an idea of developments in America or Europe by seeing one or two companies per season. Each season could concentrate on one area of the world. If this happened 3 or 4 times in a year British audiences could become very well informed — and this would lead to a raising of standards all round, not only in terms of the artists themselves but also in related areas such as

teaching and, dare I say, dance writing and criticism.

This year I made a point of seeing as many American companies as possible. The USA, lacking in its own ballet traditions, has made contemporary dance its very own, and still leads the world in terms of energy and ideas.

I was beginning to worry about the heavy, dry, intellectual turn American dance was taking. After Cage and Cunningham's philosophical legacies, the following generation were bound to start from a more intellectual point of departure. Mathematical and physiological motivations became apparent for themselves, with improvisation as the freeing factor. This year, however, one thing came over strongly, dance can be exciting, exhilarating, and explosive as performance without recourse to programme notes or a knowledge of the creative process.

Possibly, in the recent past, America has



Dana Reitz

Feature

been too conscious of making distinctions between Dance, the Art Form, and dance Hollywood and Broadway style. Obviously contemporary dance should not become synonymous with roller skates, disco championships, and skateboards, but at the same time, it should not shy away too far from its audience.

The Americans, this year, showed no signs of doing that. Ex-Cunningham dancer, Karole Armitage, caused a minor sensation with her new choreography — a blend of Balanchine, Cunningham, and punk. Her full evening performance 'Drastic Classicism' included a loud punk band led by guitarist Rhys Chatham with whom she has presented solo performances. With that contemptuous look so favoured by punk performers, one wondered whether Armitage and Co. were merely meting out shock treatment to a neo-classical America. With two other Cunningham dancers in this company, Chris Komar and Joseph Lennon, it was certainly a revolt against the classicism and restrictive practices of certain American companies. With the tensions of opposites apparent both in the music and the dance, the work displayed elements of anger and frustration very strongly.

Molissa Fenley, a fellow New Yorker, also presented an explosive performance. This time firmly rooted in the neo-classical style, Fenley is a solo virtuoso and

presented an evening which was frenetic, driving, and very exciting. Using repeated phrases motivated by different parts of her body, she built up masses of energy in the space, always on the move and displaying a very human sense of physical effort. The pace of the performance rarely changed which, together with a very stylised movement sense, could be a restriction on her choreography. But the purity and drive of the movement was more than enough to keep the energy level of the audience from flagging.

She, along with fellow Americans Charles Moulton and Dana Reitz, displayed a taste for costumes which did nothing for them, nothing for the piece, and looked rather nasty. I'm sure they had their reasons!

Moulton's work was also a celebration of dance rather than a dissection of it. As Luke Dixon writes about the performance in more detail elsewhere in the magazine I will just say that it was a pleasure to see a choreographer who was not afraid to be clever, humorous and highly entertaining.

Lack of space restricts me further but I would mention two more memorable performances; that of the Dutch company Werkcentrum Dans, and Britain's Laurie Booth.

Werkcentrum's performance of Ian Spink's new duet 'Cool Harbour' was possibly more dramatic than the creator

intended but it still retained a beautiful quiet, contained quality as it traced moments of aggression and tenderness, desire and rejection. One of the real pleasures of the piece was that it didn't tell a story but elements of human relations moved in and out of the work in a light, unfussy, impressionistic way. The ghost-like set was designed by Antony McDonald and the work was set to Bach's Adagio from the Concerto in D Minor.

Bill T. Jones' 'Ah, Break It' echoed the harsh brittle tones of Karole Armitage's work. Dealing with the aggression, power and competitiveness of youth, the company showed it was capable of working with an immense variety of choreography and styles — often a stumbling block for repertory companies.

Ex-Dartington graduate, Laurie Booth is probably best known for his work with Contact Improvisation but this season presented a one-man show at the ICA. He is a wonderful performer, always involving the audience and manipulating them as much as he manipulated his voice and body. The piece was about 'manipulating motion' and he broke away from his usually powerful movement vocabulary to present a highly articulate and unusual look at how the brain and body use each other. **Liz Stolls**

Dance Diary

To write a piece about a course on writing has a curiously elliptical feel about it, and makes me aware with some horror that perhaps I am supposed to be a better writer as a result of this week long session. If I am, it is as a spin-off from what was learnt, which was a sharpening of awareness, a honing of the perceptions, as well as factual information from lectures, opinions from conversations and the acquisition of some sore muscles from the daily movement class.

The course was led by New York critics, Deborah Jowitt and Sally Banes, and dance-film archivist and writer John Mueller. There were sixteen of us on the course — a mixed bag of aspiring critics, more established critics and academics. The schedule for the week contained a movement class each day led by Jowitt, two assignments to be written, and then criticised, a screening of a film, on which we wrote, critiques of reviews written, lectures from those running the course plus videos and films. In addition there were of course performances every night in the I.C.A. theatre and a lunchtime series of dance films in the cinema. To call it an intensive course was no misnomer.

Monday 26th October

The sixteen course members drift into the top room of the I.C.A. Introductions. The first session throws up discussion on the role of the critic, their evaluative,

judgemental role or lack of it; the importance of writing about the actual work, the movement, of looking. A practical session from Deborah. Seven minutes to look at the bar and theatre foyer, seven minutes to write about it. Queries as to the purpose of the exercise: already, the need for explanations, the desire to hold a 'right' not 'wrong' opinion rears its head.

Tuesday 27th October

Movement class. Exercises with space, attempts to work on one of Remy Charlip's "Airmail Dances". A crystal clear lecture from Jowitt on the evolution of Martha Graham's dance style, accompanied by illustrations of movements from Jowitt herself, and a film of 'Appalachian Spring'. Prepare second practical assignment, writing on a non-dance activity as dance. Go to Rosemary Butcher Dance Company. Some of the audience obviously see this as a non-dance activity and leave.

Wednesday 28th October

The I.C.A. corridor becomes the venue for the movement class — we move down it as slowly as possible. Strange things happen with time. Conversation with Jowitt at lunch-time about the unwillingness of critics to look at new dance in this country, their mental rigidity. There are so few outlets for writing on new dance work. Banes lectures on Cunningham and the post-moderns. Everyone wants to get hold

of the videos and films she has. I want to go to New York and see the dances as well as watching the videos and films.

Thursday 29th October

Mueller explains how a film or video camera changes space and shows how choreographers Astaire, Cunningham and others have used this. We then see a film of Balanchine's 'Four Temperaments' and have to write on it.

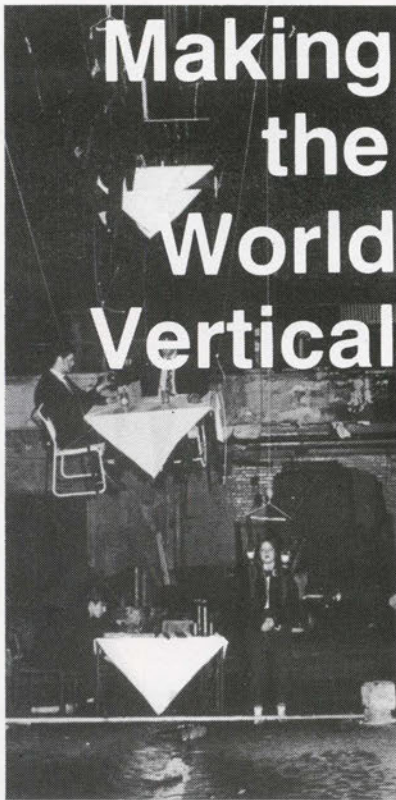
Friday 30th October

The last of the movement classes and critique sessions. The afternoon screening on vernacular dance in theatrical choreography includes a video of New York kids 'breaking'. A macho zappy street dance, analogies are drawn with Northern Soul and I wonder not for the first time about the strange distinctions that are drawn between art and popular culture. See Molissa Fenley in the evening and think 'breaking' was more exciting.

Saturday 31st October

Meredith Monk's wondrous piece 'Quarry' on film; visions, the holocaust, images from the fever of a sick child. We arrange to meet again, to continue the dialogue that has begun amongst us on criticism and how to handle it. Me, I'm now totally determined to go to New York and see some more post-modern dance and breaking. **Gillian Clark**

Making the World Vertical



PETER KIDD

Superb visibility: we are presented with an immensely simple apparatus that both openly demonstrates its functioning and remains incomprehensible, a shock. Three tables are suspended in air, one above the other, an imaginary tower, vertical schema (altar piece, mystical system, hierarchy). Two men sitting drinking in the middle, serviced by two women, who travel up and down, (reciprocal), harnessed to a pulley. They hang, free, connected, on either side of the structure. The limitation of their movement, gesture is explicit. Equally the two men cannot leave their table. At ground level, the table only two or three inches off the ground, sits a solitary man.

At the top level, above the table, hangs a row of ten tall green bottles, and a series of long weights, objects of measure, interchangeably similar in shape, symbolically congruent. The 'work' of the performance is to transport/transfer the bottles, weights, from the top level, through 'use', to the lowest. The women wait, in tails, upright ministering angels, (tails substitute Giotto wings), one brings the bottles to the table, the other takes the empty bottle away. The weights are used to enable the pulley system, measuring reciprocity; unhooked with difficulty from their horizontal pole, and clipped onto the harness, the weight fuels movement, or impedes it.

Tables hang in a structure of narrow cables, like magic, a dream, and still hiding nothing: there are no tricks. The space consists of tall narrow warehouse bricks with wet cobbles, a drain, 'sculpture', detritus, dark rain drizzling through the roof.

Service

A coded, simple exchange between the women begins the movement: 'Pheasant.' 'Salmon.' Up and down. 'Roast beef.' Signals intention (up or down): the reply must reciprocate — 'Salmon' Any agreement — 'Salmon' 'Salmon' — is deadlock. The women do most of the talking, exchanging these waiter words deadpan. 'The Menu' ascends, descends; "A little more roast beef" pulls a woman up another inch or two, reaching for a weight. The women never touch, transfer objects via the two men, only remain on the same level by holding the men's hands, do not look at each other.

Service codifies gesture unnecessarily: a rigorous choreography of everyday (upper class) life that can seem controlling, oppressively empty of meaning, infinitely repetitive. Service delineates gesture: it is recognisable, visible, mysteriously methodical. (Trousers are automatically folded, pockets carefully checked and put 'away'.) Nothing is unpredictable: the gestures of 'waiting' are uninterrupted. (The wet table cloth hung out to dry domesticates the highest cable, transforms a tightrope to washing line.) The women seem, in dynamic relation to their drinkers, extremely controlled.

Weights and Measures

Bottles are consumed, water flows, splashes, falls. The two men share a quiet bottle, demand more, spill some, throw more, drink, spill, spit, splash. They get 'drunk', on drinking, playing for laughs to a greater or lesser degree. One leans forward, aimless gaze, and the whole table lurches, leans; they are tied together, a single unit hanging in space. Reciprocity, a dreamlike (nightmare) connectedness, in which anger (an attempt to choke him to death) throws the world sideways, glasses drop, body slips, the threat of falling.

Bottles of water are consumed, emptied, discarded, exchanged for weights, full bottles, another tray of glasses. Bottles (plastic) fall, bounce, spill; glasses (plastic) are filled, drained, thrown in the drinking partner's face, emptied. The waiters remain impassive, and a lot drier. They are held, gripped in a passionate handclasp while exchanging service, and pushed off on their way, continuing their silent elevator, dumbwaiter, repetitions.

Meanwhile the lowest, solitary, man is provided with his own larger, clear plastic bottle, which arrives by magic on a system of wires, counterbalanced by a tray of full glasses. He drinks liberally, inundated from above, splashing the space around him, solitary mess maker. When he has emptied this bottle, it flies away, the tray descends.

The work is finished when the ten green bottles are empty, descended. The women's reciprocal weight, the men's interdependence (he leans too far, tables turn), and the ritualised transfer of water,

bottles, weights, together constitute the system. It is a system of arbitrary connectedness (push/pull), a system of checks and balances, representing a nightmare state of psychic experience in which everything has its corollary, its opposite number, its double. Freud: 'If everything we can know is viewed as a transition from something else, every experience must have two sides, and either every name have a double meaning, or else for every meaning there must be two names.'

The pleasure in watching this piece is in meaning filling gesture, gesture drained of meaning, a dynamic system of transition, one moment profoundly significant, the next moment empty. Laughter measures these shifts, marks moments of transition, the audience blurring, stifling its nervous shrieks and giggles.

Hierarchy

Heaven, hell, earth: trapped at their table, the middle ground, the men drink, fight, make up, enjoy quiet companionship, ignore each other, climb onto the table, undress, touch, swing, plummet. The women, briefly held, quickly disappear. The upper level and the lower level are invisible to these two men. They are stuck, lifelike, repeating the water torture consumption, making a mess, never quite escaping into death fall. Below them, the drinker suddenly, decisively, leaves his seat, and on hands and feet gallops over to a bucket, from which he drinks, dog fashion, slurping. Soon he lopes around the apparatus to curl up, asleep on wet cobbles, under a hanging brick counterweight. Heaven is invisible, storing bottles and weights, visited by the angels only. Is it a kitchen or heaven? Foreground, middleground and background are projected vertically, an exaggerated painting; perspective lines materialise as necessary cables, holding this world together, holding this world apart. Arbitrary disjunctions (trapped in a hanging picture) counter meaningless connectedness (can't move without him). Sexual difference defines planes, women's vertical movement, men's horizontal freedom, the dog can crawl on wet and dirty earth. Faulkner: '... I would think how words go straight up in a thin line, quick and harmless, and how terribly doing goes along the earth, clinging to it, so that after a while the two lines are too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other....'

Sex and Death

Anxiety fuels the pleasure of watching this dangerous machine. The sudden appearance, on wires, of a hanging chair, jacket, tray of glasses, substantiates the implicit threat of slipping. The sadism and masochism of vertical limitation is clear, extending into the language of sheer aggression and murderous reconciliation shared by the two men, the powerlessness of waiters, hanging, harnessed, the fearful

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YOSHI OIDA

Yoshi Oida successfully used techniques of the old Zen masters to provoke audience response.

It was not unknown, during performances of *The Phantom Captain's* 'Loaded Questions' for exasperated audience members, desperate for an answer, to interrupt the proceedings when their frustrations became bearable no longer. For some ninety minutes, the as always elegant members of, in Irving Wardle's words, 'Britain's answer to the Pataphysicians', would bombard the audience and each other with nothing but questions. Throughout this most enigmatic of performance pieces not a statement was to be heard. With its undermining of all certainties, 'Loaded Questions' was a most disconcerting show, and, though discreetly requested in the accompanying programme not to respond, for some it was just too much. Along with events staged by John Cage and Yoko One, 'Loaded Questions' was one of the precursors of Yoshi Oida's 'Interrogations' and like Oida's show it took as its model the eleventh century text of the Koan, a series of unanswered questions posed by Japanese Zen masters and recorded by their students. But while *The Phantom Captain* used their familiar collage techniques to compile a performance from largely contemporary questions, Oida has gone back to the original Zen text. His audiences, too, are disturbed. The need for response in a Western audience obviously disconcerts and during the recent run at the Almeida Theatre in London, many of the spectators were not slow to shout out glib replies to questions that have remained unanswered for a millenium.

Yoshi Oida is a Japanese actor who has spent the past decade working in the West, largely in association with Peter Brook's Paris based Centre for International Theatre Research. Since 1979 much of his time has been taken up touring 'Interrogations' around the world. It is a spare and simple show. Oida, a small man with a physical and vocal discipline that enables him to do the most precise and delicate of things with his body and voice, as well as the most forceful, is accompanied by a single musician, Tony McVey, and his strange assortment of percussion. Oida's only props are three bamboo canes. He begins with great seriousness, in close physical proximity to an audience, many members of which sit literally at his feet, and asks the most banal of questions in the most solemn of ways. And while the audience, bemused by the brandished bamboo canes, thinks whether or not to answer, the stern aspect dissolves with a disarming laugh and a beatific smile. The performance ends with a tiny moment of spectacle, recalling Brook's production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', when a struck cymbal flies through the air (on an invisible wire,) circling in the space vacated by the two performers.

We met in the bar of the Almeida Theatre, the day following the first performance, a performance that had been preceded by a week of workshops with British performers. We never did ask Oida, as he had asked us the evening before, 'What is the Meaning of Life?'. Instead we began by talking about the building and the response of a London audience.

Luke Dixon: Well, I enjoyed it very much last night... Is it a nice space to play in?

Yoshi Oida: Yes it's nice. It's a small *Bouffe du Nord* like Peter Brook has in Paris.

LD: Of course you've worked there.

YO: Yes. Same sort of style.

LD: Smaller.

YO: Yes.

LD: Where have you been with the show since your last visit here with it?

YO: All over France, including Paris, Swiz, Holland, Cologne Festival, Italy...

LD: And do you play it in different languages wherever you go?

YO: French and English. Well, in Poland I spoke in English and somebody on the stage they translate. Because this show, if people

cannot understand a phrase then more than fifty per cent interest go away. So necessary to understand language. So Italy or Poland they have translator on the stage.

LD: Does it change much performance to performance?

YO: (Laughs) Yes! It depend on the day. Also it depend on the musicians. Wherever I go I change the musician.

LD: Oh you do. So Tony...

YO: Just for England.

LD: Oh I see. Because the music seemed to me a very integral part of the show and I wondered how early Tony had been involved.

YO: Three days of rehearsal and we just improvise on the stage.

LD: And you find a different musician everywhere you go?

YO: Yes. Well two years ago we did it with Japanese but afterward take risk! So show all risk. That's more interesting. Otherwise, too safety, becomes mechanic.

LD: And is it dependent upon the audience as well?

YO: Yeh! (Laughs) Yes!

LD: I wondered how much you expect responses from the audience.

YO: ... I don't decide. I'm not expecting anything so if people speak it's alright.

LD: You don't mind if they answer?

YO: I don't mind. But I have control. So that's my responsibility. So if audience too much response I have to calm down. If audience too much calm, I have to check hot to make nice temperature for show.

LD: It seemed to me last night that there were people in the audience keen to provide very simple answers to the questions rather than let the questions hang there unanswered. Are there specific answers to the questions?

YO: Originally some Zen masters said to students and they write down questions. And then now in Zen temples the master give that kind of question and people sit down — three years later they find out the answer, through meditation.

LD: But not straight away!

YO: No, no. Well, if you are very understanding the truth you can understand immediately. The older ages they did it Zen master to Zen master. It's like a fighting with word instead of sword. Like in England how you say...?

LD: Duel.

YO: Yes, they fight each other with words...

LD: Has that ever happened when you've given a performance, that you've had that sort of reaction?

YO: Sometimes I got good answer... My aim is not to get answer. The truth is not only rational mind. It's beyond wisdom, beyond science. So it's not necessary. But sometimes audience have excuse, this is oriental text, so we cannot understand oriental mind... but for me it's excuse...

LD: It seemed to me though that there was a way of thinking in those who were giving answers last night that was different from the way of thinking that was behind the questions.

YO: Normally Japanese are less logical than Western people. They try to understand the text instead of construction of the logic...

LD: Have you played the show in Japan?

YO: No. In New York some people come and the Japanese said, yes this is good because no logic. But the American people said, this is difficult because no logic! That a different mind.

LD: Would you like to play in Japan? Is it just chance?

YO: Just chance. In Japan no money for theatre. Even Kabuki, Noh theatre, no subsidy from the government, so experimental no money!

LD: So is all your performing confined to the West now?

YO: Yes. At the moment, yes. Another thing, I speak bad English, that why it does work maybe. Don't you think so?

Interview

LD: It's difficult, because you've got a very precise control of your voice which was clear in the non-verbal things you did last night, but when you're speaking English —

YO: If it was spoken by English actor then it would become more ordinary. But I think because I speak sort of artificial, something like a foreigner, maybe that's a bit of it.

LD: Is English the language you speak most now or French? You're based in Paris.

YO: Yes, in Paris. This is originally in French.

LD: And you are still working with Peter Brook?

YO: Sometimes.

LD: Did this particular show develop out of the work you did with him?

YO: Yes. Because of a lot of things — the experiences in Africa, the Middle East, the street theatre and so on. In Africa we go to village, I have to improvise — and so last night if I fix some piece and where to stand, that's safety, but this is very risky... And same time it's life in it because spontaneous, so all rhythm, tempo, I have to make every night. It's more purely alive, it's not like a fixed mechanical thing, like a television, video film — it's canned, they open the can, it goes around, so nothing wrong, it's perfect, but it's cold. But last night it's not perfect. Consciously making not perfect... I've studied the Japanese classical theatre, with between four and five hundred years the same movement. When I started work with Peter, first time I started improvisation, which was terrible because I didn't know what to do.

LD: So you'd only done classical Japanese theatre before you started working with Brook?

YO: No. I studied Japanese classical theatre but I was working in modern theatre: television, film. But even so it is very conventional theatre so I never did improvisation. But when I started work with Peter, first time I studied improvising... In Africa we started from zero, or some certain ideas, but we never prepared a show. So in front of the people I had to do something. After three years experience I started to have some sort of self-confidence, that... I can support a certain level. So that's a challenge to myself.

LD: Is story-telling a part of it? There seemed to be a strong element of story-telling in 'Interrogations'.

YO: Yes, that's it. That fixed it but afterwards every night I feel I can make some show. Fortunately till today all performances not very bad. I keep certain level but every day different.

LD: When do you decide how it is going to go? Do you have a fixed starting point?

YO: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! Of course. I sit down! Afterwards, how long, how short, any sort of possibility!

LD: The only props you use are bamboo sticks which you use rather threateningly when you address questions to the audience. I couldn't decide whether you wanted people to answer.

YO: Me neither. I don't know whether I want answer or not. Basically certain people say better not wait answer otherwise it become banal. Some people say it's nice to talk to audience and exchange. Me myself I don't know. But now I try less speak to the audience. Because two years ago when I started I just try asking the people but now I am asking generally so you have no obligation to answer.

LD: Is it very different working on your own to working in an ensemble?

YO: Well, when I'm working with Peter Brook I'm like his child. Very small responsibility, very easy. I'm completely free. But when I work in my case I must take care of everything — economic, relation, everything. So it's much more difficult but much more interesting, rather than being Peter Brook's child. Great artist has money and whatever he makes people think his work is good. I just enjoy the acting.

LD: Do you do any more physical forms of theatre?

YO: Yes, my last one was more physical. Let's say this way. For economic reasons I had to go round United States, Europe, whatever, so I had to make show which not depend on language so it had to be more visual... so I used sort of Japanese old language which Japanese cannot understand also. So it's like visual and sound. I did it twice and felt this is a limitation. Also, this nice for the business, because you can go anywhere like a ballet, music concert, but I wanted to have phrase... Last night the information was sound, and the visual and the interjection of phrase. Then you can make meat of three elements.

LD: How important to you are the workshops you do?

YO: Wherever I go it's interesting to contact the people. Like this, we speak like this but we really not understand each other. But if I come here and work with local musician, and make a show, and work as workshop I become very deep contact with society, people. And the show is like question and answer. So in the three step level I can contact the local people.

LD: So are the workshops as profitable to you as to those you teach?

YO: It's an exchange. It's a nice situation.

LD: You gave up commercial theatre when you joined Peter Brook. Have you ever gone back?

YO: Yes, film, television. I didn't like being an actor. From the beginning I didn't want to be actor. I wanted to be director. I wanted to be leader of group. And in Japan I started to learn theatre and then I met Peter by accident and fascinated by him teaching me how to make a show. So I would learn from him! But I had to be something otherwise I cannot stay with him. So unfortunately I was actor. But I never interested in play in performance. The fascination is watch him rehearsing. The problem is when we've started perform, he's going away and I have to perform and that's terrible. So for me I like to research or I like to think about how to make it...

LD: So the process of making the show is more interesting than repeating it night after night?

YO: Yes. Normally the actors say after first performance, now I'm free. Now my time! But for me, now I want to finish... First performance, good or bad, it's finished.

LD: It depends how fixed the performance is.

YO: Yes! But you cannot change — my show I can change myself. His show I cannot change! So while he's research, that's interesting for me. After, when he started perform, I become nervous, every day same thing!

LD: Where are you going after this week?

YO: France, near Swiz. I work with Shinto priest and thirty French people in workshops.

LD: Do you work towards making a performance in your workshops?

YO: No, no. Maybe it's going to performance but I don't push.

LD: You've not got any great desire to direct a show with a lot of people?

YO: No, no. I'm not type of boss so I cannot be boss. If they make themselves I can help, so I'm not a leader I'm a helper. Peter is boss. I'm not a boss.

Theatre pieces in the form of questions — a chronology.

John Cage — Lecture in the form of Questions, 1958
Published in 'Silence'.

Yoko Ono — Question Piece. First performed Tokyo 1962, Sogetsu Art Centre, in French, by two people on stage asking questions to each other and not answering. Broadcast, in English, Voice of America, Tokyo 1964 and on Japanese television, NTV, 1964.

The Phantom Captain (Neil Hornick et al) — Loaded Questions, London 1976 (Bush Theatre, Kings Head Theatre Club and elsewhere) then throughout Britain. Traverse, Edinburgh, 1979; Performing Garage, New York, 1981; Bellevue, Amsterdam, 1981.

Yoshi Oida — Interrogations. First performed Avignon Festival, 1979. Toured to France, Italy, Holland, Canada, Poland, USA and Belgium including La Mama, New York, Toronto Theatre Festival (both 1981). First London performance Almeida Theatre, June 1981.



Laurence Burns



Circles

New performances
and a day workshop.

CIRCLES PERFORMANCE PLATFORM at the Midland Group Nottingham, November 19th - 21st.

Circles was formed by women to distribute women's work in Film Video, Slide/tape and Mixed-Media.

The Women who took part were Carlyle Reedy, Rachel Finklestein, Tina Keane, Annabel Nicolson, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Jane Clark, Pat Murphy and Susan Hiller.

FRIDAY

Rachel Finklestein's performance on Friday night involved two video monitors stacked one on the other on a platform. The monitors are wrapped in paper and fancy coloured string, like a big gift. Rachel Finklestein runs in, saying 'Is that for me?' with great delight. She unwraps the gift, revealing the monitors. The top one is running in real-time, showing at an angle what the other monitor shows, which is a pre-recorded tape of the lower half of a woman's body, moving in and out of projected stills of chastity belts. Part of her bottom is painted red. Her movement is jerky and tentative, and the background music by 'Strange' is 'beautiful', conveying feelings of pain and pleasure simultaneously. Rachel is exploring metaphors that expose the masochistic basis of women's pleasure in their relationships with men.

Later the same evening, Tina Keane's video performance **BEDTIME STORY**: A large circle marked out on the floor defined the performance area; inside the circle two video monitors, each facing half the audience seated on the periphery. A pre-recorded tape on both monitors, showing a woman opening a door very slowly, the image at first abstract and mysterious, distant, later looming larger, becoming more specific, until the door is completely open and the woman moves through it. Tina

Keane shines a red light through the darkness, outlining the circle on the floor. She reads a passage from Sheila Rowbottom, about self-discovery through mirrors, and about watching a strip-tease, 'catching myself desiring myself', and a passage from Virginia Woolf:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. If she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgement, civilizing natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is?

A man's voice reads the Bluebeard fairy tale while she shows the audience their individual faces in a small hand mirror, illuminated in the red glow of her torch; when she shines the red light on her own face and body, she is eerily transformed by the play of colour and shadow. By the time the Blue Beard story is over, she has rubbed out the circle, and leaves by the same door that is showing on the video monitor.

SATURDAY LUNCH TIME

with Louise Homewood

Annabel Nicolson, 'Cries': A tentative, almost apprehensive atmosphere, set up by the quiet use of very little light in the performance space. This, rent by a strange rendering of an archaic song — then questions, what was it? Where did it come from? This work is about muting, substitutions, hidden coded meanings, secret languages, the subterfuges and strategies imposed on women's speech. Intense and intimate, Annabel Nicolson's performance defined itself within the same tradition of poetic substitution, as she showed the

audience some dream notes, read a message from a friend addressed to her but directed, in terms of 'meaning' to another friend present during the performance (in fact participating in it), and played some favourite tapes, women imitating bird calls, and the cries of herd girls in the Swedish countryside. She showed a few slides, and attention was drawn to a tent-like shape in the back of the performance area. The conjunctions were gentle, leisurely, dreamlike.

SATURDAY DURING THE DAY

Saturday daytime was taken up with a workshop seminar which was unusual in that it pivoted on a curious juncture between 'social' and 'art' definitions with a total acceptance and valuing of life factors that could lead to or inspire the formations of thought named as 'philosophy' or 'art'.

Without the obstructive format often present in 'panel versus audience' situations, seated amongst the visitors, crowded around a large table in the upstairs room, the panel, chaired by Susan Hiller and including Tina Keane, Rachel Finklestein and Carlyle Reedy, discussed issues raised on their personal experiences of performance work. A certain amount of retrospection was required at the beginning by the people other than panel pressing a need of general background information.

As the discussion developed, the artists made opportunities for audience participation in the form of mutual exchange rather than questions and authoritative answers. Students of art and practising artists from the area including Ev Silver Shirley Cameron and Frances Saunders engaged with the panel and each other in an informal and energetic exchange. Presented data coordinated with discovered material often involving 'subjective' feelings and thoughts.


The first 2-hour session adjourned to allow everyone to see Annabel Nicolson's work and later reconvened. Everyone returned with interest. It is possible that an unusually strong level of communication was reached through the skills of receptivity and adaptability evidenced in the work of some of the artists and valued by the people present. These skills are often seen as throw away skills in the conventional formal panel discussion, but in fact they allow for minor gradated meanings which can lead to new understandings on contemporary issues.

The workshop was called appropriately 'Personal Approaches.'

SATURDAY EVENING

Saturday evening Jane Clark and Pat Murphy performed 'PROJECTIONS'. Statement: A woman hangs garments on a clothesline. Transformation: She replaces them with photographs from a tray of developing fluid, hangs them up to dry. Slides: De La Tour, a well-lit figure, a woman leaning on a table; Madonna, elevated and floating, a presence lifted. Two women. One earthed, the other other-

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'Frater Achad took the Oath of a Master of the Temple, that is to say, vowed to interpret everything that occurred to him as a particular dealing of God with his soul, in Vancouver B.C. on June 21, 1916. When a person takes such an oath, the psychological effects — as may be imagined — have profound consequences. The world appears in a light totally different to that in which it is seen by an ordinary individual. Every incident becomes charged with a particular significance; every and any chance event is vividly felt as bearing a direct and personal relationship to the person who experiences it; a vast and cosmic pattern begins to formulate in the mind so that the most trivial event appears charged with portentous meaning... taking the oath implies the ordeal of the abyss, which is the most critical experience a person can undergo.' *From 'The Magical Revival' by Kenneth Grant.*

Magic and Performance

'For me performance is everywhere, it includes everything and everyone — all response, all intents, all things related to the individual and the world. Every moment is a performance, every gesture, every sip, every mouthful, every spoken word, every single thought in time, every twitter of one's eyebrows. All human transactions, sleeping, fucking, shitting, all is performance but unframed.' *Charlemagne Palestine, in 'Performance by Artists'.*

Medieval Mumbo-Jumbo, conjuring tricks, or a particularly juicy item in the News of the World. All these and more spring to mind when the term Magic is mentioned. Yet there have always been people around who take the subject very seriously, and Magical symbols, traditions, and its practitioners have always been a strong influence on artists, from William Blake and Fuseli right through to modern performance artists. But because it is such a subjective area, and positively littered with warnings and taboos that seem to affect anyone not directly concerned with it, Magic is a very slippery customer to deal with. In what follows, Rob La Frenais makes some attempt to sort through the vast amount of information available on occult subjects, and finds a number of interesting parallels and links between Magical practice and the work of performance artists and theatrical experiment.



Aleister Crowley in magical vestments

There are some tasks that are infinitely tantalising, however problematic, in writing about live art. Whole fields of diverse creative activity cry out suddenly to be compared, to be thrust together to provide new directions of thought. Such it is with Performance and Magic. But is that impulse spurious? We shall see.

Firstly there is the problem of the form in which the subjects are presented to us. Performance is an open book, to be interpreted freely. Magic, on the other hand is personified in a whole welter of occult literature, and its meaning is sheltered by a shoal of red herrings. Performance artists have often done what might be construed as magical rituals, but are the effects the same as in magic? Magicians claim that if you follow certain ritual rules, actual results are obtained, not just a philosophically aesthetic effect. But surely that is also what the dedicated performance artist wants in the relationship with the world — results. On the evidence available, it would seem perhaps that the magician has been doing exactly the same as the performance artist for centuries, but in private, while the performance artist is striving for the same concrete effects that the magician claims to achieve.

It is difficult to keep the flamboyant figure of Aleister Crowley out of any discussion of this sort for long, so we may as well start by introducing him here. He in fact provides some of the main links between the two areas, one of these being his breaking with the repressive past of covert occultism to actually stage a magic ritual as a public performance in the early part of the century.

What follows is remarkably similar to a piece of modern performance art documentation. The performance of the 'Rites of Eluisis' held over seven Wednesday nights at Caxton Hall, London, during autumn 1910 were to 'induce in the audience a state of religious ecstasy' for a

cost of £5. 5s the lot. Leila Waddell played the violin and Victor Neuburg danced the rites, of whom Crowley says: 'He possessed extraordinary powers. He gave the impression that he did not touch the ground at all, and he would go around the circle at a pace so great that one constantly expected him to be shot of tangentially. In the absence of accurate measurements, one does not like to suggest that there was some unknown force at work, and yet I have seen so many undeniably magical phenomena take place in his presence that I feel quite sure in my own mind that he was generating energies of a very curious kind. The idea of his dance was, as a rule to exhaust himself completely. The climax was his flopping on the floor unconscious. Sometimes he failed to lose himself, in which case, of course nothing happened: but when he succeeded the effect was superb. It was astounding to see his body suddenly collapse and shoot across the floor like a curling-stone.'

But what was sublimely effective when performed in private lost most of its power to impress when transferred to unsuitable surroundings. I had no available spare money, no knowledge of the tricks of stagecraft, no means of supplying the proper atmosphere. I would not condescend to theatricalism.'

And so Crowley, with his little performance at Caxton Hall, runs straight up against the question that bothers many live artists today — the relationship with the public. Six years later, Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball would open their Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich as a 'gesture against this humiliating age' which would eventually end up as a physical battle between performers and an ideologically dissenting audience. The Rites of Eluisis ended up less violently as a famous court case after an unfavourable review in 'The Looking Glass' and Crowley's long career as media provocateur started, with the Sunday Express dubbing him: 'the Wickedest Man

in the World'. His public behaviour, his penchant for dressing up in elaborate Highland costume in public, (he was also the last man known to have worn a top hat in the dock of the Old Bailey) and his titles of The Beast 666, Logos of the Aeon, the Master Therion, Bahomet, the Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britains that are in the Sanctuary of the Gnosis, Laird of Boleskin, etc. etc. would make him a quite ridiculous figure, if one did not suspect that he spent a lot of his life pulling people's legs. Even contemporary magicians who do not follow Crowley, acknowledge him as a highly accomplished magician. And it is he who provides us with our link with the whole range of performance work in the last ten years that has been heavily influenced by the occult. Coum Transmissions (Genesis P. Orridge and Cosi Fanni Tutti) have adopted him as one of their heroes, and include his picture and writings in their documentation. P. Orridge follows one of Crowley's disciplines, when for example writing letters, neglecting to use the word 'I'. (Crowley's disciples were made to cut their arms with a razor if heard to use the word). And Coum's mid-seventies incursion into the world of newspaper outrage, (some say deliberate, they say accidental) certainly mirrored the doings of the 'Wickedest Man in the World'.

The Beast also takes us into the world of theatre. An interesting case-history is that of Publick Spirit, a touring company from Manchester who until recently devoted themselves to dramatising Crowley's work and other occult subjects. Their account of their progress is of some interest. It seems they were a group of newly graduated students who decided to form a fringe theatre company. After hunting around for suitable scripts they decided to revive Snoo Wilson's play about Crowley, 'The Great Beast'. At this time none of them had any interest whatsoever in the occult, and the play itself emerged top-heavy and over-acted, a bit like Ken Campbell's 'Illuminatus' but not excessive enough to get away with it. However, one unexpected effect was that it brought out the occult fraternity in force to see the show. 'There was one old man dressed in black with a silver-topped cane who turned up with a body-guard.' The other effect was that the cast started reading the books and trying out the rituals, which gradually became incorporated into the rehearsal period. The performer who played Crowley even devoted two hours a day to performing magic before playing his part. The company, by then deeply embroiled in the whole affair, went on to tour 'Moonchild', from Aleister Crowley's novel about an experiment to produce 'Homunculus', an extra-terrestrial being given form through human birth. Slowly, the methods used in the magic rituals began to infiltrate Publick Spirit's attitude to performing. Preparations for a performance became preparations for a ritual. The direction eventually culminated in a crisis for the company, the strong identification between life and art

becoming too intense. The group, after working on the Frankenstein legend, have now literally taken the next step with their current touring production. Titled 'The Next Step', it uses the occult techniques, transformed into a type of Stanislavskian approach, to produce a piece concerned with performance in itself. Stripped of paraphernalia of magic, and also the previously cumbersome theatricality, powerful statements are made about behaviour in the modern world, drawing on thematic sources that seem to range from Pavlov to Scientology, and presented in clear and cogent images. The effect of music on the consciousness, and indeed in an audience watching a performance is explored in an almost rigorous scientific manner, representing their concern with the evocation of atmosphere, an important part of the making of a ritual.

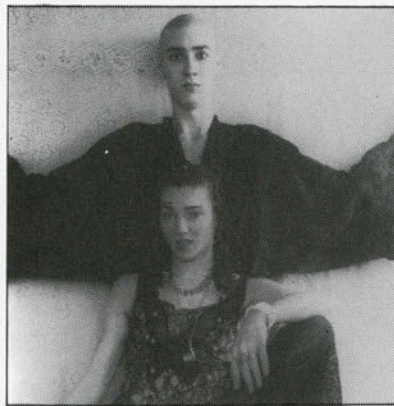
Occult material has always been a tempting source for experimental theatre in Britain. Magical obsessions were highly prevalent in early work by touring companies such as Incubus and Crystal Theatre, the former in 'Joanna Southcott's Box' and the latter in 'Radio Beelzebub', a satanic mass held under cover of a radio variety show, with elaborately coded requests and call signs giving way to hellish possession of the studio. Also in the same genre were Lumiere and Son, with early shows like 'The Sleeping Quarters of Sophia' and the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool with their adaptation of the occult parody 'Illuminatus,' whose numerological conspiracies, (based on the number 23) involved the company in a relentless series of coincidences during its tour, and which was followed by a version of Lovecraft's 'The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward'. The Dog Company, a relatively new touring group, has also closely pursued occult themes in 'A History of the Devil' and 'Paradise Street'. Finally, The Phantom Captain, whose involvement could best be described as being in the portrayal of alchemical themes; specifically in the 'Changeness Congress', which dramatically links Nuclear Physics with the 'Great Work' and 'Abracadabra Honeymoon' about the alchemical nature of human attraction. While the Phantom Captain is essentially a theatre company, involved



Phantom Captain

with the dramatic presentation of themes, the philosophy of its director, Neil Hornick, provides important evidence for our joint consideration of Magic and Performance.

'The performed act is at root a ritual ceremony designed to bring about altered states — of perception, consciousness, being. In short it is a magic act. We know that there are times when our 'performed' interplay effects such shared moments. The mutuality is a vital factor in the potency. In every magic act, I suspect, there must be *interchange*. Magic is not a fantasy, nor a pretention, nor an indulgence, nor a luxury, nor a fiction, nor a fairy-tale. It is an unavoidable necessity. If you want to be brutally Darwinian about it, you could call it a crude survival mechanism. Life is, or can be, a blessing.'



Publick Spirit

What is Magic? What is it that magicians exactly do? To borrow the occultist's own phrase, Magic is 'effecting changes in conformity with the Will'. For the purposes of this article, the vast field of occult activity will be condensed to a single aspect which happens to be native to this part of the world, Western Ceremonial Magic.

Western Tradition Magic originates in its present form in the writings of Paracelsus, John Dee, and Eliphas Levi, and culminates in the occult revivals in the Nineteen Twenties and has been enjoying surges of interest in about every other decade since. Although the tradition was originally brought from the East by Jewish wandering tribes, there is also a link with the 'Old Religion' of pre-Christian Europe, sharing a background with the religion of Wicca (Witchcraft) whose adherents hold an uneasy peace with magicians.

To undertake a magical ritual in its simplest form, three basic steps are taken. First, some sort of non-physical entity must be *visualised*, that is, made to take shape by the exercise of the imagination. It must secondly be allowed by some means to *possess* the magician. Thirdly, it must be expelled in the direction of the magician's *intention*.

These three steps hold important parallels with the creative process that goes into a performance. The 'visualisation' represents the artist's training of his/her

imaginative faculties combined with skill with materials to pursue a coherent live theme, comparable to a painter's 'inspiration' or an actor's 'character'. The 'possession' is the creative climax, the point at which the artist's vision is consummated. The 'intention' is what the public walks away with at the end. There can also be more mundane artistic intentions, such as recognition or financial gain, as with the lower-grade magical ritual.

Looking at these steps in detail, what exactly are the things to be visualised and how does the magician do it? The various entities come in a whole variety of categories and sub-groups that would be tedious to go into. They start at elementals (nature spirits) and go up through a scale of angels, archangels, demons, gods and goddesses. Where do they come from? They are all dredged from a common mythology of symbol, superstition, and early interpretations of things not then understood by science. They are our own creation in a sense, but none the less powerful for that, recorded as they are throughout the ages in parts of what some psychologists call the collective unconscious and to which occultists refer as the Astral planes. But particular entities, or impressions of entities have been reinforced since medieval times by the simple fact of Western Tradition magicians consorting with them as a matter of regularity, in an unbroken chain of occult tradition. Although many magicians would deny this, the number of demons inhabiting the astral planes in occult literature seems largely due, by this principle, to the occultists' insatiable curiosity in raising them. But whatever the entity, this unbroken chain of magical activity has had the effect of strengthening the current that powers their existence.

How do magicians summon them up? The deliberate technique of visualisation, long before s/he attempts a ritual, literally systematically trains the mind to imagine first simple shapes, then colours, then sounds, then animals, landscapes etc., until any image can be summoned up at will. Magicians stress that these images should never be allowed to appear by chance, unasked, as control when dealing with these areas of the mind is paramount. As with artists who cease to draw a line somewhere between their lives and work,



Astrologer (16th c woodcut)

there are risks to be guarded against.

Once able to visualise, the magician then uses one of the systems of keys or codes that have been worked out over the ages to make magical life easier, and which are generally based on the Kabbala, or Tree of Life, ostensibly a diagram, which acts as a kind of Ordnance Survey of the astral planes. Using them, the power of visualisation combined with the colours, ritual words, and correspondences given, the magician is able to guide him/herself through the various magical thresholds and confront the erstwhile inhabitants of the astral world.



Tree of Life

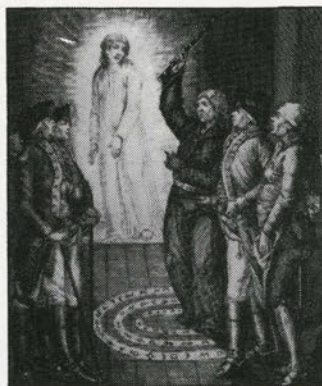
The systems for doing all this, with the actual ritual terms, are all freely available in the occult literature. They basically involve finding an appropriate place to do the ritual, using astrological tables to find the right time to do it, and making sure everything used (magical sword, wand, incense, etc.) bears the correct correspondence to the ritual intention, and is appropriately consecrated for magical use.

Surrounded by the appropriate accoutrements, tools, robes, unguents etc, a carefully prescribed ritual is performed, involving the drawing and magical sealing of a circle, the making of the various stations, (points of the compass) and the ritual visiting and invoking of various entities belonging to those stations, using a combination of the learnt skill of visualisation, some amount of preparation, including fasting and the 'taking of wine and strange drugs' if desired, and finally the Words of Power, as set down in the age-old writings. After all this, if we take the testimony of numerous ritual magicians at their word, the celebrant will be sharing the circle with a full-blown entity of the correct kind. If it is not the correct kind, it has to be sent away immediately, using various banishing rituals, and this is the point when demons and other unwelcome visitors tend to step into the picture.

Here too, is the point at which the occultists divide into different camps, sometimes known as Right and Left-hand path Magic. The various disputes that concern these two areas are extraordinarily similar to those in the art world. Generally, the idea is to accuse the other magician of keeping the wrong sort of company in the circle by referring to him/her as a Black

Magician, or worse still, guilty of trading with what is known as the Qliphoth, an astral colony of lost souls who hang about magical thresholds, and are all too ready to snare the weak or ill-intentioned into magical ruin. Demons also do this, but it is considered a test of strength for the higher grade of magician to do battle and eventually 'bind' these, thus being in a position to safely consort with them. But the real dividing point comes when it is time to 'work up' into a state of ecstasy where the entity will possess the magician and then be cast out into the world to do his/her will. How this is achieved tends to condition the magician's standing in the occult world. Right-hand-path adherents tend to favour breathing exercises, chanting, and yoga. These represent the more establishment end of the occult world, encompassing Theosophy and the more orthodox aspects of the Golden Dawn (of which more later). The left-hand-path adepts, being less encumbered by taboo, go for ritual sex and drugs to achieve the possession. Aleister Crowley favoured both these methods, in vast quantities, and when he refers to *Magick* in his writings, he means sexual magic. This tantric aspect of magical practice, long kept hidden for obvious reasons of medieval and later Christian morality, has largely contributed to a certain forbidden glamour which surrounds any discussion of the subject, in some cases blown up out of all proportion.

Whatever the method used at this point, the idea is to visualise the entity standing behind the magician, then, without looking back, to imagine it towering over the circle and eventually enveloping the participant(s). It is almost simultaneously then expelled into the world to do its' work, whether it be for good, evil or indifferent. Whatever the intention, magicians are unanimous on one thing — that if done properly, it works. (The circle is closed and any other spiritual forms assembled dismissed. There are many stories of untoward phenomena taking place on sites of a ritual that has not been closed down correctly.)



Lorenz Flammenberg's Evocation (1799)

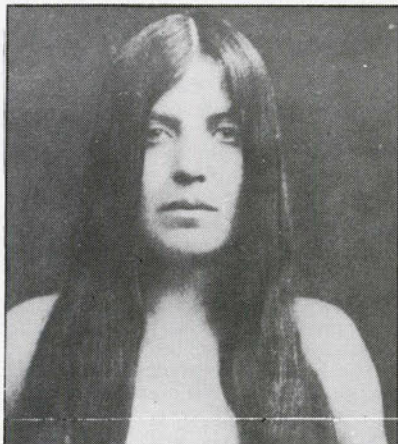
'It is said that in the 'twenties a magical lodge in Hampstead created an artificial elemental which they hoped would disrupt a rival fraternity newly established in the neighbourhood. But someone

tipped off the intended victims who promptly held a meeting at which the aggressor was sent back to where it came from. Meanwhile the original Hampstead group, fully confident of their success, were sipping tea in their sanctuary when in burst the turncoat elemental. Pandemonium broke out at once; tea-cups were hurled in the air by invisible hands, sandwiches flung across the room and an ivory Buddha sent crashing through a gilt-framed portrait of Mme Blavatsky. From that day forth no member of the group could escape the attentions that each had played a part in creating. It was described as looking like a giant sea anemone equipped with spindly legs, and for the next few weeks it was to haunt members at their work, in their homes and even in their beds where it once tried to envelop a lady adept in its gelatinous embrace. This may sound very far-fetched and, indeed, the whole thing may be attributable to collective delusion, but I do know that only after due and lengthy ceremony was the creature finally got rid of.' David Conway.



Flying table in presence of medium

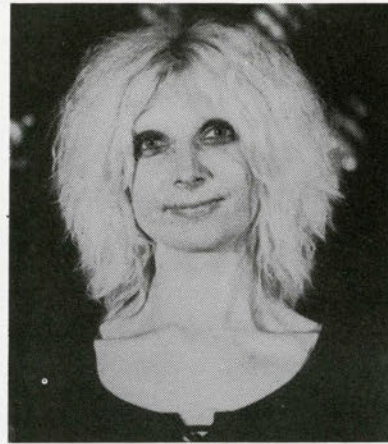
The social organisation of the occult world seems to be a quite dominant subject in occult literature. Until the early twentieth century, magical lodges were shadowy affairs, having gone underground since the late medieval times when the practitioners were part of politics and society. Dr John Dee and Edward Kelly operated openly for a time, as did the Illuminati and various masonic lodges in Europe. But the ways of politics and established religion prevailed, and famous magicians like Eliphas Levi were forced to disguise written magical works with meaningless mumbo-jumbo which could only be penetrated by the initiate. But when Levi died, not only was Aleister Crowley born (on the same day) but the new freedoms that marked the end of the Victorian era were allowing hitherto taboo fields to blossom, with Samuel McGregor Mathers to found the Golden Dawn and Madame Blavatsky Theosophy. These organisations became almost fashionable in the 1910s and 20s, with many illustrious members including artists, musicians and poets of the era (Yeats, Isadora Duncan etc.) Magical lodges, which previously conveyed occult systems under draconian conditions of secrecy, their methods revealed only under oath and after fearsome initiations, flourished. At least as far as the outer



Lelia Waddell



Welfare State



Jill Bruce

orders were concerned. For they were, and probably still are, strictly hierarchical, with aspirants passing through various grades (acolyte, neophyte, zealator, adeptus, magus etc.) and ending up with the so-called 'Secret Chiefs' who were held to be not in human form. It was the hidden identity of these 'Secret Chiefs' that caused the many rifts and fracas between the rival lodges and which enabled the colourful aspirant Crowley to dislodge the equally colourful McGregor Mathers, with much of the mud flying in the law courts and the popular press. A number of people also seriously believed that political events were affected by the actions of the various occult groups, with conspiracy theories rampant around the period of the First World War and beyond. This exaggerated sense of world-importance still survives today in occult writing, with books written as late as the fifties talking seriously about the Secret Chiefs being a kind of 'World Police Force' and solemnly informing the reader of Scotland Yards' concern with the attempts of 'misguided occult lodges to disrupt society as we know it. The events of this twenties revival indeed affected the development of the occult world as is evident today. When Crowley broke up the Golden Dawn, the movement in Britain and America split up into lodges that were either following what is known as the '93 current', of Magick following on from Crowley, (Kenneth Grant, Israel Regardie and many others) or were carrying on from the 'White Magic' of the Theosophists (Dion Fortune, Alice Bailey, and currently Gareth Knight). The '93 Current' has a further radical left wing which is quite active at the moment in the North of England, making contact with Pagan Groups, becoming involved in the anti-nuclear movement, and doing open battle with the upsurge of 'born again' Christians.

Which calls for a quick note on the politics of the occultists. Like Performance Artists, they have been all too often forced into the realisation that acting in a repressive society the very nature of their work and the unconventionalism that surrounds it, means that their actions are by definition political. The fact that they are

dealing with the nature of Power has meant in the past that some occultists have been branded as being extremely right-wing, and the supposed connection between Adolf Hitler and some sort of occult symbolism has re-inforced this. (In fact the Nazis in Germany and the Fascists in Italy proscribed all occult lodges and organisations, as Crowley found to his cost when he was kicked out of his Abbey at Cefalu). It is true that some occult writers have espoused such ideas about the 'True Will' and the hierarchical nature of the universe that have made them sound like right-wing loonies. But in many cases this has been due to problems of language and the class-ridden society in which they operated. (Like most artists, poets and writers of the period, they came from the leisured upper classes). And certainly, developments by magicians in the late seventies such as I have described indicate a movement away from this. Also crucial is the attitude to sexuality, particularly on the part of Aleister Crowley, with his many 'Scarlet Women'. The following quotation shows the ambiguity of his utterances, and in a way provides an insight into his real attitude to women.

'Cyril Grey (Alias A.C.) had once said, speaking at a Women's Suffrage Meeting: 'Woman has no soul, only sex, no morals, only moods; her mind is mob-rule; therefore she, and she only ought to Vote'. He had sat down amid a storm of hisses...'

This could be taken two ways: firstly as a typical Crowley provocation; but also as an indication of his view of women as priestesses, as his occult superiors in the Old Religion that worshipped a Goddess, as opposed to the male God. Filtered through the vestiges of Victorian hypocrisy, his bullish, egotistical outward character perhaps sheltered a genuine respect for women as mistresses of their own and the world's destiny. At least, so claim his supporters today, but he covered his traces so effectively with his flamboyance that it is almost impossible to make an accurate judgement of his sexual politics.

Finally we come to the area of performance artists whose work could be said to be magical rituals, as opposed to being about, or based on them. Here we have a

wide and varied field, with performance artists adopting shamanistic roles (Joseph Beuys) and undergoing initiation rites (The Vienna School, Gina Pane, Stuart Brisley, Kerry Trengrove). But many of these are concerned more with pure ritual *behaviour* rather than adopting systems of ritual magic. Some American artists such as Steven Seemayer, who among activities such as carrying a large cross on his back a video image of the Pope in the centre, have devised specific performance rituals, such as the following:

'A small triangular building was constructed. The building was black with a black cloth veil draped around it. On each side of the building a video monitor was inset into the wall. The three monitors carried the image of the artists face as he whispered then screamed out a command. Nine people dressed in white with microphones strapped to their mouths stood around the black building in silence. When the image of the artist appeared on the screen the nine people got down on their hands and knees plugged in their face mikes into outlets on the building and began to pray. Their prayers consisted of repeating the artists social number 559802364. As the artist's command was blurted out the nine people bowed and prayed. The prayer and command started slowly then quickly built up in to a frenzy within a few minutes. A high peak was reached, and the nine people ripped their face mike plugs out of the wall and began to whip themselves slowly and methodically. The video screens were washed in red and the nine people stood up and stared at the black building in silence.'

A contemporary ritual where, appropriately, the technique of visualisation is undertaken by electronic means where technology takes place of occult powers. Occult, it should be remembered, simply means *hidden*, and we have now entered an era where science is finally having to come to terms with forces previously held to be in the realms of magic. Modern magicians themselves now hold this view of their future obsolescence. But in Britain there are at least two sets of performers whose ritual work is firmly placed in the minimum technology post-industrial era. These are Welfare State (and their spin-off

IOU) and Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce. Welfare State construct their own rituals out of the spirit of animism, making giant fetish-objects and totems. They deal with seasonal motifs, but also with the contradictory symbols of life and death, good and evil. Things are shaken on the ends of sticks, and fertility symbols and corn goddesses are the subjects of ritual chants and allegory. Their yearly burning down of the Houses of Parliament is a symbolic exorcism, reminiscent of the late sixties circling of anti-war protestors around the Pentagon to chant 'Out Demons Out'. (In 'Illuminatus', the fantasy is that the Lovecraft demon Yog-Sothoth is locked within the five walls of the Pentagon). Welfare State deal primarily in *atmosphere*, an important aspect of performance that is shared with magical ritual, but invent their deities and magical workings. Resonant as they may be, their rites seem strictly invented, with only a mildly anthropological basis. Their work is a mixture of folkloric invocation and the artists' strong imagination.

Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce deal less with atmosphere and heavy symbolism than with a hard-working celebration of the elements. They research their work carefully from astrological and geomantic sources, and though some of their rites are commissioned to take place at specific places, (such as the Acme Gallery recently) a lot take place on spots and at times of their particular choosing. Although they, too, invent the form of the rituals, there are strong links with Paganism in their work, which, like Publick Spirit, has attracted the attentions of practising occultists. Although their rituals are as carefully worked out and taken as seriously as those of magicians they stress that their aims are more celebratory rather than that of trying to achieve a magical intention or practise a particular magical discipline. In this way, it could be said that they have more in common with the Wicca.

(An interesting point is the relationship between Magic and Witchcraft, which echoes strongly the relationship between Art and Craft. Magic is done indoors, often alone, and involves a precise science. Witches mainly work outdoors, in isolated

places, and their rites tend more to worship of an entity materialised by use of music, chanting, and the sheer force of numbers. One of the things they share with magicians, of course, is a history of religious and political persecution.) The Laceys work privately as well as publicly, but they are always seen at the big rural fairs and post-hippy craft festivals that sprout up during the summer, where their rituals have become so integrated with this circuit that they perform a new age religious function, reminding participants of their links with the earth and the elements. Even so, they retain a link with the London artworld, exhibiting at the Serpentine, causing a gentle outrage over displayed horse-shit and even being on the front cover of Artscribe.

A final anecdote takes us back over ten years to Hornsey Art College just after the sit-ins. A student called Ian Munro prepared his final diploma show. He sealed off a space in the gallery carefully with screens, and hung occult symbols and charts in the area. In the morning of the day he was to be assessed, he entered the sealed off space, constructed a magical circle, and proceeded to undertake a long kabbalistic ritual, it's intention aimed at the future of the college. He finished the rite shortly before the party of tutors arrived, closed the circle, sealed off the space so that no-one could enter, and left the building. The following events took place. When he returned the following day the exhibition had been defaced, almost ritually disfigured during the night. The tutors announced that they were neither able to pass nor fail him in his diploma. A few days later, it was announced that Hornsey Art School would lose its name and identity and become a wing of Middlesex Polytechnic. This little tale is not offered as evidence of anything, but simply as a pointer to the fact that, where Magic is involved, every event seems to become significant. In Live Art also every event becomes significant and the artist does not set criteria based on normal systems of belief and judgement. It is simply that where coincidence is combined with the force of the artist's imaginative will, events roughly compatible with

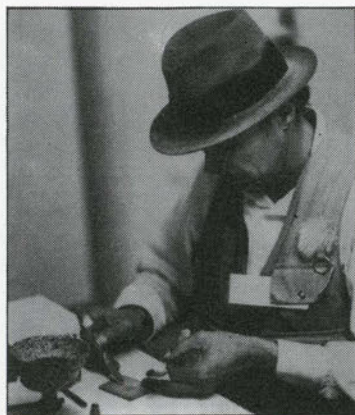
reality are created.

Magic and Art seem to have this in common: they are both concerned with the dynamic linking of the artist or adept's physical functions with a deep-rooted consciousness of will. Both disciplines have various systems for doing this; both involve a certain amount of risk. The practice of magic brings the participants up against a number of social taboos, and often against the paranoia of other occultists — leading to the murky goings on that have given Magic a bad name. Artists, especially performance artists, run the risk of falling foul of this or that critical standpoint of categorization by art historians, and of being used as a public symbol of the avant-garde by the art establishment — and then having to endure being a scapegoat in any anti-art backlash. Magicians raise and bind demons from the recesses of their own soul — artists raise and bind them from the collective madness of the public. The problem is: demons don't hang well in galleries, or sit still in theatres, but manifest themselves as lingering doubts about the true nature of experience and perception.

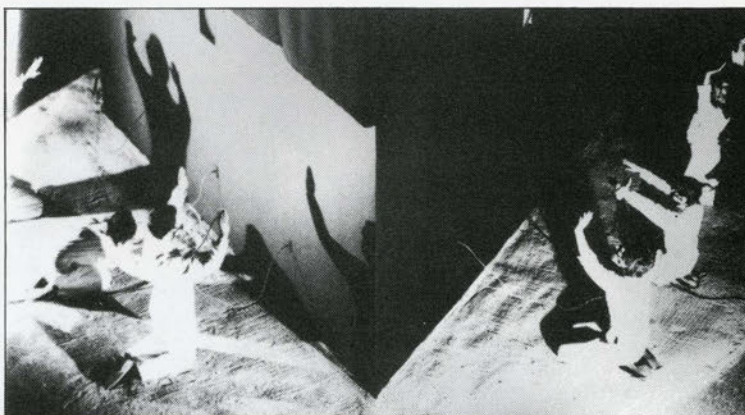
Rob La Frenais

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Joseph Beuys



Steven Seemayer's 'Meccanization' 1980

ReviewsReviewsReviews

Crystal Theatre New End

The most stunning Alternative show I ever saw was at De Lantaren in Rotterdam in 1974: Crystal Theatre's 'Yeti'. If ever a production fulfilled André Breton's dictum 'The Beautiful is what is bizarre' this was it, a work at once grandiose, comic, and hypnotic, deploying a dazzling slide show and other potent visual effects to create an authentic visionary experience.

And now the Bristol-based company are celebrating their 10th Anniversary with 'The Protector', a new touring piece about Cromwell and the English Civil War, co-written by long-time Crystal Theatre regulars Paul B. Davies (who also acts and directs) and John Schofield (who acts, co-designed the ingenious set and is a dab hand on percussion).

Rows of blank-faced puppet schoolboys sit facing us across the auditorium, joined, as the show begins, by the cast of six men and one woman playing a bunch of loutish schoolkids messing about during a tedious lesson in English history imparted by a prissy teacher in gown and mortar board. The music-hall spirit of Will Hay presently gives way to another familiar English strain, that of Sellar and Yeatman's '1066 and All That', when the kids themselves don period costumes (still retaining their absurd short trousers and ties) to act out for us a cod version of the Civil conflict between Royalists and Puritans. The principle of grown-up actors impersonating schoolkids impersonating historical figures is a droll one (one's tempted to call it a jolly good wheeze) and the liberal use of puppets, courtesy of Forkbeard Fantasy, further reinforces the notion of English history as a grotesque charade performed by dolts with unsightly hairy legs.

When, at half time, Cromwell gets round to announcing the closure of all the theatres, the New End auditorium is itself

declared closed and the audience cursorily ordered to leave during the Interval. A Roundhead musketeer urges slow movers on with the muttered imprecation 'It's a theatrical device! It's a theatrical device!'

But, come to think of it, the whole show is a series of theatrical devices designed to render more digestible a pretty intractable text. Crystal Theatre are good at such devices: the puppet schoolboys revolve on their benches to become a grisly-faced 17th Century parliament; a messenger with news of alarms from Ireland 'swims' on and off on a low trolley; Queen Henrietta Maria wears an immense picturesque wig; a cleric emerges from beneath her dress to join another in a dead-pan disco-rock dance; a couple of speeches are given the over-alliterative treatment. And our wily authors are not above a bit of self plagiarism: a relay of tense conspiratorial encounters is lifted direct from a previous Crystal show — though admittedly I enjoyed seeing it again.

The text itself is, so to speak, another story. Much of it seems to derive from authentic period documentation, which makes it tiresomely hard to follow. I don't think the authors mean the text to be quite so dense and juiceless. But, as it turns out, the knotty period prose tends to unroll as mere texture without touching the mind or feelings, while the eye finds relief and diversion in a succession of visual gags and special effects. An over-intricate text, offered in a spirit of visual relief from its linguistic demands is, however, the rather unsatisfactory keynote of this production.

After Charles I has been amusingly executed in Punch-and-Judy style, the cast re-emerge in their schoolkid togs and fall into a heated 'impromptu' political row, presumably intended to show that argument about the democratic process is still going on, to little avail.

But despite this nod in the direction of our own times, and the company's engaging humour, the envoy awkwardly serves

only to point up what the production fails to do: it fails to invest the intricate story of the English Civil War with any resonance for our own ragged end-of-term era. History remains embalmed, burlesqued, but not illuminated, which is what perhaps we have a right to expect of a company which once called itself 'Crystal Theatre of the Saint'. In the end all I learned is that the naked male leg, protruding from short trousers, is a gruesome sight. And that is ancient history. The one female member of the cast, by the way, has a speaking voice as striking as her name, Teri Bramah, and is woefully under-used. **Neil Hornick**

Mother's Arms

Royal Court Theatre Upstairs

Mother's Arms — embracing, warm and strong. Mother's arms — loaded with lethal bullets.

Natasha Morgan, Jenny Carey and Trevor Allan weave around one another, crossing time, place and role again and again, creating a multi-layered, multi-textured fabric from the diverse threads of women's lives as mothers, daughters and wives.

'I want the freedom to be myself' the woman says despairingly to 'Mr Big', her husband/son/father. But who is that self? She doesn't know. A woman is someone's mum, someone else's old lady, someone else's little girl. Whatever name she is given or takes, it isn't her own, she cannot even take that of her mother — whose name is *her* father's. So who is she?

She examines the family photo album, seeking clues, evidence, proof of her identity. There she is, smiling with her aunt on the beach. Did she spend her childhood smiling — happy? Probably not. There she is again in a neat dress and clean white socks. Did she always wear 'best' clothes? Probably not. She looks up from the photographs, bemused, 'To look at this album you would think I spent my whole life in a bathing suit' she says.

Natasha Morgan's loose narrative encourages an unusual form of participation — that of reverie and the re-interpretation of offered images with personal memories and sorrows — is that why you were so angry mum? Did you want more from your life than to be dad's wife and my mum? Your fury wasn't that I picked up books and flew but only that your wings were clipped and the sky was forever beyond your reach. Now, only now, I know you weren't insane. Just mad... at the world.

Motherhood is an impossible state in an impossibly unheeding, incomprehending state, whose children and institutions pretend that mothers' madness is that of weakness, not of frustration born of those children and those institutions. We look at our mothers and try not to see how they feel. We hope their madness won't show, that no one else will notice. But the costs are there to see in the national drug bill, in



Crystal Theatre's 'The Protector'



Natasha Morgan in 'Mother's Arms'

the brains atrophying over shopping lists and part-time production lines, and the haunted eyes of lost women.

The small dramas and enormous burdens of motherhood are played out in a shadowy, lace hung room. Is it granny's? Is it aunty's seaside villa? Is it one's own fashionable decay, a feminine heritage purchased down Portobello market? It doesn't matter, what does are the evocations of lives and puzzles lost and gone forever that echo through this thoughtful and thought provoking work. **Diana Simmonds**

Dog beneath the Skin Half Moon

Written in 1936, W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood's verse drama is like an aesthete's News of the World — all human life is there — and indeed it's roving panoramic action coursing through pre-war Europe has very much the 'look at life' approach of a Pathé news reel.

The plot is simple — Alan Norman is invited by his village to search for it's baronet, missing for ten years. Through the tottering European states of Ostria and Westland journeys Alan and his adopted dog, encountering the decadent delights of

the Red Light District, the deadbeat artists ghetto of Paradise Park and the seductive comforts of the Nineveh Hotel and it's obscene carpet. Embroiled in the illusory charms of the Starlet, Miss Vipond, he is rescued by Sir Francis who has been with him concealed as his doggy companion throughout the whole trip. Returning to their village, they discover a burgeoning rightist youth movement within the community and, denouncing the hypocrisy he has observed for ten years, Sir Francis renounces his inheritance and leaves with Alan to join 'the army of the other side'.

A journey leading to knowledge is a classic device to sustain a viewpoint on a society. Kerouac's 'On the Road', Hopper's 'Easy Rider' and most recently Chris Petit's 'Radio On' are some post-war examples and today's audience will possibly be more accustomed to the episodic treatment that structures the play. Couched within this seemingly contemporary format, however, are the British intellectual concerns of the Thirties. There is the reaction against the writers of the Twenties such as Eliot, Joyce and Yeats, 'the cultured expatriates with a leaning towards the Church' as Orwell describes them. The deeply personalised view point

is rejected as being an acceptance of a closeted, collapsing Europe, eaten away by a crisis ridden capitalism and besieged by a developing fascist solution. Communist sympathies were fashionable, indeed essential, for a young intellectual. The conservatism of the Twenties writers with their moral-religious-cultural concerns had given way to a defined leftist stance as 'the prophetic side of Marxism showed new possibilities for poetry' (Orwell again). Here, however, the didacticism is concealed within a satire in which no quarter is given. The Church, the musical comedy, cabaret, the Press, big business, British class interests, European politics are all lashed without mercy by the authors' collective tongue.

So how does this piece come over, forty five years after its first performance? An ad-hoc company, Desert Theatre, has collaborated with the Half Moon to present Auden and Isherwood's well known but never seen play (and hopefully at some later date their two other pieces, 'On The Frontier' and 'The Ascent of F.6'). The dusty, sparse atmosphere of the Half Moon, adorned with minimum of set proves an appropriate setting in sympathy with a spirit of Thirties desolation. The full thrust playing area draws the performers out so that they play against a backdrop of audience, giving a strong focus on the humanity of the action. Director Julian Sands has done a fine job by sensitively editing this enormously long and rich play into a workable show. The density of the prose and poetry with set piece choruses and large numbers of characters, entailing much doubling by the performers, presents a formidable task and this young company works hard to rise to the challenge. At times, however, they seem overwhelmed by the undertaking and have difficulty gauging characteristics and dynamics so that choruses become too animated and characters too cool. Tim Potter, as alternately the Vicar, King, lunatic, Grabstein and Madame Bubbi performs well, balancing caricature with naturalism, as does Yvonne Howgill as the Curate and Manageress. Richard Jobson gives a fine cabaret cameo as Destructive Desmond. **Phil Hyde**

Impact Theatre Almeida

From Chekhov and children's shows to the more arcane reaches of the Dance Umbrella, how well so many shows looked during the autumn season at Islington's new Almeida theatre, and what a versatile space they proved this to be. With improved facilities front of house, hired and comfortable seating made for adult back-sides (previously we had had to make do with school issue) and a busy programme logistically a little more feasible than that devised before, nearly six weeks of events threw up many pleasures. Comparison with Peter Brook's theatre in Paris was often made (see also Yoshi Oida elsewhere in this issue) and what better location than



Impact Theatre

this Bouffes du Nord London could there have been for Impact Theatre's *hommage* to all that is French, 'The Undersea World of Eric Satie'? The physical structure, with its exposed brick, cast iron pillars and bare boards, proved an equally appropriate setting for Impact's latest 'self-devised adult touring show', 'Dammerungstrasse 55'.

The Satie show has toured long and hard since we reviewed it in these columns a year ago and its success has shown Impact to be amongst the most interesting of current visual theatre groups. Stylistically and thematically 'Dammerungstrasse 55' reverberates with many echoes of its predecessor and confirms that promise. The French cafe setting is transposed to a German railway station, a pervading sense of ennui is punctuated by searing visual images; a particular country and a particular time (previously *fin de siècle* France, in this case Weimar Germany) is encapsulated with at once great accuracy and jarring but illuminating anachronisms; cod French becomes cod German; a tape montage, at times directly controlled from on stage, with the omnipresent noise of trains and the sounds of battle growing from the sounds of violence in the station, plays throughout.

What we see is the interior of a railway station. A face appears at the window. Inside a figure slouches on a table. Outside a man with welding gear attempts to break in. A black guy enters; the welder follows, pulling down the balaclava that has been hiding his face to reveal a lighted cigarette. The place is a furtive centre for black market intrigue where anything (spoons, harmonicas) can be legal tender — anything that is except money. The atmosphere is one of threat and destruction, fire the dominant visual motif — ceilings dissolve and drip with flame, tables are set alight, photographs of loved ones are destroyed with a match.

The most striking scenes are set not in the station itself but in the false perspective of a small back room that is from time to time revealed between sliding panels in the back wall. One such scene, a choreo-

graphed sequence of unnatural movements and poses that characterise the newsreels of the time, gives a very precise feeling of period. Another is the emblematic key to the piece and comes towards the very end. The persecuted outcast of the station waiting room, a figure of ridicule and fun through all that has gone before, is revealed as a naked Auschwitz victim, huddled in the corner of the bleak distorted room. The audience that has been a party to his ridicule is now a guilty witness of his final humiliation. Impact being interested in exploring the language and imagery of cliché, it is a liberating GI who gives the victim succour. Back in the station a journalist bashes out his words on an old typewriter: 'they create dissolution and call it peace'. At the window another face appears.

This is a show dense with ideas, punctuated by visually astounding sequences if strung out with some unfortunate longeurs and little overall rhythm or precision. But these are pardonable faults in the face of a work so intelligent, disturbing, visually imaginative and funny as this, and it was early in its tour when it came into the Almeida. Life on the road will tighten things up. **Luke Dixon**

Incubus Theatrespace

'What, tell that bloated voyeuristic rabble of onanistic scum?' What is to be told, but never eventually revealed is the final secret of the 'Revenge's Comedy', the current touring performance by Incubus Theatre; the scum is the audience. Or to be more precise, one suspects, the London audience. Not to suggest that these words are changed for the redneck country of East Anglia or the scrumpy-enlivened audiences of the West (to select a few urban prejudices at random), but there is the distinct impression that the venom in the words of the narrator and character of Manipulo, Paddy Fletcher, is aimed in a rather more metropolitan direction. Incubus's modus, which stands it in good stead in places slightly more backwoods

than Covent Garden, is that of the raunchy, belly-laughing codpiece humour that does not always blend well with the Londoner's jaded introspection. This tends to rebel against such Rabelaisian jollity, and the night I saw the show the audience was not quite so wont to split its sides with the incontinent hysteria as is often the case elsewhere.

Which was useful, because it gave me the space to find some genuinely funny and even, dare I say, intellectual stimulation in Paddy Fletcher's self admitted 'clash of iambic pentameters and trivialised super-ealism'. It was also interesting to note Incubus's change of style over the last few years. First of all, it has ceased to be 'underground theatre' peopled with characters chosen more for their bizarre appearance than their ability to perform efficiently and with versatility. I'm not sure whether that is an advance or not, but it must certainly make it easier to work after thirteen years on the road. Secondly, Paddy Fletcher who promises us 'I'll be ruthless, I'll be evil but I'll never be a bore' has in fact shed some of the warty porridgen skin, stopped rolling his eyes, stopped trying to out-drool everyone within farting distance, and in short has toned down his act. People who work outdoors a lot do have this problem about four walls and Fletcher seems to have finally come to terms with it. This means that there is some balance between the performers which means that the words can be listened to, and also the plot, which, if you hold on tightly to its many protrusions, can actually be followed as it hurtles, dragging you on its labyrinthine way to the conclusion of this revengeful renaissance romp.

'Corpses wall to wall' is the name of the Jacobean game, and motiveless slaying the genre, as with that other well known Italianate stabberama, The Borgias (its simultaneity apparently coincidental.) The motives are certainly as thin on the ground as that for the assorted brotherly slaps on the back with a dagger in the TV series; where the vaguest whiff of incest powers the recurring cloak-concealed twitch in the lower arm of Cesare Borgia; in the Incubus show, (where incest is the only permitted relationship), Manipulo did it all because of an 'unhappy childhood'. This included being sired by a Nazi-tortured GI and a Countess who remains bricked-up in the walls of Castle Sepulcro, being cast out on birth by the Count on a hillside in a cardboard box to spend his lifetime plotting Revenge. Enter the same GI forty years later accompanied by his wife Lavern (ex-Cunning Stunt Mandy Travis) and their homicidal offspring Dennis, for a package holiday at Castle Sepulcro, now run by the Count and his daughter Nubilissima, who is not the only one to have three nipples... Suffice it to say that everyone at Castle Sepulcro either ends up floating face-down in the 'swimming pool' or ends up roaming the corridors howling for 'Revenge', which, if you had not already guessed, is a rather dominant theme in the proceedings.

Typical knockabout fringe frolics, some

might say, and perhaps it was. But its multi-layered, always precise comic dialogue managed to pull it out of the cul-de-sac of measured outrageousness that this sort of work can typify. 'Think they'll go for it?' asks Fletcher, squinting sideways at the audience before launching into a musical Brecht/Weill parody. Incubus's rural parish certainly will. And I am not entirely acting in fear of a certain sharp pressure between the shoulderblades applied by the abovementioned protagonist when I say that I, too, sort of went for it.

Rob La Frenais

Pack of Women Drill Hall

Rosalind Asquith, *City Limits* theatre critic, remarked recently 'If I read one more time that something or other "dispels the myth of the humourless feminist" I'm going to scream'. This was said through clenched teeth without pre-menstrual tension.

The 'humourless feminist' is a woman who does not find traditional male defined humour tit-crushingly funny. She doesn't break up over mother-in-law jokes; she can't crack a smile for Ivor-Biggun-ripper-rape skits; in short, finding herself the butt of uncountable two-liners in every medium has the humourless feminist not so much rolling in the aisles as walking rapidly up them towards the exit.

Which is why the cabaret show *Pack of Women* has been playing to capacity houses since opening. It is a mixture of song, poetry and prose of rare richness and breadth. Indeed, it's the variety and scope that sets it apart from other examples of the feminist-middle-of-the-road-sophisticated revue style such as the recent 'Female Trouble' and Sadista Sister shows. A style which sets out for the mainstream West End audience, in search of the unconverted who would normally be scared shitless by the prospect of 'feminist entertainment'.

However, the trap of offering nothing new to the faithful is avoided in *Pack of Women* by the use of a startling diversity of sources and styles and the juxtaposition and up-ending of the familiar. Never in the cause of laughter and tears has so much been hurled at so many by so few with such affection.

Robyn Archer, Margo Random and Jane Wood are perfect specimens of the humourless feminist. They (and director Pam Brighton) contrive between them to produce a roller-coaster ride through the condition and history of women which moves at applause defying speed. From broad ribaldry to exquisite delicacy, to understated menace to lubricious sexiness to utter utter tragedy... the show is informed by rage and laughter — great dollops of it.

Singling out individual items from the 60-plus is to risk misrepresentation, nevertheless: Margo Random has a tremulously beautiful voice that tears the heart with 'Nobody Sings', a wailing lament to a body growing old but not leaving bodily desires

behind. She also struts her red satin stuff with Dolly Parton's '9 to 5' and, given a green spotlight, makes a droll toad prince to Jane Wood's opportunistic princess.

Jane Wood, an English actress, has the tough task of threading the prose into this exuberant show, which she does with passion and finesse, from Charlotte Bronte to Alexandra Kollontai. She also uses her small singing voice to no mean effect in a wry exposition of female anonymity: even when he's a has-been and she's writing the songs, she's still 'The Wife Of A Rock 'n' Roll Star'.

Which leaves the very humourless Australian, Robyn Archer. Whether exploring the minor keys of Brecht/Weill; raising female morale, the rafters and Fleet Street critics' eyebrows with the stomping rudeness of her own 'Menstruation Blues' and 'Good Old Double Standard', or la-la-ing wickedly as she gives an outgrown lover the boot in 'Movin' Out Today', Robyn displays a talent to haunt and entrance. Shimmering through the delights of lesbianism 'The Old Soft Screw' — such raunchy bravado, soft shoe shuffle seduction (oh do — oh do — oh do me — oh do me — oh do...!) prove irresistible to all persuasions and gender combinations. She is an everyday, down to earth, no nonsense genius, and no mistake.

Diana Simmonds

Rational Theatre Theatrespace

Ever been alone in a strange town? Ended up as the solitary customer in an unfamiliar Indian restaurant? Ordered a meal that seems destined never to materialize? Wondered where on earth you are? Has the waiter forgotten you? Remembered Bishop Berkley and mournfully decided that your existence has ceased? Fallen into

even deeper and more melancholic musings?

'Chicken Tikka' glows with the glimmer of recognition as occurrences and conundrums unravel in one such Curry Mahal. But... things are not as they seem to be. Peter Godfrey's Rational Theatre steps comfortably into a tradition that coolly examines everyday experience, elevating this notion to an axiom. There is a full catalogue of artists within 20th century Europe but Rational Theatre's most recent peers are, like themselves, definitively English — Stoppard, Pinter, Fowles, even Lewis Carroll — the common denominator being mystery. In an alliterative mood, Rational Theatre add murder and metaphysics.

Eddie Monza has an accident (fatal?) and surfaces in the quintessential High St. curry house. A nurse (waitress?) dissects a chicken and withdraws to the kitchen. A fellow customer erupts through the top of his adjacent table and conducts a solo doll's tea party. The waitress (hostess?) reappears to take his order but Eddie's off his food. A Mr. Miller (bandleader?) rouses himself at the bar to share some thoughts with Eddie until the hostess (maid?) returns. It is clear that Eddie has landed up in the nether regions where the ind. rest. has been pressed into service as a clearing house cum waiting room for hapless souls. The four square orderliness of the everyday world having fallen by the wayside, the situation evolves quite naturally (naturally?) but at the expense of Eddie's only too mundane nerve. The dumb waiter brings life size Cluedo counters, his two fellow customers come and go, hours (days?) go by, his order is continually requested by the maid (la patronne?) until he finally goes berserk in an attempt to beat the situation at it's own game. At last, in a really stunning moment,

George Yiasoumi: Chicken Tikka



the wall of the restaurant falls on him as it does on Buster Keaton in 'Steam Boat Bill Jr.', and out of the blazing white light walk surgeons to lay him, capped and gowned on the table.

There is a captivating whimsy about this piece with its marooned and rampant Glen Miller, the sly sexuality of la patronne (restauranteur?), the stentorian intrusions of the woman (child?) and punky, dead-beat Eddie. But the great weakness is that Eddie can only confront his situation as a none too bright Stepney wide boy would — with swaggering bravado degenerating into frenetic gibberish as he tries to allay the panic of his situation. Although logical within terms of the character, this doesn't make for much development of the piece's many interesting possibilities. When combined with George Yiasoumi's loose and often uninteresting portrayal of Eddie, which stood up badly against the excellently studied mannerisms of his colleagues (Cindy Oswin, Brian Lipson and Sarah Sankey), it meant that the piece's direction and interest flagged badly. Whereas Tom Stoppard can cut Rosencrantz and Guildenstern adrift in a wasteland where chance, probability and reason are all suspended but at the same time steer them into conclusive situations, Peter Godfrey can only make a virtue out of begging the question.

Phil Hyde

Cirrus Theatre Co. Old Half Moon Theatre

At first it seemed as if the Cirrus Theatre Company had set themselves too rigid a pattern, of episodic scenes punctuated by black-outs, in their recent production 'Let's Call It a Day' (Old Half Moon Theatre). The opening image set this pattern by relying on the convention of mimicking the photographic 'freeze and hold' technique, where the performers were discovered in various silent tableaux, light snapping on and off to represent the camera shutter. A good attention-seeker, which grew a little too ponderous with length. This, however, followed by a scene in which a housewife prepares breakfast for an inconsiderate 'invisible' family, made one feel that perhaps nothing new was forthcoming, either to do with women's experiences or the presentation of them. The production purported to be about 'a day where dreams come true, where fantasy becomes reality', and it wasn't until about the third scene in that this message finally hit home. A female vagrant meets with a painfully unconfident secretary on a park bench, and these two fling themselves into a full-scale circus fantasy, with some astonishing acts — real fire-eating, and superior athletic feats. The slow start was forgotten, and the extent of the group's talents, which are considerable, managed to captivate the audience throughout an escalating sequence of highly entertaining, and sometimes thought provoking material. Music and movement tended to dominate the acting, which was pinned mostly at caricature

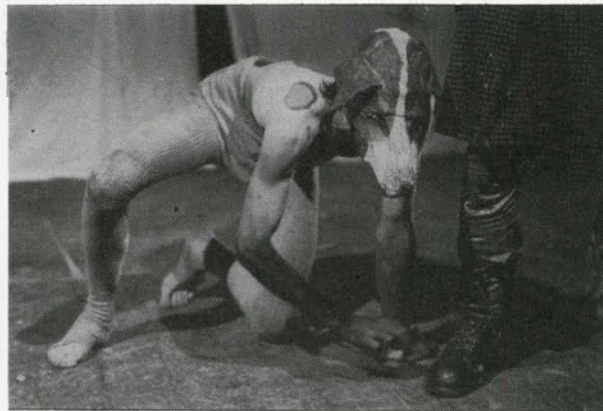
level. Margo Gordon and Cisela Bjorkland performed one of the high-points of the show, as female boss and secretary coming together in an 'office fantasy', where they quite passably sang an excerpt from 'Don Giovanni'. And Kate Bagnall's homeless tramp, with her pet steam-iron for a companion, provided the most moving moment, when she read out accounts of the murder and violation of elderly women for their pensions, from the pages of the newspapers she used to keep her warm at night. There was a relief from pre-recorded music when Jacky Taylor made a brief but welcomed appearance to play the piano.

Overall, the show proved the physical and musical abilities of the company, including Pete Moser's use of sound. The material, based on imaginative ideas, stretched at times beyond its climaxes, an inheritance perhaps of improvised beginnings. However, Rebecca Nassauer's difficult task of co-ordinating the production, did prove fruitful on many occasions and the choice of a bare setting, and inclusion of only essential props was highly successful.

Caroline Mylon

with Merseyside Play Action Council. The participants in the project had helped create the objects used in the performance, been a part of the working process that led up to it, and appeared in the resulting performance. This was an unusual departure for a company that has always assiduously avoided any involvement with work of this kind, preferring to use their skills in the creating of theatre rather than involving the community in their working process. The fact that the show was in a very embryonic state, and that much in it was unresolved presumably was the result of this process and its attendant difficulties. However, there was plenty in the piece that was of the distinctive I.O.U. style and hints that it could develop into an innovative show, breaking new ground for the company.

I.O.U. work with visual imagery and music, interweaving these two distinct strands to form a rich, dense tapestry in which there is a lyrical, slightly surreal world. The words of songs add new meaning to images and vice-versa. Puppets and masks have always been a strong



The Hunter's Dog; IOU

IOU Yorkie, Liverpool

The wind blew off the Mersey and in the clear starlit night a solitary building with a cagelike structure on its roof reared up from the wasteground. In its basement, redolent with cloves from the punch administered to the audience, an avuncular seated figure, thrice life size, narrated his memories of tales told by his old nurse. Said nurse, tall, tall, and very thin, dressed in black, brought books to his writing desk, and rocked the infant revealed in its cradle in the nursery. Whales were beached, rescued, bloodily dismembered, lessons offered in how to trap a rat, an octopus danced with fish, and a human dog and his inept master met an enormous dancing rat. Old naturalists' stories mingled with childlike fancies came to life to the accompaniment of music from the three musicians seated at the side of the stage.

'Trumpet Rats' was the result of a ten day residency in which I.O.U. Theatre Company worked with adults associated

element in I.O.U.'s theatre and in 'Trumpet Rat' they predominate. The exquisitely made figure of the narrator, bent over his desk, head nodding off to sleep, mouth perfectly synchronised with the spoken words was a puppet on the largest scale. Set to one side of the small proscenium stage was a screen on which tiny shadow puppets performed dramas parallel to or illustrative of the main action. A whale was chased across a stormy ocean by a sailing ship, captured and towed in. An elaborate rat trap was demonstrated by a couple of minute, scurrying rats. The action on the main stage contained cut-out figures, stick puppets of birds, and animal and fish head masks. The changing scales of the three playing areas, and of the objects within them — miniscule shadow rat as opposed to human size rat on stage — has been a characteristic of I.O.U.'s work since their first pieces in 1976.

Words have nearly always been confined to the songs in I.O.U.'s shows, the images unaccompanied by narration. 'Trumpet Rat' differed considerably from the bulk of previous shows in that there was a constant usage of the spoken word. Unfortunately,

the show was structured as a loose series of stories, each told by the narrator, and images and music within this structure became merely illustrative of the words. However, the stories themselves had a wryly humorous flavour, threw up extraordinary images and the words were descriptive diamonds. If the company could find a way of subtly weaving the words together with the images and music so that they became an equal part of the work, rather than so dominant that they trample on the other elements, the piece would gain immeasurably.

The pace of some of the scenes was rather shaky — the story of the killing of the whale seemed to go on for ever, and I wished the figure cutting it up could have had a power saw to hurry him up — but other moments more than compensated, especially the furry bulk of the rat nimbly stepping out to a bouncy reggae number composed by Lou Glandfield, whilst the oh-so-British hunter lit his pipe watched by his brown spotted dog. **Gillian Clark**

Rosemary Butcher

ICA

Rosemary Butcher's work of the last two years has been a series of collaborations with artists; a logical development of her interest in those aspects of dance that most closely relate to the visual arts-line, pattern and the placing of three-dimensional form in space.

'Spaces Four' which was premiered as part of the ICA's contribution to Dance Umbrella, is a silent landscape of iceberg edges in which the angularity of Heinz Dieter Pietsch's installation and the fluidity of Butcher's dancers co-exist and complement each other.

A rectangle subdivided into four was delineated by its corners. It was as though a solid structure of four adjacent cubes had blown apart leaving only the tattered corners standing on the ground. Very white against the black of the floor and lit only in its interior, it acted, not just as an inspiration for the dance, but as an adjunct to it.

Quietly, one by one, the three dancers entered. Dennis Greenwood occupied the front lefthand quarter, lying on the floor, his long body a series of curves, arms casually outstretched, knees bent. Beverly Sandwith followed, placing herself in the diagonally opposite area, and Sue MacLennan stood outside the sculpture on its dim exterior.

With the entrance of the dancers there was an immediate change in the quality of this stark space: the shapes of their bodies and the movements of their limbs contrasting and complementing the form and creating shifting spatial rhythms.

Within the structure of the sculpture and Butcher's choreography the dancers improvised. As is typical of Butcher's work the movement was soft, almost languid in its throwaway motion. However, the improvisatory nature of the dance meant that each of the dancers had more individuality

in their movement than is often seen in Butcher's dances. Although at times they fell into habitual movement patterns, at others the improvisation took the dancers into chance relationships of an intriguing nature.

The dancers explored absent surfaces, interior and exterior and the jagged, torn edges themselves, their white dressed figures delineating space and becoming moving components of the sculpture. From time to time they came together in gentle duets but were always defined as individual units in relationship to each other rather than becoming submerged in a complex grouping.

Moments stand out with sharp clarity from the dance. Sue MacLennan wrapping herself softly around an edge, curved arms enclosing the small corner. Sandwith slowly standing, one arm raised, her body precisely fitting into an angle of the sculpture. Greenwood giving a quirky twitch with his shoulders preparatory to allowing the energy to carry his arms out into space.

'Shell: Forcefields and Spaces' is the result of Butcher's collaboration with artist, Jon Groom, and was first shown at Riverside last Spring. The dance explores the directional possibilities within Groom's structure of a blue painted oval on the floor with two rectangular screens set closely together at each end. Lighting alters the colours — screens change from yellow to beige, the floor from blue through purple — and the form. A shaft of light from between the screens cuts the oval, a circular blue pool is the only thing visible when Butcher appears, after a stridently echoing trombone solo by Jim Fulkerson, to open the dance. She paces in and around the confines of the circle, one arm rapidly swinging which leads her into sharp turns and alterations of direction. Her body is upright, poised, her feet and arms establish lines, diagonals and the perimeter of the area. The following sections, with Sandwith, Greenwood and MacLennan being joined for this dance by Miranda Tufnell, extend and develop the initial solo. The light spills out to reveal the total installation and the dance unfurls in a taut design.

'Shell' was ill-served by the space at the ICA. What should be seen at a distance, as a totality, was pushed forward and so fragmented. Whenever I have seen 'Shell' previously Groom's installation has appeared as a unit, placed in a much larger space than itself, here it occupied all the available area. Similarly the choreography could not be well perceived. It was impossible to see the whole, instead single dancers, strands of movement, were taken in, as if one were trying to understand a jigsaw by looking at its pieces rather than seeing it complete. I was disappointed to find confusing a work which on previous occasions I have found to be intricate and finely constructed. The cacophony of noise made by audience members leaving during the performance did not aid concentration. **Gillian Clark**

continued from page 11

significance of weights falling from a great height (dime off the Empire State Building), the constant water fall.

The objects are images from dreams, mirroring, countering each other, shoes, ties, — a sock flung into space to catch, chance on a wire and slide seductive, striptease. Reaching out to pull her down, her shoe comes off in his hand, immediately filled with water, swallowed. The waiting angel retrieves, empties, puts it back on, her patient tolerance of the fetishistic customer is reminiscent of a nanny.

The language of object and gesture rely on dream-work to make and lose meanings, the most precise and obscure symbolic formulation of male sexuality. Freud on dreams of flying and falling, both specifically erotic, notes 'the remarkable phenomenon of erection, around which the human imagination has constantly played, cannot fail to be impressive, involving as it does an apparent suspension of the laws of gravity.'

The performance affords the spectator the exquisite pleasure of watching dream process consciously, allowing the shift, the sudden dis/appearance of meaning, the random ritual repetition of unconscious language. The single words, ridiculous, a perfect dream restaurant-ese, ('Pheasant.' 'Salmon.' 'Roast beef.') are repeated, punctuating the continual sounds of water hitting ground, a dream without remembering.

Visibility

The piece closes with the appearance of candles, lights diminish, a night fall. The dog sleeps, two men gently leaning in a stillness recalling Cezanne, candles blown out make an ending.

The visual references to paintings make another, cumulative shaping; some jokes (Degas' circus acrobat exactly reproduced by a woman's crossed ankles), the vertical structure deconstructing the elements of painting, a diagrammatic demonstration of perspective tradition.

The apparatus functions, its economy is clear, and (if the drinkers don't muck about too much), the undistracted utterly effective manipulation of the device is extremely pleasurable to watch. The initial visual shock engenders curiosity which is sweetly satisfied by the performers' demonstration of the system. The pattern is cumulative, repeating the up and down movement, giving and taking away, somehow containing the danger (murder/falling) as well as the drinking rituals at the middle table. The easy difficulty of attaching the detaching weights, of agreeing on a direction, of maintaining an inevitable equilibrium in itself invokes a pleasurable tension in the spectator. Signification exists in transition, meaning spills on the floor, drips off the table cloth, indeterminate, overdetermined. (The interpretation of dreams is a therapeutic process, not an aesthetic necessity. ■

Music in Performance

Criticism and Creation

Over the last few months I have been giving some thought to my involvement in writing about other peoples work in the form of reviews. I have been having pieces of writing published since 1972, and have been involved in the editing and production of such magazines as *MUSICS* and *READINGS* which have attempted to develop a critical language capable of dealing with new work, as well as providing information and publicity for performers and artists whose work is too obscure or challenging for the popular media. I have come to the conclusion that in attempting to change music criticism and general attitudes to new work by doing what critics should be doing and writing about the work myself, while useful, was not the correct way to effect the desired change. I am also not sure that as a performer, I wish to operate as a critic of other peoples performances. My feelings at present are that I only really feel happy about writing about anyone elses work in the form of a critique at their request, rather than in the form of a review, or drawing on the example of other people's work to illustrate points in an article on a particular topic.

I still want to see the development of music and performance criticism as a valuable contribution to making art. I would like to see such criticism developing from considered ideological and aesthetic beliefs generated by the critic and applied to work. I don't pretend to have followed the development of critical forms very closely, but it seems that painting and sculpture, literature and film have all generated theorists who have used the criticism as the medium for the expression of their ideas.

As to this magazine's contribution to this task, we will still be carrying reviews of musical performance, and we would like to receive reviews from writers, and requests from performers to be reviewed. We will also be seeking contributions from performers themselves, in the form of statements, manifestos, documentation or whatever. As for myself, I intend to contribute general pieces concerning different aspects of performed work and its context.

In the music press, we don't find the presence of any critics as such, but instead music journalists, who do a job as well or as badly as individual ability dictates. I guess a music journalist's job is to respond to public interest, and a critic's job would be to inform public taste. This of course implies that the critic should have done enough work on themselves to gain insight into the significance, function and joy of the medium to which they address themselves.

Music should be an agent of change. In

the same way that 18th century art music reflected the ideas of the aristocratic patrons in its construction and content, and opera reflected the same ideas in its storylines, the music, or art, we make today must reflect our ideas and how we feel we should organise ourselves and live our lives. It seems self evident (if not, check out Karl M's argument in the Communist Manifesto) that the dominant cultural forms of the time reflect the ideology of its ruling class — in form, deep structure and content. Yet, the alternative and left wing press are always looking for musicians with radical statements who are working within the popular forms, and because of their conditioning to what music is, they can't recognise music or art that conforms to their own ideology when they see it. Because in form and content it does not bear any resemblance to that which they think people are used to, they dismiss such work — if they even bother to mention it — as intellectual or elitist. It's heartbreaking. In the mid November issue of *TIME OUT* John Gill was able to come up with the following statement concerning the innocuous systems music group the Lost Jockey: 'It's heartening that the purist avant-garde mafiosi can exert no control over this ghetto-busting music'. Ghetto-busting? What on earth is he talking about? And avant-garde has had no meaning as a useful term in art for decades (as a result of the fragmentation and proliferation of contemporary forms of expression). What Mafiosi? Who is he talking about? His paranoid attitude is reminiscent of bourgeois fears of Bolshevik plotters. (If there was such a mafiosi and I was a member there would be a contract out on music critics like this). That quote was from his first paragraph. He goes on to give a crude superficial description of systems music: thanks for enlightening us, but some of it was around before the very first one page issue of *Time Out* hit Ladbroke Grove.

He continues his side-swiping against the 'avant-garde' in his final paragraph with 'The cerebral bully-boys of the avant-garde may not like it, but systems music presents a natural crossover between High Art and the low entertainment of the rock pulse'. I've been involved in music for a long time, and I don't know who he's talking about (although my concept of the 'avant-garde' may be a little different from his — whilst I'm trying to construct a secret society of cerebral bully-boys out of such possible applicants as Derek Bailey and Gavin Bryars, he is probably referring to Brian Eno). Mind you, one can hardly blame the journalists when they have such poor material to work with: Chris Sullivan of *Blue Rondo a la Turk* talking in *Melody Maker*. 'We've grabbed hold of Africa and given it a damn good shaking and there's Latin America — there's so many rhythms

down there that haven't been used!'

What the hell does he think Latin American musicians have been doing with Latin American rhythms? There seems to be a belief in the West that until something has been annexed by western culture, it doesn't exist. The Western music industry has such a long history of ripping off other people's music and watering it down for young white audiences, as if nothing existed outside of white youth culture. Why can't people develop their own forms of expression? There's nothing wrong with having an open ear and being influenced by what you hear, but there's something very wrong about mindlessly repeating what you hear (that's what tape recorders are for).

Paul Burwell

Cecil Taylor Unit The Roundhouse

Free jazz is more commonly associated with the network of small fringe venues dotted around the country. Small sized audiences are the norm, yet, on occasion, all it takes is an influx of foreign musicians to give this unfairly maligned area of music a degree of respectability. And so it is with the pianist Cecil Taylor. One of the heroes of free-jazz, indeed something of a legend in his own lifetime, Taylor has built up a solid reputation for his extended and often demanding performances that can drain the energy of even the most fanatical audience.

The last decade has seen the release of a wealth of live recordings of various Taylor-led groups, the majority of which have been for foreign release. I had begun to think that Taylor's music had become the reserve of countries abroad. Whilst it was easy to pick up these records through importers (the latest release 'It Is In The Brewing Luminous' on the Swiss Hut label is particularly recommended), performances 'in the flesh' were few and far between. Taylor's last British concert was at Ronnie Scott's in the mid 1970's. Since then numerous attempts had been made to bring him back to these shores, all of them unsuccessful. Building this feeling of novelty had undoubtedly helped to pull the audience in — the Roundhouse was virtually packed to capacity, a rare but welcome sight.

Given the circumstances surrounding his visit to Britain, there is an inevitable air of expectancy surrounding the performance. The audience has come along with pre-conceived ideas of what they will hear and see and the performer is supposed to deliver the goods. Certainly Taylor, along with current associates William Parker (bass), Rashid Bakr (drums) and long-time partner Jimmy Lyons (saxophone) fulfilled the audience's needs. A period of garbled vocal chanting gave way to a spell-

binding performance of one and three-quarter hours where Taylor led his musicians through a variety of moods and expressions with the emphasis on the up-tempo. There is a certain unyielding quality to Taylor's music that, whilst giving it character, can be a drawback. Despite the ever changing line-up of his groups, a one-dimensional element has crept into his music. Much of this is derived from his compositional method where the energy is usually dictated from his piano playing. Lyons has proved to be a capable sideman to Taylor, knowing his moves and constructing his fiery alto playing to suit his needs (a point that is emphasised when one looks at Lyons' poor record as a band leader in his own right). The real surprise of the evening was Rashid Bakr. Playing his first British date, he proved to be a master of control, a musician with a total understanding of his medium. His playing was gloriously uncluttered and at times he displayed telepathy with Taylor, knowing intuitively when to lay back on the rolls and when to throw his playing to the fore. Bakr matched Taylor note for note and it made for some of the best jazz that I have heard in years. Taylor played with all the conviction that he could muster. Although the introduction to the set was sedate, he had soon forced the music into another sphere, hyperactive, yet never chaotic. There was an almost spatial quality to his playing where every note was clearly audible although to watch his pulverising the keyboard, one would have thought otherwise.

A short encore (short by Taylor's standards at least) was duly offered in the true showbiz tradition, yet to my mind it was totally unnecessary. By the end of the main set, Taylor had left his reputation intact. A jazz master of course, I only hope that his next visit will not seem like such a novelty.

David Ilic

Stephen Cripps

Documentation / Score

MUSIC FOR ROCKETS (Pt 1)

Fuel: propulsion and explosion.

Movement: percussive force, varying tension, shock waves etc.

Taken from a piece written for tape using a series of experiments with pyrotechnics as the power source for creating sounds. The experiments are set up to guide the direction of a piece of music: once activated the pyrotechnics produce sounds in conjunction with the selected materials without intervention, using their ingredients. Pyrotechnics create their own music.

Photo:

Acme Gallery, 1981.

Performance. Gerb and cymbals.

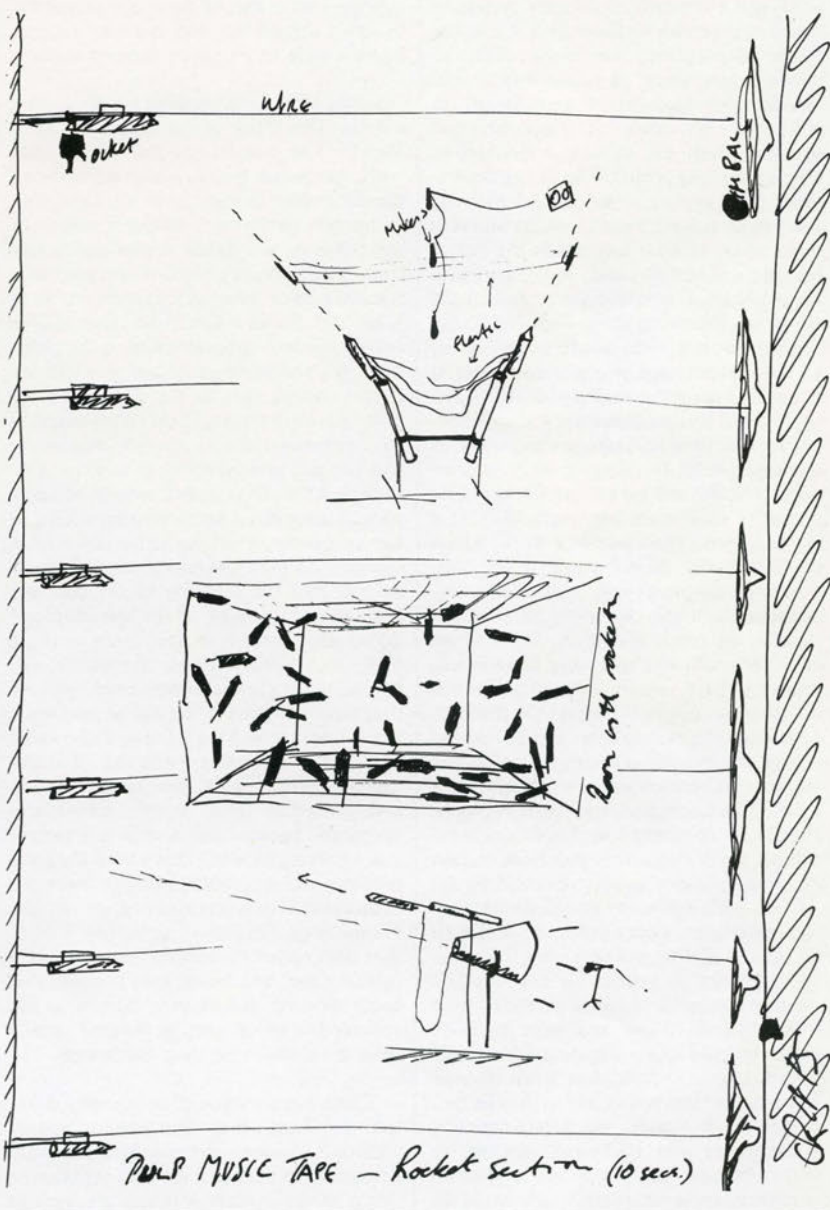
The burning particles emitted from the gerb spray over the mounted cymbals. The very quiet sound of the particles travelling through the air and the sound of them hitting the cymbals (like sand poured

on to glass) contrasts to the 'violence' of the initial emission.

Drawing: notes on music for rockets.

Background: rockets fired along wire guides to crash into and explode against wall mounted cymbals. Rockets are the muscular (motor) force necessary to produce percussive sounds. Top sketch: Two rockets set on divergent courses attached to each other by aeroplane elastic which is put under tension by diverging rockets in flight. Elastic whistles through the air. When critical point of elastic tension is reached, rockets go all over the place. Middle sketch: Rockets fired from mounts on walls, floor and ceiling. Percussive obstructions are also placed in the room. Bottom sketch: Rocket fired attached to length of elastic, the other end of which is attached to a diaphragm on a megaphone.

Stephen Cripps



Arts Council Music Panel Report

Little Joy for Improvisers

There is a lot wrong with the creative music scene at present, not all of it due to the practitioners. The new Arts Council 'New Music' panel seems to be full of academic 'modern' composers, the same sort that comprise the other music panels... the music department is one of the most conservative departments in the whole Arts Council. Whereas other departments, such as film and video are doing what they can by way of initiating schemes and even creating a bursary for someone to tour the country creating interest in new film work, and producing catalogues of new artists work and a streamlined subsidy system to encourage venues to show new work, the music department has done little to develop new work in music and to encourage development of new forms, in spite of constant, if uncoordinated pressure from the musicians themselves over a very long period. The Music department (this applies to the GLAA as well) need to be more forward looking and also more aware of what happens in the rest of the Arts Council, and to re-structure accordingly. I would suggest something along the following lines: First of all, the classical or historical side to be separated, as the performance of opera and classical music and the preservation of such historical musical artifacts requires a very different set of artistic and administrative values to those useful for dealing with contemporary work, and vice versa. It would be better if they were kept separate. This leaves us with contemporary work, which could roughly be sub divided by composed, semi-composed, non composed, classical/academic, popular, jazz, experimental, electronic and so on. These forms could be dealt with by two or three panels working more closely with Arts Council officers assigned to the areas than seems to have been the case to date, and having the power to initiate schemes to publicise, support and encourage new work in their areas. The Contemporary Music Network should be re-vamped to more closely resemble the Video artists and Film makers on Tour schemes already operated by the ACGB, with the Arts Council disseminating information about musicians and their work and giving support, help and encouragement to venues for the development of new work as well as for the support of established artists, and more attention could be paid to encouraging educational institutions to support new work through lectures, performances and artists in residence. As it stands, the Arts Council is conservative and backward looking. In contemporary music it tends to support work that conforms to the traditions of the

past, and is just not responsive enough to work of the present and future. The situation is similar to that which would have existed if the type of art exhibited at the late ACME gallery had to go before the board of the Royal Academy for consideration. Whilst the State has a duty to preserve the Art, music and culture of the past, its duty to the work of the future is of at least equal importance (actually, its a damn. sight more important).

I have just received the November issue of the Arts Council Bulletin, and most of it has relevance to the criticisms I make. It carries a report on a paper 'New Approaches to New Music' by Andrew Peggie. Whilst this paper deals primarily with the Contemporary Music Network, many of the criticisms and solutions hypothesised are similar to my own and include recommendations of a liaison officer and a handbook/resource guide for prospective presenters, with an emphasis on education. I hope that some of these recommendations are carried out, and that they will embrace a wide variety of performed music.

In the same Bulletin there is a discussion paper, 'The Work of the Music Advisory Panel'. The majority of this paper deals with composed music, with emphasis on the difficulties in getting the work of living composers performed: the paper states "In the fields of art, dance drama and literature, contemporary work is accepted as a normal part of the artistic experience. such is not the case in music..'. Too true. There is considerable space devoted to the problems of contemporary composers and the Arts Council's role in the development of contemporary music. I don't want to create the impression of an anti-composed music and pro improvised music at any cost attitude, but the Arts Council system and attitude as it stands, is far more sympathetic to the composer, working from (usually) a classical training and background. I would submit that the majority of the effective (and affective) music of the last couple of decades has come from musicians working from an improvisational sensibility and background. (It has always been the case that some composers 'improvise' and some improvisers 'compose'). I would also make a (rather wild) analogy with the diminution of exciting work done in the painting and sculpture fields in the sixties and seventies, because the people that twenty years previously would have been the good painters and sculptors turned to more immediate and open forms of expression, like Happenings and Performance Art. I think that the greater advantages offered by performing live and being able to spontaneously develop and express their ideas has appealed to those who, in the past, would have been the interesting composers.

There are a couple of paragraphs devoted to Jazz and Improvised music, although Improvised music is not actually discussed, the paper itself does say that the 'lines of distinction between the various

areas of contemporary work are less clearly drawn than previously'. This section of the paper criticises the organisational structures that exist for jazz, and talks about what the Jazz Centre Society might do if they ever get it together (actually, I hope they do, a permanent venue and rehearsal space for jazz could only be of general benefit), but no mention of Improvised music at all, or what the London Musicians Collective has been doing, although the statement from the report 'There is no doubt that this field is both under-organised and insufficiently funded' could well apply.

It's terrible that the work of improvisers is so under rated, and so poorly represented on Arts Council panels. There are few people in the Arts Council who are really qualified to pass judgement on such work; most of them seem to be much more interested in Opera, Classical and traditional structures of music making. However, the Jazz Forum held earlier this year at the ICA, and the increased number of bursaries that went to Improvising musicians this year show that more interest is being taken, and I hope this trend continues and that this vital, contemporary form, and its practitioners will be further aided by the Arts Council. As the work expands however, the Arts Council are invariably left behind, and the recent developments in the art — 'multi media' performance groups and individuals have great difficulty in obtaining funding or even recognition that their work is 'music'. What also is needed is a Contemporary (musical) performance panel and supporting officer to deal with this new category.

Paul Burwell

Letters

Dear Performance Magazine,

Last month's article Pigs and Pyrotechnics was written by me, Mary Turner of Action Space Mobile and whole chunks of copy were inadvertently omitted which accounts for the very odd reading in places.

I don't want to pedantically make all the corrections but I would like to have printed the last paragraph which explains to people who we are and what else we have been doing:

The company Action Space Mobile consists of Mary Turner, Phil Hyde and Robin Morley and was formed in spring 1981 out of the debris left of Action Space by the Arts Council cuts. The company has recently had residences in Liverpool, Manchester, Barcelona and Poland and plans to continue to work with a small core group that uses the resources of situations to build up large events.

Yours,
Mary Turner

Our apologies to all concerned with the Action Space Mobile article. A couple of paragraphs appear to have been missing from the photocopy of the text which we were given.
The Editors

The Art of Making Visible

When the 'private moments' of lovemaking become a public spectacle, where does porno end and the art begin?

In our society, sexuality has always been a potent site of contradiction. Presented as one of our most important and private areas of expression it is also ruthlessly exploited as an aid to selling almost any commodity, and is a highly profitable commodity in itself. In the last ten years or so, the visibility of porno has increased. Sex has always been for sale, but it is only comparatively recently that it has reached every high street newsstand, cinema and now video store. Time, perhaps, to look closely at how money, exploitation and the work ethic engage with this seemingly most intimate of activities. For loss of self can be paid for — £80 per day orgasms for the cameras in a skin flick. Or as this interview describes, as part of an art performance in a gallery, orgasm is unpaid for — for art. For art, of course has the highest motivations. If it chooses to expose the normally hidden areas of human life, it is surely for philosophical, not titillating ends. But can any display of sexual behaviour be dispassionately contemplated in a society which is fuelled by the deepest repression? Philippe Veschi describes the audience's hostility towards the performers, when once clothed and sipping drinks, 'normality' had been restored. Control reclaimed by the gallery patrons, those who had been permitted to go beyond the bounds could safely be reviled....

But would that same audience have said 'no' to a blue movie show? What cassettes do they insert in the home video machine? Is the difference between porno and art situated in the act of exchanging hard cash? And where do all those so-called intimate feelings fit in? Charles Hustwick and Philippe Veschi discuss.

Charles Hustwick: I'd like to ask you about your experiences as a performer, and really the difference between performing and being.

Philippe Veschi: And being?

CH: Yes.

PV: Umm. You are speaking only about performance, not of porno?

CH: Of porno as well, particularly that; it's not everyday I get a chance to interview a porno star you know. How did you get into it in the first place?

PV: In the first place, oh. First place, I made porno movies and after, a guy, a performer, saw the porno movies and, in a cocktail bar, he met me and he ask me, I saw you and I need somebody who is not afraid to make sex in front of people for my performance so do you want to do this, and I say, OK.

CH: So this was for a live performance?

PV: It was a live performance, yeah, in an art gallery.

CH: Tell me about it.

PV: I explain to you the performance. It was in an art gallery specializing in sex art, you know, Sylvie Bordon and Michel Journiac decided to make a performance together. Covering all the stage was a big French *drapeau*, flag, the audience was just in front. At one moment we were arriving naked but Michel Journiac was there, he

was not naked, he was wearing an epee, a sabre and with what do you put your hand on the sabre?

CH: The hilt.

PV: The hilt was a cock. He was wearing this and he walked up to the stage. On the stage there were two skeletons with big cocks, they were painted white and the cock was the same. Sylvie Bordon just sat in the centre of the flag while we begin to fuck the skeleton, but like if it was a man you know, first a caress. It was to be the most natural possible, like if it was really a man you know, to smile to be very tender, and after to fuck and to come with the skeleton — that was really crazy because it was — I don't know if you know the people of art galleries, I don't know if it's the same here but it's very...

CH: The audience?

PV: Yeah — it's very chic, very bourgeois, and this guy is very known, and most part of the critics newspapers were there, from *Le Figaro* and *L'Aurore*, very conservative newspapers and that was crazy because there was all the bourgeois women with all their jewels, and the glass of scotch in the hand and looking this, but they don't want to be shy, not shy, ashamed of this, so they are very nervous but they were in an art gallery so they can't do anything. If they see this on TV I think they would protest, but they won't here. There were people taking pictures, shooting. I make this with my friend. There is two skeletons on each part of the flag and after we come, Sylvia Bordon the porno woman began to masturbate herself with the cock of the sabre and there was a plastic baby just near her, white painted also, and after she come she kill the baby with the sabre and the baby was full of blood and the blood come out everywhere and we take this blood and we put on our body and after we leave. That's all. It was really strange because it was sex because we really come but in fact it was not sex because of the audience and of the feeling.

CH: What is the difference between working in front of an audience like that and working in a straight porno movie, the difference in your involvement in it?

PV: Straight? — I only do gay porno movie.

CH: I mean just ordinary commercial porno movies. What's the difference between the way you have to think about it and the way you have to be?

PV: Oh for me, I had to be more sincere. For me it is only one time, so it's different; it's only one moment. I want to be sincere with the skeleton. When you are making porno movies you are always to produce a cliché, really, because if you begin to fuck tender the film maker tell you, no no, do this, like this. That's funny, there is only one way to come in the porno movies, you have to have a face expression, do you know all the porno movies the same, it's crazy (laughs) really. If you come and don't show this on your face that's not good.

CH: So you feel you're acting in a movie?

PV: Yeah, nothing is real. Nothing.

CH: How do you continue to have the



sexual energy and interest. Do you think about other things, are you really there? Does the presence of the camera make a lot of difference?

PV: Yeah it makes a lot. There are very long takes so when you are fucking like this and you know you can't move just here because the focus isn't good, you can't forget this because you're obliged, you have a lot of obligation, you can't forget forget this because you must remember only this. When you are fucking, you are always to show what you do. You are always to be in a shooting position. You never fuck like this because it's impossible. It's uncomfortable, unsexy, it's really not fucking. These movies are made with not a lot of money and it's very speed we only make two takes of each and it's not enough and we work fourteen hours per day. Normally jts three or four days, sometimes one week, always always masturbation. It's not fucking, it's showing you come, it's not fucking, it's masturbation it can't be fucking that's not possible. When you have to come it depends on the position. If you come inside somebody it's drama because nothing is shown, always it is very frustrating because you can't have pleasure. When you are fucking a guy you can't come inside, you are obliged to show that you are coming, so there is no pleasure.

CH: Do you get well paid for it?

PV: About £80 a day. Because I was four-times the principal actor, but some guys are only working for an afternoon and they are paid £50.

CH: Back to the art gallery performance. Do you want to do more of that kind of thing? Do you find it much more interesting or do you find that leads to problems as well?

PV: You are speaking about performance? I think it was very negative because do you know how I saw the look of the people's eyes and it was a really *méprisant* er — they want you to be ashamed. Because after the performance there were cocktails and we were dressed after and all the people they want to show to the actor that they don't agree with this attitude and it was a very negative feeling you know. Even if it would have been mundane or something like this but it was a very negative feeling and I remember very aggressive because the time before they can do nothing but after it was normal social relations and they had the power.

CH: Did you feel in sympathy with the concept of the piece?

PV: Yeah, with the concept of course, oh yeah. I really like this kind of thing really. I like to destruct all these kinds of things, concepts...

CH: It's breaking down barriers.

PV: Yeah, I like do this. Most part of your life you can't do this with everything, especially this kind of thing with sex, you can't do this in the street you can only do this in your bed or speaking with people but speaking is not real, it's only words, it's only not so strong as when you show this, when you do this. And to show without any censure. Do you know there

are many ways to speak about sex you know; and to say, this is a cock, I'm showing a cock and that's all. All the movies, all the novels are based on this to speak about this but not showing not saying nothing.

CH: Do you find that in your normal life you feel as if you are acting?

PV: That was the problem. I stopped doing porno movies because — at the moment when I wanted to come, at home in my bed with a guy, I had to think that people were looking at me do you see? I needed this to come. So I think this — I need this to come and that's not normal because you don't — you are not fucking with the guy, you are alone.

CH: You mention prostitution. Do you think making porno movies is a kind of prostitution?

PV: No.

CH: In what way do you think it differs, in that you are selling a commodity?

PV: What's prostitution? To cruise a guy only for money. The fuck is not prostitution. Only to cruise for money, that's prostitution. And in a porno movie you cruise nobody.

CH: In a porno movie do you fuck with friends, do you have to have someone you know you relate to sexually, or what?

PV: I don't care about this in a movie.

CH: It makes no difference?

PV: No, because — no. It's so — if it were an exchange it would be necessary but it's not an exchange.

CH: It's so impersonal?

PV: Yeah. Sometimes I met a guy I liked you know but we were really fucking together after the movie or before but when we were fucking for the movie it was just a job. Even if you want — it's not possible — you don't feel I want to do this like a job. One funny thing is — you know I stay quite naked in front of people all day but when I arrive, and all the people do the same when they arrive, to undress, they close the door of the room where they take off their clothes. That's the last private moments. If I have to undress in the movie that's OK but if I have to be naked when I arrived in the place where the movie is shooting I always undress myself in the room and closing the door like as if I was alone.

Sometimes I see this problem like a child feeling about this small part of the body which was always hidden. And that's funny, you can make money showing this and that's good. What I like with Michel Journiac is he shows without making money — yeah I forgot he makes money as well because he was selling the skeleton — it was like statue, when after this art gallery was exposed the sabre, the skeleton and the plastic baby, another statue from him and the polaroids and the picture of the performance and he was selling this.

CH: And you received a fee for your performance?

PV: No.

CH: Why not?

PV: I don't care about this, he produced the statue, he produced the idea and I

enjoyed to do this you know. So if it will be a millionaire or something like this then of course I would like to ask him some money but he's not.

CH: Your difference in involvement in working with Journiac and working with film is very clear. What difference is there in the presence of the camera in each?

PV: In the performance I don't care about the camera because they can't say me anything and I have to be myself you know and they take pictures of this but it was myself doing what I want with this skeleton and fucking like I want. In a porno movie the camera is the master and you are the object. It's quite different. One way you master the camera and she had to look at what you are doing the other way you have to do what the camera want. Really. You have to be what the camera want in the porno movie because the camera had to show this part of the body which was always hidden so to make money.

CH: Did you find the performance more exciting, sexually?

PV: For my pleasure it was. I think that's good because really it was masturbation you know — it was seeming to fuck with somebody but in reality it was masturbation — that's easier for the pleasure you don't have to play to be somebody.

CH: But you were doing it publically, are you an exhibitionist by nature?

PV: No.

CH: So how do you manage to cut off from the audience?

PV: If I hadn't have made porno movies I couldn't have done it. I would be ashamed too much. I can't be horny because of all these people — I think I remember in this performance I closed off. You close your sense to be alone to be only with your desire. During the fuck I remember nothing and people told me after, that I came very loudly and I don't remember. Even your eyes can look and you can come looking at these people but really in your head you don't see these people because they are not exciting pictures.

CH: Do you have a politic?

PV: About the body and sexuality, how it has been treated. I mean I see the whole area of sexuality as having been appropriated by the dominant political values. But that sex is merely a physical need that everybody shares, like food or shelter or warmth or clothes or whatever. But that sex has been overloaded with so many different layers, that sex is no longer a simple matter — and these values are reinforced by many institutions for example by the Church.

It's not only the Church — I don't — it could be seen in a political way but I think it is a mistake because — I have never heard a political discourse about this which was good — because Marxists have a fucking idea about this and militants don't fuck, they militate, so it is the same with the Church. I think it can be only a personal feeling — to have a talk about this, to have a programme about this, it will always be the same. It must be individual, quite individual. ■

continued from page 15

worldly.

A woman begins a drawing of a cross in pigment on the floor area, foreground. The placement of a skull. 'Dirt' pigment out of the pockets of her dress. The other woman changes the cross into squares with white salt. Then the woman who made the cross runs across the 4 squares at a diagonal. All this is contemplative, charged with being. It takes as long as it takes, with very little tension.

Detail. The 2 women in the piece resemble the pictures in the slides; they participate equally in the actions, self aware, aware of each other. Truth and self-searching are characteristics of the taped monologues from these same women which work into the fabric of psychological meanings passing between them. They express hostility and awareness and knowledge of each other cleanly. Their emotion is contained. As people they are a very total experience, one monumental and one more volatile.

Rose Finn-Kelcey's 'Vacated Performance' took place on Saturday at half-hour intervals with a specified audience quota of 8.

Extract from 'Live, neutral and earth' — a vacated performance by Rose Finn-Kelcey:

'There is a hotline which enables one button pusher to check with another button pusher for a potential misunderstanding and thereby be reassured. The hotline inspires confidence. There needs to be mutual trust and confidence, so

constant contact outside of hours is maintained. Knowing each other personally prevents either button pusher from believing that the other is capable of duplicity. The button pusher recognizes that command and control difficulties increase as the premium is on ever faster reaction. The button pushers' greatest anxiety is that another button pusher has retained or designed an electronic key which may prevent their own button from being depressed. The button pusher has to resist testing comparative strength with a genuine or mythical button pusher. This button pusher is ambidextrous.'

SUNDAY EVENING

The weekend of Circles events ended on Sunday, with Carlyle Reedy's performance of Yoga with Interference. The piece appeared as a composite of fixed and mobile factors, dividing into areas each relating to experiences pertinent to particular identities, jobs, transcendances of stereotyped associations. These areas in the Midland Group Performance Studio on that Sunday were separate sets for 'waitress' for 'laundry' and for 'model'.

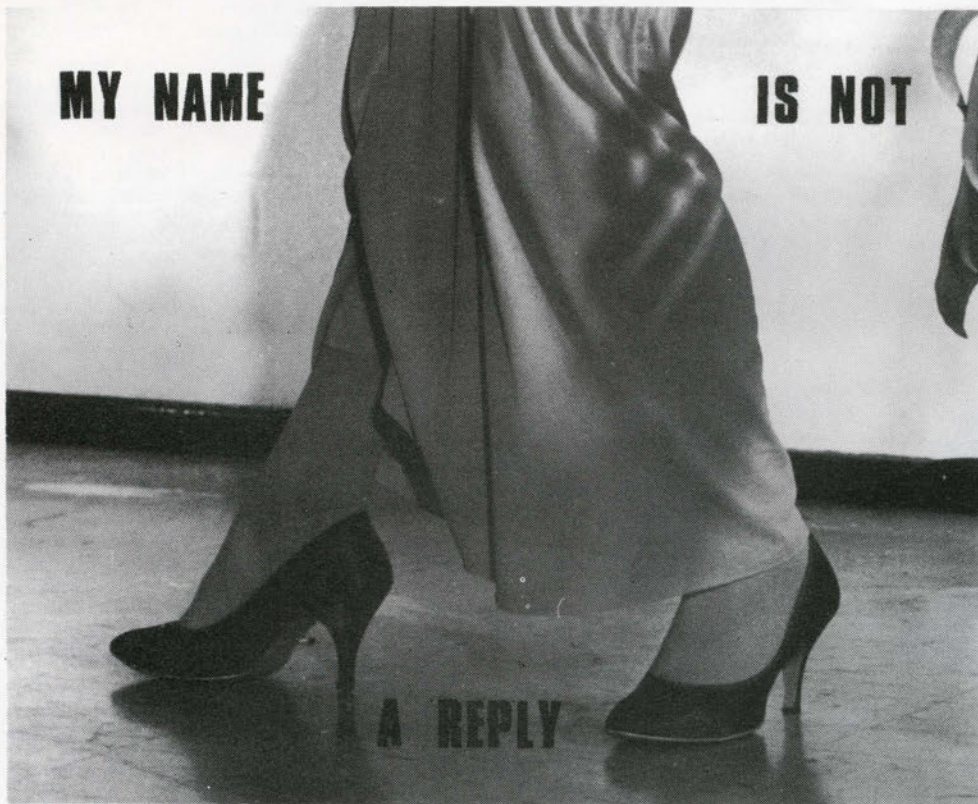
Carlyle Reedy first read an announcement in which the beginnings of dream were evident. The interplay between characters and the accoutrements of their separate rather mad scenarios made up the work; the content brought into unusual focus by a curious correlation between author, characterization, and personal

being of the performer (or character in dream, poet, yogin) exists and is turned to account, in this work.

Set Images had been prepared in advance (waitress's luminous paper apron with a long-lashed eye as a pocket; Laundry's bendix which was the video of a young woman's face in intimate portrait; Model's trash effigy box-mask) Sound tapes were collaged and working with multiple moving factors, and their relatability, with herself amongst them, acting, reciting, or discovering, she selected some amongst many prepared and ready possibilities.

Waitress's Texts dealt with intrigue, violence to women, city paranoia, work oppression and at one point she screamed. Laundry came in to a tape of medieval music juxtaposed with excerpts from a male-voice lecture on turbine engines, sprinkling Kapek 'soap powder' from a classical urn. Model transpired in a bizarre set reminiscent of plain vanity but juxtaposing garbled tapes in chinese with seminadvertant posturings so that it began to resemble some war-time chinese take-away. Surrounded by artifice and tawdriness, provoked by slide images of women (lit up by a woman helping her) she wrote in ink on a screen of luminous white the words Model and Cruelty; Model and Money; Money and War and Ignorance.

In each section of the piece an allegorical dance was performed, effectively balancing a transition between acted character and woman performer. ■



Documentation

BY SILVIA ZIRANEK

National Performance Listings

Bristol Arnolfini

Info: 0272 299191
Plenty of video going on in the new video library but no sign of any dance. Still, there is some music to be going on with:
Jan 22 London Sinfonietta in Clifton Cathedral
Feb 6 Company
Feb 20 Singcircle

Cardiff

Chapter Arts Centre
Info 0222 396061
January 7-9, 13-16. Paupers Carnival with Sly Smiles. A new performance with a gossip. Victorian theme, centring around a family called the Skeffingtons a 'great Theatrical family'.
February 3-6 Cardiff Laboratory Theatre with new performance.
February 9-13 Lumiere and Son in 'Slips'.
February 8 Chapter's monthly 'Terminal Cafe' cabaret.
February 24-27 Waste of Time Jail Warehouse. Co-production called 'Listen'.
Unit Gallery — Until January 23. 'Viewing' an examination in the form of and exhibition of the act of viewing an art exhibition in a public space.

People Show

London Air Gallery

Info 01 278 7751
Continuing installation by Polish Artists until January 28. Andrzej Bereziansky, Andrzej Szewczyka. Performance in February — ring to confirm.

Almeida

Info 01 354 2091
Refurbishment continues at the Almeida through the winter and the theatre promises to be open on something like a full-time basis in the Spring.

The Albany Empire

Info 01 691 3333
Hurrah for the return of The Albany Empire in a spanking new building down in Deptford and opened with the help of the GLC. John Turner of The Combination, the resident company at The Albany, tells us: 'We will have one of the best sound and lighting systems going. And comfortable chairs, and a 40 foot bar. And it's wonderful. Perfect. Come and see for yourselves.'
Dec 31 New Year's Eve party.
Jan 7 - Feb 7 The Combination in 'All Who Sail in Her', a showbiz backstage musical: 'A howl of rage, a song of survival and a laugh of defiance.'
Jan 19/20/26/27/28 'Table Talk': 'a fast rap about seven disaffected kids'.

Chisenhale Dance Space

Info: 01 981 6617
Still no end to the problems with

the fire exits which have delayed the opening of X6's new home but Chisenhale should open sometime in the next couple of months so ring for details.

The Drill Hall

Info: 01 637 8270
Strong programming at the newly reopened Drill Hall continues with opera, no less.
Jan 4-31 London Opera Factory with the Endymion Ensemble. Playing in repertoire will be John Gay's 'The Beggars' Opera' and a long-awaited production of Harrison Birtwhistle's 'Punch and Judy'. Australian whizz-kid director David Freeman is responsible for the productions.

ICA

Info: 930 0493
Dec 29 - Jan 3 Rock Week
Jan 5 - 23 Lumiere & Son in 'Slips', the result of their latest collaboration with Wimbledon College of Art and using, for the first time in a Lumiere show, extensive music. Frank Millward has composed a specially commissioned score to accompany a performance about 'childhood and memory... the nonsense world of the very young child...'. It promises to be all strip cartoons and Victoriana. Then the London Mime Festival move in:
Jan 27 - 31 Pantomimusitten II

(from Germany) and Feb 2 - 6 Pep e (from Czechoslovakia)

Half Moon

Info: 01 791 1141
Paines Plough come into the New Half Moon (Jan 1 - 16) with their award winning dramatisation of The Decameron, Boccaccio's famed collection of love stories. 'In a walled garden of a villa outside Florence, five young people have taken refuge from the Black Death. There to amuse themselves, they recount tales of bawdy farce, romance, comedy social satire and tragic love...'. And then, from Jan 25, a week of festivities to celebrate the Half Moon's tenth birthday. Meanwhile at the Old Half Moon, Marcus Brent's 'Who's a Hero' runs from Jan 10-23.

London Musicians Collective

01 722 0456
January 2 Russell Riders Benefit
January 7 Club night including Laurie Booth, Juggler.
January 14 Club night including dance from Kickstart.
January 8-9 Matchbox Purveyors
January 15 Gorp.
January 23-24 Stillmauve leading workshops.
During February various club nights and a Composers/Improvisors festival.

London Mime Festival

Info 01 434 3531
The ever-ambitious London Mime Festival is back in January, with performances and at venues too numerous to list in entirety. Phone above number or see listed venues for details.

Oval House

Info 01 735 2786
January 8-10, 15-17 Y Front Theatre.
Late January (unconfirmed) Womens Theatre Group in a new cabaret performance, Timepiece. Plus Siren Theatre Co. in Curfew
February 5-7 Silhouettes Dance. (Workshop production)
February 5-6-7 Bloodgroup in Barricade of Flowers.
February 12-13-14 Season of performance by disabled, including the Graae.

Riverside

Info: 01 748 3354
With the help of the GLC and a wealthy, anonymous donor, Riverside has been reprieved and is hurriedly programming for the months when it expected to be closed. Things to come include: Black Theatre Co-op with a season:
Jan 27th - Feb 14 'Trojans' by Farrukh Dhondy, directed by Trevor Laird
Feb 23 - Mar 14 'Trinity' — three short plays by Edgar White. Both these programmes then tour Greater London.

continued on back cover



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- * RUN WORKSHOPS
- * ATTEND WORK-INS

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LONDON

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London Listings continued from page 34

Royal Court

Info: 01 730 1745
The People Show Cabaret continues its run indefinitely into January. If you've not seen it before, now is your chance. If you have, go again and hear Mark Long end the joke that reduces him to tears.

Theatrespace

Info: 01 836 2035
The ever-interesting West End basement continues through January and February with its unpredictable brew. Always worth popping in to see what's on offer. No confirmed plans as we go to press.

Manchester Radiator

Info: 061 224 0020
An umbrella organisation, Radiator Presentations promotes events throughout Manchester. Forthcoming attractions include: Jan 23 Horse and Bamboo and Angel Mummies at Birch Community Centre
Jan 28 - 30 Elaine Loudon as Mitzi Wildebeest at The Gallery, Manchester (with midnight matinees!)
Feb 5 - 10 Cunning Stunts new show at Lesser Free Trade Hall
Feb 13 Womens Theatre Group in 'The 7 Deadly Sins' — a revue at Birch Community Centre
Feb 25 & 26 Theatre Exchange (Kaboodle that was) in 'Macbeth' at the Homiman Theatre, Didsbury
Feb 27 Stand and Deliver give an evening of poetry and music at Birch Community Centre.

Newcastle

Basement Group
Info 0632 614527
January 9 Ann Hayes and Glenn Davidson — Performance.
January 16 Steve Hawley — Videotapes.
January 23 Ann Darlington —

Performance.
January 26-28 Rob Jackson, Julie Stephenson, Damien Coyle, Helen Cruiks (all from Belfast) Mixed Media show (performance films and slide tape)
January 30 Cate Elwes — Videotapes.
February 6 Margaret Warwick (unconfirmed) Video Installation.
February 13 Calvin Sims — Performance.
February 17 Mark Palmer — Film and Performance.
February 20 Keith Frake — Tape slide.
February 27 Malcolm Finch — 6 hour continual performance.

Nottingham

Midland Group
Info 0602 582636
January 21-22 New Heart in The Gorgeous and the Damned.
January 9 Paul Dart — new Performance work.
February 5 Jacky Lansley and P. D. Burwell — Adventures of Drumwoman.
February 10 Singcircle
February 12 Ddart (Ray Richards and Dennis De Groot) Art and the Media. New performance plus discussion on relationships between the Media and Contemporary Art.
February 25-26-27 Thats not It (Natasha Morgan) in Mothers Arms (See review this issue)

York

York Arts Centre
Info 0904 27129
January 15-16 British Events in Storm Warnings.
January 21-23 Crystal Theatre in The Protector (See review this issue)
January 29-30 Three Womem in High Heels.

Touring

Elaine Loudon
Info: 637 5516
Elaine has her two one-person shows on the road, 'Will the real Judy Garland...' and 'Mitzi Wildebeest'.
Jan 8 & 9 Hemel Hempstead Old Town Hall
Jan 11-13 Tricycle
Jan 14-16 Gulbenkian, Canterbury
Jan 20 & 21 Merlin Theatre, Frome
Jan 27 Runcom Library Theatre
Jan 28 - 20 The Gallery, Manchester
Feb 1 - 2 Towngate Theatre, Basildon
National Theatre of Brent
Info: 637 5516
A new touring show, 'The Black Hole of Calcutta', suitable for large audiences and very small venues.
February
11-13 Colchester University
16-17 Clarendon Hall, Nottingham

18 West End Centre, Aldershot
19-20 South Hill Park, Bracknell
23-27 West Midlands Tour

Ivor Cutler

Info: 637 5516
'Whether it is for his now near legendary appearances on the wireless in 'Monday Night at Home', his gramophone recordings, his minor stardom on the rock circuit, or simply his eccentricity, Ivor Cutler, humourist, broadcaster, songwriter, teacher, performer, poet, cartoonist, prankster, bicyclist and cult, has long been held in special regard and affection — near reverence even — by a certain following.' (Performance 9).

Feb 13 Hornchurch Arts Centre; 18 Exeter University; 19 Royal College, Exmouth; 20 Barn Theatre, Dartington; 27 Coventry Festival of Contemporary and Improvised Music.

Incubus

Info: 01 637 4789
January 19 Lewes Village Hall; 20 & 21 Nonnington College; 23 Tower Centre, Winchester; 26 Malvery Fringe Festival; 27 Storchley Studio, Telford; 28 Gate House, Stafford; 29 29 Rose, Kidderminster; 30 Tamworth Arts Centre.

Extemporary Dance

Info: 01 240 2430
Jan 11-16 The Place. First chance for Londoners' to see Extemporary's new repertoire under Artistic Director Emilyn Claid, including Tom Jobe's 'City' set to songs by Rickie Lee Jones and 'Counter Revolution' the first work for a British company by the American 'dance constructor' David Gordon. Then the company continue their tour.
Jan 21 & 22 Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage
Jan 26-30 Sherman Theatre, Cardiff
Feb 2-6 Derby Playhouse
Feb 9-13 Hexagon, Reading
Feb 26 & 27 Christ's Hospital Arts Centre, Horsham

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 'Tinkerbelle meets Apocalypse Now' ". (Performance 13) We caught up with this show again during its run at the Oval and it is thunderously good. You won't see a piece of more dazzling, funny and disturbing piece of visual theatre.
15-16 Jan York Arts Centre.
19-21 Jan Coleg Harlech.

Bert Smart's 'Theatre of Jellyfish'. The one and only Bert Smart and his invertebrate circus hit London for the opening of the big 'Art and the Sea' binge at the ICA. Don't miss it.
5-9 Jan ICA. In the bar.
12 Feb Assembly Rooms, Bath.

Shared Experience

Info: 01 380 0494
One of the first productions of Schnitzler's suppressed classic 'La Ronde' with a cast of two playing all the couples on the sexual roundabout.
Feb 15 - Mar 6 Crucible Studio, Sheffield.

Rational Theatre

Info: 01 624 3296
'Alien — the Final Collection' — a 'Pangalactic Ecological Adventure'. The Rational's return to the Natural History Museum after their great success last year, with another Christmas show.
Jan 1 - 21 Natural History Museum, London.

Take-away

Matchbox Purveyors through the voices of Roger Ely and Ian Hinchcliffe have marked their return from North America with the release of their first record, 'Drip Feed' - 'an album which hopes to draw people into a world where fantasy, dreams and everyday events are mixed to a point where you cannot separate one from the other: a cat talks, garden gnomes are replaced by vultures, and suburbia is turned inside out to reveal a strange and ridiculous world.' Mike Figgis did the special effects. Likely to be available where you bought this magazine or, by post, from 58 Sherwood Road, South Harrow, Middx. (£ 4 inc p&p)



CHRIS HARRIS

Photograph of 'Counter Revolution' by Company