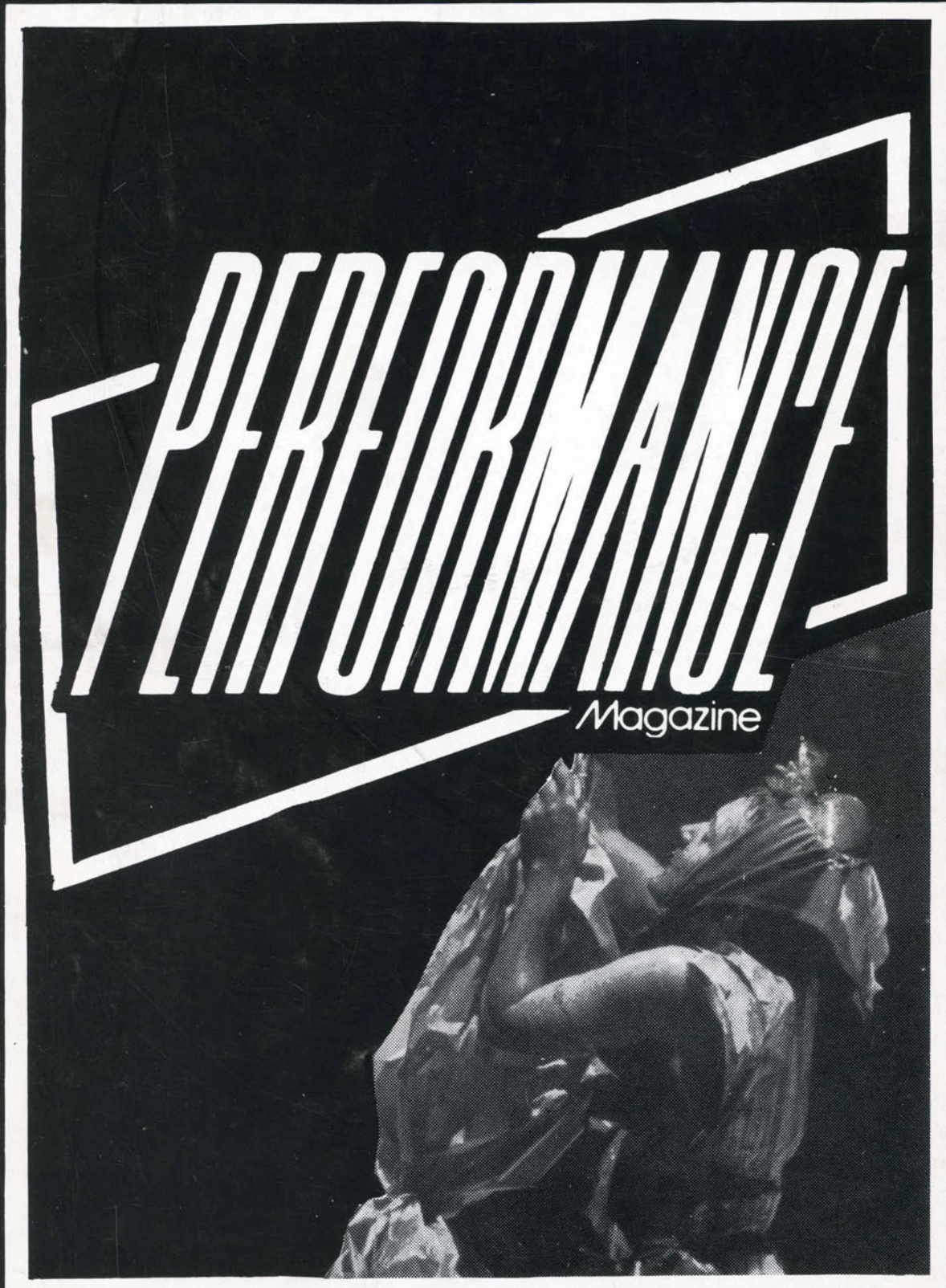


The Regular Review  
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No 17 75p



**Irish Performance      Women and Jazz**  
**Geraldine Pilgrim      Hesitate and Demonstrate**  
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# Women Live

Diana Simmonds asks some awkward questions



**W**omen Live! 'Live' as in 'strive' rather than 'give', that is, is the title given to the culmination of over a year's extraordinary back-room work by Women In Entertainment and, as their programme says 'launches our drive to transform entertainment in Britain'.

But what does it all *mean*? Transforming entertainment means re-adjusting our sets — theatrical, TV, music and film — to take into account that the species who hold up half the sky would like to do other things as well. It also means that those who are already 'doing' would like the opportunity to do more, do it differently and do it as a matter of course rather than in the grace-and-favour, nudge-nudge system that currently passes for thought in the corridors of entertainment power.

A (male) theatre director, asked why he'd put on only one play by a woman in over ten years work, said 'We don't cater for minorities'. However, this minority accounts for 52% of the population and over 40% of the official workforce — not to mention 100% of child production. The other favoured argument for the apparent inability of women to participate in the upper and wider echelons of the arts is that of quality. Women just aren't good enough — if they were, then *of course* they would take their rightful place... alongside the men who, with talent and excellence

oozing from every orifice bring us almost unadulterated pap on all three TV channels: the West End's current crop of bum-numbing drama (63 productions written or directed by men, six by women at press time) and, recently, a crop of films depicting such grotesque violence towards women that even the tabloids began to question whether it was perhaps a bit much. The latest of the genre 'Visiting Hours', even brought the urbane Alexander Walker out in hives. Neither is cinema exactly overflowing with works of pacific genius elsewhere either: 'Chariots of Fire' may well be about the triumph of the athletic will over, *inter alia*, racism, but is also a great deal to do with the resurgence of (respectable) British nationalism. Imagine swapping Wilma Rudolph for Harold Abrahams — the declared intentions would be achieved but the *actual* result wouldn't...

Then of course there is the music business where, whether it's a record company executive, revered jazz man or good leftie supporter of RAR, their attitude toward women is rarely more thoughtful than that of the apparently parodic Meatloaf with his sweat-stained, beergut rape act. Women are not expected, nor are they encouraged to put anything as threatening as a musical instrument to their lips, much less expect and encourage each other to play them sublimely. So where does the

quality argument lead? Inescapably to the conclusion that men do not hold the patent on genius, but that they've cornered the market in powerful mediocrity.

Which brings us back to the end of the tether and 'Women Live' — a month organised by and dedicated to women's work in the arts. The full programme is eclectic, nationwide and largely, of the fringe: the placid manly brows in high places remain, for the time being at least, unfurrowed. This is hardly surprising, given a budget of £3,500 (not a misprint): £3,000 from the Equal Opportunities Commission and £500 from the Greater London Arts Association to get the event off the ground. Ironically, in the great tradition, this has meant that many women have given their time for nothing in between making a living and running their private lives. The rich, rambling result is thus even more an extraordinary phenomenon. There is wonderful theatre, world class music and scores of films. Out of the woodwork have come technicians and performers who have never before realised each other's existence let alone the possibility of finding work together — and transforming entertainment.

If Women Live! is to mean anything outside of this glorious month of May, it is *that* transformation that has to come — not the once a year joys of a festival, but the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly work requirements of the participants, who after all, need to live in order to continue holding up their half whilst persuading the rest that they're also entitled to the simple perks of being alive. And it is this aspect that is most worrying. Already a male colleague has said 'Well, maybe we can have a bit of peace now you've had your month'. He meant it as a joke but, as I pointed out (in the way of humourless feminists) the Falklands started out as a joke too. Musicians, electricians, playwrights, designers (journalists even) need work, affirmation and control over their lives all year round. Blowing or singing your lungs out for a month is progress of a sort but it will be interesting to see how many have anything like the same amount of work in October. And, although the stamina of women is legendary, one wonders whether the pushers, pullers and movers of Women Live! could or should continue with this sort of burden. Can they/we keep up the pressure? Is it the right kind of pressure? The taskforce has set sail with, for some of the crew at least, little idea of the fundamental nature of the battles that could lie ahead — or even a destination. No one gives up power easily, least of all the beneficiaries of the richest industry of all (we're talking about entertainment here, not imperialism). Do we simply want a fair share of the action or do we want to reshape that action entirely? Ultimately, if Women Live! is going to be anything other than a wonderfully brave and exhausting gesture, the answer must be the latter and we all know what that means.

# Irish Performance

The Crescent, Belfast, was the setting for a remarkable series of performances. Nick Stewart reports

Glasgow and Belfast both have complex histories and many ties link the two industrial cities. A shared culture split between the Orange and the Green is expressed in songs and dances, walks and wall paintings, drinking and talk. A common culture in which high art would seem to have no place.

Recently, live work by Irish artists has been seen at the series of performances organised at the Crescent, Belfast by Nick Stewart and Angela McCabe and at the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow, part of the Hibernian Inscape exhibition. In both venues, the artists' work made an impact more intense than that usual for an art form often assumed to cater for an elite audience. Nick Stewart describes the most positive response to the Crescent shows as coming from 'ordinary people' — something Andre Stitt has also commented on (See interview in Performance Magazine issue 16).

It would be easy to draw high flown and empty conclusions about performance's much vaunted ability to break down barriers and communicate to all. Such communication is not a given. It takes work from both sides — from the performer, something to communicate, and from the audience, a desire to be open, to try to understand. Perhaps what occurred in Belfast and Glasgow (despite the press's field day of distortion) was that all too rare

conjunction of performers and audience where the audience may not be too well up on form but will appreciate effort, respond to sincerity, take symbols in their stride. Where the performers are sincere about their work, often happy just to have a chance to perform, at all, packing in content and personal commitment. Commitment and sincerity do not go unnoticed. A dialogue is begun.

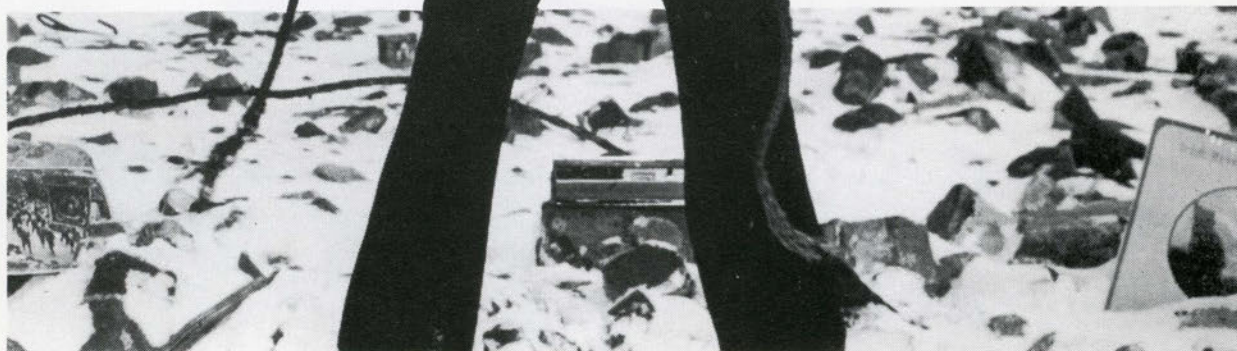
Lynn MacRitchie

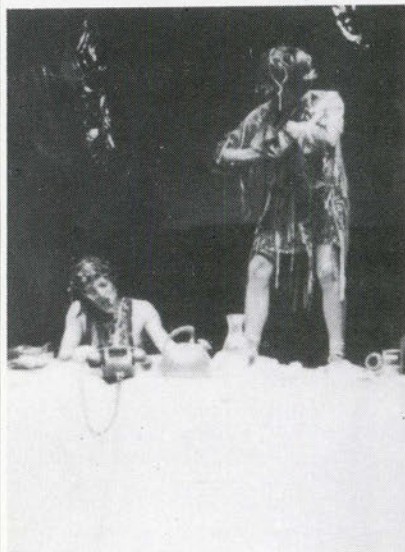
The series of performance art events run over eight weekends at The Crescent Centre, Belfast, was only the second time this form of art work has been seen in the city — in fact, this programme was the first to be organised independent of the Arts Council.

Angela McCabe and myself had the opportunity to use a large old school gymnasium in the most 'neutral' part of Belfast to stage the programme. The neighbourhood Open Workshops — N.O.W. — a community based arts group — had asked us to help them with their film/theatre festival by scheduling some performance art work. At first we were simply going to invite a maximum of five people to present work to be scheduled with N.O.W.'s film/theatre events. However, things rapidly took on their own momentum. A programme of 24 performances by artists from all over Ireland was organised. There were a number of interesting things about this series of performances. Firstly, several of the artists presenting work had never attempted live performance before. Secondly, the programme was scheduled to create maximum contrasts including as it did everything from street theatre through to 'Viennese' style actions. Thirdly, the work took place in a 'non-art' venue. This yielded valuable experience in dealing with an uninformed audience. Fourthly, an encouraging number of women artists took part.

Willie Doherty began the series in a quiet and understated manner. Live work was a new experience for him though the possibility of it was never far from his previous work in photographs. His work demanded close attention. A complex set of slides, was projected onto a screen in front of which he maintained a static pose, back to the audience. The slides juxtaposed progressively closer — more telescoped — views of his back with images from his home environment of Londonderry. Slides of himself — in the same stance he maintained during the piece — projected onto him made it at times difficult to distin-

James King





**Andre Stitt and Tara Babel**

guish the real from the illusory. At a point in the slide sequence where he turned to face the camera, he, in actuality, turned to face the audience. He then walked slowly towards the projector — taking one step between each slide. At this point it became noticeable that the raincoat he was wearing had attached to it a large number of twigs and leaves. On reaching the projector he removed the coat and placed it over the projector, in effect turning it off. A second projector was switched on — throwing a single image of a twig seen against a blue sky onto the screen. This was a subtle, poetic work with an, at times, almost surrealistic air.

James King's work mines an altogether different vein. He chose to build up to his performance by undertaking a series of actions in the city centre area. These were direct, simple and powerful political and social comments. In one, King painted one arm green and the other orange. Then, stripped to the waist, he proceeded to flail himself. The considerable pain he endured was compounded by the sub-zero temperatures that day. In a second action King chose the recently restored Belfast Opera House as his 'stage'. Utilising a cantilevered part of its structure he stood on a chair and mockingly held the building up with his hands. The point was hammered home by his wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the names of several small — recently defunct — theatre groups. King successfully trod a tortuous path between street theatre, 'straight' drama, and performance.

Julie Stephenson's piece was ambitious and many-layered. Her work mixed a strong sculptural content with personal narrative. The piece was entitled 'A Choice — 1 in 3'. Three sculptures — similar in form but of differing materials — were utilised in different ways, allowing the materials to speak for themselves. While these were being 'activated' a tape alternated between a male voice relating a sensitive and obviously personal story, and a female voice enlarging upon the question

'What is a qualitative judgement'. This tape was difficult to rationalize at first hearing. I constantly felt the need to either listen to it and ignore the activity or vice-versa. In the end it was the visual activity that sustained my interest. With this type of work I feel that any taped narratives/monologues need to be paired down to the essential elements. This applies all the more to someone with such strong sculptural sensibilities as Julie Stephenson.

Philip Roycroft has been living on the north coast of Ireland for a number of years now. He has a full time job with 'Save the Children' and is not seen within the 'art world' that often. He prefers it that way, shunning the title 'artist'. He works mainly in the open countryside in ritualised time periods — sometimes hours, sometimes days — during which he may be walking in a straight line across country, canoeing in a river, or sleeping rough in derelict houses. His work is often synchronized to solstice dates and fire is often of paramount importance in the work.

He presented a piece at The Crescent which was part documentation, part performance. Against a back projection of an earlier work, Roycroft attempted to light a fire using a wood and cord 'bow', some dried grass, flint and wood. He put a great deal of energy into the technique and gained a lot of support from the audience. After around twenty minutes labour, some four letter words, and not a little perspiration, Roycroft failed to kindle a fire. At the end he stayed and spoke with some people who were keen to try out his implements. The openness of his approach engendered this response and for me this was a refreshing change from the over ritualisation that inhibits many people interested in performance.

André Stitt and Tara Babel presented an altogether different work, extremely professional. Every detail was checked and double checked. The set was theatrical in appearance involving a kind of stage — a long table — and seating for the audience. The work was pitched at a near manic level, which at the start really stunned the audience of around 50 people.

My first impression was of an explosion of light/colour/noise and movement. Stitt — male, aggressive, lunatic, gesticulating and shouting; Babel — female, twitching, teasing, calming and seducing. The sound was like white noise but evidently put together with considerable care. References to authoritarianism and Northern Ireland were, from time to time, discernable. Stitt would react violently to these references, perhaps be screaming with great passion into one of the brightly coloured telephone receivers placed on the table around which the action took place. Bin lids were banged and whistles were blown, perhaps referring to an activity made famous in Belfast as a way of warning people about the approach of the security forces. The second half, if it could be divided like that, took place at the table. At this point I should mention that the performance was entitled — 'The Hebe-

phrenic — Food fer Thought'. Hebephrenia is a condition characterized by delusions, idiocy, and general silliness. It was the second 'half' of the action that related most strongly to this title. I had the feeling of watching a kind of crazed 'Generation Game', crossed with an eating competition whose two participants were on speed. By this stage I was looking for some light and shade. The piece seemed to be pitched too much at the same level, and by the end I felt quite detached from the action. There was, for me, something too dark in this work. Nevertheless, I admired the level of commitment and professionalism in its organisation missing from many other performances.

Damien Coyle's piece succeeded in front of a small but appreciative audience. It had certain similarities to Julie Stephenson's performance of the previous weekend, relying as it did on strongly ritualised actions utilising symbolic/metaphoric, sculptural props and objects. As with several other pieces during the programme of performances I was confronted with work which could only be felt and not rationalized. The symbolic content, which seemed to me to embrace the entire work, was totally mysterious. The use of such things as black and white cloth, fish, candles, copper wire, and earth, could inspire many interpretations — too many to attempt a clear understanding without firstly consulting the artist. Suffice to say, the poetry of the work was sufficient to hold the attention. A feeling was communicated. Perhaps for Coyle that was enough.

Vivien Crane's piece was entitled, 'Islands and Waterways'. Like this title it was simple in structure, clear in intent, and poetic in reference. With her nine year old son, she repeated, nine times during four hours, a kind of poetic gesture of, on the one level, friendship, on another, spiritual kinship. The piece commenced in subdued lighting as a stasis, the mother facing the son a few feet apart, relaxed and at ease. In time she picked up a candle, lit it, and then

**Nick Stewart**



picked up a rose. Mother and son then started to walk in a spiral out from the centre of the space, gradually encompassing the whole space. A viewer was selected and presented with the rose. The spiral walk was then repeated back to the centre of the space and once again, stasis. This was a powerful, elegant work which, though perhaps irritating to those expecting a show. It touched the hearts of most visitors to the Crescent that Saturday afternoon.

Tommy Kelso was one of the few artists who attempted to use the entire space. His was a slowly paced work which contained several memorable images. A beam of light, about ¼ inch wide, projected along the floor, split in two by a sheath knife as a metaphor for the whole piece. It dealt to a large extent with polar opposites made most specific by Kelso removing his clothes and placing them, half on one side of the light beam, half on the other. The main part of the performance involved the cutting into and cutting out of two plastic covered wooden boxes, each about seven feet in height. One was enclosed in black plastic, the other, clear plastic. In one, a flashing light was used, in the other a constant light source prevailed. The activity was conducted slowly and casually with considerable attention to detail. Kelso's work has a strong sculptural content and it will be interesting to see how this develops in future work.

Nigel Rolfe opened the busy weekend session with a work entitled 'Red Man — Advance'. This was a development on recent work using beds of flour with words/figures stencilled in colored pigments on their surface. In Belfast he spent about five hours setting the piece up for a short action. People were free to come and go all day. Rolfe was quite casual in his approach to the work and his audience at first. At around 3pm the German rock music that he had been playing loudly in

the space was turned off and in the ensuing silence Rolfe developed a much more ritualised behavioural mode. The culminated in him transferring the images from the flour beds — using his body — to a canvas set up between the two beds. The end result was an unusual and very aesthetic object.

An aspect of performance highlighted by Rolfe's work was the problem of how to document the action without interfering in the actual performance. One solution is to integrate the process of documentation into the performance — a solution favoured by Rolfe. Generally though, this is an area not well thought out by most of the performance artists whose work I have experienced. For the most part it is carried out with little consideration for the audience. I have, several times, been asked if the person with the camera is to be seen in the context of the performance.

Later the same day Michael Arbuckle presented a 'static action' of one hour's duration. For me he spoilt an otherwise interesting video of treated Photomaton self portraits taken over a twelve year period, by introducing a loud, constantly playing sound track and several other projected images. At the start of this piece I had the strong impression of speed — due probably to the constant high pitched sound. This linked in a way with the notion of time being speeded up in the video. The piece lasted for an hour, by which time this initial feeling had been replaced by one of considerable irritation at the volume of the sound. What started as a promising performance turned into an endurance test — an old ploy in live work and one that would be best laid to rest.

Vicky Adams presented three carousels of slides projected, side by side, onto a free-hanging screen. In these slides Adams' body was either painted black, white, or black and white striped. She was seen ascending or descending a staircase

painted in a similar manner. A single set of slides, shown at the other side of the space, was of her legs descending or ascending several steps, seen from the side. The performance as such consisted of Adams synchronizing with this second set of slides.

This was a very formal piece which related quite strongly to the earlier piece by Nigel Rolfe, dealing as it did with notions of positive/negative transference. Echoes of Duchamp's 'Nude Descending a Staircase' were also discernable.

Donal Ruane's work had a very strong ritualistic quality involving not a little endurance on his part. For me it recalled some of the earlier work of Stuart Brisley or the Austrian school. Ruane shaved his entire body — with the exception of his eyebrows — and had himself tied, face up, to the floor at the centre of the room. His limbs were tied by lengths of rope to the four corners of the space. Four bowls of porridge and his body hair were placed around his torso. This was not work to warm the heart on a cold Sunday afternoon. This kind of action seems so personal, one wonders why an audience is required at all.

Anna O'Sullivan, Tony Hill and Lynn Davies-Jones completed the weekend with a subtle and poetic work lasting for one hour. Hill used simple means to great effect. During the first part of the performance he stood just inside the beam of a fog lamp shining diagonally across the space. A soundtrack of a bonfire burning played while he nervously fingered a cup of hot water. The main purpose of this seemed to be to allow steam to be caught in the fog lamp. Slides of areas around Dunstable — where Hill lived for seven years — were projected to one side of him. There was a strong tension in the work by this stage which snapped when Lynn Davies-Jones unexpectedly threw a bucket of water across the fog lamp beam. This

Angela McCabe



action was echoed a moment later when Hill threw the water from his cup onto the floor with a gesture of resignation. The piece continued in this vein with periods of inactivity, abruptly changing, cued by either a slide or part of the sound tape. The whole was carried out in a poetic, almost romantic atmosphere. In this piece there was a strong feeling of distance reduced in scale and of time speeded up which at times was extremely evocative.

Anna O'Sullivan's piece, on the other hand, was staged very much for an audience. Entitled 'A Girl Called Rose', it involved several theatrical techniques — lighting, props, costume etc — and was set up on a small stage with seats for an audience. Anna dressed in black somewhat masculine attire, read confidently from a pre-written script. In the background a tape of a whispering female voice played. This tape dealt with overtly sexual experiences whilst Anna's script related more to romantic love. A boy and girl wearing masks of her face sat on either side of her.

The piece had a very strong sexual tone yet little emotion was expressed. The main theme was O'Sullivan's feelings regarding bi-sexuality, as it related to her. Simplicity and openness regarding this delicate area was complemented by the simple and formal design of the set.

By this stage of the programme of events certain facts were becoming obvious to me. Most of the publicity and support we were receiving was coming from a, by and large, uninformed public. The notable exception to this was the local Polytechnic student union who enabled us to cover the travel expenses of all the visiting artists — due mainly to the fact that a percentage of those participating were art students. Generally though, I was amazed at the almost total lack of interest shown by those people who would like to see themselves as being 'in touch' with art, artists or the art world. Here I am not just referring to people in museums, galleries, or various art bureaucracies, I am also implicating the local 'community' of artists and the staff and students of Belfast College of Art. Over the period of eight weekends the attendance and interest shown by these parties was, to say the least, minimal.

Mike Murphy presented a quiet though risky performance with a strong religious flavour. He chose to enact a Christ crucified stance against a backdrop of photographic paper, onto which were projected a series of slides of almost schematized drawings relating to the crucifixion. These drawings had been done directly onto the slides and were carefully related to the standing position of the performer. After about twenty minutes, Murphy moved away from the photographic paper revealing the form of a ghost like figure. To those people present who knew nothing about photography and even less about performance art, this must have been, to say the least, a surprise.

Later that evening Jacki Aherne presented a strongly theatrical work entitled 'Hag'. The centrepiece was a 9ft tall figura-

tive sculpture painted bright red. Aherne crawled slowly towards this, dressed in a kind of ornate net. The soundtrack which was extremely professional in production, moved from the world of everyday sounds to an increasingly dream like quality. This soundtrack reached a peak as Aherne managed to stand upright in front of the ominous figure, only to fall dramatically to the floor, leaving the audience in darkness for some tense moments. The final part of this performance seemed to offer an optimistic vision, as Aherne, freed from her shackles, walked confidently through the now divided figure, into blinding blue light, an image which recalled the final moments of the film 'Close Encounters...'. This was a precisely rehearsed piece of work which left little room for the kind of spontaneity which to my mind, characterizes much of what is best in performance art.

Martin Wedge presented the final work, a suitable ending for this rather long series of performance events. A path of seaweed divided a billiard table sized area of flour placed at the centre of the space. One black chair was placed at either end of this path. Three pieces of coal lay the centre of it. One small black book, wrapped with one length of white tape, was placed upon each chair. Wedge, his face painted bright red, divided by a thin black line, and wearing a black silk dress over black trousers and jumper, carried out a number of ritualised actions in this setting. Like Tommy Kelso's work, Wedge seemed to me to be primarily interested in polar opposites: black/white, male/female, intuition/reason, etc. The piece lasted for around seven hours and moved at a very slow pace with quite long periods of 'inactivity'. When movement occurred it was confined, in the main, to walking between the two chairs while moving a piece of coal around his body. This was, on the one hand, an aesthetically pleasing work, and on the other, a conceptually demanding one which confounded rationalization by dealing in paradox.

Looking back over this programme of live work it is hard to discern any particular pattern which might be related to Ireland, North or South. Certainly, anyone hoping to see the 'Irish Question' reflected in the work would have had to do a lot of digging for possible references.

However, a number of artists seemed to apply 'oblique strategies' to this area. With Willie Doherty 'The Troubles' were simply one thread in the tapestry of his work. Andre Stitt and Tara Babel employed more 'up front' imagery and sounds but then gave them a more universal context. With Tony Hill and Lynne Davies-Jones a kind of tension, akin to that experienced while waiting for a bomb scare to be cleared, was manifest: and so on.

One generalisation that I feel confident about making is that a certain lack of sophistication seems to characterise much of the performance art on this side of the channel. This may be due to its relative newness within the Irish art world; the art

education system in the South is only now reaching Degree standards, and forms of work such as performance have only been catered for within the last several years. Consequently, there are but a few 'cultural models' within the local community of artists. Alistair MacLennan and Nigel Rolfe are perhaps the two most influential artists working in performance over here.

Nigel and Alistair have done much to enliven the local art world. It is MacLennan though, who I feel has had the biggest influence on students here. This influence may perhaps be discerned in the frequent use of a kind of solemn ritualised behaviour favoured by a percentage of students involved with performance. On the other hand this may simply be due to a lack of confidence on the part of the artist. Nevertheless, it is worth saying that MacLennan was one of the very few people who received a hearty round of applause after giving a talk on his work at Belfast College of Art. His popularity as a person and the integrity and strength of his work have undoubtedly influenced live work in Ireland during his seven years of residence here.

Nigel Rolfe organized the first national festival for young artists making live work, in Dublin last year. This did much to create energy and confidence for students to carry on working in this way. He has also done much to gain publicity for live work in Ireland. Slowly but surely things are improving. Triskal Arts Centre in Cork runs regular programmes of performance art as does The Orchard Gallery in Londonderry. A.R.E. in Belfast occasionally present live performance, most recently that of Roland Miller and Zbigniew Warpechowski from Poland.

A rigid, unyielding tradition of painting and sculpture embedded in a, by and large, 'upper class' social structure, is slowly giving way to a healthier fracturing and cross fertilizing of traditions which are increasingly in touch with, on the one hand, a wider international sphere of art activity, and on the other, a growing local circuit of spaces and groups.

As a footnote I would like to acknowledge that words are always a poor substitute for live action. In compiling this article I have concentrated on those aspects of the work which I felt were strongest, consequently, many details have been left out. It is also worth mentioning that Angela McCather and myself both presented performances for the programme, and that of the 24 works scheduled only 3 were unable to perform. **Nicholas Stewart**

#### Short Biographical Notes:

*Willy Doherty: Fine Arts graduate from Belfast College of Art (1981) — currently working in Derry. James King: Lectures at the Ulster Polytechnic — is involved with street theatre events. Julie Stephenson: studying for her MA at Belfast College of Art. Philip Roycroft: Bread-line productions. A former graduate of Belfast College of Art. Andre Stitt and Tara Babel: Both from N. Ireland, now based in London, are currently*



working together. Damien Coyle: Is studying for his MA at Belfast College of Art. Viv Crane: A recent graduate in Fine Art from Belfast College of Art, now living in Enniskillen. Nick Stewart: Graduated from Belfast College of Art in 1981. Lives and works in Belfast. Tommy Kelso: Third Year Fine Art student at Belfast College of Art. Rainer Pagel: Formerly with Media Workshop in Belfast. Sue Triesman: Principal Lecturer in Drama at the Ulster Polytechnic. Nigel-Rolfe: English — Lives in Dublin. Active in many areas of Irish art. Lectures and works locally and internationally. Michael Arbuckle: Vicky Adams: Donal Ruane: Anna O'Sullivan: Are all studying at NCAD, Dublin. Tony Hill: English. Lecturer in sculpture at Belfast College of Art. Angela McCabe: Third Year Painting student at Belfast College of Art. Mike Murphy: From Cork. Co-manages Triskal Arts Centre, Cork. Jacki Aherne: From Dublin. Studied sculpture at Dun Laoghaire school of art; T'ai Chi Chuan in Dublin. Martin Wedge: From Belfast. Studying for his MA at Belfast College of Art. Chris Cumpson: from England. Studying for his BA at Belfast College of Art.

## Four Artists

Irish performance at the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow

Nigel Rolfe 'Clay Beds'



Mike Tooby/Nigel Rolfe

'Do you accept the universe as it is rather than try to act upon it?' 'Did practising yoga lead you to Performance, or the other way round?' 'What motivates you to do these things?' 'S'cuse me, Jim, but what did you do with the 1000 kilos of flour after the performance?' 'Will the canvases you have completed this week become artworks or souvenirs?' 'Do you feel what you're doing is not a freakish activity but more like painting an abstract canvas?' These were a few of the questions that followed Nigel Rolfe's lecture on the final day of his performance event at the Third Eye; he was the last of the four performances. 'Four Artists' was part of a season of contemporary Irish arts which included the more conventional, gallery hung, 'Hibernian Inscape'. Mike Tooby, the exhibition's organiser, brought together four artists who live and work in Ireland, each of whom was asked to create a new work for the Third Eye Centre within the set limitations of time and space. Of the four, two are Irish, one a Scot, and one English.

But let's get back to Nigel Rolfe and his work, *Clay Beds*. Like three of the other four pieces this took the better part of a week to complete. He had intended, and very much expected, to be naked during the performance, but this would have meant roping off the gallery entrance and repeating the zoo-like atmosphere of the previous week that surrounded the work of Alastair MacLennan or 'Big Al' as Glasgow's *Daily Record* was quick to dub him. To be with the artist all day in the smaller of the Eye's two large galleries was to watch the merging of process and procedure with creative thought and action. On the floor were two large frames each about twelve feet by seven. In the far one lay the dusty terracotta clay, familiar to devotees of his work, while across the other was stretched taut a canvas, the stretching of which, patiently and methodically, served as the daily overture to the day's work, as did the raking clean of the pigment in the first bed. By the middle of the week the first completed canvas would be hanging on the adjoining wall creating a triptych linked by a creative process that came dangerously close to the printing process.

On the floor was a stencil of the artist in foetal position, beside which was a grid of human proportions stretched on a metal frame, and shiny galvanised buckets containing right powdered pig-

ment. All carefully, and deliberately, chosen. From a speaker came Rachmaninov's *Grande Liturgy Orthodox Slave*, a choice which Rolfe optimistically hopes will calm the fervour of the Glasgow punter in for a swift lunchtime pint and a look at the nude artists who have had so much local, and staggeringly mindless, press coverage. As the day progressed pigment was applied through stencil or grid onto clay. Changing the tape to synthesiser music that convincingly mimics the breathing of a sleeping man, Rolfe entered the first bed and shadowed the coloured form already there. In the past he has maintained such a position for 5½ hours, in flour, and maintains it in such postures that cause the most physical damage to the system, and not, as one might expect, the more outwardly violent performances which involve hurtling himself through installations or into beds of flour. After perhaps twenty minutes he rose, moved across to the second bed and imprinted the pigment on that canvas. Other images that are important to him, based on archaeological finds, such as grave slabs and cross slabs were also transferred. In previous works he has used his own alphabet of symbols. Marks are often added directly to the second canvas as are linear drawings made through the stencils. Closely linked to the body art of other cultures, the final images, largely in their use of colour, invoke the work of Miro, Kitaj, Klee and, in fragility of line, the drawings of Beuys.

The penultimate performance by

#### Alistair MacLennan, 'Neither / Nor 120 Hours'



George Oliver

Alastair MacLennan, who is the Scot of the group, was an exhausting series of actions entitled *Neither Nor: 120 Hours*. This work is about opposites and it revolves around the division of time. There is only one fixed object in the gallery, the central pillar, to which the artist is attached. During each hour the routine, procedure, and tonality of the actions are the obverse of the preceding hour. Everything in the gallery is black or white, thus one hour will see MacLennan clothed in black and making drawings of white lines on black paper, then, when the alarm counting the hours rings, he switches to being naked and making black marks on the white wall. When one is disoriented one must find ways of recording the passage of time and this he does by the careful placing of objects, which he likens to the way Robinson Crusoe brought a sense of order to a life of partial senory, and social, deprivation. A boot hangs in mid-air, a tall white ladder stands before a taller white wall, a pole cuts obliquely across a floor inhabited by short, curling lengths of string. Only the artist can see the gaping, perplexed, sometimes angry and often amused faces that queue up to peer over the rope that divides one gallery from another. It may lack a coyote, but it does have a stuffed pigeon studiously posed on the room's only table. The artist's red-painted face is the only negation of the limitation of black and white. The issues with which he is dealing, and their resolution, are described in his own words: "that the ocean is really in the cup

is an incontestable truth; but it is only so because the cup is absolutely non-existent. It is merely an experience of the infinite, having no permanence, liable to be shattered at any instant . . . Pleasure and pain become to him more real than the great ocean of which he is a part and where his home is; he perpetually knocks himself painfully against these walls where he feels, and his tiny self oscillates within his chosen prison . . ."

John Aiken's installation pulls our attention away from the artist's own body, although not from his own presence, and directs it towards the creative and technical process and the art object left in its wake. As each day passes so a 'sculptured drawing' evoking medieval castle fortifications spreads across the gallery floor – a giant relief work, the walls of which are made by compressing bars of wet sand between sheets of glass, producing geometric elegance.

The first of the four pieces lasted only one day and was an installation with accompanying performance by Danny McCarthy entitled *The Harp That Once*. A theatrical set with Beckett-like props and lighting accommodated the soberly dressed artist; in retrospect, however, it seemed Wagnerian in comparison to the other clinical works. While they referred only obliquely and subliminally to anything outside themselves, McCarthy's work was a direct response to the insanity inflicted upon Ireland. Over a period of forty minutes leaves are plucked, through barbed wire, from the spindly branches of a small tree in the centre of a triangular harp shape. Where once there were leaves, crosses hang; where once there were rows of leaves on the floor, now there is nothing, for the leaves are spiked upon the wire. One cross is left hanging on the wire: "For the unknown warrior, the next victim to be shot. I'm acting the part of the murderer, killing each leaf as I pull it off the tree. That's the tragedy."

The renewed interest and participation in Performance over the last two decades has led to many discoveries, at a personal as well as an international level, but there is a danger that these genuine discoveries become conventions tailor-made for easy assimilation by all. Surrealism, I feel, has suffered from this, with most contemporary surrealists freely borrowing from the instigators of the movement and ignoring a vast untapped pool of personal subject matter and imagery; most of my dreams are influenced by television and animation to the extent that they often feature commercial breaks, yet I have never dreamed of anything remotely resembling a Magritte canvas. Future Performance artists will I'm sure have to surmount similar hurdles or sink to obscurity. None of these four was completely free from this danger.

Peter Hill

*Mike Tooby of the Third Eye Centre sent us the following statement about his intentions in including live work in the 'Hibernian Inscape' exhibition.*

Four exhibitions were arranged as part of Third Eye Centre's season of Irish arts. The aim of the season was to show examples of the breadth of activity in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, and to include individuals and groups working outside Ireland.

The main exhibition was 'Hibernian Inscape', Paul Overy's selection of contemporary Irish art that came to Third Eye Centre after a tour of Ireland. The organisers of the exhibition had, in its early stages, planned to have a live work section. This had been dropped, but I felt that Third Eye Centre ought to represent this area of work for two main reasons: live work has been a very important part of the recent art scene in Ireland; and some of the most interesting artists in Ireland were working in this area.

The four artists were selected to represent different approaches to using a space, and to working over time. There were some correspondences between them, such as common use of natural, soft, granular materials, but these were secondary considerations. It seemed appropriate that they each represented a different career: one born and educated in the south-west of Ireland and still working there (McCarthy); one born and educated in Scotland working in Belfast (MacLennan); one born and educated in England and living and working in Dublin (Rolfe); one born and educated in Belfast who had studied in London and was now based in London (Aiken).

They were *not* all performance artists, and only considered themselves performance artists if some aspects of their work were considered in isolation.

I invited the artists to work in the gallery for a period of time rather than simultaneously in different spaces. This was primarily out of consideration for the nature of the work, but also to provide a new approach to art work to Third Eye Centre's audience, particularly those who visit the Centre daily. **Michael Tooby**

**Jacki Aherne**



Beth Ridgell



# Geraldine Pilgrim

Geraldine Pilgrim talks to Luke Dixon about working methods, memories and future plans

An air of genteel voyeurism hovers about the work of *Hesitate and Demonstrate*. Their latest offering, 'Goodnight Ladies' (currently on tour and discussed below by Neil Hornick) is a collage of glimpses into other lives. It shows a world obliquely glanced at through the windows of passing trains, a world of elegant, furtive refugees, of Ruritanian romance, translated onto the stage with high definition theatricality and the iconography of early Hitchcock and *film noir*. It is a privileged view of lives and events of which we are given only hints, tantalising clues in the form of elaborate, stylish visual images.

The effect has much to do with Tom Donnellan's extraordinary lighting and the individual performances of members of the company. But criticism of the work inevitably takes on an *auteurist* stance, for whatever the collaborative nature of their work, each performance can be seen as the vision if not the creation of one woman, *Hesitate and Demonstrate's* artistic director, Geraldine Pilgrim.

Developed out of a partnership between Pilgrim and Janet Goddard, who has since left the company, *Hesitate and Demonstrate* has its roots in that most unlikely melting pot from which so much performance has come, the Yorkshire of the early 1970s. There, at Bradford under the tutelage of Albert Hunt and in Leeds where John Darling was on the staff of the art college, and with Welfare State roaming in a caravan somewhere in the background, much of the visual theatre, street performance and outdoor spectacle that characterised a decade and is still shaping a new one, was nurtured.

Pilgrim and Goddard went to Leeds Art School in 1972 and it was there that the work that was to become characteristic of *Hesitate and Demonstrate* began. At the end of the three year course, Pilgrim spent twelve months as a member of John Bull Puncture Repair Outfit with John Darling, and Mick Banks. It was to be the group's last season. Banks went on, via the Natural Theatre Company, to found British Events and train performing ducks. Darling gave up performing altogether and has only now returned, featuring in 'Goodnight Ladies' and about to launch a new and wonderfully named trio, The Bronte Brothers. Pilgrim co-founded *Hesitate and Demonstrate*.

It was over steaming mugs of tea, four floors from the nearest teapoon in the airy garret she inhabits atop a large pink house in the hinterland of Holland Park, that we talked to her.

**Luke Dixon:** Were you doing performances whilst you were at Leeds?

**Geraldine Pilgrim:** Yes. From the first year I arrived it just happened that our year was picked, maybe by chance maybe on purpose, in the sense that we were all interested in performance, which was extraordinary. We went into doing things which we didn't know anything about. We just happened to stimulate each other all the time. So I started doing one-off performances at the beginning of the course and then all the year formed a company called Soft Soap and we started touring that around as well. So most of the time was spent doing performance work of some kind.

**LD:** What sort of work was it?

**GP:** Well the first piece I ever did was set in a derelict house. I did a performance piece based around the history of the house, which I'd imagined, using people from the course and using a tape by John Darling — that was when we first started working together. That's what triggered me off on the idea of memories and atmospheres because this particular house was so evocative of different things.

**LD:** Has the development of the work to more obviously theatrical venues been conscious?

**GP:** It just happened really without realising it. Janet Goddard (co-founder of *Hesitate and Demonstrate*) and I started doing street

performances. That's really what our main work was at that point and basically we began to get a bit cold so we started working indoors as well. We did our first performance at The Oval while we were still at college — called *Monkey Puzzle*. And then we began to do a sort of dual type of performance. So in the summer we'd work outside and in the winter we'd work inside. The theatricality of it just grew bit by bit as we learnt more and more of the techniques and what it was possible for us to do.

**LD:** 'Goodnight Ladies' is extremely elaborate technically...

**GP:** In our inside shows the lighting and the sound are an integral part. Without them it wouldn't work, obviously, in the sense that we use them as the colours in our painting. We never think of them as separate even in the conception of the work. The sound is our script and the lighting is the beginning of our patchwork of colours. So in that sense we don't think about it as lighting a show. The lighting is such an important part of it that we just talk about it the same time as everything else.

**LD:** So how does a show develop? What's the starting point for you? Do you do sketches or write notes?

**GP:** Well, it always starts from one idea which is the base point and then we start working around it and we start building up the tape and thinking about different images. And we usually talk for about eight weeks: just sitting in coffee bars, sitting in each other's rooms because we don't have our own rehearsal space. And we just talk and talk. Then we go shopping and looking around, seeing something that might stimulate us into an idea or having had an idea looking for something to go with it. So it works both ways really. The objects being used are important either to stimulate us or else to use for the idea that we've had. Then we start building and that's when we start really thinking about other aspects of the show. Such as how we are going to see it in the space. We start doing little drawings. But because we're a touring company we never build it just for a specific space because it has to fit in anywhere.

**LD:** 'Goodnight Ladies' looks as if it would be a real bugger to tour around.

**GP:** It's actually a million times simpler than 'Do Not Disturb' our last show. We can do it in a one-day get in. 'Do Not Disturb' took us something like thirty-six hours to put up. So this is our simple touring set. Not quite as simple as we'd meant it to be!

**LD:** That must limit your touring.

**GP:** 'Do Not Disturb' caused us a lot of problems. This one we've done from York Arts Centre to De Lantaren. It actually expands and shrinks amazingly. Much more so than we thought.

**LD:** Do you have a fairly well established circuit of places you play regularly?

**GP:** We've got our old favourites that we've been going to every year, like York and Bradford and The Oval and the ICA. But we're also trying to go to new places that we haven't been before and it looks as though this year that is beginning to happen.

**LD:** When you went to Leeds did you go as a painter?

**GP:** I couldn't decide whether to go to drama school or art school and I decided that I wanted to go to art school and that I wouldn't think about theatre. Before college I used to work with a theatre group (in Putney) called Group 64. But I decided no, I'd stop thinking about drama and go to art school. I just put a pin in a map and went to Leeds. It was completely accidental that I went to somewhere that made me realise it was possible to do both art and drama. But I went to be a painter and started off painting and sort of have carried it on in a very minimal way.

**LD:** Do you still paint?

**GP:** Not so much as I would like to. My scripts are my paintings.

**LD:** There's almost no dialogue in 'Goodnight Ladies' and there was none in 'Do Not Disturb'. Are you ever tempted to introduce dialogue into the shows?

## Interview

**GP:** I personally hope not. Because I'm very wary of words in that sense. I mean I like words but I think there's so much literary theatre that it's much more exciting to try and do what you want to do without using words, and see if it is possible. I'm not saying we're not ever going to use words. One of the main reasons that we have a few words in this show is because we didn't just want to get a reputation for being the group that never uses words, because then we'd be terrified to open our mouths again. So we've started to try and bring words in, but it's at a very exploratory stage. The image is the most important part of the show. The visual aspects will always be more important than the verbal side.

**LD:** How much of a Hesitate and Demonstrate company is there?

**GP:** There's four of us. There's Tom Donnellan, the lighting designer, Lizza Aiken, Alex Mavrocordatos and myself. We're the four full-time members of the group. But we also have a family which we draw on such as Jan Hardisty and John Darling. John has been associated with us from the very beginning. So we like to draw on people that we know and who have worked with us before.

**LD:** And you're all involved in devising the show from the very beginning?

**GP:** Yes, absolutely. We spend a lot of time together talking and collaborating and working things out. As the remaining founder member I carry the style with me. I start it off and then we collaborate within the original conception of the show.

**LD:** You don't perform in 'Goodnight Ladies' yourself. Is this the first time you've not been in one of the shows?

**GP:** Yes! And it's awful. It's very painful not performing in it. It's a very interesting experience. I seem to get as much tension and nerves as I did before, but there's no way to get rid of that so I'm worrying without the outlet of that wonderful nervous energy you get from performing.

**LD:** Has it meant that you've had a tighter control on the show?

**GP:** Well, it's the first time there's been an outside eye. I think that's important because performing in it and thinking about all the other things began to get just too much and this time we decided it would be really good to have an outside eye. So I've sat outside and, for the first time, seen a Hesitate and Demonstrate show. So I think it's been very good for the company and for myself. But I do miss performing.

**LD:** So you're not giving it up entirely?

**GP:** Definitely not. No.

**LD:** How finished do the shows get? Is there a moment when you think, that's it, as you would with a painting?

**GP:** As soon as it got to the point of thinking it was finished, that is when we'd stop, because it would then become simply touring a show, whereas it's got to be a process of constant reassessment. So although 'Goodnight Ladies' isn't that different from when we did it before Christmas at the Oval, we have actually worked on it a lot.

**LD:** Do you particularly like period settings?

**GP:** I think it would be very easy to like period settings and to get stuck in them, and that's a constant battle.

**LD:** Do you go down Portobello Road and think, that would be really great, we must find a use for that in the show?

**GP:** If there's something very lovely then, yes, if it triggers off an idea.

**LD:** What was the starting point of 'Goodnight Ladies'?

**GP:** Well in fact the tape of 'Goodnight Ladies' was the tape of the very first show which Janet and myself ever did. And we only did it three times. It's such a beautiful tape it seemed a waste of time to just have used it three times so this was quite an experiment. What I decided to do was use an old tape and build a complete new show around it. So in this sense the tape was the original starting point. Obviously the tape gave us evocations and ideas we were able to work on. We explored Collectors' Corner in Euston where all those wonderful old train spotters' bits and pieces are, and then we just went shopping. So, for example, something like the old tin bath we found in a junk shop at the bottom of this road. It's very difficult to explain how we do it. It just happens somehow.

**LD:** There must then be editing and structuring of all the material.

**GP:** Very intensive editing and structuring. We always have a building week before we open and that's when things really get slashed and sliced and structured and rehearsed. And we begin to see what we've got and usually we only really see what we've got on the first night of the performance. After that first night, that's when we

really start work. But we build the picture during that week before the show. By that stage we'll have worked out certain images but because we haven't got our own rehearsal space we don't rehearse in that sense. The last two weeks before the show are the most intensive.

And panic stricken!

**LD:** Is there any concern for narrative or storyline?

**GP:** We always have a very strong story line for the company. Whether that comes across to the audience in its entirety we don't feel is that important. We feel that if there's a strong enough storyline that we've got ourselves then that is a line from which people can pluck what they want or imagine what they want. We always know some sense of the beginning, middle and end. It may be all jiggled up and juxtaposed but there's always a very strong storyline, a narrative line.

**LD:** Is the same true of the characters?

**GP:** Not so much so, no. We have shades of characters but as long as each character has their own image we don't do work on character. It's very much shadows and shades of different personalities. It's more situations with the characters than real depth of characterisation.

**LD:** How did the present company come together?

**GP:** I never audition, ever. People are often recommended to the company but normally I like to work with friends. Once Janet left it became more important to work with friends; to work with people who understood that type of work. It's a lot to do with being able to do nothing very well and that's a very difficult skill to have in that it's a performance skill rather than an acting skill.

**LD:** And is that something that people just have? Can it be taught?

**GP:** I don't know. I think some people have got it and some people haven't. I think that once again is a difference between performance and acting. Lizza has definitely got it. Alex has definitely got it. In fact all the people we've worked with in the past have had that certain something which is hard to define. It's a belief in what they're doing without feeling frustrated because they can't open their mouths to talk. The fact that the company is striking looking is in a way accidental. But it does help.

**LD:** Do you go and see other shows?

**GP:** I try very hard not to see other shows when we're working on a show. I've obviously always loved the People Show. They've been a very strong influence. The company at the moment that is strongest in my mind is Pina Bausch. Having seen her, suddenly the whole world seems to have opened up. You realise what is possible with 40 people on the stage. She is quite extraordinary. I just hope she comes to England.

**LD:** What about future plans?

**GP:** The next show we've got planned is a musical and it would be really nice — instead of dreaming about it because of lack of money — God, it would be nice to have six dancers that come on and go off, and only use them once maybe.

**LD:** Do you mind having to tour the shows?

**GP:** I would love one day to have a theatre of our own and to be able to do say three new shows a year. But the touring side of it is very important because of the excitement and the nerve-wracking quality of having to squeeze a pint into a tea cup. It means that the show constantly has to change. It *has* to change. But obviously it gets very tiring. Because venues are only able to give you very, very limited performing periods, it means the get in time is much, much shorter and what we don't want to get into is turning up, getting in, doing the show, getting out, without having even noticed where we've been. Because the environment we work in is so very important. We'd be very happy to do weeks at a time with a three day get in, but that's sadly cloud-cuckoo land in the present economic climate. But if we could have our own space it would be wonderful.

*Hesitate and Demonstrate Productions: May 77 Points of Departure  
Nov 77 Ha-Ha January 78 Horrid Things May 78 Minutes July 78  
Frozen Moments October 78 No Regrets April 79 Horrid Things  
(reworked version) May 79 Scars (first version) July 79 Scars (second  
version) Jan 80 Excuse Me (first version) March 80 Excuse Me (second  
version) Nov 80 Do Not Disturb Sept 81 Goodnight Ladies!*

# Night Train to Freedonia

Neil Hornick climbs aboard for an evocative journey



Hajo Piebenga

## 'Hesitate and Demonstrate in 'Goodnight, Ladies!'

I didn't see Hesitate & Demonstrate's 'Do Not Disturb' at the ICA last year. But when Tom Donnellan, the company's lighting designer, treated me to a quick-fire display of his lighting effects amidst their impressive environmental set, I resolved not to miss their next one. And so once more to the ICA for their latest touring show, 'Goodnight Ladies'. I was not disappointed.

A programme note sets the scene:

'Sleepless nights alone in unfamiliar rooms, days spent lingering in pavement cafes waiting for news. Are they being observed or is it only imagination? Emigres, haunted by shadows of their past, drift through unknown capitals of Europe, drawn towards their ultimate destination like moths towards a flame.'

On stage, as we take our seats, a tableau: A woman, her face concealed, embraces a man in apparent farewell, a suitcase by their side. A sonorous piece of music begins, Albinoni's Adagio for Organ and Strings, and as they slowly part company we're off on a mysterious journey through train compartments, cafés, hotel bedrooms and salons, a succession of almost wordless encounters conveying a paranoid magical world of suspicion, romance and skulduggery.

Orson Welles described film as 'a ribbon of dreams'. One way of describing this hour-long theatre piece which, happily, eludes precise definition, is as a cinematic dream-montage drawing on our collective impressions of mainly pre-war train-mystery-secret-police-European-spy films. Movie buffs will be thrilled by visual echoes of such films as 'The Lady Vanishes', 'Sleeping Car to Trieste', 'Shanghai Express', 'Night Train to Munich', 'The Secret Agent' and 'The Third Man'. But the notable achievement of 'Goodnight Ladies!' is that it manages to conjure up the spirit of these

films without directly quoting them, satirizing them or merely pastiching them. It is more evocation than *homage*, played straight, powerfully refined.

The iconography may derive from Hitchcock, Lang, von Sternberg and Reed but, to continue the cinematic notion, the charged elliptical encounters rather suggest the mood and style of Resnais and a touch or two of Bunuel: a crucifix sheathing a dagger, an elegant box slowly opened to reveal its surprising contents to someone on stage — but not to us.

The piece proceeds by a series of disclosures and transformations: a train-compartment door swings back to reveal a hotel bedroom; a vacated café table is suddenly illuminated by a toy train chugging around its perimeter, lights glowing in the dark; a passport official's table-top is lifted back to reveal a gaming-board on which the woman bids and loses her jewellery. The table top then mutates into a mesmerizing mirror. A red laser beam plays fitfully upon a lifted champagne glass and surrounding perspex slats to create a jagged spidery light-show of eerie inexplicable beauty and a cabin trunk is abruptly dismantled to disclose a portable aquarium! The show reverberates with such exquisite shivers.

John Darling, who also appears in the piece, provides a virtually continuous taped sound-track of mood music and SFX, including pan-pipes, cymbale, the Red Army Choir, bird-song and, of course, trains, while Tom Donnellan's lighting design is wonderfully incisive and selective. In fact, the carefully modulated sound and lighting are as much players in the piece as the four performers, all of them active elements integrated within a unified texture of visual and aural richness, the whole almost entirely unencumbered by dialogue.

## Feature

I have to admit that the few spoken lines gave me a feeling of slight deflation. Alex Mavrocordatos, for instance, with his dark, exotic and rather brutal features, looks very good as the central male protagonist but his voice is too lightweight, lacking the impact of his visual presence.

Towards the end, the fairly slow deliberate pace gives way to a flurry of fast-moving vignettes suggesting a nightmare intensification of the reverie. Then the woman wakes up in bed, apparently refreshed or relieved, moves slowly in brightening light towards the screen-windows at the back, which open before her, and leaves. Though there may be no literal story-line to *Goodnight Ladies!* its psycho-dramatic resonance strongly suggests women's liberation. Here's how it goes: a woman bids farewell to her lover only to find his spirit oppressively persists in the image of pursuer, spy, interrogator, border-controller and game-manipulator. This menacing masculine persona is multiplied via the extension of the image of heavy overcoat and sharply contoured trilby hat to two male accomplices, as ambiguous as himself. In one sequence alone does the male appear to be in thrall to the female as, reclining on the floor, he watches her bathe, slowly don black gloves, then rise to walk bare-foot in evening dress down a green carpet strewn with War Memorial poppies. At length, she awakes from her nightmare of pursuit and departs, free at last, it seems, from the ghosts that haunt her.

The archetypal chime is of a woman alone, menaced and violated by male 'agents' from whose dark influence she finally extricates herself by a simple act of will. At least that's the shape of the stain that showed up afterwards on my personal blue-tinted litmus paper.

And since we're venturing up this particularly rocky garden path, let's go a little further. Collectively created impressionistic pieces, though maybe plotless, are quite likely to express something of the state of play in the group dynamic of their creators. Is it too fanciful to suggest that, on one level, *Goodnight Ladies!* psychodramatizes an artistic journey (towards, of course, an unknown destination) undertaken by a creator intent on shrugging off dominant past male influences in order to articulate an independent female sensibility in control of its own artistic destiny? Well, it's just a speculation, in no way meant to simplify or even over-elevate a piece irreducibly rich in many associations. After all, I'm sure it's only mere coincidence that the name of *Hesitate & Demonstrate's* highly gifted Artistic Director is Geraldine Pilgrim...

After the performance I met John Darling (ex-People Show, ex-John Bull Puncture Repair Kit, now launching a new outfit, The Brontë Brothers) and congratulated him on his sound-track, mentioning that I was only a bit puzzled why he chose to use Gheorghe Zamfir's rather familiar theme music from 'Picnic at Hanging Rock' at one point. He told me that when he first put together the tape he didn't then know the Zamfir piece had been used in Peter Weir's film. Thus I came to learn that the sound-track for *Goodnight Ladies!* was originally created four and a half years ago for a completely different show by *Hesitate & Demonstrate*, their first, 'Points of Departure'. On this present occasion they decided to create another show on the basis of the same sound-track. From which I conclude that not only does *Hesitate & Demonstrate* have class — it also has chutzpah. My salutations, for a piece after my own heart.

**Neil Hornick**



Bob van Dantzig

'Goodnight Ladies!'



# Red Artists Threat?

Community Art is often attacked — most recent example the letters column of 'City Limits' — not so often analysed. Pete Shelton reassesses its contribution

There has always been a strand of artists, musicians, writers and performers who have formed a radical movement in the arts. Although rarely an identifiable group working in unity, there is a common ground which would probably be acceptable to all of them, and central in this is the belief that their artistic output could be a tool to create change in the world.

Until recently, however, the artist was limited to working by proxy. The artist's work wasn't *actually* changing the world, more it was a symbol of the change they sought. They could work with radical initiatives in form, which demonstrated their stance, or they could use their work as a vehicle through which they could express their views. Likewise, performers whose livelihood depended on the interpretation of musical or dramatic classics could lace these works with heavy irony.

Experiments in form run very much in tandem with the development of the radical movement. After all what is the point of creating a new form, other than the fact that existing ones are no longer capable of expressing new ideas? This is visible in the emergence of contemporary dance, in "cut-up" experiments in literature, and the whole movement away from classics towards artists being their own authors. But far as these manifestations have stretched the limits of their art forms, the artists are sooner or later faced with the problem: does it work? Does the radical stance taken by the artist change the world?

Now, I'm not opening this can of worms in order to disparage the work of these artists, nor to come to an undisputable conclusion. It's an open question. Rather, I want to portray the radical movement in the arts as something that doesn't stand still, as an area that requires constant experimentation with forms and objectives, and look in detail at just one of these.

First, though, let's just have another quick peek at the problem. Assuming that at least part of the objectives of the radical movement is to see greater influence going to those who have little, to see those who have been disadvantaged traditionally in our society having a more audible voice and access to power, to see society restructured (depending on the artist) on a scale that stretches from lukewarm liberalism to outright anarchy — how is it possible to create work that will have an audience only in the top social brackets? Of course every-

one *talks* about wider audiences (best joke so far: the Barbican Centre believing it has great relevance and a potential audience in the East End) but much of this is mere lip-service to a trendy idea. Maybe some people can honestly say that by working for the most influential portion of society they can persuade them to hand over that influence to those who were not born with it as a right. Good luck to them. But, not surprisingly, it is this issue that is the snapping point for many radical artists. For them it is simply not possible to create work for twenty per cent of the population

when their real concern lies somewhere amongst the other eighty per cent.

From those who have sought different solutions two movements have been established. They are Arts in the Community and (yes, you guessed it) Community Arts. Arts in the Community is a very loose amalgam which includes artists in residence, street theatre, local arts centres, community theatre and arts workshops. What they have in common is nothing more than a desire to practice their art for the benefit of a wider, or different, audience, though all have more specific in-



# Music in Performance

Playing their lives — Val Wilmer talks to Marguerite McLaughlin about women and jazz

Kathy Stobart



**Marguerite McLaughlin:** Can you explain why in your writings you've criticised the use of the term 'jazz'?

**Val Wilmer:** The word 'jazz', what it meant originally in its first remembered use in America was a synonym for fucking. A lot of the early music was played in brothels though not as much as some books claim, and also in gambling joints in places like New Orleans. So it seems that white people began to refer to it as 'that fuck music, that dirty music'. Well 'dirty' can be used as a compliment too... In my understanding of it musicians themselves, black people that is because I think of it as a black music form, have always referred to what they play as 'music', the word jazz wasn't used. There was a short time when the word jazz might have been used by black musicians, but not at the beginning and certainly not very much today. In the wave of Malcom X and the '60s black consciousness and black nationalism in America, there was a deliberate move among black musicians to change the way the music was referred to. 'Jazz' was seen as, whatever its possible origins, a white man's word. As one person once told me: 'We were told we were Negroes, we're not Negroes, it's not our word, we don't want it and we don't want 'jazz', that's a white word. It became the feeling of the movement generally so musicians started to identify their music as black music, Afro-American music which is a term used in America a lot but not used in this country very much. It became absurd anyway to use a term like jazz to identify music that is so diverse. The pressure on the people who create the music was put on them by the white media to conform. It is a form of black people's expression, I feel, that is possible for people all over the world to play. Max Roach, an American drummer, called it 'The true music of democracy'. Some people when he said that thought it was the wonderful backdrop for the American Dream. What he meant was that it can express the mood and the life situation of any individual that plays it. If you were to pick up a horn and play it now, you would be expressing what it is like for you at this stage in your life to play. But as soon as white people start talking about the universality of the music it's like saying isn't it all wonderful we're all members of the human race, we're all brothers and sisters and, you know, let's all hold hands and conveniently forget about who invented it and who and for whom it continues to be a major form of expression and also a major form of resistance. Far be it for me to put down white people who play, who are sincere about what they are doing. It's just

when people start claiming significance in the music without acknowledging its origins. What became clear to me when I got older, having listened to the music from my early teens, was that there can't be any other form of artistic expression in the world which is criticised by a group which is so different from the group that invented it. You can argue that people writing about boxing, if not boxers themselves, might learn to box. That could apply much more to me as a European woman writing about Charlie Parker in Kansas City in 1940. It was pretty extraordinarily presumptuous of me. And it reflects the way white people have in a sense attempted to control the music. Of course they *haven't* managed to control the music in any part of its history — the music continues. One of the most interesting things about this music is that when magazines and journalists are looking around for a story they'll bring out the old stories and there's one called 'Jazz is Dead'. Somebody says jazz is dead every five years. One time I was talking to Billie Harper (saxophone player) and he said 'Yeah jazz is dead, it really takes me out when they say that. That's like saying the black man is dead, and that's ridiculous because blacks are alive, are alive.' And it's true you can't change the people and you can't change the music either.

**M McL:** How did you reconcile your interest and your writing about 'Afro-American' music as a white English woman? Weren't you challenged and asked 'How can you say, how can you know?'

**V W:** You don't question it when you first get into it. You find something that you like. Obviously it's the arrogance of our people as such that we didn't learn that what we're doing is telling another race of people 'This is how your music should be'. You become politicised through experience, as I did, rather than anything else. Meeting black people continually from all over the planet, from all walks of life, not only musicians. I find that a lot of white people who write about music, the only black people they know or have met would only be musicians. They would judge a race or group of people by the musicians they met. But because I met the families and friends of musicians and I began to know all types of black people I learned about the black movement in America as it developed, people became more political and the era changed. That experience and my own politicization as a woman (discovering the women's movement, etc.) has affected everything I've written in the last ten years. Before that I used to write criticism.

**M McL:** You've talked a lot about the music in America, what about the musicians in this country?

**V W:** What about the musicians in this country? I know what you're coming around to...

**M McL:** Is there an English jazz? Or is it as you say that people 'play their own lives'?

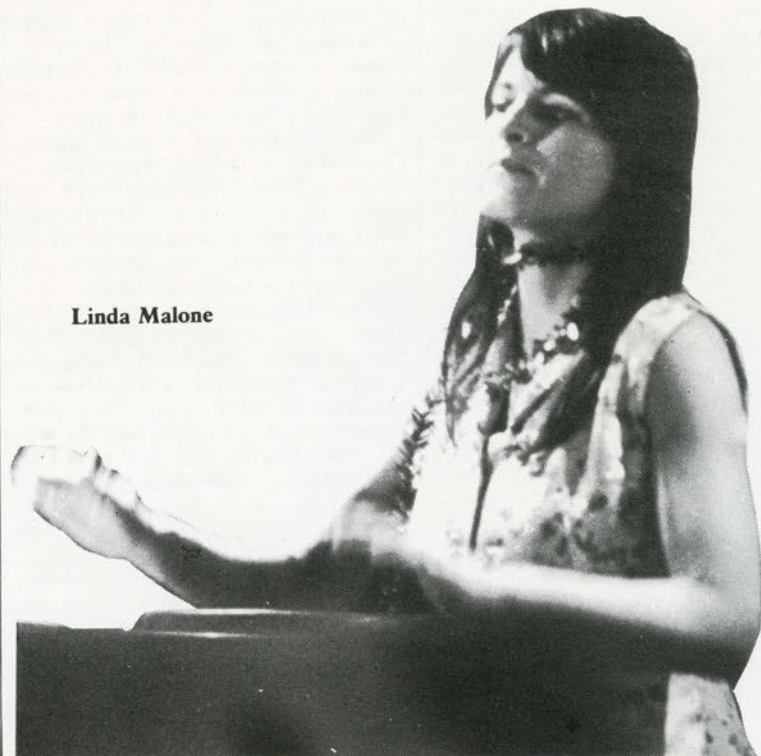
**V W:** As long as they don't take too much credit for inventing the stuff. You get musicians in this country who are arrogant

about what they play but others are world class musicians. There will never be the proportions of world class English musicians to Black Americans.

**M McL:** And the role of women in jazz?

**V W:** There have always been women playing 'jazz' for want of a better word. For instance in New Orleans in the early days some of the arrangements which were written down rather than head (learned) arrangements were done by women because they had had the opportunity of training in the church or at a college or something. Lil Armstrong who played for the King Oliver band and married Louis Armstrong was quite an important arranger in the twenties. There have always been women musicians but like women painters and so on they haven't been remembered. They've been written out of history. When you talk to male musicians you'll hear women's names mentioned in bands but women weren't promoted as musicians. They were expected to be singers or pianists. But there were saxophone and bass players but they've been written out of history the way women always have been. In the last ten years, as you know, women have just emerged out of the woodwork in this country. A lot of women have been attracted to playing jazz since it allows more freedom for self expression than other forms of music. For a lot of women the more macho image of rock music has been quite off-putting. Women might be attracted to something powerful with a little more thought behind it rather than throw themselves around a stage with a guitar. That's not to knock women who play rock music but 'jazz' does require a

little bit more thought and practice, in my humble opinion. When I first started listening to music I assumed, like most people that music was something that men did. Women were singers, pianists and we all knew women sometimes played violin and cello because we'd seen them in symphony orchestras or playing chamber music. But it never occurred to me to ask why there weren't more women musicians. No matter how interested I was I never thought about playing music, only much later when I thought I'd like to there was the thought that I might not be good enough. By then I only had time to be better than men at taking photographs and writing. You felt you would have to be better than men and God knows I had to be better at just taking care of myself and walking down the street than men had to be. Ten years later I knew I could be as good as any woman and not worry about men. I suppose I was a feminist a long time ago but we all needed the theories to back it up. I think example is very important. That's why this women's season will be wonderful because it will remove the excuse for not knowing who the women are playing jazz in this country. And most of this Drill Hall line-up is local in the sense that many of the musicians are not known outside London except for people like Kathy Stobart who grew up playing in big bands and played in Vic Lewis' band and who has guested with Ted Heath. And people like Irene Schweitzer who is a pianist from Switzerland. And of course there are lots of other people who wouldn't or couldn't play in this programme and women playing in rock bands who *all* need to be better known.



Linda Malone

# ReviewsReviewsReviews

## London Round-Up

In a ramshackle room, tucked away above a pub in Notting Hill, lurks what is probably London's only genuine *theatre de poche*, The Gate. The absurdity of the venture has not diminished even though Lou Stein, its American founder and chief mover has now turned his attentions to a new Gate south of the river. Gate productions, in a space that would not comfortably house a game of bar billiards, have never been less than epic and the show that went in there whilst Stein opened in Battersea with 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas', was in the tradition of the place — the English premiere of Len Jenkins' 'Limbo Tales'.

A success at Westbeth in New York and winner of an Obie, the play demands the greatest of technical sophistication and the most elaborate of resources. It had neither at the Gate in Michele Frankel's production but by pushing every scrap of equipment further than it might reasonably have been expected to go and bringing in a handful of holograms, it was made to work. Never can so little have been used to so great effect.

The play falls into three parts, each a monologue, linked by a master of ceremonies who delivers the central monologue himself. It was John Schofield we saw first, on a two hour drive to meet up with a woman who might or might not be driving in the opposite direction to meet him. In a mesmerising performance, driving his car as if suspended in space from his shoulders, Schofield acted out his road-movie drama with the aid of a hard-board roadway and little models. His rambling thoughts as he drove, were interrupted by the recording of notes for an anthropology lecture on the Mayan concept of time to be delivered the following day. All pretty bizarre.

And then the compere came on to describe the acts that he would have booked if only he had had the money or the Gate the reputation. This was a grotesque and disconcerting verbal freak show: the wax works of a bombed Japanese town; Count Orlov, the transparent man and the human balloon, impersonated for us by an unsuspecting member of the audience. Disturbing stuff indeed. And all he had to show us after all was the mechanical fly made by a watchmaker in Bremen and swatted by the Emperor Maximilian. 'It's never worked since. Hardly worth showing you really.' And he didn't, merely rattling the matchbox which contained it.

Lastly, the ripest slice of Americana. A man in a hotel room with no wife, no children and no job ('and this isn't the Depression so there's no excuse') was beset from outside by an army of unseen voices:

the writer next door woken with the dream of Kubla Khan in his head and tapping away to get it on paper before he forgets; the person from the Porlock Lightening Rod Company who disturbs him with his offers of protection from 'the ravages of wild electricity'; the girl abandoned by lovers or pimps; and the landlady who will not leave him alone ('if you're jerking off it's \$3 extra'). All heard through cheap cardboard walls.

The three characters are creatures of the night, suspended until dawn or something blacker lets them go. 'There's no need to check out,' says the landlady, 'I'm crossing you out of the book. There. You're gone.'

It was a tacky triumph to bring off this production in this space with these resources. The acting — Ray Charleson, John Schofield and John Sessions — was extraordinary. Schofield is familiar to followers of the Crystal Theatre and the show had that mix of bravura, stylish writing and surreal striking visual effects that has characterised their work over the years. It is rare to see a piece of theatre so visual yet so densely packed with words and it was something of a coup for the Gate and Michele Frankel to have secured its British premiere.

But the economics of such a production must make no sense whatever. The little pub theatres of London survive only by dependence on large amounts of subsidy (the Bush), impecunious idealism (The Gate), an open door policy to itinerant companies up from the country (the Old Red Lion) or a mixture of the three. I doubt whether, even in the present climate of financial stringency, such venues are actually doomed but they are certainly being eclipsed by a new generation of larger, more financially viable spaces.

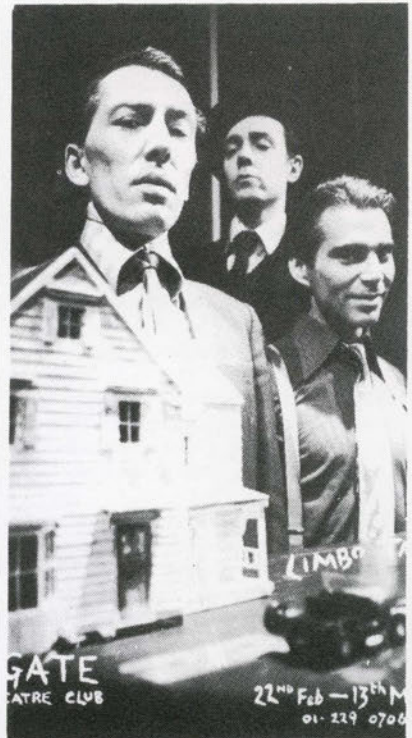
The Drill Hall just off the Tottenham Court Road is one of these. National Theatre of Brent turned up there with 'The Black Hole of Calcutta' and played to large and largely hysterical audiences. For my taste the company have stretched their original idea as far, if not further, than it will go, and to anyone who had seen either of the show's predecessors, much of the material was familiar. But the techniques have been refined, characters developed and with its red floor and back drop, oriental screen, aubergines and chapatis, the production was very good to look at. The audience — shrieking with delight before even a word was uttered — were clearly getting the good time they were after.

With the Drill Hall now a permanent fixture, the Almeida opening on a full time basis in the autumn and the Collegiate renamed the Bloomsbury and clearly re-vamping its image and its programming, there is now a circuit of middle scale theatres quietly altering the face of the fringe. Such theatres have a potential that

has hardly been explored in London. But they need to be programmed with great astuteness if all those seats are to be filled night after night. The risks are bigger, but that much more exciting. A hundred people at the Bush means a handful of punters having to spend the evening in the bar. At the Drill Hall or the Bloomsbury they look lonely. The Tricycle still has not pulled off what these other venues are just beginning to attempt. 'Blind Dancers' which went into the Tricycle trailing clouds of Canadian glory was a duff play given no help in its direction but with a couple of performances that themselves made the two hours interesting, but not interesting enough to pack the punters into the spaces between the scaffolding.

But the most uneconomic theatre of all must be that curious phenomenon, the lunchtime show. It survives, seemingly untroubled year in year out, and Sue Jamieson's odd-ball thriller 'Rabbit in a Trap' turned up for a lunchtime season at the King's Head after two successful evening runs at the Oval. By the time it reached Islington, if not before, the production was decidedly slapdash but there was much to relish in the writing including, for my money one of the best lines I've heard this year. Passing up the offer of a joint so as to dash home instead and feed the pussy, one of Ms Jamieson's characters opines, 'There's nothing worse than going home stoned to a thin cat.'

Luke Dixon



Limbo Tales

## La Ronde Drill Hall

After seeing the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Arthur Schnitzler's now infamous 'La Ronde' I had passed the play off as somewhat shallow, its present popularity due only to the Box Office pull of "Sex on Stage".

The Aldwych's analogy between the happy waltzing couple of 19th century Vienna and a not so jolly sexual merry-go-round happening in the shadows was a pretty weak affair. Shared Experience's performance of the same play at The Drill Hall, however, made a deep impression. The company showed what can be produced by putting a lot of thought into the interpretation of a script. The play is basically a 'round' of couples, one from each pair moving in to the next scene with a new sexual 'partner' — the inverted commas betraying the fact that it was hardly a partnership of equality.

Playing all the scenes with the same two actors was a brave and highly successful idea. For no matter how often the hollow epithets of foreplay were introduced we did get deeper into character and situation as each new scenario arose.

Shared Experience's production saved the play's reputation for me. It was no longer a cautious look at the undone seams of society, but a rather powerful comment on outrageous hypocrisy regarding sex and women.

The RSC shocked me visually — with Omo-white knickers being pulled down by insensitive, grabbing hands, and fucking taking place in barely dimmed lighting — but Shared Experience brought out the subtler shades of outrage. Emphasising such situations as the young wife meeting her lover in rented rooms and continually protesting her refusal — yet helping him remove her clothing — the company exploded many myths by ridiculing their perpetuation. In a male-dominated society you either play the game or get nothing?

The woman in each couple was made to play out a variety of male-dominated figures of fantasy e.g. the seducer, the innocent, the mother, etc., and the production finely reflected a society in which a woman's plea for power over her own sexuality was completely ignored. The play is about sexual tactics and though at first it appeared that this production was pointing up their one-sided nature — man the boorish and callous hunter, with woman the inevitably overpowered prey — it also made us aware of the finer strands involved.

The women were forced into situations where they 'used' the men to get what they wanted — an ambition which was never fulfilled because it was as narrow-minded as the male goal. The relationships in each case were forced down to a level of 'If you say you love me I'll let you fuck me'. The female obsession with 'being loved' was superficial and shallow precisely because they had never been allowed to think in



La Ronde

terms of equality and mutual respect between the sexes. Women had a 'role' to play and they had to get what they thought they wanted by working through it.

Within the context of drama this dual level of 'acting' is a subtle device and one which was brilliantly effected by actress Pam Ferris. She projected her personal strength through each 'role-play' scene so that her portrayal of the different women was laced with tensions still present in the 1980's as well as their historical roots.

The idea of role-playing was further underlined by various devices such as the actors introducing each scene and the parts they were about the play in it. One brilliant touch was the way they returned to opposite sides of the stage at the end of each scene to re-costume for the next. We were able to see them return to their 'real-life' selves and cross the stage to help each other in and out of their clothing — a stark contrast to the unfeeling, disrespectful way the clothing was removed 'en scene'.

The play contained some extraordinary nudity and these scenes were played with an innocence and naivety that was quite moving. The actors — the man was played by Jonathan Hackett — gave to the play an astonishing purity and sensitivity in an honest and open performance. Unlike the RSC this production used blackouts during the actual sex scenes which underlined the fact that, after all, this was the least important part of the action.

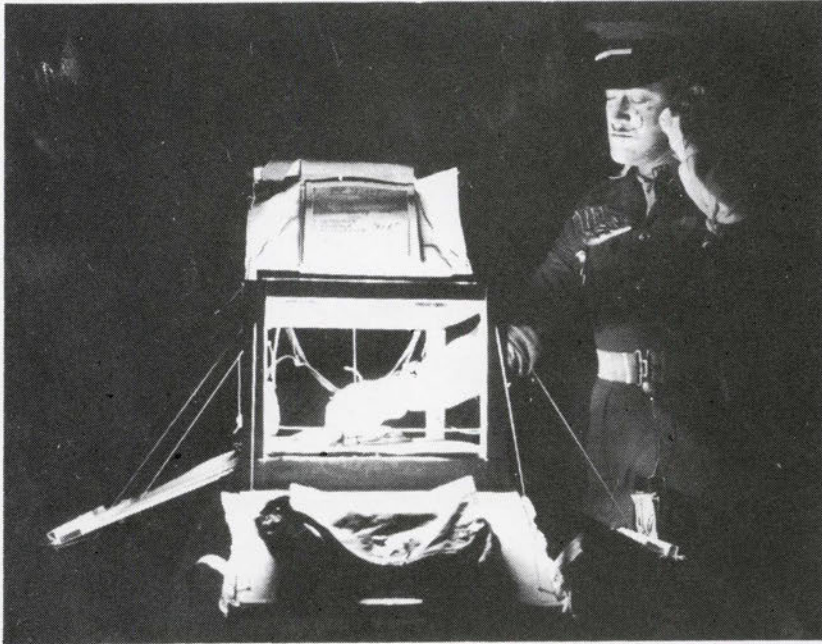
Liz Stolls

## Forkbeard Fantasy Goldsmiths/Theatre Space

Discerning tastes in performance have recently had two opportunities to sample distinctive offerings from the fraternal psyche of Forkbeard Fantasy. Within the space of a month, London audiences have been able to see pieces in two of the styles that make up F.F.'s repertoire of delights and surprises: the large environmental piece and the self contained touring show.

Such are the difficulties of finding a sympathetic venue willing to make time and space available for an installation that a solicited space from Goldsmiths School of Art became the venue for the second and final manifestation of the Library Show (the first display being at the Tower, Winchester). Environment isn't quite an accurate description since it suggests an immersion of an audience into a transformed situation. Installation is a better word. This style of show remains an observed spectacle despite its being extended through exploitation of the chosen space and the use of pre-performance events and preambles.

Thus, a shuffling queue somewhere in the depths of Goldsmiths received their library tickets and turned a corner to encounter a strange trio engaged in frenetic activity by Anglepoise-lit twilight. Distinguished author Desmond Fairybreath



Forkbeard Fantasy

(Tim Britton) took this rather wonderful opportunity to distribute free, autographed volumes while the balaclava'd caretaker (Chris Britton) extended a lugubrious welcome with a vicious looking date-stamp. Mr Fairybreath's agent (John Schofield) looked rather unusual in his bewhiskered, besuited bemusement. Eventually, Fairybreath stood before his invited audience and, spotlit before a white backdrop, thanked them a zillion, trillion times. A handy scalpel from his jacket enabled him to evade the glare of the publicity by slicing gingerly through the backdrop. Magically, the bleeding cloth whisked up and away to reveal Fairybreath aloft in his observatory, waving and blinking at the stars. Beneath him, the cavernous body of the library extended. Rickety shelves and shaky pillars of books marked out a domain that, with its gadgets, cubby holes and rude carpentry comprised the adventure playground of the personality which makes up the characteristic Britton brothers situation. With the appearances of John Schofield as a manic browser, and the caretaker in positively liverish mood, the dramatis personae was now complete to play on the swings and roundabouts of triangular conflict. It soon became clear that where he should feel most at home, Fairybreath was not highly regarded at all. In fact as a Bunterish wimp he was easy game for the unsubtle bullying of the caretaker and the rasping malice of the browser. Their cumulative beating of his brow precipitated a loosening of the bowels and he was mercifully dispatched to the smallest room. His later incarceration in a builder's-yard-cum-wastepaper-basket brought the house down in a *fin-despectacle* cataclysm that is a lastnight F.F. speciality. The shuddering subsidence of shelves discharging their contents into a littered mess on the floor formed a gleeful

celebration of exultant chaos and glorious catastrophe.

A very different sight greeted the visitor to Theatre Space to see what "The Cold Frame" had in store. In the midst of a swept and gently lit space stood one such frame, solid and attractive looking with its hinges and catches, picked out from the surrounding darkness by a white lunette backdrop which suggested both the gardener's utilitarian whitewash and the nightmare flutterings of a giant cabbage white. Tending the frame with loving care was ex-secret agent Taylor (Tim) whose rotund and gaberdined appearance indicated his espionage exploits to be firmly in his past. Interrupted by a tic-like squeak and other assorted fidgets, he recounted his efforts to resuscitate his backyard from wartime destruction, settling finally for an old cold frame — which still would not grow anything. And then... blackout! Taylor was thrown into whimpering terror as portholes opened on the cold frame, it's own lighting apparatus extended and the lid of the frame cranked open as a giant quadruple chinned Colonel Blimp emerged. A zip fastener on his chin released a more human sized Major Britton (Chris). Taylor's proud possession of all he surveyed was now usurped by this military man who produced boxes and gadgets from the depths of the cold frame like a magician drawing rabbits from a hat. Taylor was press-ganged into serving as a guinea pig for the Major's experiments. A giant join-the-dots picture tested his creative ability while public speaking was examined by flooding Taylor's face with a constant stream of water caught in a giant bib — a liason between Mothercare and Chinese water torture. Twenty questions and a stint with a fairground shaky-hand tester reduced Taylor to a nervous wreck until the unthinkable happened. The

Major ran out of instructions. In the ensuing crisis of the soldier's *raison d'être*, Taylor managed with all the pluck of a Little Englander to drop in a command for self-destruct. The Major and all his works were returned thus whence they came. The show ended on a complex emotional note with a pacified Taylor shrugging off his mistreatment in a "Now, as I was saying..." mood. Satire on storybook endings of the 'Biggles Wins Through' variety contrasted with a genuine celebration of Taylor's luck and heroism. The final sight of a bumbling, beaming Taylor soliciting approbation while exuding pathos had a singular poignancy.

The area of experience explored by F.F. has suffered from two sources: one being critics who settle for easy descriptions of surrealistic tomfoolery and the other artists who seize on absurdity as a *carte blanche* for chaotic discourse. For although the Britton brothers are happiest entertaining (and provoking!) a responsive audience, it is a complete misjudgement to see their work as being only a humorous, absurdist look-at-life. F.F. is marshalled by obsessions — not gratuitous neurotic pursuits but the continuing interests of a unique cultural outlook. A whole world is offered to our view. Miniatures and models reveal a world animated by tension and threat, turned upside down and peopled by cartoon personae. At its heart lie the essential elements of personality which reach outwards and suffuse the piece as a dye colours cloth.

Phil Hyde

## Bread and Puppet Riverside

They are indeed something of a legend. Along with the San Francisco Mime Troup and El Teatro Campesino, Bread and Puppet are one of that tiny band of American performance groups whose work is famed and spoken of in places it has never been seen. But the reputation of the company was forged more than two decades ago and burnished in Britain with a memorable visit to London and the Mercury Theatre, in the heady days of 1968. There have been occasional return trips since then and it was to Riverside that they came in festal mood this Eastertide to present 'The Story of One Who Set Out to Study Fear' and sadly to show that the company capable of glistening *événements* in 1968 is now more than a little tarnished.

Though the opening procession, with a large, crude, *papier mâché* sun slung aloft, hinted at a much earlier age of theatrical experience, the folk theatre references were all too swiftly displaced by a vision of time-warped sixties. With its rustic simplicities there was an almost deliberate perversity about the roughness of the production. Though directed by Peter Schumann, the group's founder and father figure, the performers were all of a new generation, some of them doubtless unconceived when Bread and Puppet first began their mission

of telling the world that theatre is as much a staple of life as bread.

But the years have brought no refinement of skills to be passed on to this new generation of players, only an ability at approximate recreation of past glories. How different from the work of the San Francisco Mime Troup who were to be seen at Riverside only a few months before.

Adapting a Grimm tale about a boy's strange quest for something that will make him truly know fear, the company employed full head masks, three-quarter size body puppets and undisguised actors to tell their story. It was a mix of conventions fashioned from motley sources, none of which convinced me of a positive relationship between each performer and his puppet. The dolls were used as props, accessories for the performers, rather than as repositories of created character. Though the series of static tableaux which characterised 'AH!' the show which the company presented at Riverside a couple of years ago, had here been replaced by a swiftly moving narrative, the storyline remained pretty impenetrable to adult eyes let alone those of the children at whom the marketing would indicate the show to have been aimed. In puppetry technique and story-telling ability companies like our own Bubble Theatre — certainly no legend but with their Japanese show last year doing fine work — or even, if it is rough stuff you want, Covent Garden Community Theatre, are doing work as interesting and more accomplished.

But then Bread and Puppet is more than mere entertainment. The company engage in performance as a way of life, as a political force, as a form of communion. Politically this was that currently most familiar of performance beasts, the Anti-Nuke Show. And lest we should have failed to grasp the point a curtain-raiser in the foyer spelt it out for us.

The performance ended with the blazing yellow sun, somewhat battered by international touring, being replaced by a blackened giant bearing the letters IT. 'This is it!' the apocalyptic figure vomited on a piece of card. There was a bang. 'Now I am afraid,' said the boy as he and the company with him fell into the contortions of death. Then, one by one, building steadily into an energetic counterpoint the cast sang the words 'He who has an ear let him hear'. The message, in a striking ten minutes that eclipsed all that had gone before, was delivered.

And as if to confirm the quasi-religious nature of the experience a couple of loaves of wholemeal bread were broken and passed amongst the audience. Like so much else in the show it was done with none of the conviction that would have made it a forceful statement.

Guerilla theatre such as this might well still work in the fields, at fairs and on city streets but amidst the radical quiche of the Riverside Studios it was little more than a casual, bygone curiosity. **Luke Dixon**

## Optik Theatre Jacksons Lane

Optik visited Jackson's Lane in February with their first piece — One Spectacle — and returned a month later with Second Spectacle. As the titles suggest both shows are companion pieces, staking the company's claim to its own distinctive style.

Both shows are in fact essays in theatrical style — a formidable presumption for a new company. Second Spectacle concerns itself with narrative. Following Godard, the show could well be sub-titled 'fragments of a play' as there is no smooth dramatic progression. One story dominates, that of the disappearance of three Wellsian type scientists at the beginning of the century or thereabouts. They eventually all turn up for a reunion in some post-industrial landscape that could pass for a jungle, but is much more likely to be the now derelict film-set from some long-forgotten tribal movie.

Filmic references seem very important, though none are specific — this is definitely not 'spoo' theatre. More a question of spectacle mingling with analysis, to borrow once again from Godard. The overall style of Second Spectacle reminded me a lot of his early films in its use of contrast, concreteness and ambiguity.

There are moments when the work is clearly still in transition or development. A three-handed scene in a totalitarian environment of some kind seemed over-long, or perhaps wrongly placed in the overall composition. Other moments hit

**Bread & Puppet Theatre**

the theatrical nail on the head with a very sure hand.

The opening scene where three scientists in underwear set off on their voyage through time to the lament of the crump-horn (played live incidentally) is beautifully composed, with a chorus number — 'Is there anybody there?' — delivered with nicely inappropriate Edwardian gusto. Music plays a key role throughout, nearly all live except for a ten minute tape sequence, and has an impressively wide range, from a sort of soft rock mood music to German lieder.

As one might expect, it is the approach to humour that gives the work its particular 'Optik flavour'. It is clearly going to be one of this company's main claims to distinction. Highly economic, underplayed, a quality I happen to like, it is always deftly timed. A young man sits on his suitcase, stranded on the stage — the archetypal traveller, sales rep and tourist rolled into one. To the strains of the lushest of pulp emotion sung and played by the two musicians ('Love is sweet pleasure') the non-hero eats his snack, takes a photo or two and generally turns inertia into something with a strangely rivetting kind of significance.

After these two pieces Optik are no longer newcomers, and will be able to move on from stylistics and turn their technique to more wide-ranging subject matter. The title of their next show — Short Sighted — suggests they have this in mind. If they do make the jump from theatrical questions to larger issues we could be in for something very exciting indeed. **Caroline Hardy**



## Media Arts Group Paton Gallery

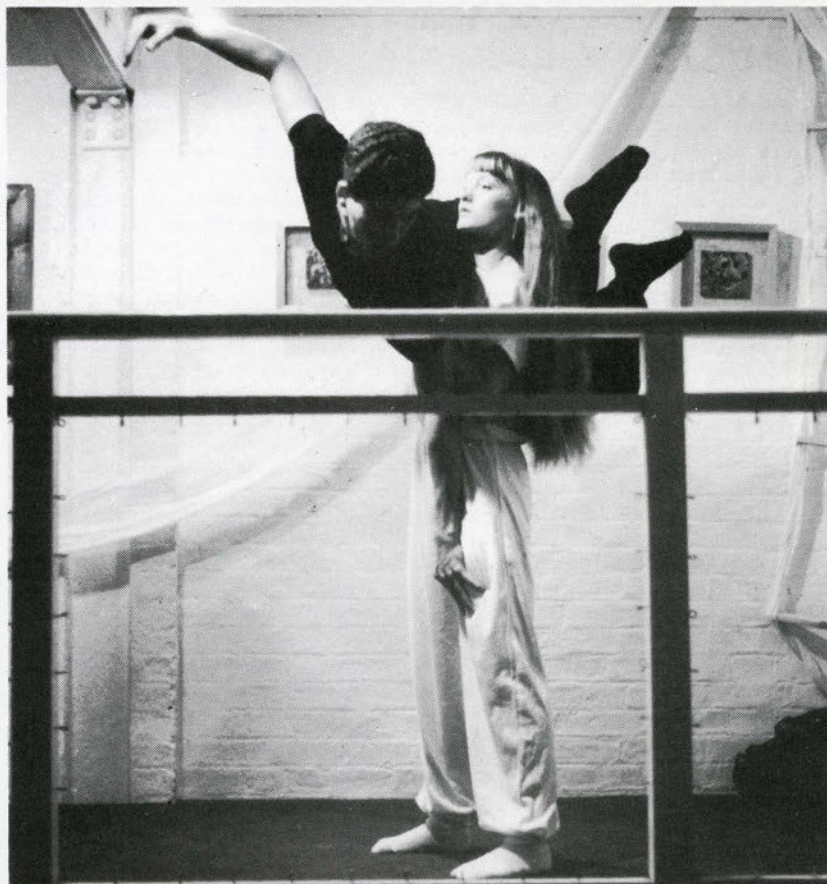
If the streets of London were ever to be paved with gold, then Covent Garden would surely have hand-sculpted slabs of platinum. Money talks and in W.C.2 the streets are full of the merry chatter of shops and winebars servicing a world of chic and clique. Blending in perfectly with the new Covent Garden ambience is the Paton Gallery, a fashionable gallery of the sort that used to be more at home in Cork St., but is now more than content to eke out a VAT inclusive existence not a stone's throw away from the old fruit market.

It was consequently quite a surprise to see a new company, the Media Arts Group, overcome the confines of this bijou setting to present a vigorous, stimulating work entitled 'Two, Three or Four..?'. The M.A.G. is a mixed media company whose primary discipline is dance. Choreography is by Michael Petry whose studies in New York with Bill T. Jones influenced a move towards performance art and an image conscious use of the body.

Working with three other dancers, his piece occurred on the groundfloor and basement of the Paton Gallery but mainly on the stairs and landing that link the two. The evening unwound in three parts. The first established a clear framework; A writhing black plastic bag ripped open to show a child clutching and grasping for life. The child was then greeted by the mother, descending the staircase. Soon it was displaced by the father and left to watch from the side as mother and father entertained each other. Furious with jealousy it interrupted and was dragged upstairs for chastisement, a lumpen bundle of spite. Oblivious to domestic duties, the father continued in his preening, self-satisfied way, finding time to play with the brat until both meet an untimely end effected by the mother driven to distraction.

The second and third episodes were repetitions of this scenario but with the difference that in each set, the dancers exchanged roles so that the four parts of mother, father, child and bystander were rotated between the two male dancers (Michael Petry, Jonathan Barker) and the two women dancers (Lynn Morley, Avis von Herder). As roles changed, one had to work hard not to be overwhelmed by preconceptions established not only by life in general but in previous episodes.

The choreography sustained by these conceptualisations was no less interesting. Petry's repertoire of movement is full and varied. By contrasting earthbound forms with reference to the classical canon that seeks to uplift and extend, he achieves an interesting vocabulary of meshing and blending floor movements with sweeping movements that have plenty of air. Of note also was the complex, bold lifting that, when executed at speed, gave a sense of



Media Arts Group

danger in the confines of the stairwell, rickety bannister and all. At a slower tempo, suspension and deposition of body weight proved a subtle metaphor for caring affection. Occasionally the stock of new ideas ran thin giving way to cliché (the writhing black bin liner that reveals the developing child) and the occasional lapse into pantomime seemed to jar with the clear physical expression. The music for tape compilation and baritone saxophone by Marc Fraser was enjoyably economical, in particular a tortuous *sostenuto* passage imitating the child's colic. Simon West's interpretation of the score avoided the obvious excitement of squealing harmonics, preferring considered phrasing. He ed reticent about coming upfront when required.

It is to be hoped that this company will continue to work together and push their exploration of non-dance spaces into more challenging, risky situations. The cloistered gallery space seemed a bit tame despite their gutsy animation of it. There was an extraordinary quality of precision about those talented dancers with sweat breaking on their brow and fighting for breath, plummeting from wall to wall and springing into space. And not one expensive picture frame was broken.

Phil Hyde

## Duel Duet Ikon Gallery

'Duel Duet' is the generic title of a number of performances being undertaken by Fiona Templeton throughout 1982. Each will be the outcome of a collaboration with another performer and will take its shape from her relationship with her partner. Future 'Duel Duets' are planned with Julian Maynard Smith, Glenys Johnson; Anthony Howell and Peter Strickland. For the Ikon her partner was Miranda Payne. The piece had already been seen at the Theatre d'Hoogt, Utrecht, and will be seen later this year in New York.

As evidenced by the title, the piece touches on paradox. It is a process of enquiry, juxtaposing extremes of confrontation and cooperation to see what clues can be thrown up about the dynamics of a relationship. Working in the basement of the Ikon and making clever and playful use of the lift shaft, the two women explored a number of situations using an old reel end of newsprint as their main source of props and costumes. A naked Fiona Templeton clad herself in this raw material of Fleet Street with all the unselfconsciousness of a child at a dressing up box. She scrunched the paper around and about herself to emerge with the cumbersome profile of an origami samurai gone wrong. This elevated to paper tiger, she challenged her partner, clad in a skimpy paper wrapabout. With scrumpled giant cones serving as socks, hat and gloves, the unavoidably



humorous impression in a uniformly solemn and sober piece was of the Ku Klux Klan reduced by the recession to disposable ceremonial robes. On a more probable note, the image of the cone again suggested a child's world with the overtones of a dunce's cap or a classroom geometry model.

Eventually, introductions and costumings done, the two protagonists performed their interaction. Their relationship drew more from the striving of a duel than the harmony of a duet. The two squared up to each other then clashed in stomach to stomach collisions reminiscent of a mediaeval joust. Paper brickbats were exchanged and a sinister hide and seek developed around the lift shaft. With the assumption of the two performers and their battle scarred remnants via the lift, the audience were left in a bare and deserted gallery. The performance ended in silence as it had occurred — broken only by the occasional phrase, cough or clatter, intruding as ephemeral emissaries of the everyday.

The world it had revealed was one where the rule of stressful, minor emotions held sway. Here there was sibling competition, sulks and spoilsports. Guilt maintained a thin hold on wilful demeanours and turned the gleeful enjoyment of waste and mess, into the furtive and anxious disposal of the masses of torn paper created throughout the performance. This was a world of take-it-or-leave-it friendship and niggling enmity — not here the pain of adult confrontation but the fractious whine of quarrelsome contention. The burgeoning personality, trapped in egocentric pursuit and driven by whim and mood, was the topic portrayed by the artists' actions.

Phil Hyde

#### Duel Duet



## Boogie! Mayfair Theatre

'Boogie!' (or is it 'Boogie Woogie Bubble 'n Squeak' — the programme is in two minds about the show's title) is a chronological survey of singing female trio acts from the forties to the seventies. Seven groups are impersonated with high-camp satirical relish by Leonie Hofmehrer, Sarah McNair and Michele Maxwell, all graduates of Cape Town University and alumni of the Market Theatre Café, 'Johannesburg's first multi-racial arts centre' where the show originated. Since half the programme is devoted to black trios, you can't help wondering, in passing, why *Skirted Issue* is an all-white company. Still, it's a simple but effective format, mercifully free of the sort of hokey character dialogue interludes that marred 'One Mo' Time'; it fits snugly into the Mayfair Theatre's intimate auditorium, and it offers the welcome chance to see how much musical and presentational fashion has changed over the years.

It's not quite a historically exhaustive survey. I'd like to have seen The Boswell Sisters get their due as the grandmummies of popular vocal trios. A white group with strong jazz links who sometimes cultivated a Southern sound (this was the era of Homes in Caroline), they were influential precursors of the better-known Andrews Sisters, whose greater fame in the forties owed a lot to the war, the movies and the expansion of the record industry.

But *Skirted Issue* make a striking beginning with Patti, Maxene and La Verne Andrews, reminding us that those broad-shouldered comrades-in-arms really did swing. The truly opulent style begins in the fifties, according to 'Boogie', with the heavily furred and bejewelled McGuire Sisters, a more disdainful feline image of gals who expect to be pampered, wined and dined. Fifties Bubble 'n Squeak is represented by Britain's only home-grown trio of any popularity, The Beverley Sisters (one of whom, as I recall, was actually called Bubbles), blonde and blue-eyed dolly girls, all flounced skirts and foamy petticoats. The coy gestures are right on the button but *Skirted Issue* don't quite manage the Beverleys' sweetness of tone, instead endowing them with a false debutante-like refinement of accent. The Beverley Sisters, though often saccharine, were not upper-class tweets. Their basically homely middle-class appeal is more aptly captured when the trio don rubber kitchen-gloves and head-scarves while singing 'Mr. Wonderful'. This conveys the right flavour of wholesome Green Belt domesticity. The first half of the show ends with some hyper-dramatic doom-laden ballads from the mean and moody Shangri-Las, including 'Leader of the Pack' and a rendering of 'I'll Never Go Home Any More' that pulls out all the emotional stops with maximum impact.

Part Two is devoted to all-black trios — wisely the team refrain from blacking up — with Sarah McNair's low throaty voice, in Part One notably off-key, coming more into its own. The Supremes and The Three Degrees epitomize the high-gloss supper-club style. With the final group, The Pointer Sisters, we come full circle, since they sprang to fame (originally as a quartet) via a repertoire based on forties nostalgia and a vividly camp sartorial style. Their flamboyant costumes, until they settled down into their more moody soul-orientated mode, combined early post-war and contemporary chic. By the way, their vocal masterpiece, 'Salt Peanuts', is scheduled on the programme but disappointingly doesn't get sung.

I wasn't crazy about the low-comedy upstaging and catty jealousy jinks in the Supremes routine, and their habitation of a single connectively linked dress is an idea that goes back to Tom O'Horgan's production of 'Hair'. But in general the numbers are well-staged, with detailed, inventive and well-drilled movement by director Stuart Hopps. Costume changes are wittily effected — choreographed on-stage musical happenings in themselves. And there is a very nicely-judged finale, the three chanteuses re-appearing in simple white dressing-robos to sing a number new to me, 'Suffer little Sisters to be beautiful till the end' as, in perfect unison, they wipe off their glittering make-up with cold cream and tissue to reveal their shiny unadorned faces beneath.

It's an endearing ending to an often exhilarating entertainment which only lets itself down badly in its backing slide show, by turns heavy-handed and half-hearted. The Andrews Sisters sequence, for instance, gets the crudely ironic treatment: in 'Oh, Johnny!' the line 'You're not handsome, it's true' is backed by a slide of a badly wounded soldier; for 'The Three Little Fishes' images of Hitler, Hirohito and Goering; for 'Lay that pistol down, Babe' the atomic bomb. And there are some feeble cartoons, including one notably tasteless 'Gay Lib' gag.

'Oh What a Lovely Second World War!' it certainly ain't. Nor, despite the programme notes consisting of a (fine) quote from Virginia Woolf and a sturdily righteous summary of women's changing social status since the forties, does 'Boogie!' pack much feminist punch. Despite the polemical trimmings this is essentially a good-natured cabaret-style entertainment which leaves the brow pretty-well unfurrowed throughout.

Finally, let's ask: whither the Singing Sister format? So far this musical genre has remained firmly in the mainstream showbiz camp, a vehicle mainly for big ballad-belters and flashy dressers. However, there are signs of a new direction with the current popularity, in America at least, of The Roches who have rejected the brassy high-gloss image in favour of a fresh faux-naive odd-ball style distantly related to the GTOs (Girls Together Outrageously), one

of Frank Zappa's short-lived production ventures of the late sixties. The Roches are humorously winsome originals who write their own material, actually play musical instruments and cultivate a baggy-trousered charity-shop sartorial style far removed from the narcissistic glamour modes represented in 'Boogie!' The future of the female trio perhaps belongs to them. Take it away, sisters!

Neil Hornick

## Performance Week Leicester

In staging their events between an art gallery and a pub, the organizers of Leicester's 'Performance Art Week' unwittingly located the poles between which much British performance has ranged itself in recent years. The week's eight performances and three films also presented a considerable range in terms of style and, less fortunately, in terms of quality: at the one extreme Lol Coxhill's music like an elaborate and brightly coloured toy in the sunshine, at the other Square Leg Theatre's embarrassingly under-rehearsed 'Work Makes Us Free.' Alongside this, the week also demonstrated the range of performance's potential toughness, if I can call it that. Performance is a medium that can swagger confidently in an area that it works out for itself, somewhere on the boundaries between art and life, taking in gallery and pub as it were. The Leicester audience was treated to examples of that. But performance can also often be so fragile that it will crumble before your eyes. Arriving on time for Andy Smith's 'Not Necessarily Together' to find him talking his assistants through their lighting cues just about evaporated any poetry that he sought for his piece and revealed a sad and unsuspected appropriateness to his title.

An experience like this is not only disappointing in relation to the particular piece you're there to see, it's also irritating in terms of what might be thought of as the responsibility artists owe one another. Performance still has to prove itself so far as many members of its potential audience are concerned, still has to win consideration as a serious and legitimate area of art making. It doesn't take more than one or two poorly presented pieces to persuade this potential audience that no, it isn't worth the bother. Though artists are at liberty to choose just what language they're going to use, technical competence in that language is indispensable. This is as true of performance as it is of any other medium, and to forget this is not only irresponsible, as I've suggested, but also to reveal a lack of confidence in the importance of art. This may sound a little harsh, but the sort of failing I'm referring to is, I'm sure the artists themselves would usually admit, signalled quite obviously within the work itself. Using the format of a studio recording of a ludicrous television quiz show, Square Leg Theatre sought to deal with a number of serious social issues. Most of these were lost however in the technical

failings of their performance. First, the characterisation of the show's master of ceremonies just didn't come off. Those execrable men are already parodies of good humour, and the Square Leg Theatre's nervous and ill-prepared attempt at caricature fell well short of what was needed. Second, one of the performances's main devices, the constant interruptions to the taping of the programme caused by the mistakes made by the show's contestants in reading their cue cards, was obscured by the fact that there were so many genuine mistakes and interruptions. Whereas serious concerns can skitter quite persuasively across the table top of a more polished performance, when things go as badly wrong as they did for Square Leg Theatre on this unfortunate night, they just sit there leaving embarrassing dull sticky rings.

So, to something rather more optimistic — Brendan Charleson and Robert Mc Gregor's 'Work', Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron's evocative all-day celebration of spring, or the perspiring salesman of Peter Wilson's 'Made to Measure'. Wilson's one-person performance, part lecture to young recruits to the sales force of a gentleman's outfitters, part dialogue between salesman and customer, part apparent reality, part undoubted fantasy, formed half of what was without doubt the week's best evening. The other half was provided by Roland Miller, in political saire mood, as Ronald Reagan at breakfast. With a Cruise Missile deon hanging from the front of his pyjama trousers, Miller's Reagan wheezed, stuttered, and clutched grotesquely to a needle-stuck-in-the-record soundtrack. Just like those greased presenters of television's celebrations of mediocrity and greed, Reagan is already something of a parody, already an overblown caricature of himself — a fact suggested by how eerily life-like (if that's the right term) the shiny plastic Reagan head that Miller wore was. Miller, like Peter Wilson had done earlier in the evening, carried his performance because his characterisation went just that right amount further than the real thing. The gulf between this and Square Leg Theatre's attempts at something similar was vast.

A successful evening then, but even here a pessimistic note. In the main, and I add that reservation to distinguish Peter Wilson, who is in any case establishing a considerable reputation as a painter, the week's best performances were those presented by artists whose names are not only best known, but which were established some years ago. Though no one could sensibly have expected extravaganza from a modest few days of performance in a provincial English city, they might well have expected the turning up of some fresh talent. Leicester's 'Performance Art Week' didn't really do that. Hopefully what it might have done was provide the precedent for an annual event.

Robert Ayers

## Ariadone Roundhouse

The Ariadone Dance Troupe was formed in 1974 by choreographer Kó Murobushi and Carlotta Ikeda, who is the lead dancer in this, 'the only all female Buto dance troupe'. According to the programme, Murobushi studied under the true founder of 'The Dance of Shadows' before himself founding *Dairakuda Kan*, 'one of the major off-shoots of Buto Dance.' But, forgive an ignorant Occidental for asking, just what, exactly is Buto Dance? Is it a variation of Imperial Bugaku dance (Yes, I consult my aging copy of 'Theatre in the East')? Unlikely, since the dancers don't wear masks. And their near-nudity suggests another influence: Japan's all-girl musical comedy troupes.

Not that 'Zarathustra' could in any way be construed as musical-comedy. The performance consists of eight 'Tableaux', solos by Carlotta Ikeda alternating with group dances by a six-woman *corps*, the final tableau involving all seven performers.

In the first tableau, 'The Palace of Dreams', a nude pasty-white supine body, legs tautly spreadeagled, slowly jerks into life. In the second, 'The Umbrella Dreams', two identically dressed courtly ladies, their heads masked by sunshades suspended over them by means of long sticks carried by attendants, meet and confront each other in a series of extraordinary mirror movements. In 'The Forge in the Forest' ragged creatures huddle together, cavort, and pound the ground like the apes in Kubrick's '2001'. The figures suggest primitive creatures, destitutes or disaster victims. In 'The Ritual Sacrifice: The Beast' Carlotta Ikeda crouches at the front of the stage, her hair wild, her body rotting with disease, eyeing the audience like a caged animal or imbecile. From time to time she gnaws at her own rotting flesh, tearing off bits and chewing them. It's quite a virtuoso routine, mesmerisingly grotesque. In 'The Witches Season' the women scabble and plunder, laugh uproariously, try to claw their way out of their seething body-pile towards the audience only to be pulled back by another emerging creature. And so on.

What's it all about? A programme scenario details a highly classical theme and development, invoking dream, myths and fairy-tales, the world beyond, the Gods and animal ancestry, Ariadne, the Bacchantes, the Serpent, the Sphinx — and Nietzsche. But while this scenario provides a possible aid to understanding the conceptual story-lines of the dances, you don't need it to appreciate what's actually happening on stage — where a more contemporary myth seems to be enacted: Children of the Ashes. For the creepy imagery and movement inescapably suggest the convulsions of nuclear holocaust victims rather than Nietzschean

super-humans. And there's another even more recent association: the crippled hand postures, the bodies lying suspended on platforms high above the stage, the vulnerable nakedness and tight-fitting skull-caps are very reminiscent of photographs of the Minamata mercury-pollution disaster which contaminated fish and left thousands of people horribly brain-damaged, deformed and diseased.

The dancers use their faces like masks. The action often has the slow measured pace and minimal movement of No Theatre, as well as No's capacity to spring sudden dazzling surprises — witness the moment in 'The Umbrella Dreams' when the two wayfaring ladies suddenly fling handfuls of white pellets at their feet. The influence of Martha Graham, Ikeda's teacher in 1964, is also apparent in the carved emblematic postures and reliance on classical models as generative narrative sources. And when the women slowly haul themselves across the stage there's a distinct reminder of Peter Brook's 'The Ik', that other potent expression of communal extremity.

The music used is an eclectic mix, including original music by Goto, and works by Keith Jarrett, Eric Satie and, I think, Jean-Michel Jarre. It's great to hear some of these recordings issuing through the Round House's mighty speakers — Keith Jarrett's piano-playing resonates almost symphonically. But there is one major lapse of judgment when, for one lengthy group sequence, the wishy-washy voice of Roger Waters (Pink Floyd) is to be heard singing 'Cry Baby Cry'. An agreeable number in the film for which it was originally written, the British documentary, 'The Body', in this context it drastically punctures the magic so far achieved, setting off too extreme a stylistic distance between itself and the choral movements of the troupe. Suddenly the show looks like one of the cheaper sixties group gropes. And there's one further loss of concentration when Ikeda, clad in a scarlet period gown performs a protracted solo that had me glancing at my watch a couple of times. Come to think of it, considering that 'Zarathustra' runs 105 minutes without an interval, nearly every tableau goes on just a little bit longer than need be.

But though the show does make demands on one's patience, it is, in the main, of intense, hypnotic and unsettling beauty, and its curious, even mischievous, choreography often revises one's vision of the human body. At times wonderfully exotic (the sunshade encounter looks very oriental and very ancient) 'Zarathustra' furnishes images of potent unclassifiable strangeness: the six creatures convulse in unison like a mutated girlie chorus-line; Ikeda's muscular white back undulates on the ground like an animated rock formation. The final tableau is magnificent. Seven white bodies, naked except for G-strings and head-caps from which long-hair braids protrude, slowly shift and turn in fixed positions as slim streams of salt steadily pour onto the stage, in yellow light. The

dancers turn their faces toward this golden rain, then turn again to crouch before us like a row of miniature Sphinxes as the light brightens and music — Ligeti's 'Atmospheres' — thunderously soars. It's utterly breathtaking, and the final kneeling curtain bows of the troupe accompanied by a Satie Gymnopedie, makes a perfect envoi.

'The Sphinx or the invocation', explains the programme note. 'The static force and the salt forever falling. In Japan salt is used in ritual celebration to purify birth and to exorcise death'. That's as may be, but once again you can't help picking up the ashy odour of nuclear fall-out. Whatever else it claims to be, 'Zarathustra' creates a sickly climate of post-nuclear deformity, disease and mutation, its sub-human creatures striving for survival and salvation in a state more of agony than ecstasy. Murobushi's 'Zarathustra' may end in purification and obeisance but one might be forgiven, for reading the entire work as a weird and wonderful ritual dance of death, more like an appeasement of the gods than an assumption of their powers. A grisly exorcism indeed.

Neil Hornick

## SEM Ensemble ICA

The ICA recently saw a return visit of the SEM Ensemble from Buffalo, USA, as part of a European tour. The group, formed by Czech-born flautist/composer Petr Kotik, consists of five vocalists (three sopranos, tenor and baritone), two flautists, one doubling bass flute, a cello player and a violinist doubling on viola. The performance lasted five hours and although the ICA publicity generously advertised that 'the audience may come & go at will,' Kotik in his introductory comments tried to discourage those present from doing so, adding 'the audience has to work... but not much really. It is not entertaining music.' Certainly an unusual way to introduce a performance.

The evening's music, entitled 'Variations' consisted of three pieces by Kotik: Many Man Women (1975-78), text by Gertrude Stein; Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking (1978-82), text by Buckminster Fuller, and Chamber Music (1981-82). Each piece overlapped the next. In 'Many Many Women', the singers and instrumentalists always played or sang in pairs eg the two flutes, the two sopranos. The music is divided into sections, and each pair may begin a section at any time. Once started, the section is to be performed to its end exactly as written, then the pair may wait as long as they wish before going on to the next section. Thus, a constantly changing texture was created as pairs of musicians entered and dropped out. The textures and sonorities are also governed by the fact that all the duos are written using only the intervals of the perfect fourth, perfect fifth and octave between the two lines. The effect is im-

mediately one of a kind of plainchant, especially as the 'melodies' move generally to a note nearby, and the metre is regular and never changes. Any meditative feeling this might evoke is dispelled by harshness of sound, rawness of texture and the nature of Stein's texts, generally bemoaning the ordinariness of existence.

'Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking', written in a similar manner — using only 'perfect' intervals and with certain rules governing the beginning & the ending of sections — was altogether more lively. The piece made a freer use of monody and of more expansive lines and the playing and singing was generally more expressive, matching the emotive charge of Buckminster Fuller's 'We can make boring robots, but we cannot make thinking, loving, life', and the references to Polynesia and to Viking & Japanese sagas.

Kotik seems to have succeeded in producing a true 'New Music' without saying as much. His work stands on its own, neither truly modal, tonal, atonal and serial nor improvisational. Though it clearly owes a debt to early liturgical musics, it is characterised by a total absence of phrase ending or closure (ie cadences). This in particular gives it a deep and probably intentional quality of unfulfillment.

Robert Schuck

## Delado Liverpool

Dynamism and high spirits were the keynotes for this afternoon workshop and performance by Delado, Liverpool's home-grown African dance and drumming group. Add informality and a packed audience ranging from eight months old to eighty years and you start to get a sense of the occasion.

An immediate rapport was established with the audience. By the end of the afternoon, proceedings had taken on the feel of a festive social gathering rather than a conventional performance and teaching situation with people sharply defined into performers and spectators. In fact, the barriers that usually permeate Western European culture, dividing dance as art from dance as a social activity and high art from popular culture, were nowhere in evidence. The dance was performance, entertainment, participatory and above all fun.

First the dancers and drummers came on in their street clothes and presented one of the dances in the repertoire, a simple boy meets girl story. The women entered in single file, circled around the space and danced together. The men strutted on and after a peacock display were chosen by the women and the couples danced off. This was a straightforward story with movements that seemed equally straightforward until audience members found in the subsequent workshop that they involved complicated co-ordination and isolation of the muscles of the pelvis and stomach. Groups

of people learnt the dance they had just seen. Others were introduced to the language of the drums. Whilst some participated, others watched and children ran about, threading their way between the dancers, none of whom were at all inconvenienced.

Delado concluded by showing four Ghanaian and Nigerian dances which followed each other in quick succession in an energetic performance, beginning with the courtship dance with which they had opened. The drum under the exuberant master drummer beat out intricate cross rhythms which formed a vital accompaniment to and integral part of the dance.

Although they have only been in existence for under a year, having come into being through a project by Steel 'n Skin in the now infamous summer of 1981, this group of young Liverpool Rastafarians gave a commanding performance. From the courtship dance the pieces grew in complexity of movement and interaction between the dancers. The culmination was a hunting story. The women danced the roles of gatherers of crops and the men with spears and shields displayed their athletic prowess as they stalked their quarry; leaps, splits in the air, spins with the axis on one hand and the body stretched out parallel with the ground. A demonstration of agility and macho vigour that derived as much from the Liverpool streets as from the dancers' black African heritage.

Delado have built up a strong popular following as they perform around the local schools and the music circuit. Despite a

lack of professional polish, which given their extreme dedication they are bound to develop, the quality, verve and spirited nature of their work is such that I hope the group will be seen outside the community from which they have grown. As the graffiti might say, African dance and drumming is alive and well in Liverpool 8 — and should be exported. **Gillian Clark**

## Pastorale ICA

Unique amongst the multifarious departments of the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Art Department actively promotes events of its own devising. It mounts exhibitions, owns a major collection of painting and sculpture, and even makes movies. In general Arts Council films are worthy documentaries about artists, not necessarily British and not necessarily living. But very occasionally something out of the mainstream has been tackled and there have been a handful of films about live performance.

The first of these, and now a valuable if little seen record of the early pioneering days, was 'The Performance Art Film' (1974) which featured the work of Lumiere and Son, John Bull Puncture Repair Kit, Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron, and The Phantom Captain. Ian Johnson's films 'The Phantom Captain Appears' (1979) and his *reductio ad absurdum* of the complete works of Ken Campbell 'No Problem' (1981) have followed, along with

a documentary about the work of Common Stock Theatre Company.

Now David Hutt has directed a film about, of and around Trevor Wishart's music/theatre piece 'Pastorale'. In its original form the piece is a complex, erudite critique in theatrical and musical terms of the creation, the Judaeo-Christian myths surrounding it, and in particular a dialectic on the ideas expressed by B.F. Skinner in his book 'Walden 2'. The film takes the form of an interlinking of excerpts from the performance itself, with comments by God (Mick Banks) on the performance, comments by B.F. Skinner (Banks again) on God, and comments by Wishart on Skinner, God and his own performance. Complex, not to say baffling stuff. Obscure but good to look at.

The pleasures of the film derive in large part from Banks' impersonation of the deity. In the original theatre piece Wishart himself appears as God, a manipulative, *deus ex machina* controlling events as a silent magician. Banks, chin thrust forward as he strides around the grounds of Harewood House in his most severe manner, irradiant in silvery evening wear, has been given a much expanded role and one which he takes to with droll relish.

As an illumination of a particular performance, a commentary rather than an integrated entertainment in its own right, the film is somewhat baffling in isolation from that performance. But it is a challenging and enjoyable three quarters of an hour and an intriguing appetiser for the live event.

The ducks were trained by Bert Smart.

**Luke Dixon**

tentions, and virtually all of them have been actively developing new forms for their work. Community Arts, on the other hand, has a clearly defined set of objectives, and a much greater sense of identity. More interestingly, it is, in theory at least, the most radical expression of the arts. It has gone further along the road of experimenting with form than any other artistic field. It is impossible for Community Arts to function without a re-definition of arts and the role of artists, and it is for this reason that I am concentrating on this movement here.

In a nut-shell, Community Arts is concerned with work with groups who are "educationally, socially or environmentally deprived". In reality this can mean anything from council tenants to residents of closed institutions. There's nothing amazingly different here from Artists in the Community. Where Community Arts differs is that instead of creating work for these groups, it creates it *with* them, not just in the sense of listening to their ideas and incorporating them into a finished product, but also giving them the tools so that they are equal creators with the artist, and putting the media of communication in their hands.

If this sounds wonderfully idealistic and totally impractical (and there's obviously the good, the bad, and the indifferent in Community Arts as in anything else) it is worth remembering that even though the movement is relatively young, community artists have been working for fourteen years or more — and you don't keep going in the big wide world for that long unless you've got something that people want.

So far, so good. But I'm sure many of you will be wondering why this subject has cropped up in these pages. When Community Arts is mentioned the image that jumps to mind is that of a mural. Some of you will have seen posters printed in a community printshop, and a few of you may have made use of darkrooms and video resources from a community media resource. But I doubt if many readers will have come across performance based community arts, even if they knew it existed. Two points here. Firstly, yes it does exist, and there is a growing number of people wanting to work in this area (a fact that must be due to some extent to the increasing importance of performance at art colleges, and the existence of general performance courses). Secondly, I'm glad you haven't come across it before.

This might seem like a funny thing to say, but it's said in compliment rather than criticism. Rumour has it that the street sales of *Performance* aren't doing so brilliantly in Moss Side and Brixton, but it's precisely places like these — and there are many more of them that don't hit the headlines — where community artists should be working. Once again, it's a point of principle. If community artists were getting high acclaim for working in galleries or fringe theatres they wouldn't be working with the people they want to work with. So in a sense, invisibility is a good thing. In another sense it isn't. As a radical movement which seeks to be highly influential in forming the shape of arts to come, it needs the same degree of coverage and publicity as any other campaign.

Not surprisingly, the press Community Arts does receive is of the order "Red Artists Under the Bed", and bitter controversy seems to erupt whenever the name is mentioned. There is no reason to suppose that the controversy will subside, so for those who want to pick their way through the mine-field it is worth looking a little closer at some aspects of the work itself.

Let's take an example. Suppose it is a tenants association wishing to organise its

first community festival, and an initial enquiry has been made to a performance based community arts team. The difference from preparing any other form of performance is evident from the outset. Whereas a performer will start from his or her ideas, the community artist will be trying to uncover ideas, themes and people who are likely to be committed to a project inside the community. In the final product the artist may not perform at all. The terms of the project will determine this, not the artist's whim. In planning, the kind of considerations running through the artist's mind will be "how can the planned event contribute to longer term change on the estate?", "will this group stay together to promote future events?", and "will the energy created by the festival be usable in campaigning, for example, for better facilities on the estate?" When themes and prospective projects are discussed the functioning of the partnership is most visible. As people called in from outside (performance based community arts is invariably more mobile than a community printshop) the artists will be challenging the group to achieve a clear and coherent statement from the work done together.

But what about this partnership? The prickly question recently surfaced: why should a working class community want to jump into bed with middle-class artists? In a sense, community artists are providing a service. No-one needs to use that service if they don't wish to, but like so many other specialist services, if you want it class status is irrelevant. Ever heard of anyone not going to a doctor because he wasn't working class?

As with any other performance project this type of work requires considerable preparation. As well as the work the artist needs to do in terms of his or her own planning, the community artist is *also* going to do the major structuring and preparation *in situ* with the community. For most performers, contact with the public begins at the performance, for community artists the real work is done before. This is not to say the finished product is unimportant — it is — but any work that is dependent on the contribution of the community, and isn't just a sham of audience participation, is bound to put its

greatest emphasis on the process of creation.

The form the project takes isn't likely to be a purpose built model that can be taken down off a shelf. The question of the most effective media for reaching an objective is probably more pronounced in this area than in other fields of the arts. Not surprisingly, when the range of potential projects is so great, artists working in this area have had to become specialists in a wide variety of communications media. Whilst one project might lead to a videotape that the community will want to use to promote a case, another may require the artists to become completely immersed in every aspect of creating a festival: procession, environment, publicity and continuity — both creating an effective festival, and showing how arts activities can enhance every aspect of it.

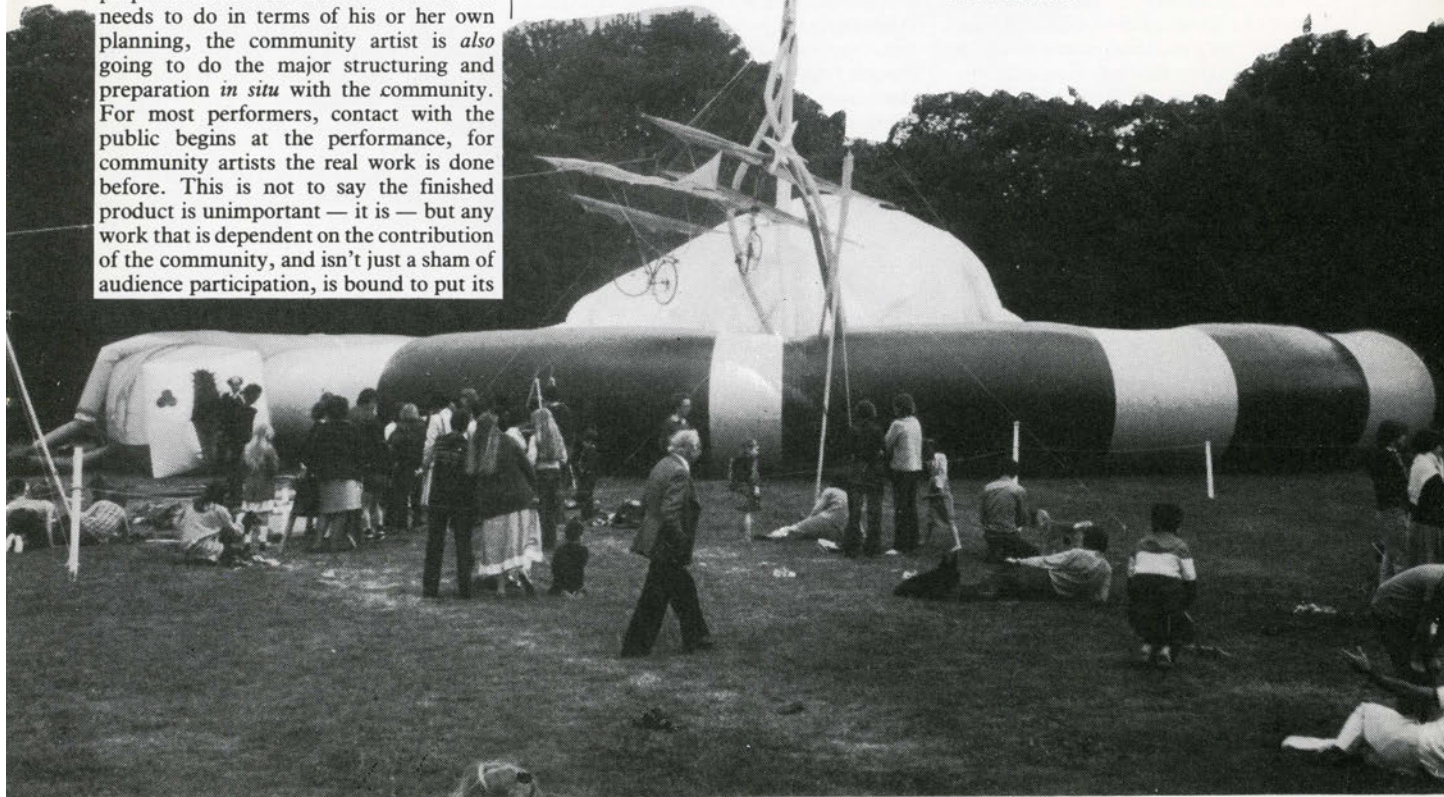
Indisputably, these projects are *fun*. That's not to say that the product lacks serious aims, nor that it is entertainment rather than art. The process of creating work together has to be enjoyable — or no-one would want to do it. For this reason the preparatory stages of a project draw at least as heavily on techniques of creative play as they do on the arts. There's nothing peculiar about this — *in* preparing a performance any performer is in fact making use of play both in the creative imagining of the performance, and in improvisation and working with objects. Community arts allows everyone to partake in this experience.

And the proof of the pudding? In its own terms community arts can only be effective

if its work leads to social change. Community artists certainly aren't so naive as to believe that one or two projects are going to create a major transformation of society. They are some of the most practical people around. What they can say, and with justification, is that they have developed an area that otherwise just would not exist. They have developed projects which in many cases have had a much greater significance than just the use of arts, and that people for whom arts had no relevance have acquired, through community arts, the tools with which they can make a definite influence on their world. This is no mean achievement. On the other hand, this is still only true in a few small pockets — there aren't that many people and groups working in this area, and good work takes time. Also, many of the best conceived projects may simply not work. The number of unknowns the community artist has to work with are far greater than any other artist. They are still working in an experimental area. As well as the test of time there is one other major factor that will determine the success or failure of the movement, and that is the attitude of artists. There will always be artists who wouldn't touch anything like this with a barge-pole, equally, there will always be radical artists who will have to find their own answer to the question of how their work will be most effective. Depending on their answer we could see Community Arts flourishing — or we might see the emergence of completely new initiatives.

To my mind, at least, it will be considerably more interesting watching these developments than reading the kind of coverage the press gives Community Arts at present.

Pete Shelton



# London's Dance Crisis

London has no venues good enough for world class dance.  
What's being done?

**D**ancers like, and need, to work and if they can't they will look elsewhere — to Europe and America. They will be forced to leave — that is what they fear and that is what is beginning to happen" *Val Bourne, Dance Umbrella*.

London's claim to be the dance capital of Europe is becoming a joke. There may be plenty of excellent dancers, choreographers, and companies — but the stages where they can perform are negligible. This means that the big companies like London Contemporary Dance Theatre and Ballet Rambert are forced to squash on to the stage at Sadler's Wells — in Rambert's case the smallest stage on which they are asked to perform in Britain — and the smaller companies are left with the choice of either not performing in London at all or presenting work out on the fringe of the city in inadequate venues.

At the Royal Opera House — where life one would have thought was rosy — there is now danger of a dance 'brain drain' as principal dancers are forced to sit idle while opera takes precedence in the programming schedule.

For a long time dance has been left to get on as best it can by the Government. When the South Bank was built there were facilities for every art form — including film and visual art — but nothing for dance. The multi-million pound Barbican centre did not even attempt to provide the necessary staging facilities for dance.

On the smaller scale the 150-seat venues are left much alone to find volunteers and donated paint pots in order to provide some kind of facility. But it takes more than willing helpers to turn a stone or concrete floor into a sprung stage. Not only is it extremely uncomfortable for dancers to perform on concrete — it is also dangerous.

At Riverside Studios — a venue heavily relied upon by the Dance Umbrella organisers — the floor is concrete and a wooden one has to be hired in. Battersea Arts Centre has a difficult stage area, Jackson's Lane has a wooden floor but poor backstage and front of house facilities and erratic programming. In fact, central London has nothing to offer the smaller groups. When the Greater London Arts Association arrange tours the venues are always out of the centre of town.

Helen Dickson, chairperson of the Small Scale Dance Management Committee said: 'For most companies their London season is a nightmare. They have to perform in venues that are worse than those in the provinces. It is so important

for them for them because it's the chance to get critical appraisal and yet they have to show their work under the worst possible circumstances.'

Dance Umbrella's Val Bourne, says: 'We are furious about this situation. People tried very hard to get some dance involvement at The Barbican but they didn't want to know. It is disgraceful that dance is continually ignored like this when it is obviously such a popular art form now'.

Life is difficult enough for the small dance companies. To obtain an Arts Council project grant a company has to prove it can attract an audience. Draughty church halls and having to compromise on stage space and facilities are not the best ways of drawing on a wide London audience.

There is now in existence a Dance & Mime Action Group which is pledged to fight for a Dance House in London which would — ideally — have two or three performing areas of different sizes to accommodate all the companies, from the Royal Ballet to the newer groups.

The Action Group has looked at several venues in London with the idea of turning them into a dance theatre but they have not found one that fits the bill. For the small companies there is a ray of hope. The Place is planning to operate two five-week dance seasons a year starting this Autumn. The theatre would be operated by an independent trust who would be responsible for the programming but the seating facility will not go above 250. Along with the fact that 10 weeks a year is not going to be nearly enough to accommodate even the better-known groups and companies, this is only a small drop in a pretty dried up ocean.

The chance to see foreign companies in London — so important if home culture is to grow and expand — is also pretty bleak. It is now seven years since Netherlands Dance Theatre came to the capital. It may be another seven before we get to see them again because they refuse — along with other important companies like the Stuttgart Ballet — to perform at Sadler's Wells theatre because it is too small. Alternative theatres like the Colliseum have tight programming schedules with few openings for anything other than opera.

Sadler's Wells do have plans to widen and deepen the stage which would go some way to improving the sight lines. But to make radical improvements to the auditorium could result in a loss of seats, a consequent loss in Box Office revenue, and

render the theatre financially inviable for the bigger companies.

London's problem has been recognised throughout the world. The Dance Committee of the International Theatre Institute which represents, among others, the Bolshoi Ballet and the Joffrey Ballet in America, have sent support to the D&MAG. The committee singled out London as one of the centres where cultural exchanges are inhibited by lack of suitable performing space.

The Housing the Arts Committee of the Arts Council has already agreed in principle that a purpose-built dance theatre is desirable — but money is the problem. And with The Barbican now into its first prestigious season it will be a long time before the Government forks out any more cash for the arts on a big scale.

Lack of decent rehearsal space has also reached crisis point across the whole spectrum of the dance world. At the Opera House principal dancers have sometimes performed a new ballet without ever having had a full dress and orchestra rehearsal on stage because of fully committed stage time-tabling.

With a blooming of commercial studio space in central London the problem would see, to have been eased — but not so. Hourly rates for rehearsal space have rocketed recently and if reasonably well funded companies are finding it difficult to pay their rehearsal bills the problem for small, less adequately funded groups is magnified. Church halls are the only alternative.

The Action Group, which came together at the 1980 Dance Umbrella season, has already prepared a research brief in an attempt to collate the first ever comprehensive survey of the state of dance in this country. It has been approved by the University of Surrey and, when adequate funding is found, will take two years to complete. Without the results of this survey — which is sure of supplying some good ammunition for their argument — the Action Group deserves all the active support it can muster.

The Action Group has already pledged itself to fight for more financial support for small dance and mime companies. Although the interest in dance as a popular art form is acknowledged, the percentage of moneys which is given over to it has in no way kept up with demand. Training too is another controversial area.

Students taking vocational training courses still have to depend on the good will of their local authority to provide them

## Feature

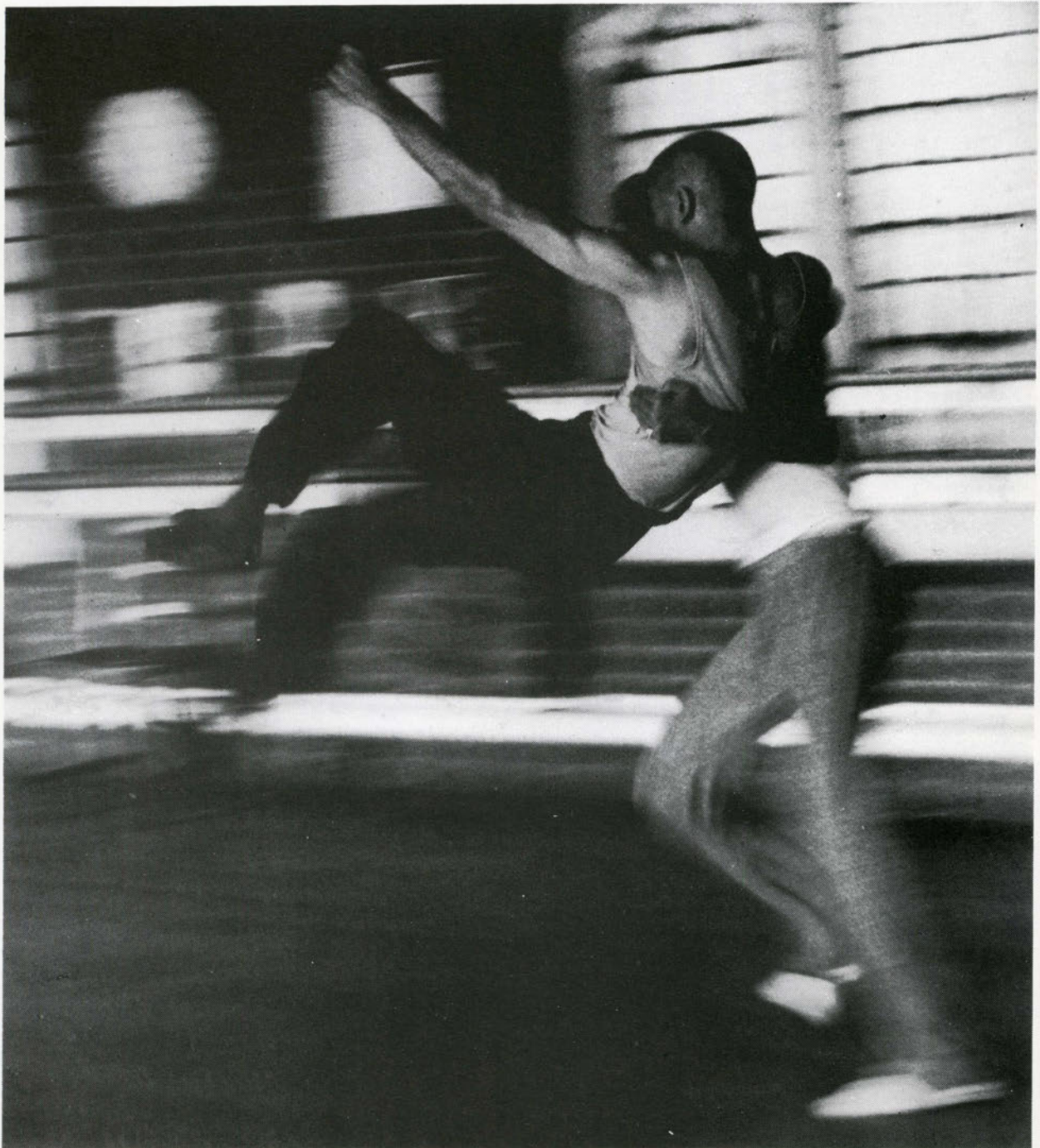
with a discretionary grant. If they are lucky enough to get one it is often only a percentage of what they really need to survive, and some local authorities still refuse point blank to provide grants for students taking up places at the London School of Contemporary Dance — one of the leading schools of its kind in Europe.

Until vocational courses are given mandatory status they will continue to be the first and most vicious victims of the education cuts. In mime, the situation is even worse with very few training schools in this country and hardly any provision for

grants to study abroad.

The Action Group is the first co-ordinating body formed to fight for the broad needs of the dance and mime community — and the need for such a body is all too obvious. It is great that the Group is fighting for the smaller groups alongside the bigger companies as it will, hopefully, give more weight to the problems of the newer companies. It would surely be seen as a real betrayal if all that comes out of this action is better facilities for the Royal Ballet and friends — leaving the new and the small still out on the street.

So far the Action Group has had meetings with the big companies and has been asked by the Arts Council to call a general meeting with all the major companies. Happily, they are also seeking a meeting with Tony Banks, chairman of the Arts & Recreation Committee of the GLC, to discuss small-scale venues in central London. But to have even more muscle the Action Group wants to increase its membership amongst companies and individuals. For details contact John Chapman on 01-388 2211, or write to him at 19 Hexham Rd, SE27. **Liz Stolls**



# PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE INFORMATION

Performance Magazine is the regular review of live art in the UK and elsewhere. Founded in 1979, it is published bi-monthly and covers the linked areas of performance art, experimental theatre, new dance, new and improvised music, with associated articles on political, cultural, media and technological issues. We welcome the submission of any features, interviews, reviews and artists' documentation for possible publication. We also need your support in the form of letters of criticism, subscriptions, and advertising. See below for details.

## EDITORIAL MATERIAL

**Listings** are needed at least one month before the event if possible for us to be sure to be able to include them. Even then, because we are bi-monthly, you may 'fall between issues' so let us have them as quickly as you know something is happening. Listings are usually divided between venues and individual artists or groups doing a tour.

**Reviews.** If you want us to come and review something, again please try to give us details a month in advance. Try to send us as much information as possible. If you are convinced your event is really something we ought to look at don't hesitate to phone us even at shorter notice. We will do our best to get along although we can't guarantee anything in print as a result.

**Documentation.** We have a regular double page slot for artists and groups to send in documentation of work. This should be camera ready artwork. It is probably wisest to telephone us first before submitting documentation.

**Features.** If you think something is worth a major feature, please contact us ideally four months, i.e. two issues, in advance of when it ought to appear. We have a regular team of writers who are available for features and reviews, but they need to be well briefed and informed before embarking on what will often be unusual and innovative material. Work can of course be done at shorter notice if possible, but time ensures quality. If in doubt, get in touch.

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Camden Arts Centre  
Moira Kelly Gallery  
Landry Books  
Royal Court Bookstall  
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Village Books (SW16)  
Bookplus (SE14)  
Balham Food and Book Co-op  
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Centreprise, Dalston  
Paperback Centre (E15)  
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Bookmarks (14)  
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### Brighton

Solstice Books  
Public House  
**Salisbury**  
St Edmunds Arts Centre  
**Bath**  
1985 Books  
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### Bristol

Arnolfini Gallery  
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Athaneum News

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London WC1

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London WC2



# National Performance Listings

## LISTINGS

We have tried to list as many events as possible that fall within our area. If you think we have left something out that should have been included please write to us at PO Box 421 London NW1 0RF.

## Women Live Special

### The Drill Hall

'For Maggie, Betty and Ida' for *Maggie Betty & Ida* features Elaine Loudon, Julianne Mason and Sarah Morley, the harpist from *The Sound of Music*. It is written by Bryony Lavery and directed by Susan Todd. Bryony and Susan have worked with *Monstrous Regiment* and collaborated on the National Theatre of Brent's last two shows — *ZULU!* and *THE BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA*.

*For Maggie Betty & Ida* is not just a cabaret! The stories, songs and music link up to present a collage of the experiences of this collection of very different individuals. May 18-30 (Tue-Sat 8pm, Sun at 6pm)

Mrs Worthington's Daughters' Daughters launch

### Wyres' Cross

the Soap Opera You Can Really Relate To. By Peta Masters & Geraldine Griffiths — directed by Angela Langfield. **WYRES' CROSS** is a saga in four episodes. Each one plays for one week. Miss one and the intricate threads of the many plots may never become clear — see all four and be none the wiser. **YOU CAN'T BEAT A LIVE SHOW.**

Episode 1: The Drill Hall 16 Chenies St WC1 637 8270 (Box Office) open 10-6 Mon-Fri & 2-6 Sat & Sun for advance sales May 5-8 (Mon-Sat) 10pm May 9 (Sun) 8pm

repeated: *King's Head Upper St N1 226 1916 May 10-15 (Mon-Sat) 1.15pm*

Episode 2: The Drill Hall May 11-15 (Tues-Sat) 10pm May 16 (Sun) 8pm

repeated: *King's Head May 17-22 (Mon-Sat) 1.15pm*

Episode 3: The Drill Hall May 18-22 (Tues-Sat) 10pm May 23 (Sun) 8pm

repeated: *King's Head May 24-29 (Mon-Sat) 1.15pm*

Episode 4: The Drill Hall May 25-29 (Tues-Sat) 10pm May 30 (Sun) 8pm

repeated: *King's Head May 31-June 5 (Mon-Sat) 1.15pm*

### ICA

### MONSTROUS REGIMENT

present the premiere of

### THE EXECUTION

by Melissa Murray

Directed by Sue Dunderdale  
18 May-5 June  
**KITSCH'N'SYNC** Doors open 7.30

Friday 7 May 8.15 *Sitting Ducks*  
**MARGO RANDOM**

Saturday 8 May 8.15 *The Guest Stars*  
**MARGO RANDOM**

Sunday 9 May 4.30 *Cast Iron Fairies*, *The Crystal Pyjamas*  
8.00 **FIG** (Feminist Improvising Group)

Tuesday 11 May *Gymnastics* She's Moved  
**THE DOLLY MIXTURES**

Wednesday 13 May *Amazulu*

Fast Relief **THE MISTAKES**

Thursday 13 May Amy and the Angels  
Soul Sister **AU PAIRS**

Friday 14 May *The Skirts*, *The Delmontes*, **THE MODETTES**

Saturday 15 May *UT Nadia*  
Kapiche **MALARIA**.

### Oval House

16 May 7pm *Momentum Dance Company*. Rosamund Shreeves, Nan Wigglesworth, Hazel Williams, Sheila Williams and Bryony Williams in a programme of solos and company numbers. 'It is hard to define exactly what gives Rosamund Shreeves' work such an underlying quality, but it seems to be contained somewhere within the threefold assets of line flow and integrity, and in the way she finds the individual talents of her dancers. (*The Stage*)

Plus 'Miss Dickinson' Fay Prendergast in a mime and narrative piece about the poet Emily Dickinson. 'A touching and highly wrought evocation which at times brushes the skirts of greatness' (*Times Ed. Supp*)

'A thrilling poetic spirituality' (*Glasgow Herald*)

19-30 May 7.30pm *Dovetail Joint* in 'Venus Flytrap'. Two interdependent beings move away from a sheltered life inside the Venus Flytrap to the stunning realisation of survival instincts, emotions and that the world is ultimately sound. Costumes and masks and original music are designed to give a surreal quality to this show, which develops the theme of searching... With Carol Stevens, Birte Pedersen and founder-member Luci Gorell Barnes. *Dovetail Joint* were last seen at the Oval in 'Powercut' which was judged 'a strong and well conceived piece...' with 'mesmeric performances' and their *Nativity Play* 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. They have since been working with groups in the Community of Lambeth and return with this new show. (*Spare Rib*)

21-30 May 9.30pm *Sitting Ducks* are 'appearing live' Cabaret from Cisela Bjorklund, Rebecca Nassauer, Kate Bagnall, Margo Gordon and Jacky Tayler, who also wrote the music. She has often performed at the Oval, with the Sadistas and Disband. This is described as 'a musical performed in bags'... of their last show the Stage commented 'considerable talents.' Their last show drew the following comments 'considerable talents, astonishing acts, highly thought provoking, 'future work should prove well worth the perusal' (*Stage*) (*Performance Mag.*)

### London Musicians Co-op

Sun 16th 8.00 **WILMA**

**WILLIAMS & THE COMBO**

Mon 17th 8.00 **SOUL SISTERS**

**ZET ETIK**

Thurs 20th 8.00 Anne Bean (perf)

Pamela Marre, Kazuko Hohki

(perf) films at the Film Co-op

Fri 21st 8.00 **JAM TODAY**

**TOUR DE FORCE**

Sat 22nd 8.00 Rose Garrard

Stephanie nunn (cor,kbds) Sue

Ferrar, Sylvia Hallett

Sun 23rd 2.00 w'shop led by

Maggie Nicols (women only)

8.00 **CONTRADICTIONS**

(Maggie Nicols, Viba Robinson,

Lindsay Cooper, Ros Plotkin,

Sally Battista, Shirley Hall, Corin

Liensoel, Ann Wolff)

Mon 24th 8.00 Zoe Redman (perf)  
Tues 25th 8.00 **GUEST STARS**  
(Deidre Cartwright, Josefina Cupido, Julia Doyle, Sue Ellery, Linda Malone, Ruthie Smith with guest stars)

Thurs 24th 8.00 Carlyle Reedy (perf), Lindsey Cooper, Lily Greenham (poetry) from Holland: Maud Sauer (ob.cor) Maartje ten Hoorn (vln), Annemarie Roelofs (trb, vln) with films at Film Co-op

Fri 28th 8.00 **UT SCISSORS**

Sat 29th 2.00 *Improvisation workshop*. 8.00 Carrie Born, Judith

Higginbottom (perf) Julie

Tippetts (vce), Sue Ferrar (vln)

Sylvia Hallett (vln)

Sun 30th *Mona Hatoum* (7 hour

performance project) Rachel

Finkelstein in the Film Co-op

Mon 31st 8.00 **OVA**

### Royal Court Theatre

### BAZAAR AND RUMMAGE

by Sue Townsend. Can phobia by

funny? Yes, when a jumble sale in

Acton brings three agoraphobic

women out of their houses for the

first time in years.



'Maggie, Betty and Ida' Julianne Mason & Elaine Morley

Chris Davids

Previews 6,7 and 8 May at 7.30, 10 May at 7.00, subsequent evenings at 7.30. Prices Monday evenings ALL SEATS £2.00 Tuesday to Thursday all seats £3.00 Friday and Saturday all seats £3.50.

**THE LUCK CHANCE** by Aphra Behn c1686

Two old men, two young wives, two handsome young rakes with an eye to their lucky chance... Sunday May 16 at 7.30

**THE BASSETT TABLE** by Susannah Centlivre 1705 4.30 in the morning. A group of women cardsharps have just finished their evening play... Sunday May 23 at 7.30

All seats £2.00  
**TALKING BLACK**

Extracts from the work of seven young women writers aged 14-23 will be presented by The Activists Youth Theatre. Directors JANET GODDARD, GILL BEADLE Advisor: YVONNE BREWSTER Friday 14 May, Friday 21 May, Friday 28 May, at 5.45 Price £1  
**TALKING BLACK SEMINAR** On Saturday 29 May 2.30-4.30 there will be an open discussion on the future of black women's writing and involvement in theatre. Admission free, all those interested are welcome.

**SCARLET HARLETS** bombard the audience's senses with stunning images, macabre movement and extravagant effects. We use a powerful and dynamic mixture of tribal dancing, storytelling, mime, mask and fire, song and the spectacular use of ten-foot-high body puppets.

Initiative Grant from the ACGB attempts to combine jazz and theatre in one entertainment and win two often separate audiences.

**House Gallery**

Info: 586 5170  
Ilona Guinsberg: 'Body Quest' 5 May-6 June, Tues-Sun, 11-6pm.

**London Filmmakers Co-op**

Info: 586 4806  
Co-op Films 82  
Day One, 14 May  
Day Two, 15th May  
Programme One includes work by every filmmaker offering new films for distribution this year. Programme Two is to run simultaneously in the LMC next door and will include installation work and other films available from the new film catalogue supplement. Work by Brakhage, Apps, Dunlop, Finkelstein, Jarman, Leggett, Lethem, Lowder and many others. Also: Request Programme, Sunday 16th May.

Clean.

May 21 Alison Fell, French & Saunders, Pauline Melville Amazulu

**Bloomsbury Theatre** (Formerly Collegiate)

Info: 387 9629  
Alexander Roy London Ballet Theatre, 4-15 May.  
Childrens Events every Saturday morning including 'The Rail way Children' (film), 15 May, Zippo & Co Clown Roadshow, 22 May, 'Tales of Beatrix Potter' (film) May 29 Dasilva Puppet Co, 5 June, Professor Boodleums Street Show, 19 June.

**Tricycle Theatre**

Info: 328 8626  
'Love in Vain', a new play with songs by Bob Mason, about the life of the influential Robert Johnson, King of the Delta Blues Singers, May 15, 8p.m.



**Scarlet Harlets**  
'We who were the beautiful'

## Touring

### Touring

The Women's Theatre Group  
Info: 01-251 0202/01-250 0775  
'New Anatomies' summer tour.  
17-19 May Sherman Arena Theatre, University College, Senghennydd Rd, Cardiff.  
20th-22nd May Theatre Clewyd, Raikes Lane, Mold, N. Wales  
25 & 26 May Theatre in the Mill, University of Bradford, Bradford, West Yorks.  
28th & 29th May Brewery Arts Centre, Highgate, Kendal, Cumbria.  
4 & 5 June Century House, 4 Pierrepont St., Bath.  
8 & 9 June The Old Town Hall Centre, High St., Hemel Hempstead, Herts.  
8-11 July Stichting Melkweg, Lijnbaansgracht 234a, 1017ph, Amsterdam, Holland.  
Scarlet Harlets in 'We Who Were the Beautiful'  
14 & 15 Hope Centre, Bristol  
19 North London Polytechnic Holloway Rd, N1. 20-23 8pm Theatre Space, 48 William V St., WC2. (note — Thursday 20th is Women only) 27-29 Brick House Contact Theatre, Manchester.  
'WE WHO WERE THE BEAUTIFUL' looks at tales of women: images of the witch, the hag, the eccentric, the mad-woman and asks: 'When are we going to stop this happening to us?'

## London

### Albany Empire

'Son of Circus Lumiere'. Follow up to the outstandingly successful 'Circus Lumiere'. A group of turn of the century travellers are lost in the jungle. They are discovered by the Queen of the Jungle, who demands that they perform for her. This demand cannot be refused...

A residential project in conjunction with members of the Basement Theatre Co at the Albany. Not to be missed! For performance dates ring 622/4865 & 622/2053.

### Cafe Theatre

Info: 240 0794  
'Daddy' by Keith Doxland. Premiere of this work by a Canadian dramatist.

### Lyric Theatre

Info: 741 0824  
Common Stock Theatre Co present 'The Second Line'.  
11-15 May A play with live jazz music written by Hilary Trow and Frank Whitten, music by the Mile Mower Quintet. Common Stock is a community touring co always in search of new audiences. 'The Second Line' aided by a Special

**CAST** launches New Variety in North London....

Every Sunday evening from 9th May, Cast will be promoting New Variety with four different acts on the bill at **Brabant Road Trade Union and Community Centre**, Wood Green NW2. Roland Muldoon introduces.

Info: 487 3440  
May 16 The Flying Pickets, Attila the Stockbroker, The Birds, Felix and the Cats  
May 23 Akimbo, Norma Cohen, Proper Little Madams, Margo Random & Band  
New Variety continues at the **Old White Horse**  
Info: 487 3440

'We Remember Bobby Sands MP'  
May 7th; with AD Hoc Womens Band, Wendy Wattage and Chris Ransome, Eileen 'Polly' Pollock Oxy & the Morons.  
May 14 Attila the Stockbroker, Gladys McGee, The Joeys, Mr

### The South Bank Show

'A celebratory exhibition' based on four S London galleries. Coracle Press, Morley Gallery, Sally East & S London Art Gallery — fine art, craft, installation, sound and performance. Includes performances by Charlie Hooker at the S London Art Gallery, 10 May, 7.30. David Medalla, Morley Gallery, 7pm, 14 May and Carlyle Reedy, Morley Gallery, 8.15pm, 14 May.  
Info: 341 4533 or 701 5726 or 703 6120

### B2 Metropolitan Wharf

Info: 488 9815  
Installation, film, video & performance from mid-June onwards. Gallery open Wed-Fri 12-7, Sat 12-5 & by appt.

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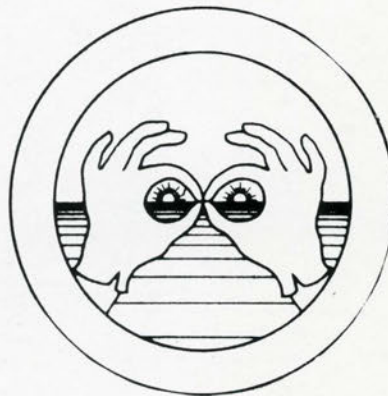
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directed by Sue Dunderdale  
18 MAY – 5 JUNE

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A new gay musical  
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8 – 26 JUNE

**ZOOS**  
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Duncan Smith  
John Stalin  
Kerry Trengove  
Four exhibitions plus talks  
4 JUNE – 11 JULY

2nd National Independent  
**VIDEO FESTIVAL**  
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## National Performance Listings

**Anthony d'Offay**  
Info: 499 4695  
Works by Gilbert & George, Richard Long, & Bruce McLean from 19 May to 20 June.

**Riverside Studios**  
Info: 741 2251  
Vladimir Mayakovsky: Twenty years of work. From 30 June. Inspiring exhibition.

**Tate Gallery**  
21 May. Lunchtime drama. Plays by Frank O'Hara. 'The Buick of Sighs', a young theatre group, will present some short plays by the poet and museum curator Frank O'Hara. The performance will be in the galleries where the works on display are by the Abstract Expressionists, many of whom O'Hara knew.

**Theatre Space**  
Info: 836 2035  
11-15 May 10.30 pm 'Whores & whores?' Angela Holman performs a classic Brechtian song cabaret. Late show, 17-19 May 8 pm 'Rover, My Emancipation' — a new show from Wenke Mulheisen, controversial Scandinavian performance artist. 20-23 May 8 pm 'We who were the Beautiful' by Scarlet Harlets.

**Jacksons Lane**  
Info: 340 5226  
'Oi for England' by Trevor Griffiths. Presented live for the first time after a powerful debut on London Weekend Television. See also Women Live listing.

**Oval House**  
Info: 582 7608  
SEE WOMEN LIVE SECTION. Closed first week of June. June 9-13, 16-20 'The Duchess Misaid' — a commedia experience presented by the Commedia workshop. 7.30 pm. June 11-13, 18-20 'Shoot' — a new gay play by New Heart. June 23-27 — GAY PRIDE WEEK. June 23-27 — 'The Story Continues', New Heart. June 24-27 9.30 pm 'Growing Up', a performance by Philip Osmond. June 25-27 8.30 pm, Carpark — Wendy Wattage Spectacular.

**Festival of India**  
29 & 30 May Riverside Studios: Dhrupad Music/Performances 24 June Purcell Room. Kutiyattam & Kathakali Dance Drama Introduction. An Indian dance style not seen in Britain before dating back to the 8th century. 26-27 June Riverside Studios Performances 26 & 27 June, 3pm.

**Fringe Box Office:**  
Based in the Criterion Theatre, the Fringe Box Office gives information, sells tickets and takes bookings for most of London's fringe theatres. Open 10-6, Mon-Thurs and 10-5 Fri & Sat. Tel: 839 6987.



Wenke Mulheisen

### Wenke Mulheisen

**ICA**  
Info: 930 3647  
18 May 7.45pm Carla Liss 'Nightclub' Video & performance.  
25 May 7.45pm A consumers guide to Armageddon BBC science programme investigates Protect & Survive  
1 June to 6 June IVA 2nd National Independent Video Festival. Screenings of the best of recent British Video. Final sessions include seminars events & a party. D.E.T. Enterprises presents Layers, 'a musical romance' from 8 to 26 June. Book and lyrics are by Alan Pope, music by Alex Harding, director Drew Griffiths.

John Maybury's visionary new Super-8 film 'The Court of Miracles' (Moments Before Desire). GB 1982 Colour Super-8 Uncertificated 55 minutes. A film by John Maybury. With: Siouxsie Sioux, Hermine Demorienne, Princess Julia, David Holey, Larry the Skin. Music: Virginnia Astley. ICA Cinematheque, 26-30 May, 6.30 & 8.30 pm. Art and its Criticism — a series of discussions.

Tuesday 11 May at 7.30 pm. Art for Whose Sake? The Critical Debate between Narrative and Abstract Art.

Tuesday 18 May at 7.30 pm. The Corridors of Criticism: Art Criticism and the Institutions.

Tuesday 25 May at 7.30 pm. Recent Trends in Art Criticism.

Post Modernism: a one-day conference. This conference brings together six artists and two critics to discuss these and related issues. The first session will deal with sculpture, performance and extended media; the second with painting and representation. Speakers include John Roberts, Stuart Brisley, Denis Masi, Susan Hiller, Michael Newman, John Stezaker, Alexis Hunter and Graham Crowley.

New Contemporaries 1982. The annual exhibition of national student work is showing in all galleries of the ICA throughout May. Includes Third Area work selected by Mark Bullus, Marc Chaimowicz, Rose Finn-Kelery, JonVhan Harvey and Erica Rushton.

New Contemporaries Conference. This day conference will examine the work and workings of art schools. Starting from the exhibition itself, it will assess the art market and the 'outside world' and what opportunities exist for students. It will analyse the workings of the colleges themselves — from teaching priorities to the position of women within. The speakers include Moira Kelly, Mary Kelly, Nigel Greenwood, Stuart Morgan, Shelagh Cluett, Peter Dunn and Lisa Tickner. Tickets £1.50.

## Newcastle

**Basement**  
Sat 15 May Roberta Graham 'Campo Santo'.  
Wed 19 May Sara Furse 'A Night in the Life' Laura H. Smith tape, slides, stills, sequence.  
Fri 21 May Yvonne Pinkney  
Sat 22 May Alison Winkle 'Remember' Belinda Williams 'Lay, take to heart'.

## Birmingham

**Ikon Gallery**  
Info: 021 643 0708  
Alex Mavro; 'The Ballista'. Alex Mavro has performed all over Europe as dancer, acrobat and actor and with his own company. Since 1979 he has worked with 'Hesitate and Demonstrate' (see feature this issue). A growing interest in sculpture led him to train as a welder, fusing performance work with the building of environments and installations. 'The Ballista' follows Vitruvius' specifications for the construction of this ancient Roman war machine. The Ballista will be activated in performance on Thursday 6 May, 3 pm and Thurs 13 May at 7 pm. Free.

## Bracknell

**South Hill Park Arts Centre**  
Info: (0344) 27272  
Video and film: 7.30 pm, free.  
1/8 May 'Often during the day' (Joanna Davis and 'Light veading' (liz Rhodes). 24 May 'The Smiling Madame Beudet' (Germaine Dulac 1922). 'A house divided' (Alice Guy, 1913). & w\$ne 'Changing Time' (Lindy Summers, 1977) and 'Clapping Songs' (Tina Keane). Sunday 27 June: Family Festival, 12 noon till 3 pm. Music, circus acts, fireworks, films. Free weekend entertainment throughout the summer in the grounds of South Hill Park. Ring for details.

## Manchester

**Radiator/North West Arts**  
Info: 061 224 0020

15 May Manchester Actors Co in 'Biggles': a Women Live event. The real truth behind the most famous of all war heroes.  
22 May Jazira-African Highlife Music.  
1-5 June Son of Circus Lumiere  
8-1d June Extraordinary Productions in 'For Maggie', Betty & Ida'. A Women Live Event. Women telling stories by women.  
9 June An evening with Alexei Sayle.  
12 June Theatre Alibi in 'The Strange Affair' a double act in one act.