

JULY/AUGUST No 48 / £1.50 / \$5.00 / 8DM / 20FL

# PERFORMANCE



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<p> <i>A Micky Project (Holland)</i>  <b>VESPERS</b> Sep 8-19 (not sun)            A sunset sort of thing            by Ritsaert ten Cate £4.50         </p>	
<p> <i>Akne Theatre (Poland)</i>  <b>THE MAIDS</b> Sep 25-27 (to be confirmed)            The first London performances of Sophia Kalinska's remarkable Genet production £4.50         </p>	
<p> <i>Graeme Muller</i>  <b>DUNGEESS</b> Sep 29 - Oct 17 (not suns)            The Desert in The Garden            An ICA Commission £4.50         </p>	
<p> <i>Noel Bartlett / Robin Whitmore</i>  <b>A VISION OF LOVE</b> Oct 20 - Nov 14  <b>REVEALED IN SLEEP</b> (not suns)            An ICA Riverside Co-production            Performances at a derelict site            somewhere in London £5/£2 conc.         </p>	



## LIVE ART

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 Queens Square, 11.30am  
 East Park, 1.30pm  
 Art Gallery, 3.00pm  
*'We make mincemeat out of flimsy reality'*

**IAN SMITH**  
 SAT. JULY 11  
 Art Gallery, 3.00pm  
*'I am the buzzsaw that gets the job done but leaves jagged edges...'*

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**SHIRLEY CAMERON & ROLAND MILLER** - 'Family Breakfast'  
 SAT. JULY 18  
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# A SHORT HISTORY OF PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

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## PERFORMANCE + THE MAGAZINE OF LIVE ART

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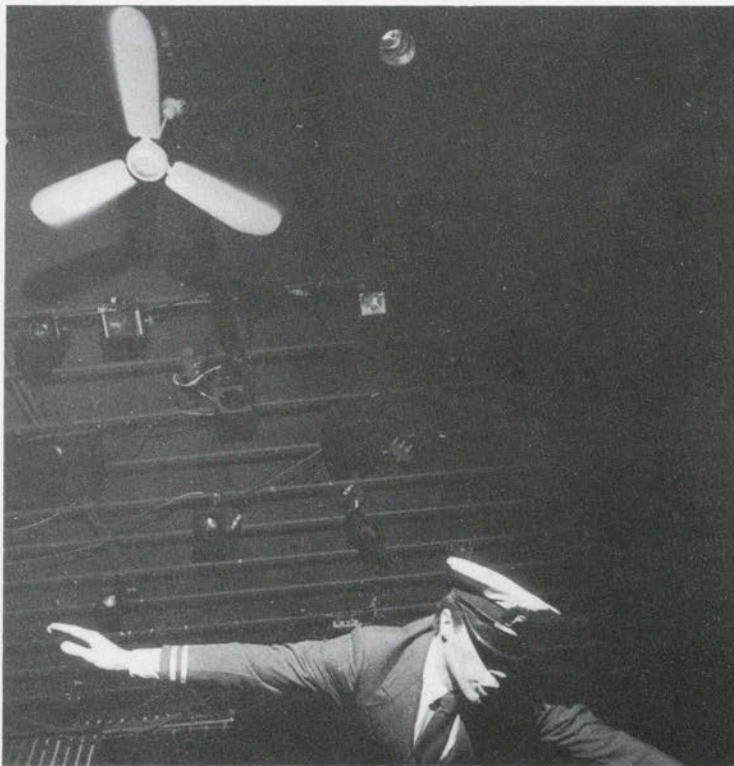
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● **PHOTOS** ● FRONT COVER + (Right) Lily Savage at the Hippodrome, London (photo Mark Cairns), (Left) Ethyl Eichelberger as Elizabeth 1. Photo: Lynn M. Grabowski.

● Contents page + taken from *The Dragons Trilogy* by Theatre Rêpere. Photo: Claudel Huot.

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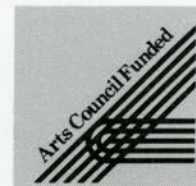
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## NEIL BARTLETT + GUEST EDITOR

Neil Bartlett is best known as a director of theatre performances both of works by other artists; *Theatre de Complicite*; *Annie Griffin*; *ManAct*; of his own self-devised works; *Dressing Up*; *Pornography*; *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep*; and of existing works such as *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *The Magic Flute*. He often works in collaboration with other artists, particularly with Robin Whitmore with whom he has produced five works.

Neil's principle areas of knowledge and interest are in the more theatre based performance activities and the scope of this issue naturally reflect this. This bias in a particular direction is an inevitable and deliberate consequence of our experiment with inviting guest editors to undertake specific issues. We hope that in so doing we will expand the range of arts and issues covered by the magazine as well as bringing fresh ideas and perspectives to our major focus on performance art and related activities. We hope too that the introduction of new editors who have their own ideas and contacts will result in the introduction of new writers to our pages as well as experiments with

style and design.

There is obviously a danger that the magazine might lose its identity in the continual shifts of interest from issue to issue. We hope that this danger will be avoided by a continuity of format and 'image', and by maintaining the usual range and emphasis of the news/preview section and of the reviews both of which we intend to expand to cover more events. The guest editor will therefore be mostly concerned with the commissioning and editing of the major features of their issue and less so with the material included in news/preview and review. The other vital aspect of the guest editor experiment is that each guest editor

will become a permanent member of the magazine's editorial group the purpose of which is to guide and develop the magazine's editorial policy and to select future guest editors. The group will serve to maintain a balance in the magazine's coverage and to involve a greater number of people in the magazine's growth.

As part of this desire to open up the magazine we welcome suggestions for future features as well as new writers to contribute reviews and features. We would also appreciate any feedback on the guest editor idea and suggestions for its improvement in future issues. ●

Steve Rogers  
Managing Editor

BETTER  
BATTERSEA

+ **Battersea Arts Centre, London**, always an interesting off-centre venue promoting a wide range of live and visual arts programmes, seems to have turned over a radical new leaf. Recent events have included a performance by **Charlie Hooker**, a youth theatre project devised by **Annie Griffin**, the commissioning of the **Bartlett/Whitmore** *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep* which we reviewed last issue (apologies for not crediting Battersea then), they are currently showing one of the **most originally conceived video exhibitions ever** and they are continuing a brilliant series of installations. Maybe Battersea can fill the long empty role of a really experimental multi-media centre for London. ●

FUN IN  
WOLVERHAMPTON

+ **Wolverhampton Art Gallery** is the next major regional museum to show the fruits of the Arts Council's Glory of the Garden regional strategy. Alongside the touring *Artists in the Theatre* exhibition (see feature in Performance No 43) they have organised a performance series which has a strong emphasis on a sense of fun. Performances so far have included **Marty St James & Anne Wilson** and **Duncan Whiteman's** *Living Sculptures*, and continues into July with **Desperate Men**, **Ian Smith** and the droll **Cameron/Miller** *Family Breakfast*. The excellent publicity for the series includes a T Shirt featuring the specially designed cartoon logo for the series. As the city's first major series of performance art it deserves to succeed. ●

GOOD NEWS FROM  
NOTTINGHAM

+ After the messy demise of the Midland Group it is a real pleasure to be able to report the outstanding success of the **Castle Museum's Art in Performance; Performance in Art** season. (See reviews). The performances have all played to capacity audiences, and the response has been very positive. It is a good programme but I can't help thinking that the audience response has been due to the quality of the promotion for the series. The printed material has been clear and helpful and specifically aimed at people with no knowledge of performance yet it avoids being patronising or over-simplistic. The season continues into August. Details 0602 411881. ●

SILVIA'S  
COOKBOOK

+ **Silvia Ziranek** has been awarded a special art project grant to produce a limited edition **Cookbook** in collaboration with **Book Works**. The book will contain 22 original recipes that are designed to stimulate both the gastronomic and the aesthetic. The book will be launched in **Plymouth, Glasgow, Swindon and London** with a photographic exhibition, a reading and a tasting. Details from **BookWorks** 01 407 1692. ●

## CLASS OF '87

+ **The Place Theatre, London** have come up with the excellent idea of showcasing 'professionally generated student work from the regions.' The series includes **Pete Brooks**

with students from **Lancaster University, Geraldine Pilgrim** with students from **Trent Polytechnic** and **Kirstie Simpson** with students from **Leicester Polytechnic**. Dates: July 1-5. Details: 01 387 0031.

+ Judging by this year's degree and final year shows performance is re-emerging as a popular alternative with students. The impression is confirmed by the increased number of applicants to the **National Review of Live Art** selection platforms which have included many '87 graduates. The standard is also very high which will make selector **Nikki Milligan's** job harder but the festival itself, this year being held at **Riverside Studios, London**, even better than before. ●

PERFORMANCE  
NEWS

+ A selection of some of the more interesting forth-coming events: **Claire MacDonald** has created a new performance for the **Museum of Technology in Cambridge** entitled *Dream of a New Machine*, July 23-26. Details: Cambridge 357851. **Jeze Welsh's** commission work for **New Work Newcastle** called 'Echoes' reputedly one of the best things in the festival, can be seen again in **London** on July 30. Details from **Jeze Welsh** at **LVA**. 01 . . . Its been some time since **Welfare State** have graced these pages (our fault not theirs) but their celebration for the centenary of **Barrow-in-Furness Town Hall** on July 12 promises to see them at their best; **giant confetti bombs**; a **Queen Victoria lookalike contest**; and **dustcarts decorated in polka dots and fish nets** are all on the menu. Details 0229 57146. **Anne Seagrave** is performing a one-off retrospective of her work at the **Third Eye Centre**,



PHOTO / JOHN SMITH

Glasgow, July 12. The hand of Third Eye's new performance programmer **Nikki Milligan** is surely visible there as it is in the Glasgow centre's presentation of Italian visitors **Mutis Liber**. This is the group's second visit to Britain this year. Like the first this new tour was organised by **Babel Administration** in **Halifax** and forms part of their developing programme of installation based work which also includes **Stuart Brisley** and **Bruce MacLean**. Other visitors over the next couple of months include the whole of the **LIFT** programme and much new at Edinburgh. One of the most interesting will be the entire **Neue Slowenische Kunst** group. The theatre section **Red Pilot** are at **Riverside Studios, London**, July 28 to August 8 and the music/rock section **Laibach** have supplied the music. Laibach also play a concert at Riverside on July 28. Both the theatre and music group have been seen in Britain before so it will be all the more interesting to see them this time alongside the painting group **Irwin** who haven't shown here before and whose work is at the **Air Gallery, London**, July 31-August 30. Details: 01 741 2251. The **ICA Theatre, London** has both **Mike Westbrook's** new music theatre the *Westbrook-Rossini* and, on an entirely different note, the new music-theatre piece *Dungeness* by former Impact member **Graeme Miller**. Details: 01 930 0493. Finally the very determined organisers of the **Finborough Arms, London** late night performance art programme are running a two week festival of performance workshops and improvisations. Workshops are being led by **David Medalla, John Stevens** and **Colin Watkeys**. Details: 01 670 1232. ●

## ALICE IN CHILE

+ A special one-performance-only production of *Alice in Wonderland* starring (amongst

others) **Neil Bartlett, John Carson, Rose English, Annie Griffin, Theatre de Complicite** and music from **Emma Thompson, Incantation** and **Sambatucada** is at the **Albany Empire, London** on July 11. There are only 400 tickets and all proceeds are going to support community artists working in the slums of **Santiago, Chile**. Details: 01 691 3333. Be there or be square. ●

## GALLERY NEWS

+ The **Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh** is showing works by **Dan Graham**, one of the most important figures in the evolution of conceptual and performance art. June 27-July 26. The **Hawyard Gallery, London** is showing **Gilbert & George's** large scale photo-pieces including a new huge triptych *Class War, Militant, Gateway*. From July 7. *Conceptual Clothes* is at **Stoke-on-Trent City Art Gallery** until July 26, in conjunction with which there are performances by **Richard Layzell** and **Mona Hatoum**. 0782 202173. The most interesting new gallery show for the summer is likely to be **State of the Nation** curated by **Sara Selwood**, director of Air Gallery, London for the **Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry**. The exhibition includes paintings, sculpture, performance and installations as well as newspapers, books and magazines, videos and 'satirical items.' It includes work by **Stuart Brisley, Terry Atkinson, Tim Head, Biff, Gerald Scarfe** and **Spitting Image**. The exhibition explores Thatchers Britain. Details 0203 25555. ●

## OTHER NEWS

+ At the **Arts Council** there are four new appointments to the **Advisory Panel on Art**, artists **Conrad Atkinson** and **Rose**

**Garrard, Su Jones of Artists Newsletter** and **Dr Nima Smith of Cartwright Hall, Bradford**. The **Arts Council** are also looking for a temporary part-time Performance Art Officer to cover **Jenni Walwin's** forthcoming maternity leave. (It's too late to apply). ●

+ A request from a radio show in **Australia** for cassettes of experimental performance or original soundworks for **broadcast**. Now in its 8th year 3.9.1 Cannibale has included tapes from **Audio Arts** and **Bow Gamelan** in its weekly show and is looking for more. Send tapes to P.O. Box 391, Seven Hills, N.S.W. 2147 Australia. ●

+ **Chisenhale Dance Space, London** are commissioning projects for the autumn. Deadline July 15. Details: 01 981 6617. ●

+ A group in **Bristol** are getting together to run a performance space during the opening week of the **Artspace V-Shed** exhibition. The exhibition opens August 7 and the organisers of the performance space invite proposals and other participants to contact them as soon as possible at 14B York Rd, Montpelier, Bristol. ●

+ **Solent Arts Marketing** have produced a useful information pamphlet covering the Southern Arts area. It contains details of arts promoters, venues and press etc and is available free of charge from Recreation Dept, North Hill Close, Andover Rd, Winchester, Hants. ●



Silvia Ziranek

## ESPERANTO CENTENARY

+ To celebrate 100 years of the utopian international Esperanto organisation there is to be a big new proselytising drive which includes media advertising, the announcement of the first approved **G.C.S.E.** qualifications in the global language, a song in Esperanto by **Elvis Costello** and the first British esperanto production of **The Importance of Being Earnest**. Of course it's fun but there's something very attractive about it all. ●

Graeme Miller  
*Dungeness*



## NEW DEAL

+ After decades of seeing theatres becoming cinemas and then bingo halls it is always a pleasure to see some returning to their original function. The recent revival of the **Hackney Empire, London** as a home for music hall and cabaret courtesy of the efforts of **Roland Muldoon of Cast** was a tremendous and important step in the right direction. Now there is news that the famous **Aster Theatre in Deal**, built by the Aster family in the 1920's, is to reopen as a theatre with a new, and no doubt, fairly wild and wonderful production of **A Midsummer Night's Dream** by **Paul Dart and Luke Dickson**. If you ever wanted an excuse to go to this pleasant seaside town this is it. August 18-29. ●

## MORE EVENTS

+ JULY 10 is going to be an interesting day in **Hull**. **Ambient Music** are staging two open air events on one day. First **'The 100 Metre Walking Wall'**, ten performers will move a wall of fabric through the city streets, and then a repeat of the **'Tidal Barrier Event'** which is a sound work accompaniment to the lowering of the barrier along with fireworks and a performance in the barriers illuminated tower. Details: 0483 225663. ●

+ The **Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh**, long the Scottish home of new plays is opening its programming to performance work for the first time. For the festival they are promoting French visitors **Theatre de la Basoche**. Their **Le Lavoir**, as the title suggests, is set in a laundry and is being staged in an old refurbished **communal wash-house** in **Abbeymount**. Later in the year the Traverse Theatre itself will host **Annie Griffin's** wonderful **Almost Persuaded** and **Ralf Ralf's** **The Summit**. Details: 031 226 2633. ●

+ Newly formed London based multi-media group **Theatre of the Heart** are creating an environmental performance on **Hampstead Heath, London**, July 21-August 2. The event is part of a three year woodlands project organised by **environmental organisation Common Ground**. Details 01 794 7974. ●

## VIDEO NEWS

Compiled by NIK HOUGHTON.

+ Frustration and missed turnings in the search for **Judith Goddards** video installation-part of the TSWA3 AD project finally led to the wooded slopes to Belever Tor on **Dartmoor**. The seven monitor piece was intriguing enough to make the journey worthwhile as the TV circle glowed disconcertingly in the gloom of the woods but quite why the event wasn't more effectively advertised remains a mystery. The only information I could glean from official sources was that the installation was at Belever Tor, Dartmoor, which is a bit like saying Isling-



ton, London. Even more remarkable is that the employees of TSW, the major sponsor, were told absolutely nothing about the 3 AD scheme. Could this be something to do with the fact that TSW are claiming substantial drops in profits in defence of expected job cuts? ●

+ From 18th June videoheads beside the sea in **Southend** will have the opportunity to get a chunk of culture as the **Arts Video Centre** swings into action. Jointly funded by the **Arts Council** and the **local council** the Centre, which is housed in a public library, will hold a library of Arts Council films, local video work, community tapes and art tapes. Punters will be charged 25p per half hour of viewing time and the Centre is located at **Southend Central Library**, Victoria Avenue, Southend On Sea. ●

+ A tired and emotional **Clive Gillman** was last seen dismantling video gear at **East London's Tom Allen Centre** following the media mash up of the **9 AM Group** of which Gillman is a member. Featured as part of the **ANATOMY** event the 9 AM throwdown featuring live video scratching, pre-recorded tape and post-modernist shennanigans was variously described as **too loud, brill and weird** by the audience. **Westminster Arts Council**, however, were impressed enough to make tentative bookings for the vidkids whilst an appearance in last months **FACE** on the 9 AM gang can't have harmed their profile. ●

+ With **London Video Arts** now employing a new distribution worker other projects include a short season of screenings/discussions to be held at the **Air Gallery, London** during July. Entitled **VIDEO ON** the form will be to present a selection of tapes chosen by individual artists/critics for discussion with the audience on themes related to the tapes. Example? — An exploration of masculinity through work for men chosen by **Catherine Elwes**. ●

+ Hep cats and beat daddies may well be wiggled out by a forthcoming tape from, of all places, **Plymouth** as the local **Video Group** set to work editing footage of June's **Beat Weekend**. The event, which featured appearances from various luminaries in the beat phenomenon alongside films, lectures and poetry readings, culminated in a show from Mr Hep himself, **Slim Galliard**. The

video group got it all on tape and retro jazzers can look forward to some interesting footage once the tapes are edited. ●

+ Aspiring tapers are urged to get those edits steaming as **Bracknell Media Centres 8th National Video Festival** lurches onto the horizon and the call goes out for 60 second 'miniatures'. Telephone Bracknell Media Centre on 0344-427272 for details.

+ Did You See? time as the hyperactive **Ministry Of Power** a.k.a. **Test Department** slipped onscreen during the 'arts programme' **Alter Image** with a decidedly dodgy piece of militaristic sound-and-image. One hopes some irony was intended but whatever the motivation the proto fascist carnival of uniformed youth set to stirring military music seemed a bit too smirkingly 'radical' for its own good. Subversion of iron fist reflection on the troubled times we live in? Either way it seems high time the post-industrial rockers got to grips with something more than big boots and urban wastelands. ●

+ Further to our comment in the last issue about the current state of the **ICA Videothèque** we were informed by the ICA that actually the facility is doing fine. It should also be said that the ICA holds an invaluable catalogue of live performance tapes that is clearly underused.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

+ This month's **Must-We-Pollute-The-Minds-Of-Our-Young-People-Horror Award** goes to a comment related by a friend attending **Tarkovskys 'Sacrifice'** with a media studies student. "Well", said the post-structuralist student smugly, "It's an OK film but... well, it's a bit easy to de-code". Roland Barthes has a lot to answer for. ●

## NEXT ISSUE

+ Guest Editor of the next issue is Rob la Frenais, founder of Performance Magazine and its editor for more than seven years. The issue will be a European special with features and reports from Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Lisbon, as well as the usual range of British news and reviews.



# 'SOMETIMES I WONDER HOW WE ALL GET THROUGH THIS OPERA WHICH IS OUR LIFE'

(FRANK O'HARA)

**OPERATIC** used to be a term of abuse but is now a recommendation. It appears in all sorts of publicity material. **OPERA** has connotations of excess, and possibilities for passion, that seem just right for the times; even people who would fall asleep during **SIEGFRIED** use the word as a touchstone, referring to a dream of a radical, all-encompassing artform. **OPERA** retains an extraordinary influence in the British art world and the world of arts funding as an institution. **OPERA** is still *the* posh art form; Conservative MPs spring into action when **KENT OPERA** is threatened by cuts. **OPERA** is very big in Cardiff and in Leeds. The new ads for **OPERA NORTH** look like ads for **NEXT**. Pete Brooks' new show **THE SLEEP** is being sold as an **OPERA**. Would you describe Rose English as a **DIVA**? Are her monologues **ARIAS** or **RECITATIVES**? What's new in **OPERA** — Robert Ashley at The Camden festival? Michael Nyman at the ICA? Then of course there's Jan Fabre. If **OPERA** is taken to be a synonym for the pre-twentieth century repertoire, then of course you realise that more people experience it on record or on CD than on stage. The **ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA** may be putting on **PHILLIP GLASS**, or overtly political stagings of rare **TCHAIKOVSKY** with dances by Ian Spink, or rare **SHOSTAKOVICH** with designer feminism by David Pountney (is that fair?), but the real audience is still for **PUCCINI**. If you want to see new work by the great European directors in this country — Ruth Berghaus, Peter Stein, Nuria Espert — then go to the **OPERA**. **PAVAROTTI** seems to be on the telly every other weekend. Did anyone else think that the Coliseum's **MADAM BUTTERFLY** was last year's most exciting stage trick? Why are **STATION HOUSE OPERA** called **STATION HOUSE OPERA**? The Albery/MacDonald staging of *The Trojans* by **BERLIOZ** was the biggest and most expensive piece of visually structured performance work we'll see produced in Britain this year, and that was an **OPERA**. Perhaps people just want **OPERA** in the same way that they want the excitement of *Chess* or *Les Miserables*. '**OPERA** — a dramatic performance in which music forms an essential part' — O.E.D. (**TURANDOT**? Forced Entertainment? *Blood Brothers*? The lazer show at the Hippodrome?) A non-naturalistic performance work mixing theatre and 'real action' with a multilayered soundtrack . . . sounds like **OPERA** to me. How can one word be so chameleon? Isn't it time we started off by asking.

## A FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS ABOUT OPERA?



NEIL BARTLETT put the questions to DAVID FREEMAN, who runs Opera Factory. Freeman's music theatre has a reputation for being shocking which is largely spurious, the result of ignorant press coverage. All that's shocking about his work is the fact that like a lot of other vilified performance artists he is trying to conscientiously define and refine the kind of performance he's working in. He works with a stable of regular performers, and insists that the body is an integral part of the work as the voice. He creates performances with rather than for the performers during long rehearsal periods — in itself a highly unusual practice — using extensive improvisation. He doesn't see any reason not to be excited by the classical repertoire, although he doesn't think this means that you have to buy opera house methods of production as part of the package.

The parts of the conversation which rambled into the closed world of references to actual operas have been edited out. The point is; does the practice of an artform usually considered to be removed from 'fine art' by its scale and from 'entertainment' by its reputation as a pleasure reserved for the rich or learned actually have any points of contact with the art practices featured elsewhere in this publication?

Recent work includes: Tippett's revised *KNOT GARDEN*; Phillip Glass's *AKNAHTEN* for English National Opera, also Harrison Birtwhistle's *THE MASK OF ORPHEUS*; *HELLS ANGELS*, an opera about history and AIDS with music by Nigel Osborne, played in rep. at The Royal Court with a version of Cavalli's *LA CALISTO* (early seventeenth century erotic comedy); Mozart's *COSI FAN TUTTE* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Forthcoming work includes two Glück operas played in one evening; a tripling of Maxwell Davies' *EIGHT SONGS FOR A MAD KING* with Ligeti's *AVENTURES*, *NOUVELLES AVENTURES* and the Brecht/Weill/Hauptmann *MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL*; a version of Goethe's *FAUST* for a company of actors, mimes and singers.

**Neil Bartlett:** Why is a text like Goethe's *Faust* interesting to someone whose work is usually described as opera?

**David Freeman:** Because it's a piece about enormous issues, and because it implies a very mixed form of theatre; it presents anyone who wants to produce it with more problems than solutions. It just doesn't work. And *Faust* says to Mephistopheles at one point "If I should ever say 'This moment is

exquisite, I wish to stay here', you can have my soul". That's a very different bargain to the twenty-four years you get in Marlowe. It's a metaphor for being on stage, because being on stage is about being totally in the present, that's when you get interesting things done.

**NB:** And what is happening to the audience meanwhile?

**DF:** They're going into the present too. That's where the excitement is; that's why it can happen in a very simple piece of amateur theatre or it can happen (but rarely does) in a very sophisticated piece of professional theatre, it's not a question of — if I say it doesn't matter how good a performance is, you know I don't mean that, what I mean is that for me it's not the most important consideration. For me the most important consideration is whether the work is going on in the present — that one way of expressing it — look some people just understand this, Ligeti's work perfectly expresses this idea, the idea that you can't think without words, that your self-consciousness always makes you unhappy, and so you have to get out into a different condition, and some people get it from climbing a Swiss Alp, some from playing football, or they may get it out of sex or out of a performance.

**NB:** Why are you trying to do that under the heading of 'Opera'?

**DF:** You have to differentiate the institution from the artform.

**NB:** And how do you do that?

**DF:** Well in my case through setting up and working with Opera Factory. I obviously didn't feel that I could make the issue I've described the primary issue in an opera house, simply because there are so many other issues vying for your attention, the difference in scale is the difference between directing field operations on a battlefield and working with a very few people's bodies and psyches in a very sophisticated way. Those are very different things to do. I *always* try to fight a few intimate battles wherever I'm working, because I think those are the only ones worth fighting, even in a big opera house. Obviously it's very exciting if you can get 60 people on stage who are at some level committed to a similar sort of work — but that's very different to what I attempt with Opera Factory. It has to be interesting to work on large scale, but it's not interesting if the only issue is how large it is. That's what you're often reduced to in the *institution* of opera.

The artform itself is no problem. The formality of it is no problem. In the late twentieth century you can hear a Beethoven symphony far more often than you could in Beethoven's time,

and at the same time you can go and see a South east Asian dance drama and you can go and look at a rock group that was only started just three weeks ago and will probably disband in another three weeks. All of that is very peculiar to our time. We live in the first age of such extreme artistic pluralism. I don't think that opera, in that context, is at all odd. Look — the big complaint against opera is that it is too complicated, that you're putting together theatre and literature and music and singing and design, all these elements, but that's really, before the use of naturalism, that's really quite ordinary, if you go to see a piece of Balinese theatre or an American Indian dance what you find they're doing is wearing a costume, speaking and singing — its basically an opera. Then you realise that only fairly recently in the twentieth century has anyone become so self-conscious that they imagine singing is at all a peculiar activity, or that it's less rational than speaking. Speaking isn't particularly rational either. Then people say that theatre can be so much more realistic — but is it rational or normal behaviour for adults to sit around the learn a text for six weeks and then to go and put it on in a little black box and then have other people go and pay to sit in this uncomfortable building and watch it for two hours and then come out and talk about it? Is that not an entirely stylised situation? Theatre *is* stylised, any kind of performance is stylised. Playing the violin is a crazy activity, you stroke a catgut with some horses hair and then people will go away and write pages of pseudoscientific drivel about what that means. It's all crazy, and it's *because* it's crazy — because it is so meaningless — that the only meaning a performance work can have is the meaning that you bring to it, and that gives you an enormous freedom, a great possibility for tolerance and compassion. It gives you the possibility of understanding other point of view which you can't possibly identify with very seriously with in real life because you only ever deal with things from your own points of view.

**NB:** How is your work affected by the image of opera?

**DF:** The question that disturbs me is the question of opera's role in society. Opera as an institution, is distinct from a performance art, is rooted in the nineteenth century — the institution, the repertoire obviously, the way people are auditioned, the hierarchy is very much related to the way an opera house was organised in the 1880's. (The problem is that the performers have to play a repertoire which now has not only come forward

Così Fan Tutte







to today but it's even gone backwards, so that they're often asked to sing in a style they really weren't ever planning to sing in, they're asked to dance, to learn atonal music, to do many things which in a way 'opera', in a particular clichéd sense, isn't, and that makes life very difficult).

Now in Zurich, about four or five years ago, there were riots, and they started at the opera house, because paint was thrown over some very rich ladies in fur coats, and I'm afraid anyone in Zurich with a fur coat . . . I was actually rehearsing at a place called The Red factory, which was a centre for all this, and we had to put up signs, because we had a harpsichord, we had to put up signs saying "We are not the Opera House of Zurich", because they would have come in and smashed it. I once had to abandon a rehearsal because it was filled with tear gas and the police walked in with these steel helmets looking like something out of Star Wars. And isn't that very sad, that on one hand there are all these people who like opera, who handled the riots very badly — of course it wasn't just about opera, but opera as a sign of the whole relationship of the young to culture in Zurich in much broader terms, they were failing to recognise the problem at all; and then on the other hand we had to defend ourselves and say we — simply because there was a harpsichord these people would attack it, it's like Goya's SCENES FROM A WAR, where they're all pulling down this statue and it's entitled 'they know not what they do' — the people, the poor old peasants who've been treated so badly destroy everything associated with the older regime including what is good about it. I mean, to destroy something simply because it's termed opera is really a very naive understanding of the term opera . . . but what I really wanted to say was, the people of Zurich, about 3% of them go to the Opera House, because of course the prices are so phenomenally high, and yet they voted 60 or 80 million Swiss francs, which is a great deal of money, and only coming from the town of Zurich, just to renovate the opera house. Now why did they do that? It was decided by referendum, so more than 50% of the people wanted to renovate the opera house although they don't go, the reason is that people want to see their city as being an important one, and so they have to have an opera house, and whether people go or not doesn't matter. It's like in Saudi Arabia you make your wife grow fat, because that shows just how affluent you are. It's a nineteenth century idea. That's part of what opera means. And it's a part that I find very uninteresting, it's crippling to be stuck with that image.

La Calisto

**NB:** Is opera different to any other form of performance?

**DF:** The one thing that is a very distinctive discipline of opera is that it is in finite time.

What I mean is that in a play you can take a pause for as long as you like. Of course if you understand and respond at all closely to the text there are as many cadences in Shakespeare as there are in Mozart. There are of course more choices about how you attack those cadences. Mind you I would love it if in recitative people would be far more free than they are. A lot of opera is completely bastardised when the voice beautiful becomes the paramount consideration.

**NB:** Are you trying to redefine opera?

**DF:** What I'm trying to do is very traditional actually. It's just trying to do something really well. And to do that you have to be relatively fanatical about it. I'm more interested — the brain of one performer is more infinite than the entire organism of the opera house, because it's possible in that one psyche to find everything — if there's the right relationship. It's got to be interesting to go for a walk on the wild side.

[Opera Factory was founded in Sydney in 1973, set up shop in Zürich in 1976 and started producing in London in 1981. The Royal Court Seasons in 1984 and 1986 are promoted by the GLC; in 1984 Opera Factory joined forces with the London Sinfonietta; together they make the expansion of new forms and new audiences for music theatre a real possibility, even in the late 80's. Flexibility of repertoire and venue are their hallmarks.]

**NB:** Where will you play next?

**DF:** Well, I think you have to keep on moving the goal-posts. I don't have a five year plan, but eventually I want a theatre of my own. I want to be able to do a mixed programme. The problem with existing arts centres from my point of view is that they turn into warehouses, and it's pot luck what's on. I want a company which will do plays, operas, co-produce things with other people, but which has a very strong personality and does a very particular kind of work . . . a personality which is especially about unpredictability, especially about crossing over borderlines, doing a lot of new work alongside good old work. Being daring; trying to look at every situation as if there was no obvious solution. The kind of work I do really doesn't have a home.

*HELLS ANGELS* is a case in point; it had too much text for an opera, too much music for a play, too much history, and too much stuff about

AIDS and contemporary issues for the people who like history. Where do you put a work like that?

**NB:** Could that theatre be in this country.

**DF:** As the English get both poorer and richer that makes this country (in a rather horrific way) an intensely interesting place to work. There's more to discuss. Actually I just create a series of works. There's no particular point I want to arrive at.

**NB:** Do you think you have to be iconoclastic?

**DF:** You can't think about things like that. If you did you'd never get any work done. When people talk about iconoclastic performances they basically discuss the sets and the costumes. It's quite phenomenal, dramatic criticism is so bone idle, they don't actually talk about what's happening in terms of opera, they don't even discuss the music. They don't discuss the music, they don't discuss the theatre — they discuss the costumes and the set and a sort of 'view of the work'. It's just Lit. Crit. I don't think there's any point in doing something which simply perplexes an audience. You want to disturb them, but they must agree to be disturbed. The audience is not here to recognise what is happening, but to see something strange, to be fascinated by what is different. And to see something happen out of nothing; you know that it's an illusion but yet you agree to believe in it; like the building of the city in *AKNAHTEN* (building a city out of sand) I think that to have thirty people doing something that gentle, and that creative . . . something like that which catches at traces in peoples' minds, because your earliest memory is of having your sandcastle kicked down . . . and I started doing all that because I'd been to Egypt and you see, what it is is just sand with this water running through the middle, and so I knew what I wanted and I said I want just sand and water and they didn't want that, it was too simple, they had a \$200,000 budget for the set and the costumes, as they knew they wouldn't be able to spend it, and I knew there was going to be trouble . . .

**NB:** Who are your heroes?

**DF:** I love Fischer-Dieskau. I would go and see him if he was ninety, I wouldn't care if he couldn't sing a note. I think he's remarkable, he's spontaneous, he combines intelligence and compassion. And I love The Who, I'm an old Who freak. ●

OPERA



# WHO ARE YOU DOING THIS FOR?

The issue of who watches Performance and of who artists and promoters hope to attract to performances, is obviously of vital importance. NEIL BARTLETT devised a questionnaire to find out more.



ALL SORTS OF performance art (or, if you like, all sorts of art featured in PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE) have a common need and desire to reconsider relations between the artwork and the artist and the audience. That is our credo.

But does that refer to reconsiderations of form, or reconsiderations of systems of access as well as means of production? Or are all those things assumed to be inevitably interrelated? What I mean is, do artists think about not only how a certain work can be enjoyed/read/responded to/used by its audience, but also about who hears about the work, who is attracted to the work, who can want, get to and afford the work in the first place? And why is it that the common-denominator language of arts administration so easily persuades us to collude in the fiction that most artists think mostly the same things about these issues?



This feature was prompted by a meeting with a Regional Arts Association officer who claimed that he hadn't met an artist in eight months who could usefully or accurately define who her or his work was for. Now, I thought to myself, is this really true? How do artists take responsibility for who sees their work? Do artists take responsibility for who sees their work?

Some artists producing live performance have very specific ideas about who is their audience and how to get to them — Theatre of Black Women, Gay Sweatshop, 7:84. Some artists claim that their work is for everyone — the RSC. But if the model of a theatre audience — political theatre, community theatre, bourgeois theatre — is not relevant, then which model of audience access can be used to contextualise live performance? The Art Gallery? Television, with its dazzling impression that everything from the 'difficult' (and what would that be — *The Singing Detective?* *Alter Image?*) to the 'easy' has direct access to a large and various audience?



Some artists and some arts administrators and funding bodies try and dissolve the whole issue of who the work is for and who sees it, and why, with simplifications like 'Performance Art is only ever seen by a very few people' or 'I think this work is very accessible actually' or 'I wish more people would come . . .' (see below). Despite the fashion for being inarticulate about these things, every practising artist does have ideas about audience (see below). In order to persuade people to be articulate, and in order to provide concrete fuel for future arguments, the following three questions were put by Performance, to a list of thirty artists and art promoters. The list was chosen to include both people working on a small scale and on a large scale; people in big cities and out of them; 'art' venues and 'community venues'; established and new artists. Not everyone replied.



The questions were:-  
**ONE** — *Can you describe the audience for your work? Is this description guesswork or do you actually keep track of who comes? Can you be specific about describing your audience along the lines of size, race, age, class, where they live, disposable income, gender, trendiness . . . or are those not useful categories for you?*  
**TWO** — *Who would you like to come? Would you like your audience to be bigger or smaller or in some way different to the one described in answer to question one?*  
**THREE** — *What practical steps do you intend to take in the next two years to bridge the gap between answer one and answer two?*



The answers have been edited as little as possible, because people reveal their attitudes towards their audience, and to the idea of 'audience' as an idea worth talking about, as much through the way they say things as in what they actually say. The answers are not intended to be representative of anything. They are intended to demonstrate contradictions, to illustrate the real diversity of opinion and practice in this area of our work. They should remove the possibility of anyone talking reductively about a homogenous practice of or audience for 'performance'. They should cause rows. They are being published because there is a desperate need for less evasive talk about 'the work itself' and more informed discussion of how the work of artists and promoters is actually changing as the conditions for the funding, creation and distribution of new live work in this country worsen. ●



**ARTANGEL (LONDON)**

Artangel Trust is a funding and initiating outreach organisation for the contemporary visual arts.

- a) Presenting art in public locations.
- b) Collaborating with artists and curators to find new audiences 'beyond the museum'.
- c) Encouraging artists working in a context of social or political intervention.
- d) Supporting public works which are transient, temporary or not gallery based.

We offer the following thoughts on our perceived audience:

As Artangel projects appear in public locations our theoretical audience is anyone and everyone. For instance on a billboard project there is no way of fully calculating how many people (of whatever types) will see the work. The assumption must be that the work is being seen by thousands of people of all sizes, ages, races, classes and gender. The ratios between such categories however will vary according to location ie depending on whether the billboard is in Southall or South Kensington and whether it is near to a soccer pitch or a public school. So to some extent we can strategically place a work to attract a particular kind of audience.

The level to which the context of the work engages various members of the public can of course be manipulated by the obscurity or accessibility of the imagery and by the publicity attendant to the work, the nature of that publicity, and where it appears. An Artangel audience consists of casual observers and/or intrigued passers-by and people who have arrived in response to publicity information. The latter will be made up of various target groups who will be the receivers of Artangel mail-outs, City Limits





listings, CND News, ID Magazine, The London Daily News or certain TV and radio programmes etc. For any presentation we will be actively seeking a general audience as well as identifying potentially interested groups. Our priority is in encouraging an ever wider audience of people who would not normally consider visiting a contemporary art exhibition, installation, performance or event. This is done through appropriate PR work which will try to advertise and publicise work as widely as possible in comprehensible language.

On occasions we have surveyed our audiences by careful observation and by direct interviews in order to get a realistic idea of how successful a project has been. It is important for us to gain some indication of public reaction if we are to succeed in one of our main aims — 'finding new audiences beyond the museum'.

We certainly do not consider ourselves as an evangelical organisation but we are concerned about the elitist nature of much Fine Art practice and presentation which denies access to the majority of the population.

We seek to counteract this elitism by giving new audiences a chance to see and consider good quality work and ideas from contemporary practitioners who are willing to think about public art strategies. The resulting work might be confrontational or invitational but in most cases we try to provide an educational dimension with associated publicity which will provoke public discussion and debate around the work.

All this 'worthy endeavour' must realistically bear in mind the inevitable disinterest factor. Some people are never going to be interested in art, just like some people are never going to be interested in greyhound racing or polo. We must also contend with a great deal of downright hostility, encouraged by dominant media attitudes to any form of contemporary art which they love to hate and condemn. Such smug ignorance has to be fought with intelligent publicity and PR and, where necessary, articulate counter attack. It is not easy or straightforward to have to work against the formidable weight of established prejudice. Artangel is primarily concerned with issue-based work which hopefully provides reference points within its subject matter which most people can relate to their everyday lives.

One of the most obvious ways to new strategies and new audiences is to critically analyse and learn from each project on an ongoing basis. ●

## BABEL (HALIFAX)

1) We have little concern for who our audience is, or whether an audience exists. Our concerns lie in the consistent production of our work. The meeting with an audience is intended to be an element of chance. The work is intended to be met head on — without prompting or introduction.

2) We would hope that all people have access to our work.

3) This access, is, however, the responsibility of the arts administrator and promoters. It is for them to bridge the gap between any artist and an audience through intelligent, imaginative and coherent programmes. 'Accessibility' is the buzzword today and consequently simple work along everyday lines is requested and consequently created. The programming of imagina-

tive projects, along professional lines, is the way forward. Make the public move forward, not the work of artists backward. Then both parties will respect the promotion and existence of the arts in our society more, and both quality and quantity will develop; the size of the audience and the nature of the artists work.

4) "Imagination dead. Imagine." (Samuel Beckett). ●

## CHAPTER (CARDIFF)

In answer to question 1, here's a quote from our most recent audience survey:

At this venue, 97 people were interviewed. Out of the 97 respondents, 36% were first-time attenders and 63% had attended a performance at the venue before. 12% of the respondents had attended six or more performances there in 6 months. The three main modes of transportation to the venue were car, bus and on foot. The majority of the respondents were living within Cardiff or in nearby districts. 19-24 and 25-34 were the two most popular age ranges. 55% of the respondents went there in a party of two and 27% went there in a party of three to six. The performance was not booked well in advance since about 80% of the respondents either booked on the day or within the week prior to the performance. More than 20% of the respondents were attracted by the production through a single show leaflet. Apart from this, 30% of them became aware of the production through word of mouth. Among the 97 respondents, only 34% had visited the Chapter Arts Centre three or more times since September 1985.

Question 2: we would like bigger audiences for many of the events programmed, but size is always relative. Epigonenteatr Zlv played to 300 people at St David's Hall here in Cardiff: a small audience for the Hall, but the equivalent of 3 sold-out nights in our Studio theatre.

Question 3: in general we are more concerned about the work itself and producing organisations than about the audiences. The work occasionally does not deserve a large audience. In other circumstances the producing organisation does not have the resources to attract an audience. We have set up a number of systems in Cardiff for getting audiences, including efficient bulk distribution of print and a segmented mailing list. But the quantities and quality of print required are more often than not beyond the producing organisation. (For example, we require ten thousand leaflets, overprinted, 3 months in advance). In the light of this we are steadily withdrawing from the usual system of taking in touring work. ●

## DOGS IN HONEY (NOTTINGHAM)

SARAH TUTT:

1) No record kept. Anyone with a couple of quid who want to spend it watching something? Mainly under 30

2) Would like more people under 20 who are just becoming aware of interpreting/discussing images with particular reference to sexuality, relationships, self image and naked emotion, 1980's culture.

3) To become more involved in education, particularly 5th + 6th formers via R.A.A. school initiatives

STEPHEN TOM JONES:

1) A sixty year old well dressed man (everytime) some who are swayed by whether there is somewhere to drink and art in the same place; watchful people.

2) ACCESS to the 80's definers of 'the new type of education'; to the moulders of what should be CONSUMED and WHAT IS FASHION(ABLE).

ACCESS to those with a free-reign on the shaping of the progress of 1987 culture (particularly in this country) by making aware; and by bringing what might really be important beyond the tension of the 'surface'.

And redefine what can really be achieved.

In respect to the size of our particular audience, at this moment in time, it should remain intimate.

3) PRACTICAL MEASURES: education : nightclubs : moving into film/performing in Odeons, PUBLIC galleries. ●

## FORCED ENTERTAINMENT (SHEFFIELD)

1) We averaged about 60 a night with our last touring show. We produce work based on life in cities, about human beings caught in the centre of the TV/urban culture, breathing gently.

Our audience are people who share the concerns of our work and to one extent or another the economic and cultural conditions that it's born out of.

That's the best answer.

The other answer is this: we attract a young audience mostly in their early 20's or thereabouts. This is partly explained by some of the venues we play: colleges or other places of higher education, but it doesn't seem to vary that much in other, more generally accessible venues. Probably a lot of our audience are middle class but that's difficult to say for sure without research. All our ideas about audience are based on informal observation. UB40 and S.U. card holders are prominent. Men and women in roughly equal proportions.

All this seems fairly reasonable, for the moment, given our backgrounds and the cultural (music/theatre/video/literature) tradition that we see ourselves as part of.

But there is always an older group at our performances and this acts as proof to us, if you like, that the work has an applicability and a relevance for more people than its current audience might suggest.

2 & 3) We're essentially concerned to reach more people and, specifically, that means people in 3 areas.

Firstly the young audience: our contemporaries, just above and just below. In an obvious sort of way they're our natural audience: almost inevitably sharing our language, culture and concerns.

We'll continue to leaflet clubs, cafes and pubs appropriate to this audience. In venues far from Sheffield, or unfamiliar to us, it's usually impossible to ensure that this gets done.

We'll continue to encourage NME, the Face, i-D etc to discuss and publicise our work.

We've also gone to some lengths, and intend to go further, to establish close contacts with 6th Forms, colleges and universities, organising performances, block bookings, residences and post-performance seminars. All of these serving not only to increase this audience, but also



to make us closer to it.

Secondly we'd like to begin to establish an older, more mainstream audience. We're not interested in self-ghettoisation, and know that the work is as relevant there as it is anywhere else.

To get this we'll be trying to get two things simultaneously: cultural respectability through serious consideration in the national press and secondly access to larger theatres without a self-defeating attitude to their position.

Thirdly we want to expand the audience internationally (the concerns and language of the work demand this) by setting up performances and full tours, abroad.

How much of this will prove possible in the next two years remains open to question. ●

### THE GREEN ROOM (MANCHESTER)

1) As a Regional Promoter (that strange breed!) we have had to acknowledge a responsibility to a wide audience for touring work — if there is no alternative to The Green Room we cannot provide unadulterated new work, there would never be any growth if we did. By scheduling some of the more mainstream contemporary dance, more traditionally-based international music and dance, poetry, children's activities etc. we build up what amounts almost to a series of audiences. Of course, we would like to believe that the "cross-fertilisation" of forms is happening all the time, but you get to recognise the faces (especially when you've been doing the box-office as well as the programming during the last four years!), and that happens less often than one would hope. One could say that a typical Green Room attendee is between 19 and 35, fifty per cent are unemployed or students, we don't know what kind of work the rest are doing. However, for special-interest work, the black theatre and dance, gay companies, Persian/Chinese/Syrian music etc. then we manage to mobilise large numbers of people specifically interested in that.

Of course, all this might change as soon as our building opens and develops an identity beyond the work itself. A certain kind of person foregathers in the foyers of venues, like attracts like etc. etc.

2) By scheduling our first commissions on Piccadilly Station and not in the building, by working towards the summer school in September to include canal-side site-specific work we are hoping to reach the broad mass of Manchester public who might never set foot in an Arts centre. Perhaps they'll be encouraged to come by seeing the work, if they're not it doesn't matter, the performance will get seen by non-gallery attenders and non-theatre-goers. We've now appointed a community liaison worker to develop our audiences in particular target groups, we want a mixed attendance at events, the nightclubbers, the active politicians, the theatre and performance people. We can't afford to alienate any one group at the expense of another.

This has already become 3. The new worker, a programme of educational, workshop and class activities, visiting speakers etc will all attempt to make "difficult" work more accessible. Once the building is more known and when phase two is developed so that a rehearsal space becomes available, we hope that artists

based in the North West will feel it is their space too. ●

### ANNIE ELIZABETH GRIFFIN (LONDON)

My audience watches tv, listens to the radio, thinks about sexism, gets real depressed about this place — know what I mean? Lots of women, mostly Londoners as that's where I perform the most.

I've had friends come up to me and say 'I really wanted to see your last show but I couldn't afford the ticket price.' I think 1) 'Baloney. You spend more than that in an hour at the pub or on a new record.' 2) 'That's terrible. I must play in venue with cheaper ticket prices.' If I am on in an expensive venue, I will also play at cheaper places — this is in London.

I want to play more schools, as I've had good experiences so far — no publicity work and a chance for a good discussion afterwards. I try to tour as much as I can, but it's difficult for the work. Most small scale regional touring venues will only book one night of solo work. On the day of the show I travel, set up, warm up, and give a tired person's performance.

I want to reach an audience that shares the concerns of the work, especially women. To that end I'm trying to produce clean, attractive publicity — and get it round, so that people know the show is on and know what it's about... I'd like to bypass an audience that comes because "performance" is the latest. Whenever I hear of a well-run regional community arts centre that has developed an audience for new work I write to them. I haven't heard of many. Otherwise, about half of my engagements are for audiences more or less already there, namely schools and festivals. ●

### ICA (LONDON)

#### Our audience

Making generalisations about 'our audience' can be dangerous — we have many audiences. But for New/Performance work, they tend to be sophisticated, informed (ie make *relative* judgements), cynical, impatient, ungenerous and product-obsessed. We often feel that if anyone is denying new work that all important 'right to fail', it's our audience. They seem to have lost all interest in process, in observing development. They want to see *achievement* and they want to see it *now*. This must affect programming policy, particularly at a time when Box Office income is more a crucial part of the equation than ever. We worry that our ticket prices are too high (this also affects who comes) but we are so dependent on earned income — to a much larger extent than most of our subsidized peers.

We have a feeling that our audience isn't strictly a 'theatre' audience — ie they would more naturally tend towards concerts/movies than other London theatre.

#### Ideal audience

Obviously we'd like the Theatre to be full every night with the broadest possible audience cross section. We'd like the audience to include a large proportion of people who'd never seen a show like it before. We'd like an audience who'd never be seen dead in the ICA. We'd like more black audiences to attend 'experimental' theatre.

Old notions of a 'core' audience no longer seem to be true.

#### Steps towards achieving ideal audience

Programming must play a large role in attracting and consolidating our 'ideal audience' through the contextualisation of New Work and encouraging a relationship of trust between audiences and programming. Public discussions, special ticket offers wherever possible and thorough and imaginative mailings all proved very successful in our recent *Home Work* season and shall be continued.

Press coverage as a means of creating parallel texts is vital. Explanation and informed opinion rather than insecure personal response could do much to develop a greater sense of understanding/desire in audiences.

### THE LEADMILL (SHEFFIELD)

#### Intended audience for performance evenings:

Decisions about what type of audience to go for are made by the publicity team on our understanding of what is likely to appeal to whom, and by the artists. Confirmation packs (contracts etc) request them to specify who they think is attracted to their work.

Along with attracting the regular arts/theatre audience (usually age 20-30, middle class, equal women and men, students, unemployed and low pay bracket ie teachers, nurses, artists ect.) the intention is to also draw in an audience that watch TV, go to pubs, clubs, watch indie bands, films, and are generally out and about but who hardly ever go to live performance in the expectation that the experience is dull or obscure.

The intentions have proved successful to a degree, drawing upon the two groups outlined above (an audience of 150 for Annie Griffin early on in the season). This is known from observation and chatting to people who come down. More specific analysis of audiences could be gathered from market research questionnaires — on the whole this is intrusive and often considered insulting by audiences, prefer in general not to use these methods. However, partly due to breadth of type of work selected and present programming slot, audiences tend to fluctuate.

#### Practical methods to achieve true success and happiness...

Fortunately the evening can now be programmed to precede the 'trendy' disco rather than the 60's night — relatively easier to persuade people to come out earlier to a place they were going anyway, and will cost them less than 2 nights out.

The evenings will continue to be developed as a mixed media evening — commissioned sound tapes, artists videos, perhaps local bands for ½ hour before (Sheffield very trendy for bands), perhaps informed introductions. Artists will be asked to provide adequate programme notes where appropriate and the Leadmill will produce more general written information on live art when publicising.

To encourage identification with the evenings as a season and thus build up regular audiences, the seasons will be mostly performance, and will be advertised through 'base' posters





commissioned from artists — with an appeal of their own as posters.

Marketing strategies include devices used to publicise bands and clubs, ie flyposting, posters in clothes shops, pubs, friends' windows etc. ●

### MARTY ST. JAMES AND ANNE WILSON (HACKNEY)

1) Our work is conceived and made with a wide and varied audience in mind. In reality however our audience tends to fall into two general categories, these are: in galleries or theatres mainly an 'art' audience, youngish, predominantly white, middle class, collectors of people. In outside places the audience happily expands dramatically to encompass people who are not trying to pretend that they do not recognise the theme music to East Enders.

It is a recurring observation that sometimes the audience who choose to attend the event look worried, whereas often the second group of audience who as it were are 'subjected' to the event appear to understand the work completely and enjoy themselves.

Because of our community teaching role we have to some degree successfully short circuited the predictable audience issue on occasions, integrating people from different origins and backgrounds with the usual art audience.

It must be said however that one is **never sure exactly** who is in one's audience.

2) We would like everyone to come not just people that know us or about art.

3) Our gap is a chasm from both sides. We work in quite a lot in different situations and do some work for television which both help reach lots of different people which is good. One side of our gap can be narrowed by doing more of such work, in what ways we are currently thinking on. The other side of the gap is more subtle to bridge and needs thinking on more.

One particular version or equation to solve is:

Does one make work for the people who come or the people who don't?

We try to make work for all of them.

As for the next two years we do not know.

People who frequent art events are sometimes too complicated to understand our work, the values that they bring to are inappropriate.

People who would never willingly attend an art event seem to respond more quickly and directly perhaps because they only see what is there. ●

### ALASTAIR McLENNAN (BELFAST)

1) The nature of my audience (in part) depends on when and where I work. A white-walled gallery attracts a 'mirror image' public (or it's Absence). 'Un' art spaces draw the curious. These behave very differently at 4.00 AM than at 4.00 PM. Locations doubling as 'windows' catch Shopping Malled 'consumptives'.

I retain impressions from audiences. If there's 'hi-di-hi' from gutter-com-Other press, we'll have hundreds. They're young, old, black, white, blue-and-white collared, with or without jobs, trendies and/or 'REAL' McCoy.

2) I want access to everyone. Each has access to him/her self. How do we do this? I welcome open and closed minds. With *live* TV we have multi directional interface with millions.

Because of vested political interests it's OFF THE AGENDA here. Better . . . first-hand relations with 2-3 people than media's current EN MASSE Amnesia.

3) . . . Stepping-stone(s) or engineered 'feet' . . . ? Bridging gaps is my art. ●

### PEGASUS (OXFORD)

Pegasus is a small-scale touring venue and the home of Oxford Youth Theatre, which caters specifically for 14-25 year olds; Pegasus specialises in having companies in residence, in looking to achieve working relationships between visiting companies and local people, especially OYT members and school students.

The Pegasus is a rather plain breeze-block building in East Oxford next to a pub in a residential area of East Oxford. It's a place you come to in order to see a show or in order to do some work for a performance. It's not a place people drop into because it has no conventional leisure facilities like a cafe or a bar.

OYT are centrally involved in programming Pegasus and in vetting shows. This is where *Performance* magazine's interests figure as Pegasus, since October 1983, has been exploring that area, now known as new theatre, which includes physical theatre, visual theatre, performance, new dance, mixed media work and more. Perhaps unusually, Pegasus has approached this work from a broad educational base. Companies or artists are booked not just because they have an innovative agenda but because they wish to work with people, to inspire others, to recreate what energises them by collaborating with local people. When you operate from an educational base, audience building is a constant interest. When you do work with (state) schools you have often an enhanced potential for working with a constructive gender, race and class mix. Were we solely to book performance for a self-selecting audience it's likely that we'd also be servicing a highly conventional audience. However when

**Theatre de Complicité** worked with 50 Middle School pupils on a week-long bouffon project leading to a spectacular and grotesque show in the summer of 1984, the audience principally comprised OYT members, friends, guardians and parents of the pupils and friends of the Pegasus. It was a closed performance rather than a commercial offering but indicates how it is possible to value work for a specific audience, even though more people might have been eager to see the show. A **Forkbeard Fantasy** residency on the other hand led to an installation that was as much for the public as their accompanying performance. That installation was constructed by Forkbeard Fantasy with teachers, pupils and young adults from a Spastics Society day centre. In these terms and especially in relation to shows commissioned for OYT the conventional boundaries between experience and inexperience, artists and non-artists and so on are eroded in significant ways.

Not only do OYT members in conjunction with the three Pegasus staff programme performance, they are also wise as to which and what performances they like. At least one company that has featured in *Performance* has phoned up after an OYT visit to a show asking whether we were really going to accept the opinion of the two young people who saw it. Yes we did accept their opinion, as they are not only experienced

members of an audience but practitioners too. In their opinion the show was facile and especially inept in its portrayal of gender. Most recently, **Rose English** has performed at Pegasus and run a week of workshops. As I write a group of OYT members are working on a show that has taken on some of the characteristics of Rose's workshops. So for us, the issue is not simply a matter of whether or how we might programme performance, it is more to do with whether performance is as interesting as the work that OYT can make by themselves.

At Pegasus the task is double edged. We will develop our audience for performance as we develop local tastes for OYT's work. Next week the new devised OYT show will play in a double-bill with a new piece from **The Junction** (based at Battersea Arts Centre and directed by Annie Griffin). I suspect that that double-bill will be as interesting, as exploratory and perhaps as good as possibly anything else that we will present this year. ●

### ANDY WALKER (LARGE SCALE INTERNATIONAL) (LONDON)

I don't know and I don't care. I just want to do it for everyone. From anywhere. Fuck the money. Fuck 'What they want'. Never Ever Justify. Just do it and do it fucking brilliantly.

Am I being fair to myself? ●

### WELFARE STATE (ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA)

#### ONE

Strictly speaking, our work is not created for an audience but for a community. Where no community exists it may be necessary to invent one. The problems and processes of creating a work and finding its audience — or rather participants — are interlinked. In devising one-off celebratory events and ceremonies we attempt to generate social poetry of a high order in a precise functional context, time and place. We work in rural areas, towns and inner cities throughout Britain and overseas — audience 'types' vary accordingly and may range in size from 10 to 10,000 depending on the nature and scale of the production.

As each situation is different (culturally, physically and geographically) we can't summarise our audience under fixed categories. Of course there are some who regularly come to our events and may travel long distances to do so. At the other extreme there will be some for whom our work is their first experience of live performance other than pantomime or variety (this is particularly true in some of our host communities in the North in areas where there is a poor level of arts provision).

In the last two years, we've travelled an axis from the birthplace of human culture in East Africa to the terminal pleasure domes of Expo '86 in Vancouver. In between we've developed a long-term programme of arts development in Barrow — construction base for Trident submarines. We're interested in devising work that operates both on a local vernacular level and on a global macro-economic level. Our concern is with the energies and surplus of celebration, rites of passage, and shared subliminal experience — and what these may contribute to communal well-being, empowerment, social

change, and a more equitable distribution of resources.

We don't often work in arts venues or on established gig circuits, and would probably avoid them altogether were it not useful to be seen occasionally in art/theatre circles working before funders, critics, and arbiters of taste — it's ironic that it's here you have to prove you're accessible, radical, relevant, streetwise, clever and worth the subsidy. Even Dada can now be safely buried in middle class art cemeteries.

### TWO

It's difficult to get theatre/art critics to travel out of London or the major cities to see our work. Getting them along to the opening night at a cosmopolitan arts centre can be hard enough, but try enticing them to, say, a one-off event in a muddy field in Worlington! It can be difficult too to draw a critic into cultural territory with which he/she is unfamiliar.

On the other hand, we've had little problem in recent years building up an appreciative and perceptive audience of 'non-theatre goers' prepared to accept works that are innovative, challenging and politically charged. The acid-test is that in doing this work outdoors you don't have a captive audience. You know when you're holding people.

For our theatre work now, we prefer audiences of 200-300. When you get beyond 300 it's difficult to reach people other than through the opium of the spectacle.

We have always been concerned to place our art in the key moments of people's lives. We'd like to be more responsive to individual and communal needs, producing, say, artworks and commemorations for weddings, namings, housewarmings, memorial services etc. We intend to develop our work in this area further in future. You can't of course get grant aid for domestic celebration and ritual yet the experience you can bring from it to the public work is of great value. Count Basie once remarked that the musician that wasn't prepared to play at weddings shouldn't be playing music at all.

### THREE

We are essentially fine artists exploring styles of non-literary visual theatre in a community context. Consequently we are funded and recognised as either a theatre company (partly correct) or as community artists (totally incorrect).

We have become best known for the creation of huge, self-contained models of celebratory theatre. These epic models were conceived as allegorical equivalents of society at large. The best examples have been:

*The Tempest On Snake Island, Toronto '81*

*Tower of Babel, Bracknell '82*

*Raising the Titanic, London '83*

These works received considerable accolades. The basic flaw, however, of these models is that we were obliged to start from ART rather than LIVING, to generate more product than process, and to work to rapid (and to some extent commercial) deadlines in strange lands. You become jetset jesters, playing with specious notions of ritual, but with little fieldwork experience of the rhythms of a host community.

In recent years therefore we've undertaken long-term arts development researching new models/traditions of celebration with communities in Cumbria. This, for us, is a major shift in direction and is now influencing the content of

our international work. In sum, we are trying to find or build anew the bridge between the mythic and the domestic.

Over the next two years, we'll be working in Barrow on a cycle of 'soaps' and 'Miracle Plays' based on locally gathered stories. En route, we'll devise oratorios and light opera for local music groups, streetband parades, pantomime and club nights, films and TV work. The cycle will look at the dilemmas of labour and cultural production in a town whose prosperity and future is tied to the military-industrial complex. It means listening a lot to people, building up trust, getting accepted as artists *and* as neighbours. You might begin with the artforms or entertainments people are familiar with, then find them a context where they can be revitalised or changed to reveal agreed values, communal concerns, subliminal icons, and inner conflicts.

In future we want to establish cultural links for our audience that go beyond our own practice in the arts. For example, we're currently helping our home town of Ulverston to twin with a town in Tanzania — there's a huge level of local support for this and a desire to celebrate it in seasonal events and ceremonies. ●

## STEPHEN TAYLOR WOODROW (LONDON)

i) Let's be frank and earnest, the audience for the *Living Paintings* has been vast. The piece has been exhibited 12 times, has broken three major municipal art gallery attendance records (at Cartwright Hall, Bradford, the audience exceeded 16,000 in one week) and when the show retires this summer will have been seen live by an estimated 100,000 people. All this has been managed without so much as a review in Performance Magazine. I have been able to keep fairly close track of the type of people that have seen the show as I spend my time watching them, and it has been a broad spectrum, from arty-farty to just plain farty. We're not always in art venues — shopping centres and nightclubs will do — so we get all ages, shapes, sizes, colours and creeds. I've never been enamoured of just performing in front of the type of person that goes to see performance art, so with this particular show we did set out to work in places like the Outer Hebrides and Guernsey, where we could introduce the medium as well as the work itself. I think that it is important that performance artists should do this rather than just work in London or do the festivals.

ii) I have enjoyed having had so many people see the *Living Paintings*. I have also been made to feel ashamed by some quarters that the piece has been so popular. Accusations of populism etc as if live art shouldn't ever have an audience of more than 30, shouldn't be accessible, should not be seen on the television, should not be performed more than once. I never set out to make populist work, but I certainly have no desire to make elitist work. I'm not sure who I direct my work towards. I have no love of the general public, who will, 'en masse', stab the arts in the back at any opportunity, nor do I like art circles very much, as I'm not convinced that live art is taken really seriously as a medium in this country, even by many of those who are 'regular' audience members.

iii) Practically, I don't think I could attract a specific type or size of audience without com-

promising a work before it had been created. I certainly never expect to attract an audience like the *Living Paintings* have had ever again. ●

## THE ZAP CLUB (BRIGHTON)

We support work from any discipline. We are strongly committed to creating as wide an audience for performance as possible, irrespective of age, race, class, gender or indeed geographic location. We aggressively promote performance in our own club in Brighton, in other venues and in open spaces within the South East and throughout the UK. We try actively to encourage the press and media to adopt a positive attitude towards performance. We recently completed a film on performance art at the Zap Club which will be televised.

The Arts Council decision not to continue to support the Zap has resulted in us having to restrict the *type* of people who get to see the performance, although the *numbers* we reach continue to increase. Until they withdrew our modest grant, we were pleased to present performances to the very young, the very old, the handicapped and the disadvantaged. We also presented work in public spaces. We are now almost entirely restricted to presenting performance in circumstances where it works commercially. We do receive a small SE Arts grant that allows us to continue to operate platform evenings.

We have been pioneering mixed discipline art entertainment programming for the last six years. Since that approach makes commercial as well as artistic sense we are frequently asked to provide programmes for organisations throughout the UK, thereby rapidly increasing the audience for performance. Currently our most successful strategy is to show organisations how to create audiences that drink beer whilst watching art. We then encourage them to put some of their beer profits towards their performance programme.

If any organisations wish to discuss our approach then they should phone Neil Butler on 0273 727880. ●



# ETHYL AND LILY

## speaking your mind

**This summer LIFT is coming to town again, and the media are already springing to attention. Time too perhaps for British artists to grumble about lack of money and attention and make unfair comparisons with the visiting artists from abroad.**

● This year's festival includes legendary drag ETHYL EICHELBERGER from NEW YORK, heading for the ICA in July. Ethyl to be properly fêted as a major foreign artist; meanwhile London already has several drag performance artists as good, none of whom know what 'ICA' stands for, whose tradition, technique, audience and performance spaces are entirely unknown to the art public. Why is it that this area of performance only gets discussed or visited when turned into 'art'? Because it's gay? Because its tradition is housed, in this country, in pubs? Because it's audience and many of its performers are working class?

When borrowed to decorate the vocabulary of theatre or dance drag becomes a good joke, or a potent image-bank for illustrating various dilemmas of gender in performance. In a pub (which is where, in contemporary Britain, it comes from) it is a complete and complex art, irredeemably subcultural, irreducibly gay. In work that straddles both worlds — both in its onstage imagery and its offstage audience — the messages sent out by drag performance get very confusing. From the outside, Michael Clark's drag looks like shock tactics, theatrical exoticism. Seen from the inside, by a club queen, it looks like a very well done slice of life, nothing odd there at all. To get two very different perspectives on all this NEIL BARTLETT went to New York and talked to Ethyl, and then he came back to London and repeated the questions he'd put to Ethyl to LILY SAVAGE, current queen of the London drag scene. As elsewhere in this issue, he invited the artists to speak by asking them very simple questions, making as few assumptions as possible about their relation to the usual terms of reference of PERFORMANCE. Their acts have many points of coincidence; but they are artists working in completely different traditions and different cultures, and they know nothing of each other's work.



ETHYL EICHELBERGER is a character actor whose work is informed by an encyclopaedic knowledge of the early history of American vaudeville, burlesque, drag and Yiddish Broadway. He plays both men and women, and has been a longstanding member of Charles' Ludlum's Core. He is best known for a series of monologues in which drag drives head on into radical performance entitled *Great Women of History*. The flamboyant but much maligned women (Nefertiti, Klytaemnestra, Elizabeth I, Lucrezia Borgia) crash around on tiny painted stages, accompanying themselves on the accordion, shedding pounds of jewellery and giving us the dirt on their respective sexual politics and philosophies. Ethyl is currently appearing uptown and upmarket in *The Comedy of Errors* at Lincoln Centre, playing the Abbess in five inch heels and a sky blue strapless ballgown.



PHOTO / MARK CAIRNS

LILY SAVAGE has been voted Entertainer of the Year two years running by readers of Capital Gay. She always plays the same character, and almost always wears a different frock. Accompanied by a stuffed fox called Skippy, Lily appears in towering wigs, thigh-length boots and the sort of rags that give Petticoat Lane a bad name. Her act is a semi-improvised barrage of chat, news items and plain filth, all delivered in a heavy Liverpudlian accent. She plays in gay pubs and clubs all over the country.

**NB: Where do you come from?**

**EE:** Mid West, Illinois. I grew up on a farm.

**NB: How did you start doing this?**

**EE:** In the fifth grade. I played the witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, my mother made me a black crepe paper dress and a big black pointed hat and she put pink yarn on it for hair and I've never recovered. No actually it goes back even further than that. I believe that in a past life I was a man who played women's parts — in Ancient Greece, or I'm not sure if it was Greece, I have a feeling that it was that place that Phaedra was from, you know, Crete. Phaedra was the first character I played. I was in a repertory company, a very good company called Circle in the Square in Rhode Island, and in the summers we would have time off and I would get very depressed, I need to work, and if I'm not working I just get very depressed and so in the summer I started doing *Phaedra* in the Robert Lowell translation, and I'm still doing it, I play all the parts and that's 27 years that I've been doing that now. I love it.



Ethyl as Elizabeth

**NB: Do you think of yourself as working in a particular tradition?**

**EE:** There's a whole group of things that have contributed to my work . . . I think of myself as a tragedienne. If I have to wear a label then that's the label I would choose. I'm an American performer, and I say that to you not just because you're British, but I have to say it even louder here, because so little respect is paid by Americans to the American tradition — you know if you want a performing job you have to be able to work in a good British accent, they really prefer the British. What I come out of is, well, I was part of a song and dance team, where I grew up in the Mid West when I was a kid I was a tapdancer, and I used to see (God this is showing my age) I used to see the travelling minstrel shows. I come out of a really grassroots performing tradition, and it is a living tradition, it's only the academics that give us trouble.

It's vaudeville, it's burlesque and it's Yiddish theatre — those actors are especially important to me, you know that down here was Yiddish Broadway, especially their tragedy,

**LS:** From the docks. Birkenhead. I was brought up in Ireland though. My mother couldn't afford to give up working in the summer holidays and so I was packed off to me Aunties out in the west of Ireland. Milking a cow's fuck all to me, oh no. I didn't know what a toilet was, it was just up behind the hedge, and we didn't have no bath or nothing like that. I developed a hatred of dairy produce. I still can't eat butter, no way, I saw where it comes from, oh no, this bloody great tit covered in warts and dragging the milk out of it, I just can't touch the stuff. Oh it made me a bit delicate being brought up on the farm.

**LS:** O Christ. They used to have these things in the Black Cap, like talent nights, and they said why don't you get up one morning and have a go, so I did, and then somebody behind the bar said do you want to do a double act, and I thought, oh well I'll have a go, I thought it was just a doddle to get up there and give it a bit, you know, but it's not, I soon found that out. The whole thing of being Lily Savage started by mistake, because you know I never used to go on the mike, oh no, and I was in the Elephant and Castle on their amateur night thing and they said to me we haven't got a compere, please will you do it, so I got rat-arsed drunk and I just sat there, and like two hours later there was no sign of an act, nothing, it was just me up there going on about well first this happened and then that happened. I thought, well I prefer this to miming. I just went home and worked on it a bit. Everytime I work I say well you've done it again, you've got away with it, no really, I just stand there and waffle on about nothing. I think the thing about it was that no-one else ever mentioned drugs, or talked frankly on stage about unemployment, or sex, and there I was on about oh we're busy tonight, must be giro week and all this shit, and people actually come up to you and say to you I don't feel ashamed signing on now, and if you can do that then it's very nice, you're not just some snotty drag queen miming away or whatever, you're approachable, they can get hold of you and identify with you.

Of course I'd done about two hundred other jobs before that. I was the clerk of the court in a magistrate's court, and I tried to be a social worker. That was with Camden, I did that for three years, did me three year stint. I've always got me mother in mind you see, this is a Liverpool Catholic upbringing for you, saying now you've got a good job, you know, it's drummed into you, do you know what I mean, I remember when I was 17 I went to the Civil Service and they told me it's a marvellous job, bloody good pension, and I thought fucking hell I'm 16, I'm just not interested in being 65, but anyway, I've always got that under my belt, I can always go back to being a social worker. It's nice to have something. I don't really want to be doing drag when I'm 50.

**LS:** Well, there's a London style, and then there's a Northern style, you know, all off down the Oxfam and then fucking hell out comes the dildo and the pregnancy routines, all this hairy old stuff. It's Northern humour, Liverpool humour. I suppose what I do is just Liverpool. They say it's universal but it's not, Liverpool style, not at all. If I'm in the wrong environment then it doesn't go at all, if I'm at the Garden or at some place where they're all very posh and hooray they all go eh what is this person on about, because they've never had to deal with things like that before, the type of things I'm talking about. I just change the act quick and I do it like I was somebody's cleaning lady, because they can relate to that. But it's not so much of a big act what I do, it's just this same character, people say it's like a relation that you never go to know but wish you had, I'm just on all the time about the family, the kids, having a drink, it's all low key, it's all very school of hard knocks, just talking about





that was an important tradition here in the east Village, on Seventh Avenue. People do view me more now as comedy, well if people think of me like that then that's fine, I've found that if they laugh then that gives me a chance to go on and perform. Let them laugh, it's fine.

Look, I don't say this to everybody, but I know you're sympathetic. I am a drag queen. You can put that down in quotes. I am a drag queen, that's who I am. So.

Of course I'm a drag queen working in the theatre. Julian Eltinge, he was a great performer here, his theatre still exists, it's a movie house now on 42nd avenue; and then there's Burt Savage, who was his friend, he worked there in this theatre (The interview took place in Charles Ludlum's Theatre of the Ridiculous. Billie Holliday also played there), he was in the Greenwich follies, that wasn't a drag revue, but he was in it as a follies girl. Who else do I think about? . . . Charles Renault, he was another Broadway performer. But you know I'm not just working in drag, I don't do just women, but you know if you look at any of the great burlesque clowns, the vaudeville clowns, many of our best comics, they've all done drag. You know there's a church here called the actor's church, a little Episcopalian church between Madison and 5th, on Thirteenth Street. They call it the actor's church because in the early days of this country there was a famous actor, and no-one would bury him, they couldn't find anyone to bury him. It was like Molière, nobody would have him, there was no consecrated ground that would accept him. And then this church accepted him, they buried him, and so it became the actors' church. Well I recently researched this story, and I found out that this man, this actor, the reason why they wouldn't bury him was that not only was he a blackface performer, he was a 'black faced wench', which means he played women's roles. There are ties everywhere. But you know this country has strange moral problems; it was created by Puritans, and because of that they've always tried to sweep the drag queens under the carpet, and to find them and to use all that in your work you really have to dig. Renault's picture, I have it in a picture book that shows the history of Broadway, and it shows this very beautiful woman and it doesn't even say it's a man, it doesn't mention that this was a man. But there are enough people always to keep the tradition alive. Drag performers have been more accepted into the arts world and in the words of rock and roll than in the theatre. But that's not traditional drag like you get in the bars, it's Art, as opposed to just female impersonation.

**NB: So where does your material come from?**

**EE:** I'm a poet. I use this tradition and these historical characters to write my poetry; I'm a storyteller and in the telling of the story I invariably get my own work in, I make the work my own. If I'm telling the story of King Lear then I set it in this country, he owns a mountain, and I make it like Jimmy Carter, those terrible families, they own entire states and become Presidents and all the time they're saying 'Oh I'm just a simple country boy'. I'm not setting out to talk about who's running for the Senate. My material is dealing with politics in the terms of our lives, the lives of people I know.

how things are these days. Sometimes I come on a bit of the wicked witch, but I'm certainly not glam drag at all. If I'm wearing something stupid or outrageous then that's all the better for me. I only get embarrassed if I'm trying to wear some smart dress, do you know what I mean, if I've thought oh well I'll try on a bit of glam here, then I'm not happy at all. This is going to sound dead grand, but when I try and be the glam drag queen, forget it, complete wash out, I can't handle it, I just can't do all the posing and that, I just think get this fucking thing of me and give me me boots. I just don't feel right. Mutton dressed as lamb.



**LS:** All what I do when I do Lily is I just do me Mother and me auntie. Like you know I was brought up in Liverpool and there's me Auntie lying on the couch, and I say what's up with you, and she says oh I've just had me coil out, and it's so funny I was howling, and she says what's so funny, and she's on about this coil, this part of her body that's been removed, and her doctor won't give her valium so she goes to another one that will, and so there you are talking about these seventy year old women doling out the vannies like hardened drug addicts, 'how many have you got off yours?' — like everything I do is just the Liverpool thing, but blown up completely. That's where all the Catholic stuff comes from. Someone brought me one of these holy water fonts, hideous, it played 'AVE MARIA', and I went all to pieces, got it up on the mentalpiece and all that, and I went on about the Pope for a while, and then out comes the stopper and I started using it as scent, splash it on, do you know what I mean. Religion's a very heavy subject, but in Liverpool it's fucking murder. I was brought up in it. Don't talk to him he's Orange Lodge and all that crap. That's why Lily's kids (Bunty and Jason — Ed.) go to this Catholic school. She only goes to church to nick the candles — last time Lily was in church was when the electricity strike was on. And the reason she's always slagging off nun's is 'cause I was brought up by nuns. What a wicked breed of bitches they are I can tell you. Scarred me for life.



It's never easy on the  
mike; Lily Savage works  
the Hippodrome



**NB: Why do you choose to play strong women?**

**EE:** Your persona does change when you cross the sex barrier or whatever it is, but with me it's the opposite, even though the women I'm playing are strong, as a man I'm very hard, but the minute I become a woman . . . what works for me is something very soft and quiet. What I do best is become very vulnerable. Even though I'm over six foot tall.

I'm a character actress, so when I choose these women I choose them because they interest me historically. Nefertiti I chose because she wasn't Cleopatra you see, I'm not the leading lady, I'm a character actress. I choose to be other woman. When I do the *Oresteia* I do it from Klytaemnestra's viewpoint, not Elektra's. Lucrezia I chose because she was so maligned, there was this woman who everyone says was so beautiful and her father was the Pope for God's sake and her brother was Cesare, who they wrote THE PRINCE about, and they say she was such a lovely woman, so nice, and yet she was just used by her family, married off. Lucrezia was a pawn; I relate to women politically because they are second class citizens. Nefertiti, I believe she didn't actually exist, I have this theory that it was just Aknhaten in drag, she didn't have to look like that statue at all, she was paying the artist, she just said make me beautiful.

**NB: Do people ever tell you that your work insults women?**

**EE:** Not any more. That was the seventies. The stupidity of that remark stands on its own. You say it and it bounces right back up and hits you — that someone who desperately wants to be part of that world is being insulting . . . you're saying I worship and I adore you and I would like to be like you — so. It's a very silly statement that I can put into one word; bigotry. It speaks for itself; say it and you stand there looking like a bigot.

**NB: Are you playing a woman, or are you a drag queen, or an actress?**

**EE:** I'm playing the parts. I don't think about anything else. I'm an actor, basically. I do the character on stage the best I can. It's no different for me if I play men or women, it's no different. You just go do it.

**NB: Do people treat you as a woman?**

**EE:** Sometimes. Yeah. When I'm lucky. People are very nice to me. I like it either way but I find that with me, the way that it happens to me is that when I'm dressed as a man no-one ever kisses me, and the minute I put on drag people kiss me on the cheek, they kiss me on the chin — don't ever kiss me on the mouth because you'll smudge my makeup — they come up and kiss me and hug me and they never do that when I'm not in drag. I'm a hairdresser too, a theatrical hairdresser, and that opens doors for me, because then women really do open

**LS:** Lily has to be a strong woman because she's surviving with her kids and the husband in nick and the alcoholic mother and all and this that and the other, and like she is never miserable, she'll lose her temper and have a bit of a drink but she's a survivor basically. And that way I can kick off — I get frightened to talk about politics because I'm too ignorant when it comes to politics, but I'm constantly kicking off on Maggie and the lot of them, I get on my high horse and kick off if I think something's wrong, but I always do it as Lily, she's always onto the Giro, and how the heck am I expected to live on £18 a week and all this caper. I'd never do it myself, not as me. I never get political. I suppose I do kick off on the AIDS thing, and I do have a go at people's attitudes. I had a gang of straights in one night, it was a stag do, and they were saying 'Come on sing us a song, he's getting married in the morning' and I said, 'If I was in the straight pub tomorrow and my boyfriend and I said we've been together ten years would you sing us a song please, would you have a smiling comperè saying of course love, of course lads, would you fuck, there'd be a mass fucking lynching,' I said 'there's the door, fuck off, this is a gay pub'. That's Lily coming out.

**LS:** No. Funny enough I've had a couple of people but it was the men not the women. I'm not a misogynist, no way, like up in Liverpool you never say oh she's a dyke, she's a lesbian, you don't give a fuck, they're just there in the club with you. Down here I know it's totally different, 'fucking dykes' and all that, but I can think of fifty gay men who I'd like to push under a bus and fifty dykes who are smashing. You do see some acts that go on about fish and all that kind of caper, it's fucking disgusting that kind of attitude, I mean to say that when you're dressed up as a woman, you're trying to emulate them. I know I go on about me coil and the PMT but I'm not doing it in an insulting way, I say 'Do you take feminax' but even when I do their heads in I'm not taking the piss, I'm trying to include them. Some acts are but I don't want to be tarred with that brush, I'm not misogynist, fuck off . . . if you say to straight men right we're having fancy dress on they come with great big balloons and the wife's skirt and it's fucking vile, but with gay men it'll be a bit more stylised, you know, smart. With a hat.

**LS:** I don't know. It's weird. I don't change when I get the gear on. The things I talk about aren't the things a fella would talk about, but they're not really the things a drag queen would talk about, cause I'm on about me PMT and me coil, women's complaints, but they're blown up out of all proportion . . . I'm a professional, but what's a professional anyway, turning up on time or getting on a bit late and going down a storm. Some drag queens call themselves actors, and I know I've done a bit of Fringe stuff but if you've sold fruit and veg four times you don't call yourself a fruit and veg merchant. Drag queen I suppose I am. There's no way of getting round it, I'm just a drag queen. I don't set myself up to be a bird. I want to be a character, a cartoon character.

**LS:** Oh yes, they come up and tell me everything, they come up with all sorts, I know more about broken affairs, who got this and who got that. It's nice, because people trust you, and they're very protective as well; if there's some trouble, if there's some straight who's pissed and who's starting, my god they get them out quick. And if I start the violence, a bit of verbal, you know if I kick off on somebody they love it, they go mental, and the same people, if I'm dressed as a man, they won't talk to me, that's the weird



It's never easy being a mother; Ethyl as Jocasta





up for me. American women are taught to give attitude to a drag queen, they think it's competition or something silly. They open up to me more as a hairdresser, they'll open up to me, confide in me. They're more relaxed with that than with drag.

**NB: Is she you?**

**EE:** Do I change? No. No. Ethyl's my real name. And this tattoo is me. It's forever. (When Ethyl performs in backless classical robes, she displays a back entirely covered with a magnificent tattoo).

**NB: Do you have a sexual relationship with your audience?**

**EE:** It gets very confused. That is how some people see drag. If I see that coming then I always try to stop it; I've learned to do that. My drag is not sexual, it's political, if one has to label it. I've never had sex in drag. I'm not that interested, it doesn't make sense to me. Puh-leeze.

But people do relate to you sexually when you do drag. The other night, this man comes into my dressing room, we'd just got a standing ovation, I felt like a million dollars, and then he walks in and says to this other guy in my dressing room I bet you're glad you don't have to look like that, so I turned round and confronted him, I mean the fact that he would come backstage, at the Lincoln Centre, to an actor who has just worked his ass off, and he thinks that I'm out there trying to pick up men. What did he think? Well he didn't think, he's just seen a woman and so he thinks I'm after their genitalia, oh please, get out of my dressing room and don't come back. Or get out there and buy a ticket and pay to see me act.

**NB: Does playing in drag ever feel like an act of revenge?**

**EE:** No. I've been lucky. I don't feel the need for revenge in my life. For me, stepping out on stage in drag is a way to get an audience, a way of setting myself up as an artist, of finding my own voice. When I was performing as a man people didn't really want to know but as soon as I put a frock on I had a packed house. And I just love feeling beautiful. It's not revenge, it's a fulfilment to know that I look so beautiful. Oh yes, I know I'm not a classic, I mean I'm not going to play Elizabeth Taylor. But when I play Nefertiti I do it in a real Fortuny gown, it's a real one. You feel beautiful even though you know you aren't.

**NB: Who are your idols?**

**EE:** Charles Ludlum is the great genius of my life. He has influenced more people in this city, more artists, more theatre than anybody else.

I love Margaret Rutherford. She is one of my idols. I have millions of her movies. Well, I have several. Margaret Rutherford's son is a transsexual, that just happened a year or two before she died, and I read this quote, because you see I knew that she just had to be a wonderful woman, and she said, they asked her what she thought and she said 'We loved him as a man and now we'll love her as a woman.' And she was a great actress.

Zasu Pitts, she was a silent movie actress, a great beauty, she was in Stroheim's *Greed*, and then when the talkies came she had this funny voice. But she didn't just drop down dead and die, she became a comedienne, playing these dotty crazy women. She did that in order to continue being an artist.

thing. I get so many people come up for a little chat because they feel they can talk to her, and I listen to it all and then hit them over the head and tell them to fuck off, and off they go, nothing maudling about it. Lily says 'Can't pay you leccy bill? oh fuck, I'll come round and make a hole in your meter and shove a pin in', and I would and all. Shove the needle in and don't get caught. That's Liverpool for you. I was brought up with a needle in the meter. I could never open the door in case it was the telly man or the prudential. It's a joke. It's disgusting. All those pensioners who can only afford to have one bar on.

**LS:** Lily is just me tarted up a bit. Tarted up a lot. If I get a bit stoned, out she comes with all the good advice, have a drink love and all that, that's just Lily. Basically it's just me being mental. Three year with Camden Council did me head in. Of course Lily Savage isn't gay. She's got two kids. She did have lesbian tendencies years ago, I mean she's tried it.

I never take me wig off. Never go into the pub unless I'm in the full regalia, I can't stand all that take the makeup off and you're one of the boys.

**LS:** No way . . . those queens that can pass as women and all that they get straight fellas after them and all that. But the thought of going with a fella in drag . . . I mean when you get in bed and take the frock off, you've got two dirty great tits which is cottonwool, a pair of boots, eight pairs of tights and this enormous wig, I'm sure you're not going to have sex in all that. The only type of fellas I attract in drag is heavy masochists, they really want to be kicked around. I suppose it's the boots and riding crop. I just tell them to fuck off. No way. I don't think Lily Savage is sexy. She thinks she is. But no way. No chance. Shame isn't it really. Tragic.

**LS:** Yeah, it's delicious. Sitting up there and slating off what you hate, in a packed pub, saying things, *bliss*, and they're all cheering, and they all feel the same way, and you can feel it, and they just need somebody to say it, yeah, lovely, when you're on about some wally like that James Anderton, just pulling him down, and you've got like 200 people full of scorn and derision for this man, and you're at the helm, it's lovely. Being a drag queen you've got so much shit to face. Fucking hell.

**LS:** I love Jazz, me. George Melley. Nina Simone, people like that. I like Dame Edna, she makes me die, lover her. I hate Cilla Black. Can't stand her. Can't bear her. I saw Dave Allen do Captain Hook in a panto, he got this kid down the front, this little boy and he says put out your hand, and he flicks his ciggy ash in it, and then he says you can sit down now, and I thought oh god that's ace, that's really villainous doing that to a little child. I'll remember that. But I can't see Lily doing panto. All those ugly sister gags on Boxing Day in Wigan in front of a bunch of people you don't really like.

The drag performer I emulate is Lynn Carter, a great American drag, he did all the classic acts, Mae West, Marlene all of that; and he owned his own club in Provincetown and another club in the winter in Puerto Rico, and he did the Jewel Box review which toured all over this country. Besides being a great performer he was smart enough to keep his life together, he owned these clubs and put together this review and toured it. That's why I respect your Bette Bourne. She's not only a great actress, she keeps that company together, she creates work for people.

**NB: Does your mother know what you do for a living?**

**EE:** Oh yes. My parents are wonderful. I'm very lucky. I'm 100% Amish Mennonite; they came from Germany via Alsace-Lorraine to this country, and they don't go to the theatre at all. My parents left that community, they wanted to live in the world. And they wanted an artist in the family, so they've always supported me, they've seen me work in drag. They're glad that I'm happy and healthy.

**LS:** Oh god they don't even know of Lily's existence thank you very much, they're all Irish Catholics, it'd put them in hospital if they found out. I think she'd think I was humiliating myself by dragging up. She hates Danny la Rue on the telly. She likes Dame Edna but that's because she thinks she's a woman, I've told her it's all a pisstake but she won't have it. 'Do you hear our Paul's dressing up as a woman in London'. Oh heck, there'd be a posse of them straight down here on the coach.

**NB: Do you work differently if you're in a theatre instead of a club?**

**EE:** I try to be universal — that's why I use historical characters. But you've got to be in both worlds, to keep on changing. You can't turn you back on either of them if you take your art seriously. Drag performers are always at the bottom of the totempole, but I choose to work with great performers, and the great artists aren't just downtown or uptown . . . you work in some fabulous, tacky, dismal bar, the next day you have to air your costumes because of the smoke, but you work with magnificent performers, and then you go up town and you feel like you're at the Holiday Inn; but there are wonderful artists there too.

**LS:** Well I'm going to do this bit at the National Theatre and, well, it's a play. That to me is a totally different thing. I feel totally safe, whatever happens, if the NF come in I think I'm safe because it's a play. It's a childish attitude. No one mentions drag at all, the character thing is a sexual, also it's such a weird play. You can get away with murder in those places can't you?

**NB: Does it piss you off that the theatre makes your work as a drag respectable?**

**EE:** I'm a missionary. I do what I know I was born to do. I do it because it's what I am. I work with a lot of young people in the different places I work, different kinds of theatres and bars, young people who are chosen to be drags or whatever, anyone who is outside the normal world of the theatre, and they'll come and find people like me, and I do not smoke, I do not drink, I try to show that you are responsible for what you do and say when you are on stage, it doesn't matter if somebody else wrote the words, and it's by virtue of all that the fact that I'm doing drag up at the Lincoln Centre thrills me. I can turn to a young person and say, look, I'm up there, it can be done, if this is what you want to do. I'm there. They're not ashamed of me.

**LS:** Well I went to see this play and I just went mental for it, it was so off the wall and so I thought of fuck it I'll have a go. It's something different, a break from the drag scene. I play a woman, but they just accept me as a character. If you got up and did your act you wouldn't be acceptable, do you know what I mean, that pisses me off slightly, they're sitting there watching you but they wouldn't dream of going down a gay pub. Because it's called Fringe theatre it's alright, you're legit and they say oh it's all acting and then ten minutes later you're in a taxi haring off down the road to do some pub in exactly the same outfit and you're a drag queen. It all confuses me, I can't understand it.

**NB: Where would you like to play?**

**EE:** I always said the Metropolitan Opera, and now here I am, right next door. The Met. Doing one of my own works. They're opera's anyway. Actually I already have what I want. I have an audience. I've made that happen.

**LS:** I want to do a part on Brookside. I've got a friend in that. I'd be off like a shot.

●Ethyl Eichelberger is at the ICA, July 14-18.

●Lily Savage can be seen most weeks at various London pub and club venues, check gay press for details.

# ETHYL AND LILY

# GOING ABROAD (1)

When new international art reaches Britain, it is preceded by the opinions of journalists and promoters who make sure it arrives cushioned by advance publicity. Inevitably the work looks and feels completely different when seen on home ground and when seen in the deliberately contextless spotlights of International Festival Time. So what do the journalists who are sent out to see the work actually see? What can they tell us that will help to explain, enrich, complicate, contextualise and even *enjoy* the work. PETE CULSHAW has been sent to several parts of the world in advance of this year's festival LIFT, and we asked him to say what he actually saw and what he actually thinks while doing his job . . .

ALBERT VIDAL IS not, one would have thought, a particularly nervous individual. At any rate, the man has enough front to perplex thousands of visitors to Zoos round the world in this *Urban Man* show, where he sets up his City Slicker Office amid the giraffes and gazelles. Yet sitting in a cafe off the Ramblas in Barcelona ('The only street in the world I wish would last forever' — Lorca) Albert was decidedly jumpy. His tales of his recent trip to India — hanging out with Himalayan Yogis, trekking across the desert and the sights and smells of Delhi Zoo, lacked his usual panache. Eventually he got up and demanded a new table. The fact that the neighbouring table of relatively harmless looking individuals were speaking Castilian rather than Catalan had rattled him. Castilian is the official language of Spain which the police and army speak. Franco tried to ban Catalan, burning schoolbooks and forbidding its use in public. I'd read *'Homage to Catalonia'* and also somewhere had picked up the story that when Franco died the city of Barcelona ran out of Champagne, but it was the trivial incidents like Mr Vidal demanding a new table in a cafe which brought home the fact that the Catalans still feel threatened by the dominant Spanish culture. After Franco's regime, (he died a decade ago) it took a few years for Catalan culture to re-establish itself and for exiled artists to return, but now the place is fizzling like the bubbly will never run dry again. They seem to be having their hippy phase and their punk phase all at the same time, with a hint of urgency because they don't know when the lid of repression could be slammed shut again. Barcelona is 'the trendiest City in Europe' according to the Sunday Times, so it must be true (Actually, I Can Reveal, it's Hemel Hempstead) And the Olympic nomination seems to have fuelled their new found confidence.

We've already had several

ambassadors of crazed Catalan theatre including Fura Dels Baus and Els Comediants whose offal throwing, car smashing marathons and fireworks fiestas managed to be populist while still appealing to avant-garde arbiters of taste or tastelessness. My mission in Barcelona was to drum up some pre-publicity for La Cubana, a company in a similar spirit whose version of 'The Tempest' is, I can tell you without giving away the punchline, fairly far removed from the original intention of the Immortal Bard. La Cubana are part of this year's LIFT festival. The critic who sees a work in context of the place it originated in is at an advantage, because to many people the LIFT festival presents out of nowhere 20 or so interesting pieces of contemporary theatre, miraculously transposed to the middle of London.



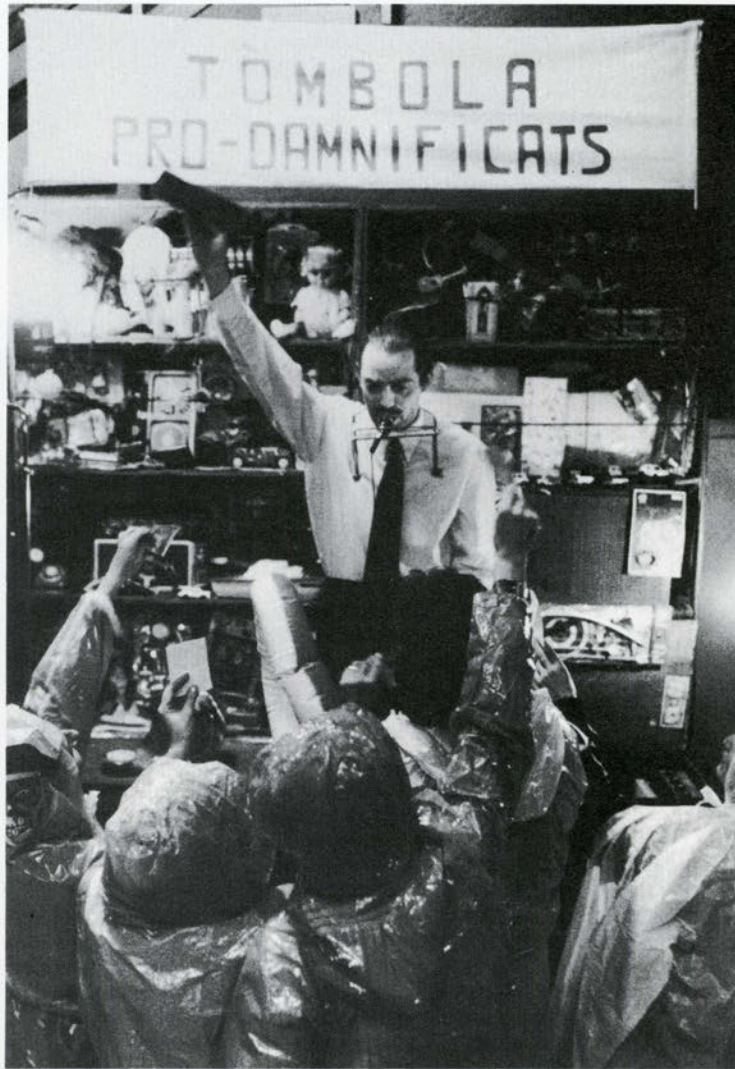
'There's 900 municipalities in Catalonia, and even the smallest village has some theatre. People love to perform more than anything' explained Jordi Milan, the director of La Cubana. This seems to be true, from the trendier discos like the KGB, to the most outrageous transexual floorshows this side of Rio, to antiquated cabarets like La Bodega Bohemia. 15 people were in the audience at La Bodega Bohemia and they all take it in turns to perform. Their resident artist Ocaña had died recently, but that didn't seem to dampen their spirits as they sung to the crotchety playing of an arthritic pianist. Ocaña had covered a couple of walls with naive paintings of inhabitants of Barcelona with wings flying over the rooftops. Ocaña had died while dressed up in a papier-maché costume of the sun. A firework had landed on him setting fire to his costume and he burnt to death.

The other LIFT missions I was sent on — to check out Théâtre Repère's *Dragons's Trilogy* in Quebec and Red Pilot's *Fiat* in Lyubliana in Yugoslavia — were totally different yet had some underlying parallels. In Quebec, the situation is of a French minority culture trying to assert itself against an all-pervasive American/English dominance. The positions of power in Quebec are taken traditionally by the English speakers, and it too until the 60s was a very authoritarian society. The bombardment of the American media is everywhere in Quebec, and as an English speaker it was easier for me to understand the situation in Catalonia. The American tabloids make The Sun over here seem positively academic. My favourite US tabloid stories include a claim that Mr Gorbachev spends his spare moments guzzling pizzas and strumming Springsteen songs in front of a mirror. Then there's the type of stories about dogs who can predict the future ('Hundreds flock to hear monastery's

miracle mutt!'), a farmer who claimed his cows were aliens beamed down here from a spaceship and a housewife who complained that her kitchen appliances were picking up CB radio chat from truckers ('My Toaster Is Talking Dirty'). The French Canadians in Quebec are producing extraordinary, energetic visual theatre — groups like La La, Carbon 14, Theatre Marmaille and Theatre Repère whose director Robert Lepage is clearly a Major Talent.

There are other elements that give these companies an edge over London work. One is that there simply isn't a big enough ICA type audience, so their productions have to be more populist which is an altogether healthier proposition. Another is that the media in London, New York and Paris pounce on anything that moves before it has time to develop and breathe. Any half-decent pop group (and the argument applies, to a lesser extent, in other fields) will, by their fourth gig in London, probably have the majority of their audience being A and R men from record companies, journalists, TV researchers and if sufficiently outré a couple of sociologists checking them out. The fact is, there is much more money to be made in arts entrepreneurship than in actually producing anything in this country. Bright sparks from universities apply to the Beeb. They do not, on the whole, set up theatre companies.

But this article is not going to turn into a whine about lack of funding. Companies from, say, Poland have brought over astonishing work in much tougher circumstances. The other advantage the journalist has is to work out the modus operandi of how groups work. It seems to me that the most constructive thing to get from these new theatre groups is not just a few ideas to rip-off in a half-baked manner, but is to learn from the groups' strategies. What makes these companies successful is a willingness to be flexible, an ability to use local resources, (ie in Catalonia the Fiesta tradition), a willingness to take the kind of risks that might lead to gigantic pratfalls, and a kind of demented faith that in spite of everything it is possible to produce something glorious. Robert Lepage and Els Comediants for example, also both have a slightly naive view of the magic of the theatre — the use of transformation, the use of lights and fire, the ability to turn mundane objects into charged symbols. Lepage will start from an oil drum found in a parking lot rather than some grandiose concept. But he also includes a discussion about Ying and Yang and Taoist philosophy, something that many Europeans associate with hippies,



La Cubana: La Tempestad

and therefore uncool; Lepage is willing to risk being uncool, and to be accused of kitsch, but the sheer ambition of *Dragon's Trilogy* make it impossible to ignore. Whereas the Fabre's of this world seem to be closing things down, Lepage's fertile imagination is opening things up again. The fundamental structure of the piece depends on the interplay between the French, English and Chinese communities in Canada, which roots the piece in a particular place. The intellectual internationalism of the avant-garde in Europe and New York I think is one of the reasons for the dead quality of so much work.

Laurie Anderson said that the reason she did some journalism was to find out what artists she respected had in their fridges. I didn't get to see Laurie Anderson's fridge, but it was instructive to watch her in action over an afternoon. (I'm sorry if this gives the impression of *The Glamorous Life*, actually most of my time is spent staring at blank pieces of paper with increasing terror as the clock spins inexorably towards a deadline). Anderson operates by keeping an enigma about her personal life, which

keeps the media at bay, and uses the pop business for what it can give her.

Many of these arguments are applicable in the case of Red Pilot. They are based in Slovenia, and are the theatre wing of *Neue Slovenische Kunst*. Slovenia is also a minority state at the borders of the East and West, the Northern most province of Yugoslavia. Western pop culture, and teenagers mimicking the Paninari youth cult of Italy and the Beastie Boys in the night clubs goes alongside the pervasive influences from the Eastern bloc. Youth culture magazines like *Problemi* have articles which jump from Gransci to Steven King while the glossy *A.V.* magazine carried a comparison of the marketing strategies of *Sigue Sigue Sputnik* and *The Art Of Noise*. NSK comprise music, theatre, architecture, design and art departments. They are only too aware of the ability of the media to isolate individuals and assimilate them in the western star system and so they hide behind the monolithic front of NSK. They also are past masters in media wind-ups through their use of totalitarian imagery, constantly treading an

ambiguous line which is utterly fascinating to a western journalist. Whether they are any good isn't the point here — let's just say that behind the bombast lurks huge potential. But what is astonishing and a little sinister is that this group of totally dedicated, even fanatical, artists (there's around 40 now working more or less full-time, with off-shoots in Berlin, Leningrad and New York) has happened in Ljubljana, a town which is a sort of cross between Exeter and Macclesfield. One literally can't imagine it happening here.

My reaction on my return to Blighty — the editor insisted I mention this — was to do an anti-Tory music video, which was conceived and completed in a week and shown on several TV stations, called 'Rap Her Up' by a mysterious (but sexy) syndicate called Project X. The local resource used was the pop world, it wasn't difficult to find a studio to donate free time and musicians and video makers who worked very hard. It tied in with a Hamnett T-Shirt with the slogan 'Vote Tactically' (again the energy in the fashion world is there to be used and collided and collaborated with). One pre-publicity stunt was absurdly easy — we rang up George Michael and asked him to sing. Predictably, he refused. This was leaked to The Sun and — bingo — a piece came out the next day next to the page 3 girl entitled 'George Michael snubs anti-Maggie Record', and read by a few million people. No-one lost any money (I think) because of sales to TV. I'm not claiming any brilliance (or not much) in organising this project, in fact it was relatively easy to do. Yet too often we assume it's impossible to do anything and lie back and get trampled on. The video that came out of this was a little amateurish (Hamnett wanted her name removed from it). But people are so concerned with keeping Cool — it really is our generation's version of Stiff Upper Lip. Partly because of this, both the visual theatre field and the pop/fashion world at the moment seem constipated — further crossovers are potentially fruitful. It's interesting that Edouard Locke from La La La after his last tour here was approached by Tina Turner, Bowie and the Eurhythmic to work with them. As it happens, he's probably not working with any of them, but the point is one can't imagine a British group getting similar offers, except possibly Michael Clark, who has worked with The Fall and Laibach (part of NSK — they get everywhere).

As you sit through the LIFT fest, my humble suggestion is not to come out saying 'Why can't we have British

groups like this. I blame Maggie/funding/the class system/lack of talent.' Steal a few ideas by all means — though if I see another group wearing 50s gear and doing repetitive things with chairs to a systems soundtracks I will Scream. But better still, consider the production as a product of a particular locality and social/economic structure, use the strategies they use and adapt them to local conditions. Be

devious with the media, get a slot if only on late night TV (they are desperate for material), be flexible about collaborations. Get an imaginative publicist and ruthless lawyer. And remember — If You Don't Have A Dream How Can You Have Your Dream Come True. Strains of South Pacific slowly drown out Philip Glass. It's way past my deadline. ●

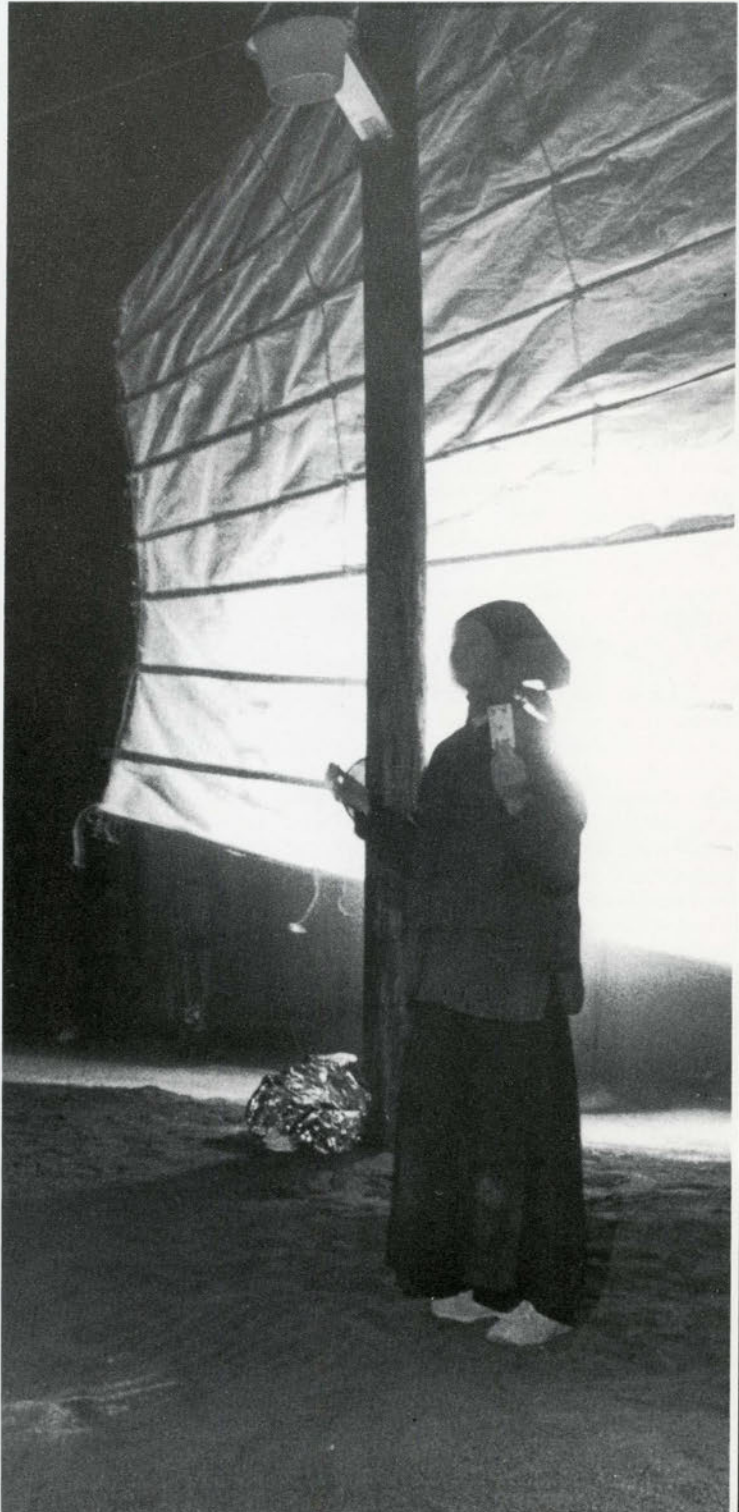


PHOTO / CLAUDEL HUOT

# GOING ABROAD (2)

STEVE ROGERS reports on the Valladolid Festival of performing arts.

A COUPLE of years ago there was a nervous moment when some people were beginning to talk of the European summer festival as a thing of the past. As great institutions like the Edinburgh and Avignon Festivals started to look financially rocky artistic directors and administrators of high-flying international companies pondered what would become of them without the prestige showcases and good fees afforded by the European festival circuit. In fact what looked for a while like the end of an era was actually the beginning of a new one and the last few years have witnessed the birth of a new breed of festival and the rejuvenation of some of the old. Whilst the giants of the seventies have floundered on they have been increasingly upstaged by a plethora of new festivals particularly, but not exclusively, in southern Europe whose focus is contemporary and experimental live arts. Economics have certainly played a large part in this shift, but so too have politics.

At the risk of oversimplifying, the old idea of the international festival is the legacy of the Victorian museum ideal. A gathering together of the world's artistic diversity for the general education of the general (by which they mean essentially middle-class) audience. Such an ideal can only be attempted when the existing cultural order is so secure that it feels no threat from the presentation of other, different, cultural ideas. I wonder if the organisers of the Paris exhibition would have included a Balinese Gamelan in their programme if they could have foreseen the influence it would have on Stravinsky and through him on the whole course of 20th-century music? The new international festival seems to be not so much about diversity, although they are diverse, but about demonstrating a shared aesthetic and moral purpose that crosses cultural boundaries.

The annual theatre festival in Valladolid gives a very good example of the new festival and its aims. Valladolid is a medium-sized, prosperous city. The centre of the Castille and Leon region, it is located about 100 miles north of Madrid. It is renowned for the purity of the Castilian language spoken there, for its large university, and historically as a frontier against the Moors, a centre for Torquemada's inquisition and as a bastion of Francoism which, judging by the graffiti, it still is. It also has a proud theatrical tradition, being the home of Calderon.

Despite the visible signs of middle-class, right-wing, affluence (prices here are generally as high as London) the city has a

minority socialist local government which supports and is supported by the festival. The council's interest in the festival appears to be principally one of achieving a higher status with other socialist cities all of which see their festivals as a manifestation of their politics. Across Europe a contemporary arts festival is used as a symbol of socialist success. Socialist controlled British cities have only lately recognised the value of art as a part of their social agendas. (Think of the way Glasgow has developed its arts in recent years and Manchester too.) Tory councils have understood this for a long time. (Think of Bath or Cheltenham.) The Valladolid festival, now entering its tenth year, uses the criteria of engaging a wide popular audience and of bolstering the liberal intelligentsia in making its programming choices as well as less specific ones of artistic quality and importance. As well as considering the festival programme on, if you like, aesthetic grounds, I also wanted to know how the festival programme succeeded in its broadly political aims.

The festival opened with a public spectacle by the French company Royal de Luxe who are in the mold of La Furas dels Baus. The all male troupe arrived in the main city square in the back of a truck accompanied by blasting rock music and set about the ritual demolition of a car. The ritual was repeated every evening for the first four nights of the festival with a different demolition technique used on each occasion. The message is simple and direct. It is the destruction of a potent symbol of property, of environmental pollution and of individualism and the break down of communality. The act is, for the most part, spectacular enough but it failed to produce the sense of euphoric release it obviously intended. The audience, except in moments of personal danger, remained largely unmoved. In fact, rather than producing a sense of self-determination it only served to reinforce the feeling of powerlessness and frustration in the face of the real instruments of control over our lives. The demolition of a car in this way is dangerous and anarchic but it is really such a very feeble gesture of protest when set against the ineffable and remote power centres of the multinationals that own the companies that own the companies that build the cars. The machismo nature of the performance, highlighted on the evening when three women in elegant dresses are strapped into the sacrificial car before it is manhandled into position for destruction, actually reinforces the divisive structures of our society which

are so carefully exploited by, amongst others, car advertisers. The performance, presented in a public space, involving the destruction of property, appears to serve an oppositional politics but actually only maintains the unfair status quo.

At the other end of the festival the closing spectacular was specially created by Test Department (Britain) with the Ministry of Power and the participation of a large number of local performers. The event being co-ordinated by Andy Wilson formally of Hidden Grin (Britain). *Demonomania* was every bit as simple and naive as *Royal de Luxe* but, despite a distinct lack of integration between its parts, managed to penetrate the barriers of alienation and familiarity and create a real sense of anarchy, excitement and danger. The performance was unsatisfactorily divided in two halves with a performance by Test Department, with all their usual energy and commitment, followed by a theatre performance that attempted to exorcise the many devils of Spain's history. A grandiose aim which by force of the size of the space they had to fill, (the massive cloistered courtyard of an old monastery), and the shortness of preparation time, was reduced to a series of simple, unsophisticated and occasionally brutal images. It became an attempt at a full-frontal assault on Spanish sensitivities with such subjects as Franco and the inquisition treated with a defiant hostility. The project was over ambitious technically too but for all its roughness and disjointedness it achieved moments of a real fairground excitement. The coarse-acting qualities gave it a greater sense of commitment than could have been achieved through a slick professionalism. As a mass appeal political spectacular it served the festival well.

In between these two extremes the festival programme consisted for the most part of known, and rather safe, quantities. The dance events stood out as the strongest elements, particularly Suzanne Linke (Germany), Pauline Daniels (Holland) and Michael Clark (Britain). Suzanne Linke's new solo work *Schritte Verfolgen* performed in a pure white set is a tense, dramatic work following a Freudian thesis of a woman whose mental health is saved by art. The theme and the structure, provided through the repeated image of a train journey, are familiar enough but the performance, alternately muscular and lyrical, and its determinedly modernist style made it a stirring emotional appeal and one of the most provocative events of the festival. By contrast Pauline Daniels' *No Fixed Abode*

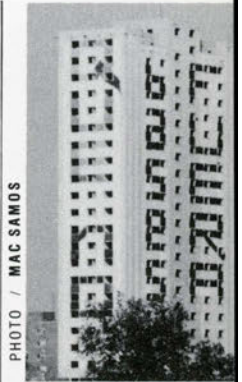


PHOTO / MAC SAMOS

The best piece of political art in Valladolid

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# ART IN PERFORMANCE IN ART

Castle Museum, Nottingham.  
Reviewed by  
STEVE ROGERS.

*ART IN PERFORMANCE IN ART* is the exhibition half of the *Art in Performance — Performance in Art* series at Nottingham's Castle Museum. The exhibition focuses on the tradition particularly strong in, but not exclusive to, the modern era of painting and sculpture of taking the performing arts as a subject. This stands alongside the other half of the series, the live performances. It is a good idea in principle and the Castle Museum has come up with some good additional materials to relate the two halves to each other. Most effective is a series of photographs accompanied by straightforward explanatory notes of great historical performance events. (I am especially grateful for the inclusion of Robert Whitman in these. Originally a member of the Fluxus group Whitman has given me two of my own personal favourite moments of performance in his rare recent performances.) The examples cover roughly the same period as the exhibition, namely the 20th century up to about 1960. The exhibition only includes a few works from the past three decades. It's a shame this idea wasn't made more of and a wider range of events and dates included since it gives the rather odd impression that performance

suddenly stopped in 1957 just at the time when many think it first started and that the live events in the series a very new manifestation.

However, my real reservations are about the contents of the exhibition itself. It is a very peculiar choice of pictures. It contains many predictable and necessary names such as Degas and Lautrec, and some surprises such as a wonderful late lithograph by Leger, and Maggi Hamblings double portrait of herself with Max Wall. The list covers Beckmann; Bomberg; Burra; Chagall; Grosz; Rouault; Sickert; Vuillard and more. As the catalogue itself points out the one picture that stands out from the rest is Jasper Johns' *Dancers on a Plane* which is the only non-figurative work in the exhibition. Curiously a large number of the works depict performers at rest, dressing or in other ways preparing for a performance. This gives the whole exhibition a very static feel which is remarkable for an exhibition devoted to performance in art. It is more accurately an exhibition devoted to performers as interesting subjects and not to the capturing of the spirit and energy of the live act.

My other complaint, and this is more serious, is the exclusion of any works that either were produced as a result of a performance, action painting is an obvious example, or any works that clearly share the same concerns as performance art, or were made in conjunction with performances of which there are many examples. *Art in Performance in Art* seems content to reaffirm the wrong idea that performance amounts only to an extension of the traditional conventions of music,

dance and theatre. There is much to be said for seeing performance as being in opposition to these traditions but this is nowhere explored. In fact the catalogue introduction written by performance artist and the series' curator Robert Ayres seems to make a point of asserting the very thing that is wrong with the exhibition. 'If you came to this exhibition . . . because you like looking at and thinking about paintings and sculptures, or because you enjoy dance, or the theatre or circus, . . . then don't be satisfied with a partial experience of *Art in Performance — Performance in Art*. For the first two weeks of the exhibition the Castle Museum is presenting new installed performances that they have commissioned especially for the show, and the rest of the summer there will be performances staged just about every Saturday. These are performances that will entertain you, move you, make you laugh and think and worry.' It makes it sound as if traditional dance and theatre were the same as performance art. I have deliberately omitted circus from my list since this is the only traditional form which shares something which is absolutely fundamental to performance art and which is not shared by the other media, including most of the works in the exhibition, and that is the idea of a non-representational form of artistic expression. Only that one painting by Jasper Johns comes anywhere near being an explanatory link between the exhibition and the live events. I can appreciate Robert Ayres' hesitation at trying to explain performance art on its own terms. Such explanations are usually guaranteed to drive an audience away. But he should, surely, have at least pointed out that performance art is not the same as either paintings or theatre.

*Art in Performance in Art* sounds such a simple, clear idea and the exhibition is enjoyable enough in itself. It would also serve well as an adjunct to a series of theatre and dance performances but I fear that it does performance art a disservice. ●

# THE SLEEP

Brighton Festival &  
Riverside Studios.  
Reviewed by STEVE  
ROGERS.

DIRECTED BY Pete Brooks; music by Jeremy Peyton-Jones; text by Claire MacDonald; design by Simon Vincenzi; publicity images by Holly Warburton; performed by Sarah-Jane Morris and an excellent group of well established actors, dancers, singers and musicals; *The Sleep* has a credit list that should have guaranteed that it would be the single most

important British experimental theatre event in a long time. It was.

*The Sleep* employs the conventions of opera and experimental performance in opposition to each other to tell the story of a woman who after 40 years in a catatonic state is violently reawakened through the techniques and drugs available to modern medicine. The dream world she inhabits is represented by the operatic traditions employed. It is a world of romantic innocence and moral certainty. As the drugs take affect her world is thrown into turmoil and finally collapses as the harsh, violent, amoral, 'reality', created through experimental performance techniques, rushes in on her. The battle be-

tween her private reality and the orthodoxy of scientific reality is made universal through the Orpheus & Eurydice myth introduced by the dream characters' singing of Rilke's 'Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes'. It is also given a modern temporality through repeated images of rape. The layering of the different realities, of the different conventions, and of the different levels of meaning produce a dense, rich pattern of choreography, music and visual images shot through with an urgent, orgasmic crescendo towards the final confrontation. The doctor is forced to accept that the woman is incapable of withstanding the emotional and psychiatric shock of the reawakening, she is seen to win the battle and is allowed to return to her catatonia and her own reality. In every way *The Sleep* is utterly riveting and deeply moving.

Sarah Jane Morris's performance is quite remarkable. Her powerful physical presence, her strong deep voice and her large elastic features combine in some unforgettable images of a woman fighting to defend her right to determine her own existence. Seeing *The Sleep* in a state of near hopeless desolation on the day after the election I was brought to tears by the sight of this woman alone fighting off this inhuman, inhumane experiment perpetrated on her



# CONFRONTATIONS

Cornerhouse, Manchester.  
Reviewed by  
DAVID LOVELY.

*CONFRONTATIONS*, an exhibition curated by Rob La Frenais, and toured from Newcastle to Bradford and Manchester, examined the role of controversy in public perception of art through mass media misrepresentation, and some of the ways in which artists have combatted such misrepresentations. This is an intractable issue as many artists will testify, and in the approach it took, the exhibition seemed, unenviably, to be grappling with men of straw. Its documentary character laid it open to a disconcerting interpretation as a set of programme notes on what it identified as a voyeuristic, media-triggered, 'drama' between artist and public. The real protagonists seemed to be elsewhere.

In the confrontations staged in this drama, there appeared to be both victims and victors. Dennis de Groot, whose tape-bound, crucified action men are bitter relics of the Ddart group's savage encounter with the media in 1976, seemed, alas, a broken man. Mona Hatoum's victory, though moral and after the event, was nonetheless complete, as she brilliantly and concisely exposed male sexual fantasies in press criticism she had received in 1982. Going

round the exhibition, however, it was clear that the blown-up pages of newsprint lining the walls often deflected attention from the focus of analysis. Many people were content to remain spectators in the drama, close enough to the attitudes reflected in the coverage of Carl Andre's *Equivalent VI* ('the Tate Bricks'), or Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*, for it to provoke much the same amusement and prejudice as it was appealing to first time round. In this atmosphere, the identification of the media as the villain of the piece was not quite believable, the implied paranoia a screen for real confrontation (of course, as the old joke has it, just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean they're not out to get you).

In the case of Jackson Pollock, the stereotypical action-painter, seen here in the sou'-westered and pajama-suited figure of Tony Hancock in *The Rebel*, explaining action-painting to a live cow, may be a product of the media, but the reasons for his enduring vitality in popular consciousness are inexplicable in the fragmentary historicist terms set out in this exhibition, which posit a progressive "deterioration" since the 1950s. The contingent economic and political conditions forming each isolated 'scandal's' specific moment — a Labour Government's incomes policy in 1976 for 'the bricks', Tory cuts and the Falklands Factor in 1983 for David Mach's *Polaris* — are undoubtedly part of the explanation for the sudden flip from invisibility, or ghettoisation on the re-

view pages, into prominence. The confrontations are in each case also with a set of spectres thrown up by a longer-running drama between artist and public, the result of larger developments in Western society. In the media, it is not only artists who are invisible. The real question should not be simply of 'a more democratic access to an interest in visual culture' (to quote Chrissie Iles' catalogue essay) that putatively disables the media from triggering negative public response to contemporary art, but of the common ground that could be created between artists and a public whose real lives are equally invisible. ●

PHOTO / HOLLY WARBURTON

in the name of progress. Her determined resistance gave me just a glimmer of hope.

I also found cause for optimism in what *The Sleep* represents in the development of Pete Brooks and Jeremy Peyton-Jones. It is the first time that either of them has had the opportunity to work on this scale, both in scope and physical size. The transition from small scale touring productions they are both renowned for to this middle-scale work is not entirely without problems. There is some obvious unfamiliarity with the physical scale. At times it looked like a small scale Impact Theatre production set rather uncomfortably in a space too big for it. It contains all the familiar Impact techniques but loosened up to allow for a bigger cast and the successful introduction of a narrative which makes the work far more accessible. But some of the techniques and ideas have not translated well. In particular the design concept of using three metal constructions like parts of electricity pylons as the only set lit from various angles to produce shifting patterns of shadows is too simple and subtle to encompass the richness of the work. Similarly some of the most painful and potentially dramatic moments of the narrative, such as the woman's enforced realisation that she is no longer the young attractive woman she

was when she went into the sleep and thinks the still is, are swallowed up by the demands of the pace and structure. In a small scale, tightly packed impressionistic Impact show these would have been delivered like a swift kick to the stomach but here they needed to be given greater space and focus to take effect fully. Many of the spin-off questions such as the effect the failed experiment had on the doctor and on medical science and ethics are not explored. These are all problems which have resulted from lack of experience with this scale of working but they are principally problems of balance between the different contributing elements. What has been gained however is a new accessibility and a new freedom to experiment with form. The scale has allowed both Pete Brooks and Jeremy Peyton-Jones to demonstrate a real growth and maturity and they have both here taken that perennially difficult step from juvenile lead to character actor without too much hesitation. The prognosis is therefore excellent. If these two can achieve for middle scale theatre what they did for the small scale there is hope that they will one day be given the opportunity to work at full stretch with all the resources of a major opera house and that is a day I look forward to almost more than any other. ●



*The Sleep*

# MOSES

Drill Hall, London.  
Reviewed by  
ANNIE GRIFFIN

THE GREAT thing about Rose English is that when she wants an audience to think about infinite possibility, she doesn't give a lecture or do interesting things with mirrors. Instead she had a nine year old girl, sitting on a pink canopy bed with a dog in her lap, sing *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*. Later, the little girl, who is called Harriet and who gives an assured and engaging performance, gets in a little boat with Sam the dog. After the interval, Harriet and Sam arrive "over the rainbow" in a miniature proscenium arch stage, revealed to us from behind the back curtains of the Drill Hall. 'What's it like up there?' asks Rose. 'It's hot' says Harriet. 'Anything else?' 'It's very small' says Harriet. 'Oh', says Rose, 'I'd always imagined it would be a very big place, a vast place'. 'no' says Harriet, 'it's really tiny'.

In *Moses*, Rose English explores a timely theme — optimism, and somehow makes us think about who's got it these days, and where to find it when you need it. There are a lot of questions. Rose always asks a lot of question,

and in *Moses* she has Harriet to question. 'Do you think, Harriet, that the whole audience should feel as comfortable as we do in this bed?' 'Did you like my dancing, Harriet?' 'Harriet, do you think we'll ever make it to the West End?' Harriet always thinks before she answers, and almost always says *yes*, or at least *maybe*, to which Rose responds 'What tremendous optimism!' I was thinking afterwards that maybe I should get to know more nine year olds. Maybe that's why the show is called *Moses*. Maybe they have the answers.

At Rose English performances you get to know your fellow audience members as there are lots of questions for us, too. It always interests me how people are either very happy if a bit shy to be asked a question by Rose English, or clearly angered by the whole event — as if they feel they have been conned. It must be the lady's style — she really does say whatever comes into her head, she uses as much of what she calls bad acting as possible ('Whoa ho HOH!!') and her pacing is not snappy. There is a lot of space and silence. Ideas are very big things, Rose might tell you, and it takes a while to look at one.

Rose English believes that theatre and entertainments hold a lot of mysteries and a lot of possibilities for us. Maybe that is why we audiences keep going to shows and movies. Maybe when we project ourselves onto the stage or the big screen, we're engaging our desires, we're hoping, we're believing. Where else but in theatres and film-houses do we allow ourselves to say 'Oh, I hope everything works out!' Infinite longing, infinite hope. What other use is there for the idea of infinity, if it doesn't allow time for the apparently impossible to come true? What else is there to live for, but the hope of change? And what possibility is there, for change without hope?

It's all very simple, really, and open and lovely and embarrassing. Like 'The Wizard of Oz' without all the noise. ●

PHOTO / SARAH AINSLIE



## GREEN ROOM

Manchester's GREEN ROOM has found a home. PAUL SHAND reports on the first moves in and around the new premises.

AFTER MANY years of struggle Manchester finally has its 'alternative' Arts Centre. The **Green Room** has opened to the baying of critics and the sharpening of knives. The space itself is rudely functional. A platform/apron stage dictated by rather inflexible raked seating that might frustrate the odd ambitious company. Distinctly post-modernist design dominates the foyer space with gargantuan ventilation tubes seemingly torn from a still from 'Brazil'. The all glass frontage is arrogant, yet inviting. You pass this place at your peril. There is an honesty about the place, a determined mood. It won't be better when "The carpets are in" — they won't arrive.

Curiously The Green Room's promoters chose to start their new season away from all this with a series of *Platform Performances* at Piccadilly Rail Station. Disturbing the hiatus of rush hour it was a setting for local work and the launch, also, of the new performance consortium *No Quarter* featuring *Babel* of Halifax and *The Bluecoat Galleries* in Liverpool in addition to the Greenies. Sharing and swapping performers and artists they hope to widen the per-

## USED CARS ARTIST

Richard Wilson  
Tyne Bridge, Newcastle  
Reviewed by  
TRACEY WARR

RICHARD WILSON'S sculpture *One Piece At a Time* for the nationwide *TSWA 3D* public sculpture project is situated in the interior of the south supporting tower of the Tyne Bridge. The spectator crosses the river from Newcastle to Gateshead and arrives at the foot of this famous symbol of the North East's industrial past and of its present decline. Entering the door of the tower you are in a chilly cavern — 70 foot high, looking at a visual cacophony of suspended car parts: mud flaps, shock absorbers, alternators, dynamos, wings, car doors, cylinder heads, spark plugs, cam shafts, suspension springs, exhaust pipes, pistons and big ends dangle and

formance audience through the North. On this occasion we saw *Steve Purcell's* synchronised walkmen and women dance in the patterns of strangers passing through, an accidental meeting of travelling Sony-listeners. The people you always hate to sit next to on the train with their tinny accompaniment. *Pauline Young* wouldn't have minded. She gets lonely on her journeys so she brought two life-size companions for the ride. Beautiful bendy-toys with more to say than most travellers. *Chris Lethbridge*, like Young, is a sculptor by trade, and was tackling his first live work thanks to the inspiration of The Green Room. His maps and dreams of luggage loaders and goods train-movements dominated the platform with the cluttered scheduling of the unreal. The ultimate train-spotter with no need of trains. *The Whalley Range All Stars* had come prepared for a wait. A wait so long its transpires that they've actually taken root, their tendrils vegetating round benches and litter bins.

The Green Room's opening night featured a grossly glorious party where the booze was free and the spirit freer. And all to the grateful amazement of the collected bohemians. But by Monday the freeloading had stopped with The Green Room's first commissioned show *Skat*, a collaboration between Kaboodle and Fision theatre companies being savaged in the press. 'Shapeless, tedious, empty!' Howled the Guardian. Bitter, sharp and poignant say I. Certainly over-cluttered by its vision and ambitions, it had the grace of great humour as four rejects from 'The poorest sectors of our society' attempted a pub celebration of their bog-end society. A show about where we have come to, rather than where we ought to go, it is a desperate jolt to those who comfortably accept force-fed Britain.

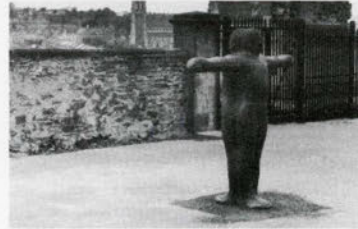
This heady week has been full of risk and surprise. Long may The Green Room profit on disturbing the complacent and angering the bitter ●

dually gleam in the muted green daylight glancing off wing mirrors head lamps and spot lights. The artist has constructed a wooden platform across the space at 60 feet which is punctured with holes threaded with nylon strings holding the shiny car parts anything from 1 to 50 foot from the floor of the tower. On the first day of the sculpture there were 1,202 car parts hanging here (an artist's dozen, according to Wilson). Concealed from the spectator, beyond the wooden platform above our heads, an automatic cutting mechanism swings slowly backwards and forwards, inexorably slicing through the nylon strings gathered there and every ten to fourteen minutes one of the parts crashes, smashes or tinkles to the ground to join the accumulating pile on the floor. The spectator sees the remote and mindless motions of the cutting mechanism on a video monitor. The sounds of the falling parts are recorded and played back in the space. The present sounds continually accrete to the past sounds and at the end of this two month exhibition the visual display of suspended metal and glass has become an incoherent pile on the ground and the sculpture has transformed itself into a sound-work.

The publicity description of *One Piece At a Time* as a 'shimmering shower of silvered and shined auto-parts ... an industrial symphony

# ANTONY GORMLEY THE WALLS OF DERRY

Reviewed by  
PATRICK BRADLEY



'... BASTARD!' I thought to myself, 'who is this guy to think he can come over here and plonk down some of his sculptures in my back yard — I mean, I wouldn't even dare to go to London and attempt to comment on the state of the nation or whatever there ...'

I was prepared to hate these sculptures. I had been scared off from the official launch of the work by an unusually high proportion of middle-aged male VIPs, and the advance publicity had made me suspicious of the validity of TSWA 3D in general. Seeing Antony Gormley's work featured on the very boring 'State of the Art' TV series didn't help.

The sculptures are described by the press release as consisting of three three-quarter inch thick cast iron moulds of double figures joined back to back with arms outstretched, standing at strategic points on the walls of Derry. The eyes of the figures are open, looking both out and in. The viewer can see through these eyeholes into a unified inner space.

After all this build up, I first came across one of the sculptures one evening in the semi darkness. It seemed menacing and sinister; seven feet tall, cold, hard, impenetrable. The eyes were holes, dark entrances into the space inside. Knocking on it, I could hear it was hollow, and was curious to see inside. In order to look directly into one set of eyes and out through the other set I had to hoist myself up onto the figure, embracing it. I could then see into it and out through it. I released it from my embrace and went home.

This encounter changed my attitude to the sculptures dramatically. The poetic embrace had awoken my imagination; a positive reaction had been formed. The figures lost most of their ominous presence and became silent overseers. They look out over troubled loyalist and nationalist areas, areas of historical unrest (like the Apprentice Boys Hall) but they are not judging, rather provoking introspection and an examination of the human political situation around both me and them ... their arms are outstretched.

As for local reaction, the work will be up for at least six months, so it's early days yet, but people I've spoken to who know they exist seem to be fairly open minded about them. They are prepared to invest their time and imagination in the work. The figure overlooking the loyalist Fountain estate has been 'decorated' by some of Gormley's 'co-artists' with anti-Derry City Council slogans; the sculptures are succeeding in drawing out long-held responses to their site, raising the issue of who owns the walls. Their success cannot be measured by the size of the audience they attract, since the city walls are not a thoroughfare. The sculptures are slow, contemplative works, promoted with low key, non-aggressive publicity. They are careful pieces of work; there to be discovered. ●

... an evolving sound-work', makes it sound trite and gimmicky and captures none of the melancholy atmosphere of the work. Using car parts — familiar bits of modern, urban and industrial life — Wilson successfully evokes a primeval atmosphere, an image of the cycle of life and death. Pigeons stutter across the frigid air of the space, occasionally splattering the shiny parts on the tower floor. The sound recorder has picked up not only the 'death rattles' of the falling parts but also the groaning of the expansion plank in the bridge overhead as it gives, over and over again, to the weight of the crossing cars and lorries. The sculpture has the air of an elephants' graveyard — the fallen exhaust pipes and suspension springs thrust up from the pile like the huge tusks of dead animals reduced to dust, the shiny and beautiful metal

shapes seem sad and vanquished like the spoils of war — once glorious and gleaming armour dragged home empty and triumphed over, resonant of its wearer lying dead and dishonoured on the battlefield. The cutting mechanism in its blind and inexorably action is scything Death. Wilson has created a peculiarly human, poignant ... and positive image using machinery and non-human mechanisms involved in a constant cycle and recycling: the car reduced to its parts, the parts made into a sculpture that is in turn fragmented and dismantled but makes a whole sound-work, set within the context of the river flowing to the sea and the image of continuity in the bridge, with its constantly renewing load of cars journeying purposefully on. ●



# ACTUATION

A performance/installation  
by ALISTAIR  
MACLENNAN, King  
David's Dungeon,  
Nottingham Castle,  
Reviewed by STEVE  
RODGERS

ALISTAIR MACLENNAN'S PERFORMANCE/installation are usually labeled 'site-specific'. This description is inadequate. True, they are 'one-offs', to a great extent determined by the specific physical location and the materials found in and around this location but this alone results only in a formal specificity to the site and MacLennan's works are also specific to the larger historical and cultural context of the town and the moment in which they are made. *Actuation* contained specific references to Nottingham which could only be fully appreciated by a Nottingham audience. The work is therefore both site and audience specific.

The materials used to make up *Actuation* are lace, a direct reference to Nottingham's now defunct lace industry which was once a great source of employment and pride; artificial limbs, literally pieces of broken people; shoes, an almost biblical reference to the basic needs for survival; derelict baby carriages, symbols of lost innocence and a new brutality; confetti trampled into the dust and newspapers each of which affords a glimpse of a potent talismanic word such as 'Tebbit' or 'Kinnock', rolled up like the torah scrolls. These materials are arranged in various combinations provoking a variety of

responses. Later on flowers are scattered and sometimes placed as at a grave throughout the installation. Over this plays a tape-loop of layered baby cries, seagulls screaming, bagpipes and an orchestral rendering of Land of Hope and Glory. Descending the cold, wet stone steps into the King David Dungeon and the installation is like entering an archeological excavation of a tomb from some familiar but long past civilisation. There is an overwhelming and stifling sense of nostalgia and sentimentalism for some pre-modern existence where the only important things were the inalienable daily experiences of birth, marriage, work, hardship and death. The torah-like papers hint at some eternal and inescapable laws handed down by a remote pantheon of gods. However, this room turns out to be only the ante-chamber and not the centre of the tomb. These are the mere trappings of the ritual that surround the real heart. Out through the far side of the dungeon is a further chamber which at first is hidden by the strong lights standing outside it. Inside the inner chamber is smaller and darker and hewn from

the living rock. Here, beyond a wooden barrier and a moat like ditch stands the artist. His face covered and almost immobile but with a torch suspended from his neck so that any slight movement causes the torch to describe wide arcs of light on the cave's roof.

Although on both the occasions I visited *Actuation* the artist was here and motionless the implication is that he emerges sometimes to rearrange the various remains in the outer chamber and literally throws light upon them in his manipulation of them.

The use of the two chambers in this way added a clearly theatrical element to the performance which is something new in MacLennan's work. By creating a distance between the artist/performer and the installation in this way he is better able to make comment on and use of the nostalgia which is always present in his work, but without losing any of its emotional strength nor its disturbing ambiguity. *Actuation* is not perhaps MacLennan's most accomplished work but it does suggest new developments which make it an important step forward. ●



PHOTO / O SHIMSHON

*Actuation*, 1987

## FUN ART AND PHOTOCOPIES

Anatomy at the Tom Allen  
Centre, London —  
Reviewed by NIK  
HOUGHTON

ORGANISED BY THE Association of Newham Artists — a group of local artists set up to promote visual arts in the Borough — *Anatomy* was a weekend long event centred on time based media which, despite its often haphazard style, at least offered a snatch of arts activity in an otherwise struggling Borough. I work in the Borough, and I

contributed a selection of video tapes to the show; this perhaps allows a certain insight into the problems of organising an event like this on a shoe-string budget and limited resources in an area not noted for its cultural consciousness.

Given these parameters and the fact that audience pullers Housewatch and Tara Babel, originally programmed for the event, eventually pulled out, *Anatomy* finally offered a sometimes chaotic mix that ranged from photocopy experimentation in the foyer of the Tom Allen Centre to the more assured work of Louise Sheppard. Sheppard's installation, *Castles On A Tidal Beach*, was an atmospheric piece hinting at an eerie innocence lost. A film loop showing a young girl on a beach as projected above a sand strewn environment

whilst a tapedeck repeats a French nonsense rhyme. It's an effective piece on its own terms yet what it does beyond echo a yearning for childhood is uncertain.

As if to complement Sheppard's work an adjacent installation by Denny Evans sought to create a work around the sea with sculpted paper. This was only partly successful, because the piece was sited next to the bar area and seemed too overlit to create any sense of self-contained ambience. The mediajam scratch crew 9AM took a distinctly post-industrial stance in a live monitor piece which hipped and hopped around post modernism. Various described as 'impressive' and 'too loud' 9AM are doing something interesting here with video as it becomes a live and interactive medium — Watch out for them... Finally though what *Anatomy* was about a roughedged 'fun art' as opposed to 'fine art'; and if this occasionally toppled into anarchic amateurism this should not be used as an argument against initiatives like this. It put a smeary hand-print across the increasingly high gloss, slickly presented portfolio of contemporary practice. ●

Robert Pugh in *Love Me Gangster* (*Alter Image*)

## FLASH ART AND FUNKYTIMES

**NIK HOUGHTON** sees something interesting going on in television right now. A minor undercurrent, a below-the-surface shift toward something different. Something is happening.

'THERE IS NO presenter; the audience is left to make up its own mind about each individual item': From *See 4* — Channel 4's free magazine on *Alter Image*.

'Why do we have talking heads? ... It's a bizarre use of television': Janet Street Porter producer of Channel 4's *Network 7*. *City Limits* April 30th.

*Alter Image* is a programme broadcast by Channel 4 centred on the idea of a compendium of contemporary art works. It's a follow up to a previous series, and retains the format of presenting the arts in short 'n' snappy chunky cuts, each item self-contained and complete. The notion here is to avoid the TV device of the authoritative voiceover and to package artists in a manner sympathetic to their work.

In this jambox of new art, freaky furniture rubs against the glitterama of an item on Andrew Logan, dance pieces share programme space with noise merchants like Bow Gamelan and context is provided only by the framework of the programme and an occasional talking head from the artists themselves. (The cliché of commentator or specialist comment is, thankfully, absent). With each programme containing a half-dozen items, each section is distinctive and specific to the artist/artists shown — with Marty St James and Anne Wilson's hi/tack piece, for example, a crudely painted backdrop and various video effects are used to enhance the mood of cartoon performance.'

On the downside, however, the programme sometimes seems like an index of London-centred trendiness as 'innovation' nudges into a proto-yuppie catalogue of designers, performers and artists. The surface 'radicalism' of this parade of pictures and words, music and movement is

undercut by the way in which *Alter Image* both de-politicises and de-contextualises contemporary art. So far little has been presented of political or social art with the consequence that 'new art' is offered as a sort of high culture alternative to *The Face*.

*Alter Image's* brief and format is promising, and little broadcast space is given over to contemporary work. To see this time occupied by snatched scenarios seemingly distant from areas of contention, struggle or debate is to see art turned into bite sized chunks without the gristle of politics or issue. No one is suggesting that *Alter Image* turns into an upmarket Open University broadcast, and yet the exclusion of items related to political artists — say Peter Kennard or Conrad Atkinson — means that this important programme suggests, by default, that the art-of-the-80's is an eclectic sprawl of kitsch, Londoncentric novelty.

*Alter Image* at least attempts to interrupt the cosy documentary form propagated by TV in relation to the arts. Alongside programmes like the newly introduced 'youth' magazine *Network 7* and *Dancelines* — all Channel 4 commissions — *Alter Image* forms the vanguard of new approaches to television and explorations of its possibilities. In *Network 7* the disruption of TV rules is foregrounded by an upmarket 'scratch' styled collage of information and images, the programme a tricky mediamix of interviews, tick-tack titles and fast-edit social concern. Artful, fast-paced and sometimes breathlessly inane *Network 7* is a prime example of television's ability to re-present what in the independent sector has been seen as 'oppositional practise' — handheld cameras, devices used to reveal the mechanics of production and presentation etc — and claim this as its own. A similar approach is seen in *Dancelines* where half the programme is given over to a revealing insight into the methodology of production as dancers and technicians are shown working on dance pieces which we then see presented as short, finished works. TV's naturalism is here undercut as the artifice of construction is revealed.

Do these programmes indicate the beginnings of a definably different 'new television', or are they just temporary fractures in the conservative gush of broadcasting? Only time and TV schedules will tell on this one but in the meantime *Alter Image* and its distant cousins at least offer a momentary disruption in the crass and stagnant profile of medialand. ●

## HOLLY WARBURTON THE ORATORY LIVERPOOL

is Reviewed by  
**JONATHAN SWAIN**

THE ORATORY is a neo classical Victorian temple thing that perches above Liverpool, but is itself eclipsed by its massive neighbour, the city's Anglican Cathedral. Built for no particular reason, though it was used by the cathedral stonemasons as a hut, it has always been an object of speculation. With its doric columns and lack of windows, it gives the impression of being an early version of the Tardis.

Inside, Holly Warburton's piece seems to have been inspired by similar classical sources and have the same time travelling capacity. Images taken from varying parts of (art) history — Symbolist painting, Victorian erotic photo scenes, early films, Greco-Roman sculpture and many more I'm sure. Reworked and beautifully photographed in a vicious Vogue style with plenty of rich red, gold and blacks. These slides are then projected onto several screens around the darkened hall, as well as on to the floor and significantly onto the tops of the ionic pillars. The audience was allowed to wander, view and contemplate at will during the quarter of an hour long show, restricted only by the blacking that hides the mechanism and about half of the room.

As one image dissolves into the next, classical sphinxes have modern heads superimposed, Greco-Roman poses are metamorphosised into lush Symbolist scenes. Delacroix's *Liberty* floats in and out of flames. With all these esoteric references and with the constant flow of opera tunes playing along too, it was difficult not to feel confused and somewhat stupid. According to the programme notes the *Palladia* are the oldest representation of the Greek goddess Athena and the installation shows her image in its various forms as goddess of Wisdom, guardian of the Acropolis, inspiration for Britannia etc.

However if you fail to get the literary references you are urged to enjoy the 'essence' of the picture show on offer in much the way one is encouraged with classical sculpture and architecture to bow down to the scale, wealth and superior learning of those in control, of whose heights of wisdom you can only dream. As a concrete (or rather marble) reminder of these much gloried-in times, two full size monuments to a couple of local philanthropic Victorian gents flank either side of the show space.

These gentlemen I'm sure would have loved Holly Warburton's slides, as no doubt will those with Victorian pretensions today, pleased that the piece avoids any political commitment, preferring to revisit the pretty-pretty (and uncontroversial) world of past mythologies. Perfect TV fodder. ●

*Going Abroad (2)*  
cont'd.

is a more subtle and complex work. Each section of her exercise based dance is preceded by a video 'trailer' of what we were about to see. The comparative visual and physical values of the two media gave the work an internal dialectic which raised questions about a woman's own reactions to the presentation of her own body, and therefore much more than a purely dancerly experience. Its lack of any overt 'message' made it an altogether more difficult work in the context of this populist festival and attracted a smaller audience to both performances than almost anything else in the programme.

Michael Clark, however, is nothing if he is not overt. Everything about his work is overt and it is none the weaker for being so. The programme consisted of the new work *Pure Pre Scenes* followed by the celebrated Laibach section from *No Fire Escape in Hell*. *Pure Pre Scenes* is about 'what is dance about', to which Michael Clark's answer is, predictably, sex and frocks. It contains too much self-consciously 'shocking' material to really provoke but it contains the major revelation that Leigh Bowery, frock maker to the club elite, is a really good performer. He has a presence and self-awareness which, combined with his extraordinary sartorial imagination, made the performance fascinating. His appearance as a teapot is brilliant. *No Fire Escape* is however what Michael Clark does best. No-one else can make ballet as exciting as this.

The festival's music programme, or at least the two concerts I heard, seemed the most inappropriate to the festival's overall appeal. Jon Hassell's spacious landscapes of computer generated sound and electronically treated trumpet are beautiful but rather cold. The immaculate control of tonal qualities is impressive and the concert did serve to create a cool meditative space in the festivals otherwise rather energetic pace but beyond Jon Hassell's international acclaim I could not work out what it was doing here or who it was for. The other concert given by Wim Mertens confirmed that his reputation is infinitely higher than he deserves. He has credentials as an authority on American minimalist music which is reflected in his own compositions. Like his American inspirations he too has recently started layering simple melodies over a systemic core. But Mertens' melodies are too thin and sentimental and the result is nearer to Richard Clayderman than Philip Glass.

Of the two other performances I want to mention one was not even part of the festival but it really helped put the festival in perspective. One evening in the middle of the festival I was surprised to discover, performing in the city square, The

Angelic Upstarts. Amazingly these old timers of political punk are still doing it just the way it was in 1978. Loud, rough, aggressive and blatantly anti-rockist in their stance, their songs about Thatcher and the Brighton bomb were clearly too unsophisticated even for the very young and mostly drunken Spaniards in the crowd. Cultural politics have moved with the times and can no longer be reduced to mere sloganeering no matter how energetically it is done.

*Cold Harbour* has been around for a while now but it is a superb piece of political theatre. Its scenario is pure theatre. A provincial museum is curating an exhibition on the life of General Ulysses S. Grant. The final preparation before opening are being carried out by a pair of instantly recognisable museum professionals who seem more concerned with peer approval, media applause and a remote connoisseurship than with the meaning of Grant's life and career. This is contrasted with the great man himself who comes alive from his glass display case to declaim in sonorous Shakespearean tones his own thoughts and feelings and his concern with history and the cultural destiny of America. Modern America is revealed as a civilisation with no concept of history, the results of which is epitomised by the two museum workers. Their apparent knowledge is no more than a collection of facts; what looks like pride in their work is no more than a camp fastidiousness, and, most serious of all, their cool, professional detachment is no more than an inability to experience real emotions. *Cold Harbour* is a brilliant lesson of humanity severed from time itself. This is what experimental theatre looks like when it becomes totally assured and gives up the self-conscious need to assert its experimentalism. It is accessible and entertaining and profoundly radical.

In all the Valladolid festival achieves its overall aim of achieving an appeal to a broad liberal audience through its identification in its programming choices, with an international style. It also contained some very good work. But there seems to be a reluctance to go it alone and make difficult decisions about the real nature of the work itself beyond this superficial style identification. As *Cold Harbour* shows, it is possible to be popular and genuinely radical and judging by the loyalty and enthusiasm of the festival's audience they have the opportunity to achieve this. If they want to improve their status as an international festival they should take more risks. There is a politically motivated body in the city, as the wonderful piece of anti-nuclear protest makes unmistakably clear, and they should not be afraid to appeal more directly to that. ●

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## OVER THE EDGE

### Dear Performance

Whether or not one agrees with Guy Brett's criticisms of *At The Edge* I'm sorry he couldn't find it in his heart to constructively comment on some of its good points.

I believe it was important to programme three continuous weeks of performances and installations in one of the London independent galleries.

I suspect that many performance artists welcome improvements in the provision of both public subsidy and public venues for their work and for the increased audiences these institutions bring to them.

I think it was clearly of interest to include in the programme performances that had previously only been seen in the Perfo Festival in Rotterdam.

I'm sorry that no mention was made of the education project and the subsequent installation at Air which developed from *At The Edge*.

I find it both predictable and sad that Mr Brett should have singled out for praise the one installation in which he had a personal involvement.

Yours sincerely,  
Sara Selwood  
Director  
Air Gallery  
London

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## MORE MAGDALENA

### Dear Performance

I was very surprised at Ms Basnett's rather personal reactions (March-May ed.) to my review of Magdalena '86 (Dec-Feb edition); some of her comments even suggested that she had not read my article with an objective attention proper to an academic.

It is a shame that the only bit of my review that was edited out was the sentence making absolutely clear that I was only involved in the first week that was open to the general public called Phase I. Phase II was the following 2nd and 3rd week were the 'invited artists' would collaborate for a public performance at the end. It is deeply insulting and politically suspect that Ms Basnett suggests that we (the paying public and artists present in Phase I) "did not undergo the Magdalena experience at all", compared to she says "all 38 of us" (meaning the invited artists) ... who saw the first week as simply one moment in the whole". Ms Basnett could not have been very attentive in the most illuminating discussion led by Patricia Niedwiecki on "Male and Female Language" where we talked at length about the insidious and arrogant presumptions of the dominant culture (patriarchal and academic) in judging the experience and expression of others. I feel sure that the participating artists at Magdalena would not exert such superiority about the authenticity of their experience over others.

The costs to attend Phase I incl. meals (but

not accommodation) for a week were approx £120. If Ms Basnett had had direct longterm experience of working in 'new'/experimental performance she would not be so offended that I found it 'not cheap' and possibly a sum that could affect the attendance of many women theatre practitioners in Britain.

The difference between her financial contract and mine (as someone to record or review Magdalena '86) is something I am glad to clarify for it is again politically relevant. She says, "I did not even receive travel expenses let alone a fee". However she did have a publishing contract for recording this important event. And so she should. Meanwhile, in writing a review for a poor 'Performance' magazine not only did I have to pay for 1/3 of the performances, full fees for any workshop that I wanted to attend etc., but I even had to buy my own copy of Performance to see my review when it came out. One is used to not receiving a subsidy, let alone a fee for doing things out of commitment to a cause!! That brings me to the next point of contention. About the fees for the invited artists — rather the lack of fees; about the fact that most of the (absent) directors were male; about the lack of black or Asian artists; about the fact that 'experimental' performance by women in Britain

was not well represented: Ms Basnett will notice — if she had not felt so unnecessarily defensive, that I did not pass judgement but simply recorded the facts by posing questions about them. My main point was that these were extremely important issues for discussion. It is futile to point the finger at anyone suggesting that the things I have listed should not have happened at all. These are extremely common problems even in a 'womens' festival. The important responsibility was to take advantage of those present problems, to air them openly, to put them forward as fundamentally important factors in determining womens performance/theatre work, as subjects to be discussed; for those problems are always treated as invisible and separate issues to the actual theatre language of a piece of work. We all know that the question of who directs, who watches, how much budget there is (even if we have managed to eat or sleep well) are all as important to the outcome of a piece of work as the script, design or music in it.

As far as Ms Basnett's totally confused and confusing reaction to my review of Zofia Kalinska's work, I can only request of her to go back and read my review carefully. She must have got carried away in her heroic defense of the

'genuine' experience of the Festival. She will find that she is actually agreeing with me in my very high esteem of Zofia's work.

As women practitioners, writers, administrators etc. working in what is called the 'minority arts' i.e. areas where our work is marginalised, we have to learn to develop and support each other through unashamed and constructive criticism, as well as maintaining a healthy protectiveness about the appropriation and inaccurate definition of our work by the advocates of a dominant culture. We do more damage when we become defensive — even worse, romantic about her 'experience' of being e.g. a woman 'new theatre' artist, and allow that to blind us to the constructive criticism from our colleagues. The Womens Movement and the thinking in 'New Theatre/Performance' arena has grown out of its 'victim' phase and has turned its efforts in joining together to develop an articulate and relevant critical language for recording and validating the work. I consider this development as an emergency political move in the expression and representation of our work — to give it a place in a culture that would otherwise render it invisible. Maybe these exchanges are its teething problems, still!

Mine Kaylan

PERFORMANCE

LETTERS

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