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Video Libraries

Rob La Frenais examines a phenomenon projected in the seventies and only now becoming a reality. Two new video libraries aim to provide a comprehensive open-access selection of independent tapes.



Arnolfini Video Library, Bristol

The idea of a Video Library, or Videotheque has been around as long as video itself, and has been just one part of the 'information revolution' that was expected to have happened around the mid-seventies. Writing in that enthusiastic white-hot mode of those optimistic times when Buckminster Fuller's influence brought together artist and scientist in an orgy of computer newspeak and sci-fi simplification of the world's problems, Gene Youngblood predicted in 'Expanded Cinema' in 1970: "... 'demand TV' or 'telecommand' systems are expected by about 1978. By this process one will telephone regional video-library switchboards, ordering programmes from among thousands listed in catalogues. The videophone will be included in a central home communications console that will incorporate various modes of digital audio visual and Xerographic storage and recovery systems." All this would be part of the 'synasthetic videosphere' which, in its purest form, was expected to change our lives in a radical, positive way. In the interim, a combination of recession, manufacturers' greed, consumer resistance, and disproportionate advances in presentation and miniaturisation of hardware as opposed to systems has meant that the 'information revolution' has been delayed in coming.

Meanwhile artists working in film and video, performance artists wishing to extend as well as document their work, independent documentary and fiction makers, community artists and educationists, and more recently pop musicians

concerned with visual and stylistic forms have throughout the last decade and beyond built up a formidable backlog of worthwhile material despite the difficulties of changing formats, unreliable equipment and the impossibility of public access. The pioneering work of the Film-Makers Co-op (London), the Independent Film-Makers Association and London Video Arts, not to mention a number of early attempts at public showing and distribution by the Arts Labs, Fantasy Factory, Action Space, Oval House Video and the late Association of Video Workers never made up for the lack of broadcasting access, or the money and public acceptability that would allow participation in the commercial video boom of the eighties.

It has remained for that other shakily burgeoning bloom of the seventies, the mixed-media contemporary arts centre to take the bull by the horns and attempt to provide a channel for what in this country with its high-quality but rigidly-controlled broadcasting media, is now a vast pool of unshown videotape and film.

At roughly the same time the ICA in London and the Arnolfini in Bristol have opened video libraries, both with the same idea in mind but each with quite different models for programming and viewing. Before examining these in detail it is as well to consider the difficulties that surround the whole area of public access to videotapes that may have contributed to the lateness of this vital initiative. Concurrent with the development of videotape recording has been the widening of acceptance of the view that the art object can no

longer be valued in terms of its physical presence. It can be appreciated, criticised and documented, but no longer can it be artificially quantified in market terms as in the commercial painting and sculpture market. Sometimes it requires the presence of the artist, sometimes it only lasts for a micro-second, sometimes it can only be viewed from several thousand feet up. But the artist must live, just the same. Performance and other third area work can be paid for in terms of audience admittance on the theatrical model. But video can be copied with ease and sold in the same way as recorded music, with only the right of use remaining as the fixed factor. However, because the techniques of this process have only very recently become this accessible, and because by nature the work is unmarketable by conventional means, not to mention less easily consumable, artists video needs to be presented within an alternative context to the home video tape recorder. The reference library is the obvious model, allowing both casual and specialist research retrieval of the material. But given the fact that such a facility is sited in such clearly AB surroundings as the ICA and the Arnolfini, (it is still an uncomfortable fact that radical art-forms are mainly, though not entirely, appreciated by the educationally and financially privileged) the artists, many of whom may well be poorer than the average viewer, want to see more than a nominal share of the proceeds (which, to be sure arrive as much from grants and prestige as from door-money) from the showing of their work.

Add to this the time-bomb of frustration built up by the lack of access to broadcast facilities and until recently the lack of recognition from arts bodies for video as a legitimate artform in this country and you have a potentially emotive issue. People want to get it right.

At the Arnolfini Video Library in Bristol, the first of the two to be opened, considerable care has been taken to 'get it right' with the artists concerned, with an amount of consultation with the existing artists bodies. The right to show material was bought, along with the actual tape for a specific sum per minute. This sum, which appears to be reasonable to all concerned covers the cost of copying to an acceptable technical standard.

The library is laid out informally, opening out into the gallery space, and with all the equipment and tapes in the same space, along with books and information about the producing artists organisations. The material available is dominated by the artists who examine the nature of the media itself, a theme which the library's co-ordinator Rod Stoneman readily admits was a specific concern reflected in the selection of the work. The 'first wave' of British video artists is heavily represented, but this is a welcome opportunity to go and study their work in a concentrated way without the context and expectancy that attends a public showing. Tamara Krikorian's 'Vanitas' can be seen, which combines what amounts to an art history lecture about iconography and the transience of the art object with a disturbingly indulgent shot of the artist's face framed in an oval mirror, a still life in the background and a TV newsreader still further in the background. The points made about transience become more and more ironic as the tape, and thus the news, gets older and older. (The news is about Carter's imminent defeat in the US Presidency). David Hall's 'TV Fighter (Cam Era Plane)' is there, as well as his more well known 'This Is A Television Receiver'. The former is a startlingly effective example of the exploration of simple techniques of gradual video overlay, where a televised shot of a fighter plane strafing countryside is shown on a screen, gunsights are painted on the screen, and a camera is moved slowly towards the screen, roughly repeating the movement of the plane. The recording of this is then treated to the same technique, raising a number of unspoken visual questions about the nature of the camera's viewpoint, and through this, the standpoint we take when we perceive a moving TV picture. David Hall has a reputation for a dry theoretical approach to video art through the way his work is presented in documentation and discussion: the video library gives a welcome chance to confirm that his work is quite the opposite.

Ian Breakwell is concerned with specifically parodying the media in 'The News', his newscaster extending the vapid conventions of news presentation into an absurd area, using items that slowly become ridiculously trivial. Using intro



Tamara Krikorian's 'Vanitas'



David Hall's 'This Is A Television Receiver'



Ian Breakwell's 'The News'



Keith Frake's 'A Few Words Home'

phrases like: 'Reinstatement of Grass Verges', 'Councillors Investigate Fence Post', and 'No Shortage of String', he inserts horribly inappropriate mug-shots in the top left hand corner while his news-reader carefully intones the sing-song formula of the typical regional news broadcast. But more than a simple parody, 'The News', by its sheer apparent authenticity, makes the viewer question an area of reality that does not come under scrutiny because it is just taken for granted. There is somehow a consensus about the way these things are considered by local news media, and this is never challenged because it simply appears boring.

Moving over to the film on videotape, this largely resembles the video section in intent, in that it too questions the structure of the media, although there are two interesting and by all accounts unconventionally made documentaries about women: 'Amy' a study of Amy Johnson which asks 'What is a heroine?' and 'Dora — a Case of Mistaken Identity' about Freud's first case history, and also a much under-shown fiction film, Sally Potter's 'Thriller', unfortunately not available at the time. Two of the most interesting pieces of structuralist work in the library are John Smith's 'Associations' and 'Girl Chewing Gum'. 'Associations' lends itself particularly well to being in a video library, as it is packed with quick-fire punning edits which initially vye for attention with the soundtrack. Only upon replay can it be discerned that the lecture on free association itself activates the images flashed on the screen. (Comprehension and production, Chomski etc.) 'Girl' uses an equally simple but illuminating trick, with a street shot of a London street, the sound of the director shouting over a shop burglar alarm, seemingly positioning him of extras dressed as ordinary pedestrians and fleets of hired motor cars. Towards the end he reveals that he is 'shouting into a microphone in a field near Letchmore Heath.' The mixed-in soundtrack of the street scene is faded down and the sounds of the field are heard in Hackney. Finally, the camera cuts to the field with the traffic noise and the alarm once more in the back-

ground.

The Arnolfini also has some of its own documentation tape, notable of a performance by Bruce MacLean, 'Mackerel and Mandolins'. Although this is useful reference material, video records of this sort can invariably be uninteresting, and this is clearly the case with the MacLeantape. Video should receive as much attention as the performance in such cases: a recording alone is not enough to convey the performers presence and intention.

Recently opened was an open access section, in which tapes, which remain the property of the producer, are deposited. Because of a selective programming policy for the library, which operates as in any other area of the gallery, and because the budget for buying tapes has now run out, producers are paid a percentage (60%) of the fees for viewing. This section looks like becoming a popular aspect of the library. Tony Broad, who operates the library equipment says that one tape submitted to

this section, a well made promo by Echo and the Bunnymen, which contains cutting and image juxtapositions at times reminiscent of a Robert Wilson performance, has been one of the most frequently requested tapes.

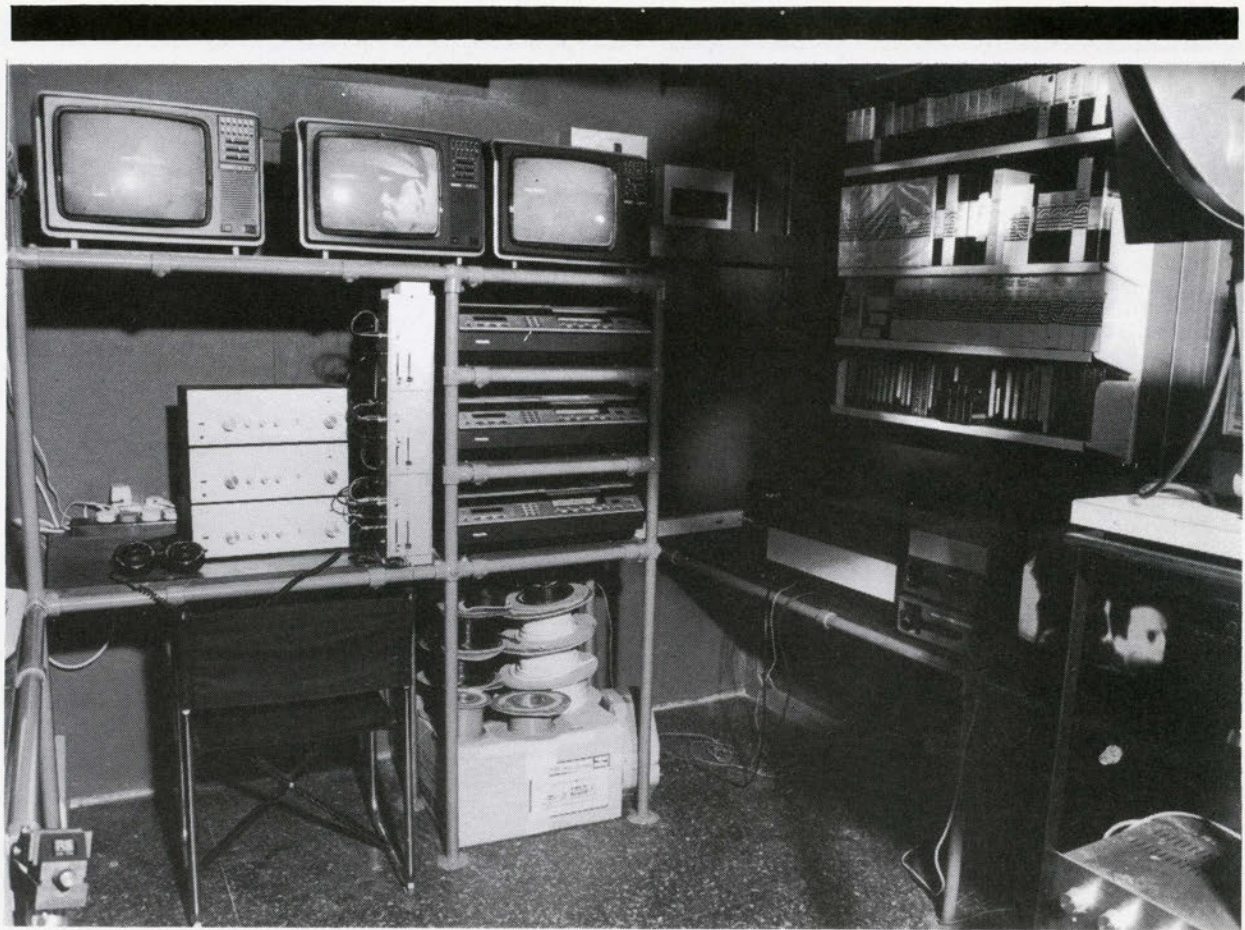
The question of open access sections, separated in a financial way from the main selected area raises whole questions about video libraries and their organisation and funding which have yet to be answered. While this in effect creates a two tier approach that would not necessarily exist in an ordinary public library, there seems to be no alternative when an independently run arts centre of this type, with its own artistic objectives and policy and limited finance volunteers its space for this much-needed project.

The ICA in London is operating a rather different model. Opened recently alongside a wave of new developments such as a commissioning fund for artists, its video library is clearly a carefully designed purpose-built area where the physical approach to the showing of material is much more formal. You enquire at a window through which can be seen an impressive array of equipment in high-tech stacking racks, order so many 'units' of viewing a certain item, then take your place at one of the three viewing consoles. The effect is more concentrated than at the Arnolfini, but could lack flexibility where it gains in intensity and privacy. It does, however have the advantage of innovation in that it beckons the casual viewer to participate in something new. There is for this purpose a constantly running video monitor outside announcing the range of videotapes.

The difference is also in its commissioning policy. Here, nothing is paid to the producer initially. All the costs of transferring material are met, and the artist gets



Derek Jarman's 'In the Shadow of the Sun'



ICA Video Library Control Room

50% of the door money, (which is twice as high as the Arnolfini's). The artists' videotapes are programmed alongside the ICA's stock of first-run feature films, such as Jaglom's *Sitting Ducks* and films by John Jost, as well as independent documentary features of all kinds. These, along with film-buffs' curios such as Jarman's *In the Shadow of the Sun* and the ICA Rock week's recordings will certainly bring in the audiences. But will this benefit the artist who will supply videotapes? Alex Graham and Peter Savage, who run the Video Library think so. Their view is that a wider audience will be attracted to the artist's work than if it were shown in isolation. They speak of the value of having a reference point in London where artists can send people to look at their work (this was certainly difficult before) and they point out that if they purchased work, they would be forced to be selective, which would go against the idea of a public access library. Indeed, they want more artists to send in their tapes.

The producing organisations, (London Video Arts, the Independent Film-Makers Association and the London Film-Makers Co-op) appear to be less than happy with this. They want tapes to be purchased, as at the Arnolfini. Discussions which they had with the ICA were not resolved, with the result that they were not encouraging the artists to co-operate. The sort of capital expenditure that must have gone into setting up the ICA system can make one

see their point of view, but can anyone afford to ignore it for long if it becomes a success? Already, a good sized stable of artists has slipped into the catalogue since their recent opening, (although very little was available at the time of writing). And with the cost of copying covered, it will soon mean a good bit of expenditure if they really do intend allowing unrestricted access.

Meanwhile, they are showing what they have got, and doing a particularly good trade with the Jarman movie, which in fact is surprisingly good, considering what it is. A slow motion super 8 film, shot through several times, with superimposed figures drifting in and out of an unidentifiable landscape sounds on paper one of the more avoidable experimental movies of the period. But this, ostensibly about a sun-worshipping cult, with occasional figures from Egyptian mythology making almost frighteningly eerie appearances through the celluloid murk, with a soundtrack by Throbbing Gristle does seem to work, as Jarman claims, on another level than words, and is worth seeing.

The sense of other-worldliness can be continued by watching a videotape by artist Keith Frake, at first a jarringly sparse selection of slides with a commentary which, as before, benefits by being shown twice. 'A Few Words Home' starts with the artist speaking "I have a strange tale to tell you Mother..." He is walking to work by a wall by which he has walked many

times before, and decides to climb over, or somehow pass through it. Once there, he is in countryside which, although strange, is in fact made up of quite common landscapes juxtaposed in such a way as to be alien from each other. For the narrator (who was on the way to work as a photographer) these experiences challenge his perception and his 'soul is in danger'. Finally some sort of acceptance is reached of the narrator's experience, though this may be an acceptance of madness.

Other video artists in the library include Brian Hoey, Wendy Brown, Peter Donebauer, Margaret Warwick, Mike Stubbs, Peter Savage and Ian Bourn.

So, after many false starts and a lot of uphill work, video is finally finding its place in the mainstream consumed contemporary arts, and a pair of relatively decent repositories for a decade's unsung video trailblazing alongside what will no doubt be slicker, more stylish products from young artists of the eighties. In the midst of growing despair and austerity, at least this part of the expansionist technological dream has come true. And everyone can use it. Even if you haven't got a TV licence.

Rob La Frenais

The Arnolfini Video Library is open from Tuesday to Saturday 4.00 to 8.00pm. Phone 0272 299191. The ICA Video Library is open every day except Monday from midday until 5.30. Phone 01-930 3647.

Disband Come to Britain

The Artists

Disband, formed in My 1978, is a collaboration of five women artists: Ilona Granet, Donna Henes, Ingrid Sischy, Diana Torr and Martha Wilson. In the "Band", each woman takes on an art persona and the five collaborate in performing songs written by each of them. Their work departs from traditional song and dance in that the instruments used include toys, pots and pans, a portable radio, bedsheets and other unlikely musical tools. Performing primarily in New York, the group's work deals with feminist, environmental and political issues. Ilona Granet, who takes on the art persona of Pansy I Rock, is a visual and performance artist; Donna Henes (Sorpresa Cheeka) is a sculptor and performance artist; Ingrid Sischy (Susan) is a visual artist and editor of Art Forum;

Diana Torr (Dianatone) is a dancer and Martha Wilson (Lov Storey) is a performance artist, lecturer on artists' books and director of Franklin Furnace in New York.

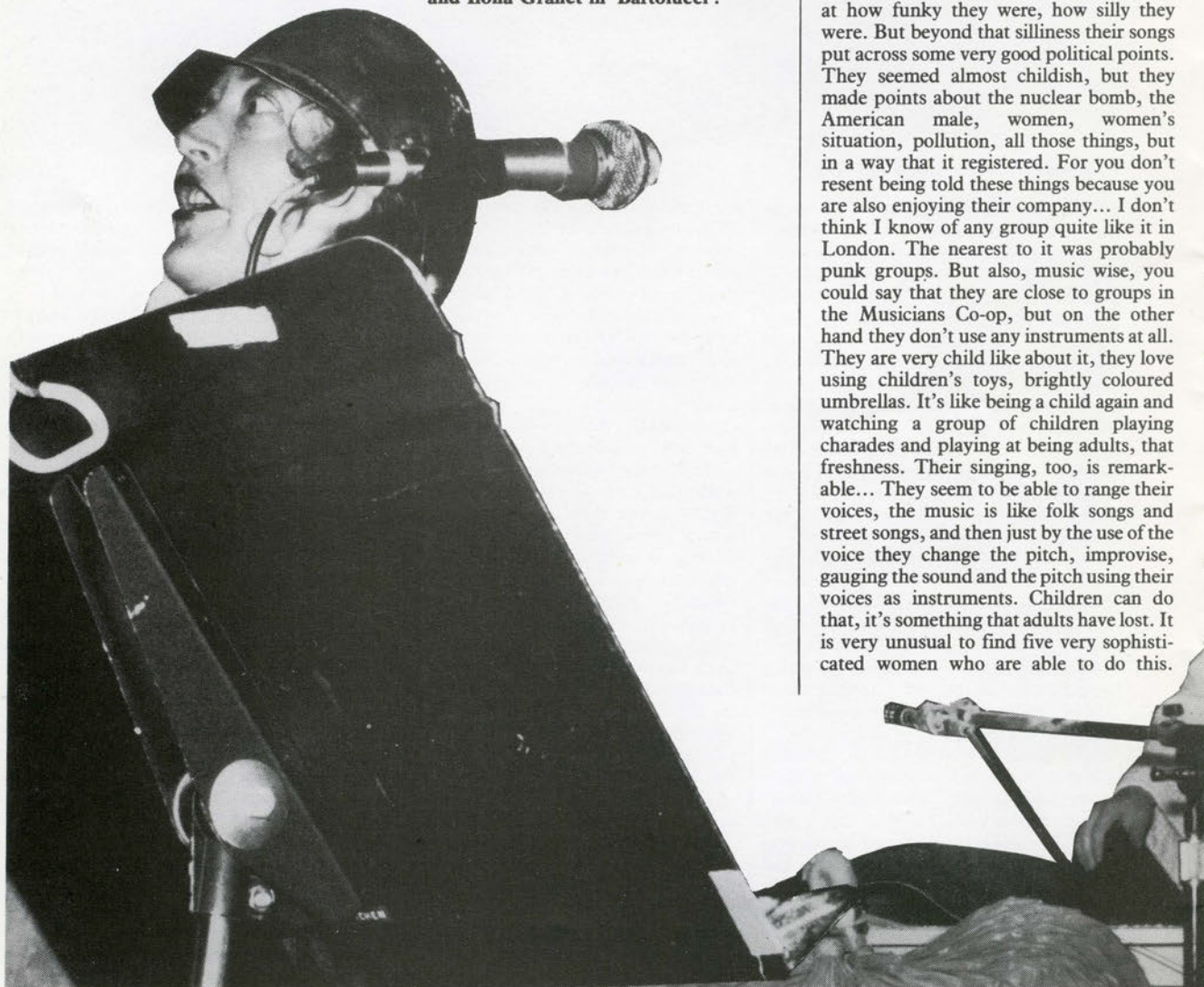
So much for the formal introduction. Not yet having seen the group, but having heard much by word of mouth, I asked Tina Keane, at present working on a new film which features Disband's music on the soundtrack, how she would introduce them to a British audience. LMcR

Tina: I think they've got to forget about what they think performance art is. Disband's performance uses songs, costumes, they try to move away from the actual formulas of art — they don't think of it as art, they think of it as fun... and also as being a political tool. They are feminist, and political, and they are worried about the

Left to right: Martha Wilson in 'Bartolucci'; Ingrid Sischy in 'Spirolina' and Ilona Granet in 'Bartolucci'.

environment and all this comes across in their songs. They usually write songs as a group, they work together. They rehearse together, but more importantly they have an idea of each other's identity. It is interesting that they like to call themselves girls... they still feel that they have the energy and the recklessness of the girl rather than the cool of the woman... On a political level one might say "What do you mean girl, surely it's woman". But they make us question what a woman's group is, also not to think of them as theatre, which it's quite likely people will do, because they're not theatre. What one should get from them is very high energy and a very good sense of fun... and a way of actually working in any space and making that space work for them, using very few props. They work as one, one ego, all the energy going into this one idea, this one band, which has five pieces, five different elements to it.

When I first saw them I was just amazed at how funky they were, how silly they were. But beyond that silliness their songs put across some very good political points. They seemed almost childish, but they made points about the nuclear bomb, the American male, women, women's situation, pollution, all those things, but in a way that it registered. For you don't resent being told these things because you are also enjoying their company... I don't think I know of any group quite like it in London. The nearest to it was probably punk groups. But also, music wise, you could say that they are close to groups in the Musicians Co-op, but on the other hand they don't use any instruments at all. They are very child like about it, they love using children's toys, brightly coloured umbrellas. It's like being a child again and watching a group of children playing charades and playing at being adults, that freshness. Their singing, too, is remarkable... They seem to be able to range their voices, the music is like folk songs and street songs, and then just by the use of the voice they change the pitch, improvise, gauging the sound and the pitch using their voices as instruments. Children can do that, it's something that adults have lost. It is very unusual to find five very sophisticated women who are able to do this.



Women who run galleries, publish, teach, who are very responsible in everyday life. That's another difference about America, people have all sorts of jobs and it doesn't interfere with their art, they continue their art as well as work, and no-one considers them unprofessional, it's just part of their lifestyle.

The film I am making using Disband's music is about my memories of New York. Things that made the most impression on me on my first trip, the trucks, how big they were, how menacing they were, yet how toylike. Also I remember an American guy saying that when he was in the cab of a truck it was like being in a woman's womb! And the other thing I remember is going to see Disband: I was so knocked out by them and the way they performed that the second time I went back to New York, I took my camera because I wanted to film. And these two elements were the most important, so much New York. These women manage to survive in New York because of their humour and their wit and their extraordinary toughness. Their capacity for life somehow manages to dominate the other aspects of New York. The film works on a juxtaposition between what we think is very macho — the film is called "Hey Mac!..." and these women who through their songs, and how they sing them, getting louder and louder manage to dominate the image. New York has that extraordinary raw energy. A folk energy, a naivety but at the same time very primitive... it's like an injection of energy — you have to be fast to survive. Disband will give such an injection here, hopefully. ■

"Perry Como"

Lick my honey pot
 Buzz my love spot
 Shuffle my four hot lips
 Kiss me sweetie
 You're as warm as an electric blanket
 I can tell you anything
 You're not shocked
 Soft as a sleeping bag
 Hug me
 Wrap me up
 Tweak my tits
 Take me someplace with palm trees
 © Martha Wilson, 1979

The Snatch Song

I'm a flamingo flirt
 I make other girls hurt
 I make little boys crazy
 I make big boys see hazy
 Hey bird dog... get away from my quail

I'm a flamingo flirt
 I play with matches and dirt
 My hair is like fire
 And I'm full of desire
 Hey bird dog... get away from my male

I'm a flamingo joy
 I'm an ex-tomboy
 I like putting through paces
 And the running of races
 Hey bird dog... you're destined to fail

I'm a flamingo greaser
 Crowd pleaser cock teaser
 Like parties at night
 And I love to pick fights
 Hey bird dog... I'll see you in jail

I'm a flamingo flasher
 Gate crasher nose basher
 A rare bird that sails
 Made of puppy-dog tails
 Hey bird dog... you look kind of pale

My name is Lov Storey
 I seek fame and glory
 I'm mostly glad and bad
 Hardly ever I'm sad
 Hey bird dog... get off my tail

I'm a flaming flirt
 I wear a slit in my skirt
 The fruit of my family tree
 The end of my family

© Martha Wilson 1979

i've been above the clouds.
 and i've been under the weather.
 i've been into trouble.
 and i've been out of luck.
 but i've never been anywhere...

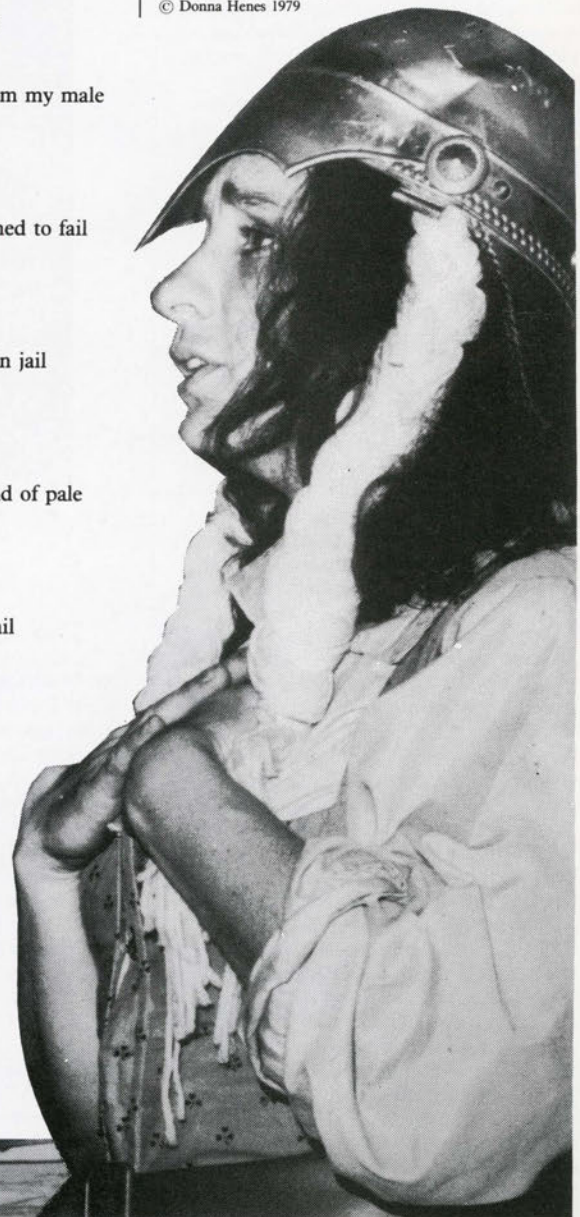
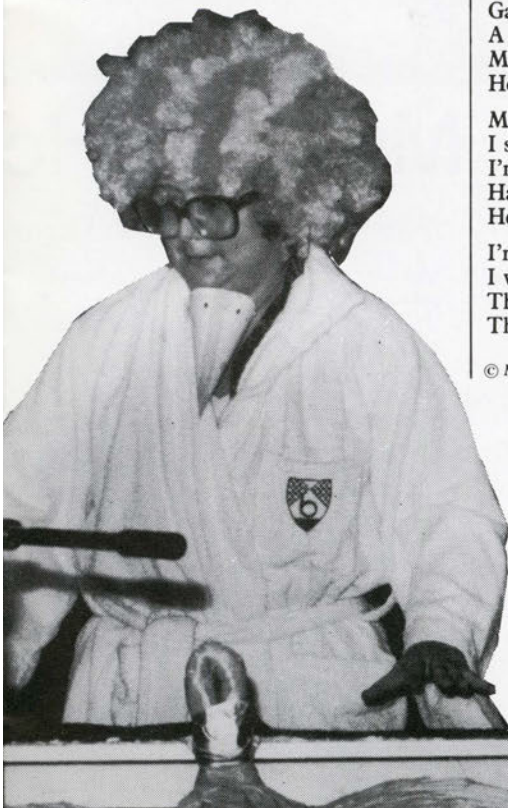
i've been above the law.
 and i've been under detention.
 i've been into revolution.
 and i've been out of small change.
 but i've never been anywhere...

i've been above suspicion.
 and i've been under observation.
 i've been into the closet.
 and i've been out of my mind.
 but i've never been anywhere...

i've been above reproach.
 and i've been under the illusion.
 i've been in too far.
 and i've been out of my way.
 but i've never been anywhere.

like new york city.

© Donna Henes 1979



Daile Kaplan

That directors and writers seldom happily share a bed with critics is well known. In the case of Lumiere & Son, the combination would seem more like the caging of mutually hostile species of animal.

The company's most recent production 'Slips', sumptuously costumed and designed by Wimbledon Theatre students, directed by Hilary Westlake and currently touring, received a dismissive, even derisive response in the daily newspapers. 'A free form and lazy minded show whose justification lies in its hectic artiness,' said Nicholas de Jongh in the Guardian. 'Anyone mean enough to demand ideas or meaning, let alone some thematic or emotional line, will search in vain through its aimless 90 minutes'. It was, he said 'stuffed with mysterious drivel'. Ned Chaillet's reaction in the Times was of 'head scratching bewilderment'. Only the Financial Times was generous while attempting a serious analysis of the piece, a surrealist Rake's progress involving a girl's psychological and sexual development.

Raising the subject with 'Slips' creator David Gale in the ICA theatre bar on the day the reviews appeared was rather like prodding him in a recently-inflicted wound. 'Water off a duck's back,' he said over an extremely large whisky. 'Which doesn't mean I'm not seething with rage.'

Nevertheless, David Gale and Hilary Westlake, whose creative partnership unleashed Lumiere & Son onto a shocked public some eight years ago, have had a wealth of opportunities to become progressively hardened to a negative press; testimony is a choice collection of cuttings dating from 1974. Then, the Financial Times described Gale's 'Jack... the Flames!', a heavily stylised and obsessive piece about a creature who is part giraffe, part bird and part woman as 'a cumulatively meaningless exercise for which the People Show (a palpable influence) should answer.'

The Scotsman's Edinburgh Fringe Festival reviews were a little more dour in 1974 than they are today. Even so Anthony Troon's comments on 'Trickster', based on a figure from: North American myth who pilfered bodily organs must have been among the most puritanically censorious of the day: 'Even Rabelais would have made an excuse and left. The group called Lumiere and Son have gone to considerable trouble to put together a piece of theatre that would have been better written on a lavatory wall.'

'Piffle!' said the Financial Times' same critic of 'White Men Dancing' (1975) while The Stage referred to 'Indications...' (1975) as 'nasty nonsense'. Of the same production the Guardian wrote '...still working the performance art joke, playing it as hard and messy as I have seen.' The following year 'Night Fall' enjoyed vituperation on no smaller scale: 'It's all a frightful waste of everyone's money and time' (The Stage) and 'Staggeringly witless and preposterously bad — what worries



Mutually Ho

The success of their Circus Lumiere has seen a major shift in rel-

ment is that trash like this gets a subsidy when I can think of several real writers living genuinely close to the breadline' (Michael Billington in the Guardian).

'The Sleeping Quarters of Sophia' (1975), 'Dogs' (1976), 'Passionate Positions' (1978) and 'Icing' (1978), all marked by spectacular imagery and minimal dialogue, attracted similar reactions. Yet in spite of the brickbats, and even though many of the public did remain bewildered by Lumiere & Son, they built up a steadily growing following.

Then, in 1979, a show was produced that, for the first time ever, generated practically universal acclaim. It was 'Circus Lumiere', devised by David Gale and Hilary Westlake with the company, a black humour circus that has by now achieved such fame that it scarcely needs introduction. At last, here were concepts the critics found easy to identify with, however much the disturbing and morbid

element of the other work remained present.

The public response to the Circus was phenomenal. Night after night the giant 300-seater tent was packed out. Crowds were turned away at the Edinburgh Festival 1980, and the feat was repeated last year. Now came the bouquets: 'The strongest group on the Fringe', proclaimed BBC's 'Kaleidoscope'. The circus was by now too popular to attract a bad word.

It is a success that has both delighted and frustrated the company. Delighted, because it brought fame and (relative) fortune, frustrated because promoters now always ask for the Circus and because it has overshadowed what Hilary Westlake and David Gale consider to be more serious work. Not that 'Circus Lumiere' was just a frivolous money-spinner; it was an acute and subversive comment on humour and the arts of clowning, magic and ventriloquism, the response to what David Gale



Slips

style Species

ations with the critics. Donald McLeod reassesses Lumiere and Son.

described as 'a distaste for the pitiful productions of professional clowns and for the clumsy and derivative streetwork of many neo-clowns of the early 70s clown renaissance.'

'Frankly, I'm rather tired of the Circus,' said Hilary Westlake, 'But we've become rather saddled with it. Slips is a step away, but we're still planning a Circus II.'

Both Hilary Westlake and David Gale consider the typically negative response of most mainstream theatre critics to be unfair and indictive of a blinkered vision of theatre and a form of self-protection rather than any genuine attempt to evaluate their work. '95 percent of criticism that we've ever had has been either benignly or malevolently descriptive or compares us with some other group they know of. Two or three critics have stepped beyond satire and into pure vitriol. Why? It's either because they feel they're being made a

monkey of (one critic actually said this!) or they fall into the 'it beats me' syndrome.

'When the monkey rears its jibbering head they revert to stereotypes. Avant-garde, for example, means being in the nude, running around saying 'fuck' and being incapable of constructing meaning.'

Both also believe that the 'alternative' press often fails to come to terms with what it reviews. 'Criticisms in 'Time Out', 'City Limits' or 'Performance' are often equally non-analytical in the other direction', said Hilary Westlake. 'We get bad reviews and as a result they go over the top in their support'.

The label of 'performance art' is still pinned on Lumiere & Son, most recently in a 'Time Out' article and much to their chagrin. 'It's quite inappropriate. But the critic who uses it is standing among cats and dogs, horses and cows. He looks over the fence and sees okapis and iguanas.

We're the okapi and he thinks we're an iguana — a complete misnomer.'

Undoubtedly Lumiere's work simply offends some critics' sensibilities, and if so then perhaps it has, within its own terms, succeeded. Some of the company's performances can be seen as gratuitous, such as the wrestling match between George Yiasoumi and Andy Wilson presented for Edinburgh Fringe audiences at the Fringe Club, in which tongues, penises, blood and guts were torn from one another in a frenzied bout (all were constructed from fresh butcher's meat, but realistic enough). Hilary Westlake refuses to admit this; although there is plenty of the macabre, the violent and the scatological, at its limits it becomes surreal rather than offensive.

David Gale is extremely sensitive to the suggestion he discerns in critics that his work is some kind of frivolous prank — not to accept that a writer working on a very moderate wage is serious about his work, he thinks, is derisive. He sees his writing as an examination of hidden and repressed energies within society, fears, obsessions, the nature of humour and why people behave in the way they do. Exaggeration and a deliberate distancing from naturalism are important devices.

'I have a loathing for naturalism — it's crippling the theatre. I blame Shakespeare. The country is besotted with him'. Hence the strange, alienating form of artificial, clipped language that characterises the dialogue of his characters. More often than not, they speak little more than short phrases, or at the other extreme characters will suddenly make very long statements that are as much as twenty times longer than anything they have said elsewhere. Other devices, such as excessive etiquette, puns and archaisms combine to eliminate naturalism. The greatest difficulty is thrown at the actor, who has to construct a stage 'character' within the confines of a concertedly unnaturalistic approach.

David Gale hopes people will learn to see Lumiere & Son's productions with a new vision. Instead of the logical, linear view which seeks conventional meaning, this vision is similar to the way in which we experience dreams. Hilary Westlake's direction is important in conveying this style of theatre; strong in visual imagery and using highly stylised, intricately choreographed movement, it aims to cut across what they see as the limiting intellectual parameters we take with us to the theatrical spectacle. Even its detractors or those who sought meaning at all costs could not easily deny that 'Slips', with its lavish set, complex lighting effects, poetic dialogue and Frank Millward's specially composed music created a vivid and arresting impression. Lumiere & Son are a group which have become established in a prominent position on the Fringe of British theatre, and will undoubtedly continue to stimulate, mystify and outrage both critics and public. This in spite of the scarcity of sympathetic comment from the critical establishment. ■



Andre Stitt

Andre Stitt talks to Lynn MacRitchie about art, politics and growing up in public.

LMcR: How on earth do you do street performance in Belfast?

AS: Its really hard! Reactions vary from pretty heavy to totally ignoring it. Funny things have happened with the cops and the Brits and stuff like that. I know it was getting heavy. I'd been doin things, walking down the street dressed like a Brit, stuff like that, and the army or the cops used to just automatically know who I was because its that small. "Aha, Mr Stitt!" they'd say... It was like every day was a continual performance, just living there day in day out, having to cope with the situation.

Things have changed quite a bit for me in the past year, getting to know London, getting to know people here... the work has become very different. Whenever I was in Ireland it was all very upfront, very aggressive. A lot of it had to do with the situation, based on it, about control. Then whenever I moved here it was like continuing, control. The situation with the government there. And over the past eight months I've been working on it. Then Tara started working on it with me, and we work together. The work now comes under the title *The Hebeephrenic*.

LMcR: What does that mean?

AS: I do quite a lot of correspondence, a lot of mail art. There's a guy in Portland, Oregon, called Dr A.L Ackerman, it was initially his idea about the Hebeephrenic. It helped me to get out of a situation where things were getting very very serious. The performance I did at the Co-op, "Dogs in Heat", was about how people are really fucked up. It was very autobiographical, about moving from Belfast to London, and everything that happened. It goes through a lot of stages, and at the end it becomes a Hebeephrenic thing, which means it looks inward, toward mental processes, things that happen inside, how you cope with the outside world and the private world and stuff like that... Its a schizophrenic condition, really, characterised by various things, silliness and delusion, hallucinations. For me, it meant that I could start working with things that had always been there, but hadn't got out before. Working with humour, comedy, like the latest performances we did in Belfast. They were really heavy, but you could just sit there and laugh your head off at them, they were really stupid. Ways that myself and Tara felt about various situations, very enjoyable but very strenuous....

I feel that a lot of performance is far too serious, and it was taking the piss out of our own performance, our own ideas, trying to break all that ice, get it out of the way. I just think there's an awful lot of shit gets in the way in performance, especially with an audience of arty farties who come along with a preconceived idea about what you are doing. You don't get any fucking reaction at all... That really annoys me, that. I think that the performance worked very well in Belfast because people weren't coming along with preconceived ideas.

LMcR: Where was the performance?

AS: We did two performances, one in The Crescent in Belfast, one in the Orchard Gallery in Derry. Everybody is very helpful there, they do everything for you. Here, you rush around trying to get everything fixed up and everyone is standing around trying to be very cool. And at the end you go and get cleaned up and then you've got to clean all your stuff up — there, they just did everything for you. The Orchard Gallery is incredible, that it should exist in a place like Derry. We've done various things there in the past year, publications, a series of posters, Declan McGonagle (sic) helps everybody. Just before we did the performance he had an exhibition of mentally handicapped paintings, had the kids coming into the gallery, people coming in and taking part.

LMcR: What was it like going back to work in Belfast?

AS: I hadn't done anything there for about a year, or I had done private things when I had been there. Even after doing so many performances there before, I was still scared shit, even working

inside, in a community centre.

LMcR: Is there a difference in content in your work in private and public situations?

AS: Yes, there's got to be, hasn't there? Things seem to work in series... I work on things privately, then that develops into a performance, ideas come together.

LMcR: About the work you've done in England, "Dogs in Heat" for instance...

AS: That was just after Brixton. The statement on the poster was from a black kid. I felt very strongly after the riots that something would happen... nothing did. But my work has changed a lot, it isn't as political as it used to be. Its more about inside than external things. I just got pissed off with things being that serious. And in the end it doesn't really matter because we're all very small within this society. It doesn't matter a shit what the fuck you do, you get trampled on.

I think most of the ideas going through my performance and a lot of other people's performances is the question of identity... what you are, what you are inside, what you are to the outside. And when people come in to see a performance, the way they feel about it as well. My work has a funny sort of politics to it now... things like the Hebeephrenic being red white and blue, the colours of the British Empire and crap like that. I use a lot of symbolism, personal symbolism but a kind I hope would work in a public context, that would mean something to people. I used to worry about putting over a particular point, I used to get mad if that point didn't get over. Now, I don't think that it matters, because each person takes what they want out of it. If you can twist it around a certain way, if you can upset them enough or make them laugh enough or do something to them, that's all right, that's what matters, if ever they can walk away with something in their heads that's different to what was there before, that they're not sure. A big problem is that people want to rationalise about things all the time. Say, even six months ago I could sit here and talk to you very easily but at the moment I can't because I just think that it's crap. I can say something tonight and it'll be bullshit and next week I'll think fuck it. You don't sum up your whole idea of life in two minutes and put it down on a page. I just think the older you get the more confused things get. When I was sixteen living on a housing estate in Belfast I knew who was who and who could do what to you and who to walk out of the way of and whatever. You knew where you stood. Things don't get any simpler, especially if you're banging away at it day in day out. People who get stuck in jobs, if they can get jobs, working at nothing, coming home and watching that (TV) all the time and all the bullshit that gives you. There's no awakening. You need something to fucking go BANG! But it's not easy. You have to really put something in to get something out.

LMcR: Do you think performance works like that? That if you push yourself far enough, if you are extreme enough in what you do, that people who saw you do it would have access to some sort of experience?

AS: Part of that is true, but I think that in this country the situation is getting so bad that nobody is going to be prepared to give a shit about it anymore. Everybody is looking after their own interests. There's certainly an element of pushing ourselves to an extreme in what me and Tara have been doing. I've never been so exhausted after doing a couple of performances... after Derry we were just wiped out, totally mental. But through doing the performances we had got really close. We understood each other. But we found it hard to articulate to people who were asking questions after the performance.

LMcR: Did you ask for questions?

AS: No, people just came up. It was mostly young people, which

Interview

was brilliant. In Derry, a load of punks came up and were going "Fuck!"... "Wow!"

LMcR: What else did they say?

AS: There was one punk girl who was saying that she had been working with mentally handicapped people and that was the closest she'd seen a sane person come to a mentally handicapped kid! Young people are more intelligent than a lot of people give them credit for... they see things really sharply. Getting stuck in a situation like Derry — could they get involved in work like that, could they step outside the situation — they just didn't know, they were sniggering and laughing about it. If you discuss certain things, like being mental or insane, or sex, they're just very funny about it. But at the same time I could see those kids stepping out of it in a few years time. That's the thing about Northern Ireland, people are more aggressive, young people will try anything that they think might help them to get out of it, or to try to understand themselves more. Performance is one of the things that has got reasonably strong there. A lot of kids are going to performances in The Crescent, not art students, just ordinary kids... you can feel their response. There's still a big hang up with Punk there.

LMcR: There's a lot of skinheads too.

AS: It seems to be an attitude against everything that's happening there. A lot of the kids are against the IRA, the UDA. The estate I grew up in, kids I went to school with got caught up in the UDA, got really brainwashed. I fucked it and went off. Because I went off, I was an outsider, a freak. When I went back, they were talking about what I was doing, wouldn't it be great to do that, but they can't get out of it, because the only way out of the UDA is BANG! And that's really sad. The kids deal with it by being aggressive to all authority.

LMcR: The Republicans talk about this in terms of problems of discipline, destroying the community. But maybe it's hard for kids to see the differences between all the sets of authorities which confront them.

AS: All the work I have done has been about identification. It's always been anti-authoritarian, definitely. I hate anything to do with authority, or a set policy for a set situation. But the work I do is 99% private, only 1% of it gets out. The 1% makes it worthwhile when it gets a reaction. Too many people here are worried about their image, about how they stand in other people's eyes. It's something I just don't care about... I do what I want to do. I have a lot of problems, breakdowns, but I do it and that's what matters. A lot of people just play around with performance, it's just something they do for a time... Any work that threatens the status quo threatens their security, like at art college — they tried to throw me out. The art scene is bad, it's dead, it reflects on everything. I think it reflects on Performance Magazine, it's not a magazine I'd buy. There just isn't anything of interest there, it's a format, too bland.

LMcR: Writing about things is just offering a point of view, part of the general effort that I assume we're all engaged in of trying to understand things. But because we're so conditioned that people become famous through being written about, people tend to exploit that — it's very unsatisfactory. To come back to what you were saying about the art world being quiet...

AS: No one will put their balls on the line. They're all worried about their money, about being cut. I've never had any money for anything, if I did get money, it barely covered the expenses. I'm on the dole. I'm trying my best to do things. Trying to set up performances. You send off so much and then you're sitting waiting and waiting and then you get this stupid letter, "We haven't any money at the moment..."

LMcR: The other aspect of this is professionalisation, that people assume they will get a certain amount of status and comfort from identifying with a particular area. If you say you are an artist then everything will be taken care of.

AS: Performance is the way that I've grown up in public. Learning about myself through it. There's a lot of things that are private. A lot that will never be shown to everybody.

LMcR: And the actions help you to progress with yourself?

AS: Yes they do, painting, photography, correspondence, they all help... I used to have aspirations for a big exhibition, but I just don't bother any more. When you see the idiots that do get exhibitions there's something wrong somewhere. Did you see that Conrad Atkinson exhibition at the ICA? There's something wrong somewhere. You could open any book in an alternative bookshop

and read everything he's done. The Pope is more political than that — it's ridiculous! It really annoys me, it's a waste of space.

LMcR: You mean it doesn't say anything? Or what it does say is too bland?

AS: Yes, it's just another person on their soapbox. Art should uplift people a bit, that doesn't do anything 'Brixton; who rules?' on a piece of corrugated iron! A live situation can uplift people. All the best artists do that. I love people like Vermeer... Shit, those little paintings... something that transcends...

LMcR: But this is the problem with art that is supposed to be political, isn't it.

AS: They kid themselves, they brainwash themselves.

LMcR: It seems to accept what it is, what everybody can already see is wrong, and just restates it.

AS: It doesn't offer any alternative, it's just a statement.

LMcR: I presume that's why it's relatively successful, because it doesn't challenge the status quo.

AS: I do things on a more personal level. I couldn't sit down with thirty people and discuss what I've been doing — that sort of statement is too general. A performance situation brings people closer. All the technicalities, whether people are seated or stand, it's a good medium to use but it's not a holy medium.

LMcR: (looking at photos) It looks as if you use a lot of personal symbolism, painted flesh, feathers, binding, cutting... I can see what it looks like, but I don't know how that relates to what you're trying to do.

AS: Those (photos) were studies for paintings. That was a private action, done in the back yard. Stuff about bondage, cutting yourself, bleeding.

LMcR: Why was that?

AS: A reaction towards what had been happening in Belfast, and the way I felt. I felt like shit. I felt like I was bound all the time, that I couldn't escape from anything. There's still an element of that in our work. We've been working with this band called the BMU's (sic). It initially came out of Cabaret Futura where we did the dead rabbit trick with the power drill. That was the first time we'd worked in a club situation.

LMcR: I'm very interested in performance done in places where people have actually gone to have a good time...

AS: We were one of the first. I met Richard Strange, he was using it to boost his reputation, his ego... The way we thought about it was, OK we'll give you Performance Art... That's what it was about. It was called Consumers Guide to Performance Art. We had loads of slides going, our own stuff, Muhl, Nitsch, Genesis P. Orridge, reading out things from "Annihilating Reality"... fetish things done in private, public performances, people drilling holes in their skulls. Then we got the rabbit out. Tara was playing the saxophone, we started ripping it apart... It was rubbish, nothing, that's what it was supposed to be. But people were going AH! It was a fucking dead rabbit, fuck it, it was just ridiculous... they were all standing there with wine glasses and all being really cool and whenever the rabbit came out they were really freaked out. I couldn't understand it — it was a laugh, a joke. We want to encapsulate people in a whole experience, sound, taste, smell, a lot of performers fall down by not exploiting those areas.

The first part of the Hebeephrenic Food for Thought series was done at Chats Palace with the band. Tara's mother was dying. She knew she had to go to Belfast. Her mother died the next day. Tara was psyched up to hell, I didn't want to do it because of that but she wanted to, it was more like her thing... At the end she had opened this tin of Tesco's spaghetti and was pouring it over my head and then the can just went bang bang bang and fucking cut the whole top of my head. I had to grab her and sit her down in a chair. Things like that look good to an audience but they couldn't possibly know what's really going on. It's the therapy, getting rid of tension. In the performance in Derry everything started to get smashed. It was a really small room and people were leaving, they were freaked out. One woman left in floods of tears. It had been arranged as a private view and was full of Nice People... During performances like that, I once knocked myself out for about thirty seconds... my body went on doing the actions, and it was like I had left my soul sitting on the floor. You learn a lot.

LMcR: What do you think audiences learn from them?

AS: Oh god that's a really horrible question... I don't know what

audiences learn from watching anything, films, TV, I think when they see something like the performance, something that they haven't seen before, they get freaked out but it also triggers something. It breaks the veil of everyday reality. Stops the motor drives, the nerves, or whatever. It's different for each person. You can't be rational about it. People always want to know why, why... Why can't they take it for what it is?

LMcR: I don't think there's anything wrong with wanting to know why. We're not allowed to do things just because we want to in this society, people are bound to be questioning...

AS: But there are people strong enough to do it. There's a guy like that in Derry, he has taken an ad in a local paper offering his services as an artist to do a performance in people's homes, or destroy the art in their houses for them — all those stupid book club pictures — in somewhere like Derry, can you imagine!.....

'The so-called civilised man has forgotten the trickster. He remembers him only figuratively and metaphorically, when irritated by his own ineptitude, he speaks of fate playing tricks on him or of things being bewitched. He never suspects that his own hidden and apparently harmless shadow has qualities whose dangerousness exceeds his wildest dreams.'

*Quoted in Introductory Notes, Andre Stitt, 1981.
re 'Akshun Man Trixter Cycle.'*



Feature



Bruce McLean and Harvey Mangold's Vidor Diodes in 'Sur le Plancher'

'Sur le Plancher'—or Up in the Air?

Phil Hyde asks some questions about the aesthetics of style.

There was ample opportunity to take in the setting for "Sur le Plancher".

Twenty minutes behind schedule, Riverside's F.O.H. manageress was still squeezing bums onto seats in what seemed an already full house. The spectators were proving an event in themselves. The assembled coterie of fellow artistes, scribes, parvenus and other aficionados had managed to create their own ambience on a par with a debutantes' ball. The eagerly awaited event was McLean's "adieu" before departing for a year's residency in West Berlin. The spectacle before them was a black baseboard, stretching the

full width of the auditorium and displaying a variety of precisely placed transistorised devices which gave the brick hangar of Studio One the appearance of a ghostly Currys Discount Warehouse. White string stretched across the board, allowing for the manipulation of the cling foil wrapped Brie to which it was attached. The image of white lines against the black area suggested a working drawing, in keeping with this work-in-progress which will contribute to the Berlin project, Ballet Fromage. The atmosphere of this minimal environment was unfortunately ruined by an embarrassed technician shuffling about setting the

amps to standby so that when McLean led on his collaborators, Harvey Mangold's Vidor Diodes, to commence the performance, it was clear that the golden rule of minimal work — absolutely everything is significant and must be considered as such — had gone out of the window.

The Diodes deport themselves in various crouching and lying positions and commence their marathon one chord bash on guitars and synthesiser. McLean begins an exposition from his vocabulary of gesture. Armed with an unidentifiable tin, he pays homage to his hero, Victor Mature,

(continued on page 18)

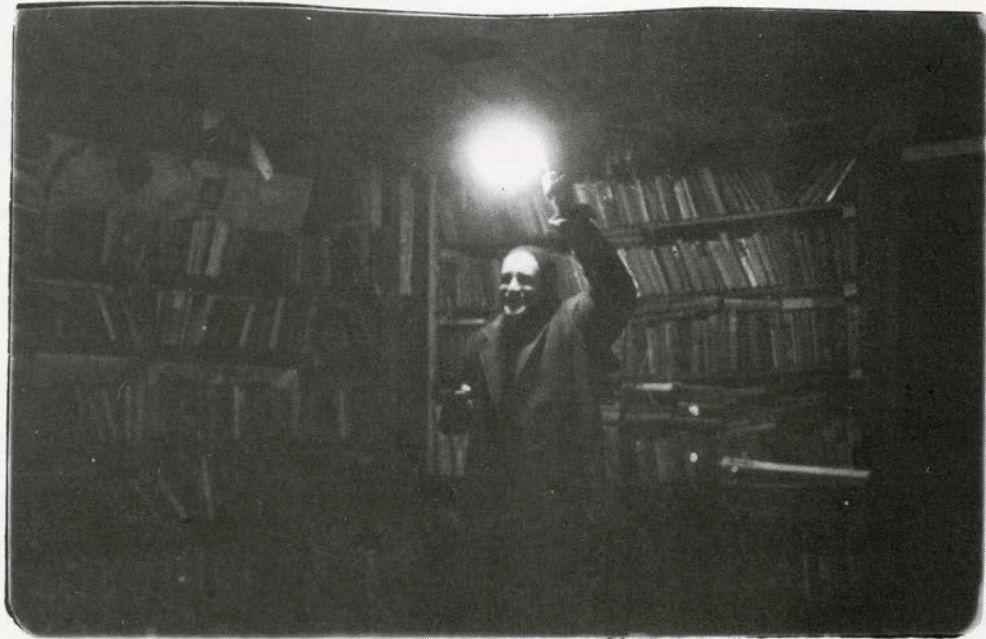
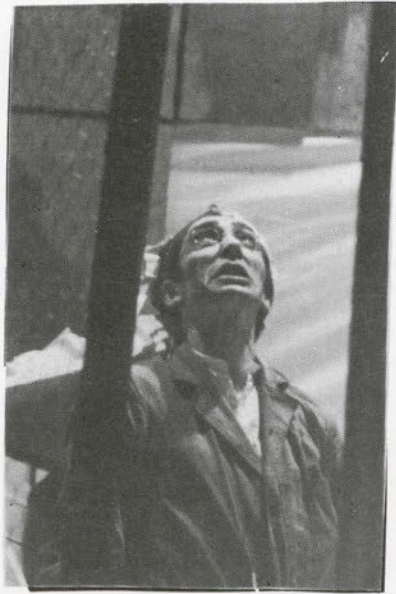


FORKBEARD

*The
Library
Ssshow*



FANTASY



THE LIBRARY SssHOW is one of those rare events, a 'spectacular' elaborately built for just three performances and never to be seen in London again. With their two tons of books the FORKBEARDS return from the South, joined this time by John Schofield of the Bristol-based Crystal Theatre. You can catch it at GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE, MILLARD BUILDING, Cormont Rd, Camberwell, London. 17th, 18th, 19th March 1982. Show starts 8.00pm. Tickets a mere £1.50 (Students £1.00)

Hope this is all right and printable. I know it seems a bit of an 'Advert' but I didn't want to write masses of bullshit about environmental theatre manifesting itself as a coherent lifestyle-environment theatre, not as the means of creating a world of make-believe, but as the provider of entertainment in another reality (recognize it?!) Be sure and print it and thanks. Tim Britton.

continued from page 15

although his twitchings and shruggings seem here to be a light-hearted exorcism of the piece of Bric strapped to his left shoulder. If his patron saint is St. Vitus, then his guardian angel is this hapless tech. who shuffles on again to activate a recorder which proceeds to describe a 1969 McLean dried up puddle sculpture, reminiscent of the Surrealists' joke about the bladeless knife with the handle missing.

Meanwhile the Diodes are discovering new ways to invert and suspend a chord while their vocalist has caught her second wind in her scripted invocation to nookie. It goes something like this...

Vocalist: "Mucho, macho!"

Bruce: "Mucho, puncho!" (Maestro cues artlessly scampering violinist)

Vocalist: "Leeks neapolitan, curried courgettes, spag. bowl with nookie!"

Bruce: "Si, si!"

Vocalist: "south sea cod with ratatouille and... nookie!"
...and so on.

Now for one Gary Chitty who has obviously sat at the foot of the master. After an inaudible spoken piece, despite the ministrations of yet another intrusive technician, his solo movement piece includes the identifiable McLean gesture based on a manic Egyptian discovering the cubit measurement for the first time. Young Chitty also possesses a nifty back kick of which Morecombe and Wise would be proud. A welcome surprise is the appearance of Sylvia Ziranek, the First Lady of Style, bedecked in the Ziranek national colours of shocking pink. A proper madam, she requires, and of course gets, a follow spot light. She invites the audience to "share a plate with the one you love" and despite this being an old routine of hers, the crash of crockery proves one of the more dynamic events of the evening.

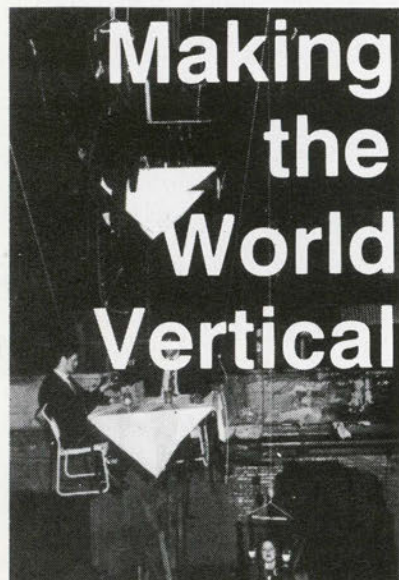
Guest appearances over, Bruce, Chitty and the violinist embark on an ensemble

movement which, in its three steps forward, two steps back routine, has the unfortunate appearance of a Silly Walk — unfortunate because popular absurdist television programmes rather tend to show up this form of art performance. The Diodes are still extracting maximum mileage from one chord and show the best coordination of the evening by finishing abruptly in unison. After the enthusiastic applause has finished, an onstage investigation proved the tin to contain appropriately enough, "Bohemienne Nicoise".

But bohemian he's not. McLean is sustained in his efforts by an art world whose abstruse concerns can easily overlook the scurrilous use of a minimalist language. Minimalism is neither movement nor style but a necessary language of expression that has been in constant development since the early part of this century. Its reduction of component elements to the "smallest possible" (Fowler's definition) is perhaps a reaction to an increasingly complex cultural pattern that is compounded by an increasing amount of international cultural exchanges. Amidst a surfeit of cultural riches that remain maverick and itinerant through the lack of a suitable time scale to allow for ingestion, minimalist attempts to conjure essence from reality by drawing right in together the terms of reference try to construct a rigorous art that communicates through what it rejects as much as what it leaves out. McLean certainly leaves a lot out. But his chosen language seems singularly inappropriate to discuss his declared topic of style. Minimal depiction is intrinsically unsuited to examine this merry stamping ground of 20th century culture since it lacks the richness necessary to examine a concept defined solely by its attributes. Fashion, deportment, environment — all engender style but encapsulating this element with scant reference to its adjuncts is akin to creating dried up puddle sculptures — a consistency of approach but a casuistic avoid-

ance of making a statement. It's a tricky concept to pin down. Perhaps the point of McLean's uninformative presentation is that popular culture has become a gilded vehicle of non-style due in part to the weekly revival of the styles of the last six decades by a capitalist media striving to get the last mileage out of the jaded old banger. Style is a vacuous joke. The redemptive sheen has tarnished, revealing a gross humanity, eager to sate appetite. The apposite form becomes the body and the slush and slop of its functions become the discursive material of examination. McLean's style is no more or less than his physical presence and the content his intentions for consumption.

Blethering and capering in the pursuit of grub and nookie, he strikes a chord with other English artists such as Adrian Henri and Jeff Nuttall. Waistlines aside, they share a notion that the pleasures of the flesh serve a valid, even fundamental, basis for creative work. Witness Henri's deft gouaches of plates of enticing salad, executed with a maximum of efficiency so that lunch could commence before the lettuce went limp. There's Nuttall's convincing opinion that "art is composition and pleasure its aim", drawing that composition from the manipulation of experience — "sex, food, clothing, odours, landscape, people — anything". Optimistically life affirming, both mould their sensual sensibilities into forms sustained by armatures of crisp, challenging thought. McLean however is a slight humourist whose live work receives acclaim ridiculously out of proportion to its actuality. But then it also offers distinctive elements of fun and pleasantly structured visuals. And as Brecht says, art "needs no other passport than fun... nothing needs less justification than pleasure." But then again, Brecht settled for the rigours of East Berlin and as this indulged envoy of a culture crazy for style and consumption settles in the affluent Western sector, he may care to take a trip through the Wall. It may provide food for thought. ■



Making the World Vertical

STATION HOUSE OPERA — AN APOLOGY

In the last issue of Performance Magazine there was an article about a recent performance by Station House Opera at Fulham Studios and the Waterloo Gallery called "Making the World Vertical" by Leslie M. Dick. Unfortunately, because of last-minute lack of space, a section was cut from this article which contained the only reference to the group's name, Station House Opera, giving an impression that was to say the least, confusing to most readers. Leslie M. Dick's name was also left out, though she appeared on the list of contributors. We apologise to Station House Opera and Leslie M. Dick for this, lack of time being our only excuse.

Music in Performance

Capital and Culture

A recent issue of *MEDIA, CULTURE AND SOCIETY* contains an article by Mike Hobart on the Political Economy of Bop, which is an analysis of the development of bop from the standpoint of Marx's theories of Capital. He gives a thorough description of the socio-economic history of the music industry of the time, how the means of production changed and how this affected the control that capital was able to exert over the forms of 'aesthetic production'. I welcome articles like this; I wish there were more, and that they covered wider areas. I would very much like to read what this writer would have to say about various aspects of the contemporary music scene such as the evolution of contemporary independent record labels, what he refers to as the 'esoteric British avant-garde' and other subjects close to my wallet, if not my heart. I don't feel able to write on such topics myself as I am subjectively involved as a worker engaged in aesthetic production of esoterica, but I do want to join in the debate and be able to comment on other people's writing. There are one or two points raised in Mike Hobart's piece that I want to comment on, not necessarily the most important points, but the ones that immediately occasioned a response (that is, the bits I could understand).

He discusses some of the causes by which jazz became isolated from its cultural base, that is, how an art form that is created out of the expression of the members of an oppressed proletariat can become developed to the point that the proletariat reject it. Hobart relates this to the domination of capital's control of the market, but I think there are other, more general factors. The 'proletariat' aren't obliged to accept the 'aesthetic product' fed them (us?) by the multinational conglomerates. The artist does not necessarily wilfully pursue the demands of insight and truth into obscurity, does not necessarily seek to alienate the public by assuming a position of intellectual elitism, a holier than thou attitude (venues I play at do, it is true, operate discount admission for the unwaged, but this does not imply that workers are banned from admission: I have never used physical force to restrain miners attempting to buy my records).

As ye seek, so shall ye find... We have all benefitted immeasurably by the various struggles of our forebears to secure for us access to information. I, for one, am not blasé about the Chartists' struggle to secure the concession (I nearly said right) to learn to read and write, and thereby give me access to Information and Ideas. Various sections of the British Labour movement have fought over the last

couple of hundred years to secure concessions and establish rights, and I am not prepared to sell their struggles down the river by not bloody well using the advantages afforded me by their efforts. I'm not sure what excuse other members of the proletariat are using. Of course, there's no such thing as a free lunch, and the Media and Education do function as propaganda for Capitalism, but it is not done with such proficiency that the conditioning is total and inescapable. Artists struggle to get at the kernel of their work, mediated through the particular discipline employed. In the development of bop, musicians addressed themselves to such questions as "why should I limit myself to one line of thematic development when other possibilities are immediately apparent" or "Why, if I feel and hear it otherwise, should rhythm not be more flexible, more accommodating than mere metronomic time keeping". When one starts to de-condition the self from imposed knowledge and starts to approach the actualities of any given subject, and gain through this effort, what, in relation to bop Mike Hobart calls "A magnificent musical achievement... won at enormous personal sacrifice", one does indeed run the risk of producing work that might possibly baffle someone who has not made some attempt to recognise the nature of the activity confronted. My intention is neither to denigrate the working classes, nor to argue against Mike Hobart's materialist analysis but to add another dimension.

Of course artists attempting to seize control of the means of production by pro-

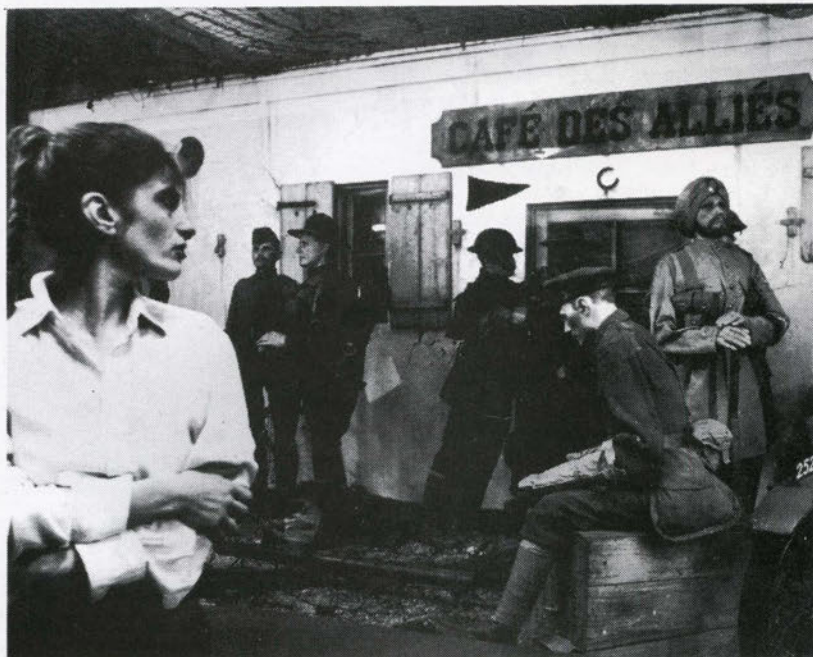
ducing their own product can be seen as a prerequisite of the emergence of proletarian art, or merely as an injection of 'petty capital' into the Capitalist equation, a form of low-budget or inefficient capitalism. Of course the product in actual terms — the performances, books, magazines, periodicals, records, cassettes and video tapes produced by the 'workers' themselves, because of the lack of capital and its resulting massive distribution, advertising, press coverage and general marketing, can be seen because of the public awareness shortfall between these things and the product of capitalist industry, to be esoteric, elitist and wilfully obscure. But can we really kid ourselves that this is really the case?

For if cultural workers attempt in any way to produce and market their own product (because of its non commercial nature) they run the risk of moving away from their class-base and becoming labelled petty capitalists or elitist, and therefore colluding with an oppressive system. However, if such efforts are seen as ideologically sound, then surely the 'proletariat' must also bear some responsibility for their own acceptance and consumption of the products served them by Capitalism.

Paul Burwell

Cafe Des Allies Centre Charles Peguy

For 8 days (Tues Feb 23 - Fri 26 & Tues 30 - Fri April 2) performance artists Hermine and David Medalla are organising the Cafe Des Allies at the Centre Charles Peguy,



Hermine at the Imperial War Museum

Leicester Square. The evenings of Music and Performance Art planned will touch on the First World War, and war poets such as Apollinaire and Verlaine.

Each evening will have specially scored music for flute, clarinet, 'cello and piano by Lawrence Hughes of 'A Popular History of Signs' and Hermine and David will each present a guest performer per night. The names of most of the participants will be familiar to readers of this magazine: performance artists Rose Garrard, Charlie Pig, Sonia Knox, Dave Stephens, Jules Baker, Rasheed Araeen, Steve Cripps, Alastair Snow, Roberta Kravitz and Filippo Daboli, film and video makers Tina Keane, Anna Thew and Wolfgang Ernst, dancers Anthony Latham, Marina Fornis, Anna Casas and the group Aegis, comics Keith Allen and Arnold Brown, musicians Richard Strange, Anne Bean and myself and Deborah Evans, the voice on the Flying Lizards singles, who will be reading war poems. Although there are many performance artists in England, there doesn't seem to be many places for them to show their work, and so this cabaret series functions as an unofficial festival of multimedia and performance work. The evenings all start at 8pm and admission is £2 an evening.

Paul Burwell

Good News

David Ilic, a regular contributor to this column and to City Limits, is now also editing LONG LOST PASSION, a free magazine produced by Cherry Red records, and available from various record shops. The first issue is obviously biased towards Cherry Red product, but contains several items of interest, notably an interview with Fred Frith and a piece by Kevin Coyne, plus some record reviews (not all of them about Cherry Red artists either). The second issue of COLLUSION magazine has recently appeared, and there are already changes apparent. The overall artwork and layout are improved and the variety of articles is greater, including articles on Indian Film music, Northern Soul, Gracie Fields (by Simon Frith) a well researched piece on the tie-up between Charles Manson, the California music scene, and the Beach Boys.

COLLUSION is an attempt to find a place in the 'commercial' market place for an uncompromising, aware music journal that fills in all the gaps left by the existing music press. The articles are written in such a way to be interesting to the general reader, and I can happily read both issues from cover to cover without being lost in obscurity, confused, bored or having my intelligence insulted. It has already established a solid reputation among musicians, artists and writers, but COLLUSION's aim is to combine this sort of underground credibility with wide distribution, breaking through the barrier that separates the non-commercial music and art publications and commercial viability. Cover price is a very

reasonable 80 pence, and it is available from the usual bookshops and also from some Newsagents — hopefully one day every newsagent.

Paul Burwell

Pressing Questions

The effectiveness of the British music press in covering the contemporary music scene as a whole is a question that has been raised for as long as the medium has existed. Certainly, the topic is a recurring one for both myself and Paul Burwell in the time that we have worked together on this publication. The music section of PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE is not so much an added luxury as a necessity. The column has given regular coverage to areas of so-called 'minority' music, mainly because these areas were not being covered by the established media.

In Britain we have a strong network of weekly music publications, of which the IPC-owned NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS and MELODY MAKER account for the largest share of the market. It would seem that neither of these advertise themselves as solely 'Rock' papers, thus opening themselves for a barrage of criticism that has, surprisingly failed to leave an imprint. Reading these papers week after week, it becomes increasingly apparent that both organs have a somewhat parasitic relationship with the established music business, coming across as little more than another arm of the trend-setting machinery on which the business so heavily relies.

The above would account for the existence of the Alternative/Specialised publications of which there are many (PERFORMANCE, COLLUSION, ZG, the shortly-to-re-emerge IMPETUS, the late MUSICS etc). I do not believe that these publications are fuelled by the work of egotrippers who have not made it on to the staff/contributors roster of the music weeklies; neither do they serve merely to present a different focus on music that is

already well known; rather they constitute an attempt to cover music that is already featured in papers such as NME or MM. This does not, however, deter the argument that there is a need for change in the scope and working ethics of the established reporting media.

Although their grievances are common to all areas of 'minority' music, the Improvising musicians have voiced particular worries regarding their relationship with the established media. Both Paul Burwell and myself had the pleasure of sitting in on two debates related to this topic; the first as part of a three day lecture/debate at the ICA (courtesy of the Arts Council of Great Britain) the second as part of last year's Actual Music Festival. Both were a shambles, the former reducing itself to an hour-long bickering session that had more to do with personal grievances than anything else; the latter not even leaving the starting post due to the non-appearance of invited guests from the media (I hasten to add that no writers from this publication were invited!)

The most worrying factor to emerge from the Arts Council debate was the apparent ignorance of some musicians as to the way that the reporting media worked, an underestimation of the problems faced by journalists wishing to cover Improvised music and seemingly no regard for the editorial/hierarchical structure of papers such as NME and MM. In view of this, plus the non-appearance of many writers who declined their invitations to this meeting, it is clear that we are no further forward in the aim to re-define the scope of the music press. It is also important to note that whilst the 'minority' musics remain largely detached from the music business (in terms of commercial marketing and promotion) the situation is likely to remain unchanged.

There is certainly evidence to suggest that the element of familiarity and the lure of advertising revenue play a large part in deciding whether coverage of left-field arts can be accommodated in the capitalist



press. For instance, it is largely due to the enthusiastic noises of David Bowie that the work of American composer Philip Glass has found its way into the pages of the music weeklies. However, it was with the series of 'Obscure' albums in the mid-1970's that the establishment organs achieved their grand-slam. Whilst this series included such avant-garde notables as improviser David Toop and the post-John Cage composers Gavin Bryars and John White, the reviews focussed more on the series' collator Brian Eno, a person well known to the rock music community who had the distinction of receiving regular coverage by the music press. His patronage gave the series an artificial and overblown sense of importance that would virtually guarantee its review. But if this was not enough reason to take notice, then there was also the possibility of supportive advertising, the albums being marketed through a well known record company with a sizeable promotion budget. This argument holds water when you consider that several of the 'Obscure' label artists continue to perform and record but, surprisingly, no longer warrant comment now that both Eno's involvement and the patronage of a major record company is a thing of the past.

Given that the music business holds sway with the music press, would it then be right to expect participants in the artistic left-field to play the game by the rules of the establishment, that is to adopt a more business-like approach? Certainly, in the realms of Improvised music, this is neither practical nor (in many cases) desirable. In order to have any chance of performing or recording, improvising musicians have had to alienate themselves from the tried and tested means of promotion/distribution which, over a decade ago, were deemed to be unsuitable. Working away from these institutions to which the press relates is certainly no way of getting reportage from these organs. Admittedly the establishment press went overboard in their coverage of the independent boom that hit rock music during the Punk explosion. However the few independent flag-bearers that hang on to press credibility have, to a certain extent, become absorbed into the music business, working within the accepted lines of communication.

Thus to attack certain individuals in the established music press is to miss the target by a mile. The key to the problem lies within the rules and structure of the establishment as a whole. The music weeklies and the music business will continue to cater for their own survival in the capitalist market, journalists will continue to conform as one of the dictates for getting regular work, whilst 'minority' musics will continue to dominate the Alternative media whose reliance and impact on the marketplace is considerably less. Only when that structure is changed can there be any hope of the music weeklies becoming accountable to the music scene as a whole.

David Ilic

ReviewsReviews

London Opera Factory Drill Hall

It is many a moon since the likes of Lord Harewood ventured along Chenies Street to that most stalwart of fringe venues known for years as Action Space. But times have changed and, refurbished, reopened and renamed, The Drill Hall, has rapidly staked its claim as London's most interesting performance place. With a spacious, convivial bar, a large reasonably comfortable auditorium, and a café with prices that rival those of the ICA in their outrageousness, The Drill Hall sold out for their opening run of Pack of Women, and then opened their doors to a season of opera, no less. It was this that brought Harewood and his fellows up from St Martin's Lane.

Indeed it was in part Harewood, and his adventurous team at the English National Opera, who backed the founding of the London Opera Factory whose whizz-kid director, David Freeman, had already been let loose on the stage of the Coliseum itself. The amount of money that Freeman has had to launch his Opera Factory in London (following his founding of such ventures abroad) may be peanuts when compared to the sums spent at the Coliseum and Covent Garden, but here none the less is one of the big four national companies encouraging a little-known director to promote 'difficult' works in a fringe venue. Would that we might one day see Sir Peter Hall follow this lead and foster events at Theatrespace or The Oval.

Having said all this, the fact cannot be escaped that David Freeman has scarcely shown himself to be worth of all the fuss that he has attracted. His production of 'The Beggars Opera', in which he also took the central role of Macheath, was as crude in its artistic accomplishment as it was sexist and exploitative in its gratuitous use of female nudity in its punk fucking sequences. Happily, later performances of this embarrassing spectacle were replaced by extra performances of the other opera in the season, Harrison Birtwistle's 'Punch and Judy'. Commissioned for the 1968 Aldeburgh Festival this work has not been staged in Britain since. It was a recording under David Atherton that recently brought awareness of it status as a major piece of music theatre and this production, tiresome as much of it was visually, confirmed its worth. Layout and acoustics made for unsolved problems of balance, but The Endymion Ensemble conducted by Howard Williams, played this rich and wonderful score for all it was worth and the singing, if not the acting, was up to the highest standards. In Omar Ebrahim, who took on the role of Punch, the London Opera Factory has found a star performer.

If we hear no more of the Opera Factory we will hear more of him, and surely soon see another production of what must now be established as one of the few post-war operas destined to become a classic.

Luke Dixon

The World of Gilbert And George The Tate Gallery

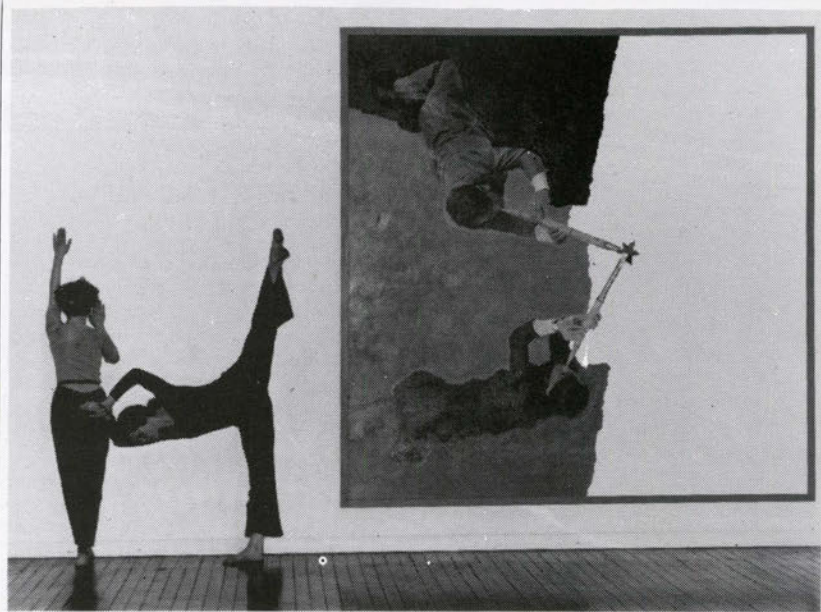
Gilbert and George have been making exhibitions of themselves since 1969. Their lives and art, as presented in their written, drawn and live works, are tautologically of their Lives and Art. Now there's the Film of the Lives. The ACGF have sponsored G & G in the making of an hour long film of their world and it proves to be a unique experience. Straightforward techniques of cutting and panning have made a film that presents images and events that can be found in several of their other pieces. It expounds the catalogue of their interests: themselves, East End lads, their house in Fournier St., militarism and views of London landmarks. The content is barely discernible, tucked away as it is in a scrap book of leisure activities and hobby-like pursuits. But the film gives what their other media can't — mood, character and other faint clues that are invaluable for making a broad evaluation.

An early written piece such as 'To be with Art is all we ask' (1970) showed either a lack of any subject to be addressed, preferring instead to offer poetic ruminations to a Muse-like Art, or a concern to establish a stylish and unique vehicle for themselves. Either way, content has come from behind and is now lying neck and neck with form although the aim of this race is still wide open. There are fears that the racetrack has a pronounced curve to the Right. The film shows images of Church, Army and State, repositories of English power, a fascination that survives claustrophobia through G & G's ability to distance themselves from their subject through the use of the media. This a world of men's interests and doings, where the music is 'Jerusalem', the tread of army boots and the tap of a drum. There are no women here, for G & G seem drawn by the seductive power of strong men and the fractured charm of male youth. Interviews with East End lads become sensual portraits with the camera lens revealing the physical individuality of each and underlining the drab lives and stunted personalities. An empathy emerges between the interviewed and the interviewers. Both tolerate impoverished worlds to achieve a vacuous survival sustained by alcohol and vicarious events. But whereas the lads get down the pub and pull the birds, G & G have more style — they stew in wine bars and afterwards share a primal scream or two.

There is no work in this world, either. There is only the pleasure of consumption and the indulgence of emotion. As like curing like, the glimpsed views of cool church towers expurge protestant commandments that work is necessary and the freedom of leisure evil, since the restoration of gratuitous choice to the individual erodes the power of hierarchical domination. Instead, they keep house as gentlemen, aloof in their Fournier St. retreat. Watching and waiting, they sustain ephemeral roles as poets and piss-artists. With lean sensuality, they show light falling through the window, fruit in a basket and pleasantly eccentric chairs. From their dry oasis, they reach out and register their surroundings — dismal towering warehouses with broken windows, divided by empty streets and dark alleys. The urban heart is running down. Into the quietude of this broken, rotting city come images of blossoming twigs, flowers in bloom and scudding clouds — a vitalistic suspicion of a living world and an irresistible force. Embued with a life that requires living and an existence underpinned by leisure, G & G become lifestyle castaways. But they have neither the materialist's 'dignity of work' to justify their lives nor the playboy's abandonment to squandered time. They have only Art to sustain themselves in their examination of their surroundings, thoughts and actions.

In this art of Art as Existence, G & G touch on existentialist tradition, in particular Heidegger's requirement that one accepts one's facticity in order to achieve an authentic existence. They are seen reciting a litany of their qualities — 'We are arrogant, pleasant, revolting, agreeable...'. They accept themselves since they have nothing else. They present their locale because they can see no further. They empathise with their neighbours because their introverted examination of themselves leads them full circle. But the great weakness is that they have become trapped in a collective way of sentimentality, tourist images and crude political fervour. Wicked humour acts as a shrewd defence. False trails are laid for others to fulfil their projections. Studiedly mannered, naturally shy, they exploit the lazy vice of ambiguity so as to neatly insure themselves against antagonistic and principled accusations. Asked by Anne Seymour in 1970 if they attempted to bring the spectator around to their point of view, they replied 'We think to make up our minds either way would be a mistake really.'

In the final scenes of a fascinating film revelation, as the boot boys mock wrestle and a naked youth extends into a crucifix before a flag of St George, one can sense which way the wind is blowing and after all, there's no smoke without fire. One wonders at the outcome of embers fanned by the wind of change. **Phil Hyde**



Accident

Fruit Market Gallery Edinburgh

Kedzie Penfield and Katy Roulaud have now presented two programmes of dance improvisation in exhibition setting. 'Accident' was put on within the exhibition by Ger van Elk. It was odd and impressive, partly because the dancers did more than the artist. Van Elk has said 'Nowadays an artist is most often a person who does tricks and entertains a small audience in a special way. I find it important to develop the typical European art direction we are now working in. A little, sensitive, highly individual art'. And he does tricks with life-size photographs, painting hills for them to hide their faces in and hanging rococo photographed cherubs on the wall.

The performers, although Katy is French, are working in an American dance tradition. They don't do tricks but work with the pictures, the implications in the pictures and with each other. Kedzie is long, can be extended in all directions and informs even the most relaxed movements with simmering energy. Katy is small, wiry and able to flash the gallery public a happy, confidential grin while holding a wide and fragile balance. The contrast adds piquancy to the good understanding between the two.

The piece had two sections and took about an hour each day. Gregor Robertson had made a sound tape, collaging natural sound, familiarly ominous broadcast material and music. Some of the latter was recorded locally, giving us a gruesome little Scots skipping-rhyme and a Vietnamese song from a boatchild. John Bainbridge, working with a tape and two floodlights, was a third performer, taking cues from the dancers with such subtlety that I never noticed him the first time round.

I arrived as a punter and came back to write about the piece because we had such fun. 'We' in fact decided we were an

audience and clapped at the end. The beginning is quiet, with little movement, Katy in bandages and foetal position, rather horrible but getting just glances from people diving into the salad bar for lunch. By the end the dancers are using the entire space for runs and lifts (one section is like jousting) and people have sat themselves down to watch.

In between the most exciting section is on a wall beside a huge picture of two men seen from above. It's great. The performers turn the whole perspective of the room round and then settle it softly back again. There are also passages with bandage and red tape and the Giant Pair of Trousers. The images are certainly from Van Elk, but where the exhibition distances with its cool jokiness the performance is absorbing and involving. Another piquancy of contrasts. **Fay Prendergast**

Penguin Ponk Oval House

Set: white and black — bath with white frame; black diving board. Patti Bee changing from constricted penguin to wet suited aquatic fan — penguin as metaphor for stuffed shirt — discovery of a pressed suit underneath House for Sale board — Roger Ely as Ming vase (short back 'n' sides and polish) — Ian Hinchcliffe in drag with tea cosy wig/hat — Roger on ladder eulogising penguin oil — Ian with plastic bag over head — duck as bananas fly — in stentorian, Etonian tones, 'A banana is not a lady's executive toy!' — a drily attentive Simon Coxhill standing in for Dad — bad show him not turning up, incidentally, where was Nuttall? — large tongs heave enormous ice blocks into view — The Ice Man Cometh, ho, ho, — watch those pincers, squire, could be nasty — water everywhere — stairs, floor, ceiling even — Patti attempts 100 metres freestyle in bath tub — actress? — reckon so, all fur coat

and no sea boots — worry about flying bricks and that ball — pain hammer looks a bit deadly — placate with nervous grin and lap up show — good the way he gets the most out of himself and the others — subtly takes the wind out of them as well, you notice — and it all ties together — eg 1. rotten tomatoes cascade into bath, 2. crushed by manic activity, 3. Hey Presto, an HP sauce bottle is rescued from the depths to 4. complete the collection on the mantelpiece. Great stuff! Matchbox Purveyors present a classic demonstration of simultaneity in performance, emphasising primarily aesthetic and formal and conjunctions in the 'poor' idiom as a means of approaching and revealing personalised and emotionalised content. Blah — penguin talk!

Phil Hyde

Jattol Jacksons Lane

'We regret to inform you that tonight the part of the Elder of the Village will be played by a Rubber Penguin.' So starts the latest performance by the Japanese American Toy Theatre of London, or Jattol, as it is inscribed, like some arcane consumer product, across a miniature stage hung about with flying cupids, hanging doves and the like. Jattol is a bizarre cross-cultural exploration enjoyed by Kazuko Hokhi, from Tokyo and 'Giblet' (Andrew Brenner), a young American who 'like delicate kitsch and the world where objects and human beings are given equal emphasis!'

Jattol were first seen at the London Musicians Collective/Film Co-op mid-winter 'beach party' where their 'Love Stories From The Sea' explored Love beyond Dimension, Gender, Limbs, Dancing and Evolution as enacted by a host of extremely lurid toys. The star of the show was an Octopus who became a Performance artist, (chopping off her limbs one by one) and such excursions through the trials of modern stylish living were undertaken by a pair of Fashionable Sharks, played by inflatable aeroplanes

who go disco dancing downtown.

This would seem like extremely indulgent whimsy were it not for the way in which Kazuko Hokhi by her naively ironic narration, manages to not only gently parody her own culture, but at the same time satirise our own clichés and expectations about far-eastern life styles. The Japanese culture, by seemingly blindly accepting US cultural colonialism is in fact annexing the more extreme consumerist values and turning them inside out in an honest way. By innocently accepting a culture at its total face value, its absurdity is exposed.

This innocence is reflected in Jattol's desire to use a world of imagination in which 'people are confused as to whether they are expected to be adults or children and excited by that confusion'. Their latest performance, 'The Magnificent Seven Samurai' continues that confusion. The 'story' starts in a peaceful village (loud Japanese Pop Music) where lots of pop-up toasters are making toast, (miniaturised of course), using mini Hovis loaves) around a large cherubic doll. Suddenly the bosky charm of the breakfast automata is broken by the arrival of bandits (Hokhi and Giblet brandishing those Fashionable Sharks, the airplanes from the last show). What is to be done? Go to the Big City and hire some Samurai of course! In the Big City the Samurai are hanging out relaxing in the OK Bar disco-dancing and singing 'be-bop ditties — It takes a lot of practice, with a sword, With all those battles, you don't get bored.' Once installed, by means of a credit card, in the peaceful village, the Samurai, (brightly coloured plastic athletes doing clockwork push-ups on a bar) are not popular with the doll's father, who happens to be a bright orange rubber lobster. He says 'All those Samurai are after only one thing.... they mess up our Stereo.' He starts to get suspicious when he finds the doll is 'learning New Dance'. The bandits arrive, the Samurai sort them out, the village cheque bounces 'I always thought Peaceful Village only pass good cheque', there is much chaos and confusion amongst the toys, but finally the

harvest comes (pop-up toasters spring up) and the Peaceful Village goes back to its peaceful rural pastime of... manufacturing Dinosaur Erasers (For Export).

Jattol's influences are from a combination of Hollywood musicals and Japanese traditional puppet theatre — as well as Joseph Cornell who they regard as 'a grandfather of delicate pop art'. Their deliberately ludicrous anthropomorphizing of injection-moulded playware is a magnificently inverse celebration of a world where the actions of products attain more symbolic significance than human actions.

Rob La Frenais

Mantis Bluecoat, Liverpool

Mantis is an impressive company. Excellent dancers, polished performance, varied programme — a small scale company of a standard that has nothing small about it. Full of quality from the lighting to the choreography, with a programme that is accessible and enjoyable. Nothing very startlingly new, rather good solid stuff that would look at home in a London Contemporary Dance programme.

The audience entered to see the dancers warming up in class, which got the evening off to a relaxed, informal start. Micha Bergese, who founded the company a couple of years ago after his departure from London Contemporary Dance with whom he was a soloist and Associate Choreographer, ended the class and then whilst the dancers changed gave a lucid introduction to the programme, providing an insight into the choreographic ideas behind the dances. Then lights up, the informality disappeared and off we went to a zappy start.

'Encore' is a crisply precise piece. Steve Reich's 'Clapping Music' sets up rhythms that are exactly reflected by the two dancers (Gurmit Hukam and Paul Clayden). The claps in the score translate into jumps and turns in the dance. Almost like a children's game, the dance has the white dressed, black striped dancers face each other, turn sharply away, and back again, line up, stand side by side and all the time its jump, jump, jump. Stiff-legged, legs slightly apart, the two jump up and down, their bare feet slapping the rhythms out on the floor. Then its off into big leaps diagonally across the space and then back to jumping. It ends exactly where it began, with the two standing side by side at the back, their movements having begun in unison, move away through gradual alterations in timing, then come back together.

After the dynamism of 'Encore' came 'Some Dance and Some Duet' in which the dancers do precisely as the title says, dance and sometimes duet, to Stravinsky's 'Pastorale' in what I found a fairly uninteresting way. It was one of those pieces that I feel are standard contemporary works, nothing very innovative, quite pretty to watch, almost illustrative of the

continued on page 28

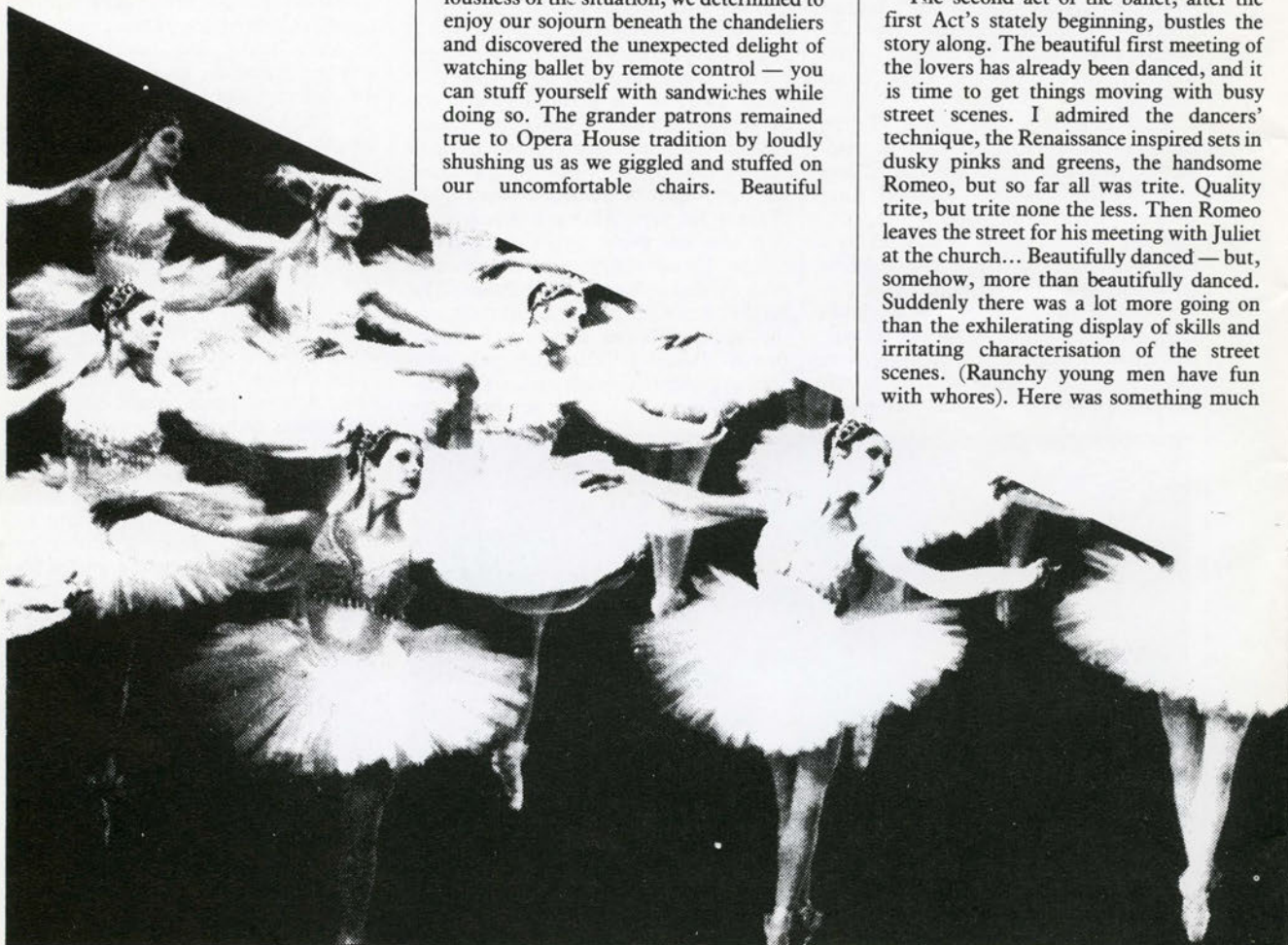


True Romance — Sex

Night Out

In a true spirit of democracy, Performance Magazine launches this issue its long awaited new feature, Night Out. This slot was originally thought of as a place to take care of the new club and cabaret boom, to ensure that work in these evanescent and at present flourishing venues be given an eye, and that weary correspondents tired from the Tate or the Fringe could have a chance of some relaxation. For this is the area where the boundaries of performance really start to crack — and just to ensure that the process continues apace we'd like to invite contributions for the slot from anyone who values the age old concept of the good night out.... be it a cabaret, dancing, theatre, nightclub, disco, rollerdisco, bingo, a stroll in the park or a pint in the pub. Had a good works outing lately? — Tell us about it... Got lucky at the horses? We want to know... For in 1981, the notion of performance as truly an art for all began to be established — So make sure you don't miss out — and tell us all about it.....

That said, our first contributor found her recent Most Memorable Performance Experience in the perhaps unlikely surroundings of that home of the Highest of the High culture, Covent Garden.....



Romeo and Juliet' may not seem like the most obviously appealing night out in this winter of discontent, but it was certainly packing them in at Covent Garden not so long ago, just as 'Swan Lake', and 'Manon' from the present repertoire are inevitably doing at this moment. A Saturday night impulse had plunged myself and companion into the well-heeled crowd, pound notes clutched firmly as we scanned the late arrivals for someone with a ticket to sell (performances are sold out months in advance...) Some minutes later, bearing the last two standing-room tickets, we made for the stalls door, only to find it barred. House Rules — no entry to the auditorium an inaudible number of minutes before curtain-up. Arguments and loss of temper having no effect (and, after all, its not the attendants who make the rules) it was up the stairs to the circle bar, where with the other disgruntled punters — for not even the very rich it seems can enter box or circle after the charmed minute has struck, we took our seats on the rows of gilt chairs which circled a grainy black and white video monitor. Small figures could be dimly seen flitting to and fro somewhere far, far away and grand music could be heard faintly, as if through many bathroom doors. Resigning ourselves to the ridiculousness of the situation, we determined to enjoy our sojourn beneath the chandeliers and discovered the unexpected delight of watching ballet by remote control — you can stuff yourself with sandwiches while doing so. The grander patrons remained true to Opera House tradition by loudly shushing us as we giggled and stuffed on our uncomfortable chairs. Beautiful

though the First Act of 'Romeo & Juliet' is, under those circumstances it was quite put in the shade by the curious performance taking place all around us. A young couple in front drank Bucks Fizz and looked tense, a family grouped and stared in silence, numerous persons in jewels and expensive shoes sat trying to look as if they had made it to their boxes after all... Best of all though was the performance of one of the bar men, who circled the area depositing discreetly labelled bottles of wine and champagne in various hidey-holes next to the bust of someone or other, next to the video monitor, even under the balcony stair for those patrons sussed and rich enough to pay to make a soignée impression. So snotty were our neighbours that although they drank, we were the only ones to broach the sandwiches before curtain-fall. As we scrambled down the grand staircase in the interval to fight for a place in the stalls, I little thought just what an emotional battering I was in for. Physical battering too I certainly did not expect. On crutches after a recent leg injury I was shocked to find myself literally pushed out of the way by one of my fellow standers, who after lights out and curtain-up proceeded to edge me further and further along the rail from which we were both contriving to gain some support.

The second act of the ballet, after the first Act's stately beginning, bustles the story along. The beautiful first meeting of the lovers has already been danced, and it is time to get things moving with busy street scenes. I admired the dancers' technique, the Renaissance inspired sets in dusky pinks and greens, the handsome Romeo, but so far all was trite. Quality trite, but trite none the less. Then Romeo leaves the street for his meeting with Juliet at the church... Beautifully danced — but, somehow, more than beautifully danced. Suddenly there was a lot more going on than the exhilarating display of skills and irritating characterisation of the street scenes. (Raunchy young men have fun with whores). Here was something much

and Death at Covent Garden

more compelling. I began to feel my attention fixing, deepening — and then it was back to the street for the fatal fight. I lost interest in my own fight with my pushy neighbour and sat down on a step behind a large pillar to spend the last of the act following the music.

Another interval and, oh bliss, a seat, and then Act Three. Straight to the point, it opens in Juliet's bedroom, and the dancing of the post-coital love duet begins. How extraordinarily beautiful it was.... Not just the young people who danced that evening, lovely though they were, not just their evident skill, their consummate training and grace. There was more, much more in that twining and lifting, embracing and clutching, falling back and letting go. A veritable picturing of hetero-sex, extraordinarily clearly described through movement, positioning, relation of one body to another in the most disciplined possible way which yet managed to suggest so successfully those depths of undiscipline of passion. The giving, leaning, supporting and circumnavigation of these two bodies one to another in a gorgeous dependence, like the basic ingredients of the best sex itself.... I was stunned. I had been prepared, had noticed before the ineffable vulgarity of the rich and so-called cultured, was quite prepared to storm this citadel where men can look at women's legs and other men's bums and call it art... So I certainly hadn't expected to find myself rooted to the spot, eyes following every movement as the two dancers worked through their complex duets, unwilling to miss a second of their steps and lifts and rolls. I didn't expect to find gut-wrenching sobs which needed strong teeth on my handkerchief to prevent embarrassment. I didn't expect to feel as if I had witnessed something truly moving, expert and profound. And all expressed in a wordless combination of music and movement which I had expected to find opaque and instead found brilliantly illuminating.

For in Covent Garden and places like it, a ritual of behaviour has been erected — tickets, places, servants, intervals, drinks, conversations, high prices — which protects the audience from the content of what it actually sees. And appreciation of the dancers as stars, or technicians with specific gifts to be watched out for prevents the meaning of what they struggle to convey from making the impact which it should... for the trouble with what is

identified as bourgeois art is that no-one bothers to analyse its content. It is indeed a cliché to say that bourgeois art upholds the superstructure — but it is endlessly illuminating to see just how this is done. Covent Garden, The National Theatre, the Coliseum are the grand venues for a display of culture which keeps us on our knees but could get us on our toes.

For the great ballets presented there, the great tragedies of drama, are filled as much with 'all human life' as the trashiest Sunday papers. Sex is an inevitable and powerful part of their appeal. And they make sure, too, always to neatly present sexual passion as inevitably linked to death. There is no sustaining desire beyond its first consummation in such classic works, and in that first consummation the seeds of destruction have already been sewn.

There are social questions to be addressed here of course, but perhaps most important is the one that is never really spoken and yet provides a major motor force for spectacles such as these. The very nature of love itself, which in this ballet, these two dancers seemed to convey with such unerring exactitude as they lifted and tossed, lay, rolled, glanced and clung. A metaphor of movement which seemed to include every possible emotion in a language at once highly stylised and remarkably direct. There was something incredibly moving about it all, and as the lifts and graspings which had characterised the love duet were hideously coda'ed in the death scene, I found myself not just dabbing my eyes politely but actually sobbing as the tragedy rolled on to its terrible climax, my class and sex-based judgements suspended in an emotional reaction which left me exhausted.

That mute movement seemed the perfect way to tackle the awful inevitability which seems to be the accompaniment of passion. The frightful way that movements, decisions, actions cease to be freely undertaken but lurch out into the light of day unbidden but none the less inevitable. The lovers meet, they stand stock still, transfixed... The town is full of life, hustle and bustle, but the lovers have no movement except that which will bring them into embrace. Their movements thereafter are entirely circumnavigated by the reach of the other, the gentle rise and fall or hasty lift and embrace of a meeting in which the animal nature of the sexuality is very clear to see beneath the glittering web of human sentiment which here momentarily overlays it. Where aspiration and reality can be one, however briefly, and beauty, truth and honour seem to couch inside a kiss. For here indeed was movement more expressive than words. From the world of pushy rich people and silly conversations, we were transported to a world where passion is made visible through the trained

muscles of a woman's strong leg, the coached tenderness of a man's embrace. Heterosexuality presented as passion and the epitome of love, with death the only escape when reality proves an unbearable compromise and the ideal is an integrity ever shattered by the reality of the physicality of passion.

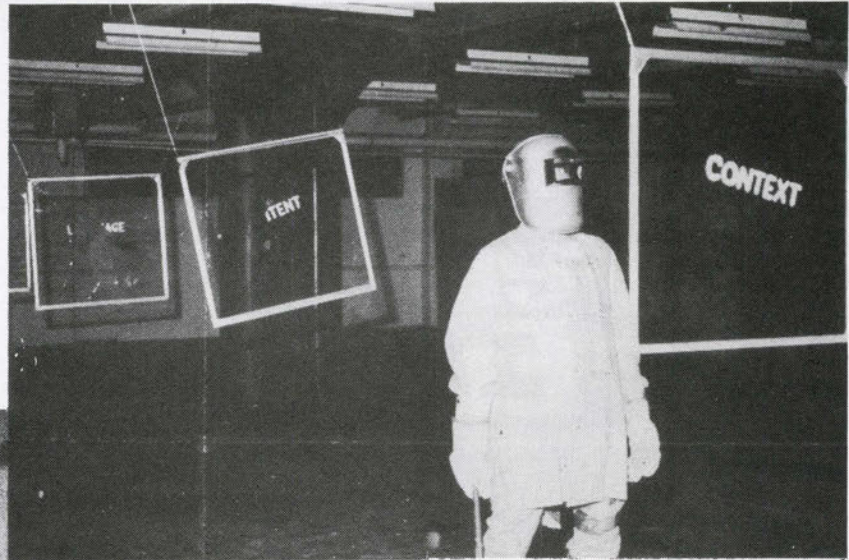
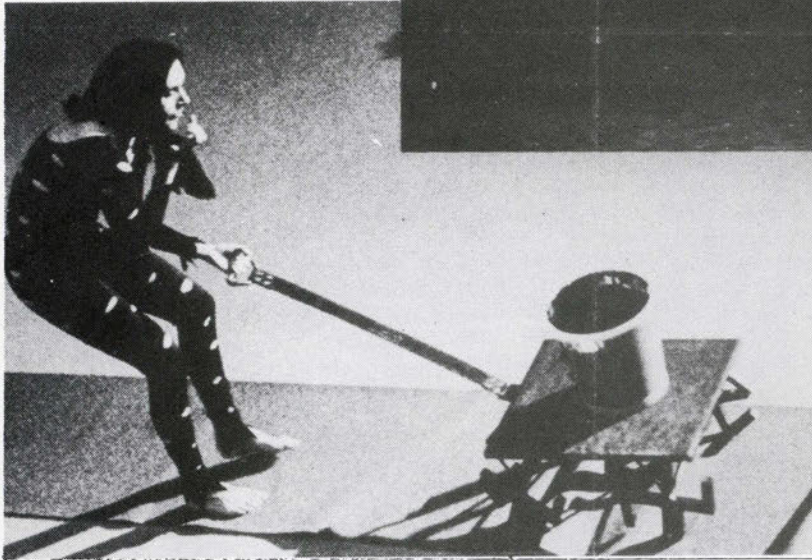
All this expressed through the dialectic of movement and stillness. The lovers are still, transfixed while all around is bustle, in the town where sex is commerce and men rule the streets. Stillness is the area that Juliet is seen to inhabit — her bedroom, the quiet church, the silent vault of death. Always she is still, fixed, placed, specified, while Romeo can come and go, leap and enter, dash and be gone, fight, dance, drink, declare. Finally the anguish of her position overcomes her. In the second scene in the final Act, trapped in her room with her suitable suitor, bullied by her father, cajoled by her nurse into sensible compliance with the real world of compromise, unbearable compromise, she is finally driven to seek a solution. And it is this solution whose deception in its metaphoric perfection leads to death. Acting independently, stung to movement by the truth of her emotion, her motives can only be discounted, her message goes astray. Her one independent act brings death to the one she loves so much. But so it would have too, perhaps, if the story had continued, like Coronation Street, for 21 years. For, as Sally Potter has made so clear in her film 'Thriller', the bourgeois love fantasy demands death as its conclusion. Passion can be enjoyed as spectacle, yes, but as soon as it goes beyond secrecy and compromise, as the strength of Juliet's emotions compel her to act, then punishment, even death, are the rewards. For true rebels who say yes to emotional truth threaten the structure of a society based on repression of feeling.

So, in the Opera House class, state and subsidy join hands to present the spectacle of pleasure to those who, even if perhaps they might enjoy such delights for real, (though a glance at their faces would seem to suggest that this is doubtful) are scarcely likely to follow up any of their revolutionary implications. For how many women were there attending the performance, clothed and perfumed, propelled along by elbow clutching men, the ghost of death-in-life already in their faces. All passion spent indeed. How few women were there alone or with friends, except perhaps the small group of young dancers who clustered in the standing areas and talked of the performers whom they could often scarcely see, something to remember in class next Monday. No art is worth that much pain, perhaps, but watching the performance with them that night, I could understand just how it might seem to be. For the seeking eye, the seeds of change can pop up in the strangest places. We left that old opera house radiant and full of thought. Love... now there's an idea.....

Lynn MacRitchie

Catching them in the act

A report on recent performance work in Canada by Mark Czarniecki.



Untitled work by Randy and Berenici (above); Dragu in 'Her Majesty': art that comments on rituals of modern culture

They were turned away at the doors of the Art Gallery of Ontario recently and the sellout van Gogh exhibition wasn't what they were after. Several hundred performance art practitioners and devotees, plus a handful of sensation-seekers, had magically appeared for Margaret Dragu's and Tom Dean's *Her Majesty*, a performance with many unkind words to say about bleeding heart liberal patriarchies. Clad in black tights with eye-shaped slits, Dragu trundled out a cart, with swastikas for wheels, carrying pots of eels and chocolate sauce. The eels were chopped, plopped into the sauce and strewn over the floor. But the crown jewel in *Her Majesty* was a dance choreographed to Ravel's *Bolero*. Dragu made a powerful personal statement while challenging the audience's preconceptions about her 'act' and their participation in it. Where one might have expected passionate spirals to embellish *Bolero's* insistent linear sexuality, Dragu tap-danced and goose-stepped, parodying every possible pose of romantic love with deliberate clumsy pirouettes. And yet, while mocking passion she embodied it as well: her emotional commitment was completely visible. Was she out of control? Should we really have been watching this?

After years of playing to limited avant-garde audiences, many performance artists are grappling with the question of whether

to increase their exposure, and if so, how. Non-initiates often condemn it as hermetic, self-serving and utterly lacking in entertainment value. 'Personally I'm very dedicated to entertainment even though most performance artists are against it and think I'm a con artist,' says Dragu. The problem of expanding audiences hasn't been helped by the almost universal lack of agreement on what this most elusive and freewheeling of the visual arts really is.

Although pieces like *Her Majesty* have obvious affinities with Dada and Surrealism, modern performance arose in the '60s as part of the revolution in the visual arts against the isolated sterility of abstractionism. Artists wanted art to return to daily life by exploring and commenting upon the myths and rituals of modern culture. Linked to these concerns was a reaction against the art market: the art object/gallery/dealer/investor treadmill driven by establishment media which could subvert the content of art works by manipulating the contexts of their public appearances. Performance is perhaps the most extreme protest against this syndrome: although it can include any medium available to the artist, no 'object' exists to be bought or sold; a performance piece by one artist very rarely gets performed by another artist and is infrequently repeated even by its creator; because there is no agreed-upon

critical language to deal with the phenomenon, the value judgments vital to the traditional market have been slow to surface.

Performance and its close relative video art appeared early in Canada with enlightened support from the Canada Council, which quietly funded both individual artists and 'parallel' galleries, such as Toronto's A Space, run by artists who needed space but wanted to keep their distance from the administratively top-heavy established galleries. Toronto's General Idea and Vancouver's The Western Front Society led the way with high-profile, humorous performances: the 1971 Miss General Idea Beauty Pageant featured invited guests of both sexes attired in suitably outlandish costumes and in 1974, Western Front's Vincent Trasov dressed as Mr. Peanut and campaigned for mayor in the Vancouver civic election. In *Towards an Audience Vocabulary* (1978) General Idea examined audience role-playing by staging a performance in which the 'real' audience's reactions were pre-empted by a pre-selected audience facing them on stage. Predictably the 'real' audience reacted with some hostility, and such experiments (plus funding problems) have led an unperturbed General Idea to seek audiences in addition to their own fertile, if self-reflexive, artistic milieu by selling both ideas and objects. Says General Idea's Felix Parts: 'You haven't sold out until you're out of stock.'

However, more socio-politically committed artists such as Clive Robertson argue that performance can only speak in specific contexts to specific audiences who have some common understanding about the subject being presented. 'To a general audience, what was intended as a parody of TV would read like James Joyce,' says Robertson. 'It's nonsense to put performance into large museums — curators are the disc jockeys of the art world and they don't necessarily choose the most interest-

ing work to promote. Performance isn't an industrial product, it's a dialogue which has to involve the audience directly.' Robertson considers performance with its built-in critical format best suited to groups actively combating the established order, such as feminists, racial minorities and non-unionized workers, rather than to the public as a whole. So far only feminists seem to have taken significant advantage of the genre. In *Don't Believe I'm an Amazon*, German performance artist Ulrike Rosenbach shoots 15 arrows into a reproduction of a long-suffering Gothic madonna. The madonna's features are picked up on a video monitor with Rosenbach's face superimposed over top, creating a resonant image that unites sorrow and hostility. The repeated shooting of the arrow presents the audience with a typical performance con-

frontation: deprived of their media-conditioned 'oh-that-was-a-clever-idea-what-comes-next' entertainment, they can either project personal association into the event — or they can leave.

Performance's potential as a more popular art form hinges on issues such as these. Rosenbach's piece is 12 minutes long, as is Elizabeth Chitty's latest work *History, Colour TV and You*, yet admission to *History* was \$3. Like any artist who needs an audience and who deserves recognition, Chitty considers the price justified; only a handful of performance artists in the world can survive on box office alone, and those who do, like New York's Laurie Anderson, tend to employ a lot of technology in their pieces. Chitty does too, thus incorporating a potential entertainment quotient that can engage the audience in

several "languages" simultaneously. Language and the need for "action" in the sense of increasing personal experience are central concerns of *History* and an untitled work by Randy and Berenicci: dressed in asbestos suits, the pair smashed five windows painted with the words "concept", "language", "content" and "syntax", then climb aboard a burning dolly and crash through a flaming fake brick wall. It's too early to predict whether such "theatrical" combinations of message and entertainment will draw more potential viewers to performance or only widen the gap between the proselytizers and the politically committed. Speaking strictly from the viewpoint of artistic satisfaction, Berenicci puts the case succinctly: "It's nice to play in front of 250 people instead of six." ■

Curator prejudice attacked

The following account was sent to 'Performance Magazine' by Suzanne Lacey, one of the artist organisers of the protest at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Concerned about the Museum's continuing failure to represent work by women artists and artists from minority groups a spectacular 'protest performance' was held at the opening of the two prestigious Bicentennial exhibitions. The protest may bring back memories of similar, if less spectacular action by women artists in London at the 'Conditions of Sculpture' exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in 1975.

It seems that such protests continue to be necessary, despite the occasional grand gestures such as the 1976 'Women Artists: 1550-1950' at Los Angeles or the recent 'Women's Images of Men', 'About Time' and 'Issue' exhibitions in London, for work by women and minority group artists still remain exempt from the cultural mainstream. It is good to see that artists themselves continue to see the necessity for protest, and make, at least in this case, damn sure that the protests are loud, energetic and to the point.

courtyard!' the leaders shouted. Instead of picket signs, pink and black balloons bobbed above the protestors, asking the question 'Where are the women and minorities?' Out of 32 artists in the two current exhibitions, only two were women, and despite the fact that Los Angeles has a high percentage of Latino, Black and Asian people, no minority artists were included. Los Angeles County Museum of Art has a long time record of discrimination. In 1971, the curator of one of the current shows, Maurice Tuchman, was responsible for the 'Art and Technology Show,' an exhibition of 64 artists, 63 of whom were white men! This touched off a strong protest movement by women artists in Los Angeles, eventually ending in the Museum's commitment to sponsor the 1976 exhibition, 'Women Artists: 1550-1950,' curated by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin. A similar gesture was made during the intervening years with 'Two Centuries of Black American Art,' curated in 1976 by David C. Driskell and Leonard Simon, but by and large the same discriminatory practices remained in effect. Now, in two of its major contemporary exhibitions, the museum appeared to be returning to the narrow mentality of the sixties, blatantly ignoring their own meagre gains and the changes in social consciousness of the past decade.

By 9:00 pm opening night over 200 protestors had gathered outside the gates. Suddenly out of a nearby cadillac jumped six women clad in masks and hot pink cowgirl outfits. Identifying themselves as the Cowgirl Commandos they announced 'We're looking for curator Maurice Tuchman, wanted on three counts: rustlin' tax dollars from poor folks, falsifying history, and having the gall to invite you all here to watch him do it!' Under a banner of someone had tied to the seven foot gate — Los Angeles County Museum of White Male Art — the cowgirls exclaimed, 'We've come here to tell you you're

VISIONA NARROWSA—DEADLY CURATORIAL DISEASE
A Case Study: 10 years observation of Maurice Tuchman, curator of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

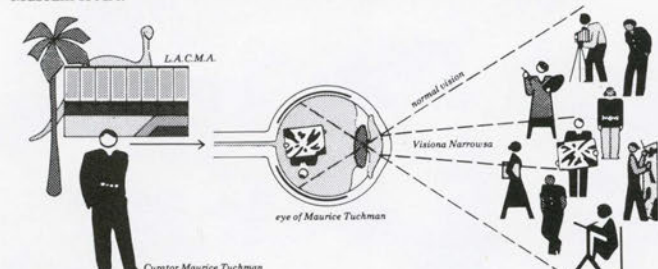


Figure 19-81.

VISIONA NARROWSA, Deadly Curatorial Disease, is common in museum curators with the highest incidence found in white males living in North America. **SYMPTOMS:** 1) inability to see Black, Asian, Latino/a or American Indian artists and the art they make, 2) inability to see female artists, especially women of color and lesbians. **CAUSES:** racism, sexism, classism, capitalism. **CURE:** extended bed rest and reduction can alleviate symptoms temporarily but for a complete systemic cure the causes must be eliminated. **PROGNOSIS:** Maurice is regressing and requires immediate action. Send letters recommending retirement.

One summer night at the impressive Los Angeles County Museum of Art: well dressed patrons were arriving to see the two Bicentennial exhibitions: 'Seventeen Artists of the Sixties,' and 'The Museum as Site — Fifteen Projects,' both originally planned as major representations of California art from the past two decades. Around the corner marched 150 women and minority artists dressed in white skirts, black jackets, and western style string ties, ready to protest,

and ready to perform! Los Angeles feminist artists have, over the past several years, developed a unique merger between political action and performance art, using creative props, guerilla actions, and media coverage. Tonight was *their* contribution to art of the seventies!

Two abreast they converged on the gate and were halted abruptly by seven armed guards. 'We have invitations,' some of them stated, but they were still refused entry. 'We have a performance for your

standing knee-deep in institutionalized racism and sexism, podner, and we think it's about time you scraped off those boot-heels of yours!

As the performers continued listing the 'crimes' of the institution, a police helicopter circled overhead, illuminating the crowd with its searchlight. The museum staff worked frantically to keep the 'disturbance' from effecting the tranquility of the opening and the 'upper category' patrons inside. They called out the police, told television stations they could not come inside to film, and escorted guests out the back gate. Inside, many of the guests (a largely white crowd) ate tacos served by Mexican-American workers, strolled past black guards, and remained oblivious to the commotion.

'We want a showdown! We want the show down!' the cowgirls demanded. 'Where is Maurice?' They whirled around to face 100 masks of Maurice Tuchman, donned by the protestors. Yelping and hooting, the cowgirls rounded up the masked curators, oinking and mooing, and drove them up to the gates, discouraging guests from entering for two hours, as press photographers and one television camera recorded the event. When finally the protest performance was over, the crowds left, feeling elated, and humming the cowgirls refrain 'Cai-ai-yippee, ai-ay, ai-ay, White boys ain't the only ones making art in LA!' (to the tune of Get Along Little Doggie).

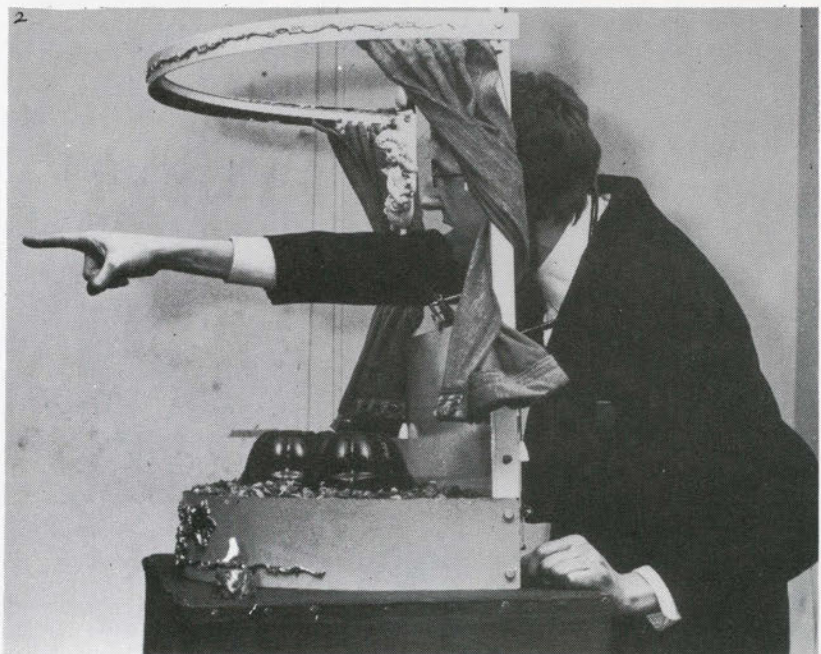
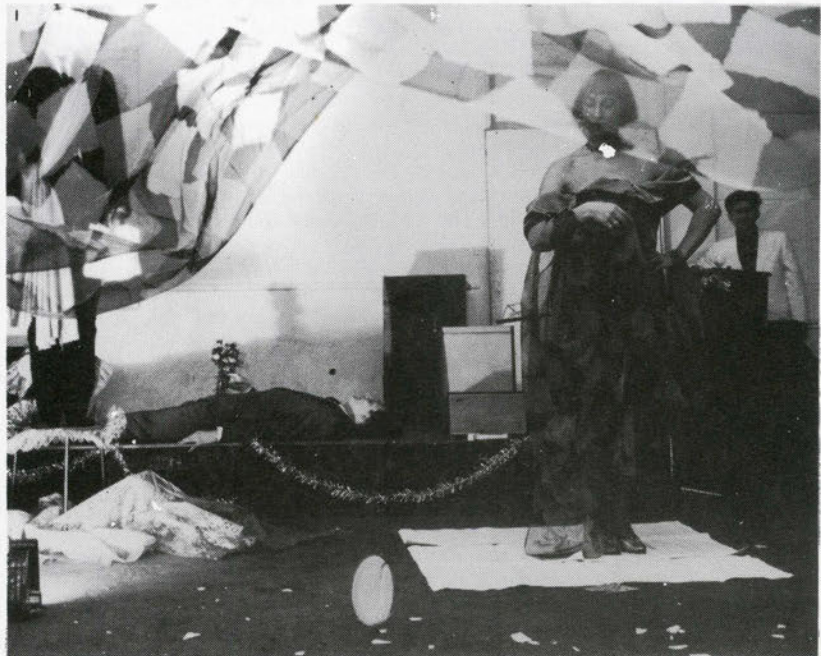
Press coverage, continued pressure on the Museum's Board of Trustees, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is expected from the Artists Coalition for Equality (ACE), as the grassroots coalition gains momentum through the success of this event. ■

Review of Mantis continued from page 23

mood of the music. Whereas with 'Social Life' in which Micha Bergese danced a solo to a tape of Laurie Anderson's, we were back with a piece that took an idea and twisted it into something fresh. Micha drew some friends on a large piece of paper to accompany him through the dance which was centred around the notion that a dancer who tours has a social life only by phone. Several phones on very long flexes acts as props with which all the movement was entwined and tangled, and throughout was the sound of a succession of phone conversations. The dance had a frenetic feel and was full of slightly awkward motion.

All of the first section of the evening was choreographed by Micha Bergese as was 'Dots and Dashes' which opened the second half. Then came the only work by a guest choreographer, the American, Dan Wagoner. 'Dolly Sods' is a tongue-in-cheek, and at times quite hilarious piece, with a ratbag of music ranging from a Gallop by Waldtaufel to a Ragtime two-Step by Scott Joplin, and movements that refer to social dance forms, wrestling, farming and games. All six of the company danced the piece, which is so full of differing movement and rumbustious energy that at times it seemed more like sixty on the stage than six. Gillian Clark

A Night to Remember



PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE BENEFIT

Amongst those appearing at the Performance Magazine's Christmas Benefit, were Ivor Cutler, The Phantom Captain, Roland Muldoon, CAST, Sylvia Ziraneck, and British Events. Luke Dixon was the ever-cool compere. Our thanks to them all. Martin Norris took the photographs.

1. Elegant as always in his white dinner jacket our editor relaxes for a moment over a glass of wine while Sylvia Ziraneck and friend goad a response from the frosty audience.
2. Mick Banks, stepping out of his guise as Bert Smart of Theatre of Jelly Fish fame, remonstrates with a spectator.

National Performance Listings

LISTINGS

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

BRISTOL

Arnolfini

Info: 0272 299191

Interesting looking music/performance programme set up for March/April. March 9 Fires of London (Contemporary Music Network). Eight Songs For A Mad King... 'George III's deranged monologue delivered in a ravaged voice to the caged bullfinches he was teaching to sing. The King in his dementia is tormented by grotesque and distorted parodies of all kinds of music from The Messiah to 'Boy Friend' style foxtrots...' Also Vesalli Icones — with dance choreographed by Ian Spink.

March 27 Bristol Musicians Collective — Skins and Stones featuring Ebamijo Dancers and Drummers. Tribal drumming and dancing of West Africa by musicians Immanuel Josiah and Daniel Hammond with dancer Aeke Ekapyong. Plus 'Popular Drumming' an exploration of percussion instruments ranging from Burmese Kyezees to yogourt pot friction drums and stones collected on Clevedon beach.

April 17 S.E.M. Ensemble from USA performing new-music works by Petr Kotik 'in a art-gallery context where the audience is free to enter or leave as they please during the continuous, unbroken performance.'

April 18-22 (unconfirmed) Ian Spink and Sue Davies — Second Stride.

Also public showing in the new video library (see feature this issue)

CARDIFF

Chapter Arts Centre

Info 0222 396061

March 3-8 Pip Simmons Company — new performance — Can't Sit Still. This musical is the first performance of the first show they have done since they broke up last year, so it should be of particular interest. Based on 'Peter Pan' legend.

March 10-13 T.N.T. — The Mystery. An 'Economic Pantomime.'

March 16-20 Brith Gof and Cymni Cyfri Tri — a Welsh language performance titled Manawydan.

March 24-27. Cardiff Laboratory Theatre — Heart of the Mirror. (New performance.)

March 29 Theatre Bara Caws. Another Welsh Language show. In April there will be a major

residency culminating in a new performance by IOU. Following their 'Trumpet Rat' developed in Liverpool (See review in No 16) long residencies seem to have become the style of working for this influential and innovative group of artists. Perhaps a feature here soon?

COVENTRY

Lanchester Polytechnic (Art Faculty)

Info 0203 24166

April 19-23. Events Week 5. An important annual opportunity for looking at new work, (not just by art students, others may participate) concerned with so-called 'time based' work in the visual art area, including performance, film, video, installation, poetry, improvised music etc, as well as an exhibition of the artists documentation. Described as an 'invaluable occasion for discussion and exchange of ideas', the selectors try their best to accommodate all the work submitted, the only restriction being on time, space and equipment. It has proved almost impossible to publicise this event in the past because of lack of written information, which is a pity as it is one of the few incidences of a large number of younger and lesser known Third Area artists being observed in action.

Warwick Arts Centre

Info 0203 417314

March 2-6 Theatre Du Silence

March 9-13 People Show Cabaret.

LIVERPOOL

Bluecoat Gallery

Info 051 709 5689

March 11-12 Janet Smith and Dancers.

March 25-27 Won Kyung Cho.

Tradition Korean Dance/Drama 'full of grace and apparent simplicity, expressive of joy, melancholy, mischief or high drama. The variety and beauty of the silk costumes is dazzling and Dr Cho's performances thoroughly beguiling.'

Liverpool Polytechnic

Info 0476 67248 (This perf. only)

March 11 Roland Miller. Bottle 7. Roland Miller continues his series of work based on experiences in Poland and Northern Ireland, using the various meanings and uses of the word 'Bottle' (eg A lot of bottle, to bottle someone, on the bottle) as a theme for his performance.

LONDON

Air Gallery

Info 01 278 7751

LVA at Air present 'Works in Video and Related Media' every

Thursday at Air Gallery. Check above or London Video Arts on 01 734 7410 for details.

Albany Empire

Info 01 691 3333

March 10 Womens Theatre Group in Time Pieces.

March 19-31 People Show Cabaret

Drill Hall

Info 01 637 8270

March 9-28 National Theatre of Brent — The Black Hole of Calcutta. 'The task of portraying an enormous population of the Indian subcontinent is now shared between a cast of three: founder of NTOB and man of ideas Desmond Oliver Dingle is joined by accountant Vernon Turpin and cabaret artiste/Ideal Home demonstrator Maxine Lenore. The relentless audience involvement for which the company is notorious is nevertheless required.'

Written by Lryony Lavery.

March 30- April 25. Shared Experience in La Ronde. Should prove to be the most interesting of the various versions of Schnitzler's notorious censored play. Shared Experience showed themselves capable of economically portraying quick-change visual jokes of obscure eroticism in 'Arabian Nights', and La Ronde should prove a suitable vehicle for similar concupiscent contortions.

April 12 Robin Tyler presents her cabaret 'Always the Bridesmaid Never the Groom.'

Gate Theatre

Info 01 229 0706

March — Limbo Tales — A multi-media piece in as much as sound effects, lighting and holograms are an integral part. About a lecturer in anthropology 'who becomes involved in an intriguing and bewildering 'time-slip' and finds himself living simultaneously in the past and present.' By Len Jenkins, directed Michele Frankel (Ex Beryl & Perils) Music by Rory Allam (Ex Michael Nyman Band).

Jacksons Lane

Info 01 340 5226

March 11-12 Optik-Second Spectacle. This new performance group, formed from ex-members of Ritual Theatre and others, with their second performance in which the 'mysterious disappearance of three people from Hampstead Heath at the turn of the century is investigated by an enthusiastic local sleuth with disastrous results. The event has connections with a contemporary suburban couple, Ron and Joyce, which are sometimes made clear. A tragic-comedy of bizarre proportions.

ICA

Info 01 930 0493

Gallery:

Eureka! Exhibition of Australian artists including installations, video, performance and posters. March 23 Robert Randall and Frank Bendenelli — Video presentation.

March 24 Peter Kennedy — Film/Talk

March 25 Kevin Mortensen —

Performance Forum on

contemporary Australian art

March 26 Jill Orr — Performance

March 27 Kevin Mortensen —

performance.

Cinematheque:

April 27-May 2 Ian Breakwell — a retrospective of films, tape/slides, readings and new video works. First showing of The Institution, featuring Kevin Coyne, and IN THE HOME, a videotape dedicated to the acting style of Noele Gordon. See Video library feature for more on Breakwell, also ICA video library.

Theatre:

Until March 20 — Joint Stock in Real Time. Recently jocularly profiled on Walters Weekly as a performance that doesn't know where it's going until it's there, devised completely out of improvisation, it should be a welcome return to some real experimentation in theatre.

March 30-April 17 Hesitate and Demonstrate — Goodnight Ladies — a performance that is creating myths as it tours around the country — this 'intricate but fractured narrative which spans Europe and conjures images from the cinematic past' is supposed to be unmissable.

April 20-May 2 Pip Simmons Company — Can't Sit Still. Based on Peter Pan Legend. 'Which fairies do the glue sniffers and child rioters believe in?' asks the press release. New show from newly re-formed company should be interesting. (See Chapter, Cardiff.)

Music:

April 20 — Sem Ensemble — 'Variations' — 5 hour performance by Petr Kotik (See Arnolfini, Bristol)

London Musicians Collective

Info 01 722 0456

Every Friday 'Beetbop' night — experimental rock starting March 5 with Ade Newton Stett. Series organised by Gordon Winter. March 4 Clubnight — Phil Minton, Keith Rowe, Roger Turner, Maggie Nichols, Terry Day.

March 6 Mark Rowhutt
March 11-14 Fast and Loose Festival. Composers/Improvisers festival.

continued on back cover

PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE INFORMATION

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

EDITORIAL MATERIAL

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

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

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

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

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WHERE TO BUY PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

The following places have the latest issue of the magazine on sale.

London (Central)

Air Gallery
Angela Flowers Gallery
House Gallery
Arts Bibliographic
Zwemmer
Ian Shipley
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Nigel Greenwood Gallery
Arts Council Shop
ICA Shop
Riverside Studios
RSC Shop
Hayward Gallery
Central Books
Collets London Bookshop
Dillons Bookshop
Duck Soup
Paperback Centre
City Lit. Bookshop
Compendium Books
Housemans
Frenches Theatre Bookshop
Camden Arts Centre
Moira Kelly Gallery
Landry Books
Royal Court Bookstall
243 Newsagent, Chelsea
South Bank Bookshop
Camerawork Gallery

London (Outer)

Tetric Bookshop (SW4)
Village Books (SW16)
Bookplus (SE14)
Balham Food and Book Co-op
Battersea Arts Centre
121 Books, Brixton
Websters, Croydon
Centreprise, Dalston
Paperback Centre (E15)
Kilburn Bookshop
Bookmarks (I4)
Bush Books (W6)

Brighton

Solstice Books
Public House

Salisbury

St Edmunds Arts Centre

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1985 Books
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York Arts Centre

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(Details not yet available
except for:)

Edinburgh

First of May Bookshop

Glasgow

Third Eye Centre

Amsterdam

Athaneum News
Het Fort Van Sijoo
International Theatre Bookshop
Ins and Outs Bookshop

Paris

Flammarion 4, Pompidou Centre

Back Issues

These may be bought singly, or
ordered from the following places.

Duck Soup

11 Lambs Conduit Passage

London WC1

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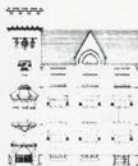
COMMUNITY DANCE TRAINING

The Laban Centre is pleased to announce the development of a One Year Full Time Course for EXPERIENCED DANCERS interested in Community Arts work. The course will be directed by Peter Brinson, assisted by the staff of the Laban Centre and will be related closely with practical activity in the London area.

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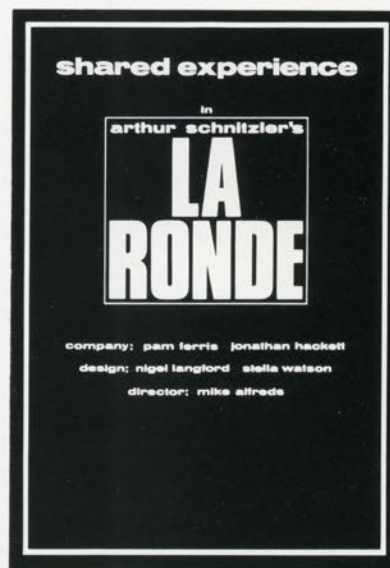
Additionally, COMMUNITY ARTISTS who wish to spend a year studying aspects of dance related to community work should apply for the Centre's Special Dance Course at beginner or intermediate level.

Apply for information to:
The Administrator
Laban Centre for Movement and Dance
at University of London Goldsmiths' College
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National Performance Listings

London Listings continued

March 18 Clubnight — Gunther Summers.
 March 20 A celebration of the 'Equinox and the passing of childhood.' — Sue Ferrar, Terry Day, Lol Coxhill, Maggie Nichols, Sylvia Hallet, and others.
 March 21 Music Machine — Improvisation with Vacuum cleaners and guitars — Martin Howard Naylor.
 March 27 Roger Ely and Dave Stephens.
 March 28 George Whitmore.
 March 29 Mike Mower Quartet — Common Stock — The Second Line).
 April 3 Coventry Musicians Collective — plus Max Eastley.
 April 10 STate.
 April 24 King's Pleasure Bangle Music.

Oval House

Info 01 735 2786
 March 4-7 Simple Theatre in The Mushroom and the Mighty. Oval House Workshop Production.
 March 5-7 Excursions by Fay Prendergast. Collage of the myths of the life of Emily Dickinson.
 March 10-14 The Hardware co: And Pigs Might Fly — Satire set in 2002 when government decides to scrap costly social welfare and relocate the populace into compulsory family units.
 March 13-14 Young Atturi Theatre (Of Malta) in Phantoms and Sunscreen
 March 19-21 Spook Group — When Siren Goin' Stop? Oval House Workshop production. Set in the future, in South London about 'unemployed youths, race hatred, the blacks, the whites, the police, the frontline, corruption, the hatred, the loved, war and peace: all there is and more to make an epic of our lives together.'
 March 17-28 Passerelle in A Slow Country.
 March 24-28 Remould Theatre Company in The Nuclear Cabaret.
 March 31-April 4 New Heart in The Gorgeous and The Damned.
 April 2-4 One Way of Seeing — Audio-visual performance by Martin Humphries using his poems accompanied and challenged by images and sounds.

Riverside Studios

Info 01 748 3354
 To March 14 Black Theatre Co-operative presents Trinity, or The Long and Cheerful Road to Slavery by Edgar White, directed by Charlie Hanson, and featuring reggae star Victor Romero Evans.
 March 17-April 4 Season of productions/workshops/open rehearsals. Various open-house events, including workshops and work by Edward Bond.

Theatre Space

Info 01 836 2035
 March 1-6 Doldrums by The Up and Coming.



Optik in Second Spectacle, see Jacksons Lane.

March 16-17 Womens Theatre Group — Time Pieces
 March 18-20 Common Stock/ Mike Mower Quartet — The Second Line.
 April 19-24 — Impact Theatre — New show, Useful Vices.
 April 27 onward New Internationalist Theatre — Mother Courage.

NEWCASTLE

Basement Group

Info 0632 614527
 March 2 Disband — See Feature in this issue.
 March 3 Rod Allen, Penny Caulfield, Christina Walker — Performance.
 March 6 Paul Lambert — 144 Shoplifting Days Till Christmas — Performance.
 March 10 Johnny Turpey — 'Milk' Tape/Slide.
 March 13 Laurie Anderson's performance group (sans Laurie Anderson) from New York. Presumably this means people like Romer Baren, who produces many of LA's music and effects. Should be very interesting and definitely worth a trip for those who don't lie in the North East
 March 17 Basement Group's own show of Tape/Slide/Documentation at Newcastle University.
 March 20 Marc Camille Chaimowitz. Partial Eclipse — described in Performance 14 as 'a glimpse into a private experience, an emotional and erotic encounter both anticipated and remembered.'
 March 27 Mike Stubbs-False

Pretences — Video.

April 3 Marty St James — Performance. 'Marty St James brought a magic to that time and place that afternoon, conjuring terse images and using simultaneous outside noises and events that made one seize at a variety of meanings.' Performance 13.
 April 24 Kieran Lyons — Performance.

Sunderland Arts Centre

Info 0783 41214
 March 17 Incubus — Revengers Comedy — A performance 'which if you hold on tightly to it's many protrusions can actually be followed as it hurtles dragging you on it's labyrinthine way to the conclusion of this revengeful renaissance romp... Suffice it to say that everyone at Castle Sepulcro either ends up floating face-down in the 'swimming pool' or roaming the corridors howling for 'Revenge'... Performance 15.
 March 24 IOU — The Trumpet Rat and Other Natural Curiosities.

NOTTINGHAM

Midland Group

Info 0602 582636
 March 3 Disband
 March 5 Fiona Templeton — new solo performance
 March 11 Claire Hayes — solo dance piece 'Snow Fish Flies: Flap.. Flap!'
 March 13 Nottingham Feminist Arts Group — performances by Shirley Cameron, Evelyn Silver, Carol Crow and Rachel

Finkelstein.

March 19/20 The New Theatre — present '1945'.

April 7 New Arts Consort/ /Charles Barber — Programme of new percussion based music, with slide and video.

April 21 State Sympathy — Piano and electronics, mostly Stockhausen, with film accompaniment.
 April 29/30/May 1 Blood Group — Women's experimental theatre, present 2 performances of 'Barricade of Flowers' + workshop.

MANCHESTER

Radiator

Info 061 224 0020
 March 5 Roger McGough (Free Trade Hall).
 March 9-10 Incubus — Revengers Comedy (Free Trade Hall).
 March 12-13 Cabaret with Lip Service and Proper Little Madams (Gallery, Peter St.).
 March 18-20 IOU — Trumpet Rat (Brick House).
 March 27 Evening of Brecht with Frankie Armstrong and Others (Community Centre).
 April 1-3 Forkbeard Fantasy (see documentation this issue). The Cold Frame (Brick House).

YORK

York Arts Centre

Info 0904 27129
 March 5-6 Waste of Time and Jail Warehouse in Listen. Laura Gilbert and Fran Waller Zeper first met at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1969 when Laura was working with the People Show and Fran with the Will Spoor Mime Company. Now with Derek Wilson (performer and sculptural artist) and Felix Straterger (musician) they have created a work 'invoking faded splendour, intrigues and politeness with undertones of hatred and incest — a daily pattern of routines broken by bizarre musical interludes, frivolity, the echo of past voices and crazy humour set against a sense of hidden menace and catastrophe'. (From press release).
 March 11-13 Monstrous Regiment-Shakespeare's Sister. A world 'where common domestic objects take on new and strange purposes, a world peopled by brides in their full regalia and grandmothers who are not what they seem.'
 March 18-19 Covent Garden Community Theatre — This Shirking Life — 'four performers who demonstrate how a band of clear-sighted visionaries can replace the post-capitalist malaise with a new spirit of enterprise.'

TOURING

A section for artists and groups working in a series of venues not normally covered in the previous listings. Temporarily lapsed this issue, we are now preparing a touring section for the next (May/June 1982). Please send your list of dates as soon as possible.