

August/September 1982

No 18 75p

# PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE



**Radical Americans — John Cage and Laurie Anderson**  
**Robyn Archer on politics and showbiz**  
**Magical Theatre — IOU in London**



Midland Group Arts Centre

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The Contemporary Art Journal

Published by:  
The Artists Collective of N. Ireland  
22 Lombard Street  
BELFAST BT1 1RD  
N. Ireland  
Telephone 0232 24429

Subscription rates:  
Yearly Subscription (inc. p&p) £6.00  
Please make cheques payable to:  
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# PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

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Calverts North Star Press Ltd

## Publisher

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The Performance Magazine

ISSN No 0144 5901

This issue receives financial assistance  
from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

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# Radical Americans

John Cage and Laurie Anderson span more than forty years of U.S. innovation in the arts. Lynn MacRitchie attempts a perspective.



John Cage

June and July have seen visits to London by two American artists whose work and ages span four decades of the US avant garde — Laurie Anderson and John Cage. John Cage's seventieth birthday was celebrated at the Almeida Festival and Laurie Anderson, performing at the Adelphi, was feted like a popstar, which of course is one of the things she now is.

Yet it was only reluctantly that I attended the crowded first night of *Roaratorio*. John Cage, so sixties, all that Zen, who needs it? To be honest, part of my dread was based on my own memories of the impact of Cage on so many of my art school contemporaries; *Silence* has been a very important book in my life too.

*Roaratorio* astonished me. Grand, majestic, moving, magnificent — all those people, each making a contribution to a work which while respecting their individual skills — the Irish singing and traditional instruments, the orchestral tone of bassoons and cellos, the inclusion of Dublin's own street sounds on tape, the quiet reading of Joyce's words — made a whole which was so much bigger than the sum of its parts simply because it was a sum of parts... riches rather than chaos.

So much did I enjoy it that the next day I returned for more and was enthralled by the Cage lecturing style — light, friendly, yet full of sharp political comment and much musical wisdom. Cage may be an old man, but he is by no means grand. Nor is he set or restricted in his ways. The impression of open responsiveness was quite remarkable. At an age when men are expected to make definitive pronouncements with even greater authority Cage continues to keep his options open.

I remembered that manner when I went to see Laurie Anderson perform a couple of weeks later. There was something remarkably similar to Cage in her way of talking, her manner of address, the care with which

things had been listened to. It got me to thinking. What quality did they share, those Americans, those radical Americans who come from somewhere very far away and yet speak the same language? Which when you listen carefully, really isn't the same language at all. Like with US pop songs or films, if you listen to them carefully they seem much harder to understand. The language just isn't quite the same, just as the politics are not quite the same. For somehow if an English artist was going to attempt a work about the history and background of the whole nation, I don't think he or she would do it with a song and a smile or by telling a few jokes or without being accused of being a rabid nationalist.

But this kind of work seems to be an American tradition. Laurie Anderson's work *United States* is very like its namesake, the novel by John Dos Passos. Written surely nearly contemporary with Joyce and similar in its breadth of style, the huge book includes extracts from newspapers and popular songs and the biographies of real people among its tales of fictional characters who manage to reflect among their various adventures certain notions of themselves as Americans, as something new in the world. Not long afterwards, John Cage's experiments with chance and Eastern philosophical methods brought something indeed new into Western aesthetics, something which has influenced many generations of artists of which Anderson is surely one.

Some years ago I came across Moira Roth's excellent article 'The Aesthetics of Indifference' (*Artforum*, November 1977). In it Roth describes the response of artists Cage, Duchamp, Johns and Rauschenberg to the rampant anti-communism of the McCarthy era as one of indifference, a coolness which would not allow itself to be involved. Impressed with her placing of these isolated and revered artists smack in

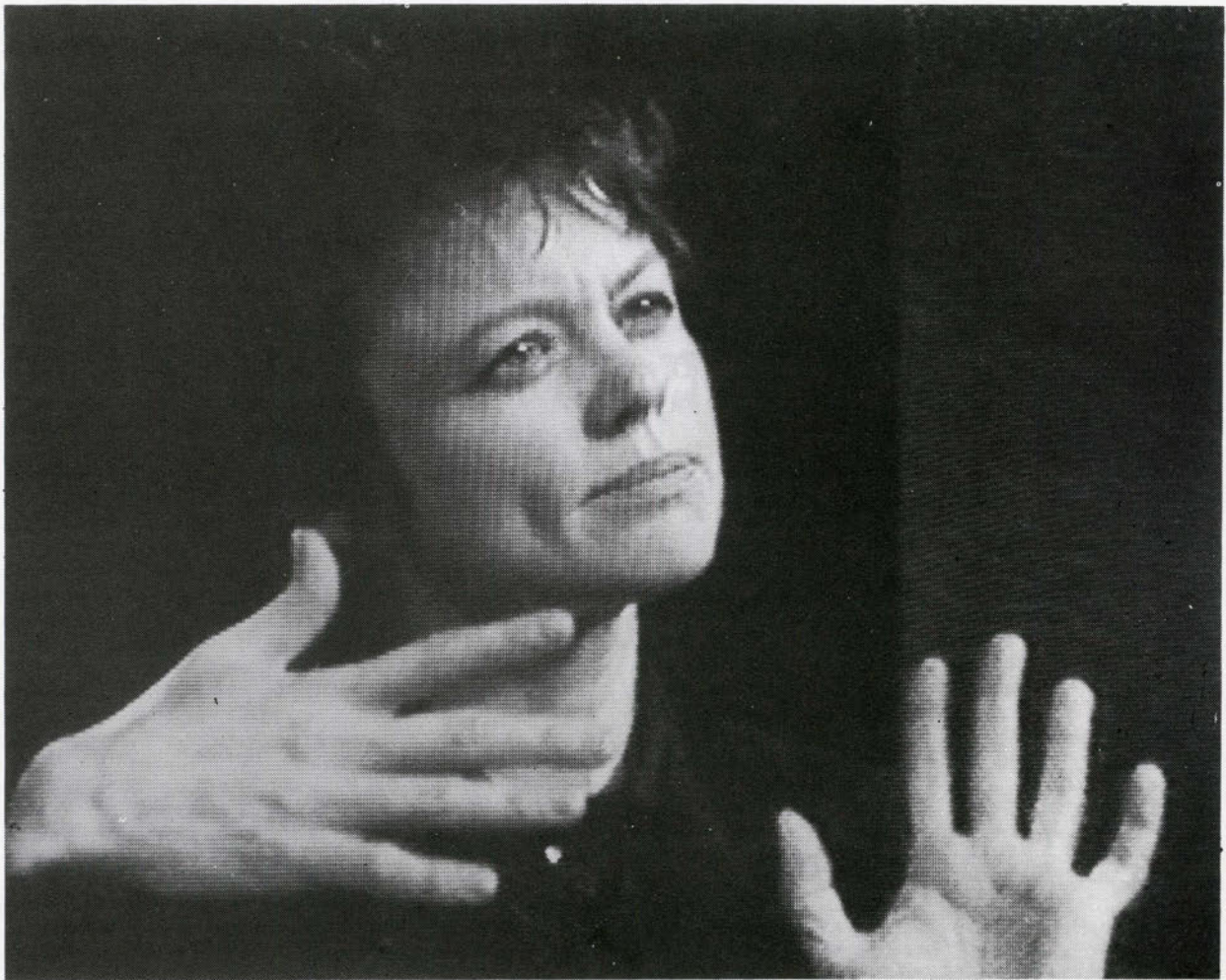
the context of a political moment about which not enough is written, her article confirmed that much of my own uneasiness about the work of this group was possibly politically based. If their politics were suspect or nonexistent then aesthetic doubts (in my case mainly about Duchamp) could be put in a context. Part of the relief in my reaction was also due to a certain embarrassment about my own enthusiastic adulation of a Cage of a few years before. A confirmed feminist, it made me uncomfortable to have had quite so much admiration for a man, and I was glad enough to find a foot or two of clay.

But notions of politics change and especially about the attempt to combine politics and art. For now the specifically political art work of the late sixties and the seventies seems jarring, out of joint. My students this year laughed heartily at Joseph Beuys and thought in the main that people who did performance had something wrong with them. Feeling old, I told them they sounded like a bunch of reactionaries. The form of the art work might not be appealing, but surely it was a useful exercise always to try to understand aims and intentions, and if the work seems now to fail in these to try to find out why.

Some of that quality of failure which now surrounds much of the art of the seventies is perhaps located in what is missing, in what it had to sacrifice in order to make its didactic points clearly. For now as the eighties get under way it is as if artists were allowing themselves to bring back all that colour, to stuff in all that individualised content, that the seventies demanded they leave out. Suddenly the work of artists of the forties and fifties, filled with paint and personality unlookable at for many years, seems relevant, fresh, exciting. And the work of Cage too, listened to in the eighties, far from being negative or coolly detached seems to burst and brim with a remarkable life and beauty which, far from seeming old fashioned as Jeremy Paton Jones suggests elsewhere in this issue seems only now to be offering some facets of its meaning — its richness, its fullness of life — its tremendous potential energy to the understanding.

Laurie Anderson's art attempts to evoke America. John Cage, by offering his audiences the conscious experience of listening, provides a potent metaphor for freedom in a society saturated with an ideology of sound (why else is the tone of voice of Mrs Thatcher's speeches as famous as their content?) United in the grandness of their gesture, these radical Americans would seem also to agree that hope is at least as ready an option as despair, that beauty and joy can be a political choice worth fighting for.





Laurie Anderson, from the 'In Conversation' video tape

Stephen White

## 'A Real Traditionalist'...

Words may be full of tricks, but Laurie Anderson loves to tell stories.  
Extracts from 'In conversation', recorded at the ICA in June.

I think of myself as a real traditionalist in a lot of ways, as a storyteller, the absolute oldest way of using words — speaking directly to people.

When I first started to do art work it was basically sculpture. I had a very chequered career because I was working in a university in which one of the requirements for sculpture seemed to be that it should weigh a lot and that you had to wear goggles and weld it. So I worked mostly with material that was very lightweight, paper. I was very influenced by a lot of the New York ideas of conceptual art — I would do things like take the day's newspaper and crush it up into brick-like structures, stamp it with the date, or take the front page of the *New York Times*, cut it up into very thin horizontal strips and the same front page of the *China Times* into thin vertical strips and then weave them together. A lot of the time they'd been on

the same wire service and shared a lot of the same photographs. They had this very fractured look, not just in the images but in the words as well. I was also interested in doing kind of visual crossword puzzles. Then I began to use words in a more direct way, connected to the narrative art movement in New York at that time. I would use very large photographs with words written on them, which became almost like graffiti on a train — those enormous words — and I began to think this is missing part of the words. It's missing the tone of voice, just like when somebody writes you a letter they can say a certain thing and they can say the same thing to you on the phone and you get so much more information when you have their tone of voice, and where they're pausing, what they're really emphasising.

So I thought if I want to use words I should just speak them. The first per-

formances that I did were really stories that were based on certain ideas about memory. I used examples from my own life to express this sort of passage of time. I began to slowly incorporate other things into the work, into the objects that I was making as well as the performances. I made a pillow with a silkscreened open book of Van Gogh's diary on it and inside the pillow was a small speaker which you would use to learn German in your sleep — you wake up and you can talk — supposedly you can only remember it, you don't know what it means. Inside this pillow was a song and a story called 'Unlike Van Gogh'. I had a job at the time as a reporter for various art magazines in New York. As the new-comer cub reporter I was not assigned the choice jobs. I talked to people who had been very influenced by minimal sculpture but were doing more or less spin-offs of it, second generation minimal sculpture.



Work that I really liked to think about and talk about but it didn't really move me very much. Actually there was a quite wonderful book that was put out, in California, a computer generated book which is called *Most Used Adjectives of the 60's*. It's divided into companion chapters, so that things that are used in one discipline are also used in another. The companion chapter for art was the military. They shared this vocabulary of things like precise, clean, hard-edged. These were the ways to describe goodness in both of these areas. I would try to find my synonyms for precision and at a certain point I began to think of it — about art — in other ways. My favourite artist at that point was really Van Gogh, for the absolute intensity of his work. I felt that particularly in the context of the very cool minimal scene I wanted to inject another attitude just... for the tilt. So I began to mention Van Gogh in every review that I wrote. Sometimes rather tortured 'this artist, like Van Gogh, uses yellow and blue'. An editor of one of these magazines called me into his office and said 'Look, not every artist can be usefully compared to Van Gogh, why don't you give us some other'... I could see his point but at the same time I couldn't really in good conscience edit that out. And so the reviews began to 'This artist, unlike Van Gogh...' And so in this pillow which you had to rest your head on you could hear a song and a story called *Unlike Van Gogh*.

**I like to make a situation in which the images go along like this, the music along like this the talking like this — to create a kind of polyrhythmic situation between those elements and make a performance in which you're not really sure if you saw that or heard it.**

When I was making these small audio objects I was also doing a lot of things with books or books as movies. I made a book in a case, a glass case. It has about a hundred pages and a few of them were text but most of them were images, shot into a corner. I was very interested in corner situations. The image was shot so that the spine of the book was the corner of the room. And there were 2 fans on either end of the glass case. The fans were on little circuits that would blow the pages at a slow sort of primitive film level. The narrative would pick up with the motion. When the pages got heavier they'd be blown back the other way. And there was another story that would be the reverse of the first one. It was part of a series of books that I was making at that time. The first was called *Hand Book*, the book as a kind of hand-cranked instrument. It was about the experience of turning, of the weight of the page, of the slight breeze that's created as that page is turned. Also around that time I made a movie called *Dear Reader*. It used a lot of clichés of 40's films — it's all shot in one room. It began with a very familiar scene. A man and woman in their bathrobes — they begin to kiss and the woman's leg comes up and the slipper drops off the foot

onto this carpet and the camera then pans across over to window and sees no more, where the curtains are gently blowing.

**Rather than film being a big page of light on the wall I've always thought that it was just as interesting to see the beam of light that creates that image and that there are many points along that beam at which you can intercept and do something else.**

I was using a lot of things from my own life which I eventually had to abandon because your past is more or less finite — you run out of stories that's what it comes down to. Anybody who's been married to someone for more than their storytelling length knows this, you know, you've heard it. I used to go and see a psychiatrist — and she had her office set up so that she was in a corner and on one side of her was a window and on the other was a mirror. And she could tell by slight movements of my eyes whether I was looking at her or out the window, or at the mirror. And I looked at the mirror a lot and one of the things I noticed about this was that on Monday it was perfectly clean and clear but by Friday it was covered with these lip marks. This was one of those processes that you notice and are surprised by but you learn to more or less take it for granted. After a while, even to depend on it. This was something that I didn't even mention until one time more or less in passing I said well it's kind of like the lipmarks that appear on your mirror. And she turned around and said what lip marks? And I realised that because of the way the sun was coming through the window and hitting the mirror at an angle that she couldn't see them. And I had never seen this woman get up out of her chair before and I said why don't you come over and sit in my chair. She got up and she could actually, you know, walk and came over and sat down. And she said, Oh, lip marks. And the next time I saw her, it was the last time, she had discovered that her 12 year old daughter had been coming into the office and kissing the mirror and then on the weekends the maid would come in and wash it off. And it was at that point that I realised that we were seeing things from such really literally different points of view that I really wouldn't have to see her again. So that was one of the many corner, or backed off, stories that I was working with at the time. Those were things that often didn't translate into performances because they were very much about location and performance in many ways is more about change really, than something more static.

I have a very half-baked theory that I like to try to foist off onto people that tries to describe my own reaction to words and also to criticism as well. Here it is, it's very half-baked. It starts in the 50's with maybe the Cedar Bar in New York and a lot of painters of grand gesture, the abstract expressionists and particularly Pollock and Klein and all of the guys who were using paint as paint. Critics would ask them about their work and they would talk about

the painterliness of paint and how paint was so paintable. And it was maybe a generation after that in which a whole series of artists, very articulate artists, began to talk about their work in different ways, not to describe it in those ways. They left it to the poets who were then writing very poetic abstract expressionist criticism. And at this point the artist was getting a little bit blander. You'd walk into the gallery and see giant blues with a red stripe. And then you have artists who were extremely articulate — Don Judd, Barnett Newman particularly Newman, who could talk any critic under the table a guy who's capable of saying something like 'aesthetics is to me what ornithology is to the birds'. I don't go along with that maxim because I think he had quite the opposite attitude to his art. Words were very important to what he was doing. What was written about what he was doing was very important in order to come to terms with the canvases. What he said about them was to many people as interesting as the use of blue. What he had said he was doing was crucial in some cases to understand and to get it. The catalogues started getting thicker and thicker. I see performance art linking in here as maybe an off-shoot of the word. I see myself as going along with my work — there's the blue and I'm there as well, talking about it. Words then have become very very important to me, in fact the basis of the images and the sounds. That's the half-baked theory.

**I think that the slipperiness of words is what attracts me most. What images can do to that slipperiness is very important. There's a song in one of the sections of *United States* called *Language is a Virus from Outer Space* which is a William Burroughs quotation. I've always found that to be quite a mysterious thing for someone who's written a lot of books to say — that language is a disease communicable by mouth. What exactly does that mean? I think Burroughs is interested in it in a Buddhist sense. Buddhist ideas have played a part in his work. There's the thing and there's the name for the thing — and for Buddhist thought that's already one thing too many.**

The words that I use in performances are very very simple. They're words that are about very ordinary situations. Things that happen to you during the day or walking down the street. If I use big words, something like, let's say 'freedom' or 'change' or 'love', it's almost in a way to watch them in passage, rather than to say exactly what they are: The word change especially because I think that in this work *United States* that's a crucial word because I think Americans tend to confuse that word with freedom. The reason that the first section of *United States* is about transportation is that that to me seems to be one of the most important things about living in that country — things change. You grow up on one city and then you go 2000 miles away to university. Then your company moves you





Stephen White

1000 miles over here. It's kind of what's left over of a cowboy or hobo aesthetic.

In trying to make words I sometimes use the most obvious way possible — take pictures of the words. So that you haven't heard the word but you're reading it on the screen which is a different way of getting it.

For years I've had a lot of trouble with video. I just think it is really ugly and I think it sounds awful. It's real crackly. The biggest problem I have is the way it scans, the way the picture is built. This kind of motion I find extremely disturbing, I can't watch it for ten minutes before I lose all sense of judgement. There are lots of theories about the kind of brain waves that are generated by watching pictures scan at that rate, and made out of electronics as opposed to film which is made of light, and made of millions of dots of scintillating light which I find absolutely beautiful. Looking at film that giant picture is also a social situation, from the movie line on — there you are in the dark with a lot of people, eating popcorn and it's social whereas TV is by nature lonely. You're there by yourself, or with someone else — or else it's kind of in the background. I can't see it as a background because it's too much of a pull and I'm not getting anything from it. I'm just fixated on it without getting anything

from it. I think part of it is that video is still very new, and there's not a tradition of video makers, there aren't masterpieces that people look to as a real exciting visual experience. I think that that's because people who are interested in visual things also find the box ugly and the network too complicated to get involved with and would rather do their work in some other way.

In Pittsburgh they have one of the new cable, one of the talk-back systems in which there's a soap opera on which has, like some of those mystery books, 50 alternate endings. And at certain points you can dial up the next narrative turn — should they or shouldn't they? and people say yeah, they should. And that's the way the story goes. That's a little plastic as well. **It's a kind of a fiction of this democratic system. It's some horrible mistake that TV was called communication. It's an elaborate way of selling things as far as I'm concerned.**

Now in Pittsburgh they have a choice of 100 different shows that they can watch of an evening. Now you come home and you can't ask that question 'what's on TV tonight?' because you have to read this book. It's not a simple choice between the dreck that's possible which would be the most relaxing and

**mind washing — it's which one of these things it will be. And the people I know who are plugged into that system in Pittsburgh just come home and say I can't face the book — they go out and have a walk.**

**One of the things about video — I go to a lot of art schools and have a look at**

One of the things about video — I go to a lot of art schools and have a look at what's going on and one of things that seems to be going on is that people who are painters, graphic artists, say well, I think I'll try some video, see what's going on. And of course the main prohibitive thing is its cost. Especially for art students who just don't have any money — where are you going to get the equipment. You have to make this elaborate plan to do it. And it's very difficult. It's as if a painter had to think of this big masterwork for a long time and one day he gets to go out and rent a brush and comes back makes the painting and returns the brush to the rental place, clean. It's not going to work.

**I feel that the most important thing about being an artist is of course that you're free. There are no rules it is one of the very few things in the world you can do where you make up all the rules yourself.**



There's a count — Italian count — who makes the rounds of New York. He goes to sculpture studios and has a look at what's there. Many sculpture students have a dream of having their work in a place — so perfect — it's not in somebody's house with ketchup spilling on it or in some museum's collection maybe sometimes in the attic or basement, shuffled round here or there or sitting in his own living room. It's the perfect place for it to be. People can come and see it but it's also lit just the way he wants — it's perfect. So this Count makes the rounds in New York and every sculptor in New York knows minute by minute where this Count is. There's a phone network — Count So and So's on 14th Street and he's heading South... People go out and flag him down. I think that's great. Anything you have to do to survive as an artist is in my book fine. And I think that the most important thing is that there aren't rules and for one artist to tell another artist what they should do with their work is a big mistake. That's part of the whole freedom of being able to create things.

While I hope that the structural things in the work that I do don't stick out a lot they are the things that hold the work together. In *United States* the angles are the foundation of the structure of the work. In the transportation section all of the movement and all of the images and all of the sounds pan stereo, left to right, east to west. It begins with a kind of historical confusion. You see Mount Arrarat over here, New York City over here. A map of the Atlantic with Europe and Africa and South America. It begins with a kind of example of movement — a certain American religious sect was looking at conditions of the world during the Flood and they calculated that a lot of the winds and tides and currents were basically in an overall south-easterly direction which would then locate pre-flood civilisation

somewhere in the area of up-state New York and the Garden of Eden basically New York City.

In the second section the axis shifts to the vertical. All of the images and sounds drop and rise. A small instrument, a toy hammer is used. This is the political section really. It suggests people's ideas about their work and relates to social mobility, upward and downward rise and fall from power. The hand signal connected to this is one of power. In the third section the circle is used very prominently and there are many stories about centrality or home. At the end of this the circle becomes a kind of dryer with flags going round in it which then opens up to suggest the next movement, which is in and out. This is the money section. The last section is love, the axes then stabilise into a crossroads situation. Given this kind of structure which I hope doesn't stick out like the bare bones of some kind of funny animal, I think that the people who understand that structure or can see it really best are other artists, people who make their own structures, put images together or put sounds together. They are the people who know best what I'm up to and can see how the thing is made. **To me the work is not about ideas it's about images and sounds and those things are sensual things. If given a choice between something I think is beautiful and interesting and something that's in my book politically correct or even morally correct I will choose the thing that's beautiful.**

People are genuinely terrified of what will happen to them. It's not a front line situation any more at all. It's your front yard and that changes people — psychologically in ways that are incalculable. There is a lot of attention paid to very horrific images now. Pictures of these giant fireballs rolling across the countryside, major cities devastated. **Plans of bus companies to take people out of cities and go to what's called their Host city — a town**

of 200,000 and they're supposed to accept their 2 million people coming into their town. There are strikes in Seattle at their bus company now because they say we're not driving these people. It's preposterous. The point is that the images of that that are shown to people are gripping. No-one can imagine a more amazing image than the end of the world.

Visionaries of the 20th Century have tried to make images of a world that has different priorities. It's a very hard job to do that. Images that would be hopeful and thrilling in the way that violence can be thrilling. I think that that's a huge challenge. I don't know who should do this. I think it would be wonderful if artists could say we want to make these thrilling images but at the same time I feel very torn about it because I am not a politician or a preacher. I don't presume to tell anybody what to do.

It's a very delicate balance between those kind of ideals, and I think it's largely a matter of how it's done and can only be judged in an individual way. There also aren't rules about whether you can or cannot consider ideas like that — where they fall in terms of the art is the most important thing, and that can only be done by looking at that piece of art itself, rather than a blanket statement that says don't be political.

**My goal is really to make work that is open enough so that other people can make their own way through it. The best thing that somebody can say to me after a performance is I got so many ideas from seeing your work. Then they tell me what the ideas were and they have nothing to do with what I thought, which is wonderful — that tells me that it was airy enough yet suggestive enough for someone else to come into it and just say well that's interesting, that's not, that's fine, that's not — rather than being didactic. That's the thing that frightens me most is that kind of didacticism.**

## Spoken By Others

John Roberts considers Laurie Anderson the star.

**A** number of high-powered claims have been made for Laurie Anderson. Now she is a 'hot property' — consumerable, an artist with a hit single and successful album behind her, and the luxury of a mass audience — those claims seem all the more justified. She is important, her work is seminal. Anderson's performance delivers what technological media based art has long promised: a sensual, compelling, challenging and most of all demotic picture of our technological sign-systems, what it's like to 'live in the midst of wires' as she said recently. Her shift from the artworld to the rock business has in no complete sense been a break with or rejection of her past.

Addressing herself to an audience outside of the artworld — albeit up to now very small — has always motivated her view of what art can achieve in the wider world. Her success is the natural outcome of these ambitions and as such should be seen as real breakthrough whatever the future difficulties in personal terms maybe. Breakthroughs though don't remain breakthroughs though don't remain breakthroughs, it is therefore important that Anderson's entrance to such charmed circles be seen from a long-term perspective, the easiest thing in the world is for the artworld to betray her as an 'untouchable'. How worldly success will ultimately affect her work is far too early to say. Although I

cannot see her selling off her work by the pound — the roots of her art are too strong, too long won — her recent concert at the Adelphi highlighted what will no doubt become an increasing problem for her: the pressures of convenience, of tailoring her work to fit the conventional rock gig format without sacrificing the accumulative nuances of the material. Unlike any other solo artist in the history of performance (with the possible exception of Robert Wilson) she is now up against the problems — keeping things fresh, adjusting to audiences — that confront all full-time professional performers. But perhaps I am over-emphasizing these difficulties because her work is in no sense bound by narrative or



linear structure. The monologues, musical vignettes and stylized movement are autonomous and interchangeable units, even if they are non-heterogeneous in subject matter and presentation. Hence at the Adelphi one got the feeling that this was the 'best of' or an 'introduction to' Laurie Anderson, before she performs *United States* in toto at the Dominion and



CHRIS HARRIS

the ICA in autumn. (With careful attention to theatrical protocol she saved *O Superman* for an encore). However, that said, it is worth looking at just how good she is and the various claims surrounding her.

Inevitably being in the limelight the personality gets hived off from the art. If her strengths as a performer are underestimated in the art press (because subordinate to the work's issues) they are over-compensated, divorced from any ideational framework in the music press (because subordinate to the music). The former emphasizes the critical side, the asexual persona, the dehumanization techniques or *verfremdungseffekts* — the fact that she dissolves her own identity, is 'spoken' by others — and the latter her charm and humour, her technical sophistication and the topicality of her songs — in short those attributes that make her a star. On the one hand she is post-modern, Brechtian, and on the other an eccentric New York singer-

song writer. If the latter kind of thinking has done little to accommodate the former this rests on the assumption that the terms have changed, she is now in the hands of others less intellectually preoccupied. Hence the critical context which has surrounded her entry into popular culture carries little weight for those who are now fans. Her artworld past has no meaning. Although the mass media is prepared to acknowledge where she has come from, they are not prepared to discuss why she is here. Because she is here, the rest is redundant. The job now is to get on with it. To a certain extent this has to be the case if we are to take her new position seriously and not as if she were simply passing through. Art criticism therefore has a responsibility to address itself to the culture she is now part of, the potential infiltration and transformation of which they saw in her work in the first place. Anderson's own responsibilities — the moral ground from which she views the world — must also by necessity shift. Because audience expectations are geared to an artist's oeuvre and the artist's public image Anderson has an increased responsibility to her material. At the moment there is tendency in her work towards fuzziness. As Vera Frenkel has said recently 'The work of debunking harmfully sacred notions is useful, and Anderson does this part well. What she doesn't do is bring the points home, making them ours, letting us share the responsibility. When she's through with us we don't care about these things much, though we care a lot about her'. The Brechtian influences in her work have been much discussed, but the necessary spaces — breathing spaces — for audience reflection get short shrift at times; Anderson is drawn to the seamlessness of mass culture, its polymorphous presence, and her work maximizes this. We are seduced by the continuous flux of images and sounds, caught between deciphering their implications and just wanting to let the experience flow over us. Although there are changes in tone and emphasis, there are no sharp breaks or peaks, things roll on at a uniform pace. The work is essentially cyclical. Epic theatre of course is very similar to this (as Benjamin said about epic theatre 'there is no such thing as a latecomer') but with Anderson, because of the heavy use of sophisticated technology, the viewer is too often lulled rather than pulled up short.

Despite all the advantages working on the rock circuit brings, Anderson is far too sophisticated an artist to talk simply about accessibility. Being able to talk to more people is the icing on the cake — no more. It's because Anderson is dealing with our value-systems, with the process and abuse of information and lives, that her accessibility remains *potentially* so subversive.

'Devaluation of the past', 'intense preoccupation with the self', 'historical discontinuity' Christopher Lasch's descriptions of America in 'an age of diminishing expectations' could so easily refer to the themes of Anderson's art. 'People no

longer dream of overcoming difficulties but merely of surviving them'. In her stories and anecdotes Anderson surveys these feelings of erosion and cynicism. But without condescension. One of the strengths of her art, as that of a good novel, is her ability to let her subjects speak without being patronized. Anderson starts out from the 'found' story: conversations, observations from television newspeak, political doubletalk, advertising are transformed into cautionary and humorous tales, lyrics and dialogues. Her America is a babble of smooth industrial-military Americanese, of voices distorted by technology, squeaky voices, foreboding voices, of voices dulled into passivity. Forgetting, censure and confusion characterise these stories. A North American Indian from a vanishing tribe, visited by a group of anthropologists cannot remember the ancient song he is requested to sing, so he sings gobbledygook instead. The anthropologists are impressed. A man comes home from the office to find his wife on fire. A man wanders into a strange house thinking it is his own. These points of psychological conflagration — moments of breakdown and stress — form the pattern of her overview.

Anderson's attempt to examine the myths and obsessions of modern America in such an episodic and all encompassing way has prompted some commentators to stress the native literary roots of her work. The 'sociological' fiction of Miller's *The Air Conditioned Nightmare* and more specifically Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* The gigantism of Anderson's *United States* echoes the totalizing ambitions that have been so much a part of this literary heritage. It has seemed impossible to deal with the power of the States in any other way. The idea of the U.S.A. as a huge melting pot of races and languages has precluded any easy synthesis of the American experience. Anderson's work follows in these difficult and giant footsteps.

John Roberts

1. Interview with Rob La Frenais *Performance Magazine* No 14 pg 34.
2. 'Discontinuous Notes On And After A Meeting Of Critics, By One Of The Artists Present' *artscanada* March/April 1981 pg 35.



# National Independent Video Festival

Penny Dedman and Peter Savage assess the week long event.



'Sanitorium', Islington Video

**A** programme of evening screenings, daytime viewing, discussions, forums and debates, video performance, video production, packaging and a party marked the week-long Second National Independent Video Festival held at the ICA on 1st-6th June.

The first Festival, held last year at the London Film Makers Co-Op clearly demonstrated the need for a continuing forum for the viewing and discussion of new work and the dissemination of new ideas and debates on related issues. The second Festival was presented by the Independent Video Association against a backdrop of a sudden upsurge of interest in innovative and creative independent work with recent developments in cable and satellite television and the impending arrival of Channel 4. Channel Four was a principal sponsor of this year's festival, along with a GLAA guarantee against loss, and a BFI contribution towards publicity. This marked a significant and most welcome upturn in the fortunes of the fund-starved IVA.

The featured work covered a broad spectrum, ranging from politically committed alternative views of media representations

in the Ulster conflict, through hilarious reconstructions of the gay community's relationship with the police and artist's explorations of video technology, to video technology, to video theatre, fiction and satire. In addition, the intention of the festival was to bring together the producers, the artists and the public in a much needed forum and exchange of ideas and impressions.

The spread of screenings of the 31 selected tapes made consistent viewing an impossibility. Nevertheless, any one evening's viewing provided a well-integrated selection of the types of work represented. Strict categorisation of Independent work is no longer possible, as for example many of the Community tapes use drama and fiction to illustrate social issues, and documentary work often draws on the language of video art. This merging of traditional boundaries is a progressive trend and marks the maturation of work that has been largely dismissed as unprofessional or simply boring. It is ironic that this development in independent work poses even worse problems for those looking for funding from grant authorities, who were represented in the seminar

*Funding — The future prospect.* Speakers from three funding authorities were present (Ian Lancaster from the Gulbenkian Foundation, Rodney Wilson from the Arts Council, and Alan Fountain from Channel 4) and it rapidly became clear that demarcation in funding responsibility to various sections of the video community was a major source of tension between funding bodies, and it was also clear that in that situation it is the video maker who ultimately loses out. If any of the funding bodies had been monitoring the new trends in the video work in the Festival, it would be high on their list of priorities to renegotiate and discuss new criteria amongst themselves, but it seems there are no such plans afoot at the moment.

**Penny Dedman**

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A s part of the Saturday evening programme of the IVA Festival there were four short performances using video by Sonia Knox, Mick Hartney, Richard Layzell and Dov Eylath. All the performances made use of a video projector, though only Mick Hartney put it to any significant use. His performance was (he acknowledged) derivative of an expanded cinema event by Guy Sherwin. It began with a tape showing a series of layered shots, each slightly different of Hartney holding what appeared at first to be a mirror but on closer inspection was a large sheet of card. This acted as the 'key' in a Chroma Key shot so that each sheet of card formed a 'hole' in its layer of the image and revealed the image behind it. In the performance Hartney, having let the tape run for a few minutes, climbed up onto a table in front of the image and began to mimic the actions of the figures in the tape, rotating a sheet of white card and occasionally reciting fragments of the soundtrack.

Set against the other performances of the night, this one was by far the most interesting. Hartney kept to something like the ten minutes allotted to him and certainly attempted to use video and the projector consciously. The main criticism of the performance (and the tape, which was not made specifically for it) was that in the end we were left thinking that we had been shown an interesting device but nothing really had been done with it. Much artists' video seems to be preoccupied with merely illustrating and demonstrating that certain devices are possible and leaving it at that. It's time such devices were used to some purpose.

At the other end of the spectrum, Dov Eylath's performance was an altogether unrewarding event. Having brought with him two cameras and a vision mixer to supplement the projector, he did very little with them. There was an air of dissatisfaction which seemed to affect his performance, the whole thing being somewhat improvisatory.

Again it began with a section of one of his tapes being shown for a few minutes before he entered the performance area, smeared in a made-up red face. The images on camera, which attempted to follow Eylath's movements, were alternately projected on the screen above him as he writhed about on the floor, freezing in one position for a few seconds at a time. Then, without warning and after perhaps only four or five minutes he simply stood up and declared that that was it and promptly left the performance area.

This kind of activity seems to be some kind of throw back to the hippy days of Fluxus and happenings; the problem is does it matter what happens? It seems for Dov Eylath that it doesn't. There is an air of that old spectre of the artist as a person who uses a capital A to describe himself, as if they are somehow gifted, endowed with other faculties than us mere mortals.

Sonia Knox also used a camera with the projector. She sat at the back of the audience reading what appeared to be a

prepared script made up of fragments of text, whistles and other vocal noises. Three cassette players also replayed superimposed fragments of pre-recorded text and sound. The camera was trained on her face, though at one point she put on an orange mask, and its image was relayed through the projector to the large screen. The resulting performance was disappointing. What we could hear from the three cassette players seemed to be very confusing segments of dreams and/or memories given a rather clichéd radio treatment with Knox adding live segments which echoed or pre-empted the recordings. The whole affair took an intensely personal and unfortunately private atmosphere and my impression was that I was eavesdropping on something which could not really have any significance for me. Personal work can often be extremely interesting when it avoids the trap of being particular to the artist, when it avoids being private. This work seemed so private as to become inaccessible.

The question of whether video was being used as a convenience or as something significant to the work again reared its head, though it could certainly be argued that it was being used to relay information in a significant way, it also

setting up of a performance at Acme which seemed to consist mostly of Layzell talking to visitors. His performance at the IVA Festival consisted of him talking us through sections of the tape, rather like the stereotyped view of someone talking through their holiday slides with the next door neighbours who couldn't afford to go. He adopted what seems to be becoming his usual 'performance' attitude of slightly forced arrogance, throwing out orders to people and generally being condescending about the people who appeared in the tape. I'm not too sure what he thinks he is achieving by this; my own reaction is annoyance and to leave him to it. He has already managed to put himself in a position which is difficult to question at such performances, since in many respects he exploits members of the audience, often through ridicule, or attempts to embarrass them. Their attitude is usually to avoid being rude to him so that they leave him 'in control' of a situation where 'the artist' is an authoritative position from the beginning. To enter into discussion in such a situation is courting disaster.

With the great potential video has to offer performance work it was unfortunate that more could not have been made of it in these. Video must be used more inven-

'Kensington Gore', Catherine Elwes



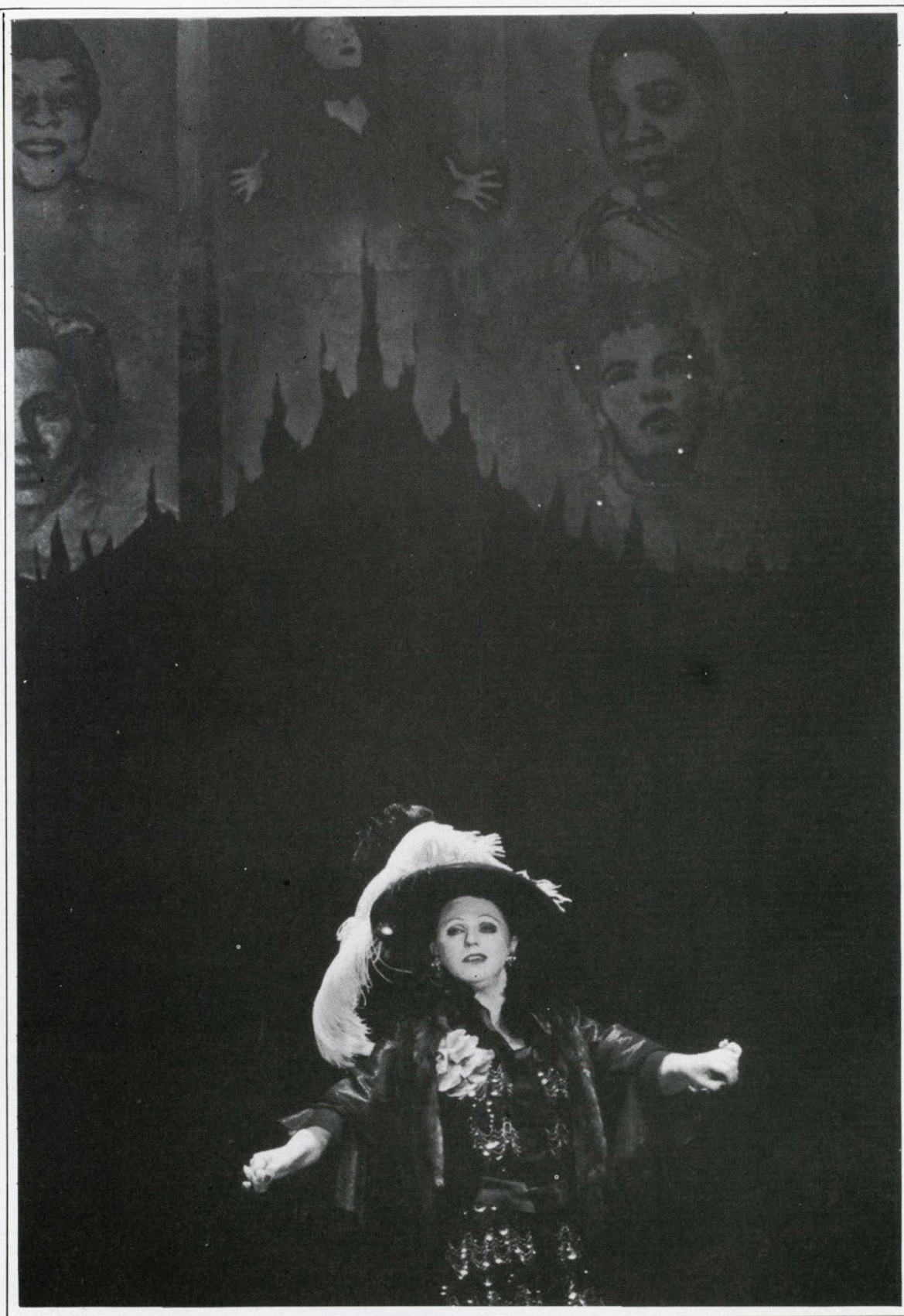
seemed somewhat ambiguous as to whether it had been consciously used as part of a work which concerned itself with issues relating to the distribution of information.

The other performance of the night by Richard Layzell was again a rather tedious affair, though there were a few odd moments of humour to relieve the atmosphere. Layzell began by informing us that he would be playing sections of a tape recorded at a previous exhibition of his work at the Acme Gallery just before it closed. The tape was a recording of the

tively and not merely as an opportunist addition to a work as seemed to be the case with some of those performances. At the same time it should be said that video festivals which attempt to include all aspects of independent video — here there had been no place for video installations for instance) — should be encouraged throughout the country so that the whole range of independent video activity can finally be seen.

Peter Savage





**Robyn Archer as Marie Lloyd in *A Star is Torn***



# Robyn Archer

'You can actually have politics and show business'. Robyn Archer discusses her remarkable career with Marguerite McLaughlin.

A star in her native Australia, Robyn Archer chose to make her London debut as part of *The Pack of Women*, the show which re-opened the Drill Hall. She has returned to London, not as herself but as the eleven women singers she portrays in *A Star is Torn*. She took time off during her sell-out run at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, to talk to Marguerite McLaughlin.

**Marguerite McLaughlin:** You started getting involved in music very young, how did you first learn?

**Robyn Archer:** My father was a comedian, and his mother, my grandmother was a Cockney involved in music hall in the east end of London. She emigrated to Australia so she was the one who first taught me my songs. When I was four we lived in their pub in Adelaide. So there was a bit of it in the family and at about twelve I started to pick up on music a lot more. I taught myself the ukelele and got a guitar after about a year. I picked up on folk music and we weren't very well off at all so I used it for pocket money and kept it going through University where I got involved in jazz and blues and rock and roll, vaudeville, burlesque and lots of things. After teaching for a few years I drifted into performing again and now I've been professional again for seven years.

**M McL:** Was going into teaching a way of getting away from music?

**RA:** It wasn't so much getting away from music. I did a lot with kids with music and drama while teaching English. I was always very interested in music it was just that I found the company of people working in show business, which is what I'd been working in, was really deploring and boring — a whole lot of bullshitters after success. I really enjoyed teaching and only gave it up when it became obvious to me through my Brecht work that politics wasn't folk music, you could actually have politics and show business. The past seven years have been a history of combining socialist and sexual politics with show business, not ghetto versions preaching to the converted but actually using entertainment as a vehicle for saying serious things.

**M McL:** Did you find that that way of working then brought you into contact with a different type of theatre person that you could relate to?

**RA:** Yes exactly, they were no longer 'show biz' people they tended to be serious 'artists' and as a working class kid I'd never come across people that had gone to drama school or that you could have a musical and dramatic upbringing — the concept of actual training and craft and all that. For me it was something one did intuitively, one performed, it had nothing to do with what I was doing with language and literature because I'd never made the connection. By the time I made the connection I was teaching full time and singing six nights a week. I did that for eighteen months. Since then my work has been self determined. That was when I'd also met Di (Diana Manson, Robyn's manager/agent). We would find ways of doing what I wanted to do without my having to fulfil somebody else's niche. I'd think up projects to do, collaborations with people I admire and Di finds the money and the space and we do them.

**M McL:** You make the distinction between 'artist' and 'show business'. Where do you see yourself fitting into that?

**RA:** What show business people are and are about is a *Hit* whether it be a hit single, a hit show, a hit film, but what they want is the hit. They spend their lives searching for that hit, most of them never find it, but their entire energies are about that. I'm different from that because what I care about is the work. I'm starting to be very successful, it surprises me because I don't have my eye to success. What I care about is that every day I'm happy in my work. I would say that I've become a 'serious artist' in that I take a lot of care of the bits of me that are required to perform. The only time Di and I think of this career in terms of commercial aspects is when we're made to think about how we stay alive. Take *A Star is Torn* (just finishing its run at

the Theatre Royal) I like it very much, I'm pleased with it. It's not a shameful show by any means but we both know very well by our experience in Australia that it will earn us enough money, especially if it transfers, to actually not be burdened by having to do terrible work. If we've got a money spinner in *Star* which it was in Australia — it allowed us a year off which resulted in *The Pack of Women* (Drill Hall, winter 1981), for which Di worked for no money at all. We're not totally naive in the commercial aspects of the business. The performing side of me is what people want and that will make it possible to do worthwhile projects from which it would be impossible to make a living.

The Brecht record (on EMI) is genuine pioneering work, nobody's done that album. It's the first of its kind to have that spread of music and those translations. Without the Australian success of *Star* we couldn't have been in Abbey Road Studios last year. In the theatre and particularly in fringe theatre, which is the great charm of London for me, one does find that kind of person totally dedicated to theatre because they don't come to the theatre with their eyes on hits. They have no choice, they want to be working in theatre, they do it for no other reason, usually struggling to get by. Just look at the Drill Hall, people who aren't after a job at the National, the RSC, or the Arts Council. They like to work in the excitement and the environment of struggle. Of course they wish it were a bit easier... but they're there. It's infinitely more interesting than stand up comics or female impersonators...

**M McL:** But you use the cabaret format often in your own work, not only in *The Pack of Women* but in *Kold Komforti Kaffee*, etc. How do you explain that, if often your past experience of such things was so gruelling?

**RA:** There is a huge amount of my performance now and my abilities now which I attribute directly to my training in vaudeville — which is what club entertainment is. I recall the first time I went to the National Theatre in 1977 and having one of the actors say at one point how difficult it is to stand alone in a solo spot and do this piece. I was profoundly shocked because since the age of twelve all I'd been doing was standing in a solo spot, like every fifth, third and first rate club performer who designs their own performance saying 'I open with a fast song, then I have a mildly amusing song, then a big ballad...' and stand up in front of a lot of people...

**M McL:** Who aren't as polite as at the National...

**RA:** Right, and who are loud and often drunk and more interested in the poker and bingo machines. You've never seen the band in your life before, you hope they'll get your music right. When they don't you cope. You have to. Once I found Brecht and looked at all the things that had been going on in the Weimar period of the '30s for political reasons. I already had the style, the craft of putting a show together, all that then had to be said was that you could do all of these things and it didn't have to be meaningless bullshit. In fact it can not only be non-sexist and enjoyable, it can actually be helpful.

**M McL:** How do you assess your work?

**RA:** I'm a pragmatist in that my work has been going very well, and if something like *The Pack of Women* had flopped I would have had to carefully reassess what I was doing. But it was a success and I've listened to the criticisms of some people and weighed them up. I don't doubt that *The Pack of Women II* will change a little according to a number of opinions I found interesting and informative. *Star* similarly, I weighed it up carefully whether we should do it in London and it's proven to be a correct decision.

There was an interesting situation when I went back to Australia for a tour in January. I went back to do two concert programmes in ways I'd never done before. The Brecht concert was extremely straight: no show business, I didn't wear any makeup, it was a classical recital, with the luxury of an excellent band. The critics were divided... they wanted show business.



## Interview

**M McL:** Because it was you and they knew your past work?

**RA:** Yes because they know I'm a performer. One classical critic, who doesn't believe anything of value has been written since Monteverdi, and had never seen me made reference to my rock and roll concert coming up the next week saying 'I hope she doesn't make the mistake of doing all Brecht in her second programme.' For the rock concert I'd written eleven new songs and only used two or three songs I'd ever sung on stage before. The reviews were excellent, largely because I'd come back doing new material. Yet friends who hadn't seen me for two years were delighted that the Brecht was so plain. I suppose it will be a bit of a shock when two of my plays are produced in Sydney this year. Then I'll have to be judged as a playwright...

**M McL:** Isn't one of them about Carmen Miranda?

**RA:** *The Conquest of Carmem Miranda* and the other one is called *Il Magnifico* using a very Brechtian model. It's about Lorenzo di Medici. With me not in them, their never being seen before, I'll have my neck put on the line a bit. Well *Pack II* will be without me too, we're trying to find a venue here. They'll all be interesting situations.

**M McL:** What does the immediate future hold for you?

**RA:** It is fairly sure that there will be a West End transfer of *Star* and there are a number of writing projects going, and of course sorting out *Pack II*. If we transfer to the West End it will be a long run.

**M McL:** How do you feel about that?

**RA:** I don't mind the idea, actually if we do six it will be the longest I've done any thing, or been anywhere in seven years. It will be like having a nine to five job and I'll have lots of time for myself. It's a little bit frightening in terms of the audience I might get, they might be boring. The notoriety of being a West End success is a bit of a worry because people develop a different attitude. They expect you to be something called a star. I keep very private, I don't go carousing, I can't ever (due to an asthmatic condition).

**M McL:** You've said the charm of London for you was the fringe, is there nothing like that in Australia?

**RA:** There always has been in Melbourne, there's a tradition there, partly due to the inaccessibility of the Melbourne Theatre Company. It's an area I'd like to work in in Sydney. To start developing a viable alternative to the straight theatre there. I feel there are two things I have to do in Australia. I have to spend six months on an Aboriginal settlement because the plight of those people is shocking and few people know enough about it. I would need to spend time with them before I could speak out with any kind of authority about what's going on. I would hope that the women would teach me some of their secular singing too. Secondly what I'd like to do is have a permanent political cabaret, probably a pub open at lunchtime which would be a gathering place for journalists, a real coffeehouse atmosphere. In the evening there would be two shows a night with a little company which could shift and change a bit, so that every five or six weeks there would be a different show. It would be a way of helping young performers and musicians get their eye off the main chance. Rather than wasting their time crying over not having a hit, they could be earning a wealth of experience. It would require a union battle because there is no provision for anything but high paid salaries. Everything else is illegal. It would be a fight so that someone could agree to take a percentage of the gate but be able to be in the union.

**M McL:** There had been some criticisms about *Pack of Women* from a part of the Women's Movement about your using men in the band, etc. How did you feel about that?

**RA:** I've done a number of things to offend the Women's Movement. After I made my first album *The Lady's Choice*, with songs like the *Menstruation Blues* and *The Double Standard* I was expected to become another Meg Christian — champion of the Women's Movement. I don't want to be anybody's champion. I speak for myself and if some people find that

useful may they take it and us with all joy, but they can't tell me what to do. I listen to what people have to say, some of it, especially from the Women's Movement, upsets me terribly because I am after all a woman who needs the support of other women. It has happened four or five times in the past seven years that attacks have been so violent that I've felt I'll never go on stage again. But when I've examined them later I've seen that often they have been attacks of bigotry. I understand why some women take the position of having nothing to do with men because their own experience has been so bad. But that has not been my experience, I do not have that kind of anger towards men. It's ironic that it's been so important to have the support of the Women's Movement and it's the one area where I have had none. So often I feel criticism is made in such a way as if I've not possibly considered the issues of ten years of feminism. And if you're in the public eye you are careful about the position you take about anything. What you lose in support for not taking any party line you gain in what you work out for yourself. Ultimately you just carry on.

*Stage shows: Kold Komfort Kaffee, A Star is Torn, Songs from Side Show Alley, The Conquest of Carmen Miranda, Il Magnifico, The Pack of Women.*

*Recordings: The Ladies' Choice, The Wild Girl In The Heart.*

*Tonight: Lola Blau, A Star is Torn, Rough as Guts, Robyn Archer Sings Brecht.*

*Books: The Robyn Archer Songbook (McPhee, Gribble, Australia, 1980)*

*Two Childrens Books (Mrs Bottle Burps & Mrs Bottle Busks) are to be published by Thomas Nelson, Australia, and a book of short stories is on the way from Penguin. 'Robyn Archer Sings Brecht' is the only album available in Britain. HMV ASD 4166, TC ASD 4166.*

*'Pack of Women II' is at this year's Edinburgh Festival.*

*'A Star is Torn' has transferred to Wyndhams Theatre in the West End.*

Robyn Archer as Bessie Smith in *A Star is Torn*





Vivien Lisle in *Legitimate Journey*

# Legitimate Journey

Vivien Lisle explores the facts and symbols of androgyny in a moving performance.

At the beginning of Vivien Lisle's performance *Legitimate Journey*, three elaborate brass objects are hanging from the ceiling: a bell, a candelabrum with two double-headed eagles and two red candles, and a censer from which emerge clouds of richly smelling incense smoke. Towards the end, the artist ties a large cross onto her back with red cord which she then binds tightly around herself; having hooked the candelabrum onto the left arm of the cross and the censer onto its right arm, she stands behind the bell and rings it, before holding its knocker to her crutch and exhibiting it like a penis or enlarged clitoris.

Lisle is a British-born performance artist living and working in Amsterdam. Her artistic training was at Leicester, Newcastle and the North East London Poly, which she left in 1977. Her work was already dealing with sexual roles and the following year she did a performance with Edith Pollock, entitled *We Can Always Adapt*, which however she now hates. Increasingly, she had become disenchanted with what she considered orthodox

feminism's latent puritanism and negative attitude towards pornography. And at the same time she had lost interest in its exclusively social perspective and become progressively more involved with mythical and archetypal imagery. The mythic and the pornographic came together in her next performance, *Vertical Courage* (1980), which centred around the themes of St Sebastian and bondage. While basically happy about this piece, she says now that she 'had still been thinking in terms of polar opposites', something that *Legitimate Journey* definitively goes beyond. As well as live action, both performances use slides and sound tapes — music and spoken texts — and numerous props. There are no lasting, static art objects which derive from her performances; but she would like to make the slides, at present little more than an accompaniment, into a more central feature.

The theme of *Legitimate Journey* is androgyny, in both its symbolic and its literal aspects. Specifically, it is based on the memoirs of the nineteenth century French hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin,

which were re-published in 1980 with an introduction by Michel Foucault. Barbin was brought up as a girl and educated in single-sex Catholic schools where she experienced passionate, albeit innocent, attractions towards her classmates. In 1858, at the age of twenty, she became a teacher and fell madly in love with a female colleague two years her junior. This love was reciprocated and rapidly developed from a socially acceptable sisterliness into a fully consummated romance. For reasons that were never clear even to herself, Barbin felt the need to confess everything to her local bishop in La Rochelle, who in turn promptly called in a doctor. The latter told Barbin that she must regard him 'not only as a doctor but also as a confessor'. In his physical examination, he discovered that both male and female characteristics co-existed. For example, while Barbin had an entirely feminine urethra as well as a vagina she never menstruated. She also possessed what appeared to be testicles and was capable of emitting sperm — though not through her diminutive penis which was imperforate and might equally have been considered a greatly enlarged clitoris. Rather than simply concluding that she was a hermaphrodite, the doctor weighed these factors against each other and, taking into account her sexual attraction towards women, recommended that her civil status be 'rectified' and that she be re-classified as male. The autopsy performed on Barbin's corpse was later to confirm this diagnosis.

For Foucault, the interest of Barbin's case lies in its being an especially telling example of institutional medicine's need to ascribe to each individual a single 'true' sexual identity, male or female. And this he sees as part of the wider institutional aim of producing 'a true discourse on sex', a discourse of which the ultimate purpose is moral control. Medical probing into the secrets of sex, and in particular the sexually unusual, has been an instrument not of liberation, as some suppose, but of control. Its roots are to be sought in the Catholic practice of confession: the analogy between the psychoanalyst's couch and the confessional is no coincidence. It is appropriate that the soundtrack of *Legitimate Journey* begins with the sugary song *I Confess* by Dorothy, immediately followed by the general confession from the Catholic Mass; also that, about half way through the performance, there should be read the following extract from Foucault's *History of Sexuality*:

Confession is a ritual which takes place within a power relationship. One confesses to an authority who prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile.'

For, at one level, Lisle is following Foucault in exploring the subtle mechanisms by which we are induced to submit to established authority, an authority which is ever tightening its grip through legal and medical definitions, apparently scientific but in reality laden with traditional moral value-judgements.



## Feature

One of the main images in *Legitimate Journey* is that of the apple. When we first see Lisle, she is peeling an apple; before long the red peel of several apples adorns her hair in a conscious reference to Medusa. She also cuts some apples in half, revealing the five-pointed star at their centre. Lisle did not know at the time of the performance that it is because of this five-pointed star that apples were associated with Venus but it fits in well with her intentions. What she stresses about five is that it is the sum of two and three, two being a female and three a male number; also that the traditional figure of the complete, cosmic human being with arms outstretched can be inscribed in the five-pointed star.

That is the shape too of the periwinkle flower. On stage, behind the location of the principal action and flanked by two candles are what might best be described as three icons: one contains two transfixed butterflies; one is a composite photograph of Lisle and her younger brother; and the third is a photograph of periwinkles. The periwinkle is associated also with death and death is another major element in the imagery of this performance. Lisle has made a granite gravestone to commemorate Barbin. Unable to transport this to England, she used instead a suitably shaped cardboard cut-out onto which a slide of the real gravestone was projected: it was important to her that, if it could not be the real thing, it should be quite obviously a representation. The final words on the soundtrack are quoted from Barbin's memoirs:

'Death is there, oblivion. There, without any doubt, shall I, exiled from the world, at last find a homeland, brothers, friends. And there too, shall the outlaw find a place.'



The last years of Barbin's life, lived as a man in considerable poverty in Paris, were desperately unhappy and lonely and he/she ended his/her own life at the age of twenty-nine. For Lisle, a believer in astrology, the fact that Barbin died at the age of twenty-nine, which is the length of Saturn's cycle, is only one of the many possibly meaningful coincidences which surround this subject. Among the factors which drew her to it was that Barbin's Neptune, a planet concerned with communication, was in Aquarius, Lisle's own sun sign. The fact that Barbin's suicide occurred in the Rue de l'Ecole de Medecine was highly appropriate, in view of the im-

portance which the case was to be accorded in medical text-books at the end of the last century; but much stranger was that a friend of Lisle's, who was going to Paris and whom Lisle had asked to take some pictures of that street, booked entirely by chance into an hotel which was actually in it.

Hermaphroditus is the son/daughter of Hermes (Mercury) and Aphrodite (Venus). While the reconciling power of Aphrodite is obvious enough, that of Hermes, charged with communicating between Heaven and Earth, is no less relevant. His *caduceus*, or staff with two intertwined serpents, is one of the most basic of all androgynous symbols. At one stage in *Legitimate Journey*, a slide of a caduceus appears on the left and one of a daffodil bound with a red rope on the right; they merge and become one. Symbolic of the reconciliation of opposites, androgyny appears in almost all esoteric religious traditions, from alchemy to shamanism, from the Qabbalah to Tantra. But while most modern writers who document the symbolism of androgyny go to great lengths to distance it from physical hermaphroditism, Lisle is at her best when she juxtaposes traditional symbols with images of gory operations or with details from Barbin's life. She retains the polyvalent richness of esoteric symbolism but combines it with a demystificatory stressing of medical and historical fact and thereby saves it from the dullness of polite sublimation. For Lisle, it is typical of Western culture that its medico-legal system is so loath to accept the hermaphrodite, since it dislikes ambiguity in any form. By interweaving the symbolic and the actual, Lisle is successfully attacking the very tendency which she deplores, the need to think in either-or dichotomies. **Gray Watson**

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# Back to the Garden

IOU in their unique and magical performance at the Almeida Festival in June. Overleaf Meira Eilash examines their complex and haunting work.



## I WENT

*I went back to the Garden  
To find out what I'd done.  
To say, 'I beg your pardon'  
And 'best wishes to Your Son.'*

*I went back of my own accord  
To register my doubt.  
An angel with a flaming sword  
Was keeping people out.*

*I asked if I could see the Man  
And have a heart to heart.  
The angel said 'no way we can.  
We said so at the start.'*

*Perhaps a word then with the boss;  
Five minutes — face to face.  
The angel said, 'eat candy floss.  
The chiefs in a state of grace.'*

*But surely I could leave a note?  
The angel said, 'no dice.  
I can't afford to rock the boat  
And sink the bastard twice.'*

*No souvenirs, no postcards?  
I saw the angel frown.  
'According to the coastguards,  
We are forty fathoms down.'*

Lou Glandfield

**D**ream-like yet concrete, poetic and still humorous, magical, surprising and entertaining — the I.O.U. Theatre's work exists in that 'no man's land' between the theatre and the plastic arts.

I.O.U. operates in the context of the not-to-be-taken-for-granted. They rebel against attempts to automatically categorise their aesthetics or genre. What is it that they create? A non-plot/non-characters/non-literary text theatre? An exhibition of paintings painted and displayed, one after the other, in front of the visitors' eyes? I.O.U. regard themselves as 'Theatre' and yet the company's six members (Lou Glandfield, Steve Gumbley, David Humpage, Louise Oliver, David Wheeler and Colin Wood — joined by another artist, Jane Revitt, for the Almeida production) are either plastic artists or musicians. None of them is a professional actor. They are 'Performers' rather than 'Actors'.

The liberty taken by this company in moving between the plastic arts — the traditional major concerns of which are space and objects — and the performing arts — which deal with questions of time and motion as well — enables I.O.U. to approach these two different poles according to the work's needs and to obtain that original mixture of vision and movement which has long been their 'trade-mark'.

This liberty is not merely formal but also relates to their material. At the heart of

their work there is a contrast: The contrast exists as a concept and as an artistic material. Taking clichés in order to break them. A quality of surprise. I.O.U. work with their audience's natural association but at the same time against them. The result is poetic, unexpected. They do not operate within any realistic place or time. Their 'landscapes' are made up of dream-materials, comprised of period costumes and bonfires side by side with the pale blue light of a television set; their vocal 'cloth' is woven of such sounds as flushing toilets together with repetitive,

somewhat melancholic songs and music with vague resemblance to old music traditions, perhaps Medieval perhaps early Baroque.

I.O.U. have established for themselves a rather interesting place within contemporary performance. Generally speaking, they are descended from that rich tendency among plastic artists, musicians and poets — a tradition first recognised in 1910, with the first Futurist events — who were no longer satisfied with merely presenting their artistic objects (publishing their poetry, composing their music) in conven-



The importance of the *environment*, as an inspiration and stimulus for a creative process, as a treasure of actual materials and as a central theme to which all the other images relate in one way or another, is clearly demonstrated by the unmistak-

able dominant presence of 'the house'.

For their first London outdoor production, I.O.U. chose a derelict house in Islington — devastated by fire some years ago — and an enclosed space (semi-garden) in-front of it. They used the house



tional circumstances, but sought a performing art, without any stage background or training. More recent developments to affect I.O.U., which has operated from West Yorkshire since 1976, are the Happenings of the late 50s and most of the 60s on one hand and Performance Art, which is a phenomenon of the 70s, on the other hand. Along with the latter I.O.U. have adopted the performance-frame — their events are conceived, deliberately, as presentations for *Audiences* — the separation between 'Audience' and 'Performance' is maintained; the event is carefully

planned and performed after a period of preparation; the show is maybe repeated a few times (not as the performances of the 60s which were mainly one-off presentations, only generally laid-out, without a definite given time-span and extensively using improvisation and chance-techniques).

Giving up the dramatic structure of plot and narrative or even mere sequences of events which tell a story — I.O.U. turned to a structure of collage or assemblage, in which an overall framework is given to a collection of elements, not necessarily con-

nected to each other in a logical, informative manner, but creating in total an effect of perceptible, visual information; always rich and stimulating on the imagery level, sometimes one of conceptual accumulation, as well.

The great importance to I.O.U. of the environment as a starting point for the creative process and as dominant artistic material in its own right is also one of the traditions of the 60s' performances. I.O.U. create their pieces for carefully chosen spaces — both indoor and outdoor — landscapes, public meeting places, sometimes theatres (the exception in their work as they restrict the flexible nature of the images). They work within their chosen, found or slightly designed environment for *at least* one week before the first performance and respond to its stimulus. They never impose a completed piece on an environment.

Another important element is the extensive use of objects. Objects in the realistic theatrical tradition have a functional or symbolic role (the classic example is the rifle shown on stage in the first act that must fire in the final act). In I.O.U.'s work, as in sculpture, objects and materials are sometimes chosen because of their pure plastic qualities — colours, texture, shapes — being soft or hard, dark or light. Very frequently, objects gain image status. A poured yellow paint becomes honey, straw baskets become bee-hives.

I.O.U. suggest an interesting viewpoint on performer-object relations. The status and importance of these two become equal. This is an animistic attitude towards the object-world and sometimes a performer turns into a poetic, almost mythical creature, half human, half object or animal.

In common with many plastic artists I.O.U. have their own reservoir of iconography — objects and images for many productions. And then, suddenly, a forgotten image comes back to mind and is used again. In some cases, an image is developed from one piece to another; sometimes one member of the company 'finds' one, works on it and with it and then, when he/she finally rejects the image — it is not uncommon that another member of the company picks it up and carries on working on it in a new way.

A striking feature of I.O.U. is their collaborative method of work. I.O.U.'s work is presented as a collective creation, combining all the personal resources, talents and imageries of its members to create one whole experience.

Having said all that, this experience requires one more element in order to be complete — the audience's co-operation. This does not suggest any physical, actual participation, but a particular mental approach — a readiness to use their imagination and to re-examine concepts, conventions, clichés, as well as a readiness to open their senses to the poetry and beauty which the work of this group of artists has to offer.



as an actual site and related to its everyday associations (manipulating all its spaces: rooms, floors, stairwell, chimney, toilets) as well as its pure plastic qualities (rust, peeled paint etc.). The contrast between all the images and gestures taking place inside

and around the house and the sharp air of unreality and improbability of such occurrences provided a magical atmosphere, a dream-like quality.



The status of *the house* as the *central image and theme* is reinforced by a sort of symbolic act; a divine winged figure carrying a diminutive house-model makes his way downwards, from the very top of the 'real' house to the ground. Having completed this ritual journey, he then performs a series of gestures, not less meaningful, the most prominent of which is imposing the house-model on another performer's head. The new creature — half human/half object — demonstrates the animistic attitude toward the object-world, often taken by I.O.U., and their notion of performer-object relations.

— the theme of stolen beehives and honey, followed by the appearance of revengful bees, is an old theme in the company's work. They started using it in early productions and return to it, from time to time.

The use of actual objects out of their conventional context is amazingly visualised here, when common kitchen strainers serve as the bees' eyes and feelers and straw baskets serve as beehives. The choice of materials for their pure plastic qualities is demonstrated through the use of yellow thick paint as honey. In both cases the 'things' gain an image status and this whole scene, starting with two 'medieval' figures carrying the beehives, through feeding the house-model with honey, the entrance of the bees in a black car, behaving like gangsters and finishing with the arrest of the house by a rather weird policeman — suggests a very strong feeling of magic, poesy, surprise and surrealism.



*Not just any cage this,  
neither is it a nest —  
no plucking of hairs here  
from our own mother's head.*

*Helping nature,  
breaking down the building,  
burning the bush.  
Crying for  
'One last guest'  
'One more parcel'  
'Yet one dance in the yard'*

*A day will not dawn lest you sing for it.  
Sing for your Thursdays,  
Sing for your Fridays twice.  
Sing, sing for your life.*

*Louise Oliver*







# 'An Integral Part of Your Lifestyle'

I went to a large department store to see a video-performance. In Tokyo, department stores are a perfect microcosm of the consumer society outside, so, as with everything else, if there is an avant-garde there must be a correct place for it. At the vast Seibu Ikebukuro store, apart from the 'usual' things (which include roof gardens, a myriad of coffee-shops and restaurants, and a private railway running from the centre of the store to the suburbs) there are to quote the brochure 'a wide range of cultural and community facilities to make it an integral part of your total life style.' This includes a performance space known as Studio 200, which is described as a 'visual home actively hosting the total range of creative arts.' Performance Magazine is also sold there, but does not sit entirely well with the electronic gadgetry and gourmet clothing that is the main business of this edifice.

Neither did the initial impression given by Leonore Welzien's video environment set up in the vast, clean hi-tech space of Studio 200. A pile of TV sets looking studiously messy, with bits of video tape strewn about, and the performer sprawled motionless covered with a fishing net gave the impression of an installation experiment miraculously displaced from the late sixties and deposited neatly on the pristine floor of this stylistic emporium.

My attention was soon drawn to details, though, like the rough but appositely spliced video tapes of lurid Japanese television, with its patina of sex and violence and ads for extremely unlikely products. It soon became clear that detail was what this work was primarily about. Surrounded by playbacks and live images of herself Welzien used her face and hair as subtle outlets for raw expression. In this, she is inspired by Japanese Buto dance, a post-war movement founded by an ex marathon runner called Ono Kazuo, who at 77 is still dancing. The aim of the Buto dancer is to 'forget his/her personal history to find his/her presence in the moment.' Hijakata Tatsuji, another early Buto dancer, would kill a chicken on stage and dance like a shaman to catch the bird's spirit, but Buto is really more like a form of meditation, where the performer waits to become slowly possessed by an image. Welzien: 'Buto dancers may look like crazy people, but they can traverse from the dance state to what others call normal. The point is that they are exploring those boundaries. The crazy aspect is very far from my everyday concept, yet since I dance it, it is a part of me.'

From the closeness of the TV world, Welzien moved swiftly across the room to position her face by a revolving red light,



Leonore Welzien skilfully framed by the camera operator into an image of almost gothic, macabre grandeur, while the audience become aware of an amplified drip of water falling from the high ceiling to a metal dish on the floor below. A long period passed with the performer motionless like this, and presumably waiting to be 'possessed', then the action shifted to another part of the space, with two large separate monochrome film images of her eyes, projected to the rear of the screens and the performer, rather in the style of a Laurie Anderson performance. Now, Welzien was interposed between two screens, the eyes behind her, her face a black, out of focus blob on the video. Again, our attention was drawn to the face by a slow, hand gesture across an open mouth, producing an almost geological texture and a strong, emotional intensity. The live sound of the drip was mixed with soundtrack by Fred Frith, Hervie Salvador and Magada Lith, but towards the end of the performance became the focal point as lights faded on all but the bowl and the performer after a long drawn-

out grimace, left the room. A shot of a strange substance appeared on the screen, which slowly revealed itself to be the performers hair, covering her face. As the face was slowly revealed by the hair, a technician 'wiped' the eyes away from the cinema screen by passing a cloth over the projection glass, again causing a concentration on detail rather than total image. Finally, the performer returned her mass of hair now falling loose, and slowly approached the water, the climax coming when the completely dominant drop was smothered by the hair. The symbolism throughout was completely abstract, based entirely on visual presence, without any specific meaning attached to any action. Therefore it was important to know whether Welzien really considered herself as having entered a state of possession while on display to the public.

She stated that she did, and that one of her reasons for coming to Japan was that such states were acceptable and even understood by the general public. Apart from the continued existence of Zen Buddhist practitioners within what is ostensibly an extremely materialistic society, she cited the trance state that the ordinary Japanese seems capable of achieving, whether on the long, numbing, crowded commuter train journeys they endure in silence, or the tremendously long hours worked, or the ability to live in close quarters with the sound of other families coming clearly through paper-thin walls.

Leonore Welzien is but one of the many who are fascinated by the Japanese culture, and there is a contemporary tradition of foreigners attempting to mediate and decipher aspects of it. Its impenetrability and strangeness unfailingly impress any visitor, principally for the reason that it has never been invaded or culturally colonised until the Second World War (by the Americans, whose gaudy influence can be seen everywhere) and its homogeneous but hierarchical social patterns suffuse every aspect of life, including the art world (and the theatre world, as John Ashford pointed out in Issue 14 in his description of the 'Ungra' theatre groups.) Hans Fleischner, another German artist resident in Japan told me that younger artists usually would 'become the disciples of older, more successful artists, who would see to their material needs while they in return would call for their master every morning and faithfully accompany him to his studio, to lectures and openings (no doubt also protecting him from the cruel barbs of passing critics!) He thought this might be the reason why there were so few individual

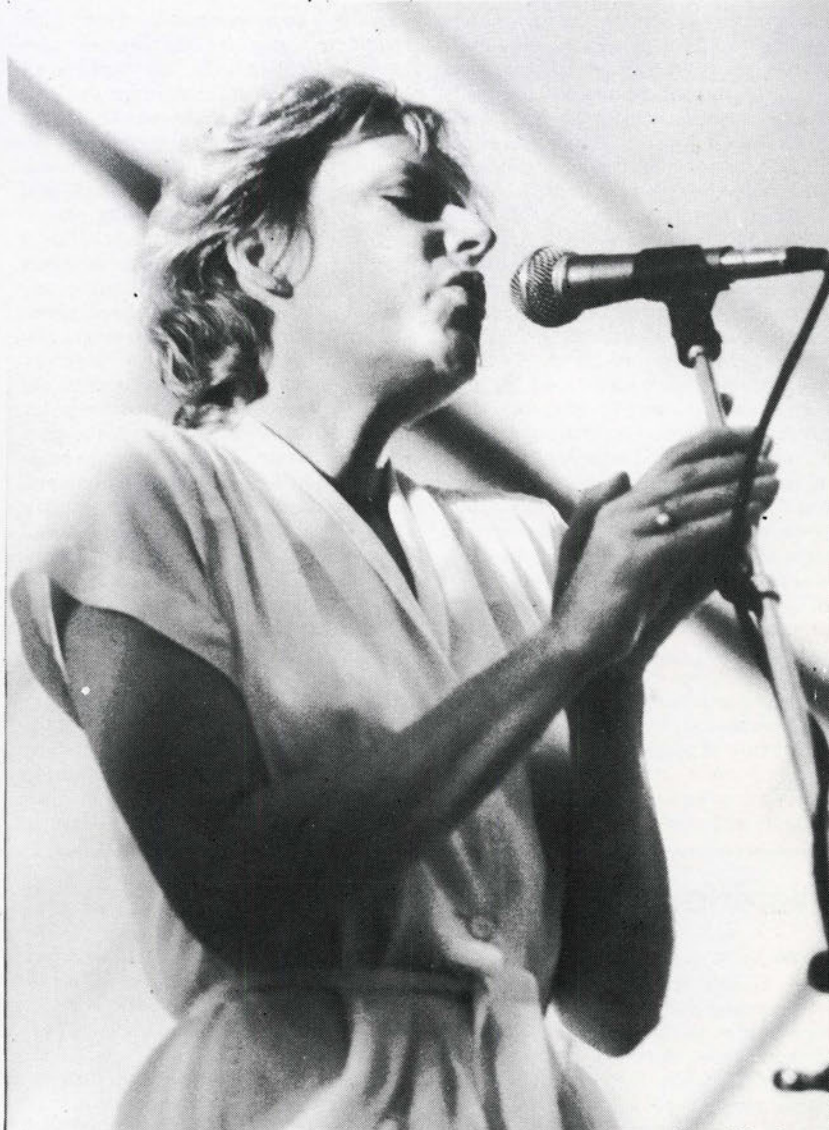


Japanese performance artists — they were so used to doing everything in a group.

Fleisschner himself is busy exploring Japanese behaviour in his installation work. At a recent show of his at the Maki Gallery (run by the stalwart Ulay/Abramovic, Petr Stembra Karel Miler, Stelarc and many other international artists to Japan for the show 'Body as a Visual Language' and encouraging Japanese artists to take risks, a task about which he was somewhat despairing when I talked to him) he dealt with the well known taboo about pubic hair. Although not apparently a sexual taboo, Japanese authorities rigorously scratch out any portrayals of this entering the country, and Fleisschner decided to challenge this by stretching a celluloid sheet across the gallery, shining a light under it, and inviting visitors to donate a pubic hair each to be placed on it and writing their comments on the taboo on the wall. There was apparently some risk that the exhibition, entitled *Public goes*, might be closed down by police or angry public reaction.

Fleisschner and indeed many other foreigners' almost cold objectivity towards the Japanese culture might seem a little odd to readers outside Japan, in a climate where racist attitudes are usually implied in such close cross-cultural comparison. In Japan however, there is a mirror image of the 'outside' world which defies racist stereotyping. Foreigners, (known as *Gaijin* — literally 'out-person') are constantly reminded of the difference between theirs and the Japanese culture. Besides having to carry special identity cards, known as alien registration cards, they constantly complain of being treated like zoo-animals. Children will point and shout at them in the street, and they often feel excluded from the feeling of *belonging* that all Japanese seem to have. Yet they are respected in many ways that immigrants are usually not in a host country, especially Caucasian, and enjoy a high standard of living while there. The net result is that the foreigner has the unique feeling of being an alien landed on a planet somewhat more advanced, but very different to his own. There is also a sneaking feeling that Japan is a model for things to come elsewhere.

Finally, back to Leonore Welzien, who has chosen a less aggressive form of meditation between two cultures. In her case, High German macabre, mixed with Japanese forms of Shamanism, and a department store within a department store of hardware and effects to mirror her 'altered states'. As the largely well-dressed Japanese moved out into the quiet echoing halls of the large store's carpeted corridors, to swish home on the private railway, Welzien remained prone under the dripping water. I wished I could read Japanese, in order to read the comments that the audience write on forms provided specially for the purpose, so that the owners of Seibu's Studio 200 would know if the performance had indeed become an 'integral part of your total lifestyle'. **Rob La Frenais**



Jak Kilby

Kate Westbrook

## Jazz in Angouleme

**E**arly summer in deepest France. The ancient ramparted town of Angouleme basks in sunshine and occasional cloudbursts. In every shop window and flypost site is a poster trumpeting the forthcoming Jazz Festival. It is something to be proud of, the seventh successive year and still growing in reputation and pleasure. For a visiting Anglo it is a pleasure mixed with faint puzzlement and depression: why can't we have such festivals? Why can't we have such wonderful patisseries? Why can't we buy a cognac and something luscious to nibble at ten in the morning whilst we mull over such inequities? Transfer the whole thing to say... Bath, Carlisle or Norwich... unimaginable.

The cognac-induced conclusion centres around expectations... whether it's motorway food, music festivals, or one-night stands, the English have such desperately low expectations. Thus the sordid, smokey

dumps known as pubs continue to prosper; we have the high street bakery; steak houses instead of restaurants and a halfway decent meal costs so much that it is cheaper to scoot across to France on a Hovercraft for the same. Which is a roundabout way of saying I wish Angouleme could happen here (somewhere other than Bracknell/London that is): eclectic lineup, intimate small-town stages and settings — and wonderful music... With combinations ranging from solo offerings in the municipal museum surrounded by Roman artefacts and fifty fascinated citizens of assorted sizes, to the full Mike Westbrook Orchestra in a packed and steeply tiered theatre for the two and a half hours of his rich *Cortege*. In between times there were the classic Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee; the zany mad dog Englishman in the midday sun — sax player Lol Coxhill; a troupe of drummers and dancer/singers from Martinique whose ethnically rooted



and stunningly exciting percussion was overlaid with sophisticated Euro-jazz touches; a series of rare and early jazz films played at the local cinema and an equally rare facet of the coolly gentle Kate Westbrook was on display at the civic centre in the form of an exhibition of her paintings. Their images ranged from predictably well executed flower studies to fantastical scenes of urban violence and isolation. Urban violence was also present in musical form. It became apparent within minutes of starting that Global Unity intended to take on and beat Motorhead at their own game of aural torture. With Alex von Slippenbach's piano mixed over the horn players and drummer by several hundred per cent the contest was strictly one-way — for many that way led to the bar. The shock of their incomprehensibly macho heavy metal approach was probably compounded by the group taking the stage right after an hour of seamless, beautiful solo piano from Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand). Without pretension, without compromise, with images and phrases suggested and abandoned to the listener's imagination, his was one of those sets where the audience is reluctant to break the spell to applaud but when it does the result is a tumult of appreciation.

The previous evening Irene Schweizer and Maggie Nicols caused a similar kind of delight with their curtain-raiser set of

piano and vocal gymnastics. Fresh from several duo gigs for the Women Live month in England, the pair displayed an ease and intuition with each other that gave rise to the silly-grin syndrome where otherwise sober and serious persons unconsciously behave like Cheshire cats, sometimes for hours on end. The authority and wit that Schweizer brings to her percussive-lyrical playing has the effect of lifting Nichols to heights that she is rarely induced to explore by less demanding company. A vocalist of still untapped talent, she can be heard to full advantage on a new album *Lask* (ECM) where her easily susceptible imagination is suitably stretched by Ulrich Lask's sweet-toned tenor and Meinors Bauschulte's all-over-the-place drums in a collection of self-penned songs that combine post-punk pop, jazz, improvisation and, on 'Kidnapped' lower middle class glottal stop rap. In the absence of Nichols in person, firing on all cylinders, this record is a Must, with a capital M. However... someone, somewhere Must (capital M) be planning to capture the current Schweizer/Nicols magic on vinyl...? Another landmark already on record is the Mike Westbrook Orchestra's *Cortège* — probably the centrepiece of this year's Angoulême festival. The three album set is now available at a penny under £15 (!) and it captures a band of superlative individuals at a rare conjunction of under-

standing, synchronisation and composed/improvised musical ease, brought about by recording the piece directly after the recent UK Arts Council tour. As with the recording, the performance at Angoulême benefited from beautifully balanced and separated sound, leaving each instrument, theme and strand in clear and comprehensible space; thus rendering this rambling, diverse work logical, exciting and moving.

The recording is an essential investment for it is unlikely that *The Cortège* will be seen-heard live in these triumphant islands again. The Westbrook Orchestra, because of its size (16 players) and musical ambitions, suffers more than most from the pusillanimous attitudes to be found in this land of less than great expectations. In any event, at Angoulême the *Cortège* audience was treated to a performance of rare technical quality in this journey through the musics and cultures of Europe. On record that studio precision is matched by a passion and fire that is uncommon outside of live performance.

So, a little later this summer in deepest Bracknell. The sun shines on the ancient chippies and burger purveyors at Britain's premier non-pop event. I wonder whether members of the audience have come from Bath, Carlisle or Norwich... probably.

Diana Simmonds

\* *Lask* (ECM) Ulrich T Lask, Maggie Nicols, Meinors Bauschulte.

## Waterloo Sunset

The Waterloo Gallery has been a unique space in London, offering young and little-known artists the opportunity to show their work in a large London venue. An important aspect of the gallery's function has been to provide a large, flexible space for new work in the area of performance. It was an important project for this reason, with opportunities for showing live work in such a space all too few and diminishing, despite the large amount of activity taking place.

The Waterloo building has provided a wide range of possibilities for live work, offering a main gallery space of 5,000 square feet, a small gallery of 1,500 square feet and a large cobbled courtyard with balcony and glass roof. The different spaces have been well used by a number of performance groups during the last two years, including Station House Opera, Janet Davies, Mzui, Max Eastley, Impact and now, for two days at the end of July, by nine performance groups presenting fourteen performances in a two-day 'festival' of live work.

It has always been the gallery's policy to encourage the use of the building for live work, but it has been hampered by the lack of a full-time administrator to co-ordinate a programme. The method of selecting work has always been through members of the Waterloo Studios choosing work from applications received. This has meant an essentially passive programme, with a

reliance on individual knowledge of the availability of the space and on being approached by interested groups. Consequently, despite the eagerness to present more live work, the number of performances at the Waterloo Gallery has, in relation to its time span, been relatively small.

A new, more active policy towards live work has developed since the beginning of this year, when the gallery acquired a full-time administrator, Chrissie Iles, who work a 'festival' fortnight of performance was planned, to take place in the gallery in the autumn of this year. Other projects, such as live work from Ireland, were also planned, as part of a general move towards integrating live work more fully into the gallery's programme.

These project will not, alas, now take place. Lambeth Council, who own the building, have just informed the Waterloo Gallery and Studios that plans for the building's demolition have been brought forward, and that the gallery and studios must close by the end of July. This has for the autumn have now been shelved, but in order to realise at least some of the potential of the gallery's new approach to live work, a smaller, two day 'festival' has been organised for the 23rd and 24th July.

The two day event, aptly named 'Waterloo Sunset — Live' has been designed to provide a rich mixture of groups and individual work, all of which involve different media and stem from a different source, hopefully presenting a good cross-section of new live work

The fourteen pieces to be presented will show work concerned with or evolving from and through dance — Philip Jeck and Douglas Gill, video and sculptural installations — Richard Layzell, improvised music and experimental sound — Max Eastley, Paul Burwell, Alan Thomlinson and Peter Cusak. Tara Babel and Andre Stitt will perform *Headroom*, a piece which explores the nature of identity, relating specifically to events in Northern Ireland; Graham Tunnasine's piece *Wall Coverings* deals with the effect upon the individual of advertising and the mass media. Marty St. James and Anne Wilson perform *Perfect Moments*; Gina Parr, Sean Shanahan and Hercules Fisherman will all work in the main gallery area. Other work has been specifically designed around the Waterloo environment

The Waterloo artists are looking for new space in which to continue and expand the activities which have taken place over the last two years in an otherwise derelict meat premises will usher in a new era. A new project will hopefully evolve from Gray Street to create an environment in which new work can flourish, both privately in the studios and publicly in the display of new work by young artists. Live work will be considered an intrinsic part of this new work, and will be fully integrated into the gallery's programme, in a policy which will hopefully set an example to other gallery spaces concerning the provision of space for live work to flourish in London.

Chrissie Iles



# ReviewsReviewsReviews

## London Roundup

It has been festival time in London with *Women Live* and an international binge in Islington that brought together not only Mongolian gong-bashers, Italian environmentalists, aged *enfants terribles* of the American avant-garde and bodhran players from across the Irish sea, but also famed, if obscure, performers from the provinces of Britain. A gothic opera about lesbian vampires succeeded in being a part of both festivals simultaneously.

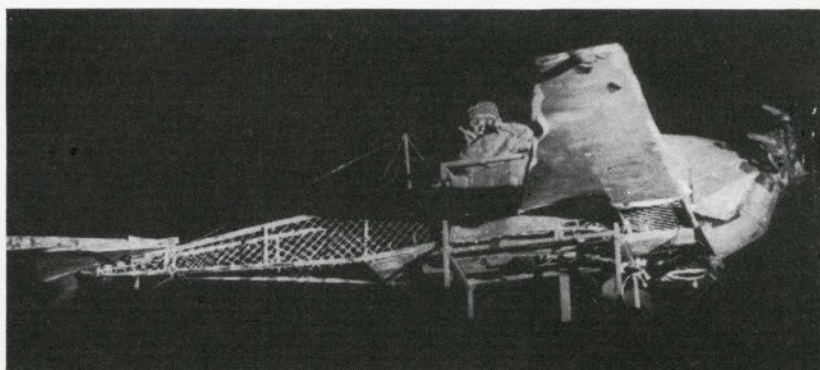
Much lurked under the banner of *Women Live* that had little but impertinence to justify its being there. Of all the London venues it was only the Royal Court and the Drill Hall which seemed to make any special effort. The Court, upstairs from a stunning revival of *Not Quite Jerusalem*, involved **only** women in every aspect of its efforts, from stage crew to front of house photographers. The Drill Hall, with its by now familiar imaginative-ness of programming, mounted a major season of jazz, live soap opera (from Mrs Worthington's *Daughters' Daughters*) that transferred to the Kings Head and — a theatre event, for 'play' is hardly the word for the divertissement that went under the title *'For Maggie Betty and Ida'*. But whatever else it was it was a pleasure.

Not that I did not have any doubts for a moment or two when it looked as if we were in for a series of readings from 'The Readers Digest Book of the Unknown Women of History', proclaimed in costumes left behind by the crew of the Starship Enterprise. The costumes, I am afraid, did not go away. Neither did the perspex furniture or the old parachute which was strewn around the stage. But just listening to Elaine Loudon (marvellous in anything she does and surely on the verge of some sort of stardom) and Julianne Mason tell stories and recount anecdotes, and sing Paul Sand's songs to the accompaniment of Sarah Morley's harp, was a treat. The fairy tale of the twelve princesses exhausted in the morning after unexplained nocturnal wanderings; the tales of men who died in diverting circumstances; and the fearful recounting of train journeys in suburbia, all showed Bryony Lavery to be a writer of considerable talent. She has mastered the art of writing minitures, something few can do. Could we hope for a book of short stories?

Before making what for me, as for many, was to be the first of numerous visits to the Almeida Festival around and about Islington, duty called South of the River to catch Impact Theatre with the first showings of their new performance *Useful Vices* at somewhere called the Waterloo Gallery.

The 'gallery' turned out to be a derelict gutted warehouse three stories high and

open, in part at least, to the elements. Fires roared in oil drums. A few chairs were scattered amongst the vans, cars, piles of leaves and posed figures. As a backdrop to the decay, flights of rusting steps climbed to the roof, through the broken glass of which glowed the last of the day's natural light. Theatre lanterns carved their own complementary lighting amongst the smoke and rubbish. Smells of filth and burning were acrid in the nose, the silence of the tableau broken only by extraneous sounds of the city — the buses, the kids, the far-off police siren, the scatology of local youth.



Mike Laye

Could this really be a gallery? Apparently so, with a warren of artists workshops and the like somewhere attached. The audience huddled in a large knot inside the fearsome abandonment of the space had been brought to a most desolate area of London. A brief walk, it is true, from the concrete bunkers of the South Bank, but a world apart, a world of grimy, tiny terraces, of fear in the streets and of the welcoming lights of the little hostelry opposite in whose cheery warmth we waited for events to begin — a motley meeting of aficionados, Arts Council people, students and fellow performers.

There was a feel of the 50's about the performance — though in the midst of London's current austerity fashions such a period sense is difficult to isolate — especially when combined with perspex and neon. And there was story: a sort of 'Carry On Up The Amazon — An Anthropological Study' with a robbery, a get-away, a car smash, an escape by motor launch down the Thames towards Southend and then days on the river on a visionary journey into a very particular heart of darkness. Ray's scrapyard in East London is run by a family; a family of brothers: Reg, Ray, Roy and Rene ('even Rene and mum are brothers'). The brothers have been successful in the scrap metal business and have moved up West from Dagenham to Wapping — 'It's a fucking long way to Wapping, even on the District line'. After the robbery, adrift in a

motor launch off the Dagenham marshes, amongst rain forest indians, smoking a joint of *Datura*, the brothers apply all their considerable skills to making a success of life amongst the Amazonians.

In previous shows Impact have used 'cod' lingo: French in *Satie* and German in *Dammerungstrasse 55*. Here the language was elaborate and precise. It was the academic language of the anthropologist and the language of London's underworld — as sharp, colourful and threatening as a broken bottle of Bass jabbed glittering into the air. It was used with both an accuracy and an inventiveness one might more

readily associate with the Pinter of *The Homecoming* or the best of Leon Griffith's work on *Minder*. Words were not used sparingly as in previous Impact work. The brothers had a number of long, intricately constructed conversations, delivered hard-eyed, straight out at the audience.

The ending was a real visual coup. The space, by now devoid of natural light, filled with smoke. The audience, blistered with heat behind, frozen with wind in front, watched as naked indians loomed through the lit smoke to sacrifice a brother who had killed in error a member of the family. If the piece was about anything it was about kinship, familial rites, tribal customs, the rites of the East End gangster as strange and terrifying as those of the South American head hunter. It was a chilling evening in every way.

The nights were more balmy when IOU, another of the new generation of Yorkshire based groups, hit town as part of Pierre Audi's extravagant programming at the Almeida Festival. IOU have been working for six years now since emerging from Welfare State, but until being invited to take part in the Almeida Festival they had never been seen in London as they should be seen — creating an event for a particular place. In this case the exterior and partially visible interior of a derelict house just off the Holloway Road. The Almeida, homeless because of licensing problems and building work, took over a cavernous church for its celebrations of John Cage's



70th birthday (see elsewhere in this issue) and having taken it over put other events on there as well. And in the garden opposite was IOU. A tier of seats was erected facing the old house and, as night descended, we watched a family perform the last rites, putting out the cat and the milk bottles, preparing for sleep and the dreams that were to follow.

There is something fascinating about looking into windows and it was the satisfaction of that curiosity that made for much of the enjoyment of the show's opening minutes. The naturalism of the beginning was soon usurped by a growing surrealism as night descended. There was a tiny bit of dialogue but it was negligible. This was above all an event, as was so much else in this festival, presenting a sequence of related visual images that took as their references such diverse sources as early renaissance nativity painting and contemporary car wreck movies. The most exhaustive referential analysis however would be hard put to account for the policeman on the motor lawn mower, the nutty slack on the stretcher or for much else come to that, but it is in the nature of nocturnal events that they are often inexplicable. One had just to succumb to the imagery and the spectacle until the entrance across the roof top of a genuine aeroplane brought matters to an end with a true sense of wonder.

It was one of the charms of Pierre Audi's programming of the Almeida Festival that, as in any true festival, odd events took place at odd hours and there were performances through the day and well into the early hours. All the same, it did seem perverse for the Actors Touring Company to be presenting a marathon version of *Don Quixote* midweek with a 9.45 start. It was well nigh one o'clock in the morning before the small if committed audience escaped into the night. ATC are a London based touring company who have always been coy about playing in their own home town. And, since no-one in the capital has ever seen them, they have managed to enjoy an enviable reputation.

All ATC's productions have been directed by John Rattalack. His *Don Quixote* started as two separate plays adapted from the novel and the halves have now been fused, or rather cobbled together, into a single evening's entertainment. The result, for all its many excellencies, is a broken backed affair. Part one is as spare and elegant a production as you will see anywhere. The actors in simple brown and beige costumes, the scenic convention being the use of only ladders for props and setting, and the narrative continuous and picaresque, the whole was played before a single black drape which brought out all the virtues of the production as a visual entity and also of the church in which it was played. Physically the production was full of fine things. What it lacked was the epic quality one might have expected either in the staging or in the text: this was so full of English colloquialisms as to detract from the determined efforts of the musician

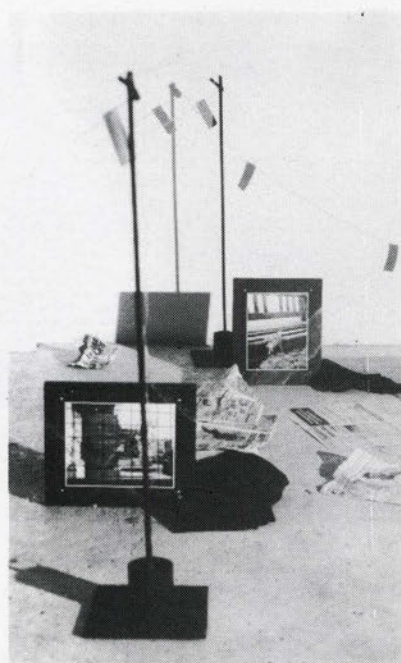
Susan Biggs to summon up a sense of Spain.

The second half, where the conventions were much less clear, where there was visual elaboration to little extra effect, and where the splitting up of the Don and Sancho Panza occasioned a fragmentation of storyline, was so clearly a different play (and a less successful play) as to undermine the evening as a whole.

Still, for a company that is shy about being seen in London, it was heartening to see them display enough hubris to open their production of 'Don Quixote' in the same week that the National unveiled theirs.

Luke Dixon

## Campo Santo Film Co-op/Basement



Most of Roberta Graham's work to date has explored and examined existing attitudes towards death, crime, mutilation and erotic fetish. Thus it is consistent that the inspiration for her latest installation/performance *Campo Santo*, seen on 8th May at the London Film-maker's Co-op and on 15th May at the Basement Gallery in Newcastle, should have been the Yorkshire Ripper case. It is her belief that so long as such phenomena are treated in merely sensational terms, or put out of mind altogether for fear of tastelessness, not only will nothing be learnt about what gives rise to them and how they could be prevented but a valuable opportunity will be lost to gain a special type of insight into current social attitudes and values in a more general sense. It seems to Graham of the utmost significance that in this case the degree of public outrage was graded depending on the lifestyle of the victim, that it was felt by many to be somehow less shocking that prostitutes should be

murdered than 'respectable' girls. To that extent, she would seem to suggest, Sutcliffe's pathological religious justifications cannot merely be dismissed as delusions unique to him individually but should be seen as an extreme caricature of elements of a value-system which is in fact very widespread. Insofar as there is a definite target against which she is directing her attack, it is religious fanaticism and its lingering ill-effects; she finds it no surprise that Sutcliffe was a Catholic but it is not Catholicism alone which is to blame but the whole repressive tendency within Christianity and indeed most religions which is far from having disappeared even amongst those professing no specific faith.

Thirteen marble blocks are arranged on the floor of the performance space in positions which correspond to a diagrammatic map of locations of the Ripper's murders in Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield and Manchester. This configuration is intended to mark out the 'sacred field' referred to in the title (the single word 'camposanto' is, of course, the Italian for 'cemetery'). At the beginning, the blocks are draped in black and, as the performance proceeds, they are unveiled in turn. To each is affixed a photograph of one of the murder sites, all of which Graham had visited and at each of which she had laid a wreath of rosebay willow-herb — a flower which is characteristic of derelict urban wasteland — bound with a violet ribbon. Visually, the piece is relatively static, the performance element consisting essentially of Graham, dressed in black, performing the unveiling ceremony in near darkness, while an assistant picks out the appropriate block with a torch. Amongst the blocks, or graves as they are inevitably read, are strewn old newspapers containing articles relating to the case. At one stage, which is particularly effective, slides of headlines such as MAKING OF A MONSTER or HIS FRIENDS CALL HIM JESUS are projected onto a screen. Aurally, there is a greater degree of change and development. The sound is quadrophonic, for two reasons. It makes it possible for the audience to be encircled by the aggressively loud sound of trucks passing, a device intended to evoke, amongst other things, the sense of oppressiveness and fear of pursuit which must have been felt by the women working and living in the area. And secondly, it makes possible a spacial play between two 'voices', one relatively rational, the other religious and hysterical, with each voice coming out of a pair of speakers diagonally opposite each other. Speaking alternately, the rational voice using the third person and the hysterical one the first, they build up a partially narrative structure, of which the climax is another murder. Yet the narrative element is only a convenient backdrop for the real development which takes place during the piece, the gradual interweaving of several apparently diverse strands to create a richly textured form appropriate to the complexity of the issues addressed.



Graham calls *Campo Santo* a remembrance. Like most remembrances, it has a predominantly quiet and low-keyed emotional flavour, despite the ever-present reminders of violence. And despite the fact that it is dealing in a sense with public and cultural memories, it has a predominantly private quality about it. Rather as, at a funeral, each mourner brings their personal recollections of the deceased, so here each member of the audience turns inwards to those unspoken and barely recognized nuances of feeling which such dramatic ruptures of normal behaviour-patterns awaken in them. As Graham herself says: 'the only positive part of mourning is the ability to remember, things can go wrong'.

Gray Watson

## La Cookiste Superba Crossroads Gallery

The Legendary Silvia C Ziraneke (Official — See your recent *Guardian*) presented her new work *La Cookiste Superba* at the Crossroads Gallery in June. Atop a kind of net covered, cake shaped platform (mirroring the veil she wore) she delivered her monologue, accompanied by a sympathetic taped mixture of dance, pop and modern romance music, to enhance the atmosphere.

After the slightly edgy start (an unappreciated 20 minute wait for her appearance) we were quickly seduced by Silvia's smooth prose. Silvia has been in training, and to lubricate the syllables drank, perfectly elegantly, three generous glasses of chilled, pink Baby Duck in quick succession. Her subject — a pastiche of formal, stylised cookery education with emphasis on the serving aspect — was prey to the ever present, yet beautifully disguised, acerbic sarcasm in which she excels. She distilled the mannerisms of the most traditional forms of female creativity — cuisine, etiquette, fashion — incorporating questions on this rôle and indicating something smouldering underneath, which was not the soufflé. There was a hint of the pleasures involved too — of the agreeable sensations of colour, texture and appearance of the table — acknowledging the grandness of Haute Cuisine. Some of her phrases are reminiscent of Brillat-Savarin's *The Philosopher in the Kitchen* — "... in grave and oracular tones I pronounced these solemn words: 'The turbot will remain whole up to the moment of its official presentation'."

The Pose/The Poise/The Porpoise (blue inflatable variety, shot with a cupid's plastic bow and arrow as a finale). The Purpose? I personally prefer La Ziraneke with her teeth bared a little more...

Silvia may occasionally suffer from leaving us behind with her elaborate prose, as one sits bedazzled by Pink, flying champagne corks, plastic arrows, burning saucepans and the like, and I often feel that I keep missing some of the best bits. However this time the balance between

concentration on text and distraction by action worked well, although the smashing of crockery is in danger of becoming the Ziraneke trade mark. The recipe — cans of beans (intact), plastic onions, peppers and everything but the kitchen sink — was collected in a yellow washing up bowl, given a graceful seasoning of tinsel and then a 'gentle stir' (pounded with a plastic hammer).

Ziraneke's knowing humour is refreshing in the art/performance arena: a kind of poetic, constructive sarcasm. This work lacked the overall sculptural quality of some of her earlier pieces, (*Rubbergloverama Drama* or *Chili con Cardboard*) possibly due to the cramped conditions of the gallery. She has, if thrown the gauntlet, proved well capable of operating within a large space (as previously at the I.C.A. or Hayward) where she can create a more effective environment for her presentation.

Roberta M. Graham



Silvia Ziraneke in *La Cookiste Superba*

## Queen Christina, Carmilla Almeida Festival

Anyone with a particular interest in woman-to-woman relationships will almost surely know the notoriety of Queen Christina of Sweden. If their knowledge extends to fictional characters as well, Sheridan Le Fanu's short story 'Carmilla' will also be familiar to them. Much of Queen Christina's famed lesbianism is probably conjectural, aided by the wishful thinking of certain feminists who would like to be provided with a 'herstory' of their own rather than the same old boy-meets-girl situation. Carmilla is a charming young vampire luxuriating in her prey: Laura.

Subject matter like this for theatre productions might clearly be used as a bait for audiences to come and be titillated by being exposed to something slightly exotic/erotic, provided that it is presented as not too threatening. But when these subjects fly the banner of 'Women Live' at the Tricycle Theatre and at the Almeida Festival one is lead to expect that such relationships between women would be more fully explored, rather than just being exploited.

Often productions including homosexual characters turn out to be about homosexuality. I did not expect nor want either of these plays to take that approach, but did expect that the representation of lesbianism, real or fictionalized, would be

more than peripheral. Yet not only are the main female characters uni-dimensional in both cases but in *Queen Christina* they are secondary to male power struggles and in *Carmilla* they are upstaged by production techniques and music. Any threat of independent sexuality is safely explained away, allowing audiences a novelty — since lesbians are normally quite invisible in the media — and strengthening their own feelings of normality. Unless of course you are a lesbian, or any woman with a strong identity.

*Queen Christina*, written by Pam Gems and directed by Pam Brighton was nothing short of appalling in its message that any woman would rather love men, but when men cannot be had (i.e. when the woman is not attractive according to male values) another woman, paid of course, is better than nothing. The play ends with Christina literally blubbing on the floor wanting only to be impregnated by a priest! Women fled the press preview in droves during the interval, sparing themselves this conclusion. This production could not even be said to be anti-lesbian since what Christina wanted was only to have her troops and screw them too (since she was said to have been 'made a man of' did this make her gay?) It was certainly the most stunningly misogynistic piece I've had the misfortune to witness: women either out booring the boorish or simpering.

*Carmilla* - A Gothic Opera was produced as part of the Almeida Festival by the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool at St. James Church and is more difficult to damn outright because the production was blindingly imaginative in its presentation. The original musical score by Ben Johnson and the multi-media visuals by Mavis Taylor, as well as performers Caroline Bernstein (as Laura) and Katherine Iddon (as Carmilla) were all unusual and very fine. It is rare when multi-media complements a performance rather than fragments it and *Carmilla* achieved a skilful blend. The major failure of the production was in the presentation of its theme. The original *Carmilla* is a powerful study of Victorian female eroticism but in this production the main relationship is justified by a song which begins 'Just as soldiers may kiss in battle ... these are desperate times...'

Ten years of the Women's Movement and gay liberation negated — and this presented under the banner of 'Women Live' whose declared aim is to enlarge the scope of women as legitimate representers of Reality and Life such as men already are. These productions are an affront, no matter how artfully presented.

Marguerite McLaughlin

## The Ballista Ikon Gallery

The thrill of surrendering to energetic and dangerous situations is a curiously popular leisure pursuit. The crunch of fairground



Alex Mavro in *The Ballista*

dodgems, the melee of the rugby field, even the piercing megawattage of an electric rock band are all situations where risk is recreation. Risk in performance is a topic yet to be exhausted. There's a clearly established area of live art where artists subject themselves to danger even to the extent of suffering grievously in the process. But how can this working situation be extended to include the spectator? How far can the onlooker be involved before an unacceptable level is reached? Astute planning at the Ikon Gallery recently brought together two environmental sculptors who seek to explore these particular issues. The main space on the ground floor showed *Vibrating Forest* by Dennis Oppenheim while the basement space contained *The Ballista* by Alex Mavro. A theme common to both pieces is potential energy and the sense of danger this can create.

Entering the gallery is like walking into a sci-fi junkyard. Oppenheim's piece dominates the main space, a large lumbering concoction of Dexion girders forming a rocking bridge together with a candy floss machine, pulleys, ropes, an arc light and some very large fireworks. It's an impres-

sive display until the fireworks are discovered to be blanks and it is revealed that the bridge won't rock as intended since the candy floss machine is too heavy — in sum a monumentally phoney contrivance.

Down in the basement, though, it's a different story. The walls are covered with black plastic giving an air of melancholic utility. At one end stands the ballista. It points across the empty space to its target, a single tree. A pane of glass is hanging before it. Captured in a keyhole-shaped pool of light, the ballista seems a truly infernal machine. It has been built along the lines suggested by Vitruvius in his *De Architectura* of 27 A.D. but using steel instead of timber and nylon monofilament instead of hair and sinews. This catapult-cum-crossbow, about the size of a small car, points a missile — a smooth clay vessel — at the tree trunk which, with its truncated limbs and branches seems to have been borrowed from a painting of the Somme battlefield. A symbol of endurance, the tree emphasizes the complete vulnerability of the 8' x 4' sheet of glass per-versely suspended in front of it. From above the ballista, a probing spotlight aims at the fragility of the glass, piercing it in the

way the missile will shortly do. The floor beneath the suspended glass is littered with the smashed fragments of previous thrown everywhere and its crunch underfoot is a constant reminder to watch one's step.

An angry whirr jolts the meditating spectator back to the reality of the dark, concrete basement. A complex timing mechanism has activated the electric motor at the back of the ballista. The motor reels in the cord of a pulley system which has sufficient purchase to inch back the firing block. This task accomplished, the timer settles back into ticking and whirring away to itself. Every three minutes it breaks this pleasantly industrious mode to harshly draw back the firing block maybe just half an inch. A little more tension is created and a little more energy is stored. The deadly working of a machine is an evocative image. It suggests not only the terror of a modern day Pit and Pendulum but the black humour of a ludicrous proverb. This elaborate modern ballista ranged against a pane of glass seems akin to cannons killing flies and bulls in china shops. In like manner, the machine demonstrates its own ridiculousness as it generates and stores up its own destructive capacity.

On specified occasions, this capacity is activated by Alex Mavro in performance. First he sits quietly beside the tree, directly in the line of fire, calmly tempting fate. There is silence except for the whirr and tick of the machine. Abruptly, he rises and walks to the rear of the ballista where he seats himself in a saddle attached there. In marked contrast to the high style of Hestitate and Demonstrate with whom he has worked constantly since 1979, he wears only ordinary working clothes. There is no need for rich costuming or suggestive effects. In this world of physical realities, things are very much what they appear to be. Straddling his construction, he takes out a handle and begins to crank back the firing block. It moves back slowly but perceptibly. Joints complain against the stress they have to bear as the alarming creak of nylon fibre and steel hawser under strain is heard. Tension rises in the spectator too. Concentration becomes awed and nervous apprehension rises. Then — click — the arms snap forward. The clay vessel is half-glimpsed in flight and the sheet of glass becomes momentarily a spider's web of radiating elements. It dissolves in a roaring boom, a wave of sound that washes around the gallery, leaving the spectator drenched in relief. The performance has lasted a nail-biting ten minutes.

In contrast to Oppenheim's bombastic excess, the Ballista is a masterful piece. It is first of all successful as a sculpture organised within an environment. Animated in performance, it works on several levels, establishing a powerful mode of simple, expressive performance. Alex Mavro's piece expresses itself through concrete actions at a time when pastiche, high style and 'bazaar surrealism' (to quote Breton's disdainful descrip-



tion of his would-be imitators) hold sway.

*The Ballista* beautifully captures the Aristotelian notion that the purpose of drama is to act as a catharsis — i.e. if the spectator can be moved into a sympathetic state with the performer, then both can achieve a purification of emotion. As the mechanism inches back, the ballista itself seems to become the performer with whom one empathises. The rising tension in the nylon monofilament is reflected in the developing muscular and nervous tension in the spectator until the cathartic release of both is achieved at the expense of the pane of glass. The black magic of this evil machine's detonation exorcises the demons of fear and anxiety.

Aristotelian philosophy can be detected further through the way the piece drives towards a teleological fulfillment of its potential. The ballista becomes more real as it acquires more energy and moves closer towards its meaningful goal of discharge. But the result of this fulfillment of purpose is that the pane of glass suffers from what Aristotle terms 'unnatural interference'. Here one can detect something of the larger issues standing behind this piece. Devoid of metaphor, the piece develops its own language of simple action to discuss the use of energy and the manipulation of tension.

**Phil Hyde**

*The Ballista will be installed at the Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, during March 1983.*

## Little Religions

Into a darkened room festooned with miles of magnetic tape the straight-jacketed form of Andre Stitt literally hurled itself, lurching, rolling, diving, becoming thoroughly entangled and screaming in frustration.

Stitt's work has always been heavily influenced by his experiences in his native Northern Ireland and although overt references are largely absent in *Little Religions* the anger remains intact, the horror unmistakably present.

Recalling the figure of Christopher Lee's Mummy (and as relentless in the face of physical injury) Stitt flung himself to the ground mouthing incoherent obscenities, the powder covering the floor caking to his sweating face as he wormed his way to the wall against which to repeatedly smash his head. It was a powerful and terrifying image of man going violently insane.

Through a deafening wall of electronic clamour half-heard voices pontificated about religious belief, while Stitt lay panting and exhausted in the dust, then exploded with renewed energy in another outburst of self-destructiveness.

Slides were projected of office blocks, road signs, the inner city asylum; maybe too-obvious icons of social restraint, certainly slightly too attractively photographed to quite convey the menace.

Stitt managed to tear himself loose from the straight-jacket and emphatically relate a summary of the evolution of man's psychological dependence on something outside of his individual control. The



**Andre Stitt in *Little Religions***

slides accompanying this monologue were tangential, ranging from images of a woad-plastered 'savage' stalking through the urban hinterland of derelict lock-up garages to naked figures, transistorized and wired up to the mains. While the 'primitive' is a figure with which Stitt, the self-confessed 'Akshun Man/Tryxster', readily identifies, it would be a grave mistake to think of him as a 'back to the soil' rustic. When he planted his crops it was with the same ferocity and disgust with which he treated the fallen idols of religion and technological progress, spraying the audience with a stinging hail of seed.

A plastic figure of a man orbited the performer on a length of string before flying off into the spectators and endless rolls of paper spewed from a suitcase with the relish of a manic computer doing conjuring tricks before the 'Warzone Exile' left us to watch a humming vibrator, gyrating futilely, amid the devastation.

A disturbing aural, visual and actual assault upon the spectator *Little Religions* left one in a state of sensory overload before one or two reservations seeped through. With a more tightly controlled relationship between sound, projected image and live action and with a little more variation of emotional pitch and atmosphere Stitt would produce an even more remarkable piece of work. As it is his technique is that of hurling so many missiles that some are bound to hit his intended target. It may not be over subtle but it is always exciting and dangerous, always refusing to play safe and in this respect his courage and commitment is admirable.

In his case the artist is, to paraphrase Antonin Artaud, screaming back at his audience from the stake. Something which, sadly, few artists have the sheer guts to attempt.

**John Stewart**

## John Cage Almeida Festival

The *Cage at 70* event at the Almeida Festival was both ambitious and welcome. Although Cage has visited this country frequently in recent years there has been

little opportunity to witness any presentations on the scale that so much of his work demands. A stereo recording can hardly do justice to music of which the whole point is that it is constructed and reproduced on a multitude of different and unconnected levels. It has been difficult to see how the large scale, multilayered works for which Cage is so famous actually work.

Many people see Cage as an artist who marks a turning point in the history of contemporary music and his 70th year seems a good opportunity to see how his work has developed and what effect it has had in recent years.

Cage's general theme (and that which gives his music its all-embracing atmosphere) is that of allowing all sound including noise and random environmental sounds to be considered music thus causing the artistic structure to more closely resemble that of life. His particular concern however is the method of achieving this through the elimination of personal taste and volition in the process of composition. As an idea this may sound an exasperatingly passive and irresponsible method of composing but it was clear over the weekend that Cage has not abandoned or modified this theme in recent works.

The end results are as unpredictable and variously successful as may be imagined. During the Saturday and Sunday afternoons there were two different 'simultaneous live music' presentations. I was interested to see how such diverse groups as Singcircle, Music Projects London, The Michael Nymah Band and Keith Potter and musicians would combine but must confess that it was the moments when the more structured early pieces such as *Double Music* (a tightly rhythmic percussion piece dating from 1941) or the equally rhythmic *Living Room Music* (1940) emerged from the wash of sound that my attention was held the most. In a sense I felt frustrated that what has come to be the accepted performance practice for Cage's music (ie that of emphasising fragmentation and diversity) was again employed and an opportunity was missed of a different interpretation embracing different musical



styles and ideas. On this point though it was interesting to hear that, on learning that the Michael Nyman Band intended to introduce an element of uniformity by tuning their radios to the same wavelength in Sunday's performance, Cage requested that they shouldn't, commenting that he never used 'doubling' in his music.

It was in the evening performance of the new work *Roaratorio* that I was reminded how, by being receptive, one can appreciate the extraordinary effect of Cage's music. The piece is subtitled 'An Irish Circus on *Finnegan's Wake*' and certainly the atmosphere was one of a circus. While Cage recited a jumbled version of *Finnegan's Wake* for an hour, Irish musicians played a series of jigs, reels and airs against a 67-layered recording from various parts of Dublin mentioned in the book. At first the wall of sound seems completely impenetrable but as the piece progresses at the same level throughout all the subtle changes become apparent: the relentlessly metrical folk tunes contrasted strongly with the ambient sounds of the tape and the free drone of the voice, the taped sounds were identifiable as somehow typically Irish (church bells and choirs, children crying, running water, brass bands etc) and so on. It seemed that one of Cage's main aims is to teach people to listen in a different way and certainly there is inbuilt into his philosophy the obsolescence of conventional notions of success or failure of a piece of music. Anything goes, and if you find the result impenetrable or just boring then perhaps you are not listening to it in the right way.

The fact remains though that, because Cage has taken his ideas to their most extreme conclusions, much of the music is so 'difficult' as to produce an alienating effect inviting accusations of elitism.

Possibly the most striking thing about Cage's music (and this is apparent whether you like the music or not) is the lack of personal subjective expression involved in both its conception and performance. This seems to me to be its greatest strength and has had the most important and far reaching effect on today's new music. From early stage in his composing Cage completely rejected the accepted notion of art being a vehicle for human expression and always strove to create the situation in which sound can be heard and appreciated for its own sake. In a piece such as *Roaratorio* the random nature of the presentation makes this aim very clear — even the highly emotionally charged Irish folk music is presented out of context enough to be appreciated in an entirely new light — but even in earlier pieces with a more clearly defined structure the most powerful and lasting impression is that the sound has been left to itself.

That this attitude has been readily applied in other art forms was clearly demonstrated by the short dance sequence in Sunday's simultaneous event by Michele Smith and Ian Spink. Their dancing was unemotional and quietly self-assured, concentrating all attention on the

moving bodies themselves rather than on any related expression or 'meaning' thus giving an exceptionally powerful presence.

In music, younger generations have pursued this idea of avoiding personal expression through the use of ever tighter and more rigorous structures. Hence the music of Gavin Bryars, Michael Nyman and 'systems' composers Glass and Reich. Cage's choice to maintain the fragmentary and diverse elements of his music seems to illustrate his historical position and perhaps shows that he has in the fullness of time become, dare one say, old-fashioned.

Jeremy Paton-Jones

## People Show 87

ICA

Mark Long comes downstage holding the familiar toilet roll, tilts his head to one side and in a quiet and relaxed manner tells us that what we are about to see is not far off a love story. Is this the People Show we have come to know and cherish? Not that the People Show haven't told us about love before, but the idea of a narrative in the context of their past shows is undeniably disturbing.

The plot, I hasten to add, never imposes itself to the detriment of the unique People Show imagery. There is a boy — Emil Wolk acting like King Kong without the hair — and a girl — Caroline Hutchison — who searches for him through endless trials only to discover him languishing in a South American prison with Chahine Yavroyan, George Khan, and Mark Long his warders. There have been better times, for when the show opens Mark and Chahine are waiters, the boy and girl their diners... spaghetti poisoning changes all that.

There are a few moments of syrupy romanticism when the girl finally tracks down the boy, but Mark has this to say about the story. 'Love, did I say love. Obviously this means that any resemblance between characters in this show and living human beings is purely coincidental and not intended.' Indeed it is the antagonism between Mark and Emil rather than the love between boy and girl that fuels this performance. At times it looked like an elaborate mechanism to demonstrate the finely tuned relationships between the five artists. But if the People Show are more indulgent, more transparent than other performers then it is obviously their strength. This is top class self expression.

As such, the show marks a return to the type of experimental theatre for which they became so renowned, but which they ceased performing some two years ago when the company went in search of fame and fortune with its brilliant *Cabaret*. To some extent its attempt to make *People Show 87* more accessible than its past work shows the scars of success. Well, a plot is evidence enough of that, but there is also a measure of music hall slapstick that Emil and Mark have a gift for but which just doesn't work with the newest member, Caroline. Although she puts on a brave act, she can't match the stage presence of the

others, all of whom play themselves with such aplomb.

*People Show 87* is not vintage stuff, yet it still includes all the company's best elements. There is the extraordinary set that bears the signature of Chahine. On ground level, a maze of caging doubles as a restaurant — called *Bruisers* it has a chandelier of Perrier bottles, and keep your eye on that Mars bar too — while a mezzanine level at the back has been turned into a jungle swamp.

Needless to say all is not what it seems. Are you looking into the jail or are you in it? Did three men really dive through a brick wall? Are they monkeys climbing out of the swamp? And yes, do expect a medley of clichés — haunted house, keystone kops and steamy jungle routines. How easily the People Show fall into them and how easily they extricate themselves. They have the ability to luxuriate in the obvious enjoyed only by those certain to surprise minutes later.

Just as Mark's influence is felt on the words and Chahine's on the set design, so performance art granddaddy, John Darling's hallmark is the professional soundtrack made with Chahine. And as if George's saxophone music at the start said 'Once upon a time...' so the story ends happily: the performers have found their roles. And we, we are still in the audience.

Paul Lyons

## Gang Ho Waltham Forest

Everyone knows that the way to start a fire without matches is by rubbing two boy-scouts together. The question is does the same formula work when the odd spark of artistic inspiration is required? This year being the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Scouts (or is it the Cubs?), the fiftieth anniversary of Gang-shows, and the year the man who started it all, Ralph Reader, died, it seemed appropriate to look in on what the Scouts get up to between tying knots and doing their best — the Gang Show.

Now, I must admit that as someone who never went away for a weekend's camping, never sung mindless little ditties round a campfire, never won a badge for mending broken legs upside down in a sheep-dip, that I went expecting a good romp — a spot of the old good, clean family entertainment. A song, a dance and a laugh a minute. A bunch of lads having a good time... and I was wrong.

I went with what a Sunday Times critic once called 'A book-full of goodwill tokens', the idea being that when you go to see something that is wildly ambitious, like a group of Scouts mounting a three hour show, you tear out one of the tokens every time something goes wrong — and if you've still got some tokens left at the end of the evening, they did OK. But surprise was to get the better of me. Far from being a knees-up for the kids, the show appeared to be a hair-down for their leaders. The whole point of the occasion seemed to be a



jamboree for frustrated Scout-leaders of the 'let's make twits of ourselves and laugh it off down the pub later' kind — the Scouts themselves appearing to be considered unreliable, or incompetent, and allowed to join in, with some reluctance, as menials and extras for those who knew better. There goes goodwill token number one.

And number two? Honestly, I am not an enemy of amateur performers. I see absolutely no harm in people enjoying themselves on stage. But without delving into the therapeutic value too far, surely one must expect that in mounting a show some consideration must be made for the audience. Just a weeny little bit. Surely the dialogue and action must have something to do with people, the way they talk, the way they do things, perhaps just a hint of a nicely observed quirk that is funny? Alas, alas.

Let me describe a standard number. The curtain goes up on a tableau of leaders and Scouts, in serried ranks, adorned in superb costumes (and guess who made *them!*) mimicking a few jaunty actions whilst singing what might have been good tunes thirty years ago, looking for all the world like an army of well trained goldfish with plastic (and frequently drooping) smiles. Without any change of style, pacing or mood, three or more songs will be strung together — moments of high excitement coming when the company moves into a minimally choreographed formation before returning to their places. All of this goes on for some time (whilst you're hoping that the next number might be a spot hotter) until the end is signalled by everyone putting their arms in the air and wagging their hands. Down the curtain comes, only to rise on the same again.

I still had one goodwill token left (it was a pretty large book I went with) and this was torn to shreds when I realised just what this form of entertainment is about. Good clean fun, it seems, is what is left from a normal stand-up comedy act when the blue jokes have been cut out. In other words good old fashioned clean-living racism and sexism. Nothing like it lads, you're going to be brought up to think like your dad, your grandad and everyone else who fought to make Britain great. But that's what the Scout movement is all about, isn't it?

It's worth mentioning that the high spot of the evening was the one sketch performed by the youngsters themselves. Albeit riddled with clichés and jokes picked up off the telly, and at school, they at least enjoyed themselves — making hopelessly bad goofs (most of them deliberate) and having a hey-day whilst they were allowed on stage without interference.

As a movement based on solid and unquestionable authority, it is hardly surprising that the imaginative content of their shows is zilch. When the extent of their witless humour is of the 'cor, look at Scout leader in drag with falsies' variety, it makes an end-of-the-pier-show look serious.

**Pete Shelton**

## Book Reviews

To a European reader Theodore Shank's new book on American Alternative Theatre comes as a salutary reminder of how much of what we have taken to be avant-garde in Europe over the past couple of decades was often little more than a trans-Atlantic extension of goings on in the USA. The only British performance group mentioned by Shank, and that only in passing, is CAST, that radical coelocanth of English alternative theatre. But if CAST seem ancestral here at home, what of Living Theatre, still going as strong as ever today, yet founded as long ago as 1951 — before this writer was born. And it is not only that in America everything happened so much earlier than in Britain — and therefore in turn earlier still than it happened in the rest of Europe. It also all happened with a much greater sense of danger. What comes out of Shank's book is a daring, an outrage, a questioning of basic concepts, a political and social anger in the face of which contemporary British work has a certain staid quality. Perhaps subsidy has something to do with it, the State in Britain supporting the avant-garde as a means of suppressing it.

But it is the coming of subsidy in the USA that Shank pinpoints as the crucial factor in the development of an alternative theatre. When the National Endowment for the Arts was founded in 1963 it provided the first US government support for theatre since 1939. It is a pity that Shank does not explore the parallel with the 1930's: it was the Federal Theatre Project that gave birth, in the midst of the depression, to whole areas of performance activity that have never since been equalled and without which much of the work that Shank describes might never have been possible.

And just as the theatrical activity of the 30's came out of a particular social and political environment, so what happened three decades later was the expression of the upheavals in American society that were such a part of the 60's: Vietnam, civil rights, black power, gay pride, womens liberation and the rest. In his introductory essay Shank securely places the work within that wider context characterising it as coming out of an alternative life-style and being made economically possible by the financial expectations of that alternative culture. As such he sees the primarily political groups of the 60's becoming redundant with the 'success' of the civil rights movement and the ending of the war in South East Asia, leading to a new generation of groups whose prime preoccupation was with form. Coming as it does out of his own involvement with the alternative theatre movement, Shank's analysis is perhaps partial and limited in its perspective but the introduction is wonderfully clear, concise and analytical and as such makes what follows all the more dis-

appointing. For the bulk of the book is made up of a collection of those dry, purely descriptive, documentations which will be familiar to any reader of an American academic theatre journal.

Another American has attempted to document much the same period and much of the same work, but what Richard Kostelanetz has produced in his *Scenarios* is a very different publishing venture. Here in a hefty tome of some 700 pages, is a collection of 'scripts to perform', though the performances are noted in such a diversity of ways that all they have in common, with a rare exception or two, is that they are not written in dialogue. Words themselves are often entirely absent.

Kostelanetz has attempted 'scripting so radically alternative that it cannot be realised in conventional ways'. It is a brave and brilliant work of scholarship, editorship and collection, imaginatively funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council for the Arts and it is pretty well all inclusive. Irritatingly, though no doubt deliberately, nothing is dated, but here is not only the whole gamut of contemporary American performance (the Living Theatre of course, Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman) but current European work (Le Plan K, Opal L. Nations) Grand Old Men (Claus Oldenberg, John Cage), distant pioneers (Tristan Tzara), and American precursors (Gertrude Stein). The only obvious omission I could see was Yoko Ono, but given that the copyright problems alone involved in putting this volume together must have been immense, it seems churlish to complain.

Quite how one is to go about reading these scripts is a knotty problem but it is a problem that musicians and dancers have to cope with continually so why should not theatre makers (an admirable and so-useful coinage of, Shank's) themselves seek, invent and use new forms of notation and recording.

Kostelanetz's assertion in his introduction that there is a strong performance tradition in American theatre that includes Orson Welles and nigger minstrels is perhaps overstated but at least it makes, if tangentially, the connection with the Federal Theatre Project (which funded Welles' Mercury Theatre) and this book shows as never before the diversity and extent of current work and the strengths of its roots.

*American Alternative Theatre by Theodore Shank published by MacMillan, London.*

*Scenarios edited by Richard Kostelanetz published by The Assembling Press, New York.*

**Luke Dixon**



# Opportunity to dance

**T**he most exciting dance performance I have seen recently was not by one of the established classical ballet or contemporary companies nor by one of the experimental or small touring groups, but by a group of Youth Opportunity trainees from a Liverpool scheme. Their freshness, vitality and sheer talent left me feeling far more stimulated and enthusiastic about dance as an art, entertainment and an educative process than has been the case for a long time. And quite apart from all that, the performance was so enjoyable.

This unique scheme, for unique it is, being the only one in the country dealing with dance, is run by the Merseyside Youth Association and based at the Crawford Arts Centre, near central Liverpool. A lengthy battle had to be waged with the Manpower Services Commission by the dynamic Cathy Pridgeon of the Merseyside Youth Association before the scheme got off the ground, for the MSC could see neither the value of a training course in dance, nor what employment openings might exist at the end of it. Their opposition to the scheme reflects the low value so often accorded to dance. To start with the YOP programme took six trainees. The number has now risen to fifteen and could go up to twenty. The trainees come from central Liverpool and the surrounding areas of Merseyside, and they show the same hardworking dedication that any other dance student must possess. They each receive the standard YOP allowance of £25 per week from which they have to purchase all their practice clothes and dance shoes.

The scheme is run by Margaret Cox who has taught dance in Liverpool for many years. She ran her own dance school in Liverpool 8 and whilst doing so acted as a volunteer adviser to the MYA on dance. She joined them full time in 1978 and teaches disco classes regularly in the youth clubs attached to MYA as well as running the scheme. She was the sole teacher on the scheme until she was joined a year ago by Robert McGibbon who had just left Spiral Dance Co. He now teaches the ballet and contemporary classes whilst Margaret Cox takes the jazz, tap and modern stage. All the trainees are entered for exams in these areas of study so that they leave the course with some basic qualifications in dance.

The trainee's diet of dance is not as narrow as it might seem from the above. Whenever companies are performing in Liverpool they go to see their work, and if there is an opportunity to take classes or attend workshops it is eagerly seized. For instance in recent weeks the trainees have taken a mime class with David Glass and been taught by London Contemporary Dance Theatre's rehearsal director, Lenny Westerdijk. And last summer two boys received a bursary to attend Spiral's summer school.

Many of the trainees have done very little dance before coming onto the course, others may have done some ballet, or more likely taken Margaret's excellent disco dance classes in their local youth club. Nineteen year old James Welch, one of the current trainees, was a plasterer's apprentice before he joined the course, and came to it because of his involvement in disco. Initially, like many of the boys, he had a great aversion to the idea of doing ballet, seeing it as effeminate. Now, he and all the others take it as seriously as the other dance forms being studied.

Margaret Cox's disco classes, and the work the MYA does with dance through the local youth clubs, are obviously an important means of stimulating an interest in dance, and supplying people for the course. For three years the National Disco Dance Team Championships have been won by a team of boys from the disco classes — Neil and David Dannels, Kevin Duala and James Welch. All four have been on the YOP course; two are still on it, two have moved on to college.

The disco dance team won the championships in each of the three years they entered, 1978/79, 1979/80 and 1981/82, a tribute to their own ability as dancers, and to Margaret Cox's teaching. Since their last win they have appeared on *Top of the Pops*, at the London Hilton, and at a number of charity events throughout the country. Two years ago they went to Cologne. Pleasant you may think, but nothing earth-shattering — until you realise that for the team these were their first visits not just abroad but to London. Working class black lads from central Liverpool don't tend to get opportunities to travel very often. The changes that the disco team have made in the lives of the four young men concerned are similar to those that the YOP course can offer to its trainees, not in terms of money perhaps, but certainly in terms of changes in outlook, increased confidence and a new found faith in their own abilities.

Those who wish to pursue a career in dance or entertainment after the course finishes have their horizons severely restricted by the fact that the Local Education Authority, like so many others, will not offer grants for training at anything other than local schools. It is deplorable that, for example, two of the trainees who are also two of the disco team, were offered places at the London School of Contemporary Dance and had to refuse them because of lack of support from the ILEA.

However, several ex-trainees have gone on to train further in dance and drama at local colleges and others will doubtless do so. This opportunity to do a full time college course and then follow a dance career is certainly not something that would have been open to those concerned

without the YOP course, largely because of social and cultural barriers. A dance training isn't a usual suggestion from the careers office, and certainly doesn't raise itself as an option in many families. Also, the prospect of obtaining a basic training is usually very expensive, and a luxury that a lot of parents could not afford to give their children.

The dance career pursued by those going on to work from college is most likely to be in the entertainment and variety field: in clubs, cabaret, musicals, television. Dance aficionados perhaps would not recognise this as having any great artistic merit, but I see no reason to exercise judgements such as this when looking at the work the YOP scheme does. A life in cabaret travelling abroad is immeasurably richer than experiencing nothing but unemployment in the area in which you were born and brought up — and for many of the trainees that is the kind of choice there is.

Their performance included all the trainees on the course. Some had only been dancing three months, others were about to finish their year with the scheme. All came over as polished performers, confident and poised, although their technical ability obviously varied. They introduced each item, some choreographed by the teaching staff, but many pieces by the dancers themselves. Moments that still remain: an intricate piece on the theme of Alex Haley's *Roots* by a young black man, danced and choreographed by him, a beautiful performance by the disco team, a tap routine by the girls, full of sparkle as well as tapping feet. The best thing that the MSC have ever presented!

Gillian Clark





# Steve Cripps

Tragically, Steve Cripps died on June 17. His work startling, original, spectacular — was something to experience, and to remember. He is sorely missed.



It is too soon after Steve's death to assess the whole of his work — or even to find out about it all. He was the only one to know all the things he'd done. At some later date, after we've been through all the documentation and done sufficient research, there will be a history that will enable a retrospective assessment to be made. Like a lot of artists today, his work manifested through different media — sculpture, made objects, drawings, paintings and collage, but mostly sound and visual events — a performance artist.

Over the last three years or so, the constructional side of his work had receded, due primarily to having no studio to work in. At the time of his death he had been waiting for builders to finish renovation of a building that he would have used for living and working, and this would have initiated a new work direction. I can't help thinking about the events that were yet to come, and the realisation of ideas he had told me about, and the developments that would have followed. I was really looking forward to the work of the future. The work of the past is now in the past, performances and events only last as long as their actual duration, despite documentation and memories and reviews, and this is as it should be. Art is about movement — doing and being. The institutions of art are about stasis and artifact, social interface and linguistic dressing up. It doesn't become an artist to dwell too much on their past work, they should be involved in the work of the present and of the future. Steve never dwelt too much on past work, and I don't feel inclined to do so now.

**Paul Burwell**

Steve always had a healthy disrespect for words. In performances he has done with Paul and I he would either studiously ignore or mutter an affectionate insult at the banners Paul would have around with such proclamations as 'Sufficient unto the

day is the evil thereof.' His reality was made of much denser stuff than the pen on the page, and its massive energy would make sure that everyone else's reality was shifted into high gear. So, writing this, I feel the same sense of awkwardness I have felt when clapping after one of Steve's performances — a feeling of the tininess and puniness of my gesture even whilst clapping enthusiastically and eulogistically. After such a powerful involvement in an event, which had somehow transformed one's entire perception of self in space, the sound of two hands clapping seemed as absurd and questionable as one. The juxtaposition of elements let loose, 70% understood and casually yet specifically controlled by Steve; 30% allowed to investigate and proclaim their own wondrous, dynamic universe, contained their own celebration and acknowledgement. Therefore, to try to manoeuvre these words into something that somehow manages to do justice to a life obsessed with an urge to explore and delight in the unleashing of potent marvels, seems impossible and probably redundant. I would like to just say something very simplistic — I love Steve for the immensely warm, generous friend he was and for the great energy I got working with him and watching him work: I miss him very much. **Anne Bean**

My experience of Steve Cripps as a performer is limited to my immediate recognition upon encountering him of his significance and value. I am fairly sure he did not have any idea of the meaning of the word compromise.

Younger performers I met in the mid-seventies in England whose work appeared to have some bearing on the initial premise of my reasons for entering the area of confrontation and thinking in public without product result, were

chiefly: 3 poets from the soundworks experiences fostered by Bob Cobbing, that is, Cris Cheek, Lawrence Upton, and Clive Fencott, the female artist Patti Karl from the US, and Steve Cripps. The recognitions of these people a decade or more younger than myself seem to me to have a direct bearing on the meaning of work begun by artists in the Dada and Surrealist movements, my experience of John Cage's 50's work, DIAS and some of my own de-structuralist work in England and Holland in the 60's, and the Fluxus movement in the very early 70's.

To be present when Steve was performing was to be certain of not knowing, not predicting, and being therefore certain of experiencing the situation. The occasions of rehearsal I witnessed during the time that Anne Bean, Steve, and Paul Burwell created their particularly unforeseeable future events was of easy-going humorous outline of rough formats open to volatile elements which in the hands of more timorous performers could have meant failure. There was never any question of theoretical satisfaction. The theatre Steve Cripps created out of explosions, fire, and smoke required a great deal of knowledge and foresight as well as a total ability to respond in situ to an extraordinary eventology paced in the action of destruction.

Image Fire Vision Shadow. The ardent effect of fire on material has its own way, at a pace variable and foreseen in study By Steve. Audio effect of sudden shock had a quality I disliked because it appeared evidence of an indifference to the destruction of the body temple; my own premise attempts to be self-respecting in this way. Neither did I ever like the audience desire to meet the challenge, for I found that response merely trendy. The audience is never the ruler of art and I am aware that Steve was aware of that.

I am personally sad at the death of Steve Cripps. The evening before his death we agreed to meet with a view of working together. If this is prophetic and I am going to join him on the other side, I am not suffering loss. If it is not and I live on for a long time, I shall keep the memory in my heart of someone who so to speak lit up the life around him and who with the self-instruction of a samurai set about his art with a controlled vengeance, who never in my experience made me anything but happy, who cleansed the atmosphere around him by knowing what he was doing in his work in explosives and fire, who balanced possibilities like a juggler, and who did not die without first creating a very strong focus of his understandings, so strong as to reach through disbelief and fear, over-power shadow, and direct the imagination without recourse to fantasy.

**Carlyle Reedy**



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# National Performance Listings

## London

**The Albany Empire**  
01 691 3333  
Cabaret weekends in August  
Aug 5, 6 **Biddie & Eve, French & Saunders**  
Aug 13, 14 **Keith Allen**  
Aug 23-31 Youth Arts Festival  
Sept 2-5 Multicultural Festival  
Sept 9-25 Macbeth by the **Albany Basement Theatre**

**Barbican Art Gallery**  
July 6 - Aug 22 As part of the Festival of India, musicians from the deserts of Rajasthan, wedding dancers, a Bhopa balladeer family, painters and acrobats will complement the Aditi exhibition.  
Aug 23 Thames boat trip with events by the Aditi performers. Details from the Commonwealth Institute Arts department  
01 602 3252

**Bloomsbury Theatre**  
01 242 1143  
Sound of Women Festival  
This promises to be one of the more exciting events in London during the Summer. The work ranges from **Cathy Berberian's** irreverent parodies to the multilingual songs of **Anna Prucnal** and the innovative sounds created by **Giovanni Marini**. Marini is virtually unknown in the UK but is somewhat of a phenomenon on the continent. She has been commissioned to write a full length work for the Opera in Rome. There is also **Joanni Bassi** presenting a cabaret that fuses her musical training with her love of the circus. **Joelle Leandre** blends jazz into her performance shows while **Veronique Chalot** specialises in ancient music and traditional French songs. And no strangers to London audiences, the **Sadista Sisters** will be presenting one of their own unique plays.

**Brabant Centre, Wood Green**  
Cast present **New Variety**, an alternative cabaret. Every Sunday at 8.30, no booking

**Croydon Warehouse**  
01 680 4060  
Sept 13 - Oct 2 Festival of new work by touring companies, some of which likely to come down from Edinburgh

**ICA**  
01 930 3647  
Aug 6-14 The Joy of Mooching put together by ex-Mooch entrepreneur **Kevin Molony** and designer **Steve Smith**.

Aug 17-22 **Actual 82** is a series of concerts devised by **Anthony Wood**.  
Sept 1-2 **Mike Westbrook** (unconfirmed)  
Sept 6-12 **Penguin Cafe Orchestra**  
Sept 14-25 **Lumiere and Son**  
Sept 28 - Oct 9 **Slow Fade**: a new work by **Mike Figgis**  
Also watch out for a series of contemporary classical music concerts on Sundays, a collection of rock promos on August Tuesdays in the cinemathèque, and a complete retrospective of **Steve Dowskin** films in September.

**Islington Arts Factory**  
01 437 2617  
Aug 16-27 Summer course in contemporary dance with **Micha Bergese** and **Christine Juffs**.  
**Lyric Studio**  
01 741 2311  
Sept 14 - Oct 9 Performing poets **Roger McGough** and **Brian Patten** in **The Mousetrap**.

**Musicians Collective**  
01 722 0456  
Programme unconfirmed except for **John Russell** Aug 28-29

**National Theatre**  
01 633 0880  
July 19 - Aug 28 **The South Bank Splash**: Six weeks of free daily outdoor events from companies such as **Pookiesnackenburg**, **Cunning Stunts**, **Flying Pickets** and **Great Medici Vaudeville Theatre**.

**Old Red Lion**  
01 837 7816  
July 30 - Aug 21 **The New Vic Theatre** company present the **Ultimate Dynamic Duo**  
Aug 24 - Sept 9 **And All Things Nice** directed by **Charlie Hanson** of the **Black Theatre Co-operative**

**Old White Horse, Brixton**  
Cast present **New Variety**, an alternative cabaret. Every Friday at 8.30, no booking

**Riverside Studios**  
01 748 3354  
July 29 - Aug 22 The amazing Brazilian troupe, **Grupo de Teatro Macunaima**, return to London with two new plays: **Family Album** and **All Nakedness** will be punished under the joint title **Nelson Rodrigues, O**

**Eternal Return**. The new works will play in repertory with the colourful, exuberant and passionate show, **Macunaima**, that so stunned London audiences last year during the **LIFT** festival. There is a first night party on the 29th organised by **Brazilian Contemporary Arts**.  
Aug 24-29 Following its visit to **Peter Brook's** theatre in Paris, **Habib Tanvir's Naya Theatre** comes to London as part of the festival of India. The company comprises 35 folk artists from the castes and tribes of remote villages. The new production is drawn from the traditions of **Sanskrit** theatre combined with contemporary techniques.  
Sept 7-19 **Mabou Mines** London premiere with **Prelude to Death** in Venice.  
Sept 21 - Oct 17 **Market Theatre of Johannesburg** present their two man satire **Woza Albert**. This is described as the most politically potent show ever to have come out of South Africa.

**Theatrespace**  
Aug 1-8 The fourth **Theatrespace** festival under the banner **Theatrespace Cruising**. A 100 shows in 8 days in and around the **Charing Cross** area.  
Aug 10-12 **Mivvy Mime** company  
Aug 16-21 A group from **Ghana**

**Upstairs Theatre Royal Court**  
01 730 2554  
July 22 - Aug 21 **Salasika** by **Louis Page**

**Waterloo Gallery**  
01 928 5230  
July 23-24 **Waterloo Sunset**: two days of live art to include a performance entitled **Perfect Moments** by **Marty St James** and **Anne Wilson**; **Gina Parr**; **Max Eastley** and **Paul Burwell**; **Graham Tunnadine**; **Gary Cooper**; **Philip Jeck** and **Douglas Gill**; **Tara Babel** and **Andre Stitt** and others.

**Bristol Arnolfini**  
0272 299191  
Concert series starts at the end of September

**Cardiff Chapter Arts Centre**  
0222 396061  
July 25 - Aug 7 **Dance Event**  
Aug 7 **Performance** course run by

**Janet Smith** and **Christopher Banstead**  
Aug 14-21 A seminar entitled **A Sideways Leap** (In search of a character) led by **Sian Thomas** and **Melanie Thompson**.  
Sept 4 **Terminal Cafe Cabaret Night**.  
Sept 20 - 2 Oct **Doppelganger Theatre Laboratory** with a new project entitled **Broken Years**.  
Sept 13 - Oct 13 **Dick Powell** is creating a performance/ballet with sculptural costumes.

**Oriel Gallery**  
0222 395548  
Aug 7-14 Chapter-based **Paupers Carnival** with installation and performance entitled **Drake's Drum**.

**Cardiff Laboratory Theatre**  
0222 394711  
To Aug 11 touring in rural Wales

**Edinburgh**, this August sees the greatest festival of fringe performing activities on earth "426 performing groups appeared in the first edition of the Programme... the total number of shows seems to be up. One could count at least 801 different shows or programmes..."



Spiral Dance Company

If you dare expose yourself watch out for the **People Show's** brilliant cabaret; the **Private Habits** of **Ivor Cutler** and **Phyllis King**; **Shakespeare's Sister** by **Monstrous Regiment**; a **New Variety** of Poets presented by **Cast**; **Pookiesnackenburg**; **Rational Theatre's** stunning



*Chikken Tikka*; the Yorkshire Actors' *Tramp*; Elaine Loudon; Female Trouble; the National Theatre of Brent; the Trickster Theatre co.; Hull Truck and the caustic wit of John Dowie. And from abroad Nancy Cole; Belgium's Radeis and Noho Theatre of Japan should be worth catching. And dancewise there will be Bill T Jones and Arnie Zane, the Murray Louis Dance Co from the US; and Second Stride, Sue McLennan and Spiral Dance Co will also be in Edinburgh. And more and so much more.

## Leicester

### Phoenix Arts

0533 554854

Aug 6 Contemporary Dance workshop US tap dancer.

Aug 7 US tap dancer **Will Gaines**

Aug 11-12, 18 Puppet workshops

with Phil Hill, Major Mustard

Aug 14 **Pratap & Priya Pawar**:

"India's divine dancing couple"

Aug 21 **Stan Tracey** Line up:

modern jazz

Sept 2-25 **Phoenix Theatre**

company present *Cider* with

Rosie.

## Nottingham

### Midland Group

0602 582636

Nothing until October but then

the Midland Group Performance

Art Festival to include **Station**

**House Opera**, **Forkbeard**

**Fantasy**, Italy's **Charles Matz**,

**Eric Bogoshen** from New York,

**Jim Whiting**, **The Basement Group**, **Marty St. James**, and **Anne Wilson**, plus performance art platform, plus talks and video screenings, all to be seen between the 20-24 October.

## Salisbury

### St Edmunds Arts Centre

0722 20379

Aug 30 - Sept 2 **Atelier Theatre**

with *Tell me Doll*

Sept 6-7 **Nova Dance Theatre** of

Canada

Sept 13-14 **Shared Experience**

Sept 15 **People Show**

Sept 18 **Fusion Dance**

## Touring

### British Events

0225 27558

Aug 6 South Hill Park, Bracknell

Aug 14-16 Halifax, Yorkshire

Aug 21-22 Stour Valley Fair,

Colchester

Aug 23-24 South Bank Splash,

National Theatre

Aug 28-30 Cley Fair, Norfolk

Sept 4-5 Rougham Fayre, Bury

St. Edmunds

Sept 11 Computer exhibition (?),

Birmingham

### Cameron and Miller

0476 67248

July 31 Oxford

Aug 20-22 Stour Valley Fair

Aug 28-31 Albion Fire & Water

Fair

### Cycles Dance Company

01 388 9848

Aug 2-7 Summer school,

Leamington Spa

Aug 9 Worcester

Following this performance Cycles

ceases operations due to with-

drawal of funds

### Forkbeard Fantasy

July 30 - Aug 1 Elephant Fair,

Cornwall with Desmond Fairy-

breath and War Games

Aug 9 Worcester Arts Workshop

Aug 10-11 The streets of Bir-

mingham

Aug 16-17 National Theatre

Aug 21-22 Stour Valley Fair,

Colchester

Aug 28-29 North Norfolk Fair

Sept 3-5 Rougham Fair

### Janet Smith and Dancers

01 349 4335

Aug 7 Welsh Summer School

### Lumiere and Son

01 622 4865

Touring *Son of Circus Lumiere* -

mental patients perform to a

jungle queen to avoid slavery and

so much more.

July 31 Elephant Fayre

Aug 6-11 Oxford Festival

Aug 17 - Sept 7 Edinburgh

### Natural Theatre

0225 310154

Two teams of performers that are

travelling from Inverness to Lands

End during August and may appear anywhere with the secret of the box or the egg and spoon olympics or disguised as the Maurice Minor Folk Dance troupe.

### Shared Experience

01 380 0494

The *Insomniac in Morgue Drawer*

Nine is described as a surreal,

bizarre and spine-chilling tale of

mystery and imagination.

Performer Bob Goody clones

himself with terrifying agility

through dozens of writer Andy

Smith's manic and hilarious

characters.

Sept 13-14 Salisbury

Sept 15-16 Birmingham

Sept 17-18 Hemel Hempstead

Sept 30 - Oct 2 Manchester

### Welfare State

01 250 1474

Aug 9-29 Havers Hill, Cambridge-

shire

Sept 6-11 Alverston Charter week

celebrations (Cumbria).

Sept 19 - Oct 2 Third residential

Summer school in celebratory

theatre at Lakeside, Cumbria.

