

PERFORMANCE
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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

PLUS

Angela Carter
on Roland and Shirley
Jeff Nuttall on Subsidy in the UK
Living Theatre Interview . Les Oeufs Malades
Shared Experience . Incubus . Hinchliffe and more. . .

Mods

MAGAZINE

45p

SIZZLE!



AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1979



THE PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

At a recent seminar, where the Arts Council were giving the usual tired reasons for the limitation of subsidy and an ex-minister of arts was blaming the Establishment, (which may still exist), for the lack of it; someone asked, (in all probable innocence), "do we need it"? Everyone assembled, whose work depended on it, roared "Yes!" and the young be-suited chap from the TUC went bright pink at the suggestion that money could be raised from elsewhere.

Well, do we need it? Jeff Nuttall in this issue, says we have been corrupted by state subsidy, yet elsewhere we hear of performance groups who simply cannot keep on the road because of the lack of any grants.. This magazine was started without any subsidy, but it is unlikely to keep going unless it can raise solid financial support.. Does the hardening resolve of the Tory government in their fund-raising efforts for the rich mean the end of the limited breathing space allowed for development of performance outside theatres and galleries? Will we see the American style of private patronage along with the spectacle of British performers in breathless anticipation of consummation by culture-groupies? Or as Tom Wolfe puts it, 'I'm still a virgin (where's the champagne?)'

IN THIS ISSUE— THE GREAT OUTDOORS



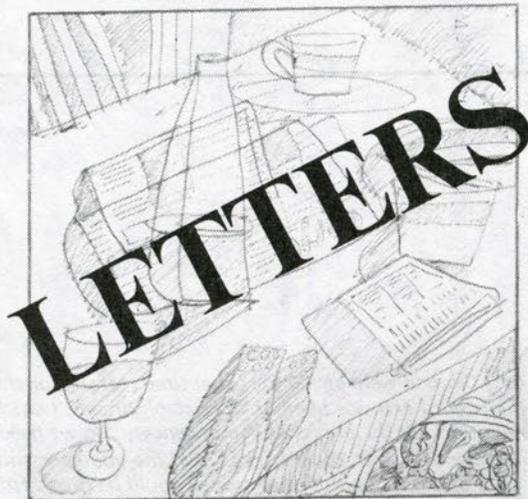
Incebus

Special section on Performance outside. P.9—16

MAGAZINE

Editor Rob La Frenais Design Editor Chloe Nevett. Correspondents Bryony Lavery Pete Shelton Angela Carter Paddy Fletcher Steven Ballantyne Saph Durrell Luke Dixon Ian Hinchliffe Mary Turner Tom Castle Bruce Bayley. Photographs Tom Castle. Typesetting and Printing Calverts North Star Press.

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FRINGE SURVEY

Having read the last issue of your magazine and seen that you are interested in hearing alternative points of view, we would like to reply to an article which you published on the Fringe Survey that we are conducting.

First of all, no attempt was made to conceal the fact that the Arts Council are one of the sponsors of the research. All the fringe organisations involved in the survey were told about this in the letter which accompanied the questionnaires.

Secondly, the research findings will of

course be published — there would be little point in carrying out the survey otherwise. Presumably the Arts Council will read the reports describing the research findings, but these reports will consist of summaries and general conclusions — there will be no possibility of identifying any individuals or their organisations from these summaries. While individual questionnaires could conceivably be traced to source by anyone determined enough, these questionnaires will under no circumstances be available for scrutiny by the Arts Council or any other body.

It would be a pity if this survey were to

be jeopardised, given the fact that it is intended to highlight the circumstances in which the 'fringe' areas of the theatre operate and could lead to a more favourable environment of support.

If any of your readers would like to discuss further the aims and implications of this survey or our research in general, we would be more than happy to chat to them on 01-486 5811 ext. 210, 231 or 223.

Yours sincerely,
LES GALLOWAY
CHRISTINE PORTER
 Arts & Leisure Research Unit
 Polytechnic of Central London

LIBERATED LIBIDO

Rob La Frenais is not quite as knowing about the knowing Phantom Captain as he thinks if he believes that The Narcissus Complex (1977) was the first of our shows to concern itself directly with sexual matters. He has overlooked Wicked Words (1972), Kingsom Come: The Art and Craft of Pornography (1972), A Bite Out (1973), What to do on a Date! (1973) and The Charm School (1975) to name but five. Nor was The Narcissus Complex the first Phantom Captain show to provide major roles for women.

His review of The Prisoner of Zen seems to imply that my absence on sabbatical has somehow liberated suppressed libido and feminism in the company. Sorry I can't take due credit for this upsurge. It was always there. But perhaps your reviewer wasn't.

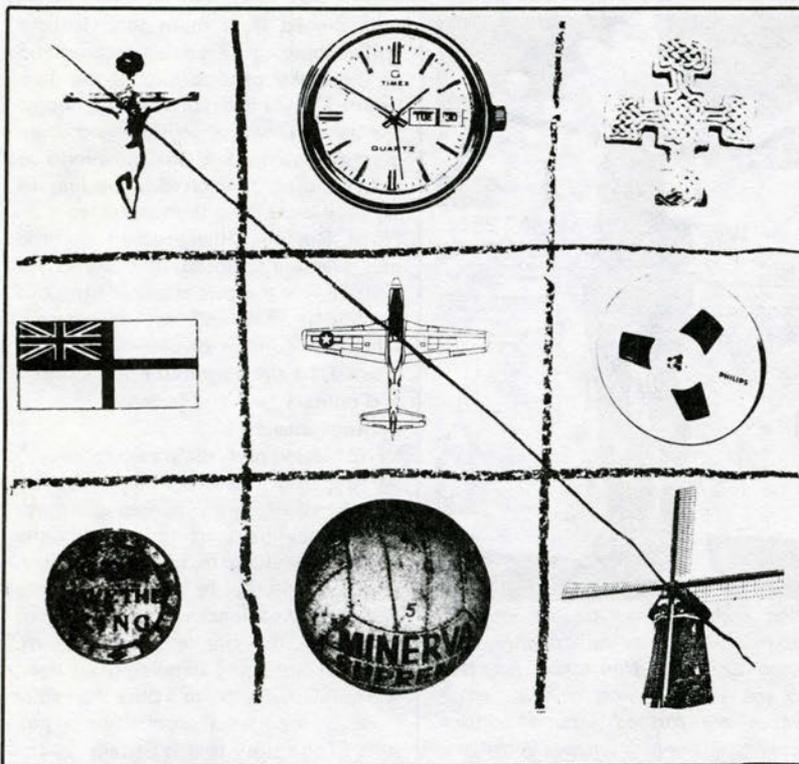
Yours sabbatically,
NEIL HORNICK

half moon theatre 27 alie Street e.1. 480-6465

Woyzeck by Büchner at 8 p.m.

Mahagonny: the Songspiel by Brecht/Weill at 9.30 p.m.

August 6 - September 29



NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

The History of Western Civilisation

ANGELA CARTER WATCHED ROLAND AND SHIRLEY ENCAPSULATE IT.

The Oval House at Kennington in South London, opposite the cricket ground of the same name, contains a theatre, a cafe, and houses a number of workshops and classes where you can learn mime, tap-dancing etc. Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron held four days of workshops with Oval House regulars before they started six days of performances of the capsule history of Western civilisation they first worked out in a different form at the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff in March. But now it was the middle of a July heatwave and the rectangular Oval House auditorium a quite different proposition to the cabaret-like atmosphere that had been created in the restaurant at Chapter Arts.

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES changed in detail from day to day, although the sequence of events stayed the same. Sometimes other girls took Shirley's place on the cross, an impressive

wooden structure that cast its shadow over the audience ranged around the sides of the theatre. The performance was composed in brief, rapid, strip cartoon-like scenes utilising the central imagery of the game of noughts and crosses — zero for conduct; X means a bad mark. The evening began outside a large church, the steps of which were themselves overhung by a large neon cross, although at half past seven on a summer's evening this cross unhappily remained unlit.

Procession of the Blessed Virgin

Outside the church, in the space where wedding parties customarily assemble, a rough-and-ready procession formed around a sedan chair on which was seated a woman (Shirley Cameron) in a long blue dress with a blue veil over her face. Roland Miller, in neat black semi-military uniform and jackboots, flourishing a baton, blowing a whistle, marshalled the procession across a

busy main road and into the Oval House itself. The tambourine accompaniment was occasionally augmented by a tin whistle and even a clarinet or two now and then. The audience, an involuntary part of the procession, accompanied the sedan chair and its robed attendants. Passers-by and children playing in the church grounds found the procession perfectly legit., as though it was a genuine manifestation of the goings-on inside the church itself.

In the auditorium: the history lesson

The procession disappeared behind black curtains cutting off the fourth wall of the auditorium. Roland Miller, blowing his whistle, flourishing his baton, briskly drilled the audience to sit up straight. "There are straight lines and there are numbers — put the two together and you have history." With that, he unrolled an enormous spool of paper diagonally across the auditorium floor. On this was written a large number of random and arbitrary dates, such as 3,000BC: Invention of the Wheel; 133AD: Gunpowder Formula Introduced to Europe by a Monk. The history lesson was delivered in curt, incisive tones; when it was concluded, two schoolchildren ran forward to wind the spool up again, with its collection of random events.

Examinations

More schoolchildren filed into the lighted space at the centre of the auditorium and sat down cross-legged on the floor. They were mutinous children; some slyly smoked cigarettes, others passed notes to one another, pinched one another, threw paper darts. At the command of the whistle, each child leapt to its feet and produced a specious justification for having failed its exams: "I spent all my time smoking in the bogs . . ." "I always had terrible handwriting . . ." "I'd have passed my history exam except it was very hot . . ." During these improvised speeches, the class grew rowdier and rowdier; as the week progressed, too, the class grew rowdier and rowdier until the schoolchildren were engaged in pitched battles under the instructor's nose. After each child had said its bit, Roland Miller marked a scarlet nought or a scarlet cross on its cheek. Some got both.

"Class — dismiss."

Ascension of the cross

Climbing up onto a podium at the side of the auditorium, Roland Miller now began to operate a record turntable. To the sound of music, Shirley Cameron, in white underwear, black stockings

and suspender belt and shiny green waistcoat, with a semi-bridal wreath on her head, began to dance across the black curtains. Her dance was puppet-like and naively sexy. She vanished behind the curtains. First a hand appeared and threw a stocking out; then another stocking; then a suspender belt. Finally Shirley reappeared, pristine in shining white bra and knickers. She danced around the cross and finally climbed up upon it. A neon halo around the cross-beam clicked on. The shadow of the cross stretched behind it and before it.

The music played on.

Western civilisation is based on victimisation, especially of women.

Indians

A group of Indians and a group of figures in police-like costume filed into the auditorium on either side of the cross. They drew up in lines facing one another, as for the start of a country dance. Roland Miller now assisted Shirley Cameron down from the cross and arranged a feathered Indian head-dress on her head. Each policeman carried a gun. Each policeman in turn shot an Indian.

"I shot her because it was justifiable homicide."

"I shot him because he was a dirty stinking yellow foreigner."

"I shot her because I didn't like the colour of her hair."

And so on down the line. After the last Indian was shot, they all ceremoniously resurrected themselves and changed places with the policemen, collecting their guns on the way. Now the Indians shot the policemen and, in their turn, mouthed their specious excuses.

Western civilisation is based on excuses. A brief blackout.

Father Christmas: the spirit of capitalism

The lights go up to reveal a jolly, red-coated, white-furred figure grinning away. "You didn't expect to see Father Christmas, did you!" And between his jackbooted feet, a perfectly enormous sack. Father Christmas (Miller) expounded the philosophy of all the jolly Father Christmases in the world, with their big cars and fat cigars. "Once upon a time, I was just an ordinary gnome on the production lines, slaving away for Father Christmas Inc., but I had a vision . . ."

And from his sack he drew the wonderfully enticing parcels and hurled them at the grateful recipients. Each hit the floor with a dull, reverberating crash, like a bomb.

Western civilisation is based on making a profit from giving people things they don't want to have.



Miller and Cameron assume emblematic roles that may be, roughly, subsumed as the authoritarian function and the victim function. The performances are formed around cultural elements — the holy image (in the procession), the tests of intelligence and rites of passage of exams, the crucified victim, ritual killing, ritual exclusion from the group, ritual modes of consumption. Some of these elements are taken as the starting-off point for improvised verbal expositions (Roland Miller).

A brief blackout.

Ball games

Brightly dressed schoolchildren, among them Cameron, scampered into the auditorium, passing amongst them a rubber ball. They formed a ring and began to throw the ball to one another. At last somebody dropped the ball.

Reluctantly, the careless one crept into the centre of the ring.

Silence.

Then the tittering started, then the catcalls and abuse. "You can smell her from here . . ." "How did *she* get in . . ."

"He's not one of us."

Until the victim can bear it no longer. "SHUT UP!"

Blackout.

The totemic animal of Western civilisation is the scapegoat.

But things soon cheered up when Father Christmas, back in his everyday uniform, climbed up to the record deck again to operate the

History of Music Disco

Western classical music reflects all the transcendent aspirations of our culture. Frenetic dancing to the music of Franz Liszt, Wagner, Joe Loss, Elgar, Sibelius, Bizet — "the Frenchman who captured the soul of Spain", Bach, Beethoven —

"the biggest B of them all". (Roland Miller showing an enviable command of the tacky propositions of the disc-jockey.) Small fights broke out amongst the dancers, whose delirium and abandon increased to a fine crescendo as Sid Vicious' celebrated recording of *My Way* went onto the turntable.

When Roland Miller turned off the music and attempted to descend his podium, the dancers attacked him, but he fought them off with his baton. When a modicum of silence had been created, he drew himself up in a proud and military way and began a

Political speech

"This blessed plot, set in a silver sea . . ."

At first they listened to him in silence, but the silence grew increasingly mutinous, heckling starting up. But the speaker, swelling to his noble theme, national pride, only became the more eloquent. Weaving a seamless tissue of landscape, the chalky Sussex Downs, the turf springing beneath your feet, the gurgling chatter of a pure Yorkshire beck . . . ley lines, the occult underpinning of the glory that is Britain . . . the speech took on more and more sinister overtones. The nationalism modulated almost imperceptibly into racialism. The dancers drift off.

A waiter in tails, a waitress in white blouse, black skirt, white apron (Shirley Cameron) trotted briskly in.

"Refreshments are now being served in the cage — cafe."

Table manners

The staff marshalled the audience into the cafe and seated them firmly at the tables, urging them to remove their bags, briefcases, newspapers and elbows from the tables, taking their orders (for real — this is the fully functioning Oval House cafe).

The scene was set for the arrival of the Captain of Protocol (Roland Miller). On a raised platform against one wall of the cafe sat two figures made out of chicken wire, one a man in formal dress plus hat, the other a woman in a flowery gown. The man wore an iron cross on a red ribbon round his neck, the woman wore pearls. "The lady is the possession of the man and wears jewellery to show how rich the man is. The man wears a medal to show he is the property of the state and how brave the state considers he is."

A rigorous exposition of the formal discipline of table manners ensued. Then the exhortation:

"Relax — enjoy yourselves — have a nice evening."

And so the performance gently modulates into real life.

Angela Carter



WHO ARE LES OEUFS MALADES? An egg speaks...

First of all – the name.

Yes, we know it's an awful name. The trouble we have with it! You can imagine trying to book it over the phone: '... Er, can you spell that please?' '... Laser what? ... are you a light show?' It was OUR FIRST BIG MISTAKE. On our first production, we spent about three weeks rehearsing the plays and two months thinking up the name. Eschewing perfectly sensible suggestions as 'too dull', someone (and to this day no-one will admit to it – and it wasn't me!) hit upon Les Oeufs Malades. Hysteria took over and we've been stuck with it ever since. Still, who else gets droves of confused French tourists in their audience expecting a piece of performance art? Who else gets not only their plays reviewed but also their name? '... that oddly-named group' '... nothing wrong with them – apart from their name' '... the only whiff of rancid omelette about this group is their name!' AARGHH!

We perform my plays.

That is to say, I write a script and the cast then spend the rehearsals moaning about 'This is too difficult to say' and 'What does *this* mean?' and 'What I'd really like is a scene were I'm on stage *by myself*'. I tell you – it's hard being the writer for Les Oeufs Malades. It's even harder being the director. In a world divided into chiefs and indians, we have a company of chiefs. War-bonneted chiefs. Hence everybody in

the company is an expert on everything ... the correct way to light a stage area, the best route out of London, which county Bishops Stortford is in (Hertfordshire, Sussex and Surrey), how to stack chairs, how to treat bee stings, how to breathe properly ... games in the van are fierce, rehearsals are always lively, often ending in fist fights.

How we work.

We start with the play. I have about fifty ideas – all extremely tenuous – such as: I want to do a play about that moment when someone tells you about someone dying and your mouth curves in a smile (*Helen and Her Friends*), or: what is travelling? (*Bag*), or: are all groups of people dangerous? (*The Catering Service*), or: I've got this wonderful character – now all we need is a play to put her in ... When I write the play, the ideas usually change. It means that our advance publicity is often at total odds with our final production – which can be very embarrassing, not to say confusing for the audience (particularly the droves of French tourists ... !)

We then rehearse the play. Rehearsals are a mixture of trying anything and everything, arguing, rewriting, taking out, putting in, getting hysterical, discipline, taking off – we do everything we can to get to what we want to do.

The things we want to say are diverse.

The way we want to say them differs

from show to show.

We have more women than men in the company.

We have made the artistic decision to do without expensive sets ... oh, alright, we would really love expensive sets and beautiful costumes, but the truth is we would rather spend money on fripperies such as our wages – and anyway, it makes our get-ins and get-outs gloriously simple.

Our history.

We've done five shows. *I was too young at the time to understand why my mother was crying* was about romantic stores. *Sharing* was about ... sharing. *Grandmother's Footsteps* was about games. *The Catering Service* was about – corruption, I think. We're all still a bit confused about that one. *Helen and Her Friends* was about death – and friendship. *Bag* is about friendship – and relationships. I hate saying what they are about, these plays. If I could say what they are about, I'd write postcards rather than plays.

Our future.

We're still doing *Bag*. It's our touring show about touring. We want to put *Grandmother's Footsteps* and *Helen and Her Friends* together and take that out around the country. And then there's the new show ...

It's going to be about – *something*. I've got about fifty different ideas for it, but until I write it ...

Bryony Lavery

Julian Beck

Rob La Frenais: What do you think of the unfavourable press reaction you've had?

Julian Beck: We have always been subject to bad reviews. There was a period in the sixties when the counter-culture movement was rising, when among the terrible reviews and horrible reviews saying how awful we were, we had some defenders. In the last ten years we've concentrated on creating an anti-theatre, street theatre; we've tried to remove our work from being governed by the establishment and middle class press. So that press had nothing to say about our work, and couldn't have therefore had a hand in forming it. In returning to the theatre, as we did this year with Prometheus, our intent was to begin to speak in the theatre very very boldly again, politically. The only production we ever did in which we spoke boldly, politically, was Paradise Now, and the reviews were largely horrendous, though the play itself made a great impact with the public. Now with this play we are deliberately trying to change the content of theatre by making it both heavily political and also, in dealing with the myths, extremely cryptogrammatic.

We have also found that it is not infrequent for the press to say of us – and this has been going on now for thirty years – 'Last year they were wonderful, but this year they are no longer effective.' They even tend to forget what they wrote. In Italy, when Antigone had become extremely successful and was winning prizes, Franco Quadri, the editor of Sapiro, reprinted all the reviews that had debunked it alongside those by the same critics who now praised it. The one thing that surprises me is that the level of theatre criticism is not as high as the level of art criticism.

RL: The main criticism seemed to be that you were a sixties period piece.

JB: I think that's a result of categorisation, not really based on reality. We've spent ten years of work outside of the imprisoned institutionalised private property theatre. We've spent ten years in the streets creating new theatre forms about which I don't think the theatre critics are terribly interested.

RL: It hasn't entirely been ignored. In England in particular, there's been a lot of street work happening and –

JB: There's an immense amount of street work happening all over Europe, America. I don't think it's of interest to the people who write about theatre generally. It's a tremendously important implement of cultural change. At the end of Paradise Now we said the theatre is in the streets, we walked out into the streets... thousands of groups have been working all over the world to liberate the theatre from the enclosed form.

RL: How was your work received in Germany during the witch-hunt in the aftermath of the Baader-Meinhof incidents?

JB: When we did Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism in Munich, we cited West Germany for the use of White Torture in Stammheim Prison, which has been adopted by countries such as Brazil, leading to the deaths of a number of prisoners later described as suicides. We were doing this play at the very moment of the kidnapping and assassination of Hans-Martin Schleyer and the mysterious deaths in prison of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe. After the third performance I was arrested and accused of 'defamation of the state' which, I enjoy saying as an anarchist, pleases me as an accusation; I was proud of that. I was held there for nearly nine hours and I was very scared, although I've been arrested many times.

RL: Why were you more scared?

JB: In South America I just felt I would be protected... by my class.

RL: And in Germany?

JB: In Germany, as a Jewish anarchist homosexual vegetarian who had just spoken out against that regime and its use of torture, I was frightened at that moment when Germany was again seized by a kind of hysteria. A highly intellectual country, highly sentimental country, highly artistic country, highly militaristic country, highly masculinised country, highly paternalistic country, as a result of the extreme repression that it exercises on its whole socio-cultural environment, is given to hysteria. I was scared.

RL: The behaviour of the people who

arrested you?

JB: Their behaviour, their comportment was decorous and polite, but the vibrations of the country at the time were very frightening. There were police vans circulating with loudspeakers, distributing leaflets telling people to report anyone they thought was suspicious; people with foreign licence plates, people who kept strange hours, people who left their apartments and went back five minutes later, then went out again, people who never telephoned out but only received calls. In four days they had received over half a million phone calls. Judith [Malina] was walking down the street the morning of the Stammheim events, and a drunk threw his arms around her and said, 'That pig Baader is dead.' Gratuitously. It was frightening.

RL: Finally, why are you going to Holloway Prison tonight?

JB: Because in the first act of this play we examine mythology, which is part of our whole culture. In the second act we project that against the myth of our own time, the myth of the Russian



The Living Theatre

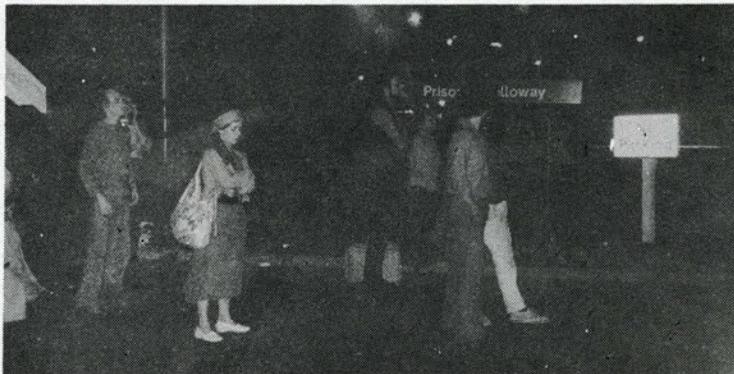
Revolution; we are concerned with the hierarchical power structure which governs our lives, which gives us a situation in which our freedom is limited, and in the third act we go out to see the result of that culture projected on the architecture of our daily lives.

RL: Why Holloway?

JB: *Because we have been doing this play for nearly a year and this is the first opportunity to go and stand in front of a women's prison. That is the reason.*

RL: What do you think of being in England?

JB: *I enjoy it. I have the sense here of an undercurrent of lively discontent.*



The silent vigil outside Holloway Prison which comprised the third act: although a rather token gesture it represented the continual idealism of the group to do it every night. Several members of the audience objected loudly to 'demonstrating for murderers and rapists.'

BLEAK ARABIAN GOTHIC NIGHTS

A Profile of Shared Experience



Shared Experience is perhaps the perfect touring company. So well suited are its artistic ideals to life on the road and so successful has it been in market-

ing itself that the company is rare in that it functions without any of the compromises which bedevil others working in the field. With five actors, a

director and an administrator, their declared aim is "to create popular theatre appealing to a wide audience and flexible enough to be played in any

space or situation. These criteria have led us to perform without any technical or scenic elements whatsoever. We rely entirely on the skills of the actors and their relationship with the audience."

The company's success allows it periods of rehearsal so long and luxurious that even the big 'national' companies can envy them. Currently they are coming towards the end of no less than eighteen weeks of rehearsing their new production, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. It was over lunch during a break in rehearsal that I spoke to director Mike Alfreds, who founded the company in 1975 on his return to Britain after five years in Israel.

Alfreds sees the production as the latest development of the company's central interest in story-telling. Theatre is essentially one group of people telling a story to another group of people, and Shared Experience allow nothing to come between the actor and his telling of stories to the audience.

Their first performances were of adaptations of stories from the *Arabian Nights*. Eventually three adult productions and a children's show developed, with the performers moving fluidly into, out of and around the stories, acting as narrators, characters and story-tellers. Even in its early days when I saw the show in what was virtually a derelict pub in North London with only fluorescent lighting, the technical abilities of the performers were impressive, while the richness of the performance conjured images which no set or costume could have come near to achieving.

I asked Mike Alfreds how clearly he had developed his ideas about the relationship between performer and audience before he set up the company. "When I started I was ready to do it. The creative centre of any performance is the actor. It is their ability to make this work that is the essence of what the theatre is about. The only thing that makes theatre viable today is that it is live. So you don't want anything fixed, you can get that on film. In theatre everything changes every night."

Certainly this is true of Shared Experience's performances, though it is a strongly disciplined improvisation arrived at out of intensive rehearsing.

With a 'Fringe First' award from the Edinburgh Festival and eighteen months of touring behind them, the company next tackled Dickens' vast novel *Bleak House* as the basis of their performances. The choice was not an obvious one, but Dickens' ability to sustain interest in a story originally written in serial form was well suited

to the company's methods, and four sequential performances developed from the rehearsals, employing initially eight performers (later only seven were used) and incorporating the narrative of the text as well as the dialogue. At the Theatre Upstairs the entire sequence was presented over one weekend, to Alfreds' evident delight: "I like the idea of theatre as an event, which is why I admire Ken (Campbell)'s stuff so much."

Rehearsals are not structured towards preparing and polishing a final product ready to take on tour. "The whole year round is a process. During the eighteen months *Arabian Nights* run we kept working on it. It's a living process. Obviously your show does take on its own reality and will be better suited to some spaces, but each night is different."

The ten hours of *Bleak House* were followed by the wholly improvised *Science Fictions* which was never scripted and existed only in performance, and *Gothic Horrors*, developed from eighteenth-century gothic novels.

Now the company are working on their first 'play', *Cymbeline*, applying the methods developed over the last four years to performances of the complete Shakespeare text. When I interrupted rehearsals, the performers were using the Elizabethan elements of earth, air, fire and water as bases for characterisations of the roles they were playing. It was just one of a multitude of exercises that Mike had devised with the company in their joint exploration of the text. He uses "whatever stimulates the actors' imaginations. The show will be very open-ended, allowing as much improvisation as is possible with a script."

Though it is a very long play, the full text will be used as far as possible, and the elaborate technical requirements of a play that includes elements of the masque provide a major challenge that clearly excites the company. So gods will descend in chariots, battles will rage, music will play, and only the unaided and unadorned performers will ever be seen on the stage.

The logistics of casting more than thirty roles with five performers were worked out before rehearsals started, but though Alfreds did much research into the play, he went into rehearsals with no preconceptions as to how it should be staged. Essentially he is a catalyst, as receptive to ideas in others as he is fertile in ideas of his own. "I try not to get too far ahead of the company. I am, I suppose, about a day ahead. The actors all go through the process of exploring the text with me. So when it

comes to a choice, it is their choice." But though the company's success has been considerable, with administration equal to the artistic standards, awards won, glowing reviews received, runs at the major London venues, and the blessing of substantial revenue funding from the Arts Council, Mike Alfreds is aware of dangers. He is anxious that Shared Experience does not relax into a creatively stifling repetitiveness. "There is a danger of being a little bit too cosy."

What project Mike will devise next year to avoid that cosiness he has yet to decide. For the present the company's security and long weeks of rehearsal have resulted in some of the best ensemble playing in British theatre. In rehearsal the company are exuberant, enthusiastic, energetic and lively with ideas. Never bored; and in performance never boring.

Cymbeline opens on September 10th at the Birmingham Rep Studio, where it plays for a week. After that it tours the South and the West Midlands before going to the Wyvern in Swindon, Milton Keynes, York Arts Centre and Derby Playhouse. Londoners should get a chance to see it in April.

Luke Dixon



Diary of Events

September: 14th & 15th
Kite Tails mime dance theatre fresh from the Edinburgh Festival. 21st & 22nd Phantom Captain in Marbles their new Edinburgh Festival production. 28th Rachel Lambert and Dancers contemporary dance group from New York.
October 5th & 6th Womens Theatre Group in Power - how do women react to it ?
24th Adrian Henri liverpool poet.

Stop Press.....This is not all. For details of these and other events as yet to be confirmed please call us on 340 5226.

SPECIAL FEATURE

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Dirk Larsen

What's the difference between a performer in some rig-up from the King's Road going bananas at the public in Japanese, and a Japanese tourist involved in a genuine misunderstanding? And that person you half see out of the corner of your eye, strutting around in a pink costume. Is it a performance artist or just a student taking up a ten-pound bet and doing that streak? Or, have you heard the one about the community artist who turned a block of London flats into a raging inferno merely by standing on his head and demonstrating his prowess at fire-eating? (It hasn't happened, yet.)

What would you have made of seeing a couple of people wandering around Coventry shopping precinct dressed in boxes eight or nine years ago? (*Action Space*, see review.) One member of the public who would not have claimed to have made anything of it did however comment, 'I've seen some bloody strange things happen here, but now I've seen everything.' He was wrong. In spite of protests of 'throwing money down the drain' by councillors, press and public, street performance not only failed to die but for a while grew to gargantuan proportions, and has remained with us. So much so that sifting out what is performance from what is not (let alone what is any good) is a difficult matter.

The easiest way of looking at what might happen on the streets of any town in summer is to look at the work being done by the individuals and groups who earn their living by performing outdoors. Many have been working for ten years or more and so have established some recognisable patterns of activity.

The fact that street performance was born in the days of wild idealism at the end of the sixties helps us to understand some of the events that can be seen; it also goes some way towards explaining why the whole thing started. A lot of people did not want to work in the arts institutions, a lot of people wanted to perform but did not stand a cat in hell's chance of doing so in arts institutions, and there was a public that didn't want to see what the arts institutions thought they should. The Arts Labs were one answer to this, and the streets were another. Here, socialists could have a working class audience and treat them to the simplicities, and frequently simple-mindedness, of the agit-prop style of didactic theatre. The artists and musicians had new 'resonant' spaces instead of the clinical atmos-

phere of the gallery, although their enthusiasm for their own experiments often led to an even greater alienation of their audience than before. It seemed that anyone could stand up and say their bit, however they chose, as long as they were prepared to receive the mockery and abuse of their audience.

In opposition to this there were a few groups with their own distinctive styles who seemed genuinely at home in the streets — the *Welfare State* being a good example. Choosing to plumb the depths of pagan history for their rituals and images, they had become tribal in their lifestyle, and through some peculiar chemistry recreated events that brought the original power and fear that would actually affect the spectator. The effect of the experience was undeniable. But for every *Welfare State* there were fifty 'meaningful happenings'. Regrettably, these characterise the period more accurately than the occasional success. Meanwhile there were community artists trying to *involve* communities, and bunches of clowns trying to entertain them.

In the USA at the time, all of this was happening, and more. The most original and timely development there, however, barely took off in England. This was Guerrilla Theatre, which was deliberately quiet and unobtrusive as it relied on performers infiltrating organisations in order to carry out direct actions against them. Example: a New York store's refusal to provide WC facilities for the public became a scandal in the press when a woman performer appearing to be a woman in the last stages of pregnancy was refused access to a WC by everyone up to the

manager, and promptly collapsed. The bridge between political direct action and street theatre offered by Guerrilla Theatre is clear. And yet, despite claims by other politically motivated performers of the time that they were attempting to work with both theatre and direct action; the form remained largely unused, although people like the Yippies were using it for ends ranging from attempts to bring about revolutionary change to self-publicity. In doing so they were unwittingly preserving an art form for performers which has now become prominent, the Hoax.

Before long, the whole area of street performance was becoming a growth industry. This can be attributed to some extent to the growth of street festivals. Initially local communities, then councils, and ultimately Jubilee street parties created an enormous demand for performers. The general effect of this was to create a new form of shoddy performance. Whilst the more established street performance companies had been slowly upgrading both the quality and scope of their work, a new horror — the amateur clown — was unleashed on the world. The distinguishing marks of the amateur clown are their white faces, their ability to be uncommonly stupid, and their playing of a loud instrument badly. They serve the public only by reminding them of how bad street performance could be. The more serious mime/clowns are a different kettle of fish, although they still depend on your taste. For some years they held a jamboree in Amsterdam under the title of 'Festival of Fools'. Here, amid the clouds of marijuana smoke you could

see an endless succession of these types (with *Friends Roadshow* very much in the forefront) attempting to do anything to shock or amuse their audience, or at least raise them from a stoned stupor. Unlike other street performers who have experimented with just about everything at their disposal, mime/clowns are still only providing more of the same, and the tediousness of this event can be witnessed this summer when part of the 'Festival of Fools' is exported to south-west England. The event should make it clear that the few groups, such as *Footsbarn Theatre*, who were born in clowning but have attempted to do something very different, are the highlights of this bunch of street performers.

Although there are many theatre companies and bands that have learned to adapt their performances to the streets, these should not be taken to represent the best of street performance. Not that they are bad, but the street is a distinctly different place to the theatre, even a fringe theatre. The best street performances inevitably come from groups and individuals who specialise in street performance. Watching *Ian Hinchliffe* attempting to open a can of beans on a car bumper, or *Reindeerwerk* gnawing at the public's ankles as dogs, although strange, are preferable to the patronising attitude of those who would try to turn the street into a theatre (and the same goes for performance artists that try to turn a street into a gallery). The public rightly distrusts arty-fartiness, and so it is those companies who have chosen the general public as their audience and have (in varying degrees) respect for them who make the best out of the situation.

continued on page 16



John Bull's Puncture Repair Kit.

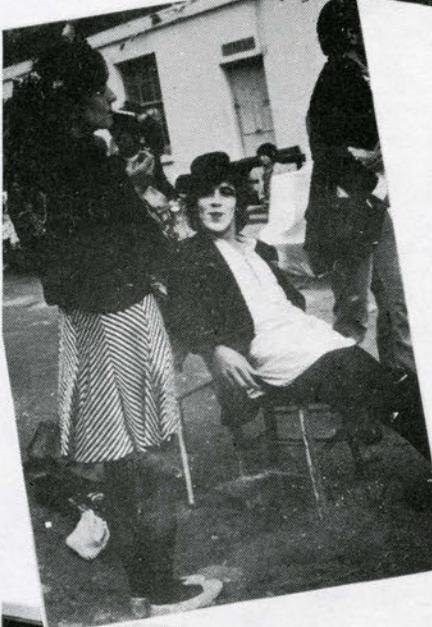
WE'RE NOT FOOLING

*The Great Outdoors Section has another crack at
the Demolition Decorators.*

"I wanted to be a visionary poet like Arthur Rimbaud, but instead I'm in Demolition Decorators." Thus spake 'Swami' Max Coles, sort-of front man for what is possibly London's most secretive group of exhibitionists. A recent Demolition Decorators performance involved a contingent of Decorators wandering idly around the Puck Fair festival in Russell Square loosely disguised as a group of counter-cultural tourists, complete with ill-informed tour guide, multiple cameras and foreign exchange problems. The announcement over the fair's PA system that Demolition Decorators would be on next served as the cue for their immediate disappearance from the Square and the simultaneous appearance of a cruising police car.

As far as anyone can remember, the Decorators were formed last year when two New Zealanders, David Mohan and Judy Boyle, were arrested in Rupert Street for putting on Mohan's kids' play *Willie the Clinklet*. When the case came up at Bow Street a big demonstration was held outside the court that featured a man sitting tied up in a bathtub full of rotten fruit and vegetables as its centrepiece. The following week the remand of the case led to an organised busk-in by fifty performers in Leicester Square, a certain measure of police panic and another four arrests. The week after that twenty-five marchers hoping to avoid charges of obstruction were met by an almost equal number of police. There were twelve arrests. Apart from tedious court appearances, what this produced was the coalescence of a performing nucleus that was more or less Demolition Decorators.

For three months the Decorators operated out of premises in Covent Garden, putting on indoor shows every other Friday. The theatre burnt down in December and the group was thrown back onto the street, where they probably belong. A desperate awareness of the likely consequences of a return to the streets led to the formation of a suicide squad within the group willing to face official harassment and arrest with stoic detachment. Three Decorators (the 'T-bone Three') were arrested for



giving away food outside the Garner's Steak House in Piccadilly, and although the ten nude Decorators on the A23 during the London to Brighton bike ride escaped police notice, another group member was run in for crossing the road in Brighton itself. Then there was the three-day vigil by the man-in-the-tube outside the headquarters of London Transport — he was arrested for hanging his washing up in the street, which may have offended the sensibilities of the employees of New Scotland Yard directly across the road. Veterans of the Ideal Home Exhibition squat, where they served as decoys, of events organised by Rock Against Racism and the Movement Against A Monarchy, of Smokey Bear's Hyde Park Smoke-In and many others, the Decorators have learned to provide a sort of made-to-measure entertainment or alternatively have become Dial-A-Cause.

But the days of providing fifteen ersatz atomic power station engineers at the drop of a lead-lined helmet have passed. There has been a purge, and the group has condensed down to five musicians and five entertainers, though such precise demarcations are, of course, rejected by members of the group. "The difference between the beginning and now is that now we don't have to introduce ourselves to each other before each performance!" says 'Swami' Max. The new tightened-up Demolition Decorators went into action at the Glastonbury Festival, where they gave a three-day performance involving a guru connected to a disintegrating TV set by a sheet of plastic. This event marked the flowering of what is at once both the joy and the dilemma of Demolition Decorators: onlookers are unable to tell that what they are seeing is in fact a contrivance and not reality. At the last five local street festivals at which they've played the police have been called, as often as not by the organisers of the festivals who haven't realised that the scruffy old tramp sitting in the gutter or the wild-eyed evangelists thumping their bibles are part of an act that they themselves have hired.

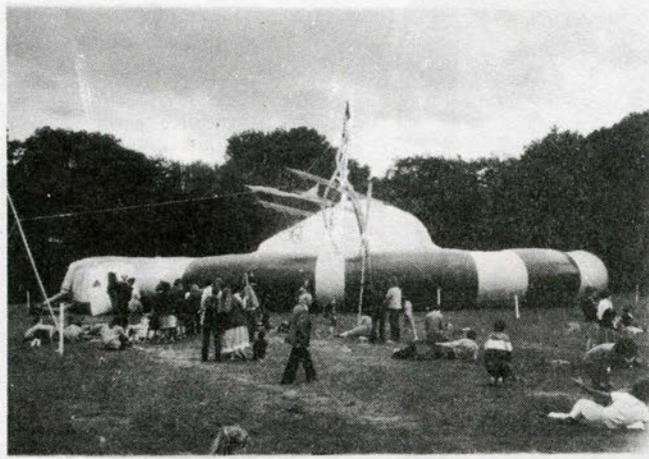
A possible rationale for all this is offered by group member Vicky Line, who reminisces back to her early days

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

with the Decorators: "It was very crude when I first joined — primitive even — yet compelling somehow, and strongly related to the spirit of the time. I'm sure Elizabethan theatre must have been the same... The Decorators were getting people involved, there was a feeling that their performances could change your life in a way that conventional theatre doesn't. It's changed mine, anyway — now Demolition Decorators is my life... It's very therapeutic to allow oneself to be so exposed and vulnerable in public while at the same time protected by the love and support of the rest of the group. And only Demolition Decorators can do the things they do, if that isn't too much of a tautology. I mean, most other theatre groups set out to involve or entertain but end up alienating their audiences with a sort of 'them and us' thing... These days the Decorators are more credible, more authentic, more real than ever." Other Decorators have less to say: Danny says simply that "We help people get into their own lives." And according to Pete Supply: "We're not fooling."

Given their curious problems with the authorities, it's hard to give a date for Demolition Decorators' next performance. One gig they have lined up for certain, though, is outside Wells Street Magistrates Court at 1.15pm on 22nd August when they will celebrate in some fashion the outcome of the case against the Leicester Square Four. As Decorator Islam Mohammed promises with ominous good cheer, "It'll be a humdinger!"

Stephen Ballantyne



As always ambitious, Action Space in *The Future Of The Past* has attempted to invest its intensely public events with an impressionistic experience of the Spirit of the Twenties. Airships, Motor Cars, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Cubism and the Futurists. The inflatable dome the echoing interior of an airship, piloted through space and time by immaculately turned out adventurers in white ducks.

Photo Tom Castle



OF THE PAST

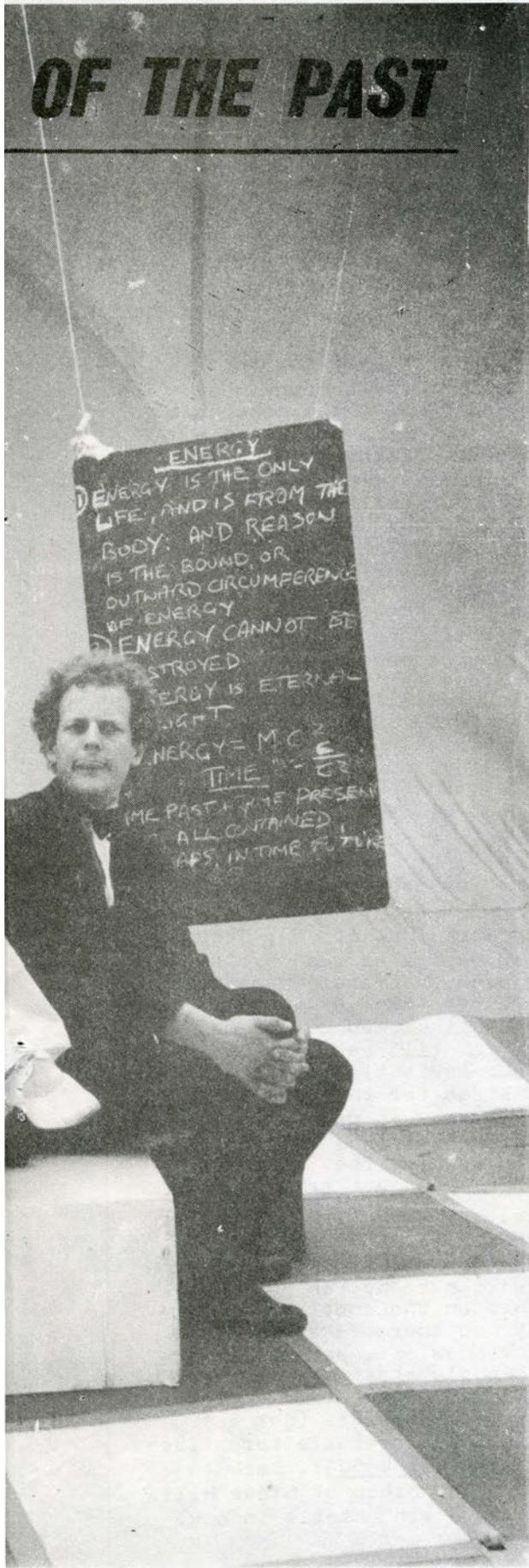


Photo Tom Castle

Bryony Lavery took a sample half hour.

I went with the wrong accessories to see *The Future of the Past* performed by Action Space at Parliament Hill Fields on Saturday. I took a Grown-Up and a Dog. The Dog got frightened by the noise of the rockets and the Grown-Up kept saying 'I'm not going to have to *participate*, am I?' What I needed were a couple of children. So I ditched the Grown-Up and the Dog and fell in with Tracy and Darren, who, it turned out, had left their Grown-Up and Dog at home.

Tracy had been to this kind of thing before. 'It's not really a space-ship – I saw them blowing it up,' she informed me about the enormously impressive inflatable. 'We go inside – these people aren't real, they're just acting.' These people were the Action Space team, dressed variously as schoolteacher, schoolboys, pre-World War I pilots and officers of the space-ship, whose task it was to make us interested enough in them to go inside the inflatable. I found the characters, apart from one or two exceptions, unconvincing. As Tracy said, 'these people aren't real'. This could have been because they were more worried about losing the keys of their van than in talking to us.

However, in situations where there was me and two children, the conversation was always directed at me. Surely this is for children? 'I can't understand a word he's saying,' said Tracy. Quite.

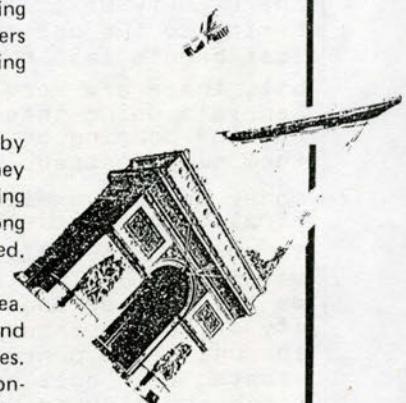
Once inside the inflatable, Tracy took off. All the kids loved the inflatable. I did too. It is a spiralling tunnel of different colours that leads into a large dome with dead-end pockets running off it. In the dome were characters from an earlier time. They were talking about Energy and Time.

Again, the kids were more excited by the inflatable than the characters. They were bouncing off the walls, falling into the pockets and zooming along the tunnels. Yeah, energy was released.

Action Space have an exciting idea. They have wonderful inflatables and visually arresting devices and costumes. What they need is conviction and concentration to invest their characters with life and to contact their audience.

I came out. The characters outside were still looking for the keys to the van. I picked up my Grown-Up and Dog.

Bryony Lavery



EIGHT

SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD WITH INCUBUS or FEAR & LOATHING IN THE WACKY WORLD OF SUBSIDISED TOURING...cast: a lot of drunk performers, 4000 hippies, a few policemen, Steve Hillage, Ian Hinchliffe, Footsbeard & Forkbarn, lemmings & cliffhangers etc etc with apogolies to those omitted...

Thursday. London to ~~XX~~ glastonbury Fayre, uneventful except for fleeting glimpses of police brutality. Set up camp and discover there is no alcohol on site so off in massive exodus to nearest pub which won't serve us. Fume off in convoy with Forkbeards, lemmings & Cliffhangers to one which ~~XX~~ will. Many pints of Bass then back at closing time to Fayre. Steve Hillage is evoking the Millenium on a stage several miles away. Compete with massive p.a. by shouting insults. Pass out. V. creative day...Friday: Rise, comb teeth and eat some dubiously doctored fudge. Back down to pub with forkers for lunchtime prod. meeting. In afternoon we erect our First Aid tent and the fudge attacks my central nervous system in mid-performance. I find myself shaving an onlooker's leg while the rest of the company hurl buckets of offal about. Later try a spot of medieval begging and make about £5. Intercept Steve Hillage who won't give me anything. ~~Coomie-pub.~~ Pub in evening with everybody, then midnite show of Footsbeard 'Arthur' which is ~~XX~~ jolly and sometimes magic. V. creative day...Saturday: Discover we have a puncture and Ian Hinchliffe shows up. We decide to unveil our Three Old men in Clothcaps. Lunchtime and evening visits to the pub, with a performance of 'Dr. Wellbeloved somewhere in between, plus a few little white lines. Steve Hillage and Tom Robinson etc. yelling exhortations at the masses, then an oohahhhmaking laser show. One o'clock performance by Ian Dave and self in dome (there's always a dome appen tha knows). V. creative day...SUNDAY. Off early to Hood Fayre. Unofficial visit cos we haven't been invited this year. Resentment and rumour, but everyone seems glad to see us and the pubshow goes down well except Steve Hillage isn't there. Lots of twee Dartington types though but a nice gig and lig for all dat. Then down to the local with Footies, Forkers, lemmings, c'hangers, Covent Gdn Community Theatre etc etc. Back to the site via confusion and eventual oblivion with campfires, jolly jamsessions ('Wild Thing' on six guitars, five tambourines and the Footsbeard Horns) and a bottle of Dutch gin which someone still thinks they left on the boat. V. creative day...MONDAY: Incestuous farewells and couple of lunchtime pints with forkers then down to Exeter with Footsbeard for first of 3 benefit nights for Festival of Fools '79. First one tonight in Routes club with us, Footies and several local bands. Opening ceremonies, explosions, slowmotion punchups with Footsbeard, and some cunt nicks a fiver from my discarded trousers. Was it you, Steve Hillage? Back to Crediton farm in clouds of smoke. Decide to wash my feet tomorrow. V. creative day...TUESDAY: Off through scenes of brain-damaging rural charm to Barrstaple Queen's Hall for more of the same. Nostalgia chokes my gorge as I recall how I used to get the shit kicked out of me there every well almost every Sat. night. Some of it still seems to be adhering to the bar ceiling. North Devon declines our invitation and on the last band's last number, when we all climb up on stage for the Last Waltz bit, there are more people up there than in the audience. I wonder what Sandra's doing these days and seem to hear again the ~~666~~ twang of brastraps and the popping of acne. Remember that I forgot to wash my feet so throw them away instead. V. creative day which is strange because the gig lost money and Steve Hillage didn't cross my mind once...WEDNESDAY. Penzance for final benefit in Demelza's. Last week the Tremeloes. Not the sort of place to expect Steve Hillage to join us onstage for an impromptu rocksteady version of 'Mellow Yellow' as indeed he don't. Club packed by ten but just as the Footies and us are congratulating each other on the emotional serenity of our collaboration, someone throws a wobbly and there is a backstage row which the punters seem to think is part of the show. Tempers are exacerbated then obliterated by copious local fungi. People start to bleat, bitch and bluster, and frontal lobes burn out with crisp reports. General verdict seems to be that with 20 companies on the road together (get out of my dressingroom Janco) the Festofools could provide a useful alternative to Ulster. All in all, I can't wait. V. creative week...THURSDAY. Back to London. Kiss the cat, jump in the bath, fall asleep and dream of Steve Hillage, his face painted blue, playing 'G.L.O.R.I.A.' on a tin whistle in a v. small, v. crowded public bar....

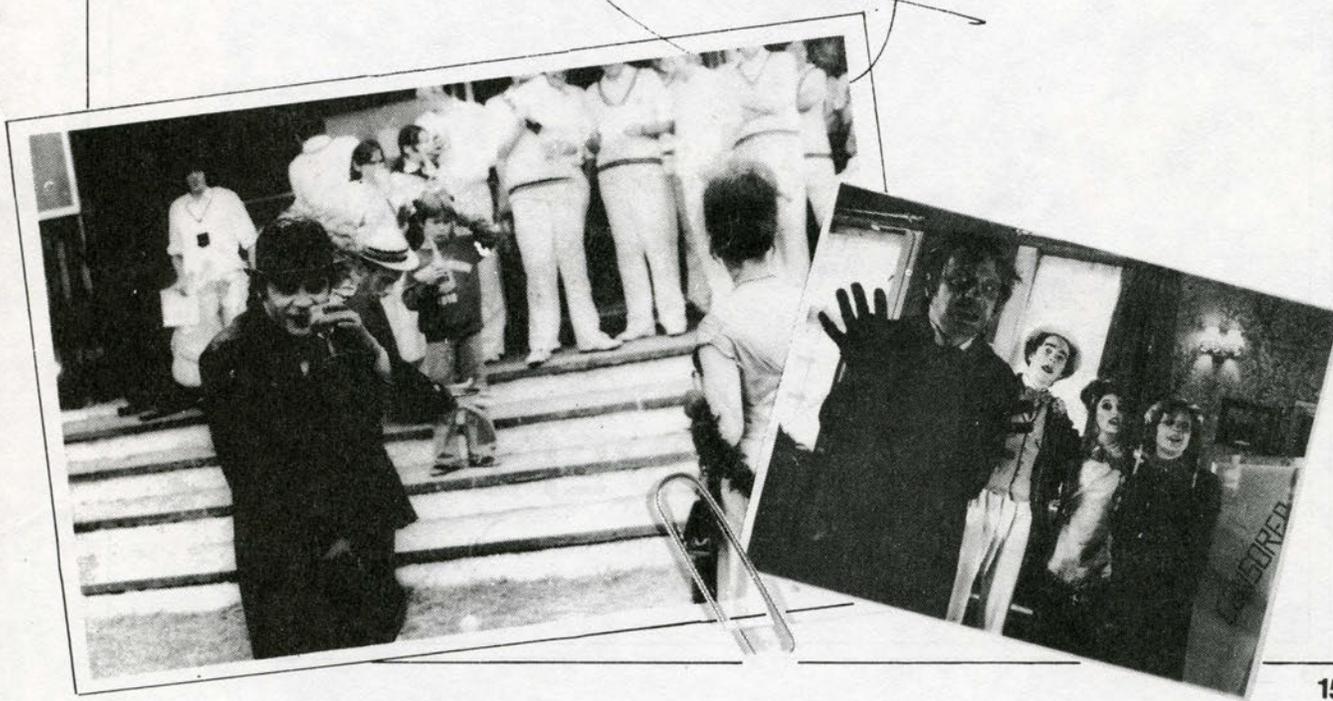
DEAR PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE,

Here please find a rough and jumbled account of what sticks in the mind after a week on the road. I hope your readers obtain some ~~vicere~~ vicarious sensation from this fragmented narrative and if anyone writes in to complain that they got no idea of exactly what we did to justify the vast fees we were getting at the se events then you can tell them from us, as kindly as possible, that they should have been there to see for themselves. ~~Q~~ If this gentle admonishment seems to strike home, you may then suggest that they get their arses down to the West Country in August for the Festival of Fools. There will be a lot of winkywanky halfcocked clownywowny crap there, but a lot of good stuff too and it's the height of the magic mushroom season down there at the time, so bring a paper bag and dig out a kaleidoscope.

I enclose a photo of our last pubshow 'Doctor Wellbeloved's Travelling Academy of Hygene'. It wasn't taken on this particular trip, but at a pub in Deptford, which reminds me. ~~Te-the~~ This pub, practically next to the Albany, was for some reason full of TACT delegates (I think it was TACT). Their presence had apparently forced the regulars out, according to ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ the landlord, but he didn't care and we'll play for anyone so we didn't care either. The show was a spoof Victorian sex lecture and had little or no aesthetic or political value other than to satirize, if you like, our own contemporary obsession with matters genital. The audience was a wonderful illustration of what Ian Hinchliffe was raving about in your first edition, what I like to call 'the new puritanism'. God help us and save us all from accusations of sexism but I would just like to point out to these people that Incubus performed that particular show over fifty times in three months to a whole variety of audiences in a whole variety of venues. Not just to poor ignorant chauvinists in nasty East End gin palaces, but even to (shudder) people as politically aware as the cast themselves, ~~xxxxxxx~~ and even once (gosh we were nervous) at a feminist cafe in Rotterdam. Since when ~~xxx~~ are cheap laughs indefensible?

lots of love to Brian and Frances,

Paddy



continued from page 10

Some, like *Covent Garden Community Theatre*, have developed a completely new type of show for street and pub. Others have done it by completely changing the environment around them so that anyone entering this environment automatically becomes a part of it. *John Bull's Puncture Repair Kit's* last outpost of the British Empire is a fine example. Complete with house,

formal garden and flagpole, the spectator could rub shoulders with the characters of the ailing Raj and marvel at their remarkable antics. This is where the element of hoax becomes a critical part of street performance. The subtle difference between what is, and what could be, becomes the trading ground between performer and spectator.

These, then, are some of the main types

of work to look out for in summer (and with arts funding in its current crisis it is unlikely that there will be the opportunity of seeing completely new ideas by new professional companies). But keep your eyes open for the occasional good idea, and when a doorman welcomes you into Woolworth's remember that not everybody performs because they are paid to.

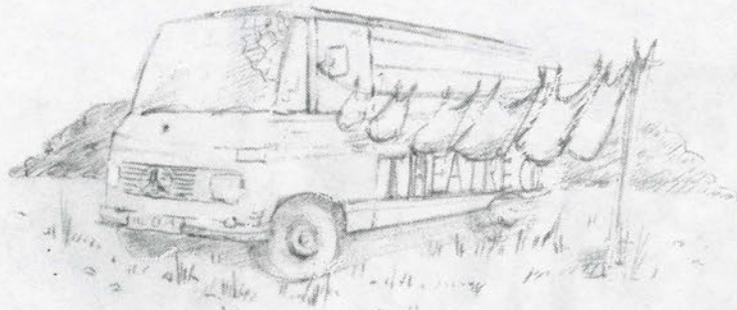
Pete Shelton



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SUBSIDY IN THE UK

The Naked Form of Control Revealed

By Jeff Nuttall

Climbing out of half a gallon of anaesthetic alcohol to assess the situation of myself and others still starry-eyed enough to call ourselves artists in 1979, the best I can do for the minute is stifle, or anyway modify, a phlegmy croak of 'I told you so'.

The arts in Hubbempireville are staggering around in the posture most common to small boys on railway stations who can't read, not through any compression of the bladder but (draw close — see the bloodstains) through the effects of a gelding knife most effectively slid into their pants in Subsidy packaging. Here in Hubbempireville, Subsidy has shed veil after veil until the naked form of Control is revealed.

Ten years ago only the grand-daddy art activities got state money; the major opera companies, stage companies, municipal art galleries. In 1968, as some of us may recall, the kids got out on the streets to make the world over anew. Amongst those who panicked in the halls of power were the English Lords Eccles and Goodman (Goodman was uncle of Burroughs' then junky lover, so he had special worms of concern crawling through his preoccupations). These worthies summoned to the House of Commons a small group of people who had been active in the (then) Underground. I had just published a book called *Bomb Culture* so I was held to be something of an authority on Underground art. I got my invite along with the rest. The purpose of the meeting, it was quickly explained, was to 'find out what sort of art these young people (i.e. the street demonstrators) enjoy'. The idea was to 'chan-



nel all this idealism into constructive activities'. I said my say pretty aggressively and departed. I walked the land asking artists to ignore the carrot, the tiny stipend offered by the National Arts Council. Hopelessly. Here was the opportunity to stand up in a socialist state and say 'I am an artist. That's what I do and that's what I get paid for.' One of the more vulnerable misconceptions of naive socialism. Within two years, between 1969 and 1971, what had been a formidable phalanx of guerilla artists had split into factional groups vying with one another and generally bitching about the injustice of comparative awards.

In the early 70s, however, some cosmetic devices still held firm. I, for instance, sat on the Literature Panel of the Yorkshire Arts Association. So did radical poets Ulli McCarthy, Paul Buck, David Tipton, performance artist Rose McGuire, small press director Tony Ward. A host of good (i.e. audacious, adventurous, inventive, militant) poets Moved into the National Poetry Society, multiplied their voting power and took over. Bob Cobbing, Lawrence

Upton, Bill Griffiths, Chris Cheek, Barry McSweeney, Tom Pickard, Roy Fisher set up workshops, set Eric Mottram (arguably the most important figure in GB just now) as editor of the *Poetry Review*, set up Poet's Conference as a democratic body to handle poets' professional affairs, leaned on the Arts Council until the National Poetry Secretariat had been formed to subsidise individual readings all over the island. The Arts Council itself allowed a Performance Act panel to be formed, where a substantial number of artists, including Roland Miller and Stewart Brisley, decided how that particular activity was to be financed. A number of small arts festivals sprang up in provincial towns and the same team of poets and performance artists moved around for fees and expenses — fee varied between twenty and forty quid per gig. For a while there was the illusion of growing artist administration. For a while we were left alone. For a while we were most strangely comfortably off. However, our political standpoint had been subtly altered, not by the heavy tactics of making us recant but by the light tactics of plucking us out of an embattled situation and setting us down in a filial situation. They elected me chairman of the Poetry Society. In 1975 we were no longer an Underground, but there did seem that we had a growing democratic power.

The organs of Subsidy in Hubbempireville are structured thus: the Arts Council of Great Britain is situated in London and carries responsibility for the whole nation. Some of this responsibility it dispenses directly, some through the Regional Arts Associations

which are supposed to give the arts their proper local inflections. Slowly but surely the bureaucrats have manipulated this structure to harness the arts to their own bourgeois standards. 'Quality', they cry, meaning tradition. 'The gentle art of patronage', they cry, quoting Arts Council Secretary Roy Shaw, meaning quietism. 'Art in the community', they cry, meaning leisure activities; and the end result is that the radical, the audacious, the inventive, the militant must cut its suit according to the public cloth or find itself cut off.

Charles Osborne, whose official title is no more than Literature Officer for the Arts Council, is a spider to whom an extraordinarily large number of threads in this web of governmental cunning lead. Osborne it was who said to the thriving Poetry Society — 'Change your policy, particularly the editorial policy of *Poetry Review*. Accept me as Literary Advisor and you can have lots more money. Refuse and you can have nothing.' They voted to accept. I, with Cobbing and Upton, resigned. Gradually all the other good poets left. The Poetry Society is now a graveyard of grey orthodoxy. When a Tory MP kicked up a fuss about performance artist Genesis P. Orridge at the Institute of Contemporary Art (obscenity complaints), heavy tags were put on ICA money and the Performance Art panel was dissolved. All performance art applications were, for a while, considered (and often refused) by Osborne. Osborne has gone on record as saying that an exhibition of the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins was scarcely worthwhile. Osborne has gone on record as saying that he only calls a meeting of his Literature Panel when he feels that he needs advice. Osborne it

is who has been instrumental in the appointment of romantic novelist and TV presenter Melvyn Bragg as the chairman of this toothless panel. Osborne it is who has curtailed awards left, right and centre according to his personal likes and dislikes. Osborne it is who has recently pronounced that the little magazine movement in England (where poetry is, by the way, thriving) is worthless and has thus cut off all money for little magazines. The tight-arsed orthodoxies of Ian Hamilton's *New Review* were subsidised out of all proportion for a while, but even here funds have been withdrawn. It should be noted that Osborne's only connection with the arts before he got this job was as an opera critic. An opera critic then has decided that thousands of pounds may go unspent because, as far as he and Bragg can see, there ain't no literature. This is at a time when British poetry is healthier than it's been since the early nineteenth century.

But still there seemed to be power for the artist on the panels of the Regional Arts Associations, and in particular of the Yorkshire Arts Association. Yorkshire, a vast county to the North of England encompassing densely industrial cities and wild stretches of hill country, besides genteel rural areas, has been feverishly active since 1966. It has been a source area of British performance art and left-wing theatre. It is the home county of a large number of leading writers and artists and it had, repeat *had*, the two liveliest art schools in Hubbempireville at Bradford and Leeds. Both these art schools have now been craftily de-bollocked by the simple process of setting them in huge administrative structures where their force and power are killed off by

gradual withdrawal of money and non-replacement of staff. Also in Yorkshire is (was) Paul Buck's magazine *Curtains*, which specialises in translation from modern French writing. It's the only English source we have if we want to have any understanding of the subsequent effect of Georges Bataille and Roland Barthes. It is, therefore, wildly erotic in much of its content. Recently the Executive of the Yorkshire Arts Association objected to some cunt pictures, photographs by Italian painter Macceroni (tough luck, a name like that, never mind). At the same time there was a similar fuss about a prose-piece of mine in another local subsidised magazine. The Literature Panel did its job and said loud and clear: 'This is no porn. This is art and good art too. Shut up and leave it to us.' The Literature Panel got sacked. Decisions for literature now rest with the Yorkshire Arts Association Director Michael Dawson (who says he will form a panel of academics — no writers). And who is the voice in Michael Dawson's ear? Who is breathing 'Get rid of these beatniks or else'? I wonder.

It doesn't matter of course. It doesn't matter a shit. Any artist worth his salt could paint masterpieces on the top of a bus on a diet of stale bread and weak tea. The old militancy is coming back. What will take place now will be strong and consequential as never before. It really is a strange phase to have gone through. The lesson is: never expect any health from state subsidy unless you have the Machiavellian skill to infiltrate the structure and take power. Most artists have something better and vastly more important to do.
Reprinted from CENTERFOLD, Toronto, May 1979.

P.S.

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POSERS PARADISE

The Mod Phenomenon

The sort of chap who was seen knocking around in a Parka when I was a schoolboy/mod in 1965 was known as a Poser. He would ride his scooter with his 'sideplates' on (the rest of us would remove them to expose the engine); not only that, they would be made of some substance like chromium. His handlebars would bristle with mirrors, pennants, horns, foxtails, and even — horror of horrors — an impertinent sort of little windscreen known as a 'flyshield'. This allowed his impeccable bouffant hairstyle to rise haughtily, like the Poser he was, above it. His Parka would be nonchalantly unbuttoned to reveal a carefully Windsor-knotted tie. Well, you can imagine how I feel when I see New Mods calling themselves things like the Merton Parkas and Vespas, names only associated with the most obnoxious form of Poser.



Anyway, Girls would like this sort of chap. Green leather-coated, they would perch on the back of this mobile Halfords, allowing their puce miniskirts to ride up white patterned-stockinged legs. Mods were, of course, as sexless as a handful of French Blues. (Purple hearts were naturally banned instantly, taking the brunt of notoriety, but these and other amphetamines such as Black Bombers survived in name, if not consumed in the amounts imagined by popular mythology.)

The Posers were the outward manifestations of mod culture. The rest of us dressed in sparse little black terylene jackets, pulled the sideplates off our Lambrettas and roared aimlessly around the environs of Watford, Croy-

don or wherever. A sort of demi-monde anti-culture that always exists on the flip-side of whatever phase or mood is currently in the public eye — not quite taking it seriously, easily making the jump to the next stage, becoming hippies, revolutionaries, punks, hairdressers etc. And the Posers? They pass on the olympic torch of Poserdom which is still flickering away, with that ghastly scent of exotic decay, here at the Music Machine, Camden Town.

I come to my senses, the deserted streets of Bushey and Oxhey fading away to their proper place (the end of the Metropolitan Line), to the ricky-ponky of the neo-ska (of which more later), the relentless lam-lam of The Who revivalists. Here in the very-late seventies we have a re-flaunting of union jack-wear, with an added bonus of RAF (Royal Air Force) tee-shirts. But the world recession has had its effect on youth fashion. The fifties sports-shirts, last year's glitter, art ties, have sort of hung around, even in those who've made the effort — after all, it is a bit much to ask, isn't it, of the teenager of today? In 1965 it was estimated that the average teenager spent £5 a week on clothes, makeup etc. Nowadays that would be worth . . . phew! Still, a fiver today could purchase at a Help the Aged shop Moira's discarded op-art dress, the odd bri-nylon button-down shirt, those pin-striped 'hipster' trousers as worn by Redge at 'Tiles' . . .



At the Music Machine, they are Knocking on Wood. The Parkas are parked in a neat line in the cloakroom and the first chessboard-patterned mini has hit the dance floor. A group of lads dressed in John Stephen military jackets (*The Speedballs*) have sauntered on and are playing *Ging Gang Goolie Goolie Wotcher* by The Boy Scouts. They prove to be the only thing worth listening to. The New Mods that followed seemed to have difficulty extracting themselves from the punk mode. *Back to Zero* intoned the required 'Ooh's, 'Oh yeah's and 'I feel so sad about love's, but could easily have been singing 'The tower block lift's stuck again'. A special message for *The Purple Hearts* who played last. Don't do The Who, boys, You can do The Small Faces, and even have a crack at The Kinks, but don't do The Who. They were a special case. A phenomenon, which is why they are still with us today (almost). A melodic wall of sound is not interesting unless constructed out of the debris of smashed amplifiers.

In those odd little church halls in the suburbs that served as placebo nite clubs for the under-sixteens in the sixties, you would hear Smart groups like The Method, Protest groups like The Situation, a whole wave of Surf groups, and Geno Washington-style audience-participation, these last being the most popular among the Posers, for whom it was good clean healthy fun, and liked by their Girlfriends. But what was most tantalising, and almost unacceptable to the all-white, mainly middle-class mods of the suburbs was the ska sound. Al Capone. Guns of Navarone.

Ska and Bluebeat have now been warmed over in a curiously acceptable form. *The Specials* were at the reopening of the Electric Ballroom, also in Camden High Street. There's a funny feeling that comes over you when you know that you have probably come on the right night to see the right group. Everybody, just everybody darling, seems to want to see The Specials tonight. They seem to have the exact opposite of a cult following, in that representatives of every fashion craze

Next ?



of the seventies have converged here. Coteries of cropheads, delegations of drapes and crepes, soirees of sleazos, Quantettes by quintets, and marchloads of mods. The lost forgotten children of 1977 drifted in a fading blaze of luminous green and henna, and skinheads charged around like Eton schoolboys four by four. Just over the horizon of the ocean of sweat emerged about eight vigorously bobbing little trilbies which continued to jog about all night, the rest of the bodies unseen. Other members of The Specials (one must presume they were members, as Storming the Stage is now the In Thing) were more enterprising and scaled the amplifiers, setting the house alight with the sort of thing you could hear on Trojan samplers, like Long Shot Kick the Bucket and Return of Django. They

stopped short of actually doing All Change on the Bakerloo Line, a magnificent mid-sixties bad-taste classic, but if they had I would have stopped doing the hitchhiker discreetly at the back and stormed the stage myself. They deserved this huge polyglot audience even if they probably won't keep it, and their combination of Al Capone Jump-Up and White Boys' sneer in *Gangsters*, their single, is a hauntingly suitable revenge for the lost years of Skinhead Moon Stomp.

Even as I write this, it's all over. The Posers will have to go home, polish up the sideplates on their Vespas, and patiently sew patches on their Parkas in preparation for ten years hence.

Rob La Frenais

HELICOPTER BLADE SAWS MAN IN HALF

'To Mom on Mother's Day' and 'Candy Man'. Monte Cazazza Industrial Records.

The bit of paper with the record promotes Monte Cazazza as a crazy man, the outrageous, vile man who traps audiences into taking part in his outrageous misdeeds. Reprinted from 'Slash', the article provides the meat of the package deal, for that's what it is. It's a sick joke hero turned artist turned performer turned product. Who knows what he's really done? The reporter raps on absorbing the myths and repeating the anecdotes. He's an incredible guy in 'The Bay' but strangely there isn't much evidence here. The record is basically a Throbbing Gristle record with inaudible recitations — god dammit. It doesn't ring true to be bored while Cazazza performs, if we believe what is said; we want to see, taste and smell the blood . . . even feel the pain of his madness.



Dean Coryl, the Texas 'Candy Man' who murdered at least 27 adolescent boys, sounds good fodder for him, but the shudder comes from the reading of the facts. The record, featuring babbled listings and newspaper reports, isn't anything but a common or garden piece of noise/drone/music as we are used to from Throbbing Gristle and others.

Letters from Cazazza to Genesis P. Orridge in the Hayward Annual Exhibition reveal a totally boring life-style. The zany, kitsch paste-ups are continuous but the narratives are devoid of interest, including information on cheap air fares to the States and that "We are saving up to buy a synthesizer." Is Orridge a censor? We want to hear the screams as he chops his arm off on stage . . . maybe I'm taking it all too seriously . . .

Tom Castle

SCENARIO FOR A CONTROVERSY

It was a perfect evening when Bruce Bayley ventured into Action Space to view *Going Gay*, the cabaret by the *Gay Authors Workshop* which has caused something of a rumpus recently. So perfect it could almost have been scripted . . .

THE CAST
Three Toilet Walls, with graffiti
Three Performers in a cabaret (M)
One Performer in a cabaret (F)
One Piano Player
Three People in an audience
Fourth Unrelated Person in an audience
Five or Six Women
One Reporter

PLACE: Two sets of toilets, Action

Space, Chenies Street.
A theatre.

TIME: Gay Pride Week, June 1979.

(Enter Two Toilet Walls, with graffiti)
1st WALL: (Loud) 'Going Gay' is oppressive and misogynist.
2nd WALL: (Emphatic) 'Going Gay' is definitely nothing to be proud of. Gay liberation is *not* about COCK POWER.

(They are talking about 'Going Gay', the *Gay Authors Workshop* cabaret celebrating aspects of the gay and

established cultures and lifestyles.)

(Four Performers (M) and (F) and One Piano Player enter the theatre area, dressed in brown shirts and slacks)

FOUR PERFORMERS: Start their cabaret with their opening song about guys who 'ruffle their thighs' so much that 'nothing else quite satisfies' and move into a series of sketches and songs about strips, orgies, cruising, ridiculing wives, scorning mothers, disliking women.

WOMAN PERFORMER: Sings a song — written by the only woman contributor to the evening — about identity crisis. She doesn't know whether she should be butch or femme, she doesn't like the smoky pubs and clubs but she still pays her Sappho subs. She has a good voice.

THE REPORTER: Notes that this is the best song of the evening so far. And the Woman Performer sings it well.

(The Reporter looks up to see . . .)

THREE PERFORMERS: Perform what seems to be a send-up of gay politics or the gay liberation manifesto — it doesn't matter which.

(Three People in the audience get up to leave)

1st PERSON: Awful!

2nd PERSON: Dreadful.

4th UNRELATED PERSON: Didn't you like it then?

(3rd Person grimaces.)

4th PERSON: Why? It seems to be what they want! They're packed out. Couldn't get any more in if we tried.

3rd PERSON: Sorry.

(The Three Persons exit.)

(Several Women in the audience get up and leave without comment. The rest of the audience applaud. Some boo. Some hiss.)

(The cabaret takes on a Side by Side by Sondheim touch, I suppose.)

ONE PERFORMER: Sings a song about how his mother threatened him with 'the Goblin' man' if he wasn't good as a child. The gobble-gobble-gobble-goblin' man never came but when he grew up to be a man the Goblin' Man arrived and it was very nice and now that child has also grown into a gobble-gobble etc.

FOUR PERFORMERS: (In blazers and evening dress) Sing a song called 'Hot Stuff' in which we learn that they want to be fucked, fucked, fucked, sucked, sucked, sucked, had so bad and how much they all want thick prick quick. It is a bright catchy sort of tune.

(The audience applaud.)

THE REPORTER: (Soliloquises) Ah! Is this a send-up I see before me here? But of what? And why this strange manner and form?

FOUR PERFORMERS: Sing the most positive-sounding song of the evening. 'Love's Not a Privilege, It Is a Right' they deliver like an anthem. Fine sentiments.

THE REPORTER: (Thinks) Well, how does this fit in with everything else we've heard? He is reminded that it is Gay Pride Week, unless people (understandably) had forgotten that fact by this time.

FOUR PERFORMERS: Give us a reprise of 'Guys/Girls'.

(Lots of people like it.)

THE REPORTER: Is told by someone that this production will be shown at the Edinburgh Festival.

(The Reporter shudders.)

(Everyone leaves)

(Enter 3rd Toilet Wall and stands with the other two. The Reporter looks at them.)

THE REPORTER: Concur. They may have a point.

3rd WALL: 'Going Gay'? Go and Stand Away.

(Instant black-out essential)

Bruce Bayley

Advertisement

In between the acts.....



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ARTIST STRIPPED BARE! Bureaucrat held responsible.

Miriam Bird and Charlie Pig are a new duo (roughly a year old). Their performance art piece at the Oval House, *Paperwork*, allowed the audience to sit in on the experience of their sending off for, and classifying themselves in the light of, arts questionnaires and application forms of various sorts. Unfolding on three consecutive nights, *Paperwork* was intended as an exemplary satire on 'the artist stripped bare by bureaucracy'. I caught myself thinking on the first night that Bureaucracy had the stakes unfairly loaded in its favour (and the guy in the piece figuring bets seemed to agree with me). Within the first five minutes Bureaucracy had secured not only the Artist but the performance itself in a half-nelson with its G-string round its neck.

The stage office housed two main characters, Pig and Bird, dressed in black plastic imitation business suits appropriate to their sex and occupation. They were discovered, Bird in a litter of crunched-up paper and orange folders and Pig strapped into a carrycot of a legless plastic office chair.



the proceedings with some free-form Art procured by means of different coloured paints which dripped from Bird's primary occupation, when she was not locating a form to read out or rearranging folders, was picking at an uninteresting crossword with which she seemed to be having problems. As Pig and Bird were running, in a languid way, through the various items of office equipment lacking or ailing ('This John Bull printing set isn't much good . . .') Pig enlivened

separate positions on his office chair as he rolled on white paper. The whole effect was neither surreal nor impressionistic but fadingly logical — a never more than slightly distorted vision of 'real life' played out over an essentially mundane activity. The two guest outsiders likewise exhibited no obvious interaction with Pig and Bird. Lynn Davidge, rendering the movements of the characters into choreographic notation on the back wall, at least had the benefit of a tenuous conceptual link, but Wilford Gayle, tucked conspicuously into a corner coolly figuring betting odds, lacked even that. Odds on what, for christ's sake? Proof that one could make more on the horses than on Performance Art? Did we really need persuading? Judging from more such mildly satirical touches, Pig and Bird seemed to think we did. Pace? Sluggish to non-existent.

On the principle that things could only go downhill from there, I decided to give the second night a miss and catch *Paperwork* on the rebound on the third evening.

The whole tenor of the operation had now been stepped up. Not only was the paperwork under control but the satirical play around the idea has started, modestly, to lift off. (Pig was costing returns on the previous night's performance, an audience of one, who was a friend in any case: 70p ticket, of which Pig and Bird got 40p, of which 38p had gone to buy the audience/friend a drink after the show.) They seemed to be trying harder to bump up the pace and amuse the audience — even to the extent of hiring a taxi to take Bird, with a member of the audience as witness, to Trafalgar Square to post off the completed forms (it was Sunday). But even some good touches, such as Lynn Davidge in her black tutu on her points to reach a notation, or her approximate notational mimic of Pig's wrestle to the death with his office chair, couldn't get past my annoyance at having to watch the performers cranking up to cope with the material of their central idea. And as for the idea, it has in any case engendered the same jokes (better ones, perhaps) in artists' living rooms and studios the country over (many have laughed equally hollowly over those same forms), so the joke was not only an In one but an old one.

Pig and Bird are shortly to perform a piece entitled *White Crow* which is based on South American condor rituals.

Saph Durrell

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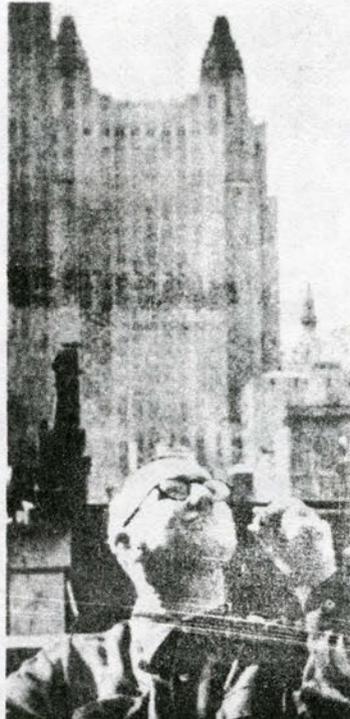
Singing Telegrams

That mythological combination of telecommunications and performance, the Singing Telegram, has finally reached Britain, after decades of bad-taste jokes about it. Straight out of the pages of Mad Magazine, right on to the doorstep of the unsuspecting public, comes Belleboys Singing Telegrams Ltd. I can now reveal the telephone number (01 607 0903) to send a pageboy (usually female) to knock on anyones front door, walk into any pub, or march into any office singing 'You're the Greatest Investment manager Since Sliced Bread' (an actual example.) I asked Pa Paula Seiferd, who runs the company, what it takes to be a singing telegram. 'Guts' she replied. How do the recipients usually react? 'Pleasantly stunned. We haven't had a bad reaction yet.' For an apparent haven for practical jokers, they haven't had many of those either, at least not of the malicious kind. They also offer other services, such as helium balloon-sprouting parcels, and breakfast in bed. They say they are willing to try anything, and can stretch beyond their basic contingent of 'belleboys' to other performers. So, if early one morning, your front door opens to reveal the entire Vienna Boys Choir congratulating you on failing your driving test, you'll know that you've either got a very rich practical joker friend or they've got the wrong house. (Note. If you want to give them a try, they need at least 2 days notice.)



Drastic Measures Work

Rather than sit back and wait for the cuts, the Half Moon Theatre believes that 'As a socialist theatre company, we must fight for a continual change for the better'. So, thumbing their nose at St. John Stevas' miserable attempts to shield his arts budget from the mad axewoman, they've gone straight ahead in raising the vast amount of money needed (£½m.) to expand into new premises in the Mile End Rd. Anyone who has been turned away from one of their numerous house fulls will welcome this.



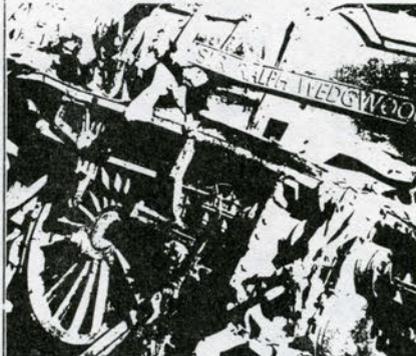
Bertolt Brecht in New York

They have been given extensive press coverage and have already raised one-fifth of the money needed! It just goes to show that you have to be drastic when it comes to raising money, as Action Space found out when they nearly had to close because of Arts Council cuts. Only then did people realise what they would be missing.

Meanwhile, the Half Moon are staging the most notable Brecht opera; Mahagonny, the mythical city of greed, a mirror held up to Weimar society, uncomfortably close to Thatcher England. The Half Moon are not missing out on their share of the tax cuts though; the mythical city of greed is being built from £3000 worth of scaffolding donated by Higgs & Hill.

The inevitable patronage in the face of state withdrawal, but the only way to survive.

Train Crash



What could have been the most exciting performance event of the year, the Sunshine Special, an entire train packed with performers travelling from London to Bath, was abruptly called off because of lack of advance bookings. Admittedly a bit of a gamble, £1500 had to be raised to pay British Rail's fee a week in advance of the trip. The Physical Orchestra, who specialise in organising events in unusual public places have lost almost £500 on the venture, including a deposit of £150 to British Rail. Although they were obviously bitterly disappointed at the outcome, they plan to try again, next time with some sponsorship..A possibility is a trip to York, co-inciding with the festival there. They have 'learnt a lot' from the first disaster, including the fact that British Rail were unusually co-operative, considering some of their more bizarre proposals. So, the way is open for anyone with the money to have a go. Historical note: In 1841 the Secretary of the Midland Temperance Association organised the first such outing, from Leicester to Loughborough, by 'guaranteeing the Railway Company the sale of a large number of tickets'. The tickets cost a shilling, the man's name was Thomas Cook, we now have Tourists.

Rob La Frenais

Brighton Festival Extra



This cultural event in a popular resort on a hot summers day was desperate, bizarre and beautiful. Clarity came occasionally through the haze of nuances grasped at obliquely. One waited for moments through the moods and habits of the performers.

The gathering could have been called an insolence of artists under the protection of poetry. They struggled to play up to one another and down to to the holidaymakers. Populism provided trips to the beach and as the weather was good everyone enjoyed themselves. Against the backdrop of a thousand sunbathers the scale of events was as dispersed as the few black posters that publicised the Festival. A drop in the ocean, a raised head from the bathing towel, a lifting of sunglasses.

During the afternoon stunt flyers held the beach with coloured smokes. The scale was right, everyone could lie on their backs and gasp in admiration. Technique rules OK as the pollution sits in a haze above the shingle.

Meanwhile back at the Poly, performers are knee-deep, everyone watching their friends. In the hallway the inevitable flickering video screens, sheets of handdrawn poetry and random sound produced by mechanical installations tracing pretty patterns in sand and straw. The complete and complacent effect of it all an oversensitised indulgence.

Three artists performed an unscheduled event an hour before the start of the evening which attracted some attention. Rosemary Beecham started gently and pulled the other performers into her world. She built 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them' as required by Marianne Moore. The official evening started with an exit of the Artists to the pub and the entrance of the ticket-buying public. Ivor Cutler read and sang in his practised style; amusing and skilled; people laughed out loud at the jokes but the reminiscences of childhood were real. Tim Dry mimed, the bar opened and closed, vegetarian food was served and people wandered out to the garden where IOU had built a landscape setting. Music and images in an expressionistic painterly manner. A really beautiful piece, organised without reliance on personality and executed with modesty; refreshing. The conception of rituals always dense, the ideas vivid. 'O Absalom. See his red hands! The world his killing floor.' Here is a company that controls its scale and concentrates its audience.. That should have been the end of the evening but still the party went on. Steel and Skin and bar extension till I am. But enough was enough and the organisation had provided an excess of food and drink with nowhere to sleep it off.

Next day one wondered what it was all about. The Performing Art of Poetry? A pretension to Popularism fueled by a yearning to amuse the multitude or an alternative megalomania? 'All these things have to be considered but when drawn into prominence by half-poets the result is not poetry' (Marianne Moore) Still that's carping, we all enjoyed a day out with the lads.

Mary Turner



Photo Frank Bren

HINCHLIFFE LASHES OUT

'THEY SAID WE'RE TOO SELF-INDULGENT'

moaned a sad Tim Britton the other day. He was telling me about the Arts Council's decision on his group's (Forkbeard Fantasy) application for assistance. His retort was that performance to a greater extent was all about self-indulgence anyway.

Tim's brother Chris also very despondent with having to face the realisation of struggling for yet another year without funding. They have a good circuit in the south of about 20 venues with an outstanding following. If a popularity poll were taken of their activities, I'm sure it could be said that they almost always play to packed houses. Favourable reports of the brothers seem to be the norm- I know, I've asked the punters. I've played a good few of these venue, that is, the ones the Brittons have set up. The ones I haven't are among that dead void that everyone has on their contract list and sends off hard-earned envelopes full of best handwritten or 1920s typewritten letters to. Never do you get a reply, an encouragement, or, for that matter any form of acknowledgement. If a one-word reply came back from these, at least one would feel within negotiation.

Oh yes, back to the brothers Britton. Southern Arts didn't give 'em owt either. Now, as the regional Arts associations are there to encourage arts in their area, wouldn't one think that a group that is constructively developing activities would be given a sniff of the cocoa? Is it because they lack administration? If one could make sense of all this, I would surmise a) that you can't have the balloon without the wind, or b) you can't have the wind without the balloon. Balloons being the actuality, i.e. the showing of the leg—the performance 'Actuality' admin, schpiel! A nonsensical comment from a layman i.e. builder in pub. 'They can't stop you doin' it mate, as people wiv character 'as to.' Nonsense? Could be right, cu'nt ee?

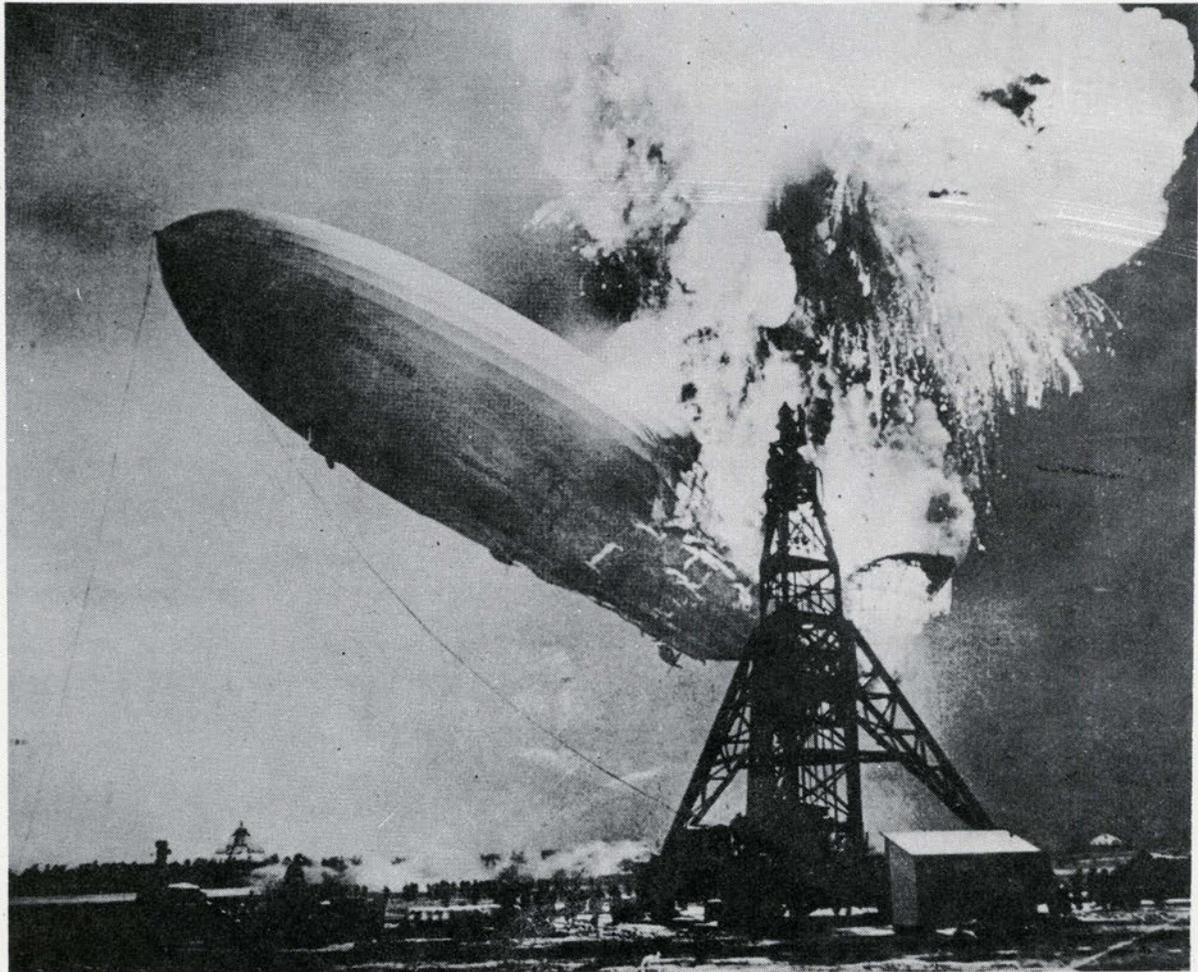
Reply to JP in last ISH (like ish, it's my initials). Problem?.....Oh yes, it's alcoholism, but I'm sure I'll enjoy overcoming it or it me. Tea on the lawn on Sunday, JP, see you about closing time.

Ian Hinchliffe.



Forkbeard Fantasy

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