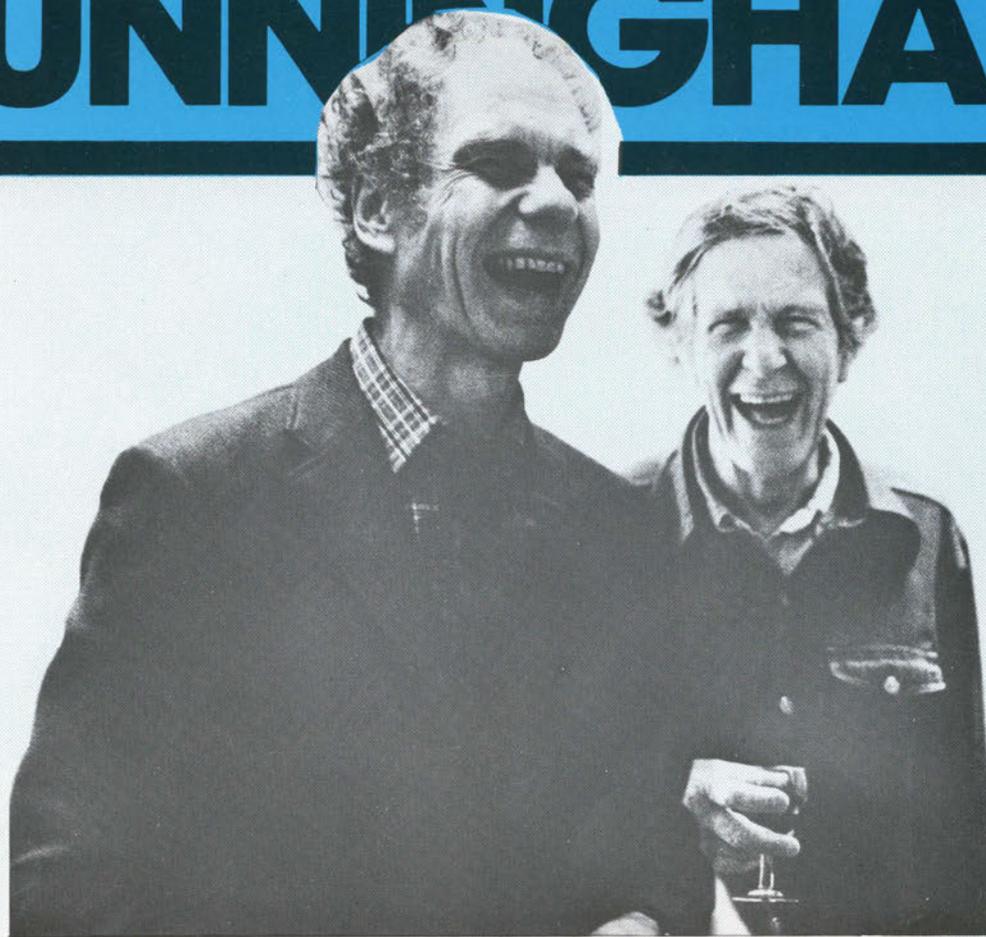


# INTERVIEW **CAGE**

# **CUNNINGHAM**



**LUMIERE & SON    TADEUSZ KANTOR**  
**WOMEN'S IMAGES    STREET WORK**  
**FORKBEARD FANTASY**

REVIEWS

LISTINGS

VIDEO

60p

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#### Thursday August 28th

Richard Coldman & Yoande Snaith. James Newton. Irene Schweizer/Rudiger Carl/Maarten Van Regteren Altena.

#### Friday August 29th

Company. (Derek Bailey, Georgie Born, Lindsay Cooper, Evan Parker) Tristan Honsinger, Maarten Van Regteren Altena, Frank Perry.

#### Saturday August 30th (Afternoon)

Steve Lacy & Kent Carter. Maggie Nicols/Peter Nu/Lol Coxhill. John Stevens/Peter Brotzmann/Peter Kowald.

#### Saturday August 30th (Evening)

I.C.P. Orchestra. (inc Misha Mengelberg & Han Bennink) Diamanda Galas. Iskra 1903. (Paul Rutherford/Barry Guy/Phil Wachsmann).

#### Sunday August 31st (Afternoon)

Alterations (Steve Beresford/Peter Cusack/Terry Day, David Toop, Paul Burwell & Max Eastley. This Heat.

#### Sunday August 31st (Evening)

Bill Dixon/Alan Silva/Kent Carter. Evan Parker/Paul Lovens/Paul Lytton/Alex Schlippenbach. Alan Tomlinson.

#### Lectures

Bill Dixon, 'Black Music Aesthetics' (Saturday Afternoon) Evan Parker 'Current Tendencies In Improvised Music' (Sunday Afternoon).

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# CONTENTS

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JOHN CAGE AND MERCE CUNNINGHAM IN  
LONDON. INTERVIEWS, REPORTS 4

CIRCUS LUMIERE 13

STREET PERFORMANCE IN LONDON  
AND PARIS 16

WOMEN'S IMAGES IN PERFORMANCE 19

TADEUSZ KANTOR'S WIELOPOLE,  
WIELOPOLE BY CRICOT 2 20

FORKBEARD FANTASY 23

REVIEWS: CONTROLLED ATTACK,  
YOUTHANASIA/PREJUDICE, ROUGH  
MAGIC, COLOURSPACE, NFT FRINGE  
THEATRE FILMS. 26

LETTERS 28

VIDEO, HINCHLIFFE 29

LISTINGS 30



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# SOME EMPTY WORDS WITH



Chris Harris

The path of the Western Avant-Gardist may be wayward, even implausible, but John Cage is as sanguine and productive as ever, still battling alone against taste and tonality when pupils turned apostates have been fiddling about with harmony and periodic time for years. The cut-ups and indeterminate music then rattles

on, or to be more consistent with his recent gastronomic productions, rumbles on. It's two years since he was in London to deliver his Thoreau *Empty Words* lecture. This July with Merce Cunningham he has been holding a series of interdisciplinary workshops at Goldsmiths' college under the aegis of Bonnie Bird, one of the first

dancers Cage worked with. There have also been performances at Goldsmiths' (*Credo in US*, *Dialogue*, and a recital of early non-indeterminate compositions including *In a Landscape*), Riverside Studios (*Dialogue*), Sadlers Wells (*Fielding Six* and *Tango*) and a lecture on Futurism and an introduction to Jean Paul Curtay's Lettrist poetry at the I.C.A. If ever a man has come to wear his art then Cage must be the bespoke champion. The art is tailored to complement the man, the life-style: ascetic, unassuming, calm, with a joyful comic glint of the absurd.

But this is plainly a matter of taste and taste is a matter of values and a hierarchy of values for Cage is neither proper to music nor the 'multi-centredness' of man. Cage's chance operations thus have a frustrating paradoxical nature to them: they deny taste, habit, memory in the manner of their operation but signify in their wider orbit a whole realm of personal preferences and feelings. All the same this doesn't in any way alter the very real liberating rejection of musical 'results' for process which released composer and choreographer from narrative and psychology — or the 'boom-boom' school of dancing as Cage has called it. Cage's music is not about refusing the emotions and imagination free rein, but offering them a wider berth by not giving them expressionist cues, that is why the music is at its most rewarding when its accompanying dance, when the viewer can 'discover' accidental correspondences between the movement and sound. It could be said though that Cage's greatest influence has been on artists rather than musicians: Rauschenberg, Johns, Fluxus etc. Cage's early work and manifestoes extended the Dadaist spirit of the homespun, the egalitarian, the amateur; a catch-all use of materials and resources: 'each artist works as he sees fit'. And Cage saw fit to replace the term music with sound. There had plenty of precedents for this, particularly Russolo and Satie, but Cage brought to it a quirky American charm, while at the same time, and of far greater importance, recognising and developing the wider possibilities of inter-media work, which was to result in the Black Mountain experiments. The collaborations with Merce Cunningham — Cage and Cunningham never work *together* as such, but in isolation with the barest of outlines of what the piece might be — have been influential in the gradual de-balleticization of dance. The question of collaboration or co-existence provided much scope during the week at Goldsmiths' for some really stodgy, staged debate vis-a-vis endless either-or harangues. To what extent does Cage 'illustrate' Cunningham's ideas? How much does prior knowledge of these ideas determine the result? If these questions seem empty, old and boring it is because people like nothing more than seeing Cage contradict his own indeterminate methods.

Now 68, and working hard on the mammoth *Atlas Borealis* and the *Ten Thunderclaps* based on *Finnegan's Wake* first begun in the sixties, Cage was over primarily to teach and promote his new book *'Empty Words'*. He has said that he wants to get on with lots more teaching and writing and doesn't like spending time reminiscing or reflecting on past achievements. This time in London he repeatedly refused to give interviews. However, after numerous phone calls and a brief introduction he agreed to speak to me and Silvy Panet-Raymond. Tired but cheerful after a panel debate on Collaboration or Co-existence? we spoke to him in his room at the Laban Centre.

John Roberts

**Silvy Panet Raymond:** I see Reagan has been pushed forward.

**John Cage:** Its very unfortunate, we're all very alarmed. On the other hand if he's really bad, if we have a really stupid president it might help the whole social situation by making us change it. We need a little intelligence.

**John Roberts:** Things will be far better if we suffer from stupidity?

**Cage:** So that we would be obliged to introduce intelligence.

**JR:** I don't know if the Soviet Union would see it like that?

**Cage:** I remember once when in Seattle there was an earthquake, in other words not a state of human stupidity but a catastrophe of some kind, which wouldn't have to come from the earth itself but could come from Reagan, (laughter) but then people come together who formerly had thought of themselves as separate and they try to use their togetherness to change things, from unfortunate to fortunate.

**JR:** Are you still very optimistic then about the state of things?

**Cage:** I'm trained to be optimistic. I have little training to be pessimistic. I think it would be more intelligent of me to be pessimistic but I'm just not good at being pessimistic each day I wake up. What I've done is that in the face of the news each day pessimism seems reasonable, but optimism is merely pushed into the corner, you might say of smaller groups of people. There's no reason to be pessimistic about my friends for instance, we know how to deal with the most miserable situations. I remember a beautiful remark of Jasper Johns: he said 'I've been poor and I know how to do that, I've been rich and I know how to do that.' He said that in response to my warning him that perhaps people might eventually lose interest in his work so he ought to save a little bit of money, but he said he didn't mind being poor.

**SPR:** Was that a reflection of your own like of his work or was that a reflection on what you could see as the reaction from the audience?

**Cage:** No he had a tendency, and an interest, in buying property here and there so I was suggesting that he not do that sort of thing. I was criticizing his lifestyle.

**JR:** Are you still friends with all the artists you worked with and knew in the fifties?

**Cage:** There was a break in my friendship with Rauschenberg but its been repaired and the only reason we don't see each other frequently now is that he lives in Florida and I live in New York. But I enjoy seeing him now.

**JR:** Will there be any collaborations in the future?

**Cage:** There might be. There was one fairly recently a piece called *Telephones and Birds* in the music, it was called *Travelogue* in the dance and Bob did the sets and costumes. And I did a homage to him by introducing to the telephones because years ago he made a dance accompaniment using only telephones, he only used the telephone's tone, whereas I found all the available recorded messages and then had three telephone operators in the pit calling anyone of these through chance operations. So we had a collage of many such recordings.

**JR:** What have you being doing recently with Mark Lancaster?

**Cage:** Mark has done much of the lighting, sets and costumes for the company.

**JR:** Did the sets look similar to his recent painting at the Rowan?

**Cage:** There is some connection between those paintings from the austerity of his grid paintings, which is some-



Charleston, by Mark Lancaster.

what reflected in his set for *Square Game*, which is a white floor with green around it. It's a bit like his early work whereas *Tango* is like his later work.

**SPR:** Does he use a different video every time?

**Cage:** We are taking it right off the air, we haven't chosen anything.

**SPR:** So where ever you happen to be you turn on the television?

**Cage:** Exactly.

**SPR:** Were you drinking coffee at one point?

**Cage:** It was hot water. That waving sound at the beginning is the coffee pot heating up. At the last part of the dance I'm accompanied by swilling the tea with the throat microphone attached to my throat. The middle part is the television set, the first part is the piece called *Letter to Eric Satie* which is the name of Eric Satie pronounced first and then ostinati formed through chance operations from all the other letters of the alphabet than those letters and all of the alphabet going at once — that's what happens in the first part of the dance.

**SPR:** Is there a project you've been wanting to tackle, that you want to set time aside to do?

**Cage:** I would never set time aside to do something because I'm generally doing three or four things at one time, so there are several projects I have in mind that I haven't yet started. Its not because of the time but because of the facilities I would require. The one project I've had for many years that remains untouched is *Atlas Borealis* with the *Ten Thunderclaps*. It would be the Ten Thunderclaps of *Finnegan's Wake* but produced by a chorus and orchestra. Instead of sounding like music it would sound like a thunderstorm but it would be produced by musicians, the singers would have contact microphones or some kind of gadgetry on them which would bring about their filling up the envelopes of actual thunderclaps when they pronounced the letters and syllables of the Joycean thunderclaps. And I was taught by Marshall McLuhan that those thunderclaps in their progress through the *Wake* are a history of civilisation and technology, so that the rain would be produced by the orchestra also with gadgets attached to the violins that would make it sound as though it were falling on different materials that would simulate the change through history, so that finally there wouldn't

be strings but wind instruments because it seems to me that at the present moment we are not on earth but in the air. Its a lovely project and ought to be done but it would require committing myself to an institution — not an insane asylum but a technological institution — and I really don't like that experience but I would have to do it in order to get this done.

**JR:** How much does new technology interest you, synthesizers etc.?

**Cage:** It interests me very little, partly for the reason it interests so many other people, and other people are doing such excellent work in that field, but I don't think anyone will do this *Thunderclap* piece until I do it.

**SPR:** Will the voices in the piece change as though it were through history?

**Cage:** No they will fill up the envelopes of thunderclaps. You know the meaning of the word envelope there? An envelope of a sound is how it begins, continues and how it dies away, so it's like a body of overjoins; and the difference between your voice and my voice is the difference of overtone structure and that's the same kind of difference to a thunderclap so when we would speak, if we had the proper equipment, it would act to fill up a thunderclap. You wouldn't hear what we were saying but you would hear thunder. It exists, they were inventions years ago for radio advertising, they would make people sound like railway trains when they spoke.

**JR:** Your music has never been aggressive, it may have been loud, but never overbearing.

**Cage:** I don't try to impose a point of view.

**JR:** So how much are you in sympathy with people who have taken your ideas and subjected to the most violent kind of treatment? I'm thinking particularly of Fluxus.

**Cage:** Well I'm not aware of any who have done it.

**JR:** A lot of Fluxus events were extremely aggressive.

**Cage:** But there are different kinds of violence. I remember being frightened by a performance of Nam June Paik's and I would think twice before going to another one.

**SPR:** Did he assault you directly?

**Cage:** Yes he came up with a pair of scissors and cut off my tie and then asked me to take off my jacket and he began slashing my shirt — you didn't know where he was

going to stop. You had the feeling he would kill something or smash something or that he could kill himself. I wouldn't say that was influenced from me. What is your question? How do I feel about such things? My feeling is that if I know it is going to rain I will stay out of the rain. (laughter)

**JR:** Do you see much performance in New York?

**Cage:** Now and then I do, but mostly after working all day long I want to relax. I saw recently a beautiful performance of Alison Knowles. She was assisted by Jackson MacLaurel, Phillip Korner and Malcolm Goldstein and an Italian dancer who did a kind of whirling — North African.

**JR:** Do you enjoy the work of Robert Wilson?

**Cage:** Yes. And I enjoyed a short performance I saw of Laurie Anderson and I was fascinated recently to meet Marina Abramovici-Ulay. I haven't seen her performance with Ulay but I hear they're going off to Australia to live for a year with the aborigines. I think she's a very convincing person.

**JR:** I haven't really enjoyed their performances. One I saw involved Ulay running with straps of elastic attached to a wall, gradually forcing himself forward further and further to the point of exhaustion. Marina was standing in the performance space some five yards away from the path of Ulay and then mid way through somebody came out of the audience and hit her. It was obviously prepared, it looked prepared.

**Cage:** There is a kind of violence in her work, a desire for it seems to me. She gave a talk recently at a symposium arranged in the South Pacific by Katherine Berel. She came but not Ulay, and she gave a — we were each to give twelve minute talks — very aggressive, violent talk, not all the way through but at times. Actually she's very sweet, a beautiful lovely person, but then that business of cutting her body with razor blades and the performance with the snake — did you see that? Did you hear about that? — in which she and Ulay in the nude behaved like snakes with a real snake, in front of an audience. Its the sort of thing I'd rather hear about than experience. There was another performance artist from Vienna — you probably know his name.

**JR:** Herman Nitsch?

**Cage:** That's it, who did some shocking things involving blood.

**JR:** I thoroughly enjoyed *Credo in US* at Goldsmiths'. How different was the piece to the original, which was first performed in 1942 wasn't it?

**Cage:** Yes. Yes it was very different. Merce's choreography was for two dancers and it involved a text which Merce had written so that in 'holds' — when my music comes to a stop then starts again — there would be words.

**JR:** Were all the bluesy passages for piano scored?

**Cage:** Yes. (long pause) I was aware of boogie-woogie at the time (laughter)

**SPR:** How do you consider new popular music — punk, New Wave?

**Cage:** What is the New Wave? I don't really know what it is. If you could point it out to me I might have some reaction.

**JR:** It's very simple, three, four chord stuff, aggressive, fast.

**Cage:** There's a good deal of dancing on the part of the performers?

**SPR:** Usually jumping up and down.

**Cage:** I've seen something like that. It was entertaining to see but not very engaging.

**SPR:** But it made me think — they use very dissonant

sounds, I wondered how you felt about that?

**Cage:** I have no objection to dissonance. (laughter)

**SPR:** I know you have no objections, but I wanted to know whether you felt any pleasure that things were coming round to your way of things.

**Cage:** But it isn't is it? Isn't it a regular beat?

**SPR:** Not all the time.

**Cage:** I think its part of show business.

**JR:** Aren't you?

**Cage:** No.

**JR:** In a marginal way?

**Cage:** No I'm much more part of music as a means of changing the mind.

**JR:** A therapy.

**Cage:** Not a therapy — that's healing the body. You mean healing the mind? Perhaps if you want to say that, I wouldn't myself.

**JR:** Opening up the mind.

**Cage:** A means of converting the mind, turning it around, so that it moves away from itself out to the rest of the world, or as Rama Khrisna said 'as a means of rapid transportation.'

**JR:** So your music in itself is not that important?

**Cage:** The use of it is what is important.

**JR:** The use rather than the result.

**Cage:** That's what Wittgenstein said about anything. He said the meaning of something was its use.

**JR:** Have you still no use for Beethoven?

**Cage:** If he's well played I will forget my prejudices and listen, occasionally that has happened, but it's very rare — well I haven't really been subjected to much Beethoven recently.

**JR:** What about the last String Quartets?

**Cage:** I haven't heard them recently — they're probably very beautiful. I remember hearing the *Bagatelles* and thinking they sounded more modern than most modern music.

**SPR:** Do you ever feel the urge to compose that way?

**Cage:** I don't proceed by urges. I think music is too time consuming to pursue that way. For instance this project I described to you is more like a conviction than an urge, something ultimately I will do.

**JR:** Do you ever worry that your producing too much work?

**Cage:** It's clear that I am and now on top of all the music and writing I'm deeply involved in macrobiotic cooking and now the making of etchings. In the last four years I've made nearly a hundred etchings. Right now the series I'm making is called *Changes and Disappearances*, it's an attempt to bring into graphic art some of the experiences I've had from musical practices, and ideas about graphic possibilities that I didn't see being done by other people.

**SPR:** Has any of it been sparked off by the way that you put sounds down on paper?

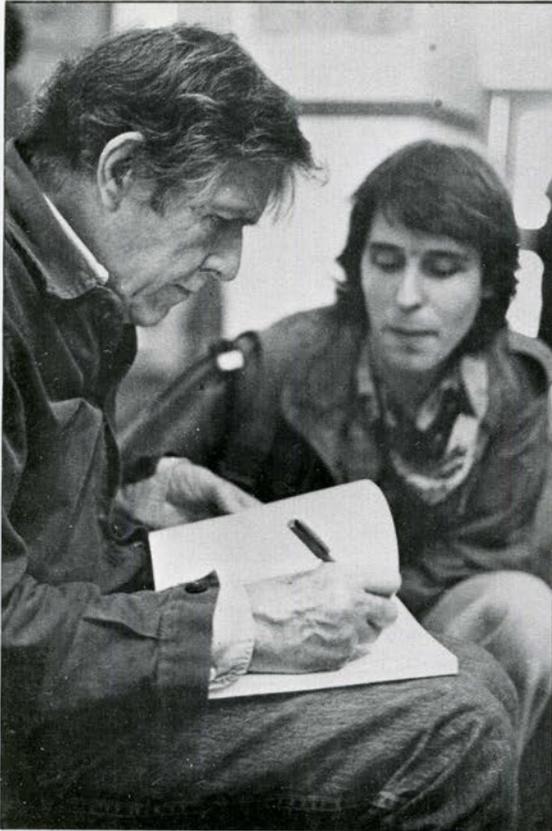
**Cage:** No, but by the indeterminate aspects of music in recent years, the use of chance operations. The people I work with are willing to take extraordinary pains so that a single etching recently had forty-four plates and a hundred and twenty colours.

**SPR:** Have you ever shown anywhere recently?

**Cage:** Yes some of them have been shown in the West, some of them in New York and some in Switzerland.

**JR:** You once said 'I'm not interested in whether any of my works are good or bad' but all the same you're much concerned with the quality of your performances. Is the latter compatible with the former?

**Cage:** You mean I'm not concerned about the quality of the composition but I am about the quality of perform-



ance?

**JR:** Yes.

**Cage:** The other statement about not being concerned about the quality of the composition is taken out some context that I'm not — I don't know what I was actually saying. I was probably referring to the fact that a good deal of my early work is clearly not very well composed, some of it is and some of it isn't, but I haven't destroyed it because I've made so many changes in composition that I wanted people to be able to follow my tracks, if they were interested. So I haven't destroyed something, haven't cred whether it was good or bad. But otherwise I've tried to do my work as well as I could. I don't really have that attitude that I don't care about whether the composition is good or bad — I do care.... and I do care about the performance. I go to quite a lot of extremes to do my work as well as I can. The writing through *Finnegan's Wake* for instance I found some mistakes in it and I've revised the whole thing. Just before making this trip now I've finished the fourth writing through *Finnegan's Wake* and again discovered mistakes — its very time consuming.

**JR:** How important is literature for you?

**Cage:** Very little of my time is set aside for reading but a great deal for writing. I don't read very much, for the last six or seven years I've been reading almost nothing but *Finnegan's Wake*. That has obliged me to read a lot of books about *Finnegan's Wake*. I could go on with that for many years.

**JR:** I saw *Dialogue* at Riverside Studios. The text you were reading seemed to be auto-biographical, you kept referring to old pieces, past ideas.

**Cage:** But it didn't make any particular sense did it? The whole thing is written through chance operations and the sources from which the lines are taken are five different sources about five different ideas so that the result is non-

syntactical and non-intentional and for that to be thought auto-biographical is not quite to describe it correctly. You would have to say as you did that it *seemed* to be auto-biographical but it wasn't — it was something else. It's extraordinarily relevant to almost any situation that you haven't yet been in. I find it a very interesting text.

**JR:** The reading seemed to offer a summation of things — two old masters recalling, demonstrating what they have learnt in a life-times work.

**Cage:** At the moment a young man called Roy Close is writing a biography of me which is actually very annoying because I'm still alive and he wants to talk about all the things that I've done before whereas I'm anxious to have time to do what I'm doing now. And at one point, with a little exasperation, I said to him it would be better for you if I were dead and he said that's not a bad idea. (laughter)

**JR:** You have or have had, an enormously impressive list of friends: Schoenberg, Max Ernst.

**Cage:** Yes but there quite a number of them I didn't meet. I would have loved to have known Getrude Stein and James Joyce.

**JR:** What was it like staying with Peggy Guggenheim? Was it very exciting?

**Cage:** Through her I met many people — Max Ernst, Mondrian, Gypsy Rose Lee and a marvellous artist — what's his name? — who made the boxes.

**JR:** Joseph Cornell.

**Cage:** That's right, he came with Gypsy Rose Lee (laughter). He's a very strange man. He loved these women but didn't dare even look at them, he would kinda keep his face away from them. He would spend his whole life at home with his mother, he never really had a life of his own.

**JR:** Did Surrealism ever come to influence you in anyway?

**Cage:** I never liked it.

**JR:** For what reasons?

**Cage:** Because of its involvement with psycho-analysis.

**JR:** What are your objections to psycho-analysis?

**Cage:** The same as Rilke's: 'They would remove my devils that offend my angels'. But my objection was also my own, it came from an analyst saying that he could fix me so that I'd write much more music and as you have pointed out I already write a sufficient quantity so its questionable whether I should do much more than I already do. It was such a fad, I think we are somewhat free of it now and I notice in society now a general willingness to criticise psycho-analysis. Surrealism is so closely connected with it — in my mind at least — that I didn't find it interesting, I found Dada much more interesting, in the same way I find the work of Rauschenberg and Johns interesting in the sense of Dada, and I find the recent Pop Art after them uninteresting in the sense of Surrealism, not a Surrealism of the individual but a Surrealism of the society.

**JR:** What of those artists who've taken your code of anonymity — minimalists?

**Cage:** Well I was always surprised that they thought of me as the progenitor because, — perhaps I don't understand conceptual art. Do you think it deals with concepts? Or does it try to change the mind of the observer? Well I read an article by Katherine Brown who claims that's its purpose and she thinks of me not as a minimalist but as a person involved with that.

**JR:** How did Marcel Duchamp improve your chess game?

**Cage:** By dying. (laughter)

**JR:** He wasn't a very good player?

**Cage:** No, he was a fine player. While he was alive I was more interested in him than the game. When he died I — perhaps partly in memory of him — played more and more chess and I've improved. (laughter)

**JR:** When did you begin to develop the interdisciplinary possibilities of dance and music? Was it through meeting Merce or was it something you were thinking of yourself?

**Cage:** No, I worked with dance from the 30s on. The musicians wouldn't accept my work, the dancers would. They were open to experimentation, musicians were not. At the time there were only two possible directions and even those were outlandish, one was to write twelve tone music and the other was to write Neo-classical music and follow Stravinsky. At that time people didn't take Bartok seriously.

**JR:** Who were the influences at the time — Webern and Ernst Bloch?

**Cage:** They weren't influential then, this was in the 30s, it wasn't until the late 40s that I was aware of Webern's work — he was very little known and probably for the reason that he hadn't written any piano music. The next big push toward inter-media, beyond music and dance toward theatre, was becoming aware of the work of Antonin Artaud. So we began the Happening that we did at Black Mountain that involved more than music and dance. I put that together with the teaching of the philosophy of Buddhism that I got from Suzuki. The two went perfectly together because Buddhism denies one centre and insists that every creature is the Buddha and every thing is the Buddha so that we are in a state of a multiplicity of centres in interpenetration and non-obstruction, that's quite different from the Western notion that God exists in heaven and he is the centre.

**JR:** Is this a kind of pantheism?

**Cage:** No its more than pantheism — its realism. When you carry that as Joyce did out of one time into all times, and out of one space into all spaces, you have something quite grand, as *Finnegan's Wake* is.

**JR:** You said this week at Goldsmiths that you have come to revalue improvisation, in what ways?

**Cage:** To find ways of improvising that are not dependant on taste and memory.

**JR:** That must be very difficult.

**Cage:** No its not, its quite possible.

**JR:** Its very difficult for people who are very critical of your work to come to terms with this question of taste, they would say that your whole output was one great edifice of taste: the sensitivity, the understating etc.

**Cage:** That could be true at times but at others not. You can't criticise the silent piece that way with any validity.

**JR:** So silence is not a question of taste?

**Cage:** Certainly not. It's much more realistic than that, and so is my radio piece and if you go farther into a piece like the *Cartridge Music* many critics don't even recognise it as music let alone taste. A critic in Chicago when the piece was 20 years old said that we were playing around like bad children whereas we were following a discipline which was 20 years old, which she had not informed herself about and didn't know what we were up to. I myself when I hear a recording of the *Cartridge Music* don't recognise it as my music — its quite free of my taste, its a piece of indeterminate music dependant not upon my taste but upon the actions of all the people making the performance.

**JR:** But isn't your choice of Irish jigs for *Fielding Six* a matter of taste.

**Cage:** Not at all it was by convenience and also by the fact that the dance had this jig-like character and that the repe-



Peter Sayers

toire lacked any Irish jigs in it. I have a great desire that the music of the dance company not be constantly the same, the chance of having some Irish jigs in it was very refreshing.

**JR:** Do you have a favourite piece of your own?

**Cage:** What would you learn from my answer I would give to that question? Do you want to know what my taste is:

**JR:** Yes.

**Cage:** Well I don't like to have favourites in any sense. I try to have experiences that are not dependant on my likes and my habits, and favourites implies both of those so that you would be unhappy if you didn't have it. If I had a favourite the logical thing to do would be to destroy all the others — why should they exist? Its not a proper attitude toward anything to choose the best. I told the students the other day instead of choosing the best to take everything. If you have a problem don't take one solution, take all the solutions.

# Cunningham — 'I had no idea where the floor was'.

# Cage — 'Oh yes, that was fun'.

# Cunningham — 'Fun? It was hell!'

Seattle in 1939, London in 1980. What has happened during those four decades would take many tomes and much time to write about. What I hope to elucidate, by means of historical sketches, excerpts from past and recent discussions, performances and my week-long course with Merce Cunningham and John Cage at the Laban Centre, Goldsmiths' College is the inroading without railroading made by this man.

Sexagenarian, from Centralia, Washington, he traversed through modern dance, made a clearing for himself and continues to blaze trails with a most uncanny instinct. It was on an early trek that he came upon 'Imaginary Landscape': scored for twelve radios by John Cage, Cunningham performed Bonnie Bird's choreography and nimbly tiptoed off stage, then across the country to New York. Martha Graham, the siren of dance, enchanted him and he danced for her. However, the voices within would not wane. Breaking away from Graham's humanism and expressive style he opts for the more liberating concept of movement for movement's sake, where its possibilities are 'bounded only by our imaginations and our two legs'. This flexibility, this interest in the complexity, not the confusion of daily life is the skeleton key that continues to unlock door after door. Whatever he is faced or tempted with, he does not compromise on his dictum that dance, as an independent art form, develops from within and does not need to be carried by music or other arts. Traditional dance-goers spoon-fed on emotional spectacles find Cunningham's unsugared potions bitterly difficult to swallow. The early revolution of 1944 is led by Cage who urges the movers to clarify their art's rhythmic structure, 'then enliven it with grace, and so get itself a theory, the common, universal one about what is beautiful in a time art'. Both Cage and Cunningham carry the banners, or the scrolls of Zen philosophy and apply them to their respective disciplines with clarity — cold, inhuman, calculated, basic and earthy and opposed by grace (not to be confused with prettiness) which is warm, incalculable and human.

And to aim for Zen's perfect grace they sacrificed the exterior ornamentation of the substance for the simple fitness of its form. The I Ching, or Book of Changes thus becomes the third link; it offers by the toss of coins, objective pronouncements that guide the two men through undetermined country. When working towards a piece, the basic specifics remain the same, though the ordering of the material fluctuates according to the choice method. Some of Cunningham's more outspoken, experimental, ex-students see this as a heresy, a contradiction in terms: the pieces themselves are not left up to chance; instead, they are carefully rehearsed in a technique that still hints at ballet and modern idioms. There may still be remnants

of the old forms, but they have been transformed, broken up and dissected to provide greater possibilities, not only in the range of movement but in the whole concept of what is dance. Certainly, even those discontented with the style will not deny the injection of stimulus to be had from technique sessions: comprehensive, rigorous, without the authoritarian tone of ballet classes, and now part of the curriculum of most terpsichorean establishments. Cunningham must have recognized the first signs of outgrowing pains in a number of his students and responded by opening his studio to Robert Dunn and his new methods of composition: more pedestrian, games-oriented, with the seeds of Contact work — and everyone could 'dance', trained or not.

The impetus has been carried on by Yvonne Rainer, perhaps the most eclectic, and now a film-maker; Trisha Brown, who causes stampedes as a result of her audition ads, Simone Forti, she likes the zoo denizens and the way they move; and Steve Paxton — Contact is, therefore he is, or vice versa.

Since Cunningham's world tour in 1964, the word has spread and he has become an excitingly risky venture for ballet companies. (Will the time come when they roll around like contact improvisers?) However hard they struggle, they still stumble upon his awkward phrasing. He tried to adapt 'Summerspace' for a major company — they could do the steps but they couldn't get the rhythm, it was too non-metrical for their 'boom-boom style'.

This was a post-mortem examination on my week at the Laban centre course.

Q. Why then do you use metric time to teach technique?

MC: I tried not having metric time, but the students didn't seem to be learning or progressing as quickly as before; so I re-adopted the metric way, and as they had something to hold on to, we could move on to something else. This 'something else' needs muscle memory and rhythmic discipline which are quite essential during some of the performances. In 'Fielding Sixes', strong currents of Irish jigs interspersed with a multitude of effects threaten to throw the performers into states of utter gaga. They have to blot out overpowering rhythms and hold on to the movements'. The design is just as likely to pop a few surprises.

MC: 'I was doing a piece where the designer had decided to alter the light at any moment. He switched them off when I was in mid-air; I had no idea where the floor was...'

John Cage: 'Oh, yes that was fun' (grin, chuckle).

MC: 'Fun!? It was hell!'

But that is one of those inevitable consequences of Cunningham's carte blanche policy: an invitation to an empty time structure first handed out in 1952 at the happening at Black Mountain College, It featured, among

others, David Tudor on the 'prepared' piano and Robert Rauschenberg — white canvases and slides of the school cook. Rauschenberg went on to pour nine years into the post of artistic advisor to the Dance company. Of this 'dear man' Cunningham says 'his paintings often reminded me of life as seen on the street' and Cage adds 'they possessed the quality of encounter'. As did Jasper John's, the subsequent advisor. Contemporary materials fused, blown, silkscreened, torn and tossed, by Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, Robert Morris and now Mark Lancaster. With this deluge of enfants terribles from the avant-garde, Events have taken on a different nature: they are the first nights of a Cunningham season in fast, fast New York. The art world, the politicians, the more curious dance and music aficionados now turn out in throngs when the Company graces New York's well-sprung boards. They 'lawve' him, but they didn't always. As Merce (everyone calls him Merce except Mr Cage who calls him Mr Cunningham) divulges that in the past he has made things purposely hard for himself, probably through stupidity (sic) and that his work was not amenable to the general public and the special dance public. People still want to see a sense in something, but the connections must be their own individual ones. And now the musicians, whose lot had shaken their heads on hearing Cage's sounds, are being drawn en masse to 'Merce'. In the recent years, some forty composers have taken part in over one hundred Events in New York. Since then, Merce has become involved with video and film; 'Blue Studio' a video done by Charles Atlas in '75 and devised for American television, it's described as an intimate work where the video itself acts as the screen throughout. With the help of chroma key printing and mirrors he has layered scenes like those from a car traveling through a Caracas street, interspersed with an image of a dog chasing Cunningham in motion, who in the foreground, is multiplied five times over.

Q: 'Does this type of work not become something other than dance, does the video not manipulate the dance?'

MC: 'It was an experiment which interested me at the time, but one which I leave to others to carry on.'

I then saw 'Torse' both on the Sadler's Wells stage last month and on film at the Laban Centre. The initial idea for the piece was to uncover the seemingly limitless torso contortions one can nonchalantly carry out while one's appendages defy coordination. Armed with a video camera, Cunningham devised 64 sections (as in the I Ching's 64 hexagrams) on a square of  $8 \times 8$ . Upon completion of this gruelling draft work, ten performers absorbed every detail during six weeks of rehearsal. In the meantime, Maryanne Amacher culled sounds from the Boston Harbour, which were reproduced on her own specially devised instruments. All the aspects of continuity were chance-determined.

Only after the completion of this gruelling draft work did he gather his ten performers to teach them over a six-week period. The film version is done by Charles Atlas after pre-planning the cuts with the choreographer (the latter is quick to point out), and presented as two 55-minute long synchronous films projected simultaneously on adjacent screens. At times there are full-length close ups of the overall design. Although it's been shown in America and last month at Riverside Studios, the first truly synchronized viewing happened at Laban.

The most recent film endeavour 'Locale' (1979) is purposely choreographed for the camera under the direction of Mr Atlas and shot in the Dance studio. They attempt to capture with the camera, the scanning move-



Peter Sayers

ment of the human eye — Cunningham, a portable camera attached to his waist roams through the groupings. At the same time they tried to avoid the common pitfalls i.e. loss of depth, momentum and continuity by using three types of cameras. This ambitious attempt still has a look of infancy about it which is partly due to Cunningham's relatively basic technical knowledge and the loss of entrances and exits, one of his strong points in creating surprise and élan on stage. He compensates, rather unsuccessfully for this by emphasizing pauses — stopping to let the camera see — the effect is slightly awkward and stilted.

Well, this is already history. So, what did Cunningham and Cage have in store for the 60 dancers, 15 musicians and 15 visual artists assembled at the Laban Centre? How was this project made possible? What was achieved?

Well, the financial assistance from the Gulbenkian Foundation and collaboration from the School of Art and Design at Goldsmiths' College and the Laban Centre,

scholarships were handed out to young professionals. But not before an audition, where numbered dancers scrambled to keep pace with the instructions that, to some, came like gunfire. Half the dancers were streamlined into an intensive schedule of composition and repertory classes with Cunningham and two Company members. The other half was handed over to Bonnie Bird and Fiona McPhee, both from the Laban studios and Peter Logan, a kinesthetic sculptor who also headed the group of visual artists. The project to be developed was based on a 1939 piece 'Imaginary Landscape' choreographed by Bonnie Bird, with a score by Cage. Two aspects of the original work were used as the starting point for an 'Imaginary Landscape of today'. The visual artists working with the dancers had to effectively 'mask' the body. The musicians had to retain the overall notion of the 'Imaginary Landscape'. They worked separately with Cage, and were only brought together with the dancers and artists at the performance of the event on the last day. What the college staff had not anticipated was the unrest which this caused among group 2 (dancers-artists), who were to have very limited contact with Cunningham, and that they would have to revive a 40-year old idea which was not even Cunningham's.

After much furore, the dust somewhat settled in mid-air, and the company members tried to palliate the situation by giving samples of what the other group was busily learning. There followed a round of apologies by the College administration on this 'oversight', everyone tried to find some way of catching up on lost time and to make the best of the situation. But what still puzzled those in group 2 was the link between Cunningham's approach to movement and collaborations and the project brief, as outlined. What transpired from the couple of workshops that he gave, was that his notion of 'isolated movements' did not really correspond with that of Ms Bird. To him, isolation does not really exist as such. He illustrated this by breaking down a combination of thirteen separate, simple actions, then doing them consecutively. This could only be achieved by relating each part to the next. Ms Bird's initial concept would perhaps have proved more stimulating if she had also taken into account the changes and experiments in movement over the forty years since her project.

Each visual artist was assigned to a small group of dancers and each group had to find their own answer to the problem of collaboration or co-existence. On the third day, the artists were given some basic materials: wooden rods, string, hessian, paint and corrugated paper. During improvisation, the dancers balked at the literality of some artists — 'you are the sun, I am the river' — and that feeling was reciprocated as regards to stylisation. Eventually, most groups decided to leave the choreography to the movers and, if the visual artists, apart from creating sets and/or costumes, still wished to be physically active, that it be done in the true sense of co-existence.

For the Event, groups performed in relays of two's and three's in three large rectangles. One of the artists, Glenys Johnson walked on the perimeter counting out the time, although this was lost, rather engulfed by the extraordinary mixture of sounds emitted by the musicians scattered throughout the Great Hall. One man, seated under a plastic sheet, rubbed a microphone on the material while above him, another man squeezed, hammered and slapped an array of objects. For his 'sounds', a pianist relied on the melting of a small chunk of ice which affected the strings: another ran around the balcony, peered out of the window into the space and

barked so effectively that, at first, people looked under their seats for a stray beast. All this lasted nearly an hour. Previously, group 1 had performed part of 'Canfield', formerly in the Company's repertoire and gave a display of their composition studies. Later that evening, Cage and Cunningham performed 'Dialogue', an independently devised collaboration. Each of them is seated at a desk on opposite sides of the stage; Cage with a microphone, lamp, notepad and telephone — slurs, slices and stretches words, dials, gets up to slowly drag a trolley towards the other side of the stage. The sounds transform the trolley into a new instrument. Cunningham gets up, marks out the space with steady footwork, sits at a chair and continues to dance. His range of movement has had to be curtailed somewhat over the last few years, partly due to a nasty touch of arthritis in his feet; but the movement is still as strong, direct and unusual as before. Throughout the piece, they merely share the space and time, and the audience is free to make whatever association it feels.

Also during the week some rather ineffectual 'discussions' took place. One of the issues was 'Collaboration or Co-Existence: two approaches to inter-disciplinary work in the Arts'.

**Cage:** Both exist. Personally, I try not to make selections, but leave myself open to observation.

A work of art is finished once it's begun, providing that you give equal attention to each part.

**Cunningham:** Music has never been unwelcome. More often than not, I only get to hear the music the day before the performance, if it's ready. I used to tell the composers the length of my piece, but now I don't.

**Audience:** Mr Cage, why bother writing music for dance, if it has its own rhythm.

**Cage:** ... (after recounting an old Chinese story) which translates into this: 'The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature in her manners of operation. If someone comes along and asks why? there are no answers.'

**SPR:** Mr Cage mentioned to his students that music is subservient to dance.

**Cunningham:** (eyebrows raised) Oh, he did? Are you sure?

**SPR:** I think it was in reference to the present situation, where his music stops when the dance ends.

**Cunningham:** Well, I guess, on that point, it could be so.

**SPR:** Have you ever rejected an artist's contribution to your work?

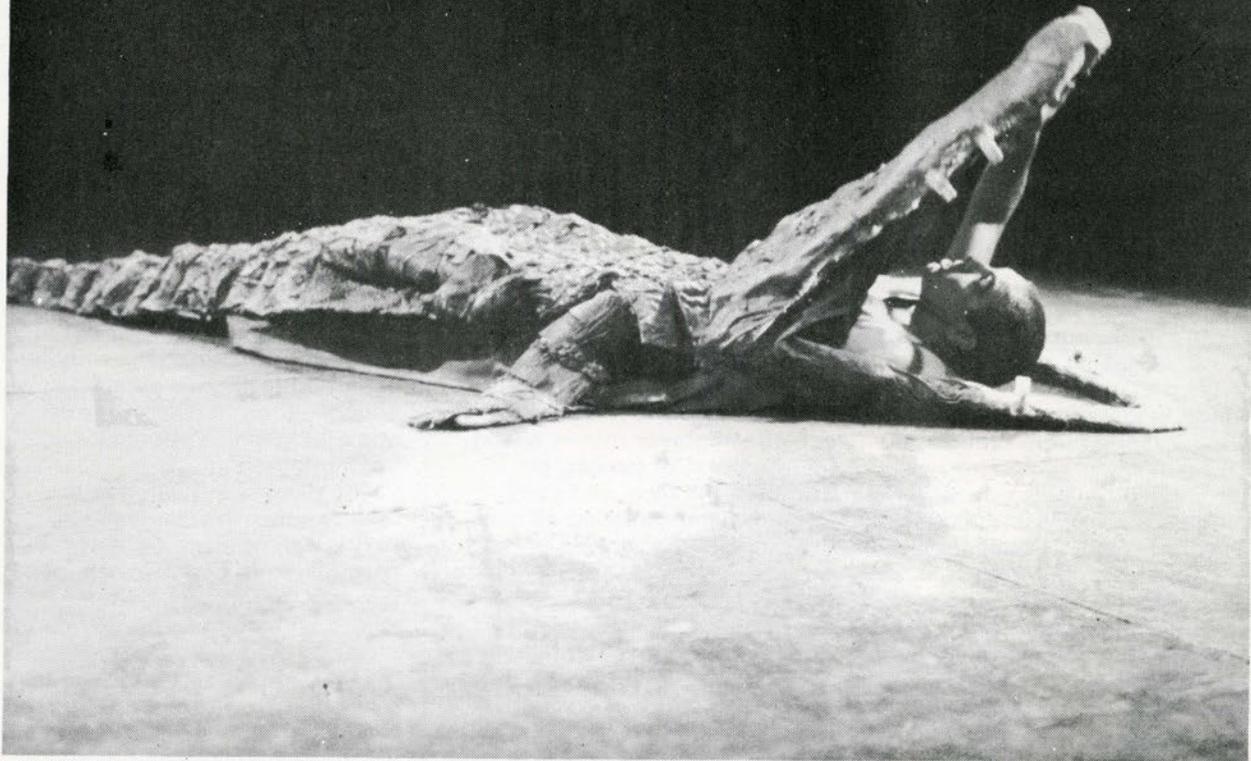
**Cunningham:** Very rarely. I had devised a solo of jumps and leaps. David Hare had designed my costume in plaster and cement. I put it on and couldn't get out. Jumps! Forget it.

Cage believes that once artists have agreed on the specifics, that each develops his/her own idea. 'Initially, what we have is quality, what we want is more and more of these good things'.

When Steve Paxton was asked to comment about his former teacher he said: 'What Cunningham has given us is clean mirrors, mirrors in fragments and whole, darkened mirrors and distorting mirrors. From some viewpoints, they were empty and from others, they were full of reflections, images of the watcher's mind'.

*Silvy Panet Raymond*

# CIRCUS LUMIERE



Brian Martin

After seeing the Circus Lumiere, a 'black circus' complete with tent, clowns, exotic performers (with a twist, as we'll see) a few things of a general, discursive nature occurred to me. At the risk of befuddling the reader by launching into a discussion of the work's attributes before saying exactly what the work is, I propose clearing up a few aesthetic matters first — then on with the show.

In *The Sea, The Sea Iris* Murdoch offers us on behalf of the central character (a retired theatre director) the following insights into the nature of the theatre, and I believe, into the motivations of a group like Lumiere:

"The theatre is an attack on mankind carried on by magic: to victimise an audience every night, to make them laugh and cry and suffer and miss their trains. Of course actors regard audiences as enemies, to be deceived, drugged, incarcerated, stupefied. This is partly because

the audience is a court against which there is no appeal. Art's relation with its client is here at its closest and most immediate. In other arts we can blame the client: he is stupid, unsophisticated, inattentive, dull. But the theatre must, if need be, stoop — and stoop — until it attains that direct, that universal communication which other artists can afford to seek more deviously and at their ease. Hence the assault, the noise, the characteristic impatience."

Elsewhere the character speaking goes on to speak of the theatre as a kind of revenge, a place of tricks and deceit and black magic, a teller of lies and spinner of fantasies. But what is most important here (and personally I do not agree that it's something other artists can 'afford to seek more deviously and at their ease') is the notion of the performer as a species of cunning savage who cajoles, implores, bludgeons the audience into appreciation; keeping them

interested, making them be involved, going at least half way, probably about 90% of the way, sweating furiously to capture the prize. The prize is having the audience fall in love, be irrationally attracted.

The Circus Lumiere operates according to a romantic notion of art — not just because it's a circus, which is romantic enough, but because it commits all its energies to seduction of the audience. Rejecting coolness, 'seriousness', intellectualism, it beguiles, charms, shakes the audience by the lapels till everyone's out of their senses. In short, it is entertaining.

## Yes but is it funny?

We are spared having to argue about whether entertainment is the bane or blessing of art, trying to decide at what point it becomes baby talk for a juvenile audience, wracking our brains on the subject of artistic value ver-

sus pleasure. Luckily for us, Circus Lumiere not only entertains, but takes entertainment as its subject and makes one or two remarks about it along the way. The group say the show is about clowning, and comes from a dissatisfaction with most contemporary clowning, which they see as largely unfunny. Their goal is to provide 'adult' clowning for adult audiences (and they go to the extent of warning that the programme is not suitable for children — although the night I attended there were several children there, apparently undamaged by the performance.)

The structure of the Circus is entirely simple. A woman in formal black dress opens the evening by adopting the role of raconteur, telling stories of her travels and experiences in foreign lands and her encounter with a strange group of men. At this point we are still thinking that something fairly normal is going on, and expect nothing exceptional... until the men appear: a crowd of disreputable mustachioed Spanish waiters — Guston, Ramon, Garcia etc. This is nothing hilarious in itself, but starts to intrigue. The body of the performance is a series of solos by each of the men in their various disguises as entertainers. The woman binds them together with great sisterliness; she introduces each one, drags him off if he goes berserk or makes a fool of himself, praises him if he does well. Finally, there is a chaos of events with every trick in the book thrown in — jokes, dancing, stunts, fights, insults, music, mad fits — carried out with the right degree of control which made it snappy but not a mess. There was one technical hitch to the particular performance I saw — the lights went out briefly a couple of times — but it's a credit to the professionalism of the group not only that they were unperturbed, but that they were so good anyway that it was impossible to associate the technical fault with their own impeccable performance.

Reversal of expectations was the name of the game throughout. Everybody knows what a magician does — he pulls rabbits out of a top hat. Oh yes? One of the men appears on stage, a sort of elfin Liberace, and produces a

wriggling rabbit which he cooes over and minces around with and pets and shows to the audience. After he convinces us of its adorableness, he puts it on a chopping block, produces some huge cleavers, and whacks off its head. Just as I was getting my sick bag ready, the man reached into the rabbit's guts, pulled out a top hat, and stuck the blood-stained thing on his head.

Then there was the ventriloquist whose dummy was cross-eyed and had a disgusting skin disease and refused to speak. His fate (the dummy's) was to have his ears torn off by an enraged master who couldn't stand it any more. (And this episode, though brilliant in parts, symptomised the only real weakness of the show — which was an over-deliberate naughtiness. On more than one occasion, the performer — in whatever role — would feign a burst of temper, go purple in the face, and start shouting and swearing all over the place. The idea was to blow the usual facade of these characters — when did you last see a ventriloquist tear off his dummy's ears and call him a fucking idiot — but the result was too chummy, too much like saying 'we're just ordinary folks too'.)

## Either you've got it or you haven't.

There was an endearing quality to much of the proceedings — as if the entire show were on some level a plea for affection. The heights of lovability, surprisingly without whimsy, were reached when all the men came running on stage in little coloured trousers looking perverse, and declared 'THE MEN LOVE THE AUDIENCE' and 'THE AUDIENCE LOVES THE MEN', and hurled themselves unreservedly onto the laps and into the arms of their admirers. Normally any direct demands on the audience make me want to leave, but this wasn't too bad.

It ought to go without saying, but doesn't, that what kept the Circus Lumiere from seeming like adolescent skits performed in somebody's garage was — not just professionalism, not just stunning costumes (and credit

for these goes to the theatre design students at the Wimbledon School of Art) — but a quality which nobody ever mentions if they can help it, namely, talent. Talent for comedy, gesture, movement, timing, acting is all that stands in a show like this, between a good-idea-too-bad-it-didn't-quite-come-off and a smashing performance that everybody remembers and wants to see again. It's a tricky subject because it crosses too many lines and makes even more impossible the job of sorting art in coherent groupings — it turns up in unlikely places and is absent from likely ones, has nothing to do with being advanced or retrograde, is disconnected from good politics or bad ideology, can make presentable something which is appallingly conceived or, in absence, ruin something which should have been interesting.

The danger with abundant talent — the only danger — is that it can obscure other issues, particularly in performance work (as opposed to, say, painting) where so much can be carried by sheer force of personality. There may be some observers who feel that Lumiere was all personality and no substance, and I admit I would be hard-pressed to elucidate anything in the way of insight into life's problems from it — it was not *that* kind of comedy that hurts as soon as you stop laughing and leads you to increased perception. All it was — and I think it's enough — was a weird ornamentation, a type of decorative exotica — but spectacularly handled.

*Circus Lumiere are at the Edinburgh Festival from August 25th-30th, in Wardown Park, Luton from September 3rd-6th, and at the ICA, London from September 16th-23rd.*

Andrea Hill





Martin Winson

I was wandering recently somehow from the depths of Theatrespace into new Charing Cross tube station where instrumental ensembles of the classical kind have sprung up to pied-piper punters to their trains with wafted strains of Bach and Vivaldi. Despite the littered extensiveness of their impedimenta — chairs, music-stands, instrument cases stand out starkly against the as yet graffiti-free walls — London Transport's subterranean police, strangely keener to try their strength against harmless musicians than crowds of Scottish football supporters, seem unconcerned about moving them on. Perhaps it is just solitary guitarists with repertoires limited to early Dylan that provoke their ire.

Above ground, too, things are changing with the opening of the Piazza shopping centre in the old Covent Garden market. The ritzy shops are open until late into the night — the Rock Garden is now open all night for the really determined reveller — and street performance is being tentatively encouraged by the powers that be.

Dazzlingly new and clean the Piazza is a mecca for the affluent consumer, its sole *raison d'être* being the extraction of money from the frivolous, the rich and the tourist. But people continue to live and work in the area, from the residents of the many Peabody buildings to the ad-people in their starkly affluent studios.

It was these people who, when the Market moved out, were responsible for a surge of local activity of a kind previously unseen anywhere in London, much of that activity taking the form of performance. It was in 1974 that the fruit, flower and vegetable market moved south of the river leaving London with fourteen acres of prime real estate. Overnight the whole social structure of the area was changed. It was a time when, as now, planners were unpopular, the speculative property boom was at its height, and 'community' was a newly fashionable word applied to a host of artistic activities all of which were eligible for grants from the Arts Council's 'Community Arts' fund.

One of the first to be involved in Covent Garden's new cultural activity was Richard Robinson who was about to open a play at the Little Theatre in St Martin's Lane when difficulties suddenly left him without a venue. Mooching disconsolately through the Garden he noticed



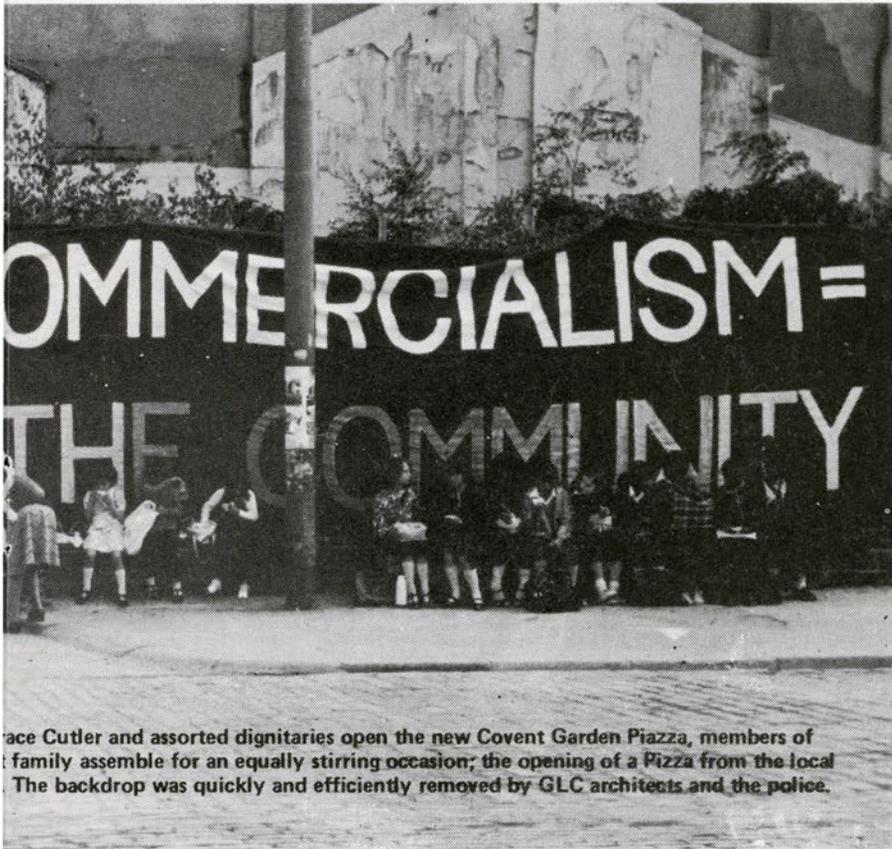
While Horace the Cutlet f  
takeaway. T

## THE OPEN THE PIZZA Street perf in Covent and Paris

a sign saying 'Alternative Arts' on a door. Behind the door he found Maggie Pinhorn organising her first season of events to take place under the elegant portico of Nash's St Paul's Church which overlooks the Piazza. Robinson's play, 'Mudsalad', was booked in for a week of open air performances as the first production of Covent Garden Community Theatre. That was in the summer of 1975.

The show went on to tour the pubs of the area all of which were having a rough time with the disappearance of their principal source of income. A big workshop event at the local youth club followed and the

Covent Garden Community Theatre



Tracey Cutler and assorted dignitaries open the new Covent Garden Piazza, members of the community assemble for an equally stirring occasion; the opening of a Pizza from the local pizzeria. The backdrop was quickly and efficiently removed by GLC architects and the police.

## ENDING OF A Performance Garden

company's first Christmas show, 'Scrooge and the Magic Lamp', dealt with the then particularly topical subject of property speculation.

The strongly recognisable style of Covent Garden Community Theatre which has characterised all their work since was discernable even in their first production. The songs, jokes, banter with the audience, rough exuberance, energy and — very importantly — puppets, were all there.

It is singularly fitting that one should associate puppetry with the work of this group for centuries before them Mr Punch, newly arrived from Italy, had chosen the

portico of St Paul's Church to make his London debut.

It was in the exquisite Japanese Garden, created on a bomb site by volunteers, that I saw 'Mudsalad' at the first of Covent Garden's neighbourhood festivals in those seemingly far-off days before the new development stilled much of the sense of excitement one had come to associate with the area. That garden, and the others which have come and gone since then, are survived only by a small Italian Garden. But since 1975 the various gardens have been the sites of the festivals which have been so central a part of community life in Covent Garden.

Into those magical spaces and spilling out into the streets around, performers from throughout Britain have congregated for little, if any, money to participate in the Metropolis's only festival of its kind. For years there has been no better place for fingering the pulse of contemporary street performance. From the fairground antics of the now defunct Salakta Balloon Band to the unexpected surrealities of *The Phantom Captain*, it has all been there to see, yet despite the national importance of the events the festival has retained its peculiar parochial flavour.

Over the summer weekdays since

1975 the Piazza Performances organised by 'Alternative Arts' in the St Paul's Portico have also continued playing with success to largely indigenous audiences of residents and workers. This summer the mixture has been as enterprising as ever with Beryl and the Perils, Kaboodle, Jail Warehouse, the Madhouse Company and Demolition Decorators all doing their things.

The difference this year is in the audiences, average bottles increasing from £10 to £30 as the punters have



become better heeled and more numerous. The Piazza Performances aim, say their organisers, 'to create a place where people may go at any time and see something interesting, and an opportunity to groups and individuals to experiment, and for the public to witness their latest work.' The GLC, though it does not own the site, has a music and dance licence for the Portico and as well as being a striking and historic setting it is also a good sounding board. At the offices of the Covent Garden Community Association is a performance chart where potential performers can book themselves in and be issued with a 'performance pass' which will ensure that they are not arrested by Bow Street's eager policemen.

Fire regulations limit performance in the covered market and individual performers may only busk in the small Italian Garden at the East end of the Piazza unless they have the official blessing of one Norman

Sutherland, an official with the GLC's arts and recreation department who auditions prospective buskers. The seventy lucky performers who have so far proved tasteful enough for Mr Sutherland are issued with permits which allow them to play for up to three hours in any week, and those by strict arrangement. Celebratory drummers outside the Africa Centre on the day of the opening were 'moved on' by the police who, a few days later, at the genial 'All Species Parade' outnumbered the marchers. Unlike the atmosphere of the neighbourhood festivals the air is one of formality and self-consciousness in the newly opened Covent Garden. For spontaneity and freedom of street performance one has to go to Paris.

Subterranean performance in London is as nothing compared with what one can witness beneath the streets of Paris. On the Metro buskers are positively encouraged, not just in the stations but even on the trains themselves. Last year a dance festival was held on the Metro with ticket offices converted into *ad hoc* control rooms for lights and sound, and experimental events planned at peak commuter times. Whole orchestras have played in a 'Music in the Metro' season.

In the streets above performance is all pervasive with a degree of achievement higher than that to be found in London, and a variety that includes the escapologists, hypnotists and other bizarre attractions that were a part of my London childhood but have now all but vanished this side of the channel. Such specialist performance skills have been rediscovered by a new generation of Parisians who focus their activity on the concourse of the Pompidou Centre and the nearby new shopping centre. This is the Parisian Covent Garden where high culture, chic shops and popular entertainment co-exist in an ever changing mix.

The Pompidou Centre is an extraordinary building, a mass of pipes on the outside, many conveying visitors on moving stairways in transparent tubes, it has been given a metallic finish where it overlooks the concourse but been painted in startling primary colours where it overlooks the road. Housing public libraries, theatres, cinemas and even the removed Museum of Modern Art, 'Le Centre Pompidou', opened in 1976, has been phenomenally successful, vindicating the late President Pompidou's belief in '*l'appétit culturel*'.



Open until late at night, its facilities free to anyone who wants to use them, it is always busy even when there is no special event or exhibition to draw a crowd.

The concourse outside is vast, raked, concrete, and sprinkled with buskers and attendant crowds who extend into the surrounding pedestrianised roads. Even in the rain there are people milling about, drinking at the peripheral cafés, and ready to watch any kind of performance. I have seen Irish fiddlers, white faced mimes, lone guitarists, hypnotists and clowns. Regulars include a pair of tough looking youths who appear naked to the waist, save for scars and tatoos, eating fire and caressing their bodies with flames. One embarks on an elaborate patter routine promising that his companion will do horrible things to himself if only the crowd will do him enough money. Of course they do whereupon the other performer lays with his back on a pile of broken glass bottles. A volunteer from the crowd lies on him, then another, then another, until five

people are lying on him, pressing him into the glass. But more is to come for next he turns onto his front with even his face in the glass and volunteers are stood on his back. It is grisly stuff and not the most sophisticated of entertainments. But it is profitable. Even the most unspectacular of buskers, I was told, can expect to take five or six pounds for a twenty minute routine.

What you will not see in Paris in the same way as in London are sustained performances in the form of plays, the many and varied agit-prop events which attach themselves to political protests, and the direct social relevance which characterises much of the work on show at Covent Garden. The phenomenon around the Pompidou Centre is a concentration of what is an accepted part of Parisian life. What happens in Covent Garden is unique to that small part of London, growing out of the needs and concerns of those who live and work there and it is that which gives it its peculiar urgency.

**Luke Dixon**

# WOMENS IMAGES IN PERFORMANCE



From 'The Center'

*This article is the first in a series, a series which will attempt to consider in some detail the imagery used by women working in live and performance art. The present article however should be considered more as a speculation, perhaps a little wild at times... Hopefully the more iconographical approach attempted by future articles will help to reinforce its intuitions at present largely sprung from between the lines of the art historical text....*

Performance Art, with its catholic range of influence and technique, has often been considered an area in which a rigorous critique of form and content, such as has traditionally been applied in the visual arts, drama, and increasingly of late, the film, just does not apply. This series, concerned with the work of women artists, would hope to suggest that it might be time that this familiarly cavalier approach was questioned, and a more rigorous attempt to identify and understand the form and content of live work might be made.

For if the not so old art world myth that expression is all, whatever it might be, is received by the audience with an equally laissez-faire attitude, then the end result gets us all nowhere. What could be simpler than to say that the moment, the experience, is all? The experience, however, is of necessity made up of a series or concentration of events, which however chaotically, have been set in motion ultimately by their authors, the per-

formance artists. For any event, to exist in the world at all, must have a form, however amorphous. And this form, like it or not, will brim with content, however absurd. We are, after all, dealing with events in time and space, demanding of an audience attention and commitment.

So what is this audience likely to experience? Traditionally, if the endless examples of ceremonial and ritual from other cultures or our own history are not included, live art as such can be considered to have begun with the early years of the twentieth century, with Italian Futurism as its prime progenitor. Audiences at the Futurists' soirees in Milan and beyond could expect to find themselves insulted and assaulted visually, verbally and physically, in a cacophonous display of recitation, noise making and general larking about that frequently ended in violence and arrests. The making of such public disturbances was accompanied by the publication in the press of the various manifestoes and bombastic statements that make up the Futurist texts. Perhaps such manifestations are more familiarly known through the later work of the various Dada groups that sprung up first in Switzerland, then in Germany and France... However, there are important differences between the two groups, and it may be useful for a moment to consider how the closely related formal expression of the Futurist and Dada groups could have

coincided with their very different political positions. For, from their inception, both the Futurist and Dada groups were actively and consciously political.

Why were the Futurists bombastic nationalists and Royalists, later celebrated by the Nazis, while the Dada artists and their circle were anti-war and anarchist at least, if not socialist and latterly even communist? And now, so many years later, does it all matter? It matters. It matters very much. For the basis of Futurist, Dada and what is now called Performance art have been formulated within the same rhetoric, citing active confrontation with the audience and a commitment to changing the general awareness of and approach to 'reality'. These precepts do not seem to have changed much over the years. But what happens if these precepts are closely examined? What happens, it can be argued, is that a basic set of underlying assumptions appears. For if one seeks to involve or engage or even outrage an audience, this, when looked at closely, reveals an essentially didactic position. For the Dada artists sought to shock their bourgeois audience into at least a consciousness of their own flaws, or at best of the flaws of the bourgeois society which had borne them; The Futurists too hoped to shock their audiences into action, but their aims were somewhat different. For they sought to ally their delight in the bustle and speed of modern life with a warmongering patriotic fervour. The Futurists glorified war as the ultimate work of art. The Dadaists despised it for the ruling class con trick that it was.

Why this difference? The following represents personal speculation for it is at this point that the art texts move on to other movements... In 1911, the high point of Italian Futurism, Italy was not long past its struggle for unification, the 1848 Revolution was still remembered. The bourgeoisie had not had long to taste the fruits of nationhood, and their children, among them the noisy poets and artists of the Futurist group, were eager for the twentieth century and an increase in their power. For the Dadaists of 1916, the situation was very different. Conscripted as unwilling recruits to a war they wanted no part of, they had experienced the cruelty and horror of the First World War, and experience which was to change the perception of that and every succeeding generation. And, of course, by 1917, Lenin, that one time neighbour

of the Cabaret Voltaire, was in Russia to come into his own...

Speculation, then, would seem to imply that it was life experience, what had happened to the various individuals which made up each group, and their consequent political choices which affected the very differing allegiances of their work.

What has all this got to do with women in Performance Art? Well, hopefully, quite a lot. For if it seems to make some sort of sense that their life experience, their starting point, made the eventual difference between Dada and Futurist art, then perhaps this indicates a new way to peer between the lines of those art historical texts, and begin to get a little nearer to some sort of understanding.

For what of the women? What of the friends and helpmates of the Dadaists? Did you know that the only Futurist to perform in New York was a woman? What of all those designers and dancers and entertainers who seemed to have very little to say when manifesto time came round? What is it that in fact we are confronted with in these efforts for freedom of expression? Ultimately, it is freedom of male

expression.

For to illustrate, we consider a frequent element of Dada performance, male self-exposure through masturbation or urination, (Wedekind, etc.) this is still frequently found in the contemporary work of male performance artists from Acconu to P. Orridge. The fact that the sort of action and activity that took place in performances of 1916 still takes place today is not without significance. For it means, or can certainly be argued to mean, that such work is in some way directly comparable, even through time. It would seem to suggest that the effort for freedom of expression quite frequently ends up with a cock in the public's face....

Just what this seeming simple action might really mean can perhaps be comprehended by a process of comparison. For, since the Sixties, women have been coming into performance in greater and greater numbers, and, most significantly, with a rather different attitude from their sisters of 1916. For they have been coming to their work independently, as women, conscious of the significance that must have for what they

do. Thus while many women are engaged with work concerned with their bodies, that concern is very different from the assertive spectacle of the masturbating male. For before any sort of presentation, there must be something to present. For a male performer, this can be the ultimate simplicity of the presentation of his organ, supreme confirmation of his place in the world, a world that is his to piss on if he chooses. For a woman, no such sweeping gesture is possible, for women are not used to considering the world as theirs, even to abuse.

Thus much of the work this series will consider is concerned with establishing just what place women do occupy in this world, and how it feels to be there. And some of it, perhaps for the first time, attempts to move into the area of definition. For perhaps, with a deep and careful effort to get to know the present, it might be possible to challenge history. And certainly, for women and women artists, there is very little to lose.

Lynne MacRitchie

# WIELOPOLE-WIELOPOLE

## The souls of the dead rise up and march once more.

In this unequal world there are some companies that are worth catching a bus to see and some that are worth spending a day on the train. Cricot 2, on this basis, should gladden the hearts of British Rail executives. For them to be able to perform in Edinburgh and London it has required a daring financial commitment, one which should be well justified by response to their work alone.

Not that Cricot 2 are strangers to generous sponsorship. Their new production *Wielopole-Wielopole* was seven months in rehearsing, during which time they were provided with a church as their rehearsal space and theatre, sumptuous accommodation and a considerable income. The bill was footed by the Comune di Firenze and the Teatro Regionale Toscano from Florence. The reason that Cricot 2 was coaxed to leave Cracow and work in Florence was surely not only to provide exceptional working conditions for an excellent company. Inseparable from the reputation of Cricot 2 is the company's director, the one time stage designer, visual artist and creator of Happenings, Tadeusz Kantor, considered by many to be the foremost artist working in Eastern Europe.

Kantor began his work as a director of performances in 1942, in the now celebrated underground cellar, and in doing so created not only performance in Poland, but also what is now seen as the prospering Polish avant-garde. Not a position that he would be pleased to acknowledge —

for as far as he is concerned he remains the *only* Polish contemporary artist.

Wielopole-Wielopole is the name of the village where Kantor was born. The new production of the same title was developed by Kantor from completely original material, from memories of his own childhood, developed through a massive portfolio of his own drawings. Scripted, rehearsed and directed to the final detail by Kantor alone it promises to be at once an enormously egotistical creation and a remarkable personal statement.

Cricot 2 last visited Britain in 1976, where as well as performing in the Edinburgh Festival they came to the as yet unfinished Riverside Studios. The atmosphere created by their production *Dead Class* was much enhanced by its presentation in an only partly completed building. This was to be *great art* in a barn, the work was to be so important that the audience would be prepared to suffer discomfort to see it, there would be no complaints from the audience that they would be crowded into a tiny corridor until the great artist they had come to see was ready to let them enter the auditorium. It may sound like a fairy-tale, but it is true. Kantor's reputation was such that a little sycophantic genuflecting did not seem out of place. Needless to say, had the artist and the company not lived up to their reputation there would be few interested in trying to bring them back to Britain, but they did, and are



Maurizio Buscarino

performing at Edinburgh and on a return visit to Riverside Studios from 3-14 September.

To those who had not seen Cricot 2's work before the most impressive feature of *Dead Class* was the complete fusion of visual arts and theatre. Here, at last was work that gave new resonance to the expression 'Performance

Art'. Perfectly at home in the theatre, what the audience was aware of watching was a living and moving sculpture of people and props. This was combined with virtuosity on the part of the performers, and intense images drawn from the deeper regions of the unconscious imagination which were fashioned both through the eyes of the artist

and through a culture which, though recognisable, was distant. Here was the life of a schoolroom, all of whose inhabitants are long since dead, but who have returned to re-enact the rituals of their childhood — both the petty cruelties and the vast mechanical movements. Image upon image passed before the audience's eyes, but few passed without impressing themselves with a burning clarity onto the mind.

Cricot 2 puts us into a world that is deeply Polish. The souls of the dead rise up and march — this is not only a reflection of the veneration the Polish have for souls that have gone beyond life, but more importantly a recurrent image amongst the Polish 'visionary' poets, sensing that whilst the nation's salvation lies in the hands of those in the other world it shall come to pass on the earth. Cricot 2 use these images, but in circumstances which allow for their own reflection on the nation's well embedded mythology. The fact that a foreign audience will not be able to appreciate the meaning of each of these symbols is not important. They are all culled from powerful beliefs and put before the audience in such a way that a peripheral atmosphere is created which you feel you can almost taste. And whilst images such as Crucifixion, Death and Re-birth might not be critical to us sophisticated westerners the archetypes are convulsed, shapen and misshapen into meanings that betray the artist's hand at work on them — and these meanings are clear for all to see.

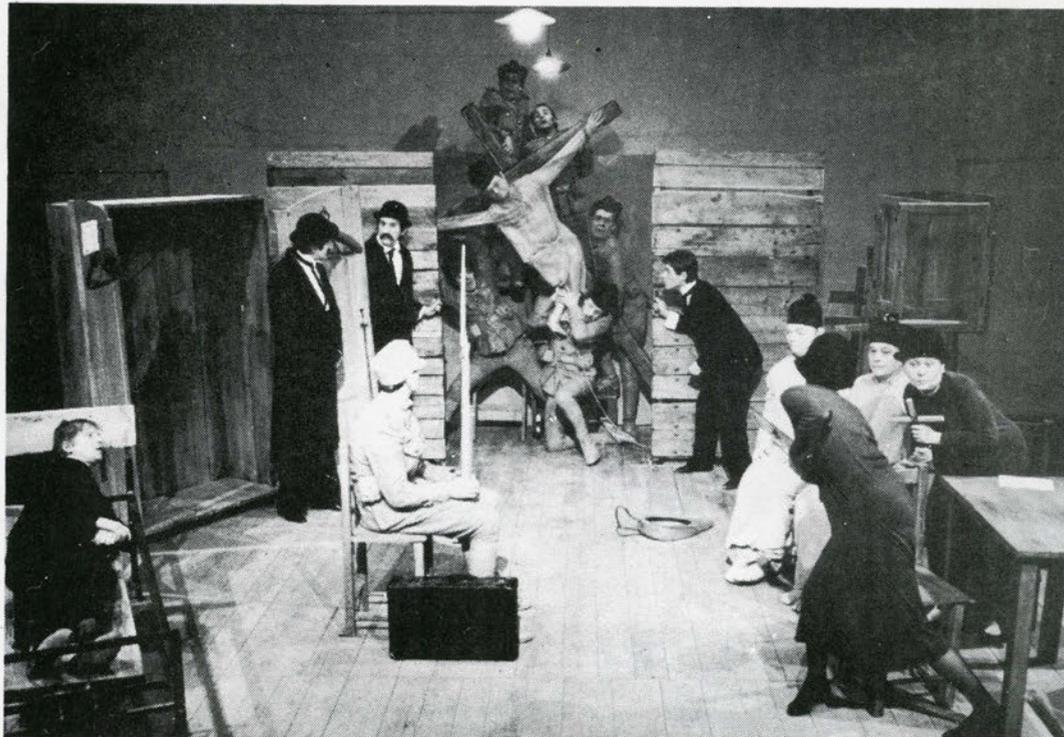
For this production Kantor retains the position that we have seen him in before: that of the artist at work on the job of sculpting the performance as it happens. This is not merely a theatrical device, but his real way of working, constantly adjusting every small detail in an attempt to bring the performance towards being a perfect finished work of art. This fanatical attention to detail and unending perfectionism is a trademark of his work — it is also one of its most perceptible strengths. *Dead Class* has remained in Cricot 2's repertoire, and by all accounts is constantly improving as each image becomes ever more defined and the performance as a whole becomes ever

shorter and tighter. This search for perfection inevitably takes its toll. Rehearsals are a tortuous affair which no doubt make his performers wish that Kantor had limited himself to pencil, paper and clay, instead of treating them as such. Nonetheless, the company, which includes several working visual artists, some of whom are in all but name Kantor's students, have an immense sense of loyalty to the artist — a loyalty to a brilliant tyrant which would be impossible inside a similar British company, but then, where is there a similar British company?

In this production Kantor's pacing of the stage, watching and moving props will take on different significance. Although all of the performers (as in *Dead Class*) will be taking the roles of dead people, here the people are Kantor's own family: his mother, his father, aunts and uncles, and with this in mind we can expect to see him in the process of creating a final crystal clear autobiography of his vision and experience through performance.

Much of *Wielopole-Wielopole* will be reminiscent to those who saw *Dead Class*. Once again we will see the yellow corpse-faced mannequins strutting the stage (an image that has been present throughout Kantor's career), scenes of religious persecution and grotesque instruments of torture, as well as moments of sudden humour. We are to be warned though that this will be the most horrifying work that Cricot 2 has so far presented. It would be cruelly unfair to use this fact to relegate *Wielopole-Wielopole* to being considered as a typical Polish excess, bound in a grim vision of the world and obsessed by religion. True, such a work could only come from a child of Poland, but it is from the Poland of today where the whisper is clearly that there will be a War. It is also the work of an old man who cannot forget the cruelties inflicted on his nation by a constant series of aggressors who have seen the Polish people and nation as expendable. Unless we can say with certainty that this aggression will cease, that there will be no war, Cricot 2 has a voice, that of Tadeusz Kantor, and it is a voice that is not to be ignored.

Pete Shelton



Maurizio Buscarino

# THE CLONING OF AN ECCENTRIC



John Goodman

## Forkbeard Fantasy

Imagine, if you will, a segment of fairly deserted countryside in, say, Oxfordshire. Then extrapolate a rustling in the undergrowth, a sudden violent disturbance followed by the appearance of a head, bespectacled, eyes and nose darting back and forth in directions only partially simultaneous. And then a hand trembling slightly with excitement, clutching a vasculum. As the net descends over the specimen, the myopic eyes lighting up with glee, the head turns to another similar disturbance that has just released its trousers from the barbed wire fence, sweating, with a white hat pushed firmly down over a red, speckly visage. 'Aha' breathes the apparition. 'An Uncertain Insect!' Behind them, over the horizon, come two boys in shorts. They are arguing, pushing one another over. 'I saw it first!' hisses Tim. 'You always say that!' cries Christopher. They are tussling over a bit of moss. 'Quiet boys' calls the torn-trousered one, squinting back over the bushes which conceal the eminent botanist. 'Let me identify that moss. By George, this is a remarkable spagnum....'

I drift back from the fictional past to the slightly hung-over present. 'I suppose it influenced us quite a lot' Tim Britton recounts. 'We were always going on botany expeditions with these batty old ladies.' We are sitting in front of Tim's cottage near Droxford in Hampshire. Chris, his older brother starts filling me in on the history of Forkbeard Fantasy, one of the few visual performance groups in Britain who maintain a persistent tradition of dealing with the more disturbing aspects of human behavior. This is blended with a fascination with the more morbid aspects of experimental science, an interpersonal introspection so deep as to be incestuous, and a near-worship of British eccentricity.

First a description of the family. The Britton Brothers are, as has already been intimated, Tim and Chris. Chris is tall and gaunt, almost a bit haughty, with a moustache. Until recently, he was the owner of a beard, which, when the brothers were in their 'viking' phase, was indeed forked, giving rise to the (some say unfortunate) name, Fork-

beard Fantasy. (They had in fact tried to get rid of it by calling themselves the Binary Brothers, but the circles in which Forkbeard Fantasy had proved themselves were too conservative, and they were stuck with the label.)

Chris is the builder of the pair. He was the one to realise that the mythical insects in Tims drawings were 'very structural, thus easy to build'. Chris presents in performance the orderly persona. He also gets very cross, especially when 'Tim starts mistreating one of my things,' which are always breaking and falling apart, providing one of the many conflicts which hold the performance together. Chris is married, and lives over the other side of Droxford. His daughter Sophie is here. She is doing something in Tim's house. Tim is even more like his performances, sweaty, a bit overweight, always wanting to get to the pub. Red faced, eyes twinkling Tim is a Very Naughty Man. He likes 'teasing'. He combines this with being a bit of a young rip. He is also good at being very clever and smug. In 'Men Only', a mid-period show, where Forkbeard took to the limit an examination of their childhoods, Tim is at his est when reading from his end of term reports, which are all extremely glowing, to the strangled anguish of his brother. Chris here presents in return a convoluted rendition of adolescent angst, the sort of thing that 15 year old boys who have recently overloaded on Herman Hesse works might utter while preparing for a Yukio Mishima type demise in their lonely rooms while their mothers are getting the supper ready.

Their mothers. Yes their mothers. In comes the shadowy third figure in the line up of Brittons. Simon, the youngest brother, is the 'Mother' in Men Only, he becomes a kind of human upright milking machine, for whose favours Tim and Chris naturally compete. He is an occasional member of Forkbeard, and is a teacher, living in Leamington Spa. Of the brothers, he is in fact the most over-the-top performer. He can be brilliantly good, or brilliantly awful. In some performances I have seen his normally anarchistic brothers despair at the chaos he can



create. Paradoxically, then, he is given the role of intermediary and stabiliser in 'Men Only'.

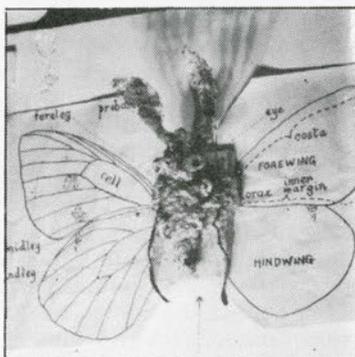
What, you may be asking by now, do these formidable filials actually do? Of what is a Forkbeard Fantasy performance composed? Firstly, it is dark, messy, tragic, twisted, both lacking and filled with humanity, searingly hilarious, with, immediately following the hilarity, long impasses that dare you to be bored. Gothick is the obvious word for it, but definitely British rather than German Gothick. There is a lot of shuffling on and off, in the half-light of pallid creature-machines undergoing rituals which are continuously explained by an authoritative voice (Tims) on the sound-track. The explanation for the various comings and goings is a celebration of pseudo-science, a mixture of the sort of Oxford empirical dogmatism that masks the inherent charlatanism. The long winded explanations and lapidatorial jargon is illustrated by Chris Britton laboriously emerging from the climbing-frame in which he is parasitically encased, with Tim coming out of a puke-stained hike-tent as the female which eventually devours the male, after a mating ritual that involves several skins being shed, numerous insectoid acrobatics, and the odd saxophone or guitar solo from the zookeeper, who is a visiting musician.

Those familiar with the work of Forkbeard Fantasy will recognise this as a sort of pastiche of several early (pre Men-Only) shows. Later performances have introduced a whole variety of

themes. A huge government depot, where confiscated *things* are kept (usually equipment and devices from which the Forkbeard's gallery of characters get their dubious delights, like a giant working shoe-fetish machine). It is here that they build up the theme of the sub-workman or slave to some unseen system that comes to a logical conclusion in the current 'Clone Show', where Clones are found manufacturing other Clones, (and destroying the rejects.)

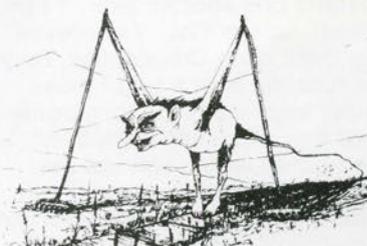
'Men Only' has already been referred to. 'Roddy and the Limpet', a tragic story of unrequited love between lifeforms, in this case a Roddy, who is a sort of underwater travelling salesman, and a limpet. This sub-aqua romance is brought to hasty conclusion when the plug is pulled out of the bath, thus emptying the bathwater/universe.

'The Weird Woman', an almost satirical glance at the world of faded thespians, dusty pianos, actors repeating lines over and over again in grimy doublets, the 'Weird Woman' herself like the musty ghosts that haunt out of tune pianos made by Samuel Bechstein; her mid-european gushing bordering on hysterical lunacy. 'On an Uncertain Insect',



that world previously referred to of eccentric amateur botanists, obsession with naming of species, collecting specimen. Finally 'the Clone Show,' inspired by the celebrated spooftextbook 'The Cloning of a Man'. The Brittons don't care if it is possible or not. Within their world of non-human morality, predatory ritual, exquisite lifeforms, and deranged inventors, cloning is just one of the everyday stories of half-life in the mixture of laboratory, farmyard and aquarium that is their natural habitat.

Working methods? 'We're very insular. The workshops were done when we were kids.' Because they are very close, a family group, they jealously guard what they do. They believe that things get very dissipated if others get too close (although many artists have worked in association with them — see list at the end). They find that the subjects they deal with are so close to the bone, they need the freedom to improvise without any inhibitions. A lot of people have asked to be able to join them, but this is generally not on. 'A lot of the things are about something that only a voyeur could appreciate, kind of through the keyhole.' The characters they work through are so far removed from normal people, though, it becomes irrelevant to talk in terms of relationships, thus they find they can do anything, breaking down sex roles, or rules of normal behaviour. They often adopt opposite, or ambivalent genders, becoming sexless, or hermaphroditic creatures. But there is always a horribly British character buried somewhere beneath whatever monstrous creation is being realised. The smarmy schoolboy, the city gent, the scoutmaster, vicar, jolly county lady, in short the very people who thrive in the Hampshire countryside where they live. They wax lyrical about the customs and curiosities of Britain, from which they draw a lot of inspiration. In another setting it could be almost disturbing, the enthusiasm they show for their country. But it is understandable when considered with the real threat that they will have to spend most of the time touring abroad, cut off from their main source of imagery, the customs and languages of England. Because they cannot get enough support here they know that they must go and earn deutschmarks, guilders, francs. 'You're supposed to be really macho about touring,' they complain. But they can't stand it. It is quite



ironic that, having built up one of the most unique touring circuits in the South of England, (village halls, greens, and institutes that have also, through them been visited by a number of other artists like Incubus, Crystal Theatre, the Lemmings etc.) because they have had their funding cut off by Southern Arts they will have to abandon all that for the endless euro-circuit of municipal pleasure-domes. The Arts Council will be considering their case this Autumn, and it will be quite extraordinary if they are passed over once again.

The other aspect of the British character that they retain the fondest admiration for, is its ability to laugh at itself. So those aspects of the national psyches that have not been otherwise dumped in the genetic soup of an average indoor performance have been brought out into the light and paraded around for all the world to goggle at. This is the 'British Square Dance', in-



vented 1977, and still going strong. Particularly popular at country fairs, village fetes and urban street festivals, this is a carefully studied mockery of the weekend rituals so many ordinary Englishmen and women take part in, from morris dancing to boy-scouting/girl guiding; from Sealed Knot battles to free-masonry, it seems that everyone delights in the opportunity to make a limited ass of him/herself, and the Forkbeards in their square dance condense all these activities down to this one portable ritual. Performed on red white and blue skis, the participants arrive as if straight from the office. They are a bit embarrassed, as if they sense the lunacy of what they are about to do. Nevertheless the embark of the *Walkwork* which involves all three (still dressed in business suits) attaching their feet to the long skis, and moving simultaneously. This then turns into the *Square Dance*, which never



works, despite the efforts of Chris, the instigator and of the ritual who is fanatically determined to get it right, and largely because of Tim, who wants to get it over with and into the pub. In spite of the obvious rough comedy it entails, it still looks visually very striking. When I have seen it from a distance, it gives the feeling that one gets driving through a village and idly noting on the green that other manifest absurdity of English life, the cricket match. One could almost be fooled into feeling 'Oh yes, they do that in these places' when passing the British Square Dance at speed.

In Droxford the afternoon is wearing on. Chris's daughter Sophie emerges from the house. Tim goes in to make tea. The buzzing of the odd insect is suddenly interrupted as, slicing through the warm sultry air comes Tims raised voice: 'Oh no, Sophie you little devil.' She has learnt her lesson well. Tims house has become like the aftermath of one of the Forkbeards performances. In short, the oven is full of water. The carpet is delicately patterned with salt and flour. There is an extraordinary odious mixture of *something* laid out on plates. The bed upstairs bears the marks, carefully felt-tipped of an immense struggle between shapeless mythical beasts. There is more, too awful to describe in these pages. Tim vows a return atrocity in Chris's house. Life in Droxford goes on.



**Performances**

- 1974 'Forkbeard Fantasy' Edinburgh Festival.
- 1975. 'Forkbeard Fantasy' Southampton Performance Festival, Edinburgh Festival.
- 'The Single Grey Salami Show' (With Ian Hinchcliffe) Oval House, London.
- 1976. 'The Excreta Show' Touring.
- 'The Rubber God Show' First tour of Village Halls.
- 'Roddy and the Limpet' Tragic Love Festival, Rotterdam
- 'The Cranium Show' Touring.
- 1977. 'Colourchange' Brighton Contemporary Art Festival.
- 'Men Only' Action Space and Touring.
- 'The British Square Dance' Invented 1977, still touring.
- 'The Government Warning Show' Oval House, London. Tower Centre, Winchester.
- 1978. 'The Weird Woman' Artists in Residence Scheme, Winchester' Also touring as 'Catch The Turkey' and 'The Secret Garden' with Crystal Theatre of the Saint.
- The Grid Reference Show. Oval House, Tower Centre, Winchester.
- 'The Splitting Headache Show' Touring.
- 1979. 'On an Uncertain Insect' Touring.
- 1980. 'The Clone Show' (Touring).
- 'Desmond Fairybreath on Tour' Special Poetry Reading Tour.



**Performers Who Have Collaborated with Forkbeard Fantasy**

- Robin Thorburn
- lan Hinchliffe
- Lol Coxhill
- Dave Holland
- Mine Kaylan
- Members of Incubus, Footsbarn, Bath Arts, The Lemmings.
- Laurie Allan
- Crystal Theatre
- G.F. Fitzgerald
- Mandy Smith

# REVIEWS

## Controlled Attack Theatre Space, London.

There is something extremely off-putting about the combination of the word 'education' with a description of any arts activity. One immediately thinks of things like 'Theatre in Education'; troupes of performing teachers, rather like seals, who are employed by education authorities to magically crank up the process of assimilating facts. The group Controlled Attack use education as a theme, not to really tell us anything about schools, but to use the more ridiculous and absurd aspects of them in terms of a performance. Controlled Attack seem very modest about their aims. 'It's really something that can only be understood by someone who has experienced an East London Comprehensive' they say, Maybe. But for me, the whole thing seems equally as close to Hellhole School (Prop. Grimly Fiendish M.A.) as described by Nicolai Tolstoy in 'The Horror of Hell Hole School' in a best-selling childrens book of the late sixties. The modern comprehensive, with its vast corridors and dehumanising tannor system is a far cry from the bleak mansion where children are locked up for a life-sentence of canings and where the masters visibly rot into the staff-room arm chairs, but Controlled Attack have managed to turn a modern First Day At School into a gothic nightmare. One of the things the group manage to do is to balance the everyday with the absurd. The cry 'You're a loony' is no doubt often hurled at many slightly less conventional teachers, but in this performance the epithet is made somehow chilling by the fact that all the teachers are indeed completely and utterly mad. The English Master, who sprays essays with deodorant before marking them, who stares at the class through binoculars, clearly conveys the sort of psychotic approach that some teachers, (many of whom have some sort of personality defect) adopt towards their charges. Indeed, it is a well known fact, that some sort of eccentricity is one of the best protections against a young enquiring mind that an older, disillusioned shagged out version has.

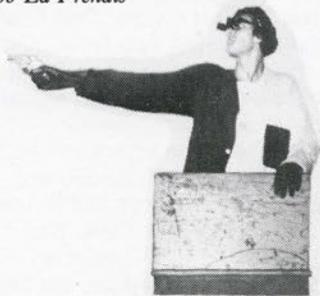
Controlled Attack are quite convincing. They have the right sort of energy, the right sort of ideas, and the right sort of twerpishness in their performers to be effective schoolboys as well as teachers. They borrow from the 'Widard of Oz' theme heavily in presenting an innocent pupils quest to Find Out What Education Is All About, a task that necessarily entails seeking out the mysterious and elusive Head, The Head is indeed a head, suspended in a fishtank, apparently barking out orders across the tannoy. When the innocent pupil is brought before this entity there is, of course revealed the classic

apologetic figure with a microphone, and the dialogue is more or less lifted from Rosemary's encounter with the wizard. Then Dr Mathew Nostromo reveals — 'I built him in the Science Lab at night.' The performance is done with a lot of rushing around and gallons of sweat by Leslie Milder, Alan Gilbey and Eamonn Duggan. They all work as part of THAP, the Tower Hamlets Arts Project.

They are all quite young, so their memories do not have to be stretched too far for material. A lot of it has the essence of good contemporary satire, particularly in the pupils treatment of the teachers. The Radical Teacher. 'I'm the hero of this show' is regaled with 'You a gay teacher sir coo are you going to come out in the classroom ahh go on sir please come out in the classroom go on sir....' And always those key words of abuse 'You wobbler!' Whatever that means.

As I mentioned, Controlled Attack think they have an appeal limited to the East End of London. Well maybe. But if they get another performance together it will be worth kicking around the country a bit.

Rob La Frenais



## Youthanasia Oval House, London.

In a garage underneath a block of flats in Paddington, the Rubber Glove Firm meet to consider their next 'job'. This gang of youths have so far been into petty crimes like mugging the dossers under the Westway, knocking over stamp machines, smashing telephone boxes, pissing in the lifts but tonight their leader, Tab, offers them a chance to get into The Big League — nicking 500 calculators from a neighbouring warehouse...

In a very convincing graffiti-riden environment built by Mark Instrall, we witness an interesting study in gang relationships, structures, authority roles that are played out in a most naturalistic manner. The power of a password, for instance, or the motivational difference between the ambitious leader and the plain boredom of the rest of the gang who are content to leave the job till tomorrow because they want to watch 'Star Trek' or 'wash their hair', takes us into the world of teen-age memory when we belonged to a gang of some sort — perhaps not as ambitious as Rubber Gloves but certainly as important to our social identities.

'Big League' was constructed through improvisation by Dom Shaw and the Forum Alternative Youth Theatre and pre-

sented as a double-bill with 'Vicious Circle', another piece based on first hand experiences of gang action, teenage boredom and ritual warfare and violence, this time set in a ca'e-cum-youth club in London.

In 'Vicious Circle' the three boys — Knuckle, Bollock and Benny are waiting for the rest of their gang to arrive so they can go and 'ruck' with a mob from Willesden Green who are in the Wimpy across the street. The wait is longer than they expected and the time is spent discovering things about each other that they never knew before. The hard-edged Knuckle is persuaded to read his poems which he had never shown to anyone before. Benny, who looks a tough, aggressive skinhead type emerges as an extremely sensitive chap whose gross racism and hatred for 'wogs' is discovered to be based partly in ignorance ('Of course, the Russians are black bastards') and partly in a history of badly associated images — black tadpoles in biology class which he found disgusting and his sister having an abortion, after 'being screwed' by a black man, manage to merge in his mind creating a loathsome mix of fear and hatred, a potent exposition of the psychological basis of Fascism. Bollock, the least mature of the three, remains the butt of their humour and scorn with his obsession with girl's breasts and his juvenile sex fantasies but manages to drive a strong point home when he turns on Benny, who has 'screwed' a girl through force, saying 'You're the sickest. I only think about it all the time. You go and fuck it all up so that chaps like me can't treat them well afterwards'.

Gaynor, the only woman in the piece, helps her sister run the cafe, and is a sharp observer and commentator on the state of things, trying to make them realise that there are other things to do. The gang glimpse a brief understanding of their predicament, before being pulled into their immediate environment by an act of harsh violence.

Devised by Richard Morley, who works with youths in London, 'Vicious Circle' is a powerful study.

The evening also contained a short set of songs and poems performed by Patrik Fitzgerald, who has a single out seen on the Final Solution label, distributed through Rough Trade, called 'Tonight'.

The Forum Alternative Youth Theatre is run entirely by young people between the ages of 12 and 21. A previous performance, 'This Green and Pleasant Land', by Damian Duggan-Ryan toured schools, community centres, the Soho Poly and the King's Head theatres.

F.A.Y.T. also has a film group, Forum Youth Films, which is at present working on a film called 'Millions Like Us...' a live wire post-punk documentary... a self sponsored and unusually vivid attempt to capture both the intensity of audience reaction and the truths and discrepancies of various bands as proved by actual events at the gigs' (Mark Ellen, N.M.E.).

Bruce Bayley

## Predjudice Oval House, London.

This was one of the best short performances to be seen in a long time. In a swift twenty-five minutes, four Rose Bruford students performed a highly amusing and sharply analytical show on prejudicial situations that confront black women in Britain: a harrassed mother trying to bring up a truant daughter while looking for adequate housing; the daughter, Doreen, being arrested under SUS and being framed by the police for a theft which she did not commit; a secretary, bored with being a door-mat to her efficient but entirely unwholesome boss, deciding to walk out of her job.

The show, which was primarily devised by the performers for an internal assessment, played at the Oval earlier this year and was brought back by special request.

The direction, from Siobham Lennon, was crisp, direct and wasted no time in unnecessary meandering or padding while the show, itself covered numerous incidents in home situations, the Housing dept., official interviews, police interrogation, boss-worker relations in the office and some hilarious touches of Television and Radio Story programmes for children highlighting the fundamental patterns of prejudice. If anything the performance could have dealt with a lot more in greater depth and still retained the sharpness that it had, if it was worked on for a longer time.

Paulette Randall, Joan Williams, Robert West and Patricia Hillaire alternated rapidly between high emotion and extreme comedy with such dexterity that they preserved a sharp edge bringing every point home to their audience with great effect.

Unfortunately, the environment was so minimal that it tended to subtract from rather than add to the overall strength of 'Prejudice' but, presumably, such is 'the limit of the budget'.

The Oval House intend to bring this group back with some more work later on this year. They are certainly worth seeing and are able to say a lot briefly and with a great deal of punch.

Bruce Bayley

## Rough Magic New End, London.

As those of you will know who have dialled the magic number and tried to get through to the offices of this illustrious magazine, the technology of contemporary telephonic communication can often be as much of a hinderance as a help. To Tom Beaker, barricaded behind his desk with an ever multiplying array of the telephone attachments of Sir Keith Joseph's brave new world, technology has become a way of avoiding face to face confrontation. His latest gadget, a 'Speak-O-Phone', ensures that not even his clammy hands need be involved in electronic conversation for if he cringes behind a filing cabinet his voice and that of his interlocutor can still be heard.

Tom Beaker lives behind the flash, glitter and winking neon of London's Soho in the grubbily realistic environment Caroline Beaver has devised for Kerry Crabbe's 'Rough Magic' currently playing at New End. There amongst the rotting lino, inflatable women and battered copies of Spotlight, is a world as down at heel and tackily romantic as Philip Marlowe's West Coast, yet alone London's hinterland of sex and theatre.

Self-acknowledged to be one of the three worst theatrical agents in London, Beaker has only two clients left on his books, one in work, filming on a far-off tropical island, the other out. It is this latter client whose violent personal affairs continually intrude into Beaker's life; the violence of his ailing marriage counterpointing the tired impotence of Beaker's own. While the two sets of partners spar a new secretary enlivens her hours at the office by going on the game in the flat above.

Mr Crabbe's show is a comedy of desperation, enveloping serious concerns of marital breakdown, suicide, impotence and other grand themes but exploring them for the most part with a richly aphoristic style and an ear for contemporary speech patterns akin to that once displayed by Joe Orton.

The identification of the agent as pimp, (a quote from Shakespeare's Pandarus decorates the programme), and the depiction of sex and theatre as interchangeable aspects of role play — ideas Orton would have cherished — are clearly developed, and the humour, wild and wonderful as it is, is done justice by the performers.

The flaw in the whole thing is Mr Crabbe's feelings of inferiority about his comic writings which manifest themselves in odd passages of maudlin dialogue, bare of jokes and presumably meant to highlight the seriousness of the emotions which are the springboard of the action. In a film by Robert Altman such a switchback technique can be genuinely disturbing, but here it merely irritates. The result, unhelped by the shaky pace and occasional boring lapses of Dusty Hughes' production, is as jerky as the Ibert music which plays between the scenes.

Luke Dixon

## Colourspace National Theatre Terrace.

Maurice Agis' *Colourspace* is a honeycomb structure consisting of 49 interconnected globular shaped cells or units within which visitors can walk. Each unit is of a single colour — red, blue, green, yellow, plus areas which act in the interior as mixing bowls for the coloured light from surrounding units. Within, rows of units recede symmetrically through oval or almond shaped openings forming vistas of different colour combinations. On entry, visitors are asked to remove their shoes and put on a coloured cloak guiding attention to the colour effects, and adding a touch of ritual at the same time. Sequences of

sounds are beamed into the different cells by highly directional loudspeaker arrays. All types of natural sound and music are used, and can be split into different frequency bands by the audio spectrum analyser, operated by Robin Maconie and members of the Music Department from Surrey University. The juxtaposition of such saturated colours appears to 'flatten' space in this hermetic environment, so dimensions are read by reference to the scale of people moving within it, appearing and disappearing at varying distances. It is an intriguing context for dances concerned with both the articulation of space, and the visual impact of such a concern.

Three dancers, ROSEMARY BUTCHER, SUE MacLENNAN, and GABBY AGIS, received Arts Council sponsorship to develop new work through improvisation and rehearsals through three weeks giving three public performances each weekend. They presented five pieces, three for three dancers, one for Agis and Butcher, and a solo by MacLennan at each performance. For *In line* the three chose a vista of seven units, yellow, red and in the far distance a group of three blue units. Here they first appeared dressed in white, indistinct, like creatures at the bottom of a clear, deep sea, arriving next to the audience by the end of the dance. The piece was constructed by mutual selection of sequences of movement from each dancer building up a vocabulary of set lines, rhythms and gestures. Their performance becomes an improvisation on the selected elements structured by cue systems. Picking up their cues, or adapting to missed cues allowed them to push improvisation to its limits, as an end in itself. At its most developed, they used the Colourspace structure itself, falling against the sides, pulling down the walls and roof thus obscuring and slicing off parts of the dancers in the distance with wedges of colour. Visually a knockout.

For Agis and Butcher's *Up down bounce* the audience moved further into the structure. It was performed in a group of four units forming a square and was principally concerned with measurement and human scale. Movements were formed by a process in which each dancer took measurements of parts of the other's body, gauged by the distance between the hands. Then slowly drifting apart they took the resultant lines and angles out to the surrounding space. Passages of rapid repetitive motions were also used by contrast. However, such actions as measuring the distance around someone's neck (palms encircling the back, thumbs meeting at the Adam's apple) underline the dangers in improvisation. For at that moment abstraction gave way to an inescapable image; it was memorable, but confused my perception of how I was intended to interpret their actions.

MacLennan made use of Colourspace's blower inlet and coloured cloaks flowing in its air currents for her solo piece. She is athletic and graceful, and *blower* showed off her strength and fluidity.

The three ended on a humorous note in yet another part of the structure — a line of bright light yellows. *Flying and falling while jogging* transposed movements from the athletic field. They bumped into soft walls, peddled in the air, ran and leapt in and out of spaces. And however do you end an improvisation when the one wants to carry on and the other wants to finish? MacLennan's solution was simple; pick up the offending body and carry it off!

Charles Hustwick

## NFT FRINGE THEATRE SEASON

I was excited to see 'The Phantom Captain Appears.' Having never experienced a Phantom Captain performance, but having heard many a lively tale about their exploits, I was expecting to be fully enlightened and further enthused by this film of their work.

I was nearly (almost but not quite) let down. It wasn't the Phantom Captain themselves who were the letdown, and it's not entirely the fault of the film-makers — but I find myself still more enraptured by my word-of-mouth informers than by this more official and permanent recording. Here's why.

The Phantom Captain, as far as I can make out, specialise in 'infiltration performance' — they inject a readymade situation with their own brand of theatrical absurdity. (Examples come later). Sometimes they 'give a performance', doing a whole piece in one place at one time, but often their work just happens against an appropriately mundane setting (Waterloo Station the Roundhouse Restaurant).

A film 'of something is analagous to a performance on a stage; you go along especially to see it, it happens in a special place without any superfluous background distractions — without accidental interferences or spectacular coincidences — and that's the end of the matter. Therefore, a film with even the slightest documentary pretensions (which this particular film did in fact have) must establish from the beginning exactly the context of its subject, and give all the necessary history, information, and atmosphere which make its subject unique. In the case of the Phantom Captain, where a lot of work is unsuited to descriptions with a clear cut beginning and end, the task is especially tricky because one medium using a unified time and space format (film) is being applied to another which has no equivalent wholeness (infiltration performance). As I see it, the film-maker had two choices: (1) either do a film which attempts an equivalent randomness — turns up in unexpected places, lasts for unspecified lengths of time, depicts unexplained events, or (2) attempt a straight-forward analysis or simple portrayal of the group's activities.

This film seemed to be caught between the two approaches. To begin with, it wandered into a friendly encounter with the group's various rehearsals and performances, interviewed a few people

(annoyingly without making it totally clear who was being interviewed), and generally made it abundantly obvious why we should attach any particular interest to what was going on. We could have been watching anything.

Things livened up a bit subsequently, but only to the extent that performances (or interviewees) were allowed sufficient time in front of the camera to unravel their identities and make known the full extent of the Phantom Captain strangeness. For example, the church performance, with the Phantom Captain acting as officiators of their own rites, contained more than a few memorable moments - of which the most memorable to me was the imitation by the group of several different kinds of laugh, from slight movement of the lips to convulsion of the whole body. Also this work (if it can be properly called anything so somber as a work) made it clear — but not too clear, thank god — that there is an ethic informing the performances, and that the encapsulating of the piece in a religious setting brings to mind notions of art as a religion, as a thing or activity to be worshipped and consecrated, and the ways in which those notions can be usefully perverted or overthrown or disrespected. Or the ways in which subversive approaches — of satire, humour, surreal inconsequentiality — may be substituted for more traditional norms.

Some subsequent events abounding in silliness and at which I wish I'd been present, were the time they all disguised themselves as Rip van Winkle with night-dresses and nightcaps and burning candles and invaded Waterloo Station, trundling each other around in luggage carts and astonishing everyone in sight. Another good evening must have been the time they provided a menu of events at the Round-House restaurant — giving customers the chance to have a waiter spill something all over them and then apologise grovellingly, or to experience auto-eroticism by having a toy car (an auto - geddit) run all over them.

For the second film I saw on the same evening, *Love is Like a Violin*, I have nothing but horrible embarrassment to reveal. If love is like a violin, then shame and cringing humiliation are like a resounding symphony, and I was deaf with the sounds of the latter when I heard the pious indulgence of this crowd of sincerity-mongers expressing their deepest concern for the 'old people' (a homogenous breed without individual identity, we are made to believe) with whom they worked and for whom they performed. Oh it was unendurable! The more they attempted to be poignant, interviewing 'old people' with budgerigars and showing 'old people' singing along with 'old tunes' and playing to 'old people' in the audience, the more you felt the 'old people' were being robbed of all the dignity they were entitled to, and the more you wished a veil of decency had been drawn over the whole thing. The worst, very worst and most sickening moment came in one of their interminable collective self-searchings, when one of the performers declared with impeccable self-

rightness, 'What do we really feel about the old people in this country. I want to know!' Whenever people say they 'want to know' something in that tone of voice, you know it is time to vamoose.

Andrea Hill

## LETTERS

Dear Performance,

Clearly Simon Kelly's article (no. 5) was written over some period of time, and therefore I am slightly puzzled as to why we were not approached at all to find out what our position in Cardiff is.

Since the writing/printing of the article. Reflex Action are, effectively, no longer resident at Chapter, the position of the other 3 companies remains the same, and we are based & working at Chapter.

In April this year we presented a new show 'Side By Side' (which we then toured Wales with). We will be presenting 3 weeks of street work in Cardiff in August; 2 one-man shows in October, 'The Ape Show' & 'The End of The World'; and a 3 week project of teaching through workshops in the Vale of Glamorgan resulting in another new piece, 'Pilgrim' to be premiered in December. — All these pieces will be premiered (in some form) at Chapter, and subsequently will tour.

There are many items in Simon Kelly's article which deserve comment, but I'll leave that for another time, and confine this letter to bringing you up to date on Diamond Age.

Regardless of the fact that we were not discussed in Simon's article, it was great that the article was written, as what is happening in Cardiff is mostly unknown outside of the principality.

Best wishes for the magazine!

Yours sincerely,  
Janek Alexander

Director, Diamond Age.  
Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff.

Dear Performance,

I have just Rob La Frenais' piece on Steve Cripps show at the Acme (no. 6) and thought I should write and clear up a couple of historical inaccuracies that appeared in the latter half, concerning performances Steve and I did together.

Firstly, the performance referred to in Birmingham was actually in Southampton, where we did a performance on the university campus in the open air that the college authorities were agghast at the thought of happening indoors later that evening, as had been planned. So I tied him in a chair, gagged and blindfolded, while a tape recording of an interview we had done that morning for Southampton Radio played. Later I cut a hole in the gag, and released one arm, so that he could play a very long, very quiet, plaintive wind instrument, and then a very old

football rattle.

The incident of the tambourines happened at his previous show at the Acme, well over a year previously, in a trio performance with David Toop and myself. Minutes into the performance, a quantity of black powder exploded in S.C.'s face, burning hair and skin, and getting into his eyes. I scooped up some water in a shallow drum and threw it over him, to reduce the burns, and gave him some more so he could clear out his eyes.

The performance in Birmingham was a solo performance of Steves.

Yours,  
Paul Burwell  
C/O London Musicians Collective  
Gloucester Avenue, London NW1.

Hinchliffe



## Was it the Twist That Started People Dancing Together Separately?

If asked to place the plodders (plodders?—sounds like something out of the Hotspur) to demonstrate the “quickstep”, I’d probably reply “er, um, er, well” (oh not another burbling hangover) and start contorting my face (as if you’re not ugly enough) into imagined shufflings. Given the frock-full of lass, I’d just about manage to rootle-tootle my down-at-heel patent leather poncers to pursue the odd stilettos for a couple of laps of the arena. I don’t frequent dance halls any more (much to the relief of Mecca Inc.). Years have marched by since then, and I’ve taken to puking on the floors of lesser-known establishments. Bands like the Metronomes (should have been called the Meaty Gnomes) the Regent Ballroom Huddersfield (what a dump) are all now ghosts of juvenile daftness. Gone are the days of the irate ballroom owner despairing at the pock-marked indentations gouged into the polished parquet by the Freeman Hardy and Willis ankle-archers. Then came the “Twist” and “Stiletto heels are not Allowed” signs all over the gaff. It’s probably a good job too. Imagine some over-enthusiastic twister going it so hard that she drilled her way into the downstairs lavs below. Yes it all seems a million years ago. Only stigmatised feet to prove it all happened. But bugger me, what’s this clip-clopping down the street? (not the Co-op horse) . . . No, by gum they’re back again, and with a vengeance. Chemists shops are doing a roaring trade in bandages and safety pins. These for the purpose of strapping the ankles of those unfortunates who have fallen off their shoes. Ladies who prolonged their agonies and stuck to those heels over the years have got used to altitudinal disfiguration and have acquired legs that the 3-30 winner would turn green with envy over. Even Green Rum gave up the ghost.

The only poor devils that are put out with this revival are the blokes who suffer from “ducks disease” (arse being too near the ground) or just general midgetism. Not to worry, Gentlemen, at least the coiffuers nightmare, the dreaded “BOOFONNNT” is out of mode. That feministic characteristic could overshadow some of the taller of us jockeys, never heed ripping hands to shreds whilst breaking through the concrete laquered tresses during a quick hair caress. By the way, how do they keep those spiky hair dos on end these days? I bet it’s not willpower. Finally, I would like to apologise to my regular reader for not submitting to the last issue. I was on my holidays doing a spot of whale hunting at Wapping Reach. I only caught eleven but have rebooked next year as the Japs have promised to do workshops in the correct usage of the stiletto harpoon.

Ian Hinchliffe

Nowadays, technology is moving so fast it is easy to miss the by-ways, to leave behind the little eccentricities, the offshoots that don’t seem immediately practical. With slow-scan video, artists are stopping to pick up the pieces.

Rob La Frenais

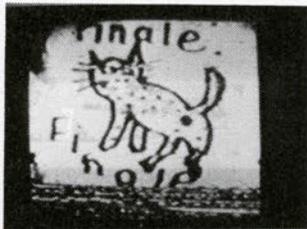
More information:

Tom Klinkowstein, Herengracht 71 105 BD Amsterdam.

Bill Bartlett, Direct Media Association RRI Port Washington, BC Canada.

John Hopkins Fantasy Factory, 42 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8NW.

Video



Beep beep beep doodle pip beeper beep  
“It’s an oddity. I don’t really know what it is, but it seems worth doing”

The first . . . an audio recording of the signal used to carry slow scan video images. The second, John Hopkins, pioneer video user, now one of a small band around the world using this basic, low scale video technology.

Slow-scan is a way of transmitting a video signal down a phone line, bouncing it off a disused satellite, or just simply throwing it out into the short wave ether. In fact, radio hams have been doing this for years, as John Hopkins discovered when he tuned his robot transceiver (the basic device for decoding slow-scan signals) to those frequencies. On his collection of slow-scan tapes is included a striking but naive decoded image of a cat, sent out from somewhere in Eastern Europe, along with friendly greetings in various languages scrawled out beneath the picture.

To watch it feels rather like being the recipient of a first message from an alien planet, and this was precisely the sensation felt when Liza Bear, a video artist from Canada, first showed some slow-scan tapes at the Video 79 show in Rome. Since then, not only Hopkins but a number of artists from different countries have set up slow-scan experiments. It seems that there are two aspects to the fascination with slow-scan. The first is the intense personal reaction to the opening of a new form of communication which can become an art-form in itself. The mere opening up of the new channel—the creation of another accessibility as it’s own end. The recent slow-scan experiment set up by Tom Klinkowstein in Holland, Bill Bartlett in Western Canada, and Aldo

Tambelli in Massachusetts is a case in point. The Montevideo Gallery in Amsterdam was used and the public was able to view the three artists “On-line in Three Countries”. Klinkowstein, who has already been a pioneer in telex art (see message in Performance No. 5) initiated a live ‘getting acquainted section’ an exchange of recorded material, and a section of ‘live interaction, where participants reacted to statements made by those at the other end of the telecommunications link’.

John Hopkins has also conducted such an experiment, using the Peacesat link in Western Australia and the Pacific, (an abandoned satellite donated by NASA for peaceful, ‘non-political’ purposes) to transmit some of his taped material.

The second aspect is the direct slow-scan image and its use in installations and taped art. The image looks the same as a normal TV image, except that it consists of a series of still frames which are replaced about every eight seconds by a slow wipe. “one picture succeeds each other at about the speed that waves hit the shore.”

So seeing an image being scanned in this way can begin to alter your perceptions about the nature of what is actually being scanned. John Hopkins has done a slow-scan version of the first version of the Lords Prayer which randomly scans various cut-ups—“In heaven which Art” “Art in Heaven” etc. Also a slow-scan transmission can be set up in a single room, leading to various installation possibilities. Moreover, the soundtrack of the video image can be played alongside so you are hearing and seeing the video image simultaneously.



## FUTUREPERFORM

### Selected National Performance Listings

#### BIRMINGHAM

**Ikon Gallery. Info 021 643 0708**

Several performances centred around the 'Nine Artists' exhibition including a performance by Stephen Cochrane and Lol Coxhill. This will extend from within the gallery into the streets of Birmingham with 'structures attached to the artist' and music.

September 7th, October 11th.

Arts Lab. Info 021 359 4192.

Pip Simmons Company — a new performance. 'A casino is ruined by the Mafia. Croupiers stage a two year long sit-in; Giscard D'Estaing closes the casino. When the English ran the Cote D'Azur all was pleasant and elegant. What has Happened?' September 23rd-27th. Dave Stephens — New World Sympathy. 'Stephens is a standup with all the time in the world. He's actually rather invincible.' — Fuse.

September 26-27.

#### BRISTOL

**Arnolfini Gallery. Info 0272 299191**

Performance — Tom Saddington, a jeweller/performance artist who deals with 'squashed objects.' For this event he will get into a train at Taunton sealed in a cigarette packet, travel to Bristol Temple Meads and proceed to the gallery escorted by jugglers. (Performance Magazine will document this event next issue.) Previous events have included being freed from a baked bean can with a giant can opener. 27th September.

#### BATH

**Bath Arts Workshop. Info 0225 310154**

The Pranksters. Subtle, reportedly highly effective infiltration performance. Only perform about twice a year. (End of September, date unconfirmed, check for date and venue.)

Moving Being — new performance — 'Monsieur Appollinaire.' (See Cardiff.)

October 3rd-4th.

Frome Cheese Fair. Natural Theatre Company — Outdoor performance work. Info as above. 17th September.

#### CARDIFF

**Chapter Arts Centre. Info 0222 396061**

One of their resident companies Moving Being, are opening their new performance. 'Monsieur Appollinaire et le Cirque du Zodiaque.' A miniature surrealist circus with the mythological creatures of the Zodiac as performing animals. 'A free association of mime, music, words and energy.'

September 15th, 16th, 17th.

#### NOTTINGHAM

**Midland Group Gallery. Info 0602 582636**

Charlie Pig and Miriam Bird — Performance Two Classy Broads.

'Lizzie' by Miriam Bird.

Lizzie Boden took a axe

Gave her Mother forty whacks

When she saw what she had done

She gave her father forty one.

'The Ideal Woman' by Charlie Pig.

Lapin au Bonne Femme, or It Aint Easy Being A

Woman Even When You're Born One.

October 10th.

#### LANCASHIRE (Touring)

**Welfare State International. Info 051 727 6847**

New touring performance — The Eye of the Peacock, a Non-Stop Honky-tonk Pageant.

#### NEWCASTLE

**Spectro Arts. Info 0632 733686**

The Basement Group Performances. These are regular performance evenings, with a mixture of artists from the N.E. and visiting artists. Belinda Williams — Three Performances From Performance. Uses film as a visual score for various live actions. Improvisation synchronised with emotions as depicted on screen.

September 6th.

Paul Burwell — performance/music September 13th.

Rob Con — solo performance. September 27th.

#### EDINBURGH

**Edinburgh Festival & Fringe**

Cricot 2 Company — Wielopole, Wielopole by Tadeusz Kantor (See article.)

26-30 August. Info 031 226 4001

Lumiere and Son — Circus Lumiere. (See article) August 25th-30th. Info 031 226 5257.

Mary Longford — Looking Through The Window. Highly recommended subversive outdoor performance. As we went to press she was phoning round looking for monkeys.

August 24th-30th. (Performances a climax of her 'Kutchure Shock Recovery Workshops') Info 031 226 5257.

Crystal Theatre — The Fatted Calf.

August 25th-30th. Info 031 226 5257.

#### GLASGOW

**Third Eye Gallery. Info 041 332 7521**

Performance — Cioni Carpi. September 20th.

#### LONDON

**Air Gallery. Info 01 278 7751**

August 27-27. 'Resemble'. An indeterminate Performance by Glenys Johnson and Janet Davies.

**Institute of Contemporary Arts. Info 01 930 0493**

September 9th-13th.

Music-Theatre and Performance art by Trevor Wishart. 'Fidelio' for flautist, actor, six suitcases and six recorders; the first London Performance of 'Tuba Mirium' for Tuba Player, staging, audio-visual mutes and lighting unit; and the first performance of 'Pastorale-Walden 2' for flautist, tuba magicians cabinet, garden, stuffed birds, tapes, slides and visual effects.

Also: September 16th-27th 'Circus Lumiere.' (See article.)

(unconfirmed) Les Oeufs Malades — 'Family Album'.

**X6 Dance Space. Info 01 407 0439**

August 22-24.

Anna Vinteler, Swiss performance artist. Performance and installations. Oval House. Info 01

**Oval House. Info 01 735 2786.**

September 19-20.

'Moby Dick'. An large-scale spectacular outdoor performance, possibly the last to happen for a long time, with Jeff Nuttall, Ian Hinchcliffe, Gerry Fitzgerald and Lol Coxhill, among others. This is a 'jazz version' of Moby Dick, and the interior of Oval House will be converted into the dockside tavern from the novel. Sea food etc will be served.

**Bush Theatre. Info 01 603 3703**

The Phantom Captain — 'Abracadabra Honey-moon'. Long awaited new performance devised by Neil Hornick and Joel Cutrara. A series of 'imaginative' erotic episodes take place in a suite rumoured to be 100 floors up in a 'Love Hotel' where every possible whim is catered for.

Riverside Studios Info 01 748 3354

September 3-14.

Wielopole, Wielopole. Tadeusz Kantor and the Cricot 2 Company. (See Preview.)

**Action Space. Info 01 637 8270**

October 16th-November 1st.

A spectacular new performance by Fergus Early and Jacky Lansly 'I, Giselle' at last liberates the traditional ballet character Giselle from her victim role. Early and Lansly have been leading figures in a new movement to reclaim the dance form as significant performance, often using highly unconventional means to achieve this. This performance is an important step in this direction, as it directly challenges dance stereotypes.

**Theatre Space. Info 01 836 2035**

September 10th-14th

Forkbeard Fantasy — The Clone Show. (See Article.)

**INFORMATION FOR NEXT ISSUES LISTINGS (November-December)**

to the Performance Magazine, 10 Fleet Rd, London NW3 by October 1st.

### ABRACADABRA HONEYMOON

A Romance in Various Positions

written by Neil Hornick & Joel Cutrara

directed by Neil Hornick

designed by Di Seymour

Bush Theatre 2nd - 27th September

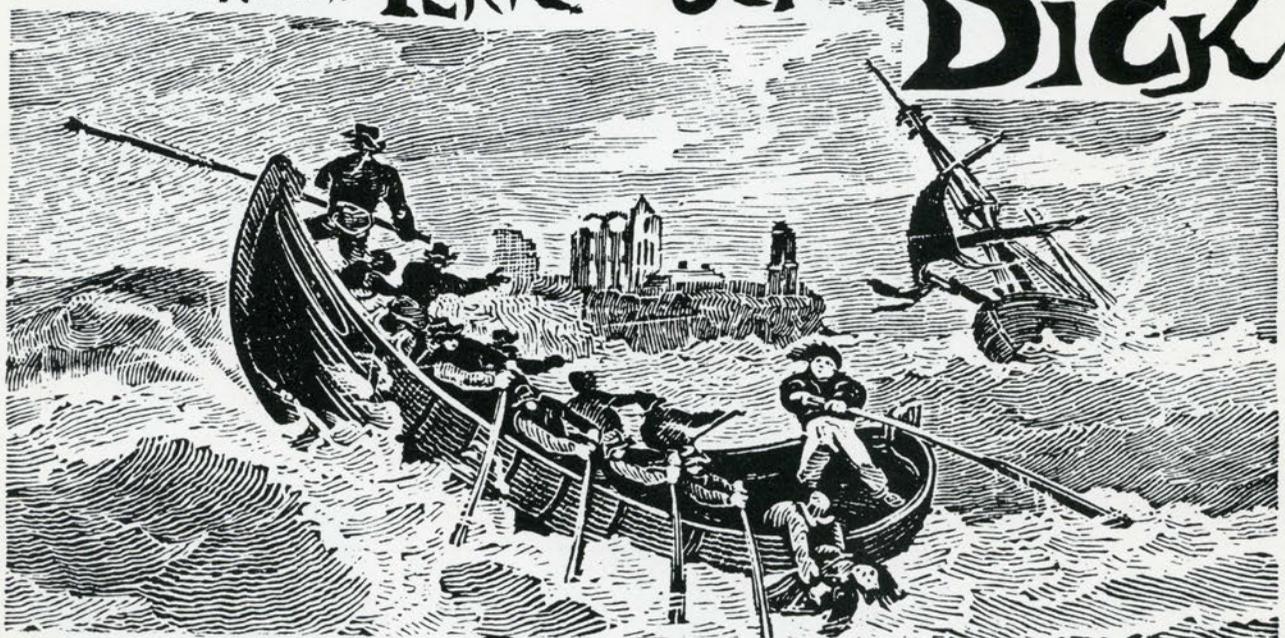
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# I, GISELLE

**ACTION SPACE**  
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