

CALARTS CENTER for NEW PERFORMANCE

California Institute of the Arts
24700 McBean Parkway
Valencia, California 91355-2340

Phone 661 291 3010
Fax 661 255 0462

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CalArts Center for New Performance (CNP), the professional producing arm of the California Institute of the Arts, was established in 1999 as a forum for the creation of groundbreaking theatrical performance. Originally entitled the Center for New Theater, the name was expanded in 2005 to reflect the broad range of the Center's interests. Seminal artists from around the world are brought to CNP to develop work that expands the language, discourse, and boundaries of contemporary theater and performance. CNP supports a producing model that is artist and project-specific, giving priority to performances that cannot be easily produced in other circumstances -- either because of scale of vision or extremity of aesthetic. CNP fosters the future of the theater by infusing its work with the talent, vitality and impulses of emerging artists in the CalArts community.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

2013–2014

Joel Agee's new translation of *Prometheus Bound*, directed by Travis Preston, and featuring a company of guest artists and CalArts faculty, students, and alums begins rehearsals in August, 2013, preparatory to its world premiere in September, 2013, at the Getty Villa. Ron Cephas Jones as Prometheus is tethered to a 23-foot wheel, in a visual image/metaphor deriving from medieval clocks, the Buddhist Wheel of Dharma, the zodiac, and a Catherine Wheel.

2012–2013

Timboctou, a collaboration with Martin Acosta and a company of actors from Guadalajara, received its world premiere in March, 2012, at REDCAT. *Timboctou*, by emerging Mexican playwright Alejandro Recaño, addresses the complex inter-relationships between ordinary citizens and the drug cartels operating in the United States and Mexico. A co-production with UDG Cultura, the presenting organization based at the Universidad de Guadalajara, and created as part of CNP's Duende CalArts initiative, *Timboctou* performed in Guadalajara in July, 2012, and further performances in Mexico City and South America are in discussion.

Fantomas, based on the sensational pre-World-War-I French novels by Silvestre and Allain, as well as the silent film serial created by Louis Feuillant, received a 2-week workshop in October, 2011, and is scheduled for further development throughout 2013-14. Created and adapted by film historian Tom Gunning and director Travis Preston, the workshop will explore *Fantomas'* connection to the Surrealist movement and to the burgeoning development of a modern, urban society.

2010–2011

In June, 2011, CNP was invited by the RADAR LA Festival to remount its 2010 production of *Brewsie and Willie*, created in association with Poor Dog Group, a performance ensemble made up of CalArts alums. Written by author Gertrude Stein as a short novel almost exclusively in dialogue form, *Brewsie and Willie* is a portrait of class anxiety – the class that fights our wars and is then left to grapple with the anxiety of return to the larger American culture. World War II has just ended, and Brewsie, Willie, and an array of their fellow soldiers and nurses are in some border-less, undefined space, waiting to return to the United States and civilian life. This period of aimless R&R becomes a space of reflection and thoughtfulness – and of vast concern over their future lives back in the US. “This is essential theater, if anything is,” said the Stage and Cinema review. “It is evidence, in fact, that miracles are indeed possible in the theater. Yes, it’s a miracle, pure and simple. That’s what it is.”

2009

AH!, a spellbinding “opera no-opera,” opened the 2009 season at REDCAT. *AH!*, written by David Rosenboom and Martine Bellin and composed by Rosenboom and 13 young international composers, interweaves robotic and interactive musical technologies, ingenious stagecraft, and flights of phenomenal musicianship under the direction of Travis Preston. Inspired by the *Diamond Sutra*, a classic Buddhist text, *AH!* is a polyglot passage across musical cultures and times, celebrating understanding and unity in today’s globalized and interconnected world.

Power Play and *Willful Blindness*, two world premiere radio dramas, produced in association with BBC Radio 4. Written by Margaret Heffernan and directed by Sara Davies, these two radio dramas about the rise and ignominious fall of ENRON were produced in collaboration with the BBC. Recorded at CalArts and directed by a BBC team from Bristol, England, the plays aired in June, 2009, in the United Kingdom.

2008

Smoke, Lilies, and Jade by Carl Hancock Rux, directed by Nataki Garrett, based on the life and work of Harlem Renaissance poet and artist Richard Bruce Nugent. A developmental production was performed in November, 2008.

Storytellers, a co-production with Centre 104 in Paris, received its second workshop in December, 2008. Directed by Robert Cantarella, this ensemble-developed work explores the relationship between objects for sale and the “story” with which modern marketing imbues them.

2007

Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary, a solo dance theater tour de force which tells an astonishing tale centered on three towering figures in the life of protean performer Marissa Chibas -- her father, Raul Chibas, who co-wrote the manifesto for the Cuban revolution with Fidel Castro; her uncle, Eddy Chibas, who was the frontrunner for the Cuban presidency in 1951 before committing suicide during a live radio broadcast; and her mother, Dalia Chibas, Miss Cuba runner-up in 1959. Directed by Mira Kingsley, *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary* opened at REDCAT in January, 2007, and then traveled to New York for a 5-week run at the DRII Theater, co-produced by Intar. It toured to Miami in mid-November, 2008, to the Guadalajara Feria Internacional de Libri in December, 2009, and to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August, 2011.

Vineland Stelae, a full-length structured improvisation for 30 musicians, created and composed by Sandeep Bhagwati and directed by Chi-wang Yang. Trombonist Mike Svoboda conducted an ensemble including soloists on tabla, gamelan, trumpet, sarode, marimba, shakuhachi, double bass flute and Ewe drums. The performance was configured in the round, with Svoboda standing in the center of the REDCAT theater and conducting in a 360 degree rotation. He was surrounded by the audience – who were, in turn, surrounded by the musicians. Svoboda interpreted the score, which included music, text, and electronic processing, and led the interactions among the ensembles, which varied on a nightly basis.

2006

What to Wear, a new post-rock opera, directed and designed by Richard Foreman and composed by Michael Gordon. Foreman, one of the seminal figures of the American avant-garde, first worked with CNP in 2000, creating the enormously successful *Bad Behavior* in association with Sophie Haviland. His collaborator on *What to Wear*, Michael Gordon, is a co-founder of the Bang on a Can Festival in New York and an increasingly well-known creator of innovative music-theater works. In Foreman's signature style, *What to Wear* is a surreal extravaganza of operatic tableaux come to disturbing, hallucinatory life. Following its world premiere at REDCAT in September, 2006, the Los Angeles Times' rave review described it as "theater that you discover while you look, listen and wonder."

2005

September 11, 2001. Produced in association with the Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne, this was the world premiere production of acclaimed French playwright Michel Vinaver's *September 11, 2001*, directed by Robert Cantarella, then-director of the National Dramatic Center of Dijon. Collaged from newspaper statements and documentaries, *September 11, 2001*, was originally written by Vinaver in English as a deeply moving elegy and requiem for the victims of 9/11. Following the 2005 performances at REDCAT, the production toured France in May-June, 2006, performing at the Frictions Festival in Dijon, in Montpellier, and in Paris at the Théâtre National de la Colline.

Bell Solaris: Twelve Metamorphoses in Piano Theater. First conceived as a concert-length composition for piano by American experimental music pioneer David Rosenboom, *Bell Solaris* was configured into an enveloping theatrical experience by Travis Preston. Built on an underlying narrative about evolution

expressed through transfigured myth, the piece featured solo pianist Rosenboom and a large ensemble of performers who, while wearing multiple video cameras and projectors, carried out choreographed movements to weave an extravagant visual score--an imagistic expansion drawing the audience closer to the ecstasies of the music. *Bell Solaris* played to sold-out houses at REDCAT in 2005.

Invisible Glass. Produced in association with the Cotsen Center for Puppetry and the Arts, which is housed in the CalArts School of Theater, *Invisible Glass* incorporated actors, a variety of puppetry forms, film and video projections, and original music by composer Tom Recchion. Inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's short story "William Wilson," Janie Geiser collaborated with playwright Erik Ehn to explore the idea of the "doppelganger," or spirit double made flesh, in this new work. *Invisible Glass* received its world premiere at REDCAT in 2005.

2004

Macbeth, a radical reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, directed by Artistic Director Travis Preston and performed by Stephen Dillane, known for his work on London and Broadway stages as well as in film. In this incarnation, the entire performance text of *Macbeth* became a "score" played by Dillane while he shared the stage with three musicians performing the original compositions of jazz luminary Vinny Golia. The production, which received its world premiere in 2004, was performed to glowing reviews in London in fall, 2005, and toured to Sydney and Adelaide in 2006. Further performances in Europe are in discussion.

Peach Blossom Fan, one of the most important 17th-century Chinese operas, was re-imagined by Director Chen Shi-Zheng as a vital new expression for the 21st century world stage. With music composed by Stephin Merritt, *Peach Blossom Fan* was CNP's inaugural production at the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (REDCAT) in downtown Los Angeles' Disney Concert Hall complex. The production defied cultural boundaries in a boldly poetic fusion of traditional Chinese movement, multi-media spectacle, martial arts, and karaoke.

2002-2003

King Lear, a site-specific production of epic scale and daring imagination. As envisioned by director Travis Preston, this new version of Shakespeare's tragedy, with a text adapted by Royston Coppenger, premiered in 2002, staged in six locations within the massive factory spaces of the Brewery Arts Complex in downtown Los Angeles. As the inaugural production of the then-Center for New Theater (now the Center for New Performance), *Lear* challenges traditional interpretations of the play by employing a staging area of environmental proportions, unconventional uses of technology, an all-female cast, and a gripping post-modern aesthetic. Audiences journeyed through a series of visual installations including 40-foot video projections and a suspended car wreck.

In 2003, the production toured to the Frictions Festival in Dijon, France, produced by the National Dramatic Centre of Dijon.

2001

Theater of the Ears toured to Festival d'Avignon and to Paris for the Biennale Internationale des Arts de la Marionette, in association with the Institut International de la Marionette in Charleville, France. A radiophonic play in space performed by an electronic puppet, the text was a collage of works by Valère Novarina, the well-known French avant-garde playwright. While Novarina is frequently performed in France, his work had never been presented in the United States; *Theater of the Ears* marked the United States premiere of his writing. This interdisciplinary work combined elements of puppetry, computer imaging, and video.

2000

Theater of the Ears was performed in New York at the Henson International Festival of Puppet Theater.

Bad Behavior, a new work created by celebrated writer-director Richard Foreman in association with Sophie Haveland. In *Bad Behavior*, named one of the 10 best productions of the 2000/2001 theater season by the Los Angeles Times, a dozen lost souls confront heartache and sexual longing and manage to take the first tentative steps in transforming them into moments of mystical transcendence.

Listen to Me, an adaptation of Gertrude Stein's text, by visual artist Michael Counts and choreographer Ken Roht, described by the Los Angeles Times as "endlessly inventive." Counts retained Stein's hypnotic repetition and stark poetry while infusing the piece with his unique visual and visceral style.

1999

World premiere of *Theater of the Ears*, a radiophonic play in space performed by an electronic puppet, combining elements of puppetry, computer imaging, and video. As noted above, this marked the US premiere of writing by Valère Novarina. The piece was subsequently performed in New York and France.