

ARCANA: Cycle of the Fool

In our eighth original production since 1997, Synaesthetic Theatre brings to the stage an incredibly talented group of collaborators in a multimedia performance that will never be the same twice. **ARCANA** combines the symbolic language of the Tarot with pop-culture archetypes and historical figures and events, in order to explore the relationship between our individual choices and the larger context in which we live. Against a backdrop of war, the ensemble offers compositions of love, loss, fear, moral conflict and courage.

At the beginning of each performance, a selection of cards from the major arcana of the Tarot will be shuffled and drawn. This live chance operation will determine the order of events for that show, re-arranging the segments into a unique "reading." The inclusion of Chance in this new production reflects our belief that life is always in transition from one state of being to another, and that Truth is a question of perspective and context.

Co-conceivers David Crittenden, John DesRoches, Joy Leonard and Chris Nichols entered this process with a desire to investigate how people cope with moral uncertainty and feelings of helplessness in times of war and loss. The idea of the Tarot cards was introduced by David initially, providing a frame work for the character archetypes we would explore on both screen and stage. In the Tarot, the Fool is the first card of the deck and represents the beginning and ending of the journey we take during the process of self discovery. We also focused much of our early discussion



on the idea of a Warrior; someone who can summon the will to face hardship in spite of their own fear and do what needs to be done. John's script for **Fool**, the short film contained in **ARCANA**, began as an exploration of the warrior spirit as it manifests on an internal and personal front. With a 30 page script, a scant 6 days for filming, 4 separate locations in Brooklyn and Staten Island, a crew of 20, a cast of 6 and 3 directors, **Fool** is by far the most ambitious video project Synaesthetic has ever attempted. Despite the enormity of the logistical challenges, the shoot captured spectacular moments and was a lot of fun.

Segments of **Fool** will be integrated with live vignettes performed by the stage ensemble, which blend history, philosophy, emotion, and archetypes with the fluidity of a dream. We invite you to join us at the Culture Project in May, for an unpredictable journey through the wasteland of our collectively American unconscious.



John DesRoches on the filming of Fool

The cast and crew proved themselves each day under often harsh conditions and with little sleep. The camera and lighting department under the leadership of Director of Photography Tracey Gudwin captured some of the most beautiful images Synaesthetic has produced to date and on a very tight budget. David Crittenden surpassed his usual brilliance with costumes that covered the spectrum from exotic to understated, with an attention to color and detail that made the characters jump off the screen. Jessica Baker's production skills kept the shoot on track and made it possible for everyone to do their job to the best of their abilities. And Jim Ford as Assistant Director did his utmost to keep us on schedule. An enormous THANK YOU goes out to everyone who made this shoot happen. We learned a tremendous amount, and can't wait to share the completed film with you all in May!

visit www.arcana.tv for more information on **ARCANA: Cycle of the Fool**. 

April Fool's Day Benefit

This spring, Synaesthetic Theatre hosted its annual benefit party at The Pioneer Restaurant and Bar in New York City. Music was provided by long-time Synaesthetic collaborator Rench, and raffle and door prizes were handed out to lucky guests and donors.

Synaesthetic Theatre would like to thank the following people and organizations for providing invaluable support and raffle prizes at our latest fundraiser: 6 Characters, Todd Amodeo, Dr. Adam Silk and Dr. Mike Shwartzstein at Avenue B Chiropractic, Battlestar America, Blue Man Group, The

Culture Project, Haven Day Spa, Claire Mullen, John Wahnish @ NYCGoBag.com, The Pioneer Restaurant and Bar, Kevin Gregor @ Tiny's Giant Sandwich Shop, Sensei Akira @ World Seido Karate Organization. 



Synaesthetic Turns Up the Heat



Synaesthetic Theatre expanded our program activity this year to include two new artistic development programs along with a workshop series and an original multimedia production. Board Chair Jessica Baker discusses our many accomplishments in the first 9 months of this exciting season.

Back in May and June of 2003, the Synaesthetic Theatre company and Board of Directors held a series of meetings to plan our current year's activities, and collectively agreed that the proposed schedule was a) ambitious, b) bordering on insane, and c) incredibly exciting. Amazingly, we have managed to make it 3/4 of the way through that crazy calendar, and I'm happy to share with all of our supporters updates from these new programs.

Seed Idea Development (September 2003 - October 2003):

This year's new Seed Idea Development program was launched as a means to increase opportunity for creative input at the earliest stages from every member of the Synaesthetic Company. At the end of the 5 week session, we emerged with show concepts for 3 new productions. Please see "A Sneak Peak at the Seed Ideas" for more

information about the new ideas.

The Viewpoints: A Physical Workshop (October 18, 2003)

Synaesthetic Theatre presented a Viewpoints Workshop on Saturday, October 18th, 2003. Twenty-six artists participated, seven observed and several more who were wait-listed had to be turned away due to the full attendance.

Creating Art Collaboratively: New Workshop Development (November 2003)

This year Synaesthetic piloted a new, advanced workshop in collaborative art-making techniques with a group of 21 New York City artists. The invited artists were provided with a free, eight-session work-

shop, and we were provided with a forum to experiment and refine our creative process and workshop structures. Please see "Looking Back at CAC" for participants' comments.



Boundless Improv (January 17th - 25th, 2004)

Synaesthetic Theatre offered a seven-day intensive improvisation master class taught by Stephen Wanhg (author, *An Acrobat of the Heart*) and Wendell Beavers (Master Teacher, Viewpoints & Somatic Movement), with Lisa Sokolov (Originator & Master Teacher, Embodied VoiceWork). For more information please see "Workshops: Boundless Improv 2004".

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Upcoming Workshops

Synaesthetic rounds out our 2003-4 training and workshop season with a 2-day Master Class in Viewpoints practice led by Wendell Beavers. Also, company founders Joy Leonard and Chris Nichols will be co-leading a Master Workshop in Physical Theatre at NYU this July with Stephen Wanhg, who was recently granted NYU's Distinguished Teacher Award. Kudos to Mr. Wanhg!



DEVELOPMENTAL MOVEMENT and THE VIEWPOINTS Joining Sensation to Perception

Synaesthetic Theatre produces a weekend workshop with **Wendell Beavers**, former director and founding faculty member of NYU's Experimental Theater Wing (ETW), and currently Director of Performing Arts and Chair of a new MFA in Contemporary Performance at Naropa University. The focus of this weekend is joining the compositional Viewpoints elements of space and time to deeply kinesthetic work with breath, sound, emotional impulse and movement. This workshop draws on Developmental Movement and experiential anatomy work based in Body Mind Centering (tm) to create a foundation for physical vocabulary to be used in Viewpoints practice.

Saturday, May 22 and Sunday, May 23, 2004 (11 AM to 5 PM)
<http://www.boundlessimprov.com>

Master Workshop in Physical Theater, NYU TSOA Special Programs for Professionals & Educators

This two-week intensive workshop, offered by New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, will be led by **Stephen Wanhg**, author of *An Acrobat of the Heart*, **Joy Leonard** and **Chris Nichols**, founders of Synaesthetic Theatre. It is designed especially for teachers of acting, offering them the opportunity to develop their art in physical theater. The work will include the psycho-physical exercises developed by Wanhg from his work with Jerzy Grotowski and Viewpoint exercises in moving and seeing originated by Mary Overlie and elaborated by Wendell Beavers. The workshop will also offer in-depth discussion about studio pedagogy and methods of working with young actors in training.

Monday - Saturday, July 19 - August 6, 2004

<http://specialprograms.tisch.nyu.edu/object/edutheater.html>

Looking Back at CAC

Each session of Creating Art Collaboratively (CAC) included an extensive discussion period with participants to discuss their perspectives and experience with exercises and creative formats used, and suggestions were incorporated into the next session. Below are reflections on what proved to be a highly engaging workshop process, from some of the 21 participating artists.



Renee Benson (actor): Working with Chris and Joy was one of the highlights of 2003 for me. Ambitious, mindful and creative, I felt safe enough to fall on my face. And I did, a number of times.

Alexandra Gray (actor): It's not often you get the chance to genuinely experiment with technique, especially with a ready ensemble of performers at your disposal, to try out your theories right away. There was a nice balance of planned exercises vs. time to do what the group wanted.



Joy Leonard (director): Chris and I were concerned that the ever-shifting nature of this ensemble would lead to a lack of trust and commitment. We were so very wrong about that. Every one of the eight sessions was a "success," with 100% commitment from everyone and a palpable joy in the act of creation. This was a group that whenever someone said "What if ...?" the answer was always "Let's try it."

Chris Nichols (director): As the workshop evolved I began to really see

it as an exploration/ rehearsal of the rehearsal process itself. It was an opportunity to take apart the different elements of our collaborative process, without the pressure of needing to reach a performable product.

Clinton Powell (actor): CAC was an amazing experience to work with a continually shifting ensemble that was completely dedicated to exploring whatever the night called for. It helped me to stand up and know that everyone supported my choice to stand.

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Workshops: Boundless Improv 2004



In January, Synaesthetic Theatre successfully produced our second Boundless Improv workshop. The workshop provided improvisation techniques that combined body, voice and emotion in an effort to push the boundaries of what performers can do onstage.

Expanding on the previous Boundless Improv offered last summer, this workshop was extended over two weekends and included three weeknights. It was divided into an Introductory weekend and a five day Advanced course (open to people who participated in the previous workshop). Once again Boundless sold out and several applicants had to be turned away.

The workshop utilized theatre games, free movement and vocal improvs to encourage deep listening and kinesthetic response. The days and nights were filled with movement and vocal jams, character work, feedback from the instructors and group discussions.

Boundless was led by three Master Teachers from the Experimental Theatre Wing at NYU: Wendell Beavers (move-

ment), Stephen Wangh (acting) and the newly added Lisa Sokolov (voice). Thrilled to be collaborating for the first time, they infused a spirit of excitement, challenge and experimentation into the work. Synaesthetic will offer another Boundless Improv as soon as we can catch these tremendously gifted teachers in the same state again, so keep an eye on www.boundlessimprov.com. 

A Sneak Peak at the Seed Ideas

Simmering away on a back burner we now have 3 new show concepts, just waiting for the right moment to be brought to the front. Following are brief tastes of each.

Atreus Noir

Where does justice end and revenge begin? Orestes, exiled heir to the House of Atreus, returns to the family-owned night club bent on avenging his father's brutal murder. A loyal compadre, a femme fatale, a psychic singer, Big Bosses and sassy assassins populate this underworld where dark desires and rivalry ensnare the purest of heart.

Blood Countess

Powerful, sadistic, and politically astute, Countess Elizabeth Bathory tormented and tortured over 600 young women in her quest for eternal youth. This sensational horror will be brought to vivid life in homage to the Grand Guignol, the Parisian theatre that pioneered live (gory) special effects - shocking, titillating and terrifying patrons for over 100 years.

The Triangle Fire

In the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, hundreds of hitherto invisible immigrant factory workers - mostly teenage girls - at last gained the attention of the US Government with their spectacular and preventable deaths. Synaesthetic explores the tragedy through actual accounts of survivors, and imagines the interior lives and dreams of young women treated like machines. 

Synaesthetic Turns Up the Heat *continued from page 2*

On the business front, Synaesthetic Theatre has received our official 501(c)3 not-for-profit determination from the IRS... a HUGE administrative accomplishment that the Board of Directors worked tirelessly for two years to complete. We are thrilled to now be able to receive tax deductible donations directly endorsed to

Synaesthetic Theatre! After accomplishing so much this year, we now have shifted our focus to the final third of our calendar, production development of our next multimedia theatre piece **ARCANA: Cycle of the Fool**, which will be presented at The Culture Project @ 45 Bleecker in NYC in May. We are also pleased to announce that

we have been awarded our first ever foundation funded grant in support of this project from the Puffin Foundation Ltd! Thanks to all of our donors, patrons, board members and participating artists for making this ambitious season a reality! 

Looking Back at CAC *continued from page 3*

Jared Robinson (actor): I found an entire range of new forms of expression. As we combined and created new pieces I learned and explored a new Viewpoints vocabulary. Communicating with your voice is one thing but to use your entire body and environment to tell a story adds so much.

Heather Rogers (actor): I loved the weeks we spent in the workshop and really looked forward to each session. It was like "wow I get to play with all these really talented actors and do interesting work with great material and I don't even have to pay for this!" It made me hungry to do more

experimental theater, specifically to work more with text in an improv.-based and/or abstract way which was very freeing and new to me. 

UPCOMING PRODUCTION:

At
The Culture Project
45 Bleecker Street

May 15th - 29th

To Purchase Tickets:
212-352-3101 or
www.arcana.tv

This production is supported, in part, by the Puffin Foundation Ltd.

UPCOMING WORKSHOP:

**DEVELOPMENTAL MOVEMENT
and THE VIEWPOINTS**
Joining Sensation to Perception

WHAT: Synaesthetic Theatre presents **Developmental Movement and the Viewpoints**, a two day improvisation workshop taught by Master Teacher **Wendell Beavers**.

WHERE: New York City - 537 Broadway, 3rd Floor

WHEN: Saturday, May 22 & Sunday, May 23 (11 am - 5pm)

TUITION: \$250

APPLY: www.boundlessimprov.com
or call 212-696-6721 to request an application

Synaesthetic Theatre 

851 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213

www.synaesthetic-theatre.com

syn-aes-thet-ic, *adj.* characterizes a work of art which produces harmony out of different or opposing impulses.