



Urban Research Theater

song • movement • action

Urban Research Theater Newsletter – March 2009

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

1) SHOWINGS AND WORKSHOPS – WINTER/SPRING 2009

Urban Research Theater is pleased to announce a series of workshops and showings between February and May 2009. The series of three-day intensive weekend workshops will be co-led by Ben Spatz (Urban Research Theater, NYC) and Maximilian Balduzzi (Teatro della Pioggia, Italy). Please be sure to reserve your space well in advance of the dates given below.

SHOWINGS:

Sunday, February 22
Sunday, March 29
Sunday, April 12
Sunday, April 26

All showings are at 6pm.
There is no charge for attendance, but spaces are extremely limited.

WORKSHOPS:

Friday-Sunday, April 3-5
Friday-Sunday, April 17-19
Friday-Sunday, May 1-3

Participation fee: \$300 for a single workshop / \$250 per workshop for more than one.
Location in NYC to be determined.

For more details, please see the flyer attached as the last page of this newsletter.

2) RELATED UPCOMING EVENTS

More information about the following events can be found on our webpage, at the top of the “artistic family” page. There are some amazing opportunities here:

January - December	'Year of Grotowski' series of events in Wroclaw, Poland
February - July	'Year of Grotowski' series of events in New York City
March 26-29	'Queen & Fool' Workshop with Anna-Helena McLean and Christopher Sivertsen in NYC
April 3-10	'Regula Contra Regulam' Workshop in Wroclaw
May 5-9	Rena Mirecka Work Session at Double Edge in Massachusetts
June 11-14	The British Grotowski Conference in Kent, England
June 15	Additional Grotowski Symposium in Kent, England
July 7 - August 5	“Meetings With Remarkable Women” in Wroclaw

On the academic side, Ben will present a paper at the Mid-America Theatre Conference in Chicago this weekend. “The Significant Other: Consensual Power Exchange in the Actor-Director Relationship” explores the unique creative productivity unleashed by hierarchical power dynamics in theatre and beyond. Key examples range from the priest-visionary partnerships of medieval Christianity through Jerzy Grotowski’s performance-based research to contemporary sexual play involving erotic power exchange between “top” and “bottom” partners.

3) AN INVITATION

Urban Research Theater is changing, expanding, shifting. It is now a “four-body problem,” the outcome of which no one can predict. Strong forces pull us towards greater performative visibility, even while the yogic or internal aspects of the work grow and open like flowers revealing unexpected depths.

We continue to fund our own research as we develop our methods, our partnerships, our intentions, our clarity, our community and our practice. You are invited to join us for showings and workshops such as those mentioned above, as well as to propose other kinds of meetings and exchange. We also invite you to become a supporting member of Urban Research Theater. At present, donated funds go entirely to space rental costs. In the future, we hope that they will be sufficient to support us as professional artists, so that we can pursue our work full-time.

Every penny donated goes towards opening spaces dedicated to patient and rigorous creative research in the heart of the metropolis of New York City. These spaces are small gardens of song and action, in which the loud materials of civilization are rendered secondary and the whole history of humankind can be read in the subtle vibrations of an unknown muscle.

Our goal at present is to build a community of 100 members. So far there are eleven, as listed on our website. You can become a supporting member of URT by donating \$60 (or \$5 per month) or more in support of our work. Donations made via the umbrella organization Fractured Atlas are fully tax deductible. Just follow the links on our membership page.

Thank you.

NOTES FROM THE STUDIO

4) BEN: ON RESEARCH AS A SPIRITUAL TASK

The spiritual is an alignment between private experience and public life.

I find graduate school difficult because it is so resolutely secular. I am always searching in the materials, in the teachers, and in my fellow classmates for what is most personal, for what seems to me most *real*. Too often I cannot feel the *heart* in what is said or written. The academic context is fundamentally based on setting aside the personal. To be "disinterested" is a value. Or else one is allowed to be politically committed, but not spiritually.

Academia talks to itself about how to become less western-focused, less Euro- and U.S.-centric. But this discussion rarely touches on religion and spirituality. When we say "Eurocentric," it would sometimes be more useful to say "secular." Because it isn't just a question of political geography. It is also a question of how science, technology, and "Enlightenment" evolved together in Europe to produce a certain kind of secularism. Too often this leads academia to ignore North American spirituality, or to equate it with right-wing fundamentalism and/or New Age foolishness. By the same token, secular movements in other parts of the world are ignored.

The spiritual is a moment in which one's deeply held beliefs, one's most insightful intellectual perspectives, are aligned and integrated with one's most personal, intimate, and inexplicable feelings. A performance can be spiritual when its gestures and actions are both deeply felt and composed in such a way that the performers can "stand" by them as citizens, adults, and artists. If I stand by my work but do not feel it deeply, then it is only an intellectual game. My heart remains unseen. If I feel it deeply but do not stand for its place in the world, then I remain a child. We have to search constantly for those elements that are both deeply felt and rigorously analyzed. An "intelligent intuition," we might call it — or a "critical love."

I am not speaking only of precisely repeatable performance structures but of any kind of performance, any action that takes place in any moment of life. To draw the continuous line between the heart and the hand, between the inner and the outer, so that for one specific moment they are identical — synonymous — unified. In that moment, the person and the environment are one, united by an unbroken line that leads back and forth between heart and world. A repeatable performance structure is one kind of practice, one kind of work, in which this unbroken line can sometimes be drawn.

Such moments cannot be recorded. A recording captures only the outer aspect, which can be viewed or auditioned later on with no understanding of its inner value. A memory, on the other hand, captures only the inner value of the moment and can never be recreated through the same techniques. The line of that moment's *heart-technique* will never match up again. To recreate the same sense of value will always require new techniques, and these techniques must be discovered through research. When the search for technique is a search for inner value as well as concrete expression, then research is a spiritual task.

As always, comments and feedback are welcome.

Urban Research Theater New York City

Website: www.urbanresearchtheater.com

Contact: ben@urbanresearchtheater.com

The essence of each workshop is playful, rigorous, and creative exploration in and around precisely repeatable sequences of physical action and song. Every element in the sequence has its own rhythm, quality, and intention. Each of us has spent years developing a particular research at the intersection of song, movement, and action.

Our workshops generate an intense ensemble environment while ensuring that every participant receives individual attention. Each day we will focus on specific elements of physical and vocal work, and on how this work can grow and be tested in a theatrical situation.

Ben Spatz (Urban Research Theater, NYC)
Maximilian Balduzzi (Teatro della Pioggia, Italy)

Participation Fee:

\$300 for a single workshop

\$250 per workshop for more than one

Location in NYC to be determined

Friday-Sunday, April 3-5

Friday-Sunday, April 17-19

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WORKSHOPS

URBAN RESEARCH THEATER • NEW YORK CITY • SPRING 2009

"It was very liberating for me, truly inspiring and I still feel a surge of energy. Thank you for creating that welcoming and encouraging space that allowed us to explore our voices and bodies and some of our boundaries..."

"There was some very strong evocation of something deep inside my spirit ... I can't put it into words now, but following your voice I could feel something very archaic, old, essential in myself..."

- Participants in "Another City" workshops, 2007-2008

SHOWINGS

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Contact for address and details.

Showings are demonstrations of current research and practice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:

ben@urbanresearchtheater.com | www.urbanresearchtheater.com