

Oct–Nov/08

Circus Dreams

**AURELIA'S ORATORIO BRINGS BREATHTAKING,
MIND-BENDING ACROBATICS AND MAGIC
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY**

*On the Loeb Stage,
November 28 – January 3*



Stolen Revolutions

THE COMMUNIST DRACULA PAGEANT

*BY AMERICANS, FOR AMERICANS, WITH HALLUCINATIONS,
PHOSPHORESCENCE, AND BEARS*

**ANNE WASHBURN EXPLORES MYTH, HISTORY, SATIRE,
AND THE POWER OF A RULER TO REWRITE THE NEWS**

*At the Zero Arrow Theatre,
October 18 – November 9*

face revealed

DEAR FRIENDS,

This edition of ARTicles highlights two productions – the world premiere of *The Communist Dracula Pageant* at Zero Arrow Theatre, and the glorious magic and illusion of *Aurélia's Oratorio*, which reaches the Loeb Stage just in time for the holidays. Both offer evenings of great fantasy and theatricality, and both are helmed by prodigiously talented young women artists – Aurélia Thierrée, the virtuosic performer of *Aurélia's Oratorio*, and our two “Anne’s”, Anne Washburn and Anne Kauffman, the playwright/director team of *The Communist Dracula Pageant*. I’m so happy to introduce their work to you.

To my mind, Anne Washburn is one of the most exciting new voices in the American theatre. Her plays are feasts of imagination, with vivid characters, storylines that veer off in surprising directions, a wry sense of comedy, and a playful love of language. *The Communist Dracula Pageant* is a wonderful example. This romp across Romanian myth and history exists in three time periods: 1989, when the Ceausescus’ dictatorship fell; 1976, when the dictators, at the height of their powers, commissioned kitschy pageants to celebrate the glory of the Romanian nation; and the fifteenth century, in the reign of Vlad Tepes, the historical Count Dracula.

The play’s full title is *The Communist Dracula Pageant, by Americans, for Americans, with hallucinations, phosphorescence, and bears*. It reminds us that although Anne has set it during the insanity of the Romanian dictatorship, the play really transcends national boundaries. Its theme – the shaping of historical events and current affairs for political gain – is uni-



versal, and will have particular resonance for us during our own election season. I hope you’ll share my pleasure in this bold and lively new play from one of our most lauded young playwrights.

I first saw Aurélia Thierrée on stage when I was a child in London. She was performing with her parents and brother in the unforgettable *Cirque Imaginaire*, the genre-busting “new circus” that played several times at the A.R.T. and continues to tour the world today. My first memory of Aurélia was as the smallest member of a family of suitcases that waltzed across the stage. Now she has graduated with a show of her own – a dreamlike combination of magic, puppetry, circus, vaudeville, and acrobatics that is every bit as breathtaking and mind-bending as her parents’ legendary performances.

Best wishes,

Gideon Lester

Gideon Lester
Director, 08/09 Season

Circus Dreams

AURÉLIA THIERRÉE TALKS TO GIDEON LESTER
ABOUT AURÉLIA'S ORATORIO

Scenes on this and the following
pages are from Aurelia's Oratorio.
Photos by Richard Haughton

Gideon Lester: Although *Aurélia's Oratorio* is your first performance at the A.R.T., it's not the first time you've worked at the theatre.

Aurélia Thierrée: When I was a child, my parents, Victoria Chaplin Thierrée and Jean Baptiste Thierrée, performed at the A.R.T. three times with their circuses, the *Cirque Imaginaire* and the *Cirque Invisible*. I worked backstage on one of them, and have such fond memories of my times in Cambridge. It was a really important place for my parents, and I can't wait to perform at the A.R.T. myself.

GL: So your childhood was spent on the road?

AT: Yes. I first performed when I was three years old, though "performed" is perhaps too strong a word. I'd begged my parents to let me on stage, so they put me in a box and I just ran out. Later my brother James and I started performing more regularly.

GL: I remember seeing the *Cirque Imaginaire* performing in London when I was a child. At one point, you, James and your parents were a family of walking suitcases.

AT: Yes. My mother created acts and magic tricks for us – James and I were two dueling insects, or my mother would get in a cage and disappear and we'd appear instead.

They were not difficult things, but they taught us discipline because we had to be reliable every night. It was fun, and it was also a way to keep the family together at night.

GL: How long were you with the *Cirque Imaginaire*?

AT: When I was a teenager everything changed. My hormones kicked in, and I wanted to live an absolutely opposite life. I suddenly thought that living in a house and going to school were so adventurous and unknown, so I stopped touring for a while when I was fourteen.



GL: Your performance in *Aurélia's Oratorio* requires tremendous physical skill. Did you go to circus school?

AT: No, though when we first started discussing the show, my mother asked that I take trapeze lessons to stay in shape. It may look virtuosic but it's really about timing and coordination. I'm not an acrobat, a trapeze artist, or a dancer, but I use whatever skills I have to serve the physical language that my mother has created for me.

GL: How long did it take you and your mother to develop *Aurélia's Oratorio*?

AT: It's difficult to say, because we play around with ideas whenever we meet as a family. It's our way of communicating and staying together. The show started little by little; my mother and I were touring in separate shows, and whenever we had some time off we'd work on it together. At one point we were given a residency for two weeks when we developed about fifteen minutes of material, then later we rehearsed for about two months. But the basic idea has been on our minds for a long time. Even now, after five years of performing it, the show keeps mutating. We reshape it, adapt it to each theatre. It's never quite completed.

GL: What was your initial idea for the show?

AT: We started with a book of medieval drawings that show the world upside down and everything inverted: a man carrying a horse; a woman going to war, which in those days was unthinkable; a master carrying a servant. My mother found these fantastical images very inspiring. She works instinctively, starting with an idea then building on it. She throws you in and you make sense of it. It's only at the end that the whole show comes into focus; suddenly a structure emerges, and the sequence defines itself more or less on its own.

GL: How did you find working with your mother?

AT: I think if another director had told me, "in this show you're going to be trapped in a chest of drawers, then later you'll have a train coming through your body," I don't think I'd have trusted them as enthusiastically as I did her! It's corny to say because she's my mother, but I love her work and I was ready to do anything for her. With your family you don't have to be polite or try to seduce or discover how to communicate. You go straight to the point.

GL: Can you tell us about the other performers on stage with you?

AT: There are five of us on stage, though you'll only see two of us, myself and a dancer. The third character is really the set, and in order for that to work we have three magical, invisible people operating it.

GL: Your performance style, and that of your parents, is sometimes described as *Cirque Nouveau* or "New Circus." Do you agree with the term?

AT: Yes. When I was born my parents were working with a traditional family circus, who were unwilling to change their costumes or their acts. My parents wanted to revolutionize circus, but they realized that to do so they'd have to create their own shows, which is how the *Cirque Imaginaire* was born. There are *New Circuses* all over the world – we were just in Brazil and found many of them there – and the term can mean many different things. Our work is more physical theatre than circus, and incorporates elements of music hall, vaudeville, clowning, entertainment. The *Oratorio* is based on a collaboration with the audience. Even though you can guess how many of the tricks work, hopefully there comes a point where you decide not to, and go along with the illusion and

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interpret the show personally. Our work is artisanal – the costumes are handmade, the tricks are not on a huge scale, we don't use projections or special effects.

GL: What about the title? What is *Aurélia's Oratorio*?

AT: There are two answers. The first is that the title was my father's only contribution to the show, so we didn't want to upset him! Second, my mother and I had the idea that everyone has an oratorio. It's hard to define what this word means for us, it's not religious, but it's a kind of prayer, or a chimera, a mad fantasy, a mixture between a spirit and a dream. The show has the surreal logic of a dream; in your dreams something absurd happens and you simply adapt to it, and it's only when you wake up that you question the reality of what happened.

GL: Your character in the show is called Aurélia. Is she you?

AT: I have no idea. I don't know who I am! It's something I have to figure out every night on stage.

Gideon Lester is A.R.T.'s Director of the 08/09 Season

The Family Circus

VICTORIA THIERRÉE CHAPLIN,
AURELIA THIERRÉE, AND
CIRQUE NOUVEAU

by Sean Bartley



IMAGINE A CIRCUS with no ringleader. And no rings. Cirque Nouveau has also done away with animals and clowns. In place of the worn-out routine of jugglers and elephants, Cirque Nouveau uses lush costumes, dense soundscapes, and over-the-top acrobatics. Leaving the circus tent behind, Cirque Nouveau has moved into legitimate theaters.

Cirque Nouveau, **across-cultural revolution** that began in the late 1970s, has refined the basic circus formula that dates back to ancient Rome. Abandoning the traditional circus equation, it draws its inspiration from pop culture and performance art. Developments in postmodern dance and music have

also guided Cirque Nouveau.

But its largest influence has been avant-garde theatre. Cirque Nouveau turns the tired circus form into a sophisticated theatrical spectacle. Intricately textured lighting plots replace the big top's simple light washes. Rather than performing assilent clowns, Cirque Nouveau artists often use the spoken word to develop their characters. Complex visual composition replaces simple sets. Cirque Nouveau has also borrowed narrative structure from contemporary theater. Instead of a simple parade of acts, Cirque Nouveau features recurring characters with **trajectories** and multilayered psychology.

Most Americans would assume that Cirque Nouveau began with Cirque du So-

Above: Jean Baptiste Thierrée and Victoria Thierrée Chaplin at the A.R.T. in Cirque Imaginaire.

leil, the multi-billion-dollar international circus powerhouse. But before Cirque du Soleil's creation in 1984, Jean Baptiste Thierrée and Victoria Thierrée Chaplin were already revolutionizing the form with their groundbreaking production *Cirque Imaginaire*. The piece became an international sensation, including two lauded stops at the A.R.T. After years of touring *Cirque Imaginaire* on all five continents, the couple would go on to create *Le Cirque Invisible*, an even more sophisticated Cirque Nouveau piece, which also enjoyed a successful A.R.T. run.

Victoria Thierrée Chaplin's pedigree for innovative physical theater is impeccable. As the youngest daughter of Charlie Chaplin, she learned the virtuosity of physical performance from its twentieth-century master. Mel Gussow, describing *Le Cirque Imaginaire* in the *New York Times*, called her a "mirthful one-man band." Instead of bringing lions and tigers on stage, Chaplin became the animals, performing as crabs, insects, and birds. The technique would become a hallmark of Cirque Nouveau.

Chaplin's landmark performance needed no supporting cast. In *Cirque Imaginaire*'s closing number, she manipulated dozens of fans and parasols at once, filling the stage with color and movement. Alone on stage, Chaplin created an enormous production number. Gussow gushed that the scene "would make Busby Berkeley glow with envy."

But Chaplin's contribution to Cirque Nouveau isn't limited to physical theater. The granddaughter of Eugene O'Neill, Chaplin is also a master of structure. At first glance, *Le Cirque Imaginaire* used a typical circus structure: Chaplin's physical romps were broken up by comedy routines played by Jean Baptiste Thierrée. But rather than merely alternating between the two characters, Chaplin often staged them simultaneously, engaging them in dialogue

with one another. Rather than a simple circus performer, Chaplin became a complex character with nuanced relationships.

Chaplin and her husband played alongside two other performers during the tour of *Cirque Imaginaire*: their children, James and Aurelia. In subsequent years, each has become a renowned artist. James Thierrée, the star of Robert Wilson's film *Mister Bojangles*, has gone on to found *Le Cirque Bonjour*. Imaginative use of everyday objects has become his signature aesthetic. Ben Brantley, describing the recent run of Thierrée's *Au Revoir Parapluie* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, raved that his staging was "as fluid and surprising as life itself."

Aurelia takes her rightful place in the family tradition with *Aurelia's Oratorio* under her mother's direction, design, and choreography. To showcase her contortionist skills, the piece begins with a simple dresser placed center stage. As the music swells, Aurelia's limbs appear through the drawers in stupefying combinations. Before long, she begins going through a daily routine while contorted in the dresser, turning everyday tasks like smoking and sipping a glass of wine into a master class on physical performance.

One new element that Aurelia and Victoria have explored in *Aurelia's Oratorio*

is puppetry. Shadow puppets become scene partners, dancing and fighting with her. In one memorable scene, Aurelia becomes a human puppet, performing inside a tiny toy theater for an audience of antique puppets who clap and boo.

Aurelia's scenes are interspersed with ballroom dances performed by Broadway veteran Julio Monge. As Chaplin and Thierrée did in *Cirque Imaginaire*, Aurelia and Monge weave their characters together as the piece progresses. By the end, Aurelia and Monge are sharing costumes, using one jacket or pair of pants to create a single human form from their divergent physicalities.

For three decades, Victoria Thierrée Chaplin and her family have defined and redefined Cirque Nouveau. With *Aurelia's Oratorio*, the Cirque Nouveau tradition moves in a bold new direction. Like the religious musical form of its title, *Aurelia's Oratorio* celebrates the sacred in everyday life. What other new tricks do Victoria and Aurelia have up their sleeves with their newest A.R.T. production?

Sean Bartley is a second-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

Mel Gussow, describing *Le Cirque Imaginaire* in the *New York Times*, called Victoria Thierrée Chaplin "a 'mirthful one-man band.'"

An Empire of the Imagination

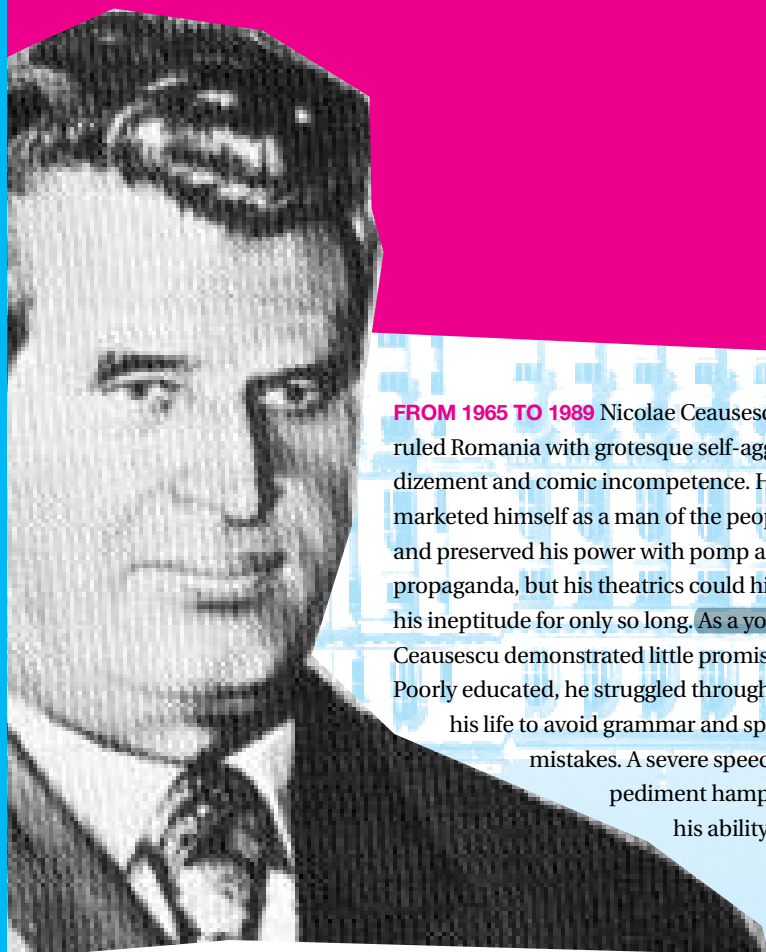
PLAYWRIGHT **ANNE WASHBURN**
DESCRIBES THE EVOLUTION OF *THE COMMUNIST DRACULA PAGEANT*

I started work on *The Communist Dracula Pageant* in 1996. I had known nothing about the Ceausescu dictatorship, but once I started digging, I became fascinated by the escalating madness of the whole thing, particularly the degree to which the Ceausescus succumbed to their own self-defining fantasies.

It's not just that the Ceausescus were out of touch with reality. It's that they had recreated it for themselves, vividly, and dragged an entire people with them. It was an empire of the imagination.

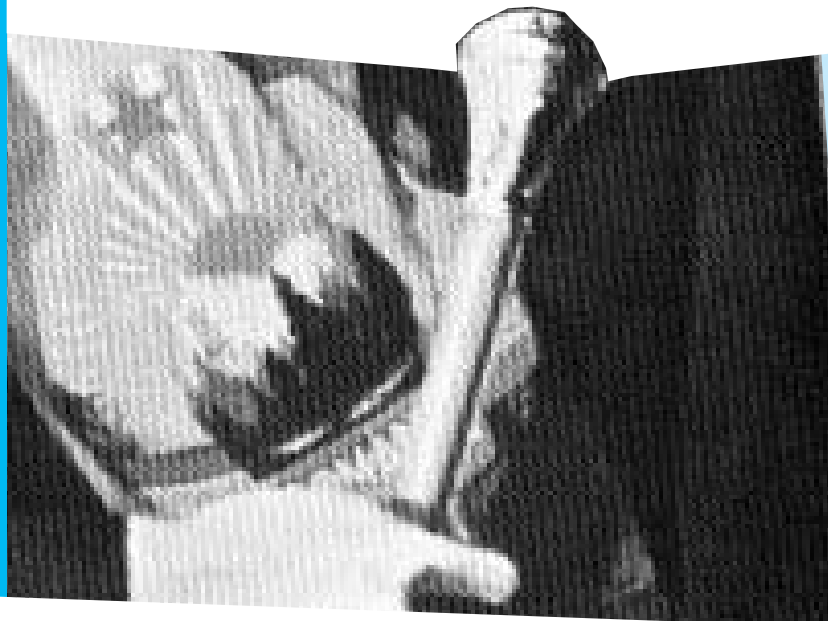
And then the revolution itself was such a compelling mixture of fact and of fiction, rumor and television. On the one hand it was a genuine expression of frustration and horror, in which thousands of Romanians lost their lives, and on the other hand...what? It was referred to, afterwards, as the "Stolen Revolution"; many Romanians even now believe it was a coup, cynically engineered to look like a revolution.

Early in my research I discovered that in 1976 pageants were staged across Romania, to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of Vlad Tepes, the historical Dracula. Vlad Tepes was a complex figure, who played a real and important role in Romanian history, but of course the pageants were really in celebration of Ceausescu, and I found the idea of them irresistible. I wanted the play to encompass both realities, and shades in between. In writing *The Communist Dracula Pageant* I wanted to capture something of the spirit of the Romanian Revolution itself: that whirlwind of chaos and action, rumor, deception, and honesty.



FROM 1965 TO 1989 Nicolae Ceausescu ruled Romania with grotesque self-aggrandizement and comic incompetence. He marketed himself as a man of the people and preserved his power with pomp and propaganda, but his theatrics could hide his ineptitude for only so long. As a youth, Ceausescu demonstrated little promise. Poorly educated, he struggled throughout his life to avoid grammar and spelling mistakes. A severe speech impediment hampered his ability to

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Nicolae Ceausescu: The Sceptered President

by Marshall Botvinick

communicate, and at 5'2" his puny, awkward body made him the butt of jokes. Shamelessly sycophantic, Ceausescu compensated for his handicaps by making powerful friends. During the 1950's he depended on the goodwill of Gheorghiu-Dej, the secretary-general of the Romanian Communist Party. Despite the frequent failure of his projects, Ceausescu earned promotion after promotion by championing Dej's positions. In 1954 he became secretary to the Central Committee where he oversaw all appointments within the party. This job gave Ceausescu a base to build power. Ceausescu's hostility toward the Soviets also contributed to his rise. After Dej's death in 1965, Ceausescu won the leadership of the party because no other candidate would stand up to the U.S.S.R. Once mocked for his stature and stammer, Ceausescu now used his bravado to become the most powerful man in Romania.

Ceausescu quickly disposed of political opponents, surrounding himself with yes men who assented to his caprices. In Machiavellian fashion, he pushed his enemies to the background, making a show of his magnanimity in sparing their lives.

To solidify his authority Ceausescu became a constant presence in the country. He embarked on a series of whirlwind tours, about eighteen a year. Each stop featured motorcades with flower-draped cars, ovations, and balcony appearances.

In 1968 Ceausescu became a hero in Romania and the West when he condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Romanians swelled with pride as Ceausescu touted the importance of national

sovereignty. In the West leaders salivated at the thought of a Communist ally. Soon de Gaulle, Nixon, and Thatcher poured into Romania to salute the dictator. With this reception, Ceausescu's cult of personality rose to meteoric heights, and Romanians began calling him "Genius of the Carpathians."

As his power ballooned, so did his ego. Wielding a scepter at his inauguration, he made himself the first president of Romania. When Salvador Dalí sent the dictator a telegram congratulating him on "introducing the presidential scepter," the Romanian papers, oblivious to the irony, reprinted Dalí's note the next day.

Despite his near deification, Ceausescu never lost his need for validation. He cheated at chess, even against his own son. When he hunted (Ceausescu owned the largest hunting estate in the world), his gamekeepers would drug bears for him, sometimes shooting them, to make Ceausescu appear like a mighty hunter.

Ceausescu's wife Elena also reveled in undeserved accolades. Although she flunked out of school at fourteen, Elena ran the main chemistry laboratory in Romania. Referring to herself as Comrade-Academician-Doctor-Engineer, she ordered Romania's finest scientists to sign her name to their research. The ruse worked as both the New York Academy of Sciences and the Royal Institute of Chemistry honored her achievements in the sciences.

If possible, Elena's egomania exceeded Nicolae's. She forbade her sisters-in-law from wearing jewelry or clothing that "might show her up." She berated photographers for taking unflattering pictures of

her. She commissioned poems that paid her homage, and she participated in pageants that dramatized the Ceausescus receiving praise from fabled Romanian heroes such as Dracula.

As he aged, Ceausescu's paranoia took over. Staying in Buckingham Palace in 1978, Ceausescu, in addition to swiping trinkets from the palace, believed that the British had bugged his room. He would only talk politics in the gardens. Petrified of infection, he washed his hands with rubbing alcohol after touching the Queen. He even required a food-taster before eating palace food.

In the 1980's Ceausescu's policy of self-aggrandizement undid him. While Romania's economy sputtered, he pursued a path of excess. When Romanians waited in breadlines three blocks long, he fed his bears the finest meat and corn; and in his greatest affront to the public, Ceausescu ordered the construction of the People's Palace, a lasting monument to his grandeur. The project resulted in the demolition of almost one quarter of Bucharest. Finally, the self-glorification that had kept Ceausescu in power began to alienate Romanians.

As Communist governments faltered across Europe, Ceausescu's old tricks could not stem the tide. Victimized for too long, the people saw through his charade; Ceausescu, like Dorothy's wizard, lost his magic. The revolution began.

Marshall Botvinick is a second-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

The Communist Dracula Pageant

by Americans, for Americans.
with hallucinations, phosphorescence, and bears

The Two Annes

GIDEON LESTER INTRODUCES ANNE WASHBURN
AND ANNE KAUFFMAN, THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR OF
THE COMMUNIST DRACULA PAGEANT



THE PREMIERE of *The Communist Dracula Pageant* at the A.R.T. this fall reunites two of the rising stars of the American theatre – playwright Anne Washburn and director Anne Kauffman. (Anne Kauffman luckily pronounces her name “Annie,” which prevents total confusion in rehearsals!)

Anne Washburn is one of my favorite young playwrights. In plays such as *The Internationalist*, *The Ladies*, and *Apparition*, she has revealed a wonderfully theatrical imagination, far removed from the realism and family dramas that currently dominate American and British playwriting.

Anne’s plays are purely theatrical; it’s hard to imagine them adapted as scripts for film or television. She delights in stage illusion, in ghosts, fantasies, and figments of our imagination, and is not afraid of grand subjects and themes – the fall of nations in *The Communist Dracula Pageant*, the Book of Jeremiah in *I Have Loved Strangers*. Her style reminds me somewhat of early Caryl Churchill, and she has something of Tony Kushner’s epic and historical sweep (Kushner taught her playwriting at NYU) but ultimately her voice is unique.

Anne is a member of 13P, the renowned collective of New York playwrights

who have been pooling their talents and resources to produce one play for each of the thirteen writers. Her 13P production was of *The Internationalist*, a strange and beautiful comedy about the disorientation of foreign travel, which won rave reviews in New York and was subsequently staged at the Gate Theatre in London. Her plays have been developed by many Off- and Off-off Broadway theatres, and she is currently writing under commission from the Yale Repertory Theatre and The Civilians.

Anne Kauffman has made her name as one of this country’s leading directors of new plays. A recent profile in *American Theatre* magazine noted, “If New York is the epicenter of new plays in America, then near the center of that center stands director Anne Kauffman.”

A list of her recent productions reads like a Who’s Who of America’s most successful young writers; she has directed world premieres by, among many others, Adam Bock (*The Thugs*, for which Anne won an OBIE Award), Jenny Schwartz (*God’s Ear*), David Adjmi (*Stunning*), Anne Marie Healy (*Have You Seen Steve Steven*, also a 13P production), Jordan Harrison (*Act a Lady*), and Dan LeFranc (*60 Miles to Silver Lake*). “For

me the perfect collaboration is discovering the play together – charting new territory,” she told *American Theatre*. “I’m on a crusade. These texts need to be mainstream theatre. These plays need to be what American theatre is.”

The two Annes first collaborated on Washburn’s play *The Ladies*, which Kauffman directed for The Civilians, the award-winning ensemble of which she is a founding member. *The Ladies* featured the two Annes themselves (portrayed by actresses) as they struggled to make sense of the lives of four dictators’ wives, Imelda Marcos, Eva Peron, Madame Mao, and Elena Ceausescu (who reappears center-stage in *The Communist Dracula Pageant*). The production garnered critical raves for its bold experimentation and sense of fun, and transferred to the prestigious Off-Broadway Cherry Lane Theatre.

Between them the two Annes represent the best of young American theatre, and it’s a delight to be presiding over their first collaboration in several years.

Gideon Lester is the A.R.T.’s Director,
08/09 Season

Between them, the two Annes represent the best of young American theatre...

In Search of the Ceausescus

ON THE ROAD WITH ANNE WASHBURN

Playwright Anne Washburn spent the month of August traveling across Romania. She was following a trail of clues about the lives of the Ceausescus, the dictators whose rise and fall she charts in *The Communist Dracula Pageant*. Over the next few weeks we'll be posting extracts from the diary Anne kept as she journeyed around this fascinating and mysterious country. Here is an excerpt.

13 AUGUST 2008. Târgoviste – Scornicesti. *Târgoviste was the scene of the Ceausescu's execution/Dracula's Princely Court. Scornicesti was Nicolae Ceausescu's hometown.*

I approach a stocky blondish man in his mid-thirties who looks friendly. He has a minimal bit of English but we seem to work out that the bus will come at three, that the trip is a half hour, that buses leave the village on the hour, and that the last one leaves at six. I look for a place to sit; that same man is sitting on a bench next to one of the few empty spots and he gestures that I may take it. I sit down, thank him, there is a long disinterested pause and then he asks where I'm from. I tell him and then I try to ask him where in Romania he's from. There's some confusion and then we work out that he comes from Slatina. "Romania beautiful," I offer – I've tried this gambit before, but have noticed that no one ever seems very moved by it. "Nature," he says in Romanian, "but no money."

At three I look about, wondering about the bus and has it arrived disguised as another bus, but he says that no, it's just late and that this is Romania. At ten after I look about again and he tells me, using the notebook, that he is himself a taxi, and he can

take me to Scornicesti, wait an hour while I look around, and then bring me back here, for 25 Lei (slightly under \$12).

As we start off he asks me what address in Scornicesti and I say "Casa Ceausescu" and there is a bit of a pause and he says that it is good I am going with him because – this is with a lot of gesturing – the bus would drop me off in the center of the village, but Ceausescu's house is 7 km beyond. "Noroc!" I say cheerfully – 'luck', a word I learned in Bucharest while toasting with slibowitz at a Serbian restaurant a Romanian acquaintance has taken me to.

Will we be able to look at the house, I want to know. He doesn't know. He says the house is now owned by the Ceausescu kids, by Nicu. By Nicu? I say. "Nicu morte." By Nicu, he says. The Ceausescus had three children, Zoe who died recently, Nicu who died of liver failure not long after their execution, but there's a third, whose name I don't remember, maybe he's called Nicu also. We pass the center of the village which is a combination of low original buildings, big municipal buildings, and, this surprises both of us, a crisp looking new hotel. We continue on, long past the point where the bus would have dropped me off, and up a side road where is a gate and old shady trees, and a largish house, and directly next to it a small cottage. We pull up and stop the car. I pull out my camera then hesitate. There is someone moving about in the yard. Christie opens the gate and steps into the yard and I follow behind him...

TO READ MORE of Anne's journal (and find out what happened!), visit blog.amrep.org



The Last Days of the Ceausescus

by Marshall Botvinick

On December 15, 1989, three hundred people gathered in Timisoara, Romania's fourth largest city, to protest the exile of Laszlo Tokes. Tokes, a priest, built a cult following by attacking the Ceausescus from his pulpit. For three days his supporters grew in strength and number. On December 17 Ceausescu ordered the army to fire on the crowd. The soldiers shot indiscriminately, killing and wounding hundreds. When rumors of the massacre circulated, Ceausescu, to quell the outcry, staged a rally in Bucharest. Party officials pulled thousands of Romanians from their homes, supplying them with pro-Ceausescu banners; however, minutes into Ceausescu's speech the audience began to jeer, and the dictator's advisers ushered him inside. The people, now supported by the army, stormed government headquarters the next day and drove the Ceausescus from the capital. In flight the Ceausescus hijacked multiple cars before being arrested in Tiroviste. They spent the next three days as prisoners in army barracks. On Christmas morning they faced a court of former allies. The trial lasted fifty-five minutes, and the court found the couple guilty of genocide in Timisoara. Minutes later a firing squad executed the dictator and his wife, and Ceausescu's underlings seized power.

From Bloodthirsty Demon To, Well...

THE EVOLUTION OF THE DRACULA MYTHOS

by Beck Holden

“Even if there is no truth in a myth whatsoever, once it is a myth it is a truth.”
—*The Communist Dracula Pageant*



IN AN AGE when Dracula battles Batman, it's easy to forget that there was a real Dracula: Vlad Tepes, Vlad the Impaler, Prince of Wallachia (1431–1476). His more famous name meant “son of the dragon” or “son of the demon.” Which interpretation his subjects took corresponded to their relationship with his pikes.

Prince Vlad III had a penchant for impaling. This brutal ruler ordered the execution of over 100,000 subjects to protect his crown. The ruthlessness that made him a demon to his subjects made him a dragon to the Turks, who had just conquered Constantinople and threatened to sweep through Southeast Europe. Vlad was a Machiavellian military genius. Harried across his homeland by the larger Turkish army, he led night raids on the enemy camp. Forced to retreat, he scorched his own

country to guarantee that the Turks would gain nothing by defeating him. Prince Vlad died in a skirmish against Turkish forces. According to legend, he disguised himself as a Turk to enjoy seeing his foes routed; his own soldiers, mistaking him for an enemy, killed him.

Despite all the blood he shed, there's no evidence that the historical Dracula actually drank it. We owe this peccadillo to Irishman Bram Stoker, who named his blockbuster novel *Dracula* (1897). Drawing on the Romantic tradition of Gothic horror, Stoker crafted the most enduring vampire tale in the Western canon.

One key to the triumph of *Dracula* was the erotic nature of Stoker's vampires, veiled just thickly enough not to outrage Victorian England. The bites of the vampires are called “kisses.” A trio of beautiful female vampires attacks one of Stoker's protagonists, who waits in “languorous ecstasy” as one presses her fangs against his neck. Lucy, an Englishwoman turned vampire, writhes in orgasmic death throes as her fiancé pounds a wooden stake into her heart.

Erotic vampirism, however, was no innovation. The political undertones of Stoker's *Dracula* were. The end of the 19th century was a time of imperial anxiety in

England. Abroad, Germany and the United States were rising, British foreign influence was shrinking, and unrest stirred in the colonies. The morality of imperialism also faced growing scrutiny back home. With the Empire under siege, a fear of reverse colonization – that the “uncivilized” colonies might rise up and conquer the “civilized” motherland – erupted. It's no accident that Dracula comes from Transylvania: Southeast Europe had been a foreign policy problem for years leading up to Stoker's novel. Count Dracula goes to England on a quest to colonize the country one person at a time by turning its citizens into vampires.

Stoker's Irish origins also allow readings of *Dracula* as an allegory for Anglo-Irish relations. Interestingly, this works from both perspectives: Either with the Irish as Dracula invading English soil (the potato famine had caused many Irish immigrants to seek industrial work in Britain), or with the English as Dracula, the self-appointed colonial master able to rewrite the identity of any target he chooses.

Once *Dracula* was written, the Count's evolution was out of Stoker's hands. The first two silver screen bloodsuckers inspired by his novel were Count Orlok in “Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror” (1922)

The Secret Lives of Dictators

Compiled by Sara Bookin-Weiner

Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein had over twenty palaces where chefs cooked three luxurious meals a day – whether or not Saddam himself was present. Paranoid about assassination, Saddam hoped this tactic would prevent anyone from pinpointing his location.

Mao Tse Tung

Toward the end of Mao Tse Tung's rule in China, he commissioned a ten-meter-long six-door stretch luxury limousine, known as the "Red Flag," which came with a fridge, telephone, TV, double bed, desk and sofa.

Imelda Marcos

In 1986, the Philippines' Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos fled their fifty-four-room palace. Soldiers later discovered Imelda's collection of 1,060 pairs of shoes, hundreds of gowns, a diamond-studded hairbrush, bulletproof bras, a bedside oxygen tank for rejuvenation, and a purse autographed by Fidel Castro.

Joseph Stalin

Between 1922 and 1953, Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin hosted elaborate dinners that lasted five to six hours. During these banquets, Stalin might request a fresh tablecloth. A servant would clear everything – china, crystal, and food – and replace it with a new tablecloth and freshly prepared food.

Idi Amin

From 1971 until 1979, Ugandan dictator Idi Amin's full self-appointed title was: His Excellency, Field Marshal, Doctor, Professor, Idi Amin Dada, VC, DSO, MC, President for Life, Defender of the Islamic Faith, Commander-in-Chief of the Uganda Armed Forces, Lord of All the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Seas, and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular.

Sara Bookin-Weiner is the A.R.T. Literary Office Intern

Opposite: A portrait of Vlad Tepes by a 15th century unknown artist.

and the Transylvanian terror himself in "Dracula" (1931). Max Schreck's Orlok looks like a living corpse; subsequent visions of vampires as physically monstrous are indebted to "Nosferatu," as is the tradition of sunlight incinerating them. Bela Lugosi, in contrast, recreated the Count as an elegant aristocrat capable of passing for normal. His Hungarian-accented vampire in tux and cape became the most famous incarnation of Dracula.

Another type that has recently become popular is the reluctant vampire, typified by characters like Angel from Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Louis from Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, and Mick St. John from CBS's series *Moonlight*. A vampire renaissance may be starting soon as *Twilight*, the first of Stephanie Meyer's wildly successful vampire novels, comes to the silver screen this December.

Through the myth of Dracula, Vlad the Impaler's taste for blood has been remembered, but his gruesome method of spilling is forgotten.

Beck Holden is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.



CURTAIN TIMES

7:30 pm Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun eves
8:00 pm Fri & Sat evenings
2:00 pm Sat & Sun **matinees**

PERFORMANCE STAGES

LOEB DRAMA CENTER

64 Brattle Street, Cambridge

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Corner of **Mass.** Ave. and Arrow St., Cambridge

SINGLE TICKET PRICES

LOEB STAGE	A	B
Fri/Sat evenings	\$79	\$56
All other perfs	\$68	\$39

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Fri/Sat evenings	\$52
All other perfs	\$39

HOT DATES

\$25 for selected performances, side and rear seating. See calendar.

DISCOUNT TAX

STUDENT PASS

For full-time students, \$60 buys five tickets good for any combination of plays. That's only \$12 a seat!

STUDENT SINGLE TAX

\$25 in advance with ID.
\$15 on day of show with ID.
Based on availability.

50 @ \$15 @ NOON

\$15 tickets on sale at noon on the day of performance. In-person only, based on availability.

BOX OFFICE HOURS

LOEB DRAMA CENTER

Tue–Sun: noon–5pm. Monday: closed
Performance days: open until curtain

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Opens one hour before curtain.

EXCHANGES

Ticket exchanges are FREE for series ticket holders. Single-ticket buyers can exchange for a fee of \$10.

PRE-PLAY DISCUSSIONS

Held one hour before 7:30 curtain, led by the Literary Department. See calendar for details.

PLAYBACK

Post-show discussions after all Saturday matinees. Free, open to the public.

DISCOUNT PARKING

LOEB DRAMA CENTER

Have your ticket stub stamped at the Loeb reception desk and receive **discounts** at the University Place Garage or the Charles Hotel Garage.

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

\$5 parking with permit at the Harvard University lot at 1033 Mass Ave. (entrance on Ellery **Street**). For permits, visit amrep.org/venues/zarrow/#harvard.

GRAFTON STREET PUB & GRILL

1230 Mass Ave. (corner of Bow St.)
6pm–1am, Wed–Sat
Free valet parking with a \$50 purchase. 617.497.0400

INN AT HARVARD

1201 Mass Ave.
Free valet parking with \$35 prix fixe dinner. 617.520.3715

DINING DISCOUNTS

for season ticket holders only

Call for reservations and present your A.R.T. ID and ticket stub. Offers change; please call to verify. Information at amrep.org/restaurants

CAFE INDIA

52A Brattle St.
5% discount on bill, including alcohol.
617.661.0683 / cafeofindia.com

CHEZ HENRI

1 Shepard St.
One complimentary dessert for each one purchased.
617.354.8980 / chezhenri.com

CRAIGIE STREET BISTROT

5 Craigie Circle
“Curtain for Certain” 3-course pre-show prix fixe dinner \$38.
617.497.5511 / craigiestreetbistrot.com

GRAFTON STREET PUB & GRILL

See *Parking*, above

HARVEST

44 Brattle St. (On the walkway)
15% off on the day of a performance (excludes alcohol, tax, gratuity, and gift card purchase).
617.868.2255 / harvestcambridge.com

INN AT HARVARD

See *Parking*, above

RIALTO

1 Bennett St.
Special “Before the Show” 3-course \$45 prix fixe. Reservations required.
617.661.5050 / rialto-restaurant.com

SANDRINE'S

8 Holyoke St.
20% off on the day of a performance (exclusive of alcohol and prix fixe).
617.497.5300 / sandrines.com

UPSTAIRS ON THE SQUARE

91 Winthrop St.
Dinner in the Monday Club (\$35 with glass of house red or white wine) or Soiree Room (Tue–Sat, \$45, with a glass of bubbly or house red or white wine). Reservations required.
617.864.1933 / upstairsonthesquare.com

ZOE'S

1105 Mass Ave.
10% discount on bill.
617.495.0055 / zoescambridge.com

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2 CDP ○ ●	3	4 CDP ●	5 CDP ●	6 CDP ●	7 CDP ●	8 CDP ○t ●
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30 HOT AUR ○ ●	DEC. 1	2 HOT AUR ●	3 AUR ●	4 AUR ●u	5 AUR ●o,t	6 AUR ○t ●
7 AUR ○ ●p	8	9 AUR ●	10 AUR ●	11 AUR ●	12 AUR ●	13 AUR ○c,t ●
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28 AUR ○	28	28 AUR ●	28 AUR ○ ●	JAN. 1 AUR ●	2 AUR ●	3 AUR ●

Dates and times subject to change. Please see amrep.org/calendar for the most up-to-date calendar.

CDP Communist Dracula Pageant
ISL Island of Anyplace
AUR Auréla's Oratorio

○ daytime show (2pm unless otherwise marked)
● evening show (Fri & Sat 8pm, Sun–Thu 7:30pm unless marked)

HOT Hot Dates: limited \$25 tickets available at the rear and sides of the theatre.

p Preplay discussion
t Talkback discussion
c Childcare series
o Out at A.R.T.
u Under 35 night
m 10:00am matinee



FOR KIDS!

The Island of Anyplace

Jennifer's father has dragged her to the theatre when she'd much rather be at home or at a movie. But when she runs up on stage and starts to make up her own play, her father becomes a magician and helps her bring it to life on the stage!

Full of interesting people, **creatures** and adventures, Jennifer's story starts when a poor shipwrecked boy washes up onto the shore of a beautiful but lonely island – how will he find his parents and get home?

Along the way, *The Island of Anyplace* introduces all of the aspects of theatre, including acting, directing, sets, lighting, costumes, makeup, sound **effects** and much more. *The Island of Anyplace* has introduced thousands of elementary and middle school students to the magic of live theatre!

4 PERFORMANCES ONLY!

November 18–22

Zero Arrow Theatre, \$16

Opening Night!

THE A.R.T. OPENED its 2008/09 season on September 16th with *Let Me Down Easy*, an exploration of the pursuit of grace in a difficult and often challenging world. Conceived, written and performed by Anna Deavere Smith, *Let Me Down Easy* continues the A.R.T.'s commitment to producing new work that engages audiences in a dialogue about issues of immediate social concern. The production has attracted a diverse crowd, full of old friends and many new audience members, who have participated in an ongoing discussion of the question of what grace means to each of us.

Here are some excerpts from audience comments:

"I teach English as second language two nights a week to a remarkable collection of adults. We struggle together, laugh together, learn from each other, share stories, fears, and joys, and create a space where different is just different, not better or worse. When we enter our classroom, we enter a place of grace, a moment of grace, an experience of grace."

"Grace is allowing the other person to shine."

"Grace is the ability to forgive. Admission of personal responsibility is even more difficult. The other person's point of view is worth consideration ahead of one's own. The adversary is the instructor. Compassion is grace in action."

"Grace is knowing you can say something hurtful and probably deserved...and not."

To join the conversation, visit blog.amrep.org.



Artistic Director Diane Paulus, Virginia Sharp, Julie Harris, and Anna Deavere Smith



Susan and Donald Ware, Executive Director Rob Orchard



Frederic and Barbara Lemperey Grant, Gideon Lester, Director 08/09 Season

Support the A.R.T.'s 08/09 Season

Each season, the A.R.T. depends on individuals and institutions to support its work onstage and off – from world-premieres to world tours, to student programming that reaches young people in communities throughout New England.

To learn more about giving to the A.R.T. please visit www.amrep.org and click on "Support the A.R.T." Or, call the A.R.T. Development Office at 617.496.2000, ext. 8832.

WAYS TO GIVE TO THE A.R.T.

Individuals enjoy a wide range of benefits through gifts to A.R.T.'s Annual Fund and participation in Gala Events and Auctions

Corporate support can take the form of Strategic Partnerships, Matching Gifts, or participation in our Corporate Membership Program

Institutional support from National and local foundations and government programs are critical to A.R.T.'s artistic programs

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A.R.T.

American Repertory Theatre

64 Brattle Street · Cambridge, MA 02138

Season 08/09

The Communist Dracula Pageant

10.18 - 11.09

Aurélia's Oratorio

11.28 - 01.03

The Seagull

01.10 - 02.01

Endgame

02.14 - 03.22

Trojan Barbie

03.28 - 04.23

Romance

05.09 - 05.31 Loeb Drama Center

Performance Stages

Loeb Drama Center 64 Brattle St., Harvard Square

Zero Arrow Theatre Corner of Arrow St. & Mass. Ave., Harvard Square

www.amrep.org

617.547.8300