

ARTicles

American Repertory Theatre

vol. 5 no. 2 November, 2006

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starts November 25

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starts December 9

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Wings
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SEASON
06/07

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of Being Earnest

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A.R.T.'s 2006-07 SEASON CONTINUES

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

In early October I joined the company of **Wings of Desire** in Amsterdam for the Dutch premiere of our co-production with Toneelgroep Amsterdam. Theatre is at the center of culture in the Netherlands, and Toneelgroep Amsterdam is the center of theatre.

Wings of Desire was created by the combined forces of performers, dramaturgs, technicians, and administrators from the Dutch company and the A.R.T. It marks a great leap for us in our role as a theatre that creates work with international artists at our home in Cambridge. The project began four years ago when I met the Syrian/Dutch director Ola Mafaalani in Germany. I saw her stunning production of **The Merchant of Venice**, and admired the alternating currents of toughness and soul which she has also brought to the creation of **Wings of Desire**. The production, which opens at the A.R.T. Thanksgiving weekend, is one of poetic beauty and vibrancy, and I'm proud that we're able to bring it to you.

Soon after the opening of **Wings of Desire** we'll be welcoming The Dresden Dolls to Zero Arrow Theatre for the premiere of **The Onion Cellar**. Both productions have strong musical backbones. The Dolls have a passionate following from their home in Boston to Europe and beyond, while Andy Moor, who composed the score for **Wings of Desire**, is beloved for his solo career and as member of The Ex, the supreme Dutch band who have played many gigs at the Middle East in Cambridge. To present the music of two such eminent rockers simultaneously will surely set the city ablaze.

Meanwhile we're well into the design process for my upcoming production of Racine's **Britannicus**. I'm working with Ricardo Hernandez, who, as you'll remember from his set designs for **Uncle Vanya**, **Romeo and Juliet**, and **Desire Under the Elms**, delights in transforming the volume of the Loeb Theatre, so that we see the stage and auditorium in entirely new ways with each production. The set for **Britannicus** will be a kind of installation on the stage, and the production will incorporate video in ways that are new both for me and for the A.R.T.

Britannicus will be sandwiched between an amazing **Importance of Being Earnest** – brought to us by the British duo Ridiculusmus, two incredible performers who between them play all the parts in Wilde's comedy – and Neil Bartlett's elegant, inventive adaptation of Charles Dickens' **Oliver Twist**, steeped in the traditions of Victorian music hall and melodrama.

These three productions promise to fill the A.R.T. with light and warmth, even in the depths of the New England winter. I look forward to welcoming you to the theatre for all three shows. As always, you can reach me at robert.woodruff@harvard.edu if you have any comments or thoughts.

Best wishes,

Robert Woodruff



WINGS OF DESIRE

November 25 – December 17
Loeb Stage

stage adaptation* by Ola Mafaalani,
Gideon Lester, and Ko van den Bosch
directed by Ola Mafaalani
in association with Toneelgroep Amsterdam

Damiel, a guardian angel, is weary of his eternal existence observing and cataloging the ways of mankind. When he falls in love with a lonely trapeze artist, he resolves to sacrifice his wings and his immortality to join her on earth — and to taste human life. Based on Wim Wenders' unforgettable film, **Wings of Desire** is about the borders, visible and invisible, that divide us — borders between East and West, between angels and people, between two human beings.

*A stage adaptation of the film *Wings of Desire*, directed by Wim Wenders, with screenplay by Wim Wenders, Peter Handke, and Richard Reitinger.

See page 4

THE ONION CELLAR

December 9 – January 13
Zero Arrow Theatre

featuring The Dresden Dolls
conceived, written, and designed by
Amanda Palmer, Jonathan Marc Sherman,
Marcus Stern, and Christine Jones
directed by Marcus Stern

The Dresden Dolls are taking the world by storm. This Boston-based theatrical duo are incredible musicians whose smart, personal, intricate songs and mesmerizing live performance have earned them a cult following. Now don't tell anyone, but there's a rumor that the Dolls may be appearing at an underground club somewhere in Cambridge — an onion cellar, where the audience peels onions for emotional release, where your life could change forever.

See page 8

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

December 21 – February 11
Loeb Stage

by Oscar Wilde
performed by Ridiculusmus
directed by Jude Kelly

You've never seen an **Earnest** like this! Oscar Wilde's classic comedy of identity fraud receives a riotous new treatment from Ridiculusmus, two comic virtuosos who play all the parts — from Earnest to Lady Bracknell — themselves, just the two of them. This virtuosic interpretation of Wilde's irrepressible caper has been received with wild acclaim around the world, and we're delighted to welcome it to the States for the first time.

Produced in association with the Loeb Drama Center

See page 10

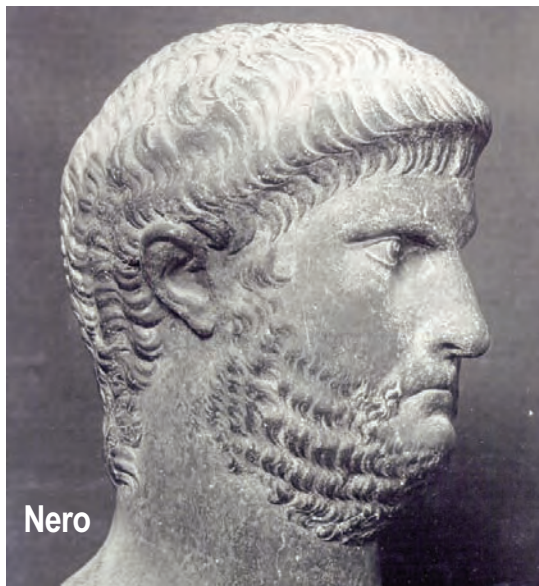
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BRITANNICUS

January 20 – February 11
Loeb Stage

by Jean Racine
directed by Robert Woodruff

The Emperor Nero is running wild, leaving a mass of political and personal scandals in his wake. When he attempts to seduce the girlfriend of his half-brother Britannicus, Nero's mother, the mighty Agrippina, steps in to prevent him, and chaos ensues. Artistic Director Robert Woodruff will direct Racine's magnificent play — part political thriller, part gripping family drama, set in a palace at the center of the empire where private and public worlds collide. Operatic in its passions and composed in some of the most beautiful poetry ever written for the stage, **Britannicus** is a tautly-plotted masterpiece.

OLIVER TWIST

February 17 – March 24
Loeb Stage

based on the novel by Charles Dickens
adapted and directed by Neil Bartlett
in association with Theatre for a New Audience, New York

Inspired by the vivid world of Victorian music hall, Neil Bartlett's staging of *Oliver Twist* uses the original language of Dickens' novel to dramatize one of the most deeply felt stories about childhood ever written. A cast of unforgettable characters brings the underworld of nineteenth-century London back to thrilling life — a city teeming with images of danger and fear — all seen through the eyes of an astonished child. By turns comic and tragic, musical and dramatic, Bartlett's adaptation of **Oliver Twist** was a runaway success in London. We're thrilled to welcome him back to the A.R.T., together with designer Rae Smith, to recreate this sensational production for our audience.



ELECTIONS & ERECTIONS

A Memoir of Fear and Fun
April 4 – May 6
Zero Arrow Theatre

written and performed by Pieter-Dirk Uys

We invite you to spend an evening in the company of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Mrs. Evita Bezuidenhout ("the most famous white woman in South Africa") and of course their alter ego, the master-satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys. After the phenomenal success of **Foreign AIDS** in 2005's South African Festival, we're delighted that Pieter is returning to Zero Arrow to perform **Elections and Erections**, his latest, most outrageous attack on political outrage, that underlines the "mock" in democracy and exposes the "con" in reconciliation.

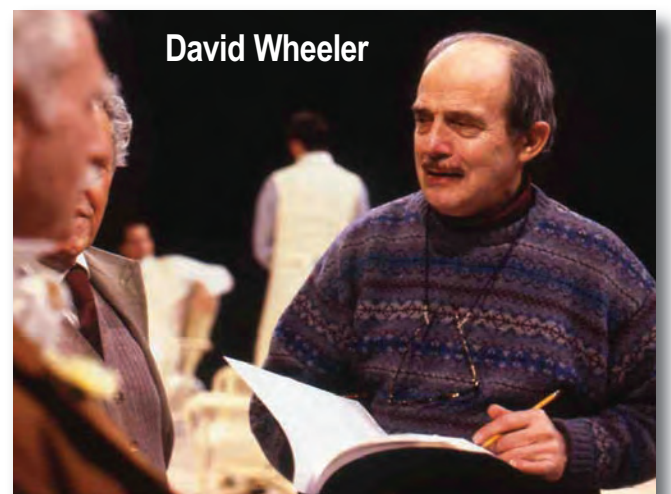
Produced in association with the Loeb Drama Center.

NO MAN'S LAND

May 12 – June 10
Loeb Stage

by Harold Pinter
directed by David Wheeler

Spooner and Hirst are two aging writers, locked in the no man's land of late middle age. They meet on Hampstead Heath and return to Hirst's home for a late-night session of witty banter, sinister power games, and the worship of alcohol. Harold Pinter's elegant, haunting play is part mystery drama, part homage to the ghosts of the past, and the fiction of memory. David Wheeler returns to the A.R.T. to direct this tragicomic gem from Britain's Nobel Prize-winning playwright.

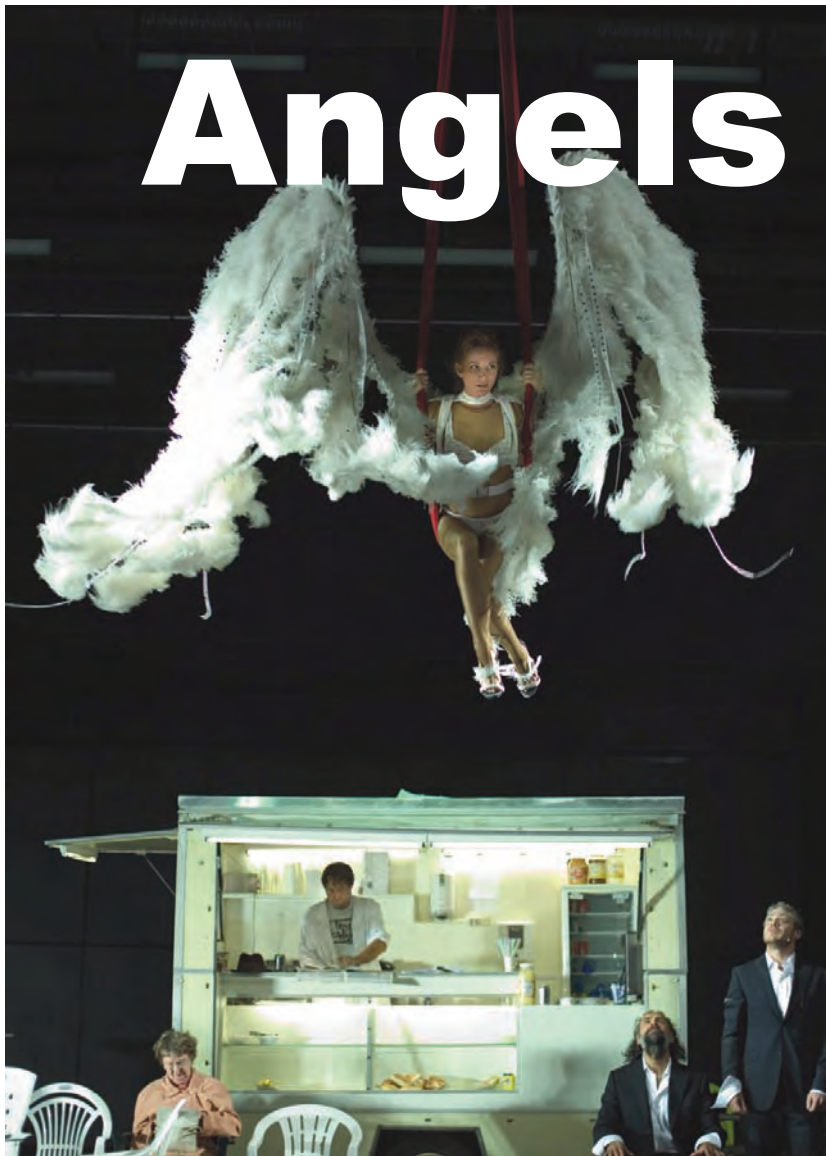


David Wheeler

No Man's Land
features Max Wright
(below with Alf)
and Paul Benedict
(at right with Thomas Derrah)



Angels



on Stage

Gideon Lester introduces **Wings of Desire**.



Q: What kind of challenges?

G.L.: First, there are profound differences between the construction of stage plays and screenplays. Filmmakers have many narrative and compositional devices at their disposal that are unavailable in the theatre; jump cuts, close ups, subjective camera shots, montage, and so on. One of the principal subjects of *Wings of Desire* is film itself – it's an example of what you might call self-conscious cinema.

Peter Falk is in Berlin to make a historical movie, and the screenplay reflects on the way that film reconstructs and reconstitutes history. There is also something self-consciously cinematic in the way the camera appears to watch the world from an angel's perspective – for example, the film shifts from black-and-white while Damiel is an angel to color when he becomes human. It wasn't at all obvious at first how those ideas could be translated to the stage, or even if they should be. Second, *Wings of Desire* is a product of a very particular place and time – Berlin during the 1980s, while the city was divided by the Wall. We now live in a radically different world, whose identity was to a considerable extent shaped by the demolition of that Wall. Even if it were possible, it wouldn't have made much sense to recreate that environment on stage, because the context is so different. If you want to see Berlin in the 80s, watch the movie – it does it much better than the theatre can. So we knew from the onset that, if *Wings of Desire* were to succeed in the theatre, it would need to take on a new artistic existence. The adaptation process would need to be very thorough; this was never going to be about attempting to

reproduce the film on stage.

Q: How did you proceed with the adaptation?

G.L.: The process took well over a year, and we're probably not finished yet; the version performed at the A.R.T. will be somewhat different from the show in Amsterdam, even though most of the cast will be the same. We began by compiling a literal translation into Dutch and English of the German screenplay, camera angles and all. That original document was about three hundred pages long, and our current script is just over forty pages,

which shows you how far we've come! The adaptation has taken many turns; for a long while we thought that the production might be set in New York City. There's a dreadful coincidence in the fact that the wound of 9/11 was inflicted exactly at the birthplace of modern America, on the site of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan. We imagined that the angels might have watched its development from a tiny, hard-scrabble trading settlement to one of the greatest twenty-first century metropolises; the Dutch/American nature of the co-production made the historical nexus seem very attractive for a while. But we eventually abandoned it, along with several other bad ideas! The final version is remarkably simple, and stays very faithful to the language of the screenplay. In theatre you often travel a very long road to return to your starting place.

Q: If not in Berlin, where is the production set?

G.L.: On the stage – or rather, in the theatre, where the audience and the actors sit together and look at each other. Ola's work is never about illusion or pretence; what you see is what you get. She doesn't like her actors to pretend to be other people – she introduces them to the audience as themselves. The set doesn't represent anything, it's exactly what it looks like – a snack bar where life unfolds in real time, where the men and women on stage eat, drink coffee, smoke, and so on. A glorious trapeze artist performs over their heads, two musicians are playing to one side, from time to time a well-known newsreader reads bulletins of today's actual news, but all those people, all those elements, are no more and no less than what they seem to be. Everyone and everything is real and tangible, which I think makes the production beautifully straightforward and alive. It's a great counterpart to Wenders' film, which is so much about the mundane details of daily life in Berlin – the real Berlin where the movie was shot, not a mockup on a Hollywood sound stage. There's no make-believe involved in either the film or the theatre, except for the one, central make-believe that the action is being observed by angels. And since everything around them is so real, the angels are thrown into a kind of high relief, which makes their presence very moving. I think at heart we'd all like to believe that our lives are being watched, and perhaps thereby given some meaning, by silent, compassionate observers.

Q: You mentioned that the production will be somewhat different at the A.R.T. than it was in Europe. Can you give an example?

G.L.: The most obvious difference will be in the language. The Dutch are almost all perfectly fluent in English, which meant that in Amsterdam the actors could effortlessly switch between the two languages, confident that the audience would understand them in both. Obviously that's not the case in Boston, so we'll use Dutch only very sparingly, mainly for its musical quality. But the international quality is very important to the production,

and we'll have to find ways to enhance it in the A.R.T. version.

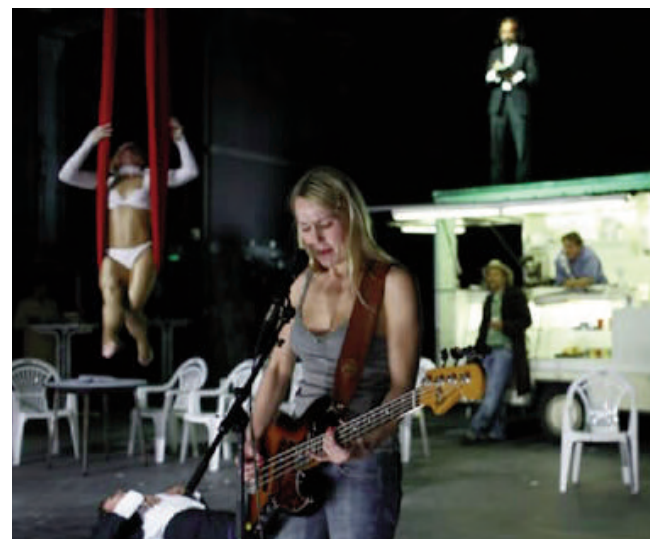
Q: Why is it important?

G.L.: Both the film and the production are about boundaries and divisions, and the great effort one person has to make to achieve real contact with another. In the film those boundaries were exemplified by the Berlin Wall; when Damiel becomes human, he does so by passing through the Wall itself. The international aspect of the stage version creates a different kind of division, or you could say a bridge, between Europe and the States. When I watched the opening night performance in Amsterdam, I realized that Ola is also exploring the division between the stage and the audience – indeed the production creates a kind of bridge there too, although I don't want to give too much away.

Q: You translated the screenplay into English. Can you talk about the language of the film?

G.L.: It contains two very different modes of language. Much of the dialogue in the film was improvised, and many scenes – particularly those involving Peter Falk – have a very conversational quality. But Wenders also collaborated with the great Austrian poet and playwright Peter Handke, who wrote the inner thoughts of Marion, the trapeze artist, as well as several of the angels' scenes, the monologues of Homer, the mysterious ancient poet, and Damiel's poem "When the child was a child" that recurs throughout the film as a kind of chorus. Handke's language is elliptical and poetic, and is almost impossible to render directly in English. He's one of the greatest writers of the contemporary stage, but we almost

never see his work performed in the States because the language is so difficult. One of the collateral pleasures of *Wings of Desire* is that we're presenting Handke at the A.R.T. for the first time.



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Gideon Lester is the A.R.T.'s Associate Artistic Director.

top left: foreground: Mam Smith, Bernard White, and Fedja van Huêt in the Amsterdam production of Wings of Desire.

above: Mam Smith, Hadewych Minis in the Amsterdam production of Wings of Desire.

*production photos by Jan Versweyeweld
top right: Gideon Lester and Ola Mafaalani*

Q: *Wings of Desire* is arguably one of the greatest films of the late twentieth century. Why adapt it for the stage?

Gideon Lester: The idea came from Ola Mafaalani, the production's Syrian-born director, who I think is one of Europe's most exciting young theatre makers. Robert Woodruff had seen her work and invited her to direct a project at the A.R.T., and Ola's first suggestion was an adaptation of *Wings of Desire*. For several years she has been incorporating angels into her productions; her *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*

all featured angels who bore silent witness to the unfolding narratives, powerless to affect their tragic outcome. One day Ola's dramaturg gave her the screenplay of *Wings of Desire* and Ola realized that her use of angels had been inspired by the film, which she had seen when it was released in 1987 but which she had more or less forgotten. We were very excited by the idea, though there were obviously huge challenges to be faced in the adaptation process.

I think at heart we'd all like to believe that our lives are being watched, and perhaps given some meaning, by silent, compassionate beings.

Falling into the World

Ray Carney introduces Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire*.



Gustave Doré's illustration for Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Satan's fall

"I have always found that angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning."

— William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

From Jacob to George Bailey, men have wrestled with angels and angels have wrestled with men. The twist Wim Wenders gives the story in *Wings of Desire* is to have angels wrestle with themselves. The last artist to do that was John Milton, and the angel was named Satan.

Wenders' angels are neither guardian nor avenging. They are witnesses — ideal observers who move from time to time, place to place, and person to person, eavesdropping on the most secret thoughts, most private moments in peoples' lives — and deaths.

The controlling metaphor of the film is that the earthly characters inhabit a world of endless, ubiquitous walls. It is not accidental that Wenders sets his film in Berlin at the height of the Cold War. In 1987, when the movie was made, the city was politically, ideologically, and linguistically sliced up like a jigsaw puzzle, and the wall that separated East from West was an omnipresent fact. As if those national and geopolitical divisions aren't bad enough, Wenders further separates and segregates his characters within a series of boxes within boxes: the rooms, businesses, factories, institutions, and glass and metal cocoons — or coffins —

they call their cars.

But the most important walls that alienate and estrange individuals in *Wings of Desire* are imaginative and emotional — the personal barriers and boundaries that individuals erect around themselves that separate parent from child, husband from wife, boyfriend from girlfriend, and individuals from their own more hopeful selves. The initial scenes of the film — in the apartment building, on the highway, and on the subway present an anthology of the ways people lock themselves in mental prisons of their own creation. Wenders' camera sweeps across a panorama of states of self-created ontological solitary confinement defined by characters' despairs, fears, doubts, and disappointments. Wenders positions characters behind car windows and windshields or shoots them standing on the other side of plate-glass windows, suggesting the extent to which even when someone is conspicuously visible, he or she can still be cut off imaginatively, sequestered in his or her own private emotional world, trapped in the secrecy of consciousness. Notwithstanding all of its crowds and groups, the world Wenders presents is a frighteningly lonely place, one in which both angels and men have ample reason to declare, like Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it."

Wenders imagines only a few openings in this world of walls — a few possibilities of breaking out of

the prison of solipsism into forms of personal freedom, connection, and interaction. Two occur at the bottom of the chain of being and two at the top. On the primitive end, there are the flights of flocks of birds visible in the sky in a few scenes, stunningly coordinated and magnificently responsive, wheeling and turning in perfect synchrony. And there is the play of children, illustrated by groups of kids playing a video game, fishing for coins in a storm drain, and seeing how high they can jump. It is as if both groups preserve their freedom by functioning below the corruptions of culture: the birds are part of a system of nature that human culture has not despoiled and the children are too young, innocent, and emotionally open to have yet erected the barriers of self-consciousness and defensiveness that trap their parents.

The other two modes of moving through or across walls — or of leaving them behind — are exemplified by the readers, writers, and researchers at the library and by the angels. The library scenes, filmed at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, one of the city's most magnificent architectural spaces, give the viewer a visual experience at the opposite remove from the dinginess of the film's apartments and the confinement of its automobiles. The openness and spaciousness of the interior of the Staatsbibliothek is Wenders' visual representation of the imaginative expansions of view the library provides. Its books and maps take researchers on journeys that leave worldly walls, boundaries, and barriers behind. Writers and story-tellers (represented by a character named Homer played by veteran actor Curt Bois in one of his final performances) navigate seas of time and thought that are blissfully free of the provincialism of national boundaries and the limitations of a merely personal point-of-view. (It is telling that Wenders includes globes in several of the library scenes, globes that significantly lack markings denoting the divisions of man-made political and ideological boundaries.)

It is no coincidence that the film's angels use the library as a kind of headquarters and rendezvous point, since the flights of imagination that writers and readers embark on there are the earthly equivalent of what the angels themselves do as spiritual observers. The angels exemplify breathtaking capacities of movement across and beyond all of the earth's physical and imaginative boundaries. In effect, they unite the different capabilities of birds, children, and thinkers in one identity. They are able to glide through — and see beyond — every earthly imaginative wall, boundary, and separation, bridging gaps and seeing things temporally, spatially, and emotionally whole as no terrestrial inhabitant can — darting, diving, swooping from past to present, from here to there, at the speed of thought.

The angels exemplify breathtaking capacities of movement across and beyond all of the earth's physical and imaginative boundaries.

But Wenders takes pains to emphasize that there is a deficiency in the angels' beautiful, free-ranging powers of imaginative sympathy and compassion. Their virtue is that they are detached from the complications and confusions of non-angelic life — that they rise above the corporeality of the body and the mess of the mundane. But that is also their limitation. As Blake puts it in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, they gain certainty and confidence at the expense of replacing the confusion of life with "systematic reasoning." Daniel, the angel played by Bruno Ganz, summarizes Wenders' reservations about the limitations of being an angel when he tells angel cohort Cassiel (played by Otto Sandler) that the purity of an imaginative relation to experience is not enough. He longs to experience the mess, opacity, and partiality of the earthbound world. He longs to know what no angel can know: "It would be nice to feed the cat, to get ink from the newspaper on my fingers,

to be excited not just by the mind but by a meal . . . to feel your bones moving, to live in the now, to guess instead of knowing." That wish leads Daniel out of the library and away from the streets and into the oddest and most complex imaginative space in the film: the circus where Daniel sees and falls in love with the trapeze artist Marion (played by Wenders' then-girlfriend Solveig Donmartin).

In a brilliant visual *coup de théâtre*, at the precise point Daniel resolves to give up his state of pure spirituality, Wenders switches the film's photography from the abstraction of beautifully nuanced black-and-white (representing the angels' point of view) to the distracting busyness of garishly oversaturated and mismatched color (representing that of humans). Like Dorothy transported to the colorful Oz, we and Daniel suddenly realize



Solveig Donmartin as the trapeze artist Marion in the film *Wings of Desire*.

that we're not in Kansas anymore.

The visual, social, and imaginative space represented by the circus contrasts in every possible way with the film's other spaces. Physically, it is open and without walls rather than small and sealed-off like the rooms of the apartment building and the cars on the freeway. But instead of being monumental in scale, solid in its presence, and fixed in its status like the library, this

See the film at the Coolidge Corner Theater

See page 13 for details.

WINGS OF DESIRE at a glance

November 25 – December 17 • Loeb Stage

stage adaptation by **Ola Mafaalani, Gideon Lester, and Ko van den Bosch**
after the film *Wings of Desire* by **Wim Wenders**
with screenplay by **Wim Wenders, Peter Handke, and Richard Reitinger**
directed by **Ola Mafaalani**

set and lighting design	Andre Joosten
costume design	Regine Standfoos
music and sound design	Andy Moor
additional music	Jesse Lenat and Hadewych Minis

in association with Toneelgroep Amsterdam

CAST

Daniel, an angel	Bernard White
Cassiel, an angel	Mark Rosenthal
Marion, a trapeze artist	Mam Smith
a former angel	Stephen Payne
Homer, an immortal poet	Frieda Pittoors
thoughts/live music	Jesse Lenat
	Hadewych Minis
dying man	Fred Goessens
news reader	Robin Young

Frieda Pittoors, Hadewych Minis, and Fred Goessens are appearing with the permission of Actors' Equity Association. The Producers gratefully acknowledge Actors' Equity Association for its assistance of this production.

SYNOPSIS

Daniel and Cassiel are angels, assigned for eternity to observe and catalogue human behavior. Daniel has begun to yearn for more than his remote, spiritual existence; he learns for human contact, for physical sensation, and for love. He encounters Marion, a lonely trapeze artist, and begins to fall in love with her.

As the angels go about their daily business — helping those distress, listening to the thoughts of the elderly and the dying, recording the diversity of human experience — Daniel grows increasingly restless. Eventually he decides to trade in his wings and his eternal life for human mortality, and to join Marion in the world.

open space is as flimsy and earthy as a tent with a dirt floor. Wenders emphasizes that the tent is not permanent, but is only pitched in a field for a few days and then moved to a new location, assembled and disassembled in an unending cycle of creation and erasure. His point is that the creations of a circus do not have the historical absolute-ness and permanence of the masterworks of Western art (in the film's metaphor, they are not like the works of Homer), but the watery fluidity and evanescence of dramatic performances in front of changing audiences. The connectedness the circus makes, like love-making, only exists for a night. Its meanings are not recorded once and for all for eternity, like those in a book or on a map, but must constantly be made and remade — like love.

As a trapeze artist, Marion is comically positioned as someone who functions suspended between heaven and earth. Like an angel, she does her most creative work above eye-level, but she is also inescapably human in that she is afraid of heights, of the full moon, of losing her job, and of not finding someone to love and be loved by. As a line in the film's dialogue comically formulates her in-between position, Marion may play an angel in her trapeze act, but she is an angel with chicken-feather wings. In the end, Daniel the angel who wants to descend into the impurity of earthly life, and Marion the non-angel who wants to rise above her state of isolation and loneliness might be said to meet halfway. In the spatial metaphor of the film,

each abandons his or her respective perch to move into a middle realm where, rather than rising above, they admit their emotional confusions and doubts — exposing themselves to the pains and uncertainties of a flesh-and-blood relationship.

It is critical that in the scene in which Daniel and Marion finally come together, Marion not only initially resists Daniel's profession of love and chides him for his half-heartedness, but holds herself at arm's length from him, delivering a philosophical

monologue to him and the viewer (turning out of the dramatic frame and speaking directly to the audience at one point) about separation, loneliness, and the mystery of personal identity. Wenders and screenwriter Peter Handke, whose artistic fingerprints are all over Marion's speech, avoid the sentimental romantic union indulged in by *City of Angels*, the 1998 Hollywood remake with Nicolas Cage and Meg Ryan. The mysteries of identity, of differences of feeling, of the separateness of individuals, continue even under the influence of love — but far from being a drawback, Wenders and Handke suggest, that is what makes the earthly world far more interesting than the world of angels — or of Hollywood movie directors. As Robert Frost wrote, emphasizing the first word, "Earth's the right place for love. I don't know where it's likely to go better."

In the largest sense, *Wings of Desire* is a meditation on the function of art. Wenders' angels are the spirit of filmmaking. As they glide through the world partaking in visions not available to earth-

bound observers, imaginatively jumping from place to place and time to time, reading people's minds and expressing their thoughts, they are doing exactly what a camera does and what pieces of film spliced together in a Moviola and the manipulations of dialogue and music on the soundtrack of a movie do in a conventional film. Daniel's declaration of dissatisfaction with the frictionlessness of his visionary relation to the world is Wenders' own expression of dissatisfaction with the traditional filmmaker's idealized relation to his material. Beautiful ideas, pure souls, and exalted spiritual experiences are not enough. The word must be embodied, made flesh, made real. It must be tasted, touched, experienced, and undergone, not merely seen and thought. How can art lower a ladder down into Yeats' "foul rag and bone shop of the heart," and function not as an escape from, but an act of engagement with the flaws, disappointments, and imperfections of the world? How can an artist break down the walls that separate the work from the world and the world from the work?

Just as Daniel wants to engage himself with the mess and confusion of earthly life, Wenders asks his art to engage itself with forms and forces that are customarily screened out of film. Daniel turns away from the library's sense of works of art as (quoting Yeats again) "monuments of unaging intellect" and toward the comical, carnivalesque, and performative forms of art represented by the circus. Wenders actually did the same thing in

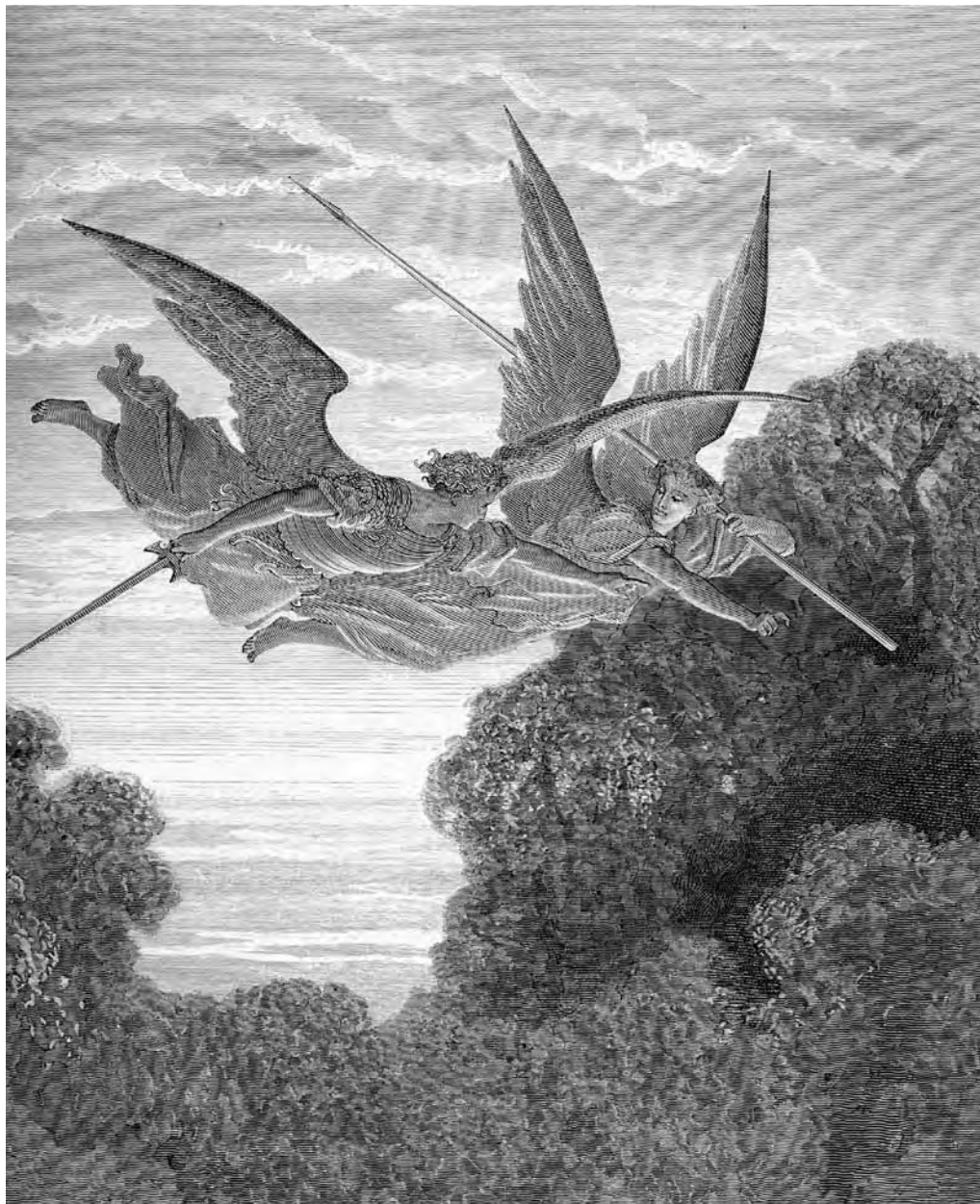
making *Wings of Desire*. Most of the film's dialogue was improvised, many of its scenes were created on the spur of the moment, and much of its photography was grabbed. (Wenders was, in fact, so committed to a carnivalesque notion of life and art that his original intention was to end his movie with a pie fight.) Daniel's fall to earth is an embrace of



Solveig Dommartin, Bruno Ganz, and Paul Busch in the film.

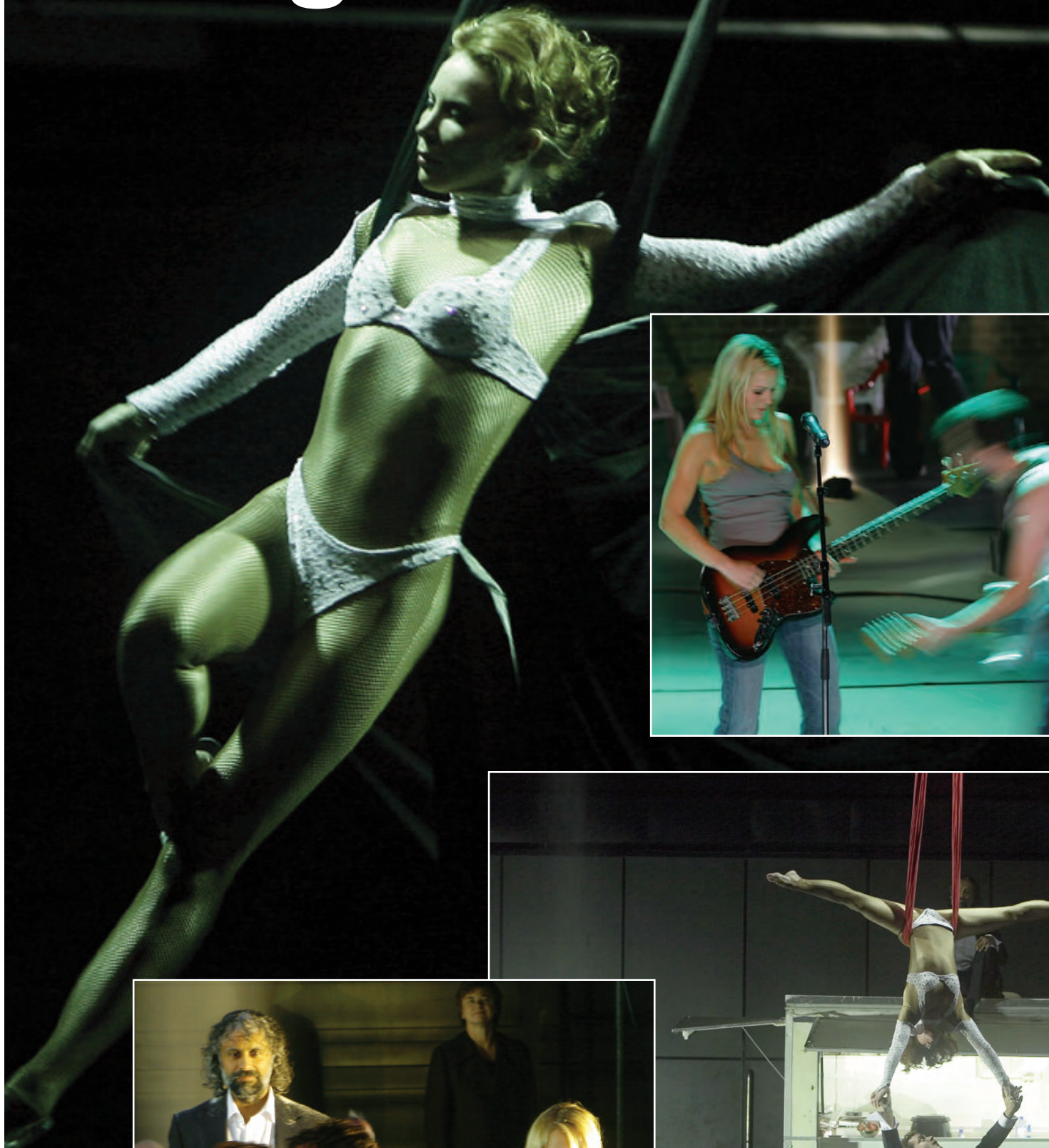
compromising political, social, and imaginative realities that dovetails with Wenders' own use of Berlin as a location and his inclusion of painful, personal World War II documentary footage in his narrative. *Wings of Desire* wants us to question the idealizations, detachments, and purifications that most art relies on. But the questions about the functions of art that Wenders poses won't be asked or answered theoretically. The work of art is the artist's way of wrestling with the relation of dreams and realities. Given the state of the contemporary world, the relation of social involvement and imaginative detachment in a work of art is something artists have to grapple with now more than ever.

Ray Carney is professor of film and American studies at Boston University and the author of



Gustave Doré's illustration for Milton's Paradise Lost: "Gabriel commands two angels to watch over Adam and Eve. . . ."

Angels in Amsterdam



PHOTOS FROM WINGS OF DESIRE IN AMSTERDAM

A.R.T.'s co-production with
the Toneelgroep Amsterdam
toured Holland before it opens
in Cambridge on November 25

Background and top right: Mam Smith
top center: Hadewych Mills and Jesse Lenat
above: Mam Smith and Fedja van Huêt
left: Bernard White, Mam Smith,
Fedja van Huêt and Hadewych Minis
Fedja van Huêt



production photos by Jan Versweyeweld

ARTicles

7

Living Dolls

bombing but 'Dolls' is the perfect word to offset that image. It's an ideal name to capture the fractured beauty and lost-innocence feeling of the music. And the dolls really do exist—the city was famous for its china and dolls before it was destroyed during the war."

A year after the fateful Halloween party, the Dresden Dolls were invited to perform at Boston's Burlesque Revival Association. Appearing on a bill with a stripper troupe, the two decided to throw on some costumes for kicks. Palmer slipped on a pair of black-and-white-stripe stockings, a garter belt, and a short dress. Viglione, whose musical influences range from jazz to soul to the hair metal bands of the 1980's, got into in a 1920's-era suit. Then they painted their faces white with make-up that slowly melted off over the course of the show. Without transforming them into characters, the costumes made them more animated and playful than ever on the stage, and the band has kept the basic look, with some alterations, ever since. "The fun thing about costume," says Viglione, "is that it can allow you to incorporate yourself even more wholly into an engagement. That's what the Dresden Dolls costumes do. People ask if it's a mask that hides us from the audience. For me the costume is a way to engage even more actively with the audience."

With their distinctive look and sound, the Dresden Dolls have developed a style that Palmer describes as "Brechtian Punk Cabaret." A reference to Bertolt Brecht's confrontational performances that broke down the barriers between the actors and audience, "Brechtian Punk Cabaret" is also Palmer's homage to one of her musical heroes: the composer Kurt Weill, who collaborated regularly with Brecht before fleeing Nazi Germany in 1933. "I remember hearing their music when I was a teenager and thinking, 'Finally! Musical theatre that doesn't make my stomach turn,'" says Palmer. "Weill and Brecht were able to write the unsentimental love song, which is really tough. Love isn't usually sentimental! It's real! And I like real, honest, complicated, and flawed."

Ryan Mckittrick Introduces The Dresden Dolls

So do the Dresden Dolls fans — a group that's been growing exponentially thanks to the release of two highly successful albums ("The Dresden Dolls" in 2003 and "Yes, Virginia" in 2006); the Dolls' playful website (www.dresdendolls.com); the duo's tireless attentiveness

to their aficionados; extensive tours around the country and world; and the band's legendary live performances. People don't go to a Dresden Dolls concert just to hear the music. They go for the total experience of the event. Determined to immerse the audience in an experience where music is just one of the artistic components, Palmer enlists the support of the Dresden Dolls Brigade for almost all of their concerts. An ever-changing ensemble of performance artists, magicians, poets, belly dancers, musicians, street performers, and

living statues, the Brigade transforms Dresden Dolls concerts into events where anything can happen. Their performances before, between, during and after the band's songs create an environment where art surrounds the audience rather than keeping itself at a respectful distance. (At some concerts you'll even encounter a violinist playing in the restroom.) A Dresden Dolls concert is a spectacular art party, thrown by two hosts who love to surprise their guests.

The Origins of The Onion Cellar

Two years ago, A.R.T. Artistic Director Robert Woodruff asked the Dresden Dolls if they were interested in creating a theatre piece. Palmer, who has been coming to the A.R.T. since she was a teenager, immediately knew what she wanted to do. For years, she had been living with the idea of creating a theatre piece inspired by a chapter from Günter Grass' 1959 novel *The Tin Drum*. In the chapter, Grass describes an underground club called The Onion Cellar where patrons cut onions, force themselves to cry, and purge their pent-up sorrows. Palmer proposed opening an Onion Club in the theatre, and creating a piece that would explore the role of catharsis in our daily lives, the ways people work through their personal tragedies, and the long-term effects of withholding truth — a theme that's been prominent in some of her songs. Woodruff paired up the Dolls with director Marcus Stern, who engaged his longtime collaborator Christine Jones to design the set and transform the Zero Arrow Theatre into a club with cabaret-style seating and a stage area for the band.

Theatre and performance have always been



The arched trunk of a gargantuan wisteria vine that grows over the front steps of the building where Dresden Dolls singer, songwriter, and keyboardist Amanda Palmer lives forms the passageway to a Daliesque oasis. Inside this four-story artists' collective, strangely-shaped holes cut into the floors and walls provide unexpected glimpses of neighbors and nature; mirrors reflect plants that seem to be growing out of the cracks in the ceilings; and antiques stare out at you from every nook. Palmer's benevolent, white-bearded landlord calls this building the Cloud Club. From the airy top floor, where sunlight pours in through a geodesic glass dome and a hollowed-out corner of the back wall lets you gaze down on the lush backyard garden, it's easy to forget you're in the middle of Boston's South End.

In her recently published songbook, *The Dresden Dolls Companion*, Palmer remembers walking into this artistic paradise the first time and thinking that "a Gaudi building had exploded in Wonderland and a vintage thrift-store on the Lower East side was selling the remnants." The surreal structure is a fitting home for an artist who has spent much of her life creating spaces and events where people can have unexpected, transformative experiences. As a child growing up in Lexington she fantasized about hosting a fair in her parents' backyard. As a college student at Wesleyan University, she imagined turning a forgotten storage room into a beatnik café. Neither of those plans came to fruition, but over the past six years Palmer and drummer Brian Viglione have combined street theatre, performance art, installations, carnival, and the Dresden Dolls' songs to create some of the most inventive and dynamic events in the music world.

Palmer met Viglione at a salon-style art party she threw at the Cloud Club on Halloween night of 2000. Hours before her guests arrived, the hostess realized she didn't have a costume. Rummaging through her closet, Palmer found a brown bag that she had labeled "Adult Clothes." Inside the bag there was a blazer, a skirt, and a blouse—office

clothes Palmer's concerned mother had bought her in case she needed to interview for an adult job. Palmer never went for that interview, but now she finally had a chance to put the outfit to use. When her guests arrived, Palmer told everyone she was a temporary office worker. (The irony wasn't lost on anyone.) Around midnight, she played a few of her songs for the group, which by that late hour included both friends and friends-of-friends whom Palmer had never met. At the end of the set, a severed head — Brian Viglione in disguise — approached the office temp, introduced himself, and invited her to jam sometime. They got together a week later. Halfway

through the first song Palmer stopped playing and gave Viglione a strange look. It was clear they had one of those rare musical connections. Within five hours, they were jumping up and down and screaming with excitement. They had fallen in what Palmer describes as "rock love."

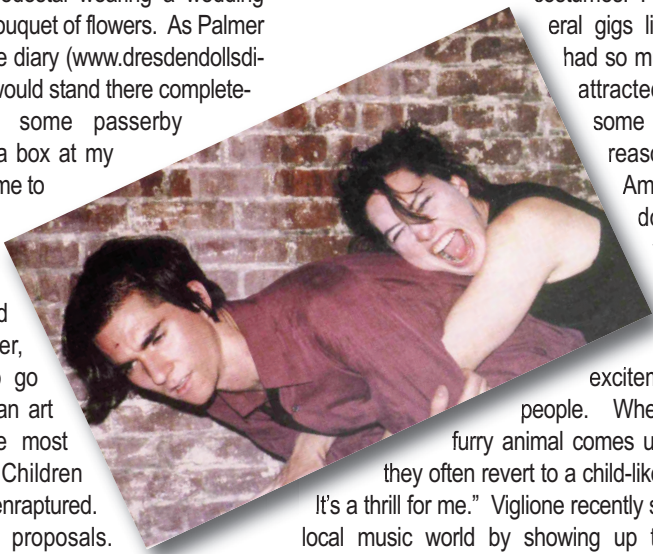
By the end of their first jam session, Palmer and Viglione knew they were a band, but the duo was still nameless. For a short period they called themselves "Out of Arms," but it didn't stick. With the help of Palmer's friend and mentor Anthony Martignetti, they eventually settled on The Dresden Dolls. "I thought it was the perfect name for a band like ours," explains Palmer, who lived in Germany as an exchange student during her college years. "'Dresden' conjures up the World War II fire-

The Dresden Dolls create some of the most inventive and dynamic events in the music world.



a part of Palmer's life. Before the meteoric rise of The Dresden Dolls, Palmer made most of her money by busking in Harvard Square. For years she played the Eight Foot Bride, a living statue who stood on a hidden pedestal wearing a wedding gown and holding a bouquet of flowers. As Palmer describes in her online diary (www.dresdendollsdiary.blogspot.com), "I would stand there completely motionless...until some passerby dropped money into a box at my feet. Then I would come to life and share a short moment with the person who had set me free. I would give them a flower, sometimes a kiss to go along with it...I was an art stripper. It was the most extraordinary job...Children would be terrified or enraptured. Countless marriage proposals. Lots of tears...I was free to fixate my gaze on anybody or anything I wanted, and it was perfectly acceptable. Nobody looked away. They would stare right back." Over the past few years, Palmer has been too occupied with the band to perform the Bride, but just before the Dolls went on their international tour this fall, she went back to the Square and got into her old gown for a couple hours. Standing on the pedestal again and having unexpected encounters with strangers as they rounded the corner, Palmer realized what her true passion in life is: to surprise people.

Brian Viglione shares that love for surprise.



When asked what he would be doing if he weren't drumming, he responds without hesitation: "I would be a mascot. Or one of those people who goes to children's birthday parties or street fairs in animal costumes. I've done several gigs like that and had so much fun. I'm attracted to it for some of the same reasons that Amanda enjoys doing street theatre. The surprise draws an innocent excitement out of people. When this giant furry animal comes up to people, they often revert to a child-like innocence. It's a thrill for me." Viglione recently surprised the local music world by showing up to the 2006 Boston Music Awards in a bear costume. Less surprising were the number of awards the Dresden Dolls won: Act of the Year and Best Pop Rock Act for the band, and Best Female Vocalist for Palmer.

In conceiving **The Onion Cellar**, the Dresden Dolls, director Marcus Stern, set designer Christine Jones, and writer Jonathan Marc Sherman are aiming to invent a space that is completely removed from the ordinary world — a space where unexpected scenes can transpire, and where audience members can immerse themselves in an event at a club, rather than just watch a scripted version of something unfold. "I want people to walk

THE ONION CELLAR at a glance

December 9 – January 13 • Zero Arrow Theatre

featuring **The Dresden Dolls**
conceived, written, and designed by **Amanda Palmer,**
Jonathan Marc Sherman, Marcus Stern, and Christine Jones
directed by **Marcus Stern**

set design **Christine Jones**
costume design **Clint Ramos**
lighting design **Justin Townsend**
sound design **David Remedios**

CAST

Remo Airdi
Claire E. Davies
Thomas Derrah
Brian Farish
Kristen Frazier
Jeremy Geidt

Merritt Janson
Karen MacDonald
Amanda Palmer
Neil Stewart
Brian Viglione

SYNOPSIS

We are inside the small confines of the mysterious club The Onion Cellar, where the internationally renowned rock duo The Dresden Dolls provide nightly entertainment. The club owner and his family (played by A.R.T. company members) are shrouded in mystery. While singer, songwriter, and keyboardist Amada PALmer and drummer Brian Viglione play their punk-cabaret songs, it is the unraveling of this mystery that creates an event where rock and roll meets theatre, carnival, circus, and street performance with humor and humanity.

away thinking they had no idea they were going to see something quite like this," reflects Palmer. "I want to create something that's inexplicable, something that's impossible to describe to someone the next day. And I want people to feel like they're actually in a club where something truly unique and

spontaneous is happening. They should know that whatever it is they are a part of won't be the same tomorrow night."

Ryan McKittrick is A.R.T.'s Associate Dramaturg.

Creating the Onion Cellar

Neena Arndt talks with designer Christine Jones



The Dresden Dolls have been called a lot of things — from campy cabaret rockers to gloomy bohemians — but set designer Christine Jones is the only one to refer to the duo as a centrifugal force. "I started thinking of the room as a centrifuge," Jones says. "The Dolls are the centrifugal force, so they have to be in the center. Everything else radiates out."

Jones has designed a set for the Zero Arrow Theatre that allows the action of **The Onion Cellar** to "swirl around" the band. She adds quickly that the audience will circulate too. "I want everyone to feel as much as possible as if they inhabit the same space. They more fluid the relationship between actor and audience, the better."

What should the audience expect when they enter this metaphorical whirligig? "It's a club more than it is a set. I did a lot of research on night clubs," Jones says, "but it doesn't pretend to be a club at the exclusion of being a theatre." The audience will settle into cabaret-style seating, rather than the rows traditionally found in theatres. This will encourage audience mem-

bers to interact with one another as well as facilitate actor-audience relationships.

Jones' desire to create cabaret atmosphere stems from discussions that began when the show was in its conceptual stages. Although **The Onion Cellar** is theatre, Jones emphasizes that her set is "a place where something real can happen." While Zero Arrow is not literally a cellar, Jones considers that entering it should feel like a

departure from the outside world. "The lobby leads to a threshold, which leads into the space. There is an experience of being led and guided."

Although Jones has never designed a theatre as a club before, she drew on her rich variety of artistic experiences. "When I was younger I wanted to be a dancer, but ultimately I knew I didn't want to be a performer, because I wanted to be involved in projects from the point of conception." As a young student, Jones was not aware that "set designer" was a profession. "One of my teachers said that I might like to think about being a "scenographer," and I thought he said "stenographer,"

Jones laughs."I didn't know what he meant." Jones soon learned about the art of stage design, and she has also worked as director on a project called "Theatre of One," in which an actor performs for a single audience member. In recent years, she has developed an interest in creating visual art. She is quick to explain, however, that her work on non-theatrical projects is a means towards improving her set design dexterity. When a set designer works, she bows to the needs of the play's text and the

director, but a visual artist is her own boss. Jones believes that "it's important to do something where you are the closest entity to whatever is being created. By pursuing an art form that isn't collaborative, I strengthen my collaborative muscles."

A.R.T. audience members may recall that Jones' collaborative muscles are in excellent condition. Her design for **Nocturne** in 2000 created a haunting, surreal world in which a bathtub overflows with books and a child's corpse lingers in the background. Her set for 1999's **The Cripple of Inishmaan** represented the impoverished and isolated landscape of the Aran Islands, while **The Taming of the Shrew** in 1998 featured an onstage 18-wheeler. Though Jones has enjoyed working with many directors, she has a "symbiotic relationship" with **The Onion Cellar** director Marcus Stern, who also directed **Nocturne**.

For **The Onion Cellar**, Jones helped Stern determine both the narrative and ambience of the evening; the show began as a concept rather than

a fleshed-out plan. In December 2005, when cast and artistic staff gathered for a two-week workshop to develop the project, Jones came prepared with dozens of images to spark everyone's imagination. They ranged from stark portraits of prison cells to color-streaked abstractions. "I have a large personal collection of pictures," Jones says.

"For every project, I choose images. Usually I don't do this until I've done an extensive script breakdown and distilled the text down to poetic form. I have to plant enough seeds so that

there will be vibration." For **The Onion Cellar**, however, no text existed when Jones began to work. She looked to the Dresden Dolls instead, focusing on their music and lyrics. "That was all I had," she says. Because these visual images predated the script, they influenced the narrative, rather than the other way around.

Images and design may be Jones' primary work, but she knows that they don't exist in a vacuum. "If I weren't a theatre designer," she says, "I wouldn't be any other kind of designer."

Design is interesting to me as it

relates to narrative: the design has to support the narrative. Storytelling is the most important thing."

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

*top left: A scene from The Taming of the Shrew
bottom left: A scene from The Cripple of Inishmaan
above: Set plan for The Onion Cellar*



More info about The Onion Cellar seating

See page 13.

The Importance of Being SUBVERSIVE

by Sarah Wallace



Like many great works of art, **The Importance of Being Earnest** was written for the most seductive of reasons . . . money. Oscar Wilde, cash poor and desperate, took a loan of one-hundred and fifty pounds from actor-manager George Alexander. 'I am so pressed for money,' Wilde disclosed to Alexander, "that I don't know what to do." Despite this mercenary approach to playwriting, the final result thrilled Wilde. "My play is really very funny: I'm quite delighted with it." Premiering Valentine's Day, 1895, at the St. James' Theatre in London's West End, **The Importance of Being Earnest** scored a critical and commercial success. It was the peak of Wilde's career; a few months later he would be arrested, tried, and imprisoned for "gross indecencies" — homosexuality. Though Wilde died a few years later, poor and disgraced, his play not only survived but grew in popularity and stature. A century later his comedy of mistaken identities continues to astonish audiences.

The play rejects serious discourse in favor of epigrams that keep audiences laughing. Unlike Wilde's previous satires, **A Woman of No Importance**, **An Ideal Husband**, and **Lady Windermere's Fan**, **Earnest** does not overtly examine moral themes like adultery and illegitimacy. William Archer, a supporter of Wilde's previous works, attended the premiere of **Earnest**, and criticized it for lacking depth:

It is like a mirage-oasis in the desert, grateful and comfortable to the weary eye — but when you come close up to it! It is intangible, it eludes your

grasp. What can a poor critic do with a play which raises no principle, whether of art or morals, creates its own canons and conventions, and is nothing but an absolutely willful expression of an irrepressibly witty personality?

Archer's distaste for what he perceived as superficial explains Wilde's strategy. "We should treat all the trivial things of life seriously," Wilde said, "and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." His characters live, breathe, and die by this code. When Gwendolen and Cecily think they are engaged to the same man, this betrayal does not drive them to jealous frenzy.

Rather, Cecily's refusal to follow good form in her tea service pushes Gwendolen over the edge:

You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.



Both women ignore the serious; the trivial, however, cannot be ignored. If politeness is not worth fighting for, what is? This scene between Gwendolen and Cecily illustrates the heart of Wilde's dramaturgy; a conversation about superficialities cloaks important issues. The women aren't really concerned with tea and cake, but unable to address their sexual jealousy head on, they discuss what society permits them to discuss. The real issue remains locked in the closet.

Wilde claimed **The Importance of Being Earnest** celebrates the trivial, and he used the tricks of farce: complicated plot, puns, innuendo, disguises and mistaken identity. Yet despite William Archer's critique, **Earnest** contains a scorching social satire. Through the guise of farce, the play subverts the reigning institutions of the day: marriage and class. Wilde exposes the hypocrisy and greed lurking under Victorian politeness. Each of the play's aristocrats (Jack, Algernon, Gwendolen, Cecily, and Lady Bracknell) contributes to this moral decay. While the characters appear to obey propriety, they

lie and deceive to do so.

Earnest savages the politics of marriage. The lovers' betrothals are acceptable only after proper lineage or wealth is revealed. Victorian society took the material aspects of marriage seriously. Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen's mother, is aghast that her daughter wishes to marry a man without blue blood. Yet Lady Bracknell's disgust towards her daughter's fiancée hides her own social climbing. She came from a limited background with limited resources. "When I married Lord Bracknell," she says, "I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way." In Wilde's play Machiavellian politics, not love, drive the marriage market, leaving married couples stranded in a desert of loneliness. The play asks if a monogamous, middle-class marriage is the royal road to happiness.

Oscar Wilde loved and loathed the world he depicts. Both member and outsider, Wilde described Victorian London from an aesthetic distance. Early in his career he served as editor for *Woman's World*, originally titled *Ladies' World*. Wilde said of the journal that it "seems to me to have been a very vulgar, trivial and stupid production, with its silly gossip about silly people, and its social inanities." But Wilde hoped to achieve loftier goals with the magazine, subverting its existing purpose. As he conceived it, *Woman's World* would, "be made the organized organ for the expression of woman's opinions on all subjects of literature, art, and modern life, and yet it should be a magazine that men could read with pleasure, and consider it a privilege to contribute to." Here Wilde hints at the method he will adopt for **Earnest**, taking something "trivial" (a women's fashion magazine) and using it as a platform for a lesson in civics (the education of women).

While Wilde worked within the system in *Woman's World*, his 1891 essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism" preached social and economic revolution,

With the abolition of private property, then we shall have true, beautiful, healthy Individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things and the symbol for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.

This essay — an angry assault — shows how the whims of society annihilate individual choice. **Earnest** takes a

lighter approach. Instead of attacking, Wilde mocks his characters by unmasking the rigidity of their absurd obsession with etiquette.

If anyone understood the pressures society imposed, it was Wilde. Secretly attracted to men, he wanted to conquer a society that criminalized homosexuality. Living in disguise with a wife and children, Wilde hid his "other" life, including an affair with Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas. Always a flamboyant character, Wilde was outed in 1895, and imprisoned for two years of hard labor. Prison broke his body but not his spirit. After his release, he wrote to his friend Robert Ross in 1898, "to have altered my life would have been to have admitted that Uranian [homosexual] love is ignoble. I hold it to be noble . . ." The characters in Wilde's play illustrate the hypocrisy often found in sanctioned "noble" relationships. Gwendolen cannot love Jack unless his name is Ernest. "And my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest," she says. "The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you." The

emotion these characters declare for each other is frivolous but socially acceptable.

Wilde's play unmasks middle-class morality, but the play's most subversive element is evident only to those who know the code. Throughout the play, Algernon refers to his invalid friend Bunbury. Bunbury's tendency to fall ill forces Algernon to make frequent trips to the country at a moment's notice. Bunbury, however, exists only in Algernon's lies; he uses the excuse of his fictional friend to escape the city and family obligations whenever he desires. Wilde's inclusion of Bunbury nodded to those in London living double lives. The term "bunbury" referred to male homosexual practice and specifically to visiting a male brothel. While

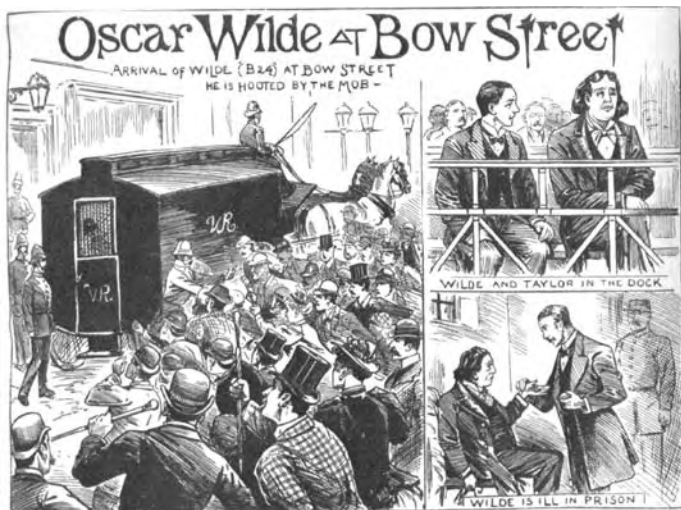


Algernon may be a heterosexual, the term hints at forbidden desires. Algernon explains to Jack, “Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.” Wilde, married with children, had to invent excuses to lead his double life, a duplicity society forced on him. Though the altar-bound characters choose domesticity, **The Importance of Being Earnest** celebrates this double life.

Shortly after its triumphant opening, her majesty’s government locked Wilde up in Reading

Gaol. His name was stripped from the marquees, and he died in exile and poverty. Despite Wilde’s fall from grace, his plays never disappeared from the stage. For the past century, **The Importance of Being Earnest**, Wilde’s “trivial” romp, has made audiences giddy with subversive laughter. The comedy — light and bright and sparkly — hides anger and pain.

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



previous page: top left: John Gielgud, Gwen Frangeon-Davies and Edith Evans in the Globe theatre production of **The Importance of Being Earnest** in 1939.

top right: Oscar Wilde in June, 1882, during his lecture tour of the U.S.

bottom left: David Woods as Lady Bracknell

bottom right: David Woods and Jon Haynes in their various incarnations.

this page: The 1895 Wilde trial as seen by the Illustrated Police News.

Playing in Earnest

Introducing Ridiculusmus

Gideon Lester talks to Jon Haynes, one half of Ridiculusmus, the British comic duo who are playing all the parts in **The Importance of Being Earnest**.

Gideon Lester: Ridiculusmus consists of two performers, you and David Woods. When did you begin working together?

Jon Haynes: I met David in 1992 at the Poor School, a drama school in London for poor people. With our friend Angus we formed a sort of busking trio, performing comic songs from the twenties and thirties on the Tube and in the street. It was an early example of our anti-comedy. Then we started a comedy club called the Tomato Club in a little room above a restaurant. Again it was anti-comedy, almost Dadaist; our advertisements for the show said, “Don’t Come!” and asked for bad comedians to turn up and perform. The show included a Tomato Spot when we’d get volunteers to come up and tell bad jokes, or even good jokes, and we’d arm the audience with overripe tomatoes so they could pelt the comedian, who was often wearing protective gear. It got quite a reputation and a lot of comics didn’t like it. We had complaints from stand-ups saying we were giving comedy a bad name. We had to leave in the end because we had complaints from the restaurant downstairs about the tomato seeds not being cleaned up. But it’s where we got our training.

G.L.: What do you mean by “anti-comedy”?

J.H.: We weren’t conventionally funny — in fact I’ve always had a problem with the label “comic.” I’m more of the belief that if I’m funny it’s accidental. I’d rather it be like that, that actually I’m trying to be deadly serious. But I suppose I have a strong comic sensibility, so I can see when people are laughing and use it. We don’t do stand-up comedy. We don’t tell jokes. When people see us perform, they often don’t know whether to laugh or not, or they laugh behind their hands, like the Japanese do. David takes all this very seriously — he’s even

written a PhD on it [available at <http://ridiculusmus.com/davejon/75/dave>].

G.L.: When did you form Ridiculusmus?

J.H.: We were in our last semester at the Poor School, and one day a fringe theatre company phoned and said they’d had a cancellation for a three-week slot, and did any students want to do a show? David was standing in the vicinity of the phone and said to the principal, yes, we’ve got a show, we’ll do it. In fact we hadn’t got a show at all, but David, ever the entrepreneur, said to us, why don’t we do **Three Men in a Boat**, based on the novel by Jerome K. Jerome, because there are three of us, and he’d just given a copy of it as a present to somebody so it was in his mind. We had about two weeks to get the show together. We used all the comic songs we’d been doing, and we had cardboard cutout props, and three suitcases made in the shape of a boat, which we carried around with all the props in and we’d just throw them down and they’d become a boat. It was quite good.

G.L.: Where did the name Ridiculusmus come from?

J.H.: When we were at the Poor School, the man on the phone said he needed a name for us. So we asked people for suggestions, and one of the students, who was a former Classics teacher, said, “What about Ridiculus Mus?” He said it was from the poet Horace. [It’s a quotation from Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, and means “ridiculous



asked her to direct us in something — we’d never worked with a director before — and she agreed. She suggested we look at Restoration Comedies, but in the end we settled on Wilde.

G.L.: Why?

J.H.: One reason was that I’d memorized the text when I was a teenager. I’d been a Wilde nut for about four years by the end of fourteen, and I

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

a trivial comedy
performed by two serious people
at a glance

December 21 – January 14 • Loeb Stage

by Oscar Wilde
created by Ridiculusmus
devised and edited by David Woods, Jon Haynes, and Jude Kelly
performed by David Woods and Jon Haynes

director
set and costume design
lighting design
music and sound design

choreography (Galliard)
Produced in association with the Loeb Drama Center

Jude Kelly
Zoe Atkinson
Jo Currey
David Woods, John Haynes,
Jude Kelly, and Lawrence English
Marcelle Davis

SYNOPSIS

Jack and Algernon, two wealthy young Englishmen, shirk responsibility whenever possible. Algernon avoids obligations by fleeing to the country; Jack evades responsibility by escaping to the city. Cecily, Jack’s ward in the country, believes that Jack is looking after his younger, profligate (and fabricated) brother Ernest — the name he uses while in London. Jack wishes to marry Gwendolen, Algernon’s cousin, but is dismayed to learn that she could only love a man named Ernest. Additionally, Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen’s mother, refuses to give her consent when she learns that Jack is an orphan.

Algernon, intrigued by Cecily, travels to the countryside pretending to be “Ernest,” Jack’s wastrel of a brother. Cecily is delighted to meet the man she has only heard about for years. When Jack returns to the country estate, however, to announce that his brother has tragically died, chaos ensues. As Cecily and Gwendolen discover they are both engaged to “Ernest,” the characters become entangled in a series of uproarious mistaken identities.

mouse.”] We said, yeah, that sounds okay, so it became our name. We were briefly joined by a couple of other performers — in 1997 five of us staged **The Third Policeman**, adapted from Flann O’Brien’s novel — but after that it’s been just Dave and me.

G.L.: Do the two of you have a constant performance persona, or does it change from project to project?

J.H.: People often say that we’re a double act, with Dave as the funny man and me the straight man, but we do try and vary it.

G.L.: Most of your material you write yourself, or adapt from novels. **The Importance of Being Earnest** is the first existing play the two of you have worked on. How did that come about?

J.H.: We were performing two shows at the Barbican in London in 2001, and the director Jude Kelly came to see them and became a fan. We

had a tape recording of a BBC production with Dame Fabia Drake, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, a young Prunella Scales, and Celia Johnson. I’d had the tape for years and I listened to it so much that I learned the whole thing.

G.L.: Was it always the idea that you and David would play all the parts?

J.H.: Yes. Ridiculusmus is now always just the two of us — we *always* play all the parts. For us it wasn’t strange, but maybe it is for people who have never seen us before.

G.L.: How was it meeting the play again after so many years?

J.H.: Interesting. David and I both try to keep a level of reality, not to go over the top in our performances. But **Earnest** isn’t really a naturalistic play. So much of it is in Wilde’s voice; the characters all sound more or less the same. They all speak in epigrams. It’s a bit like Joe Orton; it’s hard to feel sympathetic towards anyone. The heroines, for example, can easily become finger-sucking, petticoat-rustling grotesques. The play has a great artificiality. It’s like Wilde’s hair — very carefully disarranged.

G.L.: Critics often say that beneath the surface comedy, it’s a very angry play.

J.H.: It’s not as poisonous now as it must have been when Wilde wrote it, but it still does have an ability to shock you. Some of the lines are really horrible. “I have no sympathy for invalids.” “The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else, if she is plain.” Sometimes the audience still gasps.

Gideon Lester is the A.R.T.’s Associate Artistic Director.

For more information on Ridiculusmus, including archival material from their other productions, please visit www.ridiculusmus.com

*Jon Haynes and David Woods in Ridiculusmus productions of **Yes, Yes, Yes** and **How to be Funny***

Wings of Desire Artists

FRED GOESSENS — *Dying Man*

Member of Toneelgroep Amsterdam since it was founded in 1987, appeared as Orestes in **Andromache**, as the addict son in **Liefhebber** and in the title role of **John Gabriel Borkman**. This season, he is appearing in **Het temmen van de feeks**, **Roman Tragedy**, and **Tragedy**.

Alongside his roles with Toneelgroep Amsterdam, Goessens has also acted in the films *De Jurk* (1996) and *Oude Tongen* (1994), and appeared in various plays between 1980 and 1991 for companies such as Theatergroep Piek and Stichting Theater la Luna.



JESSE LENAT* — *Thoughts/Live Music*

Actor/songwriter. New York theatre credits: **Fucking A** (dir. Michael Greif) The Public Theater; **Once Around The Sun** (dir. Jace Alexander), The Zipper; **Texarkana Waltz** (also original music, music director, dir. Allison Narver), Kirk Theatre; **Floyd Collins** (dir. Tina Landau), Playwrights Horizons, cast album; **Tooth of Crime: Second Dance** with original music by T-bone Burnett (dir. Bill Hart/Sam Shepard), Signature Theatre/Second Stage at Lucile Lortel Theatre; **Rent** (dir. Michael Greif), New York Theatre Workshop; Len Jenkin's new play **Kraken** (Herman Melville), Todd Mountain Theatre Project. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, Dallas Theatre Center, Alley Theatre, The Guthrie Theater, American Music Theatre Festival, Wilma Theatre. Performed a solo show on the life of Woody Guthrie as well as his own music; recently completed a month-long residency playing his original music at The Living Room (voted best club in New York City for singer songwriters by *Time Out New York*); worked with John Cougar Mellencamp and Stephen King on a project called "Ghost Brothers" in

which he played The Shape. Films: *Venomous* with Treat Williams (20th century fox, fred olen-rey), *Went To Coney Island On A Mission From God*, *Robbers*, *The Fish in the Bathtub* (with Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara). Television: *Law and Order: CI*, *Hack*, *Once and Again*, *Strangers With Candy*, *To Hell And Back*, *The Meatloaf Story*.



HADEWYCH MINIS — *Thoughts/Live Music*

A member of Toneelgroep Amsterdam since the 05/06 season, credits include **Scènes uit een huwelijk** directed by Ivo van Hove and **Opening Night**. This season, she will be appearing in **Don Carlos**, **Maeterlinck** and **Roman Tragedies**. Other credits: **Seemanslied/Op hoop van zegen** by Christoph Marthaler and **Richard III** by Johan Simons at ZT Hollandia. She has also had frequent television and film roles, including in *De Kroon*, a television film made by the VPRO in which Minis plays the part of Princess Maxima, and in the film *Phileine zegt sorry*.

STEPHEN PAYNE — *Former Angel*

New York: J.P. Shanley's **Sailor's Song**, The Public Theater; **Bukowski From Beyond**, Soho Playhouse; **South of No North** and **Fool for Love**, 29th Street Rep; **Ghosts and Pillars of Society**, Century Center; **Automatic Earth** Signature Theatre; **Subtle Bodies**, Theatre Row; **The Realism of Simple Machines**, LaMama; **A Hatful of Rain** (dir. Frank Corsaro) and Mailer's **America Sings**, Actors' Studio. Regional: A Midsummer Night's Dream (Peter Quince/Aegeus, dir. Tina Landau), McCarter Theatre; **Bus Stop** (dir. Joe Hardy; Craig Noel and Inner Circle Critis' Awards), The Old Globe; Paula Vogel's **Boy Gets Girl** (dir. Roberta Levitow), Seattle Repertory Theatre. Films: *Rent*, *A Girl's Guide to Hunting & Fishing*, *Cake Eaters*, *Where God Left His Shoes*, *A Crime*, *A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints*, *Hells Kitchen*, *A Good Day to Die*, *Witness to the Mob* and *No Mercy*. TV: *The Sopranos*, *Law & Order*, *Third watch*, *Equalizer*, and *Kojak*.



FRIEDA PITTOORS — *Homer*

Frieda Pittoors has been a member of Toneelgroep Amsterdam since the 05/06 season. She has appeared in **Perfect Wedding** and **Huis van de toekomst**, this season she is appearing in **Don Carlos**, **Maeterlinck** and **Roman Tragedies**. She has acted in professional theatres in Belgium since the age of eight, and has been appearing on the Dutch stage since the nineteen-seventies with companies including Proloog, Sater, Het Zuidelijk Toneel and Discordia. Other credits include **The Leenane Trilogy** (nominated for Theo d'Or), **Tim van Athene** and **Seemannslied/Op hoop van zegen** at ZT Hollandia.

Frieda Pittoors, Hadewych Minis, and Fred Goessens are appearing with the permission of Actors' Equity Association. The Producers gratefully acknowledge Actors' Equity Association for its assistance of this production.



MARK ROSENTHAL*

— *Cassiel*
New York theatre credits; **Nami** (Partial Comfort), **Mercy on the**

Doorstep (Flea), **After Ashley** (Vineyard Theatre), **The Internationalist** (FTC), **The Moonlight Room** (Lucille Lortel Nomination), Kenneth Lonergan's **This Is Our Youth** (New York) and **Waverly Gallery** (Pasadena Playhouse), **Ah Wilderness!** (Lincoln Center), Elizabeth Egloff's **Phaedra** (Vineyard Theatre), **The Basement at the Bottom of the End of the World** (1996 Young Playwrights Festival at The Public Theater); also **Dark Rapture** (American Conservatory Theatre), **Marvin's Room** (Chicago's Goodman Studio and Playwrights Horizons, New York – Joseph Jefferson Award nomination and Theater World Award, Drama Desk nomination). Films: the upcoming *Backseat*, *Final Draft*, *Jump*, *Stiffs*. Television: *Numbers*, *The Mike O'Malley Show* (series regular), *Tribeca*, *Joe's Apartment*, *The Education of Max Bickford*, *That's Life*, *Law & Order*.

MAM SMITH — *Marion*

Aerialist, dancer, choreographer, and actor. As a child she studied classical dance and competed as an elite gymnast. Dancer in a Cirque du Soleil benefit series, Lincoln Center and Radio City Music Hall, toured throughout the US as a featured dancer with the Doug Elkins Dance Co. Principal aerialist for Antigravity. Television credits: most recently seen with P-Diddy on MTV's "2002 Music Video Awards" and the "2003 Grammy Awards" (where she performed with Gwen Stefani); *Oz*, *Law and Order*; also numerous print and television advertisements. She is producing the film *Hello Timor*, the first feature film of East Timor. Education: New York University's Tisch School of the Arts for Dance and Theatre, Masters in Communications from Emerson College in Boston.



BERNARD WHITE* — *Daniel*

Theatre: *Lucy and the Conquest*, Williamstown Theatre Festival: *Landscape Of The Body*, Signature Theatre Co; Sakharam Binder, *The Play Co.*; Mum, Now Theatre; *The Death Of Garcia Lorca*, The Public Theater; *An Antigone Story and Crossings: Journeys of Catholic Immigrants*, Cornerstone Theatre; *Dogeaters*, La Jolla Playhouse; *A Perfect Ganesh*, Odyssey Theatre; *Creeps*, Theatre Theatre, Second Stage; *Titus Andronicus*, The Globe Playhouse. Solo theatre creations: *Where She Went*,

Met Theatre; John in the Hill Country, The Bhagavad Gita/The Song of God (WHERE???). Founder of Plymouth in Los Angeles, a theatre space dedicated to exploring the sacred in art. Film/TV: *American Dreamz*, *Pain Within*, *Land Of Plenty* (Wim Wenders), *Sueño*, *Raising Helen*, *American Made*, *The Matrix Revolutions*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *Scorpion King*, *Pay It Forward*, *City Of Angels*, *E-Ring*, *Crossing Jordan*, *Jag, 24*, *The Agency*, *West Wing*, *C.S.I..Miami*, *The Guardian*, *Alias*, *Touched By An Angel*, *Judging Amy*, *The Division*, *The X-Files*, *The Practice*, *Felicity*, *ER*, *NYPD Blue*.



ROBIN YOUNG — *Newscaster*

Host of WBUR's midday news magazine *Here and Now*, heard on National Public Radio stations across the country. Launched the popular *Evening Magazine* on WBZ-TV in the mid-70s, spent several years as correspondent and substitute host for NBC's *Today* show, has also reported for CBS ABC, and the Discovery Channel. Recipient of numerous industry awards including television's Emmy, cable's Ace Award, and the George Foster Peabody Award for excellence in documentary films. Produced and directed the "Los Altos Story," a film about a Rotary Club and AIDS.

ANDY MOOR — *composer/sound designer*

Composer and sound designer Andy Moor was born in London England and began his musical life in Scotland playing guitar with the band Dog Faced Hermans. In 1990 he moved to the Netherlands to join the Dutch band The Ex and continues to be a full time member of this band. In 1995 he performed his first series of completely improvised concerts as a duet with Terrie Ex, and later released a video of the best performances. In 1996 he began another group with Tony Buck (Necks), Joe Williamson and Leonid Soybelman (Ne Zhdali) called Kletka Red, fusing traditional Klezmer, Greek and Russian songs with their own frantic styles of playing. In recent years he has worked with electronic musicians (Kaffe Matthews, Yannis Kyriakides, Thomas Lehn, and Colin Mclean), composed soundtracks for films and performed regularly with dancers such as Magpie Music and Dance Company. He created soundtracks for the film *Epic* by artist Marion Coutts (Dog Faced Hermans) and for her film *No Evil Star*; and launched a new CD label along with Yannis Kyriakides and Isabelle Vigier, called Unsounds. Mr. Moor has worked with Thermal (John Butcher and Thomas Lehn), with Magpie Music and Dance Company, and sound poet Anne James Chaton; collaborated with dancer and choreographer Nora Heilmann, and with the Dutch theatre companies The Ex and D'Electricque, including the production of *A Clockwork Orange*. He has toured extensively with The Ex worldwide.



The Onion Cellar Artists



THE DRESDEN DOLLS

AMANDA PALMER AND BRIAN VIGLIONE

The Dresden Dolls continue to defy explanation and classification, have been called theatrical rock, punk cabaret, manic-musical, and neo-glam-torch. The Dresden Dolls take the world stage, tear down the curtain, rip holes in the veneer and create their own rules, rhymes and reason. For the past five years, the duo has been climbing steadily out of the artistic trenches and into the mainstream of rock on their own terms. The Dolls thrive on their inherent juxtapositions. The musical-theater and New-Wave background of writer/singer/pianist Amanda Palmer mixes with drummer Brian Viglione's Heavy Metal roots to create a sonic smear of unclassifiable rock. Palmer wails; Viglione cackles. It is this dichotomy that supplies the band with a ying-yang quality that keeps them hurtling through space, pulling each other to and fro in an endless and highly entertaining match of musical wits. After signing with Roadrunner Records in early 2004, the band has been enjoying a whirlwind schedule that has included headlining sold-out tours on four continents, opening for Nine Inch Nails (Trent Reznor hand-picked the band after seeing their homemade video for "Girl Anachronism" on television), performing at the world's biggest festivals including Coachella, Fuji Rock, Roskilde and Glastonbury, and releasing an innovative and acclaimed live DVD.

A.R.T. COMPANY ACTORS

REMO AIRALDI

A.R.T.: Forty-nine productions, including **Island of Slaves** (Arlequin), **Romeo and Juliet** (Peter), **No Exit** (Valet), **Amerika** (Captain, Green, Head Porter), **Dido, Queen of Carthage** (Nurse), **The Provok'd Wife** (Constable), **The Miser** (Master Jacques), **The Birthday Party** (McCann), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Francis Flute), **Pericles** (Fisherman), **La Dispute** (Mesrou), **Uncle Vanya** (Telegin), **Marat/Sade** (Cucurucu), **Enrico IV** (Bertoldo), **The Winter's Tale** (Clown), **The Wild Duck** (Molvik), **Buried Child** (Father Dewis), **Tartuffe** (Monsieur Loyal), **Henry IV and V** (Mistress Quickly), **Waiting for Godot** (Pozzo), **Shlemiel the First** (Mottel/Moishe Pippik/Chaim Rascal), **The King Stag** (Cigolotti), **Six Characters in Search of an Author** (Emilio Paz). Other: **No Exit**, **Camino Real** and **Eight by Tenn** (Hartford Stage), productions at La Jolla Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse, American Conservatory Theater, Walnut St. Theatre, Prince Music Theater, Actors' Theatre of Louisville, Serious Fun Festival, Moscow Art Theatre, Taipei International Arts Festival, Boston Playwrights Theatre.



THOMAS DERRAH

A.R.T.: **Island of Slaves** (Trivelin), **Romeo and Juliet** (Friar Lawrence), **Three Sisters** (Chebutykin), **Carmen** (Zuniga), **Ollly's Prison** (Barry), **The Birthday Party** (Stanley), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Nick Bottom), **Highway Ulysses** (Ulysses), **Uncle Vanya** (Vanya), **Marat/Sade** (Marquis de Sade), **Richard II** (Richard), **Mother Courage**

(Chaplain), **Charlie in the House of Rue** (Charlie Chaplin), **Woyzeck**

(Woyzeck), **The Oresteia** (Orestes). Broadway: **Jackie: An American Life** (twenty-three roles). Off-Broadway: **Johan Padan and the Discovery of the Americas** (Johan), **Big Time** (Ted). Tours with the Company across the U.S., with residencies in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, and throughout Europe, Canada, Israel, Taiwan, Japan, and Moscow. Other: **Approaching Moomtaj** (New Repertory Theatre); **Twelfth Night** and **The Tempest** (Commonwealth Shakespeare Co.); London's Battersea Arts Center; five productions at Houston's Alley Theatre, including **Our Town** (Dr. Gibbs, directed by José Quintero); and many theatres throughout the U.S. Awards: 1994 Elliot Norton Prize for Sustained Excellence, 2000 and 2004 IRNE Awards for Best Actor, 1997 Los Angeles DramaLogue Award (for title role of **Shlemiel the First**). Television: Julie Taymor's film *Fool's Fire* (PBS American Playhouse), *Unsolved Mysteries*, *Del and Alex* (Alex, A&E Network). Film: *Mystic River* (directed by Clint Eastwood). He is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.



JEREMY GEIDT

Senior Actor, founding member of the Yale Repertory Theatre and the A.R.T. Yale: over forty productions. A.R.T.: ninety-seven productions including **Three Sisters** (Ferapont, in Cambridge and Edinburgh), **Major Barbara** (Undershaft), **Heartbreak House** (Shotover), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Quince four times, Snug once), **Henry IV** (Falstaff), **Twelfth Night** (Toby Belch), **The Caretaker** (Davies), **The Homecoming** (Max), **Loot** (Truscott), **Man and Superman** (Mendoza/Devil), **Waiting for Godot** (Vladimir), **The Threepenny Opera** (Peacham/Petey), **Ivanov** (Lebedev), **Three Sisters** (Chebutkin), **Buried Child** (Dodge), **The Cherry Orchard** (Gaev), **The King Stag** (Pantelone). Teaches at Harvard College, its Summer and Extension Schools and at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute. Trained at the Old Vic Theatre School and subsequently taught there. Acted at the Old Vic, Young Vic, The Royal Court, in the West End and in films and television, hosting his own show "The Caravan" for the B.B.C. for five years. Went to the U.S.A. with the satirical revue *The Establishment* and acted on and off Broadway, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and the Lincoln Center Festival. Lectured on Shakespeare in India and the Netherlands Theatre School. Received the Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Boston Actor and the Jason Robards Award for Dedication to the Theatre.

KAREN MacDONALD

A.R.T.: founding member, fifty-eight productions. Recent seasons: **Island of Slaves** (Euphrosine), **Romeo and Juliet** (Nurse), **No Exit** (Estelle), **Ollly's Prison** (Ellen), **Dido, Queen of Carthage** (Anna), **The Provok'd Wife** (Madamoiselle, IRNE award), **The Miser** (Frosine, IRNE award), **The Birthday Party** (Meg, IRNE Award), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Hypolita/Titania, IRNE award), **Pericles** (Dionysa), **Highway Ulysses** (Circe), **Uncle Vanya** (Marina), **Lysistrata** (Kalonika), **Mother Courage and Her Children** (Mother Courage), **Marat/Sade** (Simone), **Othello** (Emilia, IRNE award). Director of **Dressed Up! Wiggled Out!**, Boston Playwrights Theatre. New York: Roundabout Theatre, Second Stage, Playwright's Horizons, and Actors' Playhouse. Regional: **The Misanthrope** (Arsinoë), Berkshire Theatre Festival; **Infestation** (Mother), Boston Playwrights Theatre; **Hamlet** (Gertrude) and **Twelfth Night** (Maria), Commonwealth Shakespeare Company; **The Beauty Queen of Leenane** (Maureen) and **The Last Night of Ballyhoo** (Boo) Vineyard Playhouse; **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf** (Martha, Elliot Norton Award) and **Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune** (Frankie), Merrimack Repertory Theatre; **As You Like It** (Rosalind), Shakespeare & Co; **Shirley Valentine** (Shirley), Charles Playhouse. Other: Alley Theatre (Company member), the Goodman Theatre, the Wilma Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Geva Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Buffalo Studio Arena, Cincinnati Playhouse, Philadelphia Festival of New Plays.





Wings on the Screen

See the film
Wings of Desire!

Monday evening
November 27
7:00pm

On Monday, November 27, the Coolidge Corner Theatre in Brookline will be screening the Wim Wenders film, *Wings of Desire*. The A.R.T.'s Gideon Lester will introduce the film and discuss the process for adapting the film to the stage, along with director Ola Mafaalani, and actor Bernard White. For more information, stay tuned to amrep.org and A.R.T. Connections (sign up for this informative e-newsletter, A.R.T. Connections, at amrep.org) for details. Visit the Coolidge Corner Theatre's website at coolidge.org.

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The A.R.T.'s production of *The Onion Cellar*, starting December 9, will be a truly unique theatrical experience.

To create the special atmosphere of *The Onion Cellar*, Zero Arrow Theatre will be transformed into an underground cabaret, where patrons are able to enjoy a beverage at their table, surrounded by the employees, performers, and musicians of the club – in this case the incredibly popular band, The Dresden Dolls.

Patrons for *The Onion Cellar* will be seated at “cabaret style” tables. As in a café or restaurant, you will have reservations for a particular performance and will be seated at a reserved table by the ushers that night.



There are also lower-priced stool seats located around the lip of the stage, at the bar, and at the back of the theatre.

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A.R.T. IN AMSTERDAM

Wings of Desire opened in Amsterdam on Sunday, October 8 and several of our friends were there to see it. Robert Woodruff and Gideon Lester were joined in the Netherlands by A.R.T. Advisory Board member Barbara Lemperly Grant and Fred Grant, Provost Steve Hyman and his wife Barbara Bierer, and Michael McClung and Jacqueline Kinney. The group enjoyed lunch with artists from Toneelgroep Amsterdam including General Director, Ivo van Hove; Ko van den Bosch the Dutch translator of **Wings**, and co-adaptor; and Adelheid Roosen, one of the Netherlands' foremost actresses. They all sipped champagne and sampled delicious Moroccan cuisine while discussing Dutch theatre, American theatre and future partnerships. Lunch was followed by the premiere of **Hemel boven Berlijn**, or **Wings of Desire** (as it will be called in Cambridge). Although the performance was predominantly in Dutch (it will be predominantly English during its run at the Loeb), the story came through beautifully. The production promises to be a must-see on this side of the pond.

— Maura Henry, former A.R.T. Executive Assistant



Above: Jackie Kinney and Michael McClung joined the A.R.T. in Amsterdam. Barbara Bierer and Provost Steve Hyman with Mam Smith and Advisor Board Member Barbara Lemperly Grant enjoyed lunch before the performance. A.R.T. Associate Director Gideon Lester, **Wings of Desire** Director Ola Mafaalani, Mam Smith and A.R.T. Artistic Director at the Amsterdam Opening of **Wings of Desire**. (Photos by Fred Grant)

At left: The marquee at the Stadsschouwburg Theatre at the opening of **Hemel Boven Berlijn/Wings of Desire** in Amsterdam.

The Angels Were Watching!



"If Wings of Desire were set in Boston, there would be angels watching us from the top of the Hancock and the Prudential Center. Look around and picture the city from an angel's eye view."

— Gideon Lester, Associate Artistic Director (9/16/06)

On a glorious Saturday evening in September, fifty guests gathered on the rooftop of the Back Bay home of A.R.T. friends, Martha Cox and Andrew McKay, to benefit the American Repertory Theatre and our upcoming production of **Wings of Desire**. With donations of appetizers from Niche Catour, wine from Vintages-Adventures in Wine, party rentals from Peterson Party Center, and auction items from Chanel Boutique, Boutique Giorgio Armani, and Coral Beach Club (Bermuda), guests enjoyed fantastic views of the sunset over Boston, and music by Rooftop Jazz Four. Executive Director, Rob Orchard and Artistic Director, Robert Woodruff described the work of the theatre and this season's offerings. Gideon Lester, Associate Artistic Director, talked about **Wings of Desire** and the intricacies of creating this international co-production.

It was a delightful — and lively — evening under the stars and lights of Back Bay. And, in addition to "friend-raising", the fundraising was also a success, raising over \$10,000 for our production of **Wings of Desire**.

The angels really were watching us!

Hosts Andrew McKay and Martha Cox.
Sydney and Peter Frasca enjoyed An Evening Under the Stars.
Host Andrew McKay and Rooftop Jazz Four.

Transforming the American Repertory Theatre

Our 2006-07 Annual Fund drive is now underway! Once again we turn to you, our audience members, supporters, and aficionados of the arts, to partner with us as we present this year's Season of Transformations, with productions that reflect transformations such as a work of art, a film, and a book. Likewise, support of the A.R.T.'s Annual Fund allows the theatre and artistic vision to grow — and transform — throughout the season and into the future.

This year's donor benefits are better than ever! In addition to invitations and recognition designed to bring you closer to the work of the theatre, you will also enjoy knowing that your gift will make a difference! With ticket revenues covering about half the costs of producing live theatre, we depend on your support to help fulfill the critical difference. Last season 1150 individual donors, along with foundation, government, and corporate partners, generously supported our Annual Fund drive. With an even greater need this year we look to you— a supporter of world-class, award-winning theatre—to be part of this season's transformations. You do, indeed, play a role at the A.R.T.!

A new donor level of \$1,200, along with a monthly payment option, makes joining the A.R.T.'s Artistic Director's Circle a choice well-worth considering. Contact the theatre's development office at 617-496-2000 x8832 for more information, and look for our annual appeal in your mailbox soon.

"Gifts to the Annual Fund not only support our financial needs, but also lend encouragement to continue ambitious programming as we face the future challenge of maintaining an extraordinary level of artistic integrity and keeping the voice of the artists at the center of our mission."

— Robert Woodruff, Artistic Director

TRANSFORMING American Repertory Theatre THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT

THREE CONVENIENT WAYS TO GIVE

Online at: www.amrep.org

By phone: 617-496-2000 X8832

By mail: American Repertory Theatre
Attn: Development Office
64 Brattle Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Snow in June: Qian Yi
Photo: Richard Feldman

Picture your name on the title page of A.R.T.'s program book — as a Production Sponsor for one of American Repertory Theatre's plays.

A range of production sponsorships for annual gifts at \$7,500 and up allows for unparalleled access to the art of the A.R.T., and pays tribute to our most generous donors. Production Sponsors enjoy personal involvement with the process of the production, as well as dialogue with the artists.

Major Production Sponsors, those making gifts of \$25,000 or higher, are also invited to join the new Artistic Committee. Members of this select insider group have the greatest access to the "art" of the A.R.T. by meeting

with the Artistic Director throughout the season to review scripts and to discuss future artistic choices under consideration. The Artistic Committee will truly "raise the curtain" on the behind-the-scenes decision-making of our daring artistic choices.



TRANSFORMING

American Repertory Theatre
and Institute for Advanced Theatre Training

THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT

WHAT WILL YOUR ROLE BE?

Island of Slaves: Freddy Franklin, Adam Shankman, Fiona Gallagher, Santos Cupon, Airline Inthirath
Photo: T. Charles Erickson



WELCOME INSTITUTE STUDENTS

Students of the Institute for Advanced Theatre Training were introduced to members of A.R.T.'s Advisory Board at the home of Board Member, Greg Carr.

Pictured l to r: Sarah Wallace, Sally Ollove, Caroline Barad, Daniel Le, Greg Carr, Jia Doughman, and Elizabeth Allen. Photo by Institute student Njal Mjos.

ORDER TODAY!

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS TO ALL SHOWS ON SALE NOW
617.547.8300

www.amrep.org

subscribe & save!

- Free and easy ticket exchange!
- Create your own season — choose any 3 or more plays!
- All subscriptions are discounted — save up to 26% off single ticket prices
- Discounts on parking and fine dining in Harvard Square

new to the A.R.T.?

SUBSCRIBE NOW WITH NO RISK

We're so sure you'll enjoy the 2006-07 season, here's a money-back guarantee:

After you've seen your first two productions, if you're not completely satisfied, just give us a call and we'll refund the remainder of your season tickets. (New subscribers only.)

A.R.T. student pass

\$60 gets you 5 tickets good for any combination of plays. That's only \$12 a seat!

(Full-time college students only.)

preplay

Preshow discussions one hour before 7:30 curtain led by the Literary Department. **Loeb Stage only.**

Wings of Desire preplays

Sunday, December 10, Wednesday, December 13, Thursday, December 14

Importance of Being Earnest preplays

Thursday, January 4, Sunday, January 7, Wednesday, January 10

playback

Post-show discussions after all Saturday matinees. All ticket holders welcome.

curtain times

Tue/Wed/Thu/Sun evenings — 7:30pm

Friday/Saturday evenings — 8:00pm

Saturday/Sunday matinees — 2:00pm

The Onion Cellar

December 22/January 12

performances at 7pm and 11pm

ticket prices

LOEB STAGE

	A	B
Fri/Sat evenings	\$76	\$53
All other perfs	\$66	\$38

ONION CELLAR AT ZERO ARROW

	table seats*	stools*
Fri/Sat evenings	\$50	\$25
All other perfs	\$38	\$25

Table seating is "cabaret-style".

Stool seats are located around the lip of the stage, at the bar, and at the back of the theatre.

box office hours

LOEB STAGE

Tuesday — Sunday noon — 5pm
Monday closed
Performance days open until curtain

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Open one hour before curtain time.

new! exchanges for single ticket buyers

Sometimes emergencies do arise, and you may need to change the date of your performance. Now single ticket buyers can exchange for a transaction fee of \$10. As always, A.R.T. subscribers can exchange for free!

discount parking

LOEB STAGE

Have your ticket stub stamped at the reception desk when you attend a performance and receive discounts at the **University Place Garage** or **The Charles Hotel Garage**.

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Discount parking is available at the **Harvard University lot at 1033 Mass. Ave. (entrance on Ellery Street.)** There is also valet parking available at the nearby Grafton Street Pub & Grill. See page 11. Go to www.amrep.org/venues/zarrow/ for more information.

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

CHOOSE ANY 3 OR MORE PLAYS AND SAVE!

- ☐ **Wings of Desire** Nov 25 — Dec 17, Loeb
- ☐ **The Onion Cellar** Dec 9 — Jan 13, Zero Arrow
- ☐ **The Importance of Being Earnest** Dec 21 — Jan 14, Loeb
- ☐ **Britannicus** Jan 20 — Feb 11, Loeb
- ☐ **Oliver Twist** Feb 17 — Mar 24, Loeb
- ☐ **Elections & Erections** Apr 4 — May 6, Zero Arrow
- ☐ **No Man's Land** May 12 — Jun 10, Loeb

PRICE PER SEAT All subscriptions are discounted off single ticket prices

Day of Week	Seating Section	LOEB STAGE	ZERO ARROW
Matinees or Weeknights	A	\$60	\$34
	B	\$29	\$34
Fri/Sat nights	A	\$73	\$47
	B	\$49	\$47
Children	all seats	\$12	\$12

SPECIAL 3 FOR \$75

Choose any 3 plays and fill in \$25 (below) for Loeb or Zero Arrow price.

Good for Section B seats any time except Fri/Sat eves.

Subscriptions are filled in order of receipt. For best seats, return this order form promptly.

☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐ Ms. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (Day) _____ (Night) _____

☐ Please sign me up for ART-LIST and keep me informed of upcoming events and special offers by e-mail.

e-mail address: _____

Choose your day and time:

Day of Week : _____

Seating Section: ☐ A ☐ B

☐ Evening: Tue/Wed/Thu/Sun — 7:30pm
Fri/Sat — 8pm

☐ Matinees: Sat/Sun — 2pm

- ☐ If you wish to sit with friends, please enclose all orders in the same envelope.
- ☐ Please specify special seating requests on a separate piece of paper.

Special Series:

- ☐ **CHILD-CARE SERIES**
Saturday 2pm — Loeb Stage Series only
\$10/per child/per play
- ☐ **PLAYBACK:** Post-show discussions.
All Saturday matinee series
- ☐ **PREPLAY:** Pre-performance discussions
One hour before curtain time.
Choose from Sun/Wed/Thu evening series

Calculate your subscription price:

# of adults	x	# Loeb plays	x	Loeb price	=	\$ _____
# of adults	x	# Zero Arrow plays	x	Zero Arrow price	=	\$ _____
# of children	x	# plays (both theatres)	x	\$12	=	\$ _____

Child-care Fee (\$10 per child/per play, Loeb Stage plays only) = \$ _____

Ticket income covers less than 50% of the cost of running the A.R.T. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution. Thank you.

Contribution = \$ _____

Handling Fee = \$ _____ 5.00

TOTAL DUE = \$ _____

I've enclosed ☐ Full payment

all sales final

☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX ☐ Check

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Loeb Stage

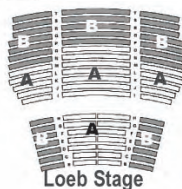
november						25 wings
26 wings 2pm	27	28 wings	29 wings	30 wings		
december						1 wings
3 wings wings	4	5 wings	6 wings	7 wings	8 wings	2 wings ^P wings
10 wings Pwings	11	12 wings	13 wings SM Pwings	14 Pwings	15 wings	9 wings ^P wings
17 wings 2pm	18	19	20	21 earnest	22 earnest	23 earnest ^P earnest
24	25	26 earnest	27 earnest	28 earnest	29 earnest	30 earnest ^P earnest
31 earnest earnest	january					
	1	2 earnest	3 earnest	4 Pearnest	5 earnest	6 earnest ^P earnest
7 earnest Pearnest	8 earnest	9 Pearnest	10 earnest	11 earnest	12 earnest	13 earnest ^P earnest
14 earnest 2pm						

Performance Times

Tue/Wed/Thu/Sun eves — 7:30pm

Fri/Sat evenings — 8pm

Sat/Sun matinees — 2pm



Zero Arrow Theatre

december							9 onion
10 onion 2pm	11	12 onion	13 onion	14 onion	15 onion	16 onion ^P onion	
17 onion onion	18	19 onion	20 onion	21 onion	22 onion 7pm onion 11pm	23 onion ^P onion	
24	25	26 onion	27 onion	28 onion	29 onion	30 onion ^P onion	
31 onion onion	january						
	1 onion	2 onion	3 onion	4 onion	5 onion	6 onion ^P onion	
7 onion onion	8	9 onion	10 onion	11 onion	12 onion 7pm onion 11pm	13 onion ^P onion	

wings
onion
earnest

show^P
Pshow
showSM
show^B

post-show discussion
pre-show discussion, one hour before curtain
student matinee, 10am
call 617-547-8300 x 8844 to book a student group
Breakfast at the A.R.T., 9am
coffee, pastries & conversation, followed by performance

Curtain Times: (unless otherwise indicated)
Tue/Wed/Thu 7:30pm Fri 8pm
Sat 288pm Sun 287:30pm

The Onion Cellar
December 22 & January 12
performances at 7pm and 11pm