CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

Advocate

March 2012 http://gcadvocate.org advocate@gc.cuny.edu

A Radical Lunch
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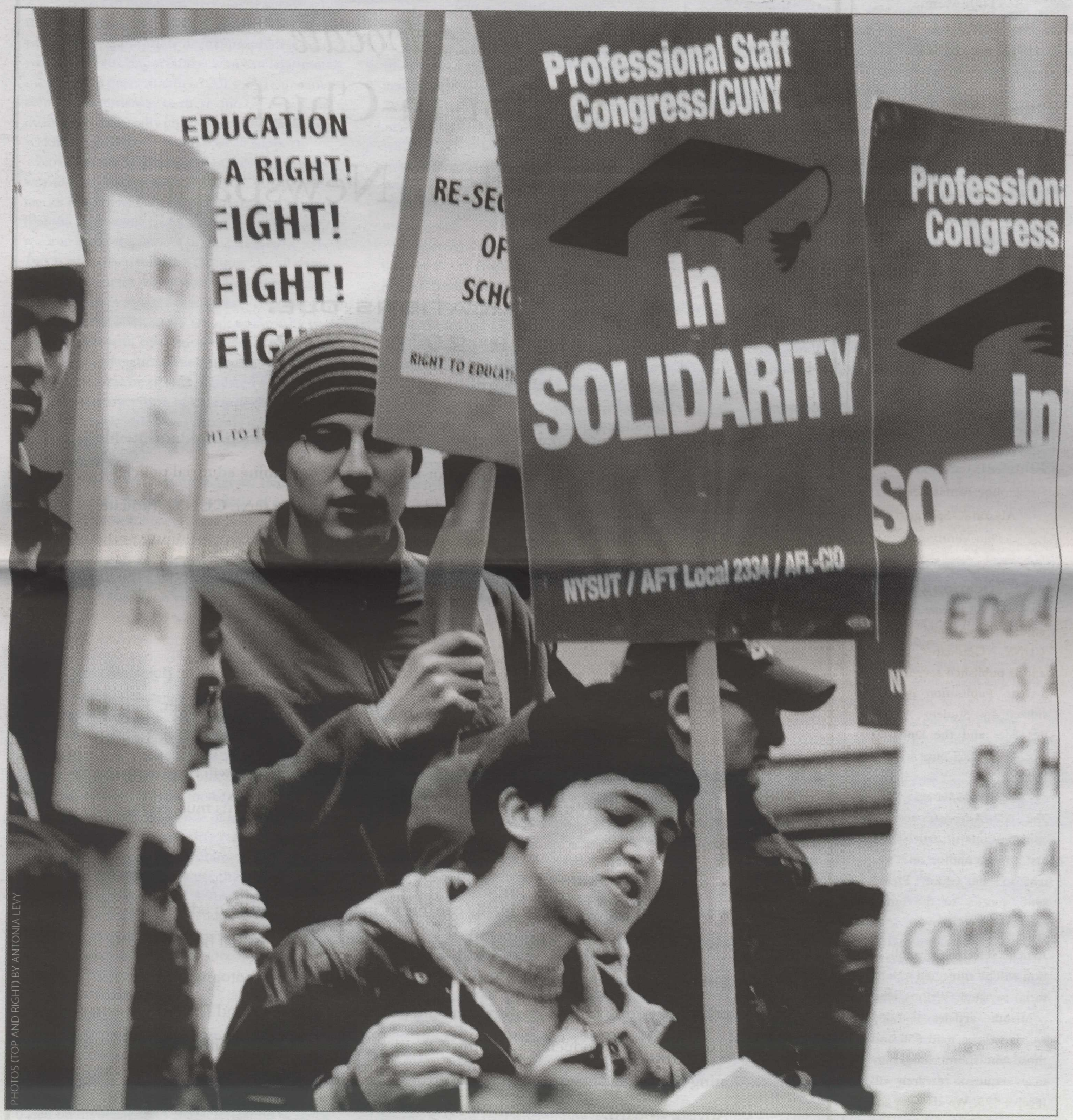

PHOTOS (TOP AND RIGHT) BY ANTONIA LEVY

ALSO INSIDE

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SUBMISSIONS
The GC Advocate accepts contributions of articles, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. Please send queries to the email address above.

Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. Writers who contribute articles of 1,000 words will be paid $50 and those who submit longer articles requiring research will receive $75. We also pay for photographs and artwork.

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JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The Advocate Editor-in-Chief DSC Student Newspaper

APPLICATIONS DUE:
APRIL 27TH, 2012

The Doctoral Students' Council seeks candidates for the open position of editor-in-chief of *The Advocate* student newspaper. The editor-in-chief shall determine editorial policies while respecting the following priority: *The Advocate* shall primarily serve CUNY graduate students as their general forum and as a source of news and information pertaining to their rights and educational, cultural, and professional interests. The editor-in-chief independently determines editorial policy.

The new editor-in-chief will serve from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013, with the possibility of reappointment, and will be paid upon the publication of each issue of the paper. The rate of pay is equal to one-twelfth of the minimum salary for the title of Graduate Assistant B per issue (approximately $900/issue). In addition, the new coordinator will be provided with office space and a budget to pay consultants and buy supplies. Applicants must be matriculated Graduate Center students.

The successful applicant must be highly capable of independent work. In addition to other duties related to running a successful newspaper, the editor-in-chief shall be responsible for: hiring the associate editors, other staff, and freelance writers, photographers, and consultants; ensuring the general content, production schedule, and fiscal well-being of the newspaper; producing a minimum number of issues in accordance with the operating budget; facilitating communication and decision-making among the Advocate Advisory Board.

Interested candidates should forward a cover letter and resume to the DSC Co-Chair for Student Affairs, Eero Laine (ccsa@cunydsc.org), by April 27, 2012.

guest editorial

On Resistance

KRISTOFER J. PETERSEN-OVERTON

Anyone who takes political resistance seriously must eventually confront the timeless question of tactics: which forms of resistance are appropriate to the struggle at hand; and which—if any—are not? A second set of questions necessarily accompanies the first. Namely, by what set of criteria are tactics deemed appropriate or inappropriate to begin with and (most importantly) who can legitimately make such a determination? All social movements respond in some way to these questions, but the dilemma is especially complicated for movements seeking to mobilize a broad base of support.

Now that the first "phase" of Occupy has given way to a more dispersed movement, the debate over tactics has intensified. It's important to remember that the proliferation of ideas and perspectives at work in every movement invariably creates tension. This is part of what makes Occupy, like all democratic movements, so exhilarating. Unfortunately, tension is often misunderstood as disorganization. To those activists for whom uniformity is synonymous with coherence, diversity is perceived as a threat and tactics undertaken on behalf of the movement must be strictly regulated so as not to disrupt a narrow vision of Occupy's character and aims. One such vision was recently articulated by Chris Hedges in his polemic, "Black Bloc: The Cancer in Occupy."

As the title of his column suggests, Hedges sets out to discredit the Black Bloc tactic of protest as incompatible with his vision of Occupy, a cancerous tumor that needs to be excised from the body of the wider movement. To this end, he describes Black Bloc tactics as "criminal," characterized by "hypermasculinity" and "mob violence." Hedges is convinced that Black Blocs transform "human beings into beasts" and "hooligans."

In his one-dimensional characterization, Black Blocs exist for a single purpose: to cause a kind of nihilistic, unthinking mayhem, excused under the euphemistic phrase "diversity of tactics." Whether or not we accept his characterization of Black Bloc protestors, Hedges' argument is important—if only because it underscores the contention over tactics. "Random acts of violence, looting and vandalism," he argues, play into the hands of the state, allowing its police apparatus to intensify repression while alienating the mainstream public.

The corporate state…can use the Black Bloc's confrontational tactics and destruction of property to justify draconian forms of control and frighten the wider population away from supporting the Occupy movement. Once the Occupy movement is painted as a flag-burning, rock-throwing, angry mob we are finished.

Unsurprisingly, the column caused a flurry online, provoking countless responses from across the political spectrum.

There have already been many excellent rebuttals of Hedges' column, but they have generally concentrated on his straw-man characterization of Black Blocs as monolithic and universally violent. There has been virtually no consideration of the deeper intellectual timidity underlying Hedges assumptions about civil disobedience: a form of political cowardice that has become endemic among self-described progressives in this country. Although precious little of what has happened at Occupy protests can be reasonably characterized as violent (or even disorderly), legality has become a reflexive mantra. Meaningful resistance is, in effect, ruled out from the start. To the extent that a social movement refrains from defying the state *in any way*, it is taken as mature. In short, the "disobedience" in "civil disobedience" must be eliminated as much as possible if you want to be taken seriously by today's defanged progressives.

The problem with Hedges' column is not his basic willingness to criticize features of Occupy that he dislikes. Anyone concerned with the future of the movement has his or her own vision of what it can achieve and what the best way of doing it might be. This is understandable. Rather, it is the forcefulness with which Hedges singles out a specific element within Occupy for special denunciation that I find so troubling. Hedges does not simply criticize particular tactics; he suggests that those who engage in such tactics should be excluded from the wider movement.

To advocate for the proscription of anyone from Occupy is a fundamentally anti-democratic impulse. Like those who generally sympathize with Occupy, but resent the involvement of "hippies," it defies the inclusive nature of democratic politics. The implicit division Hedges draws between authentic occupiers and imposters is far more damaging to the movement in the long-term than a couple of broken windows at a corporate coffee shop.

Even if we accept Hedges' central claim that violence in any form undermines Occupy's future prospects, it's still difficult to know where to look for the symptoms he describes. Where are all the broken windows? Where are the police casualties? Hedges raises only one concrete example. He accuses Black Bloc protestors of smashing and looting a locally owned coffee shop in Oakland last November. It's since been revealed that the damage was not actually the work of Black Bloc protestors, nor was the shop locally owned. Yet even this particular case is not statistically significant. Oakland police have been hesitant to report that the overall crime rate in the city dropped by 19 percent since the protests began.

> Don't even think about shouting at the police, no matter how much they pepper spray your comrades.

Hedges is not only concerned about violence and vandalism. He's wary of tactics not recognizable as either violent or lawless. The use of homemade shields, for instance, is oddly condemned as antithetical to the principles of nonviolence—and don't even think about shouting at the police, no matter how much they pepper spray your comrades.

If one looks at the radical social movements throughout the twentieth century from labor and civil rights, to feminism and the antiwar movement, it's pretty clear that change never occurs without challenging state power. This does not necessarily imply violence, but revolutionary activity by definition seeks to disrupt the status quo. It also tends to be unpredictable: violence and property destruction do occur and an unsympathetic media inevitably chooses to focus overwhelmingly on these instances, however minor. We admire figures like Gandhi and King in part because we recognize the discipline it takes to maintain uniform nonviolence in a revolutionary moment. As David Graeber pointed out in his rebuttal of Hedges article, even Gandhi refused to speak out against the bombing of British trains by allies less dedicated to his nonviolent methods. If one can say anything about these matters in the context of Occupy, it's that the movement has not been disruptive enough.

One of the most striking aspects of Occupy, especially for foreign observers, has been its remarkable restraint in the face of unusually aggressive police attacks. While European cities literally burn, American occupiers have been at comparative pains to act in compliance with state power. They remain within designated "free speech zones" during demonstrations, content at being shepherded along by America's finest. In fact, this was a strategic decision made by the New York General Assembly in the movement's early days. Many of the same activists Hedges would exclude from Occupy for allegedly counterproductive behavior were among the earliest nonviolent tacticians of the movement.

In a column for an early edition of Occupy's publication, the *Occupied Wall Street Journal*, Hedges called on Americans to "rise up" and, in a nod to the Palestinian intifada, "shake off" the 1%. Now he condemns those who refuse to conform to his preferred paradigm of resistance. His newfound animus against militancy is especially confusing because, in another column, Hedges seems to embrace riot tactics:

> Here's to the Greeks. They know what to do when corporations pillage and loot their country. They know what to do when Goldman Sachs and international bankers collude with their power elite to falsify economic data and then make billions betting that the Greek economy will collapse. They know what to do when they are told their pensions, benefits and jobs have to be cut to pay corporate banks, which screwed them in the first place. Call a general strike. Riot. Shut down the city centers. Toss the bastards out. Do not be afraid of the language of class warfare—*the rich versus the poor, the oligarchs versus the citizens, the capitalists versus the proletariat.* The Greeks, unlike most of us, get it.

The contrast is striking. Just weeks after three people burned to death in a bank set ablaze by militant protestors in Athens, Hedges praised the Greeks for "getting it," yet he now rebukes American activists for their comparatively tame acts of burning American flags and chanting "Fuck the police." I'm quite sure Hedges would not approve of tactics that result in deaths here in the United States (nor should we) but singing paeans to the Greeks, while condemning militancy at home speaks reams about the problem with the American Left today. Progressives like Hedges are content to romanticize foreign struggles, but at the end of the day, what happens abroad stays abroad.

Occupy is arguably this country's most important broad-based social movement in decades, but we must not shrink from direct action nor should we attack those who engage in minor unlawful tactics. After all, civil disobedience requires at least some forms of disobedience. Protest needs to become open resistance at some point if we expect to change American politics at the structural level. Though we may disagree over just what this means, the movement is strengthened by its diversity. If Occupy represents a democratic moment, a breath of fresh air amidst the double-pronged forces of neoliberal capitalism and American empire, we should be extremely careful not to undermine that spirit by launching trivial internecine attacks. What Eric Hobsbawm wrote with regard to the French revolution remains true of all spontaneous eruptions of political activity: "judgment is less important than analysis … [W]hat is the point of preaching a sermon against an earthquake? (Or in favour of it?)" Ⓐ

Push-Back on Pathways

PSC Presents Roadblock to Pathways

On March 8, the Professional Staff Congress hosted a town hall meeting to debate Pathways, CUNY's proposed program of credit transfer and general education reform. The meeting lasted nearly an hour, during which time dozens of CUNY students and staff spoke out against the initiative to a gathering of hundreds of concerned citizens. PSC President Barbara Bowen was particularly forceful in expressing opposition to Pathways, and made clear the union's solidarity against the proposal. "In more than 20 years at CUNY," she said, "I have never seen anything that has so deeply troubled the faculty as Pathways. Why has it hit a nerve? It's because the claims of Pathways are false, the method of its imposition on us is a direct attack on faculty governance and its effect on students will be disastrous. We can change Pathways," she concluded. "We are not powerless. That's why we have a union, that's why we're here together."

Other CUNY faculty also spoke out, noting particular aspects of the Pathways proposal that are odious to committed educators. Saavik Ford, associate professor of astronomy at the Borough of Manhattan Community College argued that "Pathways, with its three-credit, three-hour science requirement, cannot provide anything but a substandard education." Labsare "a necessary component of any rigorous science course," she noted, and "are really a form of supervised practice. The time they take cannot be shortened. Nor can we cut regular class hours, which are used to introduce, process and decipher the findings that our students make in the lab. In a society becoming...scientifically and technologically complex, where citizens are asked to make judgments on scientific issues just as a matter of participation in public discourse," slashing rigorous science study "is to leave our students disenfranchised as citizens of the future."

Steven Jablonsky, who chairs the music department at City College and is an alumnus of CCNY, talked about the quality education he received while there, which is currently under threat of dilution. "The core curriculum at that time...prepared us for a life as citizens of the city of New York. It also prepared me to go to Harvard University and be on equal footing with anybody from anywhere in the country. It prepared me to be a professor at the greatest college in the city of New York and in the country. And I am very proud of our school and any diminution of what we do is a crime."

Several students also took the mic when the floor was open to audience comments. Amir Khafagy, who currently studies at LaGuardia Community College, began by announcing that "I'm here tonight to express my outrage towards Pathways," which is "a cop-out, an excuse to give students a cheaper, poor quality education. New York students have already been through a Pathways program, and that was the city's high schools." When CUNY students, who are "predominantly of color, of poor, working-class folks…come to college, we strive for the best. And to give us the lowest standard of education, to say you're not good enough…is completely racist and undermines the integrity of the school."

The town hall gathering was bolstered by a petition drive that had collected over 2,500 signatures by March 8, a number which continues to grow. "Five hundred people signed in the first hour," Bowen proudly noted. Among other things, the petition demands that Pathways be repealed by the university's board of trustees at their next meeting (which has been scheduled for April 30). "If we haven't seen any movement from CUNY, we may need to be there in person at the Board of Trustees meeting. We have seen before that our presence can change outcomes, and we may need to be there on April 30." In addition, Bowen announced that the PSC will file a lawsuit to stop Pathways.

Terry Martell, vice-chair of the University Faculty Senate and a plaintiff in the suit, noted that "a lawsuit is not an easy thing. This is not going to be fun. I don't look forward to it." Despite the risk, Martell and others underscored its importance. "Pathways consigns future generations of CUNY students to a grim future in our globalized, competitive world," he said. "I do not want our students to have less of an opportunity because of some ill-conceived, poorly thought-through and poorly executed plan." This "is not a curriculum issue, this is a fundamental issue of the kind of society that we are going to live in." Said Bowen, "I can't think of a better use of [PSC] resources than standing up for the academic integrity of a CUNY education."

Progress Report on CUNY Contract Negotiations

LOL! Tricked you with that headline, didn't we? That's because, of course, there's not much in the way of "progress," per se, in talks between the Professional Staff Congress and lawyers representing the high council of the sith located in the great citadel of Ziost on 80th Street. You won't be surprised to learn that they are some formidably stubborn motherfuckers. Thus far, CUNY has not been willing to make an economic offer that would affect salaries and teaching load concerns.

You may be wondering why the PSC hasn't yet made a full-court press on the economic front. Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC recently explained to the membership that it is "Because the economic offers currently being made to public employees in New York are disastrous. They call for three years of zeros, along with other givebacks such as furlough days and major increases in the cost of health insurance. While the PSC does not negotiate directly with either the City or the State–we negotiate with CUNY–the economic offer we receive is influenced by the economics of the contracts settled by the City and State. The PSC's strategy has been to accomplish everything we can through informal negotiations, while at the same time working to change the economic and political policies that underlie these settlements. Rather than limiting our scope to the bargaining table, we are working with allies to shift the ground on which the table stands."

Not exactly encouraging news. Yet there are positive things to report; namely, that faculty and staff can expect to continue climbing the salary scale even as the contract itself has effectively been suspended due to inaction. That is, unless you have already reached the summit of salary possibilities, in which case your hopes for a higher salary are essentially screwed until a new contract is secured. "That's one reason the union is challenging the claim that public employees in New York have to accept wage freezes," says Bowen. "There is no justification for our taking zero-percent 'increases' while the richest people in the state continue to pay less than their fair share of taxes."

Despite the gains that were made in the last contract, it is still worth pointing out that the process this time around has been exceptionally slow, and the forecast for what lies ahead remains hazy. Bowen's insistence that the political terrain and timing mitigate against the union making a concerted frontal assault on CUNY at the negotiating table are understandable as far as they go, but it doesn't explain what exactly would constitute an "opening" (in Bowen's words) for pressing ahead with demands, nor whether continued support and solidarity within and across unions, sprinkled with a dash of hope, is sufficient to create such an opening, or whether a more militant approach might be called for. After all, it has been a year and a half since the contract expired and nothing—nothing!—substitutive has happened.

#M1

The first stirrings of the "American Spring" were seen and heard on March 1, as hundreds of students across the city marched together from lower Manhattan, across the Brooklyn Bridge and on to Brooklyn Tech, where the Panel on Education Policy was meeting to debate education cuts that will further crowd classrooms and reduce the quality of instruction New York's elementary and high school students' receive.

The action, which was spearheaded by student activists from CUNY, NYU, the New School and Columbia, also focused on the deteriorating situation in public higher education institutions, and the debilitating debt that many students accumulate during their undergraduate and graduate years of study. For some, student debt counts climb up into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Grad Center's own Amanda Matles, in the geography department, told the *Wall Street Journal* that she had personally accrued $45,000 in student loan debt. "But that's nothing," she noted. "I have friends who have $250,000 of debt."

The CUNY contingent produced menus for the march, highlighting "Thursday's Specials," cooked up by CUNY Chef-in-Charge—the Anthony Bourdain of borishness—Matthew Goldstein. They included a "democratic" university system, CUNY's signature dish—an appointed board of trustees baked in spin and topped with a light dusting of faculty and student input; "Meaningful" academic employment—mounds of ungraded papers layered between long hours and multiple commutes, served in a health benefit reduction sauce with a small side of pay ("low in job security!"); and a number of other unappetizing dishes. The so-called #M1 day of action is but the first in a series of planned marches and occupations set to kick off what is expected to be a spring jam-packed with protest,

Above: Professor Steven Jablonsky champions the need for music education at CUNY.

which will culminate with a May 1 national general strike. (see page 11).

Protesters March on Albany

Just days after the large #M1 demonstrations for education, activists took to the steps of the state capitol in New York. Hundreds of protesters from New York Students Rising and Occupy Albany made their outrage known

in Albany on March 5, demonstrating against the double-pronged state strategy to balance the budget by slashing funding and hiking tuition costs at the exact same time. "For years, we students have been pushed to the margins while the state has engaged in gimmicks like NYSUNY 2020 [a purported job creation scheme] at our expense," organizers said in a press release. "Tuition and student-loan debt has increased while we have seen a decrease in both the quality and variety of our education and an utter lack of accountability for our administrators."

Protesters—reported to be more than four hundred in number—marched around the Capitol and ended by chanting in front of Governor Andrew Cuomo's office, where thirty-three activists were arrested for disorderly conduct. They were released later that night. Jimmy Swan, a student at Binghamton University, was clear to reporters about why he was out protesting. Administrators, Swan pointed out, are making "six-figure salaries" while students and faculty experience quite the opposite. "They have low salaries," Swann said, "and they're struggling."

Will Love Tear CUNY Apart?

The start of March witnessed the latest Death Star decree, effectively bringing to an end to any romantic partnerships between faculty and students. Lord of the Chancellery Matthew Goldstein—not exactly known for his embrace of the erotic—issued the decision on March 6 in a memo designed to articulate changes to university policy on sexual harassment. "There are two principal changes from the existing policy, the memo notes. "First, the proposed amendment would prohibit (not merely discourage) intimate relationships between a faculty member or other employee and a student for whom he or she has professional responsibility. Second, the proposed amendment would continue the policy that strongly discourages an employee from having an intimate relationship with a non-student employee whom he or she supervises but adds a requirement that such supervising employee must disclose that relationship to his or her supervisor in order to avoid or mitigate conflicts of interest with respect to the supervision and evaluation of the employee."

News of the ban was note well-received in all quarters. Atossa Ghaemi, an undergraduate at John Jay, told the New York Post that "We're in a post-secondary facility — we don't need to be baby-sat or monitored. We're adults, and we're going to live as we please." Hilariously, one outraged professor—a man—excoriated the proposal in an interview with the *New York* Post by accusing CUNY of "trying to ban love. It's not realistic, because grown women fall in love with older men, and nobody can legislate against this." Apparently the anonymous professor hasn't fully considered the various combinations of romantic union that take place between teachers and students, but it is certainly revealing of his own situation. Anyways, the concern extends beyond possible dictatorships of love. Others worry that sex between faculty and the student, er, body could lead to the undermining of academic integrity as teachers trade sex for grades—directly or inadvertently.

Of course, from the point of the view of the CUNY sith, none of this has to do with love, choice, or integrity but everything to do with liability. The worry about faculty-student relationships stems from a Supreme Court ruling that found universities financially responsible for sexual harassment cases brought by students against their professors. Since then, a number of universities—including Yale, which according to the memo offered the model CUNY has chosen to follow here—have adapted policy to cover their institutional asses in the event that faculty-student liaisons lead to costly lawsuit action. Still, it isn't clear that the official sea-change in policy will produce meaningful results back in the real world. David Gordon, a professor in the history department at the Graduate Center, openly conjectured that little if anything will ultimately result from the university's new posture. "If two people want to become intimate, is someone going to turn them in?" Ⓐ

Above: Student protersters at the #M1 march. PHOTO BY ANTONIA LEVY

adjuncting

Pain and Perseverance

ALYSON K. SPURGAS

This spring will be a crucial time for organizing at CUNY. Put plainly, things are different now. We—as CUNY students and contingent workers—are finding ourselves in the midst of a different political climate with a different emphasis on coalition-building—alongside a simultaneous interest in broadening our tactics, clearly defining our goals, and developing our strategies. We know that we labor within bureaucratic structures that constrain us, but we are now articulating stronger and more serious critiques of these structures and we are militantly mobilizing within and against them. After last year's Arab Spring, the waves created by strikes, direct actions, and protests around the world, and our own consciousness-raising project right here in New York City at Zucotti Park (followed by the "winter of our discontent"), it seems that the bar has been reset pretty damn high. Maybe more is at stake now? Maybe it feels more than ever like there is nothing to lose? Whatever it is, something is different.

New things are happening for the Adjunct Project as well. Much of the energy we have put into advocating on behalf of adjuncts and other contingent graduate student workers at the GC is now being coordinated and facilitated through a more horizontal, autonomous, and inclusive organizing structure, and with renewed energy and dedication to student/labor activism through the Graduate Center's General Assembly. In the wake of Occupy Wall Street and "#occupy"-style organizing more broadly, we have seen renewed interest in defying not only external bureaucracy, but hierarchies within our own organizing circles. This has unsurprisingly been accompanied by strong critiques of approaches that privilege an emphasis on "tactics" and "form" over "strategy" and "content" (the former in these cases being purportedly valorized at the expense of the latter by OWS and company). In my own assessment, these more overtly political conversations are sorely needed, and broaching these topics has largely been productive and invigorating.

As academics, intellectuals, activists, organizers, and people just trying to get by, we often find ourselves forced into political dichotomies—sometimes we force ourselves and each other into these places of "either/or" around our means, ends, praxes, goals, forms, contents, tactics, and strategies. But questions of what our goals are (both short-term and long-term), what they have to do with the crisis in public education and our role as students/teachers/workers at a public university with a radical history, what they have to do with the crisis that is late capitalism more broadly, and how they relate to questions of identity and identity politics around race, class, gender, and sexuality, are really questions about what is to be done—in this moment, under these new and exciting circumstances. If we don't take these questions and each other seriously, we will find ourselves dispersed, worn out, stretched thin, all over the place, and at odds. We are already seeing the residue of too-broad coalitional politics, an emphasis on "inclusion" without a true discussion and taking-stock of political differences and visions, and the vitriol that results from glossing these over as so many different meetings that we simply cannot attend, as so many competing actions, meetings, and events to direct our energy toward.

If we don't take these questions and each other seriously, we will find ourselves dispersed, worn out, stretched thin, all over the place, and at odds..

We must use our own energy, and the (inter) personal struggles we are experiencing, as a way to take each other and ourselves to task, to hold ourselves and each other accountable, and to be introspective about our own politics, egos, and ossified beliefs. Activism hurts. It is painful, but it is necessary. We do it for (and in spite of) our own mental health. This means we must be open to each other, and open to the new sensibilities that might arise from this moment, historically and materially. And the new sensibilities arising in this moment are evidenced by the fact that people who don't always take notice are starting to take notice, those who have not always been active are joining the activities, and those who have shirked accountability are finally being held accountable; take, for instance, the focus of the "Dissent and Security, CUNY-style" meeting at the Grad Center on February 8. This meeting was called for by a planning group that consisted of members of #occupycuny, the Graduate Center General Assembly, and more than forty Distinguished Professor (DP) signatories to a letter of concern to the Chancellor regarding the handling of demonstrations at Baruch College on November 21 and 28, 2011. A delegation of these professors met with Chancellor Goldstein in December, when it was agreed that an independent investigation of the handling of free expression and safety procedures in the university would be called for (this investigation has now been delegated to the Kroll Corporation—the same entity that "investigated" the incident during which peaceful protestors were indiscriminately pepper-sprayed at UC Davis on November 18), and that a subsequent "seminar" on these matters would be convened. Because of delays in this investigation and the planning of said seminar, a student/faculty planning group met to arrange an open meeting to address concerns around dissent, civility, security, and protest, and to produce some sort of joint statement/effort by faculty, students, staff and CUNY community members, especially in light of the events scheduled for March 1. The meeting was well-attended by folks from many different CUNY campuses, and evidenced the distress and outrage a diversity of individuals are feeling over the unjust student arrests and police brutality that occurred at the hands of NYPD and CUNY "peace officers" at Baruch in November. Members of the GC General Assembly and others are currently working on putting together our own statement regarding what happened on November 21 and 28, and we hope to have this ready for wide dissemination by March 1.

Another example of this new sense of responsibility, accountability, camaraderie, and interest in more vigorous organizing was expressed on Tuesday February 21st, when a meeting was called for by Graduate Center PSC faculty and staff to invite students to discuss the March 1st Day of Action and other initiatives. The idea behind this meeting was to allow a space for professors, union officials, and administrators to support and collaborate on events and actions this spring at the Graduate Center, alongside student and adjunct organizers. This meeting was also attended by a diversity of individuals, including students, contingent workers, distinguished professors, and HEOs, and could be taken as evidence of this newfound sensibility of horizontalism, the desire to take the student movement more seriously, and the desire to let folks who are not necessarily in official leadership positions take the lead in organizing actions.

One crucial and telling moment was the coordination of the Nationwide Day of Action for Education on March 1st.Activists across the country came together in a multitude of different actions to defend public education, to express their outrage over the corporatization and privatization of their learning spaces, and to show their solidarity and pave the way for bigger, bolder, and more militant actions on May 1st. The day's events also included a 2pm Manhattan convergence at the Department of Education at 52 Chambers Street, followed by a march over the Brooklyn Bridge to Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn. There was also a lot of action taking place at the Graduate Center on March 1. Students held a "Radical Lunch" in which they spoke out against the militarization of CUNY, the exploitation of contingent labor, the near-sightededness of standardization projects like CUNY Pathways, and the undemocratic and unelected Board of Trustees. Actions like this are just one part of a larger trend in which activists across CUNY will be broadening and becoming more and more inventive with our tactics throughout the spring, while simultaneously honing our focus and overall strategy.

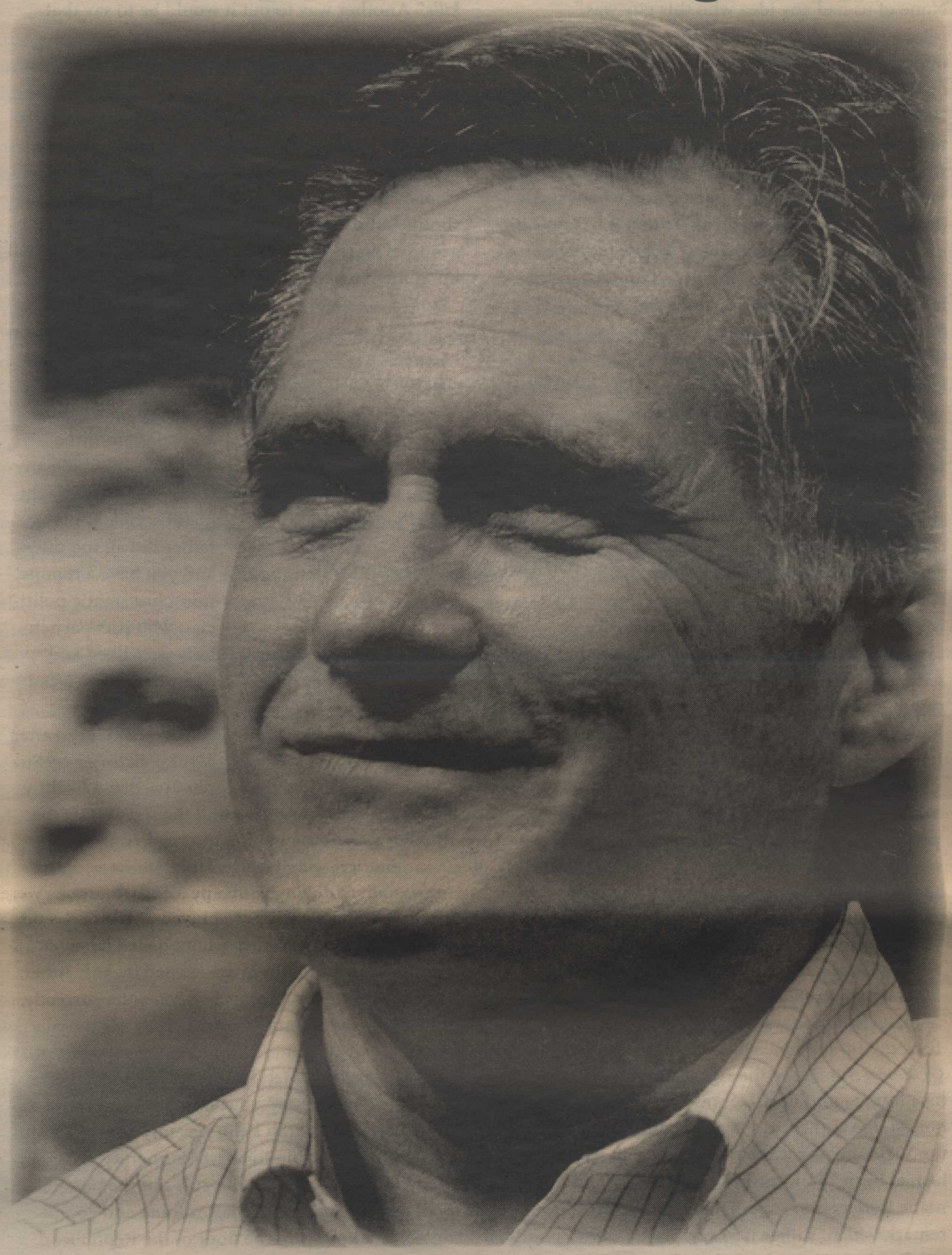
Another important action took place on March 5, when New York Students Rising (NYSR) and Students United for a Free CUNY rallied hundreds of students in Downtown Albany to demand that our elected officials recognize that education is a RIGHT not a privilege. NYSR has also started a petition campaign for the pledge, a compact with legislators designed to bring more transparency and affordability to public universities. For more information on #M5 check out: **nystudentsrising.org** and to sign the pledge, go to **www.change.org/petitions/calling-on-legislators-to-sign-the-nysr-pledge**.This week is also "Teach CUNY" week, from March 5th-11th (with an ongoing campaign throughout the month of March)—spearheaded by activists at BMCC. This year's Teach CUNY is a month-long faculty and student-led campaign to build awareness about the problems caused by decades of cuts to CUNY, including that tuition is increasing rapidly, financial aid is shrinking and harder to earn, class sizes have swelled, underpaid part-time positions have replaced full-time ones, and CUNY's promise of open admissions for all students is in jeopardy (one thing these activists hope to focus on is the fact that students and workers at the CUNY community colleges are hardest hit by all of these things). For more info, check out: **teachcuny.wordpress.com**.

All of these actions give us much promise for a productive (yet possibly painful) spring. The energy is most certainly there; it's simply a matter of getting through the hard conversations, channeling our efforts, and constantly bringing new ideas, styles, people, and relationships into the fold. All of this work is guaranteed to lead us right up to May 1st, and this May Day a General Strike is being called for by organizers around the country. We will have to wait and see where all of this movement takes us in the next couple of months, but one thing is certain, move we will. Ⓐ

political analysis

This Is Not the Droid We Were Looking For

GEOFF JOHNSON



There's a train wreck quality to the 2012 Republican presidential nomination contest. Political observers of all stripes are watching with a mix of astonishment, disgust, fear, and straight-up amusement as the most terrible and ridiculous nominating contest in the history of the country (so far!) plays itself out on our computer and television screens. Analogies to crappy reality TV have long since become cliché—Who Wants to Be a Godawful Presidential Candidate?—and indeed for a brief period an infamous reality-show-thing/person actually led in the national polls.

But, really, who *hasn't* led at some point? Since late 2010, all of the following people have sat atop at least a couple of reputable national polls: Sarah Palin, Mike Huckabee, Mitt Romney, Donald Trump, Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum. Nine different people taking turns leading a presidential race in the year before the Iowa caucuses is likely unprecedented in the history of presidential polling—certainly since the phrase "Iowa Caucuses" began to have any national meaning back in the late 1970s.

Of course it gets worse when one thinks about *who* some of these people who have led in the polls actually *are*. To wit: a real estate mogul/pop culture fixture, a minor congresswoman whose early political career was mainly dedicated to hatred of people who are gay, a Texas governor significantly more stupid and reactionary than George W. Bush, a sexually predatory pizza baron-cum-motivational speaker who bragged about his lack of knowledge of other countries, a much reviled former Speaker of the House who cheated on and then divorced two wives with serious medical conditions and who is unashamedly obsessed with doing stuff on the moon, a condom-hating ex-Senator who was easily defeated in his 2006 re-election campaign and whose surname until recently was associated primarily with an occasional byproduct of anal sex (which he hates because it can't make a baby…at least *not yet*).

And head-and-broad-shoulders above them all: Mitt Romney, for god's sake, whose oft-mentioned robot-like demeanor brings to mind the android president Rudi Kalbfleisch from Philip K. Dick's novel *The Simulacra*, in that Romney doesn't seem particularly human and quite likely wouldn't exert much power if he actually became president.

The story of the 2012 GOP nomination begins, and probably ends, with Willard Mitt Romney. It has ever been thus, like some vague prophecy that is of obvious consequence but yet so boring and annoying that no one can be bothered to give a damn about it. Since failing as the hilariously marketed "conservative alternative" to John McCain in 2008, Mitt has never stopped running for president. Indeed, at this point, he's been running for about six years or so, and there's a sense that most of America is so exhausted by his efforts that we're willing to actually let him have a shot at this thing, hoping that later he will go away or, perhaps even better, just explode once he loses. It is interesting to note that Romney was born roughly six months after Bill Clinton, perhaps the only person of his generation who desired the presidency more than Mitt.

A devoted husband—who, by most public accounts, seems to be genuinely in love with his wife Ann—and probably a fine father, Romney's closest relationships have always been confined to the rather cloistered world that is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints. Understandably—given that the baseline opinion of Mormonism among the average American probably boils down to "yeah, that stuff is kinda weird, I saw that one *South Park* about it"—Romney is at pains to avoid discussion of his religion, despite the fact that his faith has always been at the center of his life. Raised to be a leader in the church, Mitt would follow in the footsteps of his father by eventually heading-up the LDS "stake"—composed of a number of congregations with several thousand members in total—in the Boston area from 1986-1994.

As stake president, Romney offered spiritual advice to other congregants and generally oversaw LDS affairs in the region, akin to the role a bishop would play in a Catholic diocese, except stake presidents are lay authorities. Some Mormons in the stake found Mitt to be thoughtful, caring, and effective, while others described him as imperious and too controlling. He particularly clashed with a group of feminist Mormons who advocated a larger role for women within church affairs (Ann Romney was not a fan of that particular crew), among others.

Regardless of how one evaluates his time as stake president, it's undoubtedly in the LDS milieu that Mitt has had his closest personal relationships and the most contact with "regular folks," necessarily learning intimate details of their lives in his past capacity as a leader in the church. While the Mormon faith is viewed, unfairly or not, as a rather oddball religion by many Americans, it's probably within that context where we would find Mitt at his most "normal" and human, where he has best been able to connect to the concerns of regular people, something for which he seems to have little or no capacity in the political realm (Bill Clinton, in that respect, he is not). But ironically it's this part of Mitt's world—the one that probably makes him most relatable—that he keeps carefully hidden.

Romney is a genuine cipher to basically everyone outside his closest circles—even to colleagues. As one former aide noted to *Vanity Fair*, "he's very engaging and charming in a small group of friends he's comfortable with. When he's with people he doesn't know, he gets more formal. And if it's a political thing where he doesn't know anybody, he has a mask." Former associates from the business world—where Mitt first made his mark and eventually hundreds of millions of dollars breaking up companies—tell a similar story. In a recent *New York* magazine profile, Frank Rich cited one of

Romney's colleagues at the management consulting firm Bain & Company. Observing that Mitt was nice, smart, and a team player, Rich's source then remarked, with bemusement, "Still, whenever the rest of us would go out at the end of the day, we'd always find ourselves having the same conversation: None of us had any idea who this guy was."

Like many other aspirants to the nation's highest office who seem to angle for the position throughout their entire lives (here, again, Clinton comes to mind), a number of Mitt's acquaintances recall thinking even decades ago that Romney might well run for president someday. But, why, exactly? Who is this strange semi-person and what exactly drives him since we can all agree that it has nothing remotely to do with principles? While hardly ever discussed, it's likely that the key to understanding his presidential ambitions, and how he has approached his quest for the presidency, begins with Mitt's father.

Now long forgotten for the most part, George Romney was once a towering figure on the American scene. A prominent and successful auto executive, he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1959 when his youngest son was not yet twelve. He then became governor of Michigan, and by the 1968 election cycle was arguably the top contender for the Republican nomination. George Romney had good looks—square jaw, a shock of white hair on each side of his head—was governor of an important state, a wealthy businessman, and a guy who came off as personable and authentic. Indeed, Romney *père* seemed the perfect presidential candidate, and JFK had specifically remarked that he would never want to run against him.

> "It is like the Republicans have three cartons of rotten milk. … So they take out a carton, pour a drink, gag, put the carton back in the refrigerator, and take out one of the other two cartons *that they've already gagged on*. And they keep doing it over and over again."

But, as Rick Perlstein explains in a blog post for *Rolling Stone*, and in more depth in his excellent 2008 book *Nixonland*, Romney's moderation—they actually had moderate and even liberal Republicans back then—at a time when the post-Goldwater GOP was moving to the right, helped contribute to his ultimate undoing. He was also *too* candid and honest, *too* authentic. Having rightly decided that the Vietnam War was a mistake, he observed that he had been "brainwashed" by military and diplomatic leaders into supporting it in the first place—a remark which, suffice it to say, played rather poorly.

After the brainwashing dustup and a series of other gaffes, Romney crashed in the polls, enabling the ascent of Richard Nixon. President Nixon nominated Romney to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, essentially a deliberate snub as it was hardly a high profile cabinet post (Romney and Nixon did not like each other at all). The two former rivals clashed regularly during Nixon's first term, with Romney once remarking to a friend, "I don't know what the president believes in. Maybe he doesn't believe in anything." Romney was marginalized for four years and resigned at the beginning of Nixon's second term, largely returning to private life and never running for office again.

The political fall of George Romney must have been difficult for his son to watch, particularly since Mitt seems to have worshipped his father. One might even sympathize with the twenty-one-year-old Mitt, seeing his father go from the cover of *Time* and "Great Man" status to fodder for jokes about brainwashing, then eventually to complete political obsolescence. But the specific political lesson Mitt Romney took from his father's downfall is what matters today, along with the basic fact that some part of Mitt's quest to be president is likely bound up with complex feelings about his dad and a desire to achieve something that was denied to George.

While he is like his father in many respects—physical appearance, successful businessman, one time governor of a liberal state—no one would ever accuse the son of being authentic, open, or excessively honest. As Perlstein notes, "Mitt learned at an impressionable age that in politics, *authenticity kills*." Another way to put it would be to say that Romney's political persona is far more analogous to that of Richard Nixon, the man who bested his father in political combat.

Thus we have the horrible awkwardness of the "Rombot": a man who insists on singing all three verses of "America the Beautiful" before an extremely bored audience of elderly Floridians, who shouts "who let the dogs out?" while posing with a group of black Americans, and who, apparently, will upon meeting someone for the first time regularly say "congratulations!" for absolutely no reason whatsoever. Take two parts privileged and sheltered upbringing and add it to three parts fear of saying anything "real" that might go off script, as his father did all too often, and you have a remote, non-charismatic politician who isn't particularly well-liked and definitely isn't trusted by anyone.

As a result, even after several victories on Super Tuesday, a healthy lead in the delegate count, and the simple fact that all of his remaining opponents are, to one degree or another, crazy and unelectable, Romney only manages to stumble drunkenly forward (and he's a teetotaler!). While not hated by the GOP rank-and-file, as is sometimes assumed but belied by most polling, very few of them are excited by him either. Establishment Republicans believe, quite correctly, that Mitt is their best option, but they continually engage in magical thinking about the prospect of some late entrant—Jeb Bush? Mitch Daniels? That jerk from New Jersey?—swooping in, somehow, to save them. Even Sarah Palin recently emerged from her luxury hate cabin to terrify humanity yet again by saying, no, she would not rule out the possibility of being drafted at the last minute and accepting nomination from the floor of the Republican National Convention.

But, really, none of that is going to happen. So-called "brokered" or "contested" conventions are so rare in modern politics that one of the main ways pundits help folks understand the concept is by referring to an episode of *The West Wing* where the Democrats nominated Jimmy Smits because he gave a super awesome speech. No matter how much discontent there is among the party faithful in terms of the available candidates—and there's quite a lot—it's very difficult to imagine a situation where millions of primary and caucus votes are essentially thrown out and a last minute entrant is chosen solely by GOP elites and a couple thousand convention delegates.

Nonetheless that discontent is still there, and while it's almost certain that even Robot Mitt will be unable to pull off not-winning in the end, two other rivals at least have a chance to take it away from him (Ron Paul, whose run is interesting in its own terms, particularly because of what it might portend for the future of the GOP, absolutely will not be nominated). The most likely scenario is that Rick Santorum soon consolidates the coveted if maddeningly fickle "not that Romney guy" vote, Newt Gingrich throws his delegates and supporters to Rick Santorum, and Rick bests Mitt in most of the rest of the contests, somehow getting to the magic delegate number in the end.

Of course the prospect of Rick Santorum as the presidential nominee of a major political party is, on every imaginable level, utterly insane. Really nothing more should be said beyond that except that there is a (very small) chance that it could happen. Newt Gingrich is even less likely to be nominated than Santorum—and would be even more disastrous for the GOP—but given the never-ending momentum changes, that outcome is likewise not completely impossible.

The blogger Pete Spiliakos had perhaps the most apt metaphor for the current state of the race, explaining the dynamic between Republican voters and the three losers who have actually won a state thusly: "It is like the Republicans have three cartons of rotten milk. They've already taken a taste out of each carton and, on some level, know the milk is bad in all of them. So they take out a carton, pour a drink, gag, put the carton back in the refrigerator, and take out one of the other two cartons *that they've already gagged on*. And they keep doing it over and over again."

It's been really funny to watch, but unfortunately in the end Republican voters will probably choke down an entire cartoon of Mittmilk, at which point things will become *really* annoying. Thanks to the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Democracy, Freedom, and Common Sense*, come the general election we will be treated to an endless slew of ads from both Democratic and Republican "Super PACs," organizations funded by what Ari Berman has labeled the ".000063%," i.e. "the 196 donors who have provided nearly 80 percent of the individual contributions raised by super PACs in 2011 by giving $100,000 or more each."

It will be an exceedingly ugly campaign, and just as, if not more important, than the outcome will be whether or not we have a discussion about the nature of a political system where billionaires can spend unlimited sums to influence elections to their liking—i.e. a system even more terrible and corrupt than the one we had before *Citizens United*. If we're lucky, as it gets warmer the Occupy movements will return in force to the streets—and to the national conversation—helping to steer us away from horserace nonsense (like this stupid article) and toward a more systemic critique of our politics. If we're unlucky, the conversation will be dominated by discussions of whether Romney was wrong to stick his dog on the roof of his car like that and what it means that Obama once gave a hug to a professor of his from law school.

One year ago President Obama's re-election prospects looked quite grim. He still might lose, but certainly folks in his Chicago headquarters are feeling much better now. If Obama doesn't win in November, we will probably be saddled with a President Romney: a man the GOP base never loved, who will thus fear his right, Tea Party flank above all, and who will govern accordingly—i.e. probably at least as conservatively as George W. Bush did.

More likely than that semi-apocalyptic prospect is an Obama victory and then four more years of whatever it is you think the Obama presidency has been so far. As for the Republicans, a loss from Romney will lead the party faithful to conclude that, once again, they didn't pick a *real* conservative, and that's why they lost, and the odds will increase that, come 2016, Republicans will nominate a candidate who makes Michele Bachman look thoughtful and Donald Trump dignified.

At the end of the day, if Mitt Romney becomes the nominee and then loses the general election, it will probably further empower the far-right elements of the GOP who worked so hard to end his father's political career, and made Mitt so goddamned sad inside that all he could think to do was run for president. Ⓐ

IN memoriam

Remembering Louis Reyes Rivera

CONOR TOMÁS REED

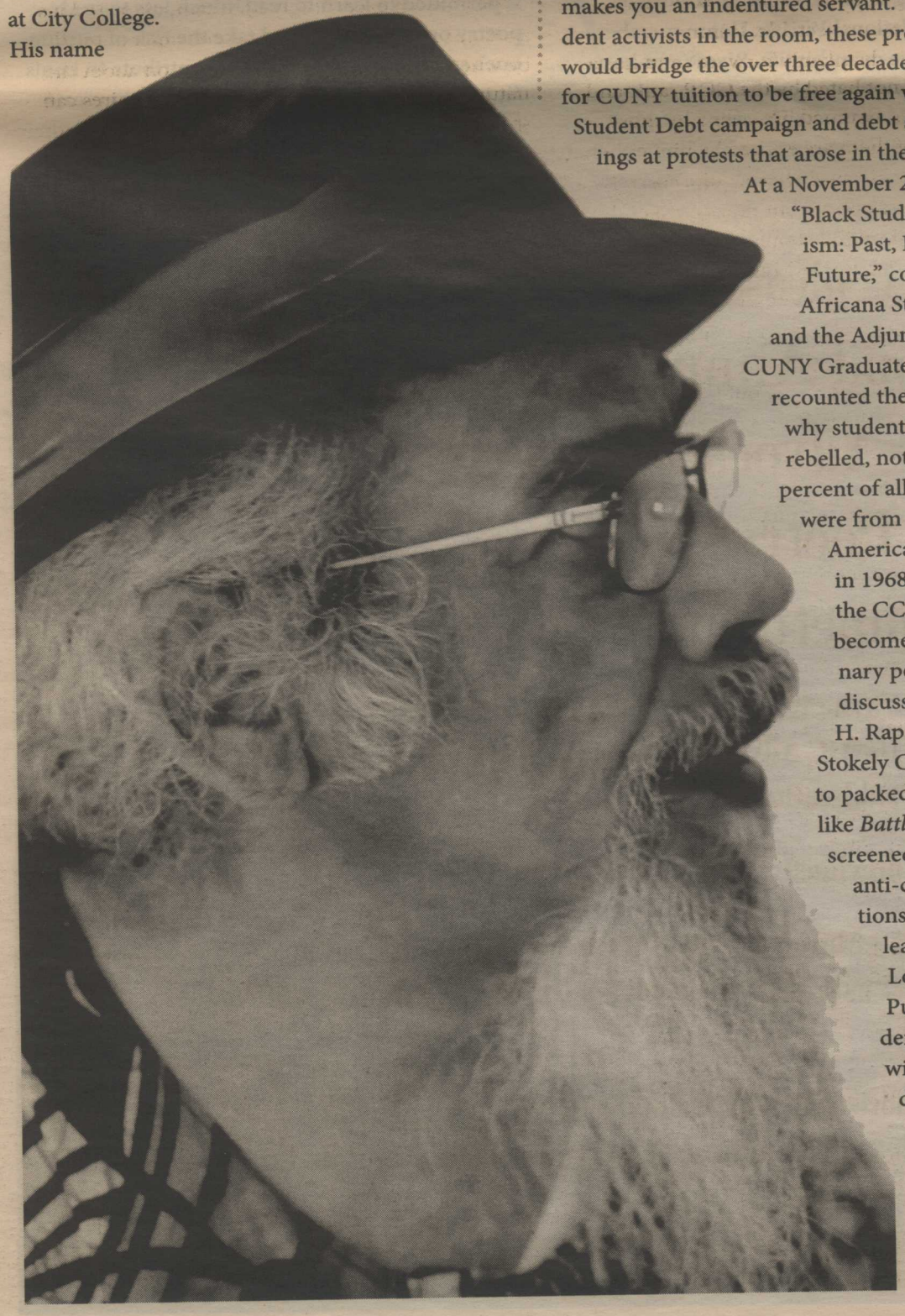
Louis Reyes Rivera—poet laureate and people's historian of the CUNY movement—passed away in the early hours of March 3, 2012, leaving behind a legacy as vibrant as the Africana, Latin@merican, and Caribbean communities for whom he dedicated his life to document and praise. As evident in the dozens of public remembrances that have already surfaced since his death, Rivera will be celebrated as a tirelessly principled elder and radical artist par excellence to a huge extended family in the social justice, performance, and writing scenes in CUNY and around NYC. Rivera is survived by his wife, Barbara Killens Rivera; two daughters, Abiba Deceus and Kutisha Booker; son Barra Wyn; and four grandchildren, James Booker, Akalia Booker, Quamey Venable, and Jean-Oliver Deceus.

Many of us revere Rivera as an active participant and chronicler of the 1969 City College of New York Strike for Open Admissions and the formation of an Ethnic Studies department, during which Black and Latino students occupied campus buildings as part of a massive city-wide student and community rebellion linking social movements to higher education. With his classmate and fellow poet Sekou Sundiata, Rivera co-founded *The Paper*, the first CUNY student newspaper under the control of Black and Puerto Rican students that still operates today as a leading political and artistic forum for students of color at City College.

His name and tremendous inspiration continues to resound in staff discussions of *The Paper*'s past, present, and future mission.

Rivera never ceased to engage with his political action roots at CUNY. I first had the honor to meet him at City College during a March 4, 2010 student walkout as part of a national education day of action. I had anticipated this opportunity ever since beginning my studies there in 2006 and hearing stories about him within our school's richly subversive history. On that cold and wet day in March, Rivera came to speak with the few hundred students gathered outside the North Academic Center, laughing and chanting with critical purpose despite the rain that dampened our posters and banners. At a stature of less than five feet, with his loud, steady, luminous flow of prose-poetry, Rivera was the embodiment of the idea that we, history's little folks, could galvanize and transform any space we occupied.

More recently, in 2011, Rivera joined two panels that spoke to students and faculty about these histories. At a February 22 event on "CUNY Student Strikes," hosted by Students United for a Free CUNY, Rivera stated, "You have to be willing to challenge everything, even the assumption that you have to go to school and pay for it. Students leave either through the front door with a degree in one hand and a debt in the other or the leave through the backdoor with no degree but a debt. That makes you an indentured servant." For many student activists in the room, these prescient remarks would bridge the over three decades-long struggle for CUNY tuition to be free again with the Occupy Student Debt campaign and debt statement-burnings at protests that arose in the fall of 2011.



At a November 2011 event on "Black Student Radicalism: Past, Present, and Future," co-hosted by the Africana Studies Group and the Adjunct Project at the CUNY Graduate Center, Rivera recounted the conditions for why students of color have rebelled, noting that only 10 percent of all CUNY students were from non-European American backgrounds in 1968. He shared how the CCNY campus had become an extraordinary political realm for discussion and debate. H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael spoke to packed rooms, films like *Battle of Algiers* were screened in the wake of anti-colonial revolutions in Africa. Future leaders of the Young Lords Party and the Puerto Rican Student Union engaged with Black students in the Onyx Society, as well as committed anti-racist white students, to form an alliance that led them to take over buildings upon coming to the conclusion that, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., the administration's call to "wait almost always means never."

Rivera's contribution electrified the room at a time when many of us in the CUNY community had become actively involved in the Occupy movement, and desired to learn how immense concrete victories had been won in the past. Kristin Moriah, Africana Studies Group Co-chair, offers these words of remembrance about the event: "We wanted to assemble a group of people who could speak to the diverse forms of activism at CUNY that often get obscured. The word "activist" tends to conjure a certain sort of white male image that doesn't necessarily hold true at CUNY. Holding the panel was a way of refuting that and emphasizing the importance of cross-racial solidarity in student activism.

"Louis Reyes Rivera had an incredible presence; he was a small powerhouse. With his flowing beard and yellow dashiki he was striking. It was impossible not to be struck by his wit, wry humor and passion for activism. He captivated everyone in the audience during his last talk at the Graduate Center. He was able to crystallize so many of the issues that concern us, especially the importance of access to a liberal arts education and the development of critical thinking skills. He wanted us to know our own history. He loved the people of New York and he believed that CUNY was worth fighting for because of these people. He was so generous with his wisdom. It was a tough act to follow.

"I think that he really came to speak to us at the right time. In so many ways, that panel was a gift. Watching the reaction of the crowd reemphasized how important it is that that link to our activist past be maintained and that the contributions of black and Latino student not be erased from our institutional history. We have a lot of incredibly talented and committed young activists at CUNY. We're doing a lot of amazing work right now, but we didn't invent the wheel. It's important for us to remember that we are part of a long tradition. Even though the battles we're facing now might seem uphill, we have faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles before AND won. There's a great comfort in that. For me, Louis Reyes Rivera's passing really means losing an important link to CUNY history. It's so important that Louis and his work not be forgotten."

Rivera's involvement in the CUNY movement represented only one of a spectacular array of his projects that could easily fill several lifetimes. Many respected, worked alongside, and learned from Rivera as a poet and performer. CCNY professor Herb Boyd writes, "At the National Writers Union, a steering committee in which Rivera was a key component called an emergency meeting and set in motion a number of ways to remember their tireless member. 'He was intricately involved in so many activities that it will probably take a team of us to fulfill just half of what he was doing and what was on his agenda,' said Loretta Campbell."

In a stunning display of persistence to share knowledge for all, Rivera helped publish over 200 books, including John Oliver Killens' *Great Black Russian*, Adal Maldonado's *Portraits of the Puerto Rican Experience*, and Sekou Sundiata's *Free!* He also co-edited *Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam* with Tony Medina, and *Bandana Republic: A Literary Anthology by Gang Members and Their Affiliates* with Bruce George. Rivera's publishing

company Shamal Books regularly released collections from some of the city's finest poets. During this time, Rivera published four books of his own work: *Who Pays The Cost* (1978), *This One For You* (1983), *In Control of English* (1988 and 1992), and *Scattered Scripture* (1996).

Sandra Maria Estevez writes of Rivera's own award-winning collection *Scattered Scripture*, "A volume of highly crafted poems of militant and radical perspective, it is a literary masterpiece that attempts to translate history into poetry, covering the chapters missing from official renditions of history. This collection took twenty years of research to create. The first poem completed for the book, "(what are they doing)," was written in 1974, and the last poem, "(like toussaint, so marti)" was written in 1995. In between came all the other works as responses to his research. *Scattered Scripture* contains forty-one pages of notes that provide the sources and historical context for the poems, making the book complete as a poetic song, a historical document, and an instructional device."

Before his death, Rivera had just finalized for publication a 150-page epic poem *Jazz in Jail*. In a Spring 2009 interview with Eric Serrano, Rivera explained its purpose: "This project began roughly seven years ago. What happens if Jazz (personified) gets busted and put in jail? For what? For trying to stand against the exploitation of music by the music industry... For trying to bring together all of the music that comes out of the Diaspora—Reggae, Samba, Mambo, Calypso, Merengue, Hard bop, Cool bop, Be bop, the Blues, Mother Blues (the mother of Jazz), Grandpa Dirge, Grandma Praise Song, Work Song, Birth Song, the Chant—into one huge convention of the music, a family reunion – *Let's discuss our condition...* So I had an opportunity to pay homage to poetry and music, to show you the conditions inside a prison and inside the court room, and I could even trace the history of it."

Rivera's dedication to changing—as well as documenting and performing—people's histories was infused in the ongoing community literacy and orality programs he led at Sistas' Place in what he liked to call the "People's Independent Republic of Brooklyn." For many years he ran a four-hour writing workshop on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays, as well as "Jazzoetry" and open mic sessions on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Moreover, for several years River hosted the WBAI radio show "Perspective," a dynamic forum on all matters political and cultural for the people of New York. One of his students, Rich Villar, reminisced after Rivera's death: "Documentation is a behavior I learned from him. Archive is a survival instinct he tried to teach us all."

Indeed, Rivera was precisely the kind of representative educator who CUNY students have continually fought to include in our schools: "I come from a peasant background (i.e., Puerto Rico), from the lumpen proletariat (i.e., urban ghetto), and from the dispossessed (i.e., of African and Amerindian descent), and I choose deliberately not to forget or forsake that there is beauty and relevance in that lineage. No shame. But no arrogance either." He repeatedly said that he wished to be remembered "as a bridge between the various currents of the underclass." Rivera also once clarified, "If I am an academic, it's by default. I never looked at it as teaching as much as sharing with others. Information is supposed to be part of our natural inheritance, just by virtue of our birth. What we call education is really more like being tricked and trained to meet the demands of labor."

One part bell hooks, one part Howard Zinn, Rivera "distinguished himself as a professor of creative writing, Pan-African literature, African-American culture and history, Caribbean history, Puerto Rican history, and Nuyorican literature at such institutions as State University of New York-Stony Brook, Hunter College, College of New Rochelle, LaGuardia College, Pratt Institute, and Boricua College," writes National Writers Union member Barry Hock. Throughout his life, Rivera was honored with numerous awards, including a lifetime achievement award from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1995), a Special Congressional Recognition award (1988), and City College of New York's 125th Anniversary Medal (1973).

Because of these myriad achievements, Rivera's legacy must be both honored and extended for more people to learn. Hank Williams, another panelist in the "Black Student Radicalism" event, argues, "Louis Reyes Rivera, known as 'the janitor of history,' is the type of person who we often allow to fall through the cracks of recorded 'official' history, but whose memory is passed on through the African oral tradition. In some ways, that's fitting, because that's how he often operated himself. Anyone who's seen or heard his incredibly gripping poem on being in the room during Malcolm X's assassination ["Bullet Cry"] can attest to the power of the spoken word when used by him. In 2011, he was honored at the Harlem Book Fair and said that he understood that his mastery of words and as a storyteller came with a great responsibility: that of telling the truth. This is what he did. It will get you in trouble if your concern is mainstream acclaim, but his concern was more for those who, like him, were on the underside of history. He repped us proudly and well."

In the essay "Inside the River of Poetry," Rivera asserted the profound stakes that guided this quality of fiercely conscientous and loving interaction with our communities. "Always there is need for song... And every human has a poem to write, a compulsion to contemplate out loud, an urge to dig out that ore of confusion locked up inside. But with the contradictions of privilege and caste, of class and gender distinctions regulating access, of those ever present distortions in textbooks with their one-sided measure of human worth, and with the culture of white man still serving as ultimate yardstick to what is acceptable as matter, not everyone is permitted to learn to read, much less to study poetry or hone the art and take the risk of putting one's self on paper." May we all contribute to Louis Reyes Rivera's memory by endeavoring to create a society that one day welcomes poetry from everyone. Ⓐ

SUBMIT NOW
DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 2012

GC Advocate is pleased to announce the Second Annual GC Advocate Poetry Competition.

The winning entry chosen by our judge Wayne Koestenbaum will receive a $250 cash award plus publication in the May, 2012 issue of the GC Advocate. Second and third place winners will receive $75 and $50 respectively plus publication.

The contest is free and open to any poet, previously published or unpublished.

Submissions must be received no later than March 31, 2012. Winners will be notified by April 30. All poems submitted to the contest will also be considered for possible future publication in the GC Advocate.

To enter, submit up to five poems of no more than 6 pages total as a Word attachment to advocate@gc.cuny.edu no later than March 31, 2012. Please be sure to include "Advocate Poetry Competition" in the subject line.

NO HOUSEWORK
NO SHOPPING
NO BANKING
NO SCHOOL
NO WORK

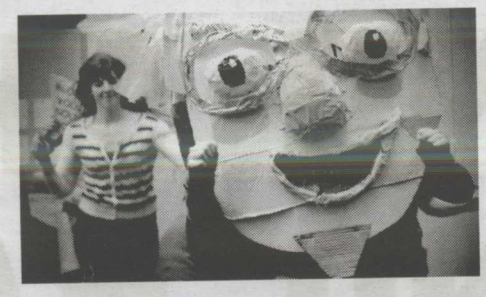
STRIKE STRIKE STRIKE MAY 1 EVERYWHERE

A Radical Lunch

March 1, 2012 marked the #M1 National Day of Action for Education called for by various student/teacher groups all over the country including Occupy Education and Occupy Colleges to highlight problems within the educational system, such as a lack of democratic decision-making and growing corporatization. In New York City, groups including Students United for a Free CUNY and NYC All City Student Assembly called for local, school-based actions in the morning to be followed by a rally in front of the Dep. of Education in downtown Manhattan and a protest march over the Brooklyn Bridge to Ft. Greene Park, with speak-outs at various sites along the way.

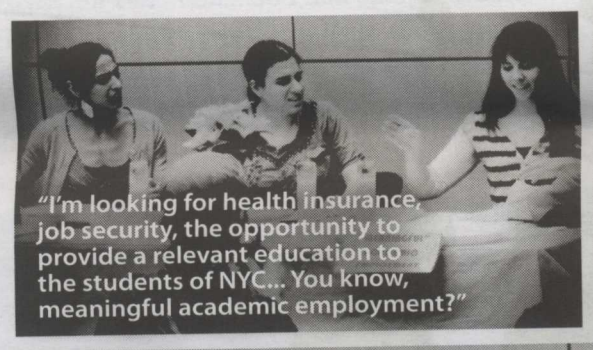
As part of the Day of Action at the Graduate Center, students from the GC General Assembly served up a "Radical Lunch" as a way to raise awareness about various issues related to affordable public education and academic freedom at CUNY. After distributing the day's "Menu" (see sidebar) to the surprised patrons in the Dining Commons, kazoo sounds filled the room and the various "dishes" were served to the table of mock diners. There was, for example, an order of "democratic space where the public has control of the university" which didn't even make it to table due to being grabbed and eaten by "Chancellor Goldstein" who declared it "delicious," tasting "like $500,000 and a living stipend." Or the "adjunct" at the table asking for meaningful academic employment – as to be served up with multiple commutes, long hours of grading and "hardly any health insurance."

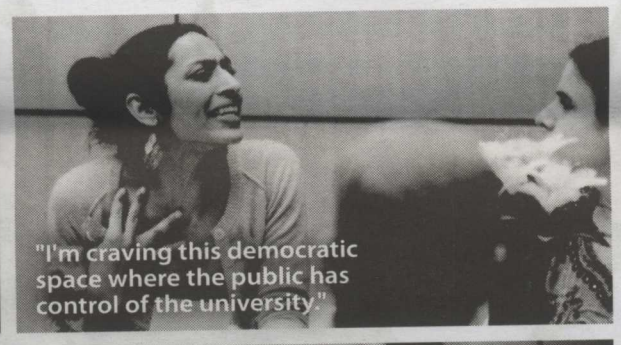
Short sound bites between servings, delivered by students planted among the audience, laid out some of the hard facts underlying the direct action: even if founded as a free university, CUNY introduced tuition in 1976 and has raised it since again and again, with a recent increase of $300 per year through 2015. Members of CUNY's undemocratically appointed Board of Trustees sit on the boards of major corporations or big banks, and favor an increasing privatization of a university that is run on an economic model. Wages of all CUNY instructors have dropped 30 to 40 percent since the 1970s, the majority making less than 10 percent of their chancellor's salary. In addition, in the past thirty years CUNY cut its full-time faculty in half, relying instead on an increasing flock of part-time instructors, which do not earn a living wage, have no job security, and teach classes constantly growing in size. To make matters worse, public sector employees are subject to New York's Taylor Law, which includes a "no-strike clause" and strict penalties for its violation – basically making striking and other work stoppages extremely difficult or illegal.

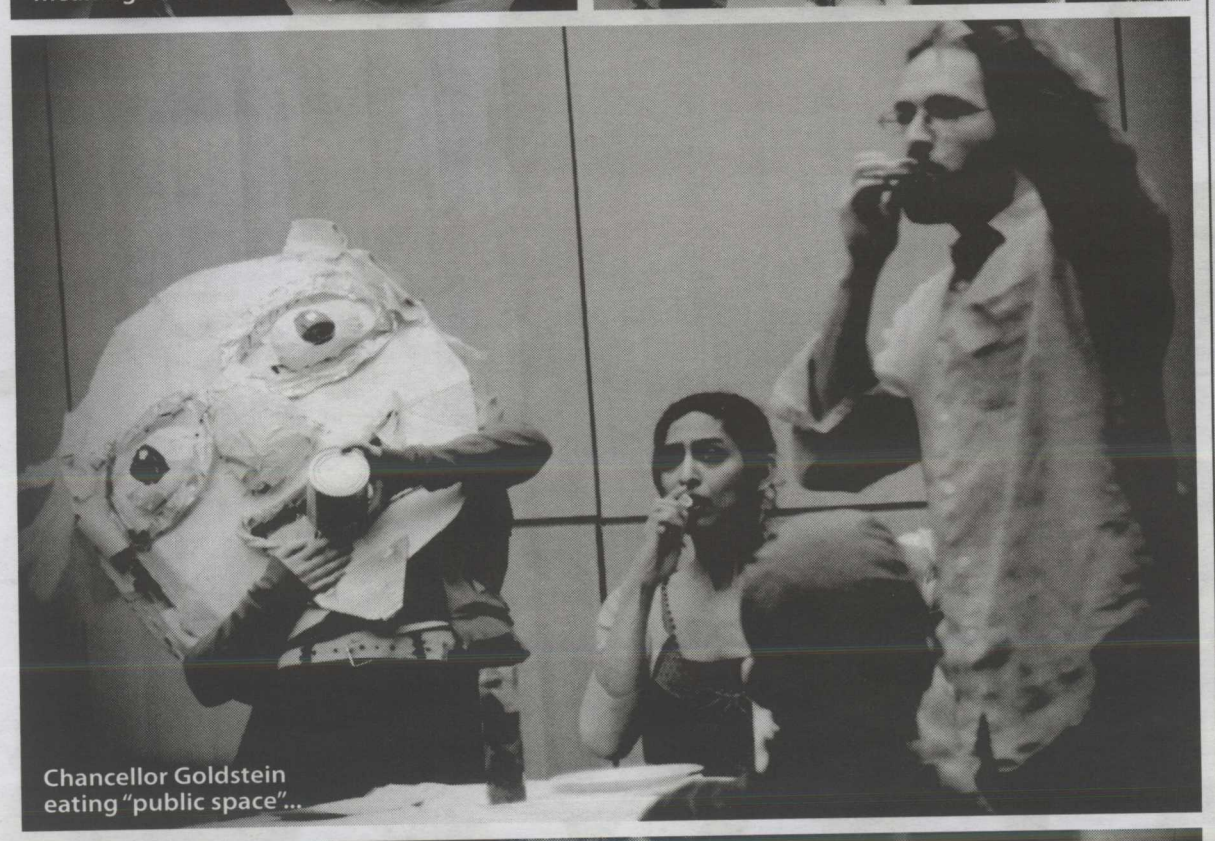


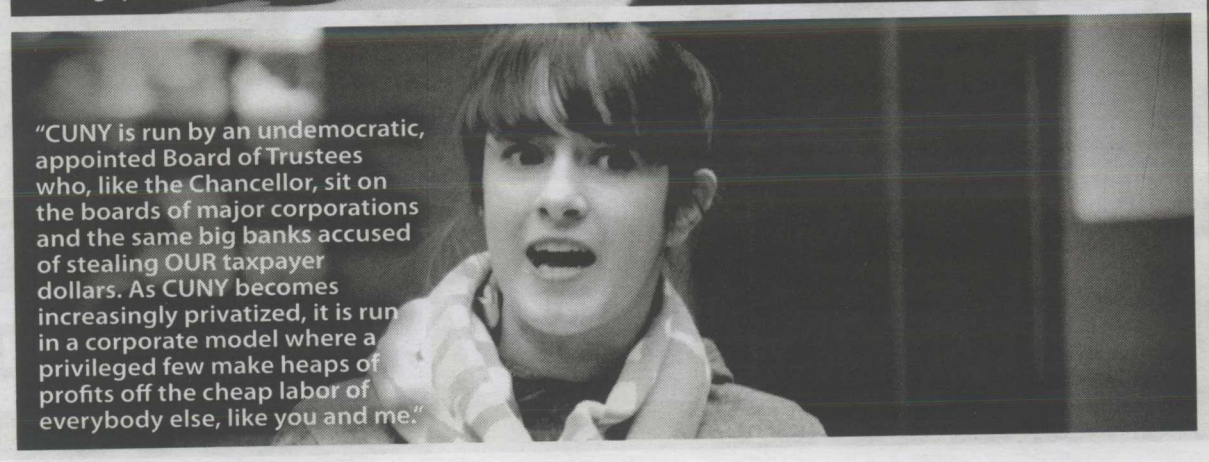
Alluding to recent assaults of student protesters at Baruch, the plot reached its high point when, wait … who?… "It's a crab!" – "It's a troll!" – "It's a Kroll!" entered the stage to face the two already handcuffed students that had asked for the "right for peaceful protest." Introduced as a "University of California delicacy" that would be "served up with pepper spray", the Kroll went on to introduce "data-mining, intelligence, and on-the-ground security" to the academic community – but in the end was chased out of the room by the united kazoos of the room, a 1991 mix tape on a boom box, and the dancing members of this successful direct action's cast. All in all a delicious – i.e., smart, funny and, yes, radical – "lunch" with hopefully many successors! Ⓐ

— Photos and text by Antonia Levy









Cuny

MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN
PROPRIETOR

Thursday's Specials

A "DEMOCRATIC" UNIVERSITY
OUR SIGNATURE DISH—CRAFTED AND SERVED BY PROPRIETOR MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN—AN APPOINTED BOARD OF TRUSTEES BAKED IN SPIN AND TOPPED WITH A LIGHT DUSTING OF FACULTY AND STUDENT INPUT

"MEANINGFUL" ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT
MOUNDS OF UNGRADED PAPERS LAYERED BETWEEN LONG HOURS AND MULTIPLE COMMUTES, SERVED IN A HEALTH BENEFIT REDUCTION SAUCE WITH A SMALL SIDE OF PAY—LOW IN JOB SECURITY!

"RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST"
A SURPRISE CONCOCTION OF TAX-FED INGREDIENTS TENDERIZED WITH BATONS, LOCALLY PREPARED BY THE CUNY "SAFE" TEAM AND SPECIALLY SPICED BY CHEF NYPD

"SAFE AND SECURE" LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
A UC DAVIS DELICACY! THIS CLASSIC KROLL DISH SMOTHERS THE SCALES OF JUSTICE WITH FIRST AMENDMENT VIOLATIONS, CORPORATE HANDSHAKES, AND A FINE PEPPER SPRAY MIST

"AFFORDABLE" PUBLIC EDUCATION
"FAIR" MARKET PRICE
SHIPPED FRESH FROM ALBANY AND REHEATED AT 80TH STREET, THIS DELICACY IS A FAVORITE OF LEGISLATORS, CORPORATE PARTNERS, AND SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS

Dessert & Digestif

MANHATTAN CONVERGENCE 2PM
NYC DOE, 52 CHAMBERS STREET

CADMAN PLAZA, BROOKLYN 3PM

MARCH OVER BROOKLYN BRIDGE

FT GREENE PARK, BROOKLYN 4PM

UNIVERSITY AND BANK ACTIONS DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN

RALLY AT PANEL FOR ED POLICY BROOKLYN TECH HIGH SCHOOL

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2012

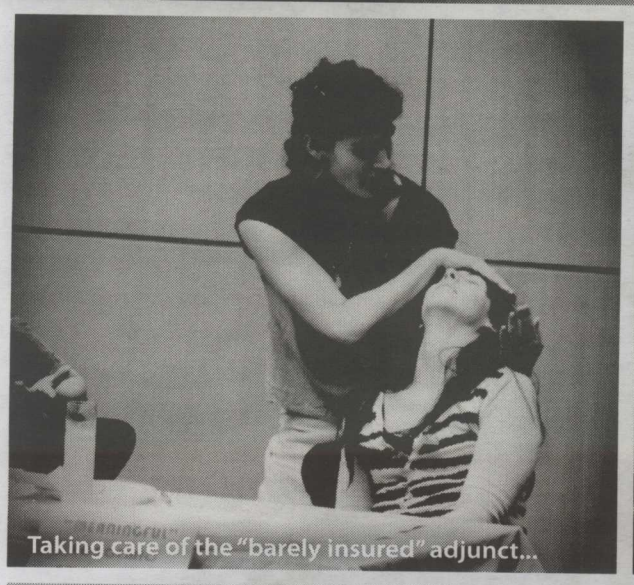
HOURS FOR MEALS

LUNCHEON, 12:30 TO 1

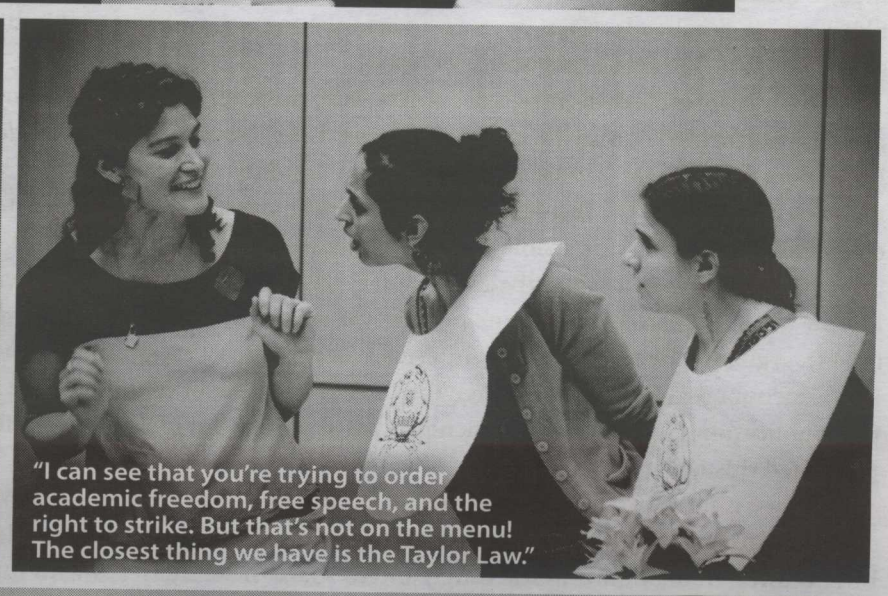
DESSERT, 2 THROUGH EVENING

"The KROLL is out of control! I love to surveil- I provide data-mining, intelligence, and on-the-ground security, to corporations and universities."

"People don't ask for me. They just get served."



Taking care of the "barely insured" adjunct...



"I can see that you're trying to order academic freedom, free speech, and the right to strike. But that's not on the menu! The closest thing we have is the Taylor Law."

Daniel Gerould (1928 – 2012)

Amy E. Hughes '09

Assistant Professor of Theater History and Criticism, Brooklyn College (CUNY)

Although I began doctoral studies at the CUNY Graduate Center with hazy hopes of becoming a scholar of medieval theatre, during my first semester I registered for Daniel Gerould's course on melodrama, one of several popular seminars that he taught regularly. Looking around the room on the first day, I noted how crowded it was. I also saw many unfamiliar faces. I soon learned that I had stumbled upon a community comprising not only theatre history students but also individuals studying comparative literature, film, and other subjects. (Dan covered an astonishing array of material in his seminars, so he attracted such motley crews.)

Many strange and exhilirating adventures were in store. We discussed "melodramas" performed across the globe and across time, from Euripides's *Medea* to Pixérécourt's *Le Chien de Montargis* to Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. We wrestled constantly with the definition of melodrama itself, reading a plethora of articles and chapters by scholars endeavoring to explain (and configure) this often-maligned but nevertheless enduring genre. For my seminar paper, I wrote about a Boston clergyman's possible co-authorship of *The Drunkard* (1844), arguably the most famous American temperance melodrama. With Dan's encouragement, the following year I revised the paper and it became my first publication. My first book, which is in large part about melodrama, will be published this fall.

My story is far from unique; many of Dan's students have similar ones. We are the fortunate beneficiaries of his indefatigable curiosity, which compelled him to unearth diamonds in the rough and to share those treasures with others. He is most celebrated and admired for his scholarship on Eastern European theatre, which has made a transformative impact on the field. But his publications on melodrama and his teaching of the subject has also had a significant impact on the study of theatre and drama in the US during the nineteenth century.

It seems incongruous to write a memorial about someone as esteemed as Daniel Gerould and to end up writing mostly about yourself. Yet this, in itself, reflects something vitally important about him, both as a model and a mentor. My memories of Dan are inseparable from the knowledge of how he affected and shaped me—how he helped me choose my specialty as a theatre historian; how his careful questions and critiques of my writing continue to influence my work; how his rigorous and interdisciplinary approach to teaching subtly but profoundly informs what I do in my classroom. For these invaluable gifts, I will be forever grateful.

Shari Perkins

Doctoral Student, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

I had my first encounter with Daniel Gerould when I was nineteen, in the form of a copy of *American Melodrama* that I purchased for a theatre history survey at Cornell University. Almost ten years later, as an MA student at Hunter College, I encountered Professor Gerould again, through his delightful collection of theatrical theory, *Theatre/Theory/Theatre*. Although the theoretical material was highly informative, what fascinated me about his book was the thick description Professor Gerould provided to humanize each of the theatrical giants whose work he anthologized.

Less than a year later, I was nervously waiting to meet *the* Daniel Gerould—in person—to discuss applying to the Graduate Center. What was I expecting? Certainly not the reedy, soft-spoken gentleman in a bowtie and jacket who greeted me—a complete stranger—with warmth and enthusiasm. Dan listened with excitement to my research interests, immediately introduced me to his staff on *Slavic and East European Performance* for a private chat so I'd get to know about the program from the students' perspective, then welcomed me back to his office with a smile, an invitation to take his Avant-Garde Between the Wars course in the fall, and the statement, "Now, let's just assume everything goes *our* way and you *will* get into the program . . ."

It was that moment that I knew that I had met a true mentor—a scholar who could view his students with the innocence and glee of a co-conspirator, who wielded authority tempered with deep humanity, and who was as skillful at understanding and managing people as he was with writing the thick biographical descriptions which made his theory collection so outstanding. At the same time, his knowledge was seemingly inexhaustible: Dan's syllabi were often composed of the most improbable combinations of plays and a long list of mysterious keywords related to the day's readings. One entered the classroom eager to hear exactly why he had placed those particular pieces together, and left with hints for a dozen additional directions one could pursue to understand the works in greater depth.

In the past three years, I worked with Dan in many different capacities: as his student in every course he offered since our first meeting, as the managing editor and senior editorial advisor of *SEEP*, and on my Masters thesis for Hunter College. The greatest lesson that Dan taught me as a scholar is to trust and value my own instincts. No matter how obscure or ambitious the idea I brought up, Dan seemed to share my passion. He had mastered the art of saying "yes, but . . ." to guide me as a scholar, an editor, and—dare I say it—a human being.

Often, when I visited Dan's office, I'd admire and compliment the framed photograph of his cat that he displayed prominently on his desk. This photograph will remain one of my favorite memories—a detail from his life away from the Segal Center that both touched and fascinated me, and which now reminds me of how very little I knew him, despite working closely over the past three years. Nevertheless, as I stand before my own classrooms of students now, I realize that I have been given a great gift: a role model for the kind of academic I aspire to become.

Chris Silsby

Doctoral Student, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

One of the first classes I took at the Graduate Center was Dan's seminar in Symbolist Drama. The room was so packed that every available inch of space into which we could cram a chair was filled, and still some latecomers had to share seats—a very difficult arrangement for a seminar class, but evidence fo the popularity Dan enjoyed as a teacher. Even in the age of PowerPoint and Blackboard, Dan would still use a carousel slide projector and lecture from giant, yellowing 5x8 index cards, which he constantly revised over the years. These mysterious pieces of paper seemed to hold all the answers to Dan's very specific questions, but he rarely glanced at them during class. You were never sure if a pause was his way of asking a question—waiting for you to complete the sentence—or just a moment where he filed through the entire history of the French Revolution to find the perfect way of phrasing a point. He would always require our in-class presentations to be fully written out. At the time, I found this annoying, but I have since come to see the brilliance in restricting rather loquacious graduate students to reading only what they had pre-written. At another point in this class, during a discussion of Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande*, he let us struggle for a while with the significance of the lizards in the castle walls. Only after it was clear that none of us had read

the play in the original French did Dan point out the error. The translator had used *lézards*, meaning lizards, when Maeterlinck had written *lézardes*, meaning cracks. There was no longer any doubt in my mind as to why his seminar was packed to beyond capacity.

Dan was also a devoted mentor to students, sharing in their successes and supporting them when they were experiencing difficult times. He remembered every detail of your life that you had shared with him, no matter how long ago you mentioned it, and could casually slip in a reference to it years later.

The word "modest" comes to mind to describe Dan as a scholar and teacher. It was not until I read his mini-biography in the preface and appendix to *Quick Change*—a collection of his work published by the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center last year—that I realized how truly worldly my mentor was. I knew that he was a world traveler, but not until that book did I realize he had worked in places as diverse as the Sorbonne and the University of Arkansas, Moscow and San Francisco. His own personal achievements—and they were innumerable—were never part of our discussions. Even though he had plenty to brag about, he always took the quieter approach, emphasizing the work and contributions of others. He was not meek, but reluctant to dwell on his important position in the creation of a discipline called "theatre studies." Why waste time talking about his accomplishments—which were already well-documented—when he could be sharing in the enthusiasm for your new discovery or continuing project?

I don't think he was completely comfortable sitting center stage, whether at all of the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center events or in his office. He would much rather introduce a young scholar to one of his longtime academic contacts. After many public lectures, I found myself in discussion with a senior scholar or international theatre practitioner because of Dan's introductions. If he thought two people would have an interesting conversation, he would introduce them to each other.

Dan reminded me of a figure from one of his beloved Central European folk dramas. He often had a slightly impish sparkle in his eye when you were talking with him. His frame was thin and lanky, but he moved with a sprightly energy that seemed incongruous with his age.

I will end by paraphrasing a parable shared with me by Frank Hentschker, who worked closely with Daniel at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, called "The Tale of the Seeming-Giant": As the children approached the Seeming-Giant, they saw that he was not a giant but a rather thin human of normal height. They spoke with him at length. The kindly old man listened to the children, gave them advice, and treated them with caring respect. He never once spoke to them of the towering giant they had seen from a distance. Finally, the time came that the children had to leave. As they sailed away, he seemed to grow in size. From a distance, the kindly old man seemed an unapproachable giant once again. And this was the children's last meeting with the Seeming-Giant, although they would never forget the lessons he had taught them.

Jessica Brater

Doctoral Student, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

If it had not been for Dan's melodrama course, in which I enrolled during my first semester at the Graduate Center, I probably would not be gesturing with heightened theatricality towards the completion of my dissertation today. Dan made me feel welcomed and that I had something of value to contribute in a class filled with students who were already well on their way to graduate degrees. He somehow convinced me that I should take myself seriously as a writer and a scholar. Dan taught me to value my own contributions to the field, budding though they are. And he also taught me that melodramas—French, English, American, nautical, temperance, and penny dreadfuls all—are completely, irresistibly fascinating.

Dan had the capacity to be both intellectually challenging and emotionally supportive to his mentees. As his friend and colleague Frank Henktschker so aptly put it, Dan was able to see people not only for what they are at present, but for what they had the potential to become. When it came to the people around him, Dan demonstrated a profoundly egalitarian spirit. He orchestrated freewheeling introductions among scholars, artists, and students in the hallway outside his office and at Segal Center events, exuding the attitude that people at both ends of the exchange had something equally important to offer each other.

Dan was similarly non-hierarchical in his view about artists and writers deserving of academic consideration. He reinforced my instinct to appreciate the potential for critical investigation in work that has been neglected or relegated to provisional positions in the field. His own translations invited many previously unknown and overlooked plays to bask in the glow of theatrical interpretation and scholarly appreciation.

I was honored to have the opportunity to collaborate with Dan when I directed a production of one of his translations: Pixérécourt's *Alice, or the Scottish Gravediggers*, which I had first read in his melodrama class. I had already discovered that Dan's translations were especially lively and engaging, but it became apparent during the rehearsal process that he put words together in a way that was delightful for actors to say. Dan's generosity leaped out at us from the page. Ever confident in the capability of humans to behave responsibly, he even lent me his folder of clippings on *Alice* and the historical inspiration for her gruesome, ripped-from-the-headlines story.

In addition to poring avidly over his file on all things Burke and Hare, I was particularly enchanted by Dan's Symbolism course. Each class meeting revealed untold wonders of the art of the psychic realm. Dan's enjoyment of Symbolist spirituality's eccentricities was quite contagious. My favorite memory from this class, and one I know has risen to the heights of popular lore among fellow students, is the day that Dan appeared in our over-crowded seminar room with a small birthday gift bag filled with books on theosophy and Madame Blavatsky, which he dubbed his "little black bag of the occult." I don't know whether these books were periodically refiled on Dan's shelves, but I like to think that they remain together in the bag, possibly transmitting invisible waves of bewitchment to anyone who comes within a prescribed radius.

I feel deeply grateful to have known Dan. He was a true friend to me in the good times and the difficult ones during the roller coaster of graduate school. He motivated me to become a better writer, a more passionate scholar, and more adventurous in the pursuit of research. I hope to find, by the time I become a mentor to my own students, that he has also imparted to me a modicum of his luminously generous spirit.

Kelly Aliano

Doctoral Student, The Graduate Center, The City Univeristy of New York

Professor Daniel Gerould always made me want to be smarter. He seemed to have an encyclopedic knowledge of every subject that we ever discussed. It was as if he could call upon an infinite amount of data on any topic. And yet, despite his brilliance, he was always humble and kind, a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. He was patient when I still had to work through my ideas and ready to push me to reconsider the ideas that I thought I had already settled on. I always left our meetings wanting to learn more, to be better prepared for the next time we spoke. I never wanted to disappoint Dan; our meetings were a part of my week to which I always looked forward.

Continued on page 18

Welcome to the Occupation

An Interview with Chris Faraone

MICHAEL BUSCH

There has likely not been a sociopolitical phenomenon more heavily documented than the Occupy Wall Street movement. What took root in Zuccotti Park and quickly blossomed in over 1,000 sites throughout the United States captured the world's imagination, but also its cameras, laptops, iPhones, and Twitter accounts. No sooner had OWS celebrated its two-month anniversary, then the first "Occubooks" began to appear, offering first cuts at making sense of the most exciting populist movement in the United States in seventy-five years. Unsurprisingly, they offered a mixed bag of quality and focus. A steady stream of OWS books has since appeared on bookshelves and Nooks. And while the latest publications offer increasingly strong and coherent narratives of what happened, they understandably privilege events that went down in and around the belly of the beast—Wall Street.

99 Nights with the 99 Percent, Chris Faraone's engaging new book on OWS, takes a different tack. The most recent book in the proliferating Occupy literature, *99 Nights*—a rollicking, richly textured collection of reports, profiles, photos, and poems—presents the most thoroughly encompassing history of OWS to date. Faraone—a reporter with the *Boston Phoenix*—spent the final quarter of 2011 zipping back-and-forth between coasts and camps, filing some of the hardest-hitting and most entertaining dispatches from some ten cities across the United States. Along the way, he reported on many of the less talked about but arguably most important dimensions of the Occupy movement—issues of race and gender, crime in the camps, sympathetic police and the myriad characters and personalities that kept the movement ticking in its darkest moments. At the same time, *99 Nights* never gets entirely swept up in the excitement and chaos of individual settings, presenting instead a broadly-rendered portrait of a national movement in all its diversity, beauty, and, at times, self-contradiction. *The Advocate* recently spoke with Faraone about his new book, the encampment era of OWS, police brutality coast-to-coast, and what the future might hold for the Occupy movement in 2012.

Let's begin by talking about the book itself. *99 Nights with the 99 Percent*, and in fact your reporting generally, is different in a number of respects from other stuff out there on Occupy. Describe your approach and what you intended to accomplish setting out.

At its heart, this is a compendium of my *Phoenix* stories. About 65-70 percent of the material has been previously published in the *Phoenix*. Things have been reworked, updated, and then there are the additions, which I'll come back to in a moment. As far as what I wanted to accomplish, first, I wanted to look at Occupy at a deeper level. I'm fortunate that I write for an alternative weekly. I don't write for a daily, but I did cover a lot of the minutiae, things that happened in camps: the crime, the day-to-day operations, etc. But I also got to step back and address bigger issues—whether it was interactions between different occupations, or, say, the media operations at one camp which of course reflects what was going on in many others. As far as putting the book together is concerned, the first question I had to ask myself was why anyone should buy *this* book, instead of just downloading all my articles. There's a long introduction which sets the tone, that steps back and says, OK it's been three months, this is what it's all about, this is how it all comes together.

Basically what I wanted to accomplish was to present a sort of time capsule. All the chapters are kept in the present tense as they were when I was originally reporting on the events. No matter what happened before this—with other movements that led up to Occupy—and no matter what happens in the future, here's the story of what happened in those three months.

People will look back at the encampment era differently, especially in academia, where different interpretations will be offered that will depend on what happens moving forward. My book offers observations of what actually happened in the moment when the camps were going strong. Of course, I am only one person who can only cover so much—about a dozen cities, with most of my coverage centered on Boston and New York—and so at the same time I didn't want to lose the sense that this was huge, something that was really popping nationally. One number we kept seeing was that there were roughly 1600 American cities, occupied in some degree or another. I wanted to reflect, not each of them individually, obviously, but the general sense that things were really bubbling across the country, and I tried doing this by including the timeline made up of haikus.

A lot of these other books—and some of them, like the *n+1* book, are really great—while not academic, really get into the nitty-gritty of things, like the methods of organizing employed, or offer a history of what led up to this moment. My book tries to get through all that, not get distracted by those considerations, by documenting what happened day-by-day. I started by writing out a timeline of the first hundred days, but it felt arbitrary and it didn't really flow with the rest of the book. And while I was doing this, the word "occupaiku" popped into my head. I googled it and found—amazingly—that no one had come up with it, probably the only "occupun" that hasn't been totally used and abused. I

found that writing haikus for each day was a good way to make sense of what had been happening. And so these poems, as well as the photos I included with them before each chapter, allowed me to bring together my own experience during those three months, and also really helped me make clear that this shit was going on all across the country.

You've had what's been a contentious relationship, at times, with Occupiers and their media reps. Where has the tension come from and what have been the greatest challenges for you reporting on the Occupy movement?

Well, the first challenge is that basically I'm sympathetic to just about everything Occupy has been doing and talking about. I say something to that effect right at the start of the book. These are issues that I've been covering passionately for years, especially the issue of foreclosures which I had been reporting on in the months right before Occupy. Where the risk comes is that I had been reporting on the community organizations that are deeply rooted in the neighborhoods where foreclosures had hit the hardest. And so to watch Occupy at the very beginning—and I'll go on record as saying that it almost impeded, in some ways, the actions that had been building and building—was frustrating. My reporting on *that* was not welcome by all.

Later, though, with the camps, the truth is that the people running the media teams weren't always in tune with the craziness that was going on in the camps at night. They weren't always the ones who had to put up with it or who had to deal with it—the drunks, the drug addicts—and these were things that were really happening. And when I reported on this stuff, I was confronted with this line "you're either with us or you're against us," which is bull*shit*. *I* wasn't there to knit pick these things *to* criticize the larger movement, obviously. But when they become issues—people don't want to see them, but they were hard truths—they need to be reported on. Take Philadelphia for instance: this is precisely why the fucking camp fell apart, completely, because that stuff ended up taking over. Michael Allen Godlberg from the *Philadelphia Weekly* did a great job of writing about this stuff and was shit on for it. And what ended up happening in Philly? By the end there wasn't even a media tent left in the encampment. It had become a fucking shantytown.

But I will give the Occupy movement this: they are transparent. They air their dirty laundry on Twitter, for Christ's sakes. A lot of organizations and movements simply don't do that. We all know that a lot of the same issues—male dominance of the discussion, for example—that have effected social movements in the past of course effect Occupy Wall Street. But unlike before, now it's all out there for everyone to see. In the first three months, though, there was this sense, understandably, that either the media was out to get Occupy, or they were out to do a lazy job in covering it. And so the media reps were sensitive about it. And I understood that. It was a pain in the ass at first, but you know, you have to prove yourself.

What surprised you the most as you visited various Occupy camps around the country?

Well, probably the extent to which every occupation takes on the characteristics of its city. Whereas, for example, I've been in several working group tents down at Wall Street and in Dewey Square in Boston, I don't think I was ever actually invited into one. The West Coast was completely the opposite, just unbelievably friendly. Literally, everywhere I went people were just so welcoming, it was completely different. So that was one thing.

The other thing I learned was that the diversity that people talk about in the camps was no bullshit. You had steelworkers, homeless veterans—and I can't stress the presence of homeless vets enough. It points to the absolute irony of the running conservative line about OWS. Just as they refuse to acknowledge that there is a homeless veterans problem in this country, just as they refuse to acknowledge that there are thousands of unemployed pipe fitters, they refuse to acknowledge that these groups were present in the camps, that they are a part of this movement.

And finally, the observation I keep coming back to—which is obvious but we rarely talk about it—is that the problems the camps had to confront—homelessness, drug addiction—are not new problems as anyone who has lived in a city can tell you. The difference was that suddenly they were front and center, they were out there for everyone to see. For someone who's constantly frustrated that these issues are so frequently overlooked, it was interesting to see people's reactions. And not surprisingly, the reaction from a lot of people was "yuck, go back to where you came from."

Talk about Occupy the Hood. One of the underreported angles on OWS has been the tension you describe between Occupy camps and Occupy the Hood offshoots. First of all, what are the contentions, and how, if at all, have they been managed and resolved in different cities? Do you get the sense the relationships that have formed between occupiers and outside organizers, especially those working in communities of color, have sparked honest discussions about race, or not?

I would say that an honest discussion about race is there in some regard. But in other ways, it hasn't really been addressed. A lot of people know it should go down, but at the same time, they feel that things are pretty immediate right now, and so it takes a back seat. But the issue remains. A lot of people will point out, just like Jamal Crawford says in my book, that when we think of all the shit that people have been through with Occupy—let's say, you got arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge—well guess what? That ain't shit compared to what happens just four blocks from the bridge in Brooklyn *every day*. If people were going hungry in a camp, that's nothing compared to the poverty that has existed in our neighborhoods over the years. The problems that Occupiers were dealing with in the camps have been problems, but in much greater magnitude, that communities of color have been dealing with for some time.

As far as Occupy the Hood is concerned, here we arrive at another problem. Black activists are better equipped to talk about this, but to be frank, there are a lot of black people across the country who are just not interested in the horizontal democracy model. It's the specifics of it—the finger wiggling, the stack, the leaderless nature of it—that in certain ways run contrary to legacy of the civil rights movement in this country. It's been said to me, "look, black people don't want to sit around in circles with their legs crossed, wiggling their fingers." This is obviously a gross overgeneralization. And it's not that people are opposed to the horizontal model in theory. It's just that, for example in Chicago, while general assemblies are going on in Grant Park, there are 100,000 foreclosed upon homes on the Southside. And so it becomes an issue of immediacy.

But let's not forget about places like Oakland, which predominantly comprise communities of color, where people have been pissed off for a long time, and where, in that case, Black, Latino and Asian groups were already organized together. When I was out there, and I tweeted something like "oh my god, this is amazing: there are all these different groups out marching together," and Boots Riley corrected me and said "no, this is just Occupy Oakland, it's all one thing." To hinge on this, and the final thing I'll say here, is that fortunately a lot of the relationships between different groups that started out superficially, I've seen become more organic as time goes on, but it has to happen naturally. At the same time, it's important to remember, too, that it's early, that we are still less than half a year into this thing, so we'll see.

You say that an entire book could be written about the Occupy con man Paul Fetch. Can you talk a bit about who he is, what he allegedly did, and where he is now?

Paul Fetch. I have no idea where he is right now, though he was allegedly spotted in Boston not that long ago. He—and I need to be careful with what I say since he's already sued a bunch of people in Boston—is an alleged con man. But the amazing thing about Paul Fetch is that he is, in one person, the embodiment of and speaks to multiple phenomena related to OWS. First, financial vulnerability. Fetch was in Occupy camps in Boston, New York and Cleveland, but it's a problem for encampments everywhere. In Boston alone, OWS was collecting $2,000 a day in cash. And this was not a group of people that was necessarily well equipped to take care of lots of money. It was begging for someone to take advantage. Furthermore, he's been involved with Anonymous. And of course, Anonymous was crucial to the success of Occupy. In Boston, particularly, Fetch's presence brought a lot of skeletons out of the closet, at least as far as that was concerned.

He's a character. I've never had a harder subject to write about than him. I would check everything ten times, and everyone had a different story. But more than anything, he was one person who really woke up the Occupy movement. They realized a bunch of stuff—and not just that they had to watch the money. They were also suddenly forced to confront this issue of, "how do we kick someone out if we have to?" That would be a fascinating book right there, a collection of profiles of each person who's been kicked out of an Occupy camp around the country *and how that happened*. I mean, people think it's hard firing a union employee, just try throwing someone out of an Occupy camp. Though I have to say that, out west in places like Seattle, guys like Paul Fetch would have had their asses kicked and would have been dragged into the street.

Why is that?

Well, I wouldn't say that the movements out west were more violent, just that they had to be more defensive of themselves. They had to be. I mean, you're talking about camps where half the people were covered in chemical burns—the police brutality was at a whole different level. In Oakland—I can't believe I haven't seen this reported on more nationally—at one point they had two different camps. Snow Park was filled with people that wanted nothing to do with violence. And that doesn't mean that everyone else wanted to be violent. It means that after everything Oakland has been through, starting with Oscar Grant and going straight through to everything that happened in Occupy, people just weren't willing to say "yeah, we'll just sit back and take it." So the level of what people were willing to put up with was completely different, from everything I observed, on the East and West Coasts. The way people badgered the cops on the East Coast, just wouldn't have happened on the west coast. They would have been pepper sprayed immediately.

Why are the two coasts so different?

Well, and I'm speaking strictly anecdotally, I think it has a lot to do with the sheer numbers of people involved out west, tens of thousands of people in the street. You'd get a couple of thousand people, say, in Boston's biggest marches. And so what's happening on the West Coast was just at a completely different level. And of course there's history: Oakland has had a lot of experience with police brutality; Seattle got all the training it needed in the 1990s. And this accounts for a lot of the reaction to the protests on both sides. I mean, have you seen some of the videos that came out of Occupy Seattle? And I am not just talking the one with Dorli Rainey, the eighty-four year old woman who was pepper sprayed during a march. There are others that didn't get much hype because no one

died, they didn't involve brutalized octogenarians, or whatever—you can find them online. There's one that just blows me away more than any of the rest where a cop, riding a bike on the left side of a totally peaceful, day-time march of a couple of hundred protesters and he just breaks out a can of pepper spray and just starts spraying people in the face as he rides by.

And this, like everything else, just feeds reaction in both directions. But it's not just an East/West Coast thing. The city that has been probably the harshest in response has been Chicago, which, of course, is really Rahm Emanuel. And this is to say nothing of what went down in smaller camps that got nothing but local coverage—the Tuscons, Tulsas. I looked through the timeline of events and I see that hundreds of people were arrested in a city like Tulsa, which when you look at it proportionally, would be like a thousand people being arrested in a city like Boston or New York.

On this issue of cops, describe Occupy Police and Operation Shield. What's your sense on the success or failure that men and women in uniform have had trying to claim a space in the 99%?

Well, what I have to say on this is not just as someone who is sympathetic to protesters who get the shit kicked out of them for doing absolutely nothing, but has to do with things more generally. Look at Philly which again, fell apart on its own. I was going back and forth between Philadelphia and New York, which each had about the same number of people in the camps. In New York, you had Zuccotti surrounded by about 150 cops. In Philly, there were about four. Philly kept it a lot less aggressive, and there was a lot more interaction between the police and the encampment. And in a way, it makes sense. I mean, who among us doesn't know someone who has been foreclosed upon, who among us *hasn't* been affected by the crisis. Police, fireman, they're blue collar, too. And they were put into some unbelievable positions throughout all this, in some places day-after-day. You know, for all the bad press that the relationships between police officers and occupiers naturally got, I was on several marches where I saw protesters and cops laughing together, and I've witnessed several occasions where officers tip off protesters about what's going to happen, get messages into the camps. And in testimonials there is example after example of individual police officers, and groups of police officers, who didn't want to do some of the things that were expected of them, or that they were told to prepare to do. I don't have to say it. What Todd Gitlin argues about this, I couldn't agree with more. There's a validation of the movement that goes on when outside authority figures, especially those that have worn various uniforms—whether police or military—express sympathy and solidarity.

Finally, what do you think we can expect to see in the spring? Some people have been talking everything from retaking city squares and focusing on reclaiming foreclosed upon homes to moving towards direct action campaigns targeting the workplace, while others suggest that the movement has lost steam during the winter and what we'll see from here on out will be a hollow version of its previous self. What's your take?

I've been writing about inter-Occupy phone calls and list servs that have been going on since the camps broke up. And that was just the start of what's going on now, which has been a lot more organic. If you go to any General Assembly, on any given weekend, and you'll find people from all over: Boston, New York, DC, Rochester. This past weekend at a GA meeting in Boston there were a dozen people from Delaware, and people from Providence. So there's a difference about people simply talking, and what they're doing now which is sharing ideas for actions. The West Coast has had this down for a minute—their inter-Occupy phone calls led to two port shutdowns. The East Coast, while there aren't as many power houses out here as there are out west, and while there's been solidarity from the start, now we're beginning to see a movement beginning to take hold across cities.

Without a doubt, the best example of this was Occupy the Primaries. It didn't get that much press, but at Occupy the New Hampshire Primary you'd get twenty people at a given action, and don't forget that they were birddogging every candidate and there are a lot of candidates! That was before there were only four. And if you were to ask the protesters where they came from, you'd find that they had come from six or seven Occupy camps—Vermont, New Hampshire and Boston, but also from New York, people had arrived from Orlando, Tampa. We are really seeing something—this is a big political year: first the G-8 and NATO, and then the DNC and RNC conventions, these are going to witness massive Occupy efforts. Especially at the conventions, it won't look like what's going on in the halls, where everyone is split up into their nice little piles, divided up into states. Outside, it's going to be huge groups of angry people from across the country, protesting together. And sure, you would have had some of those people protesting together anyways, but this time they'll all be under the common umbrella of Occupy. Ⓐ

Daniel Gerould

Continued from page 15

Because of this, I learned an incredible amount about the field that I studied with Dr. Gerould in preparation for our department's Second Exam. I completed that task far better informed about Historical Avant-Gardes than I ever could have been beforehand. However, I also got a glimpse of something much more profound—an image of the kind of professor that I hope to be in the future. Someone who can encourage her students, push them to be the best that they can be, without being harsh or overly critical. Someone who can be a brilliant scholar, but also a genuinely kind and thoughtful person. That's who Daniel Gerould was: a remarkable mind, but an even more remarkable man.

I consider myself lucky to have been given the opportunity to study with Professor Gerould. I will never forget our weekly discussions of the material: how he always knew exactly the right questions to ask, the right sources to point me towards, & how to make me understand the information that I could not quite grasp on my own. I will always cherish the many laughs that we shared & the support he gave me as my stress level increased as the exam approached. Even as I doubted my own abilities, Dan never doubted me for a moment. The day of my exam, he walked by me sitting alone in our department's Thesis Room & told me not to worry, he would be in to keep me company soon. He hoped I was looking forward to our discussion that day. And as nervous as I may have been, he helped to keep me calm.

My only regret is that I promised him that afternoon of my exam that I would show him how to play video games sometime soon. For once, I may have been able to teach him something. Now, I suppose we will never have the chance to play together. But I am so glad for all the time that we did get to spend with one another. He gave me so much that I will never be able to repay. And I want Professor Gerould to know: the next game that I play is in his honor. I'll make sure to don a bow tie for the occasion.

I learned an incredible amount about the field that I studied with Dr. Gerould in preparation for our department's Second Exam. However, I also got a glimpse of something much more profound—an image of the kind of professor that I hope to be in the future.

Sissi Liu

Doctoral Student, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

February 13, 2012 was a date of deepest sorrow for many students and faculty members in the Theatre Program of CUNY Graduate Center. It is on this day that Professor Daniel Gerould suddenly left us. I cannot exaggerate the magnitude of our loss. Laying my pen to the paper now, I'm convinced, however, that he hasn't left at all. His spirit is everywhere, from our notes taken in his classes, to his many books and the various journals he edited; from the Segal Theatre Center, where he served as a cultural ambassador for scholars and artists all over the world, to the classrooms on the third floor of the Graduate Center building, where he imparted knowledge and wisdom; from our undying love for theatre and trained ways of scholarly thinking, to our deep love for humanity and our concern and care for one another.

He lives forever in our hearts. Dan (that's how I always called him, as if he were a childhood friend) taught us to be a "scholar" in the truest sense of the word and a "philanthropist" with a most generous heart. He demonstrated to us that these two were actually one. His boundless knowledge is but an offshoot of his profound interest in human being's artistic endeavor and his unfathomable care for the human condition. While other scholars examine theatre through sociological, gender analysis, cultural studies methodologies and so on, he approached theatre from the innermost perspective—that of the human heart.

Dan was an enigma. He always dressed formally in suit and a bowtie, but always talked in a most friendly and welcoming manner. There was eternal warmth in his voice, despite his formal and impeccable language. Thin and pale, he proved to be a most sprightly and indefatigable professor. At the age of eighty-three, he still laughed like a little boy, eyes twinkling with starlight that could only be found in an enthusiastic and inquiring child. Yet to many of us, he took up the role of a father, always inspiring and supporting, having unalterable faith in us even when at times we ourselves didn't. He understood human limits and foibles more than anyone else, yet smiled at them with a fatherly empathy.

It is Dan who really kept me in this program. I first came to New York in 2009 from China with big dreams, not knowing exactly what to do with my life. Exposed to cultural shock and peer pressure, I doubted my capacities as a theatre scholar. Seeing the potential in me, potential I myself didn't recognize at the time, Dan reached out and encouraged me to pursue my interests. He taught me what it takes for one to become a scholar. There was never a single trace of bitterness in his tone, even when I had made careless mistakes in my research. I found our conversations to be the most delightful and enlightening. He handed down a heritage I will treasure for a lifetime. My greatest sorrow is that I can never talk to him face to face again. But with his spirit everywhere around me and deep within my heart, I feel empowered to become a scholar, and I will pass on his legacy for generations of students to come. Ⓐ

art REVIEW

Youthful Enthusiasm

▶ *The Ungovernables* at New Museum.

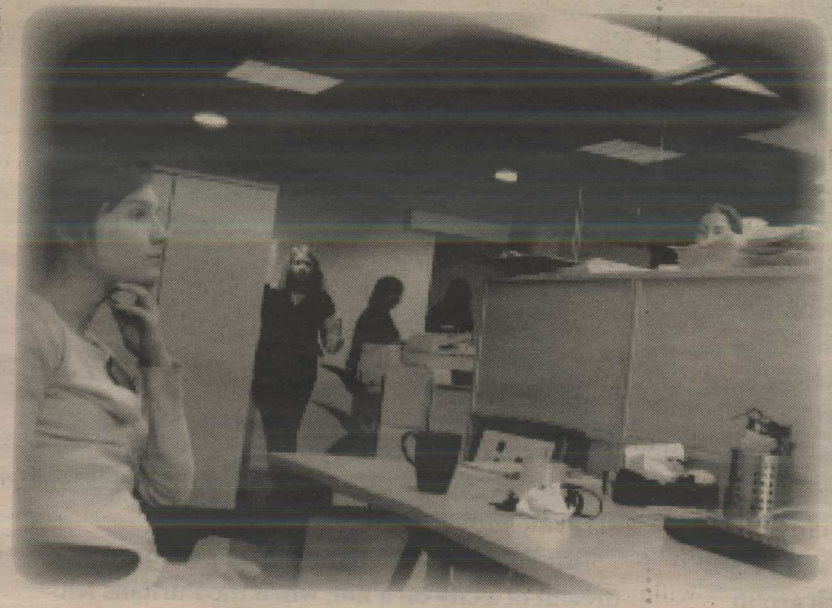
CLAY MATLIN

In 2009 the New Museum brought us its first triennial, the cynical and surprisingly boring *Younger than Jesus*, which, save for the video work (especially that of Ryan Trecartin, Cyprien Gaillard, and Dineo Seshee Bopape), was mostly an ill-conceived attempt to set a new paradigm for what is hip and adventurous in the art world. Three years later we face yet another attempt to tell us a story of youth and talent in the New Museum's second triennial, *The Ungovernables*, set to compete with the Whitney Biennial. The result is, despite its many faults, much more appealing this time around. The cleverness is gone, replaced with an earnest attempt to understand how to create art in an unstable world. What makes *The Ungovernables* interesting, as Holland Cotter rightly points out, is its distinct lack of American born artists and the global scope of its participants (a total of fifty including individuals and collectives). For that, the show's curator Eugenie Joo and her assistant Ryan Inouye should be commended. Indeed, as an event it stands in direct contrast to the Whitney Biennial which serves as a celebration of mostly American artists. This is a good and reasonable thing, as is the fact that the artists featured in the show were all born between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. The decision to present new and younger artists who are not American and often neither white nor male is, without question, an important one.

If the New Museum does one thing right, it refrains from worshipping at the altar of male genius, as MoMA frequently does. But this should not be construed to mean that the New Museum is free from an agenda, or that it is not calculated in what it chooses to present. The commitment to the new is important, but it is often—and this seems to be the case with the New Museum these past five years—a trap. By taking a stance against the establishment, the New Museum has positioned itself as the answer to what it is fearful of becoming. In doing so, and this is perhaps the terrible irony of all rebellion, it has created its own reified and hegemonic structure. Instead of the rebellion being co-opted by a sinister capitalist, the New Museum's rebellion was co-opted by its own good intentions. It has become the self-appointed arbiter of what newness is and how it might be valuable. The New Museum aspires to the same power as MoMA, the same taste making as the Whitney, but it does it in a slicker way and seeks to guide us to the proper orientation towards what important art is. Everything about the New Museum exudes the proper authority, it speaks in the perfect art-speak, its presentation is suitably shabby yet chic. It really should be able to make an irresistible sales pitch, except the New Museum wears its ideological leanings on its wall texts, and is unable to leave the art alone.

Take for example Beijing based artist Hu Xiaoyuan's *Wood* (2009-2010), which consists of thirty-one pieces of wood covered in white chiffon silk with the wood's natural grain traced in brush ink. The wood is then whitewashed and re-covered with the chiffon silk. Then it is leaned against the wall. We are told that Hu's works "externalize the processes of the artist's thinking" and that they emerge from "tumultuous deep-seated inner considerations." What piece of art doesn't engage in this process? Are we to believe that the way Hu makes art is somehow special or different than the artistic needs of every other artist? This is what the curatorial text implies, whether that is the intent or not. The problem is that the philosophic message behind the curatorial direction leaves the work overly complex yet somehow empty. Is it beautiful? Yes. Particularly interesting? Maybe. Precious? Absolutely. Lee Kit's *Scratching the table surface and something more*, in which he literally scratched a table at the same spot for two years has real potential both as an object and as a piece of performance art, and were the table his only contribution his participation would have been a success. Instead the curators decided to show Lee's paintings on cardboard and cotton, which have pop song lyrics, textile patterns, and logos for consumer products. As far as paintings go they are neither particularly good nor interesting.

Cairo and New York based Iman Issa's sculptures, while formally compelling, are fairly uninspired: an obelisk in mahogany, lightbulbs, tables, vinyl text. They have titles like *Material for a sculpture representing a bygone era of luxury and decadence* and *Material for a sculpture proposed as an alternative that has become an embarrassment to its people.* The wall text alerts us to the fact that Issa is inspired by "monuments and memories of personal significance…and channels the logic of these structures to propose an alternative to contemporary consciousness." The problem with art that proposes so much, or that we are told proposes so much, is that we are in need of a guide; the abstruseness must be conquered by direction. We are not allowed to experience them merely as objects, and the most powerful thing about Issa's sculptures is their distinct objectness. Without it, it falls flat, especially in the face of such grand pronouncements by the curators. Bona Park, from Seoul, Korea, engages in that unkillable art form: relational aesthetics. Instead of making something tangible, Park gave a questionnaire, before the opening, to those who have helped realize *The Ungovernables* (carpenters, curators, editors, museum office workers, artists, etc.) about their dinner habits. She then went out and bought groceries based on their answers, with the intent to cook them a meal at their homes after the reception. The idea was that those who chose to participate in the act would carry their bag of groceries around the opening reception and then when asked why he or she was doing so Park's contribution to the Triennial would be revealed. Apparently Park has "reverse[d] the public positions of the many people who work behind the scenes in preparation of an exhibition." I'm not so sure. There is something sweet in the piece, but it ends there. What we find in so much of *The Ungovernables* is a deafening earnestness. In many ways it is appreciated, real earnestness is in short supply in art these days and the faux earnestness of Jeff Koons does not count. Earnestness, however, is not enough.

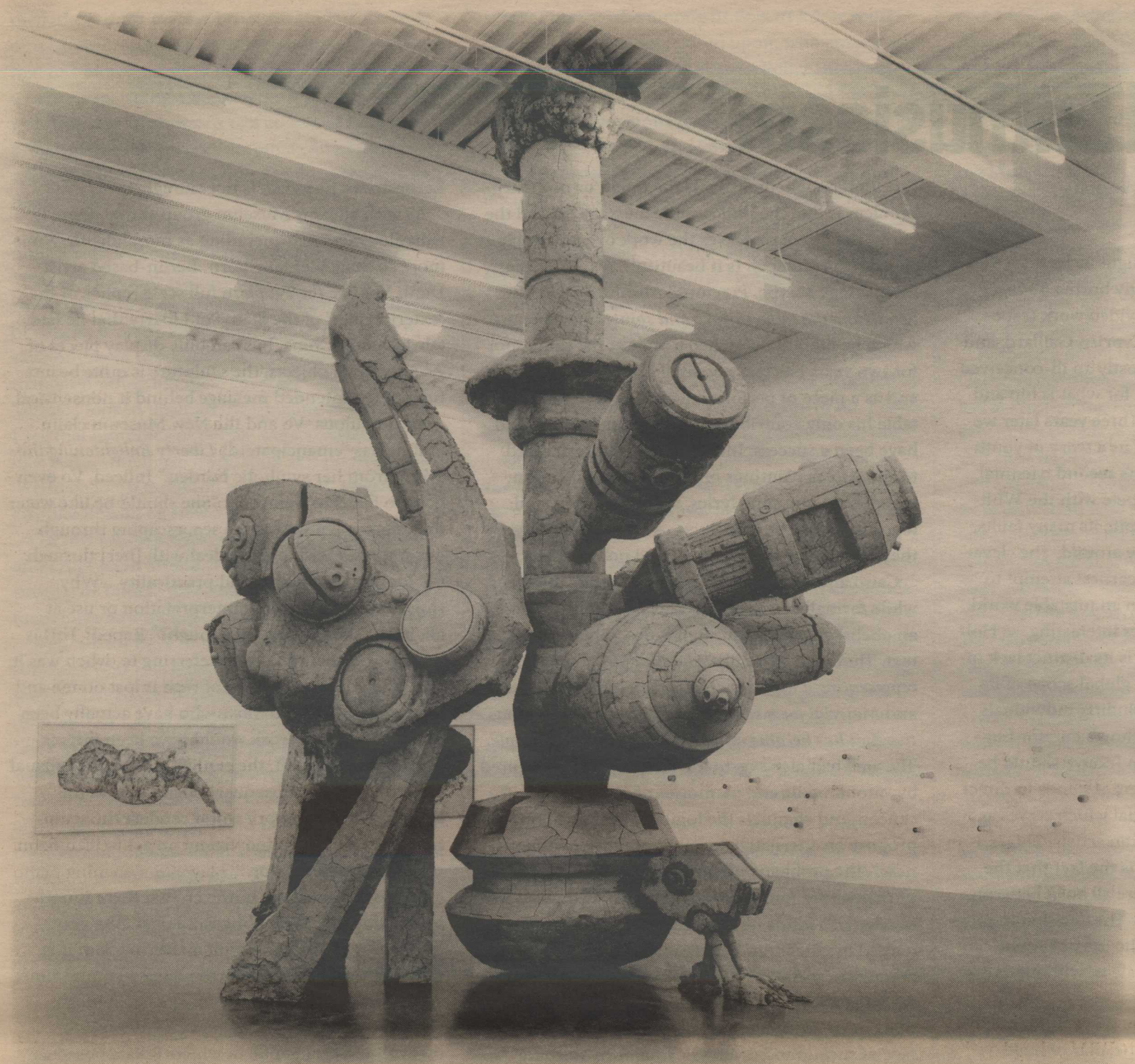


Above: Pilvi Takala. "The Trainee / Working at Deloitte for a Month," 2008.

As with all New Museum group shows, there is ridiculousness masquerading as moral depth. None more so than Vietnam-born, Berlin-based artist Danh Vo's *We the People*, a full scale replica of the "exterior skin" of the Statue of Liberty that he had fabricated in China, but can only display pieces of. As a group of objects, the sculpture is quite beautiful, but the intended message behind it nonsensical, even ridiculous. Vo and the New Museum claim that he has "emancipate[d] *Liberty Enlightening the World* from her symbolic burden." Indeed, Vo even goes so far as to claim that "She should be like water digging its own way to the sea, escaping through our fingers. I wish only to deal with [her] through the logistics, economy, and practicality…Why should we impose more interpretation or use at all, hasn't she been raped enough?" Raped? This is ludicrous. What rape is Vo referring to, when was it, and where? The metaphor of rape is lost on me and is patently unkind to those who have actually been raped. Where the work would have been impressive on its own right, the explicit reference to sexual violence and the subsequent desire to save the statue from a predatory world renders the sculpture absurd. Rape is too violent an act to transform casually into metaphor.

This is not to claim, however, that there is nothing worthwhile at *The Ungovernables*. The very problem with the exhibition is that much of it is quite captivating, even worth seeing a second time. Two artists are particularly impressive: Finnish artist Pilva Takala's *The Trainee*, a video/performance work from 2008 in which Takala posed as a new employee at an accounting firm, produced nothing, and gave up the pretense of productivity. Somehow she was able to film the whole thing and even acquire emails from her superiors discussing her odd behavior as she just sat at her desk staring out or riding the elevator all day. It is marvelously interesting, providing real tension as we watch her relationships with fellow employees begin to change as they become more unsure of her place in the corporate structure. Julie Dault, a Canadian now living in New York, makes muscular yet delicate sculptures out of plexiglass, Tambour, Everlast boxing wraps, and string. She builds them onsite and the titles reference the date and time it took to produce the work. The result is dependent not only on her own strength that day, but on the conditions within which she is allowed to create. They have a real physicality, yet also a disarming delicateness, as if the bent Plexiglas and Tambour could snap the strings that bind them at any time.

Yet what makes the show unsuccessful and the New Museum a deeply problematic institution is that it is ultimately undermined by its own self-conscious agenda. Where institutions like MoMA, the Met, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim never take any real risks, the New Museum is willing to put itself out there and give my generation a chance to speak. On the surface this is a good thing as it allows artists who are young and relatively little known a bit of spotlight in the staid art world. Eugenie Joo and Ryan Inouye inform us that *The Ungovernables* is an "exhibition about the urgencies of a generation who came of age after the independence and revolutionary movements of the



1960s and 1970s," and takes its inspiration "from the concept of 'ungovernability' and its transformation from a pejorative term used to describe unruly 'natives' to a strategy of civil disobedience and self determination embraced by the African National Congress in South Africa in 1986. *The Ungovernables* is meant to suggest both anarchic and organized resistance and a dark humor about the limitations and potentials of this generation."

This is nonsense. Very little on view is anarchic or possessed of dark humor, except perhaps Cairo-based artist Hassan Khan's strangely moving film *Jewel*, in which two men dance facing each other in a way that is both erotic and combative. As for the limitations and potentials of this generation of which the curators speak, and I'm probably displaying my own ideological stance here, apparently we're quite good at video art yet are having a hard time producing a really great painter. Collectives like Invisible Borders Trans-African Photography Project, in which ten to twelve writers and photographers take an annual road trip to cross the "invisible borders" that divide nations and people on the African continent, and the Israeli group Public Movement, who sponsor screenings, lectures, and other forms of gathering as a "performative research body which investigates and stages political action in public spaces," give a sense of organization but are so overtly political and socially conscious that they have become something other than museum worthy, perhaps something entirely different from art itself. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does confuse the difference between art making and social action and subsumes the very real question of whether or not the two can be the same thing. If we are to go by the Triennial, the answer is no.

Therefore, what is so confounding is that New Museum should be better than it is, a touchstone instead of the petulant younger sibling to New York's more respected, and for that matter, skillful, museums. While MoMA has never really realized that people continued to make art after the 1970s ended, the New Museum, as it's presently constituted since its move from its old space on Broadway to its current location on the Bowery in 2007, seems to believe that art did not begin until after 9/11. This may appear an insensitive, even cynical, statement, but it is not. What I am arguing is that the New Museum has made a decidedly reactionary decision to champion art that is emblematic of an increasingly unstable world. 9/11 did shake us. It proved our vulnerability: that the wolves were out there waiting. But the reality is that we should have known we were unsafe, at the very least we might have seen Timothy McVeigh as a sign of things to come and not an isolated incident. America has never gotten over its millenialist longings; we were founded on them and continue to believe in our special brand of divine providence.

This fantasy was there when John Winthrop dreamt of a city on a hill; when the Puritans felt abandoned by the eyes of Great Britain and made their errand into the wilderness; when we screamed of tyranny and declared our independence; when we moved west and slaughtered the buffalo and exterminated the Indians; when we engaged in civil war; and when we came to the edge of the continent, the frontier finally closed, and only wanted more. The point of an institution like the New Museum is that it should constantly remind us that the millennium never came. It should let us in America know that there are other artists out there, other modes of thought and practice that are foreign to us and equally legitimate to our own homegrown greatness. In some ways the New Museum does this, and this is why I argue that it does not believe that art existed before 9/11, not that its curators actually think art is a product of the past ten years, but as an institution, the New Museum seems to be saying that an art that speaks to us in the wake of unfathomable tragedy has only now come into real and tangible existence. This is why the New Museum looks to youth and newness because as an institution it seems generally interested in trying to find a way to use art to understand the post-9/11 world.

Yet it is for that reason the New Museum is so vexing. It proposes to give voice to a generation's discontent. There is no question that my generation has much to be discontented about. The enlightened, moral, and well-meaning liberals of our parents' generation made serious mistakes in the 1960s and 1970s while the suburban warriors, to borrow a phrase from Lisa McGirr, of the sunbelt managed to bide their time after Barry Goldwater's failure and keep their heads down and work away at fomenting their own quiet revolution that saw its greatest triumph in Reagan and then its resurgence with George W. Bush. The radicals of the 1960s and 1970s look back with fondness to the years of their youth, but the conservatives march ever further ahead. They face the future, while our well meaning parents stand bewildered by the times, unable to reconcile the failures of their vision with the world that their mistakes brought into existence. It is for this reason that they embrace their own deeply personal rebellion so much and see often in their children an apathy that is not actually there.

This should not be confused as a distinctly American phenomenon. It is not. The revolutions *have* failed. The result of the forward looking of the right and retrograde longings of the left is that we, the very sons and daughters, the ungovernables, that the New Museum hopes to represent and speak to, are compelled to grapple with the wreckage that is the present. But the New Museum sets the terms by which that wounded voice can be heard. It would do well to abandon its ideological stance, to show a bit of restraint from the lure of youth and newness, and its overly affected posture. There is real potential there, but that potential is being wasted by an ideological mission that is neither clear nor particularly profound. The danger for the New Museum, as is the danger for all dogmatic agendas, is that if one goes looking for anarchy and resistance, just as if one goes looking for complacency and cooptation, one will always find it. The New Museum might consider allowing the work to speak for itself. More often than not it won't, as most art, just as most everything, says nothing. Yet sometimes art does speak to us, it helps us to handle the chaos of life. Rather than holding our hand and telling us what to look for in the wilderness of the present, the New Museum would do well to let us embrace the starkness we now find ourselves in. Ⓐ

Above: Adrián Villar Rojas: "A Person Loved Me," 2012.

Other Lives at New York's Bowery Ballroom

▶ Other Lives at New York's Bowery Ballroom

CONOR FEBOS

If you don't know who Other Lives are yet, you will soon. This rising indie rock outfit hailing from Stillwater, Oklahoma has already opened up for Grammy winner Bon Iver and beginning on February 27 the quintet will lead things off for Radiohead. Suffice to say, the band has drawn some serious attention from well-established artists, all of whom feel the band is ready to solidify themselves as a headlining act. There first test: New York City.

Playing to a sold out show in the historic Bowery Ballroom on February 17, audience members were given the opportunity to watch a band substantially progress right before its eyes. Originally known as Kunek, Other Lives were promoting their sophomore project, *Tamer Animals*, which after its release in May gave music fans and critics alike, a *real* reason to be excited for the bands' live performances. There were, however, those who were still unsure of the live translation of the album and its intricately layered and meticulous sounds. In short, the doubters were met with a mature sound that superseded even the albums' rich, organic feel.

As 11:00 pm neared, the Ballroom became increasingly packed–if you didn't have a spot by this point, getting to the front was a daunting task. Yet as the anticipation grew, Other Lives' fans channeled the gregarious personalities of each member in the group, and treated each other with genuine respect–something you don't see too often in jam-packed New York City clubs. Some of this cordiality was supplied by the opening act WIM, who played a riveting set comprised of Sigur Ros- like instrumentals and inspiring melodies that resonated throughout the entire audience. WIM, a five-piece outfit from Sydney, Australia, created a blissful synergy within the confines of the Bowery Ballroom with their beautifully dense sound and eagerness to connect with the audience. That, along with a shoeless frontman accompanied by equally eccentric band members, gave the evening an exclusive kind of feeling. This approach was well received; the crowd was now in an optimal mindset as Other Lives' set was fast approaching.

Cheering and howling from the moment lead singer Jesse Tabish reached stage for an initial sound check, the crowd was electric. As the other members of the band came out for a rapid set up of gear, the excitement in the room was now at its highest point. Fans now realized the treat that was in store for them: a total of nine different instruments, each as integral to the bands' sound as the next, crammed the stage leaving little room for anything else. After some final tuning, the band went backstage as the crowd was now roaring in elation. A final push to the front of the stage ensued as audience members geared up for an hour of deeply intense music. The band looked like their music sounds: sophisticated yet edgy; innovative with a grounded sense of their beginnings. There was no frippery in their attire; rather, the band appeared as honest and forthright as a group could look – a complete understanding of who they are as musicians.

Chants of "We love you!" and "Welcome to New York" echoed throughout the venue as the band jumped right into their set, instantly matching the intensified energy exuding off of the crowd. The second they began playing fans went wild, but in a tamed manner – once again embracing the demeanor of the bands' music. Tabish's distinct croon was on full display from the opening song "As I Lay My Head Down." Other Lives' complex instrumental melodic layering's were vibrant, and gave off an atmospheric bliss that was consistent throughout the performance. Surprisingly, their live translations even gave off a danceable vibe. "Tamer Animals" and "Dark Horse" were early hits and met with grooving hips and rocking heads. There was something for everyone.

With little to no extravagant light show, the band let the music speak for itself–a rarity for a musical generation fixated on elaborate productions. Using just a few changing lights (mostly a deep red and ethereal blue that accompanied the music perfectly), a tranquil mood was set. Each band member played from a seemingly designated position; the instruments were all properly placed in accordance to each other, producing a wholly organic sound that enveloped the room. Moments into the show, one could find themselves unaware of the crowd surrounding them. The music's depth was capable of transporting the mind to another place, a far off distant world where music is the only surrounding presence. But still, the communal feel to the show was omnipresent throughout. There's nothing more gratifying than experiencing a concert with a complete stranger, who, by the show's completion, has become a valued person in your life. Other Lives speak a universal language that brings people together.

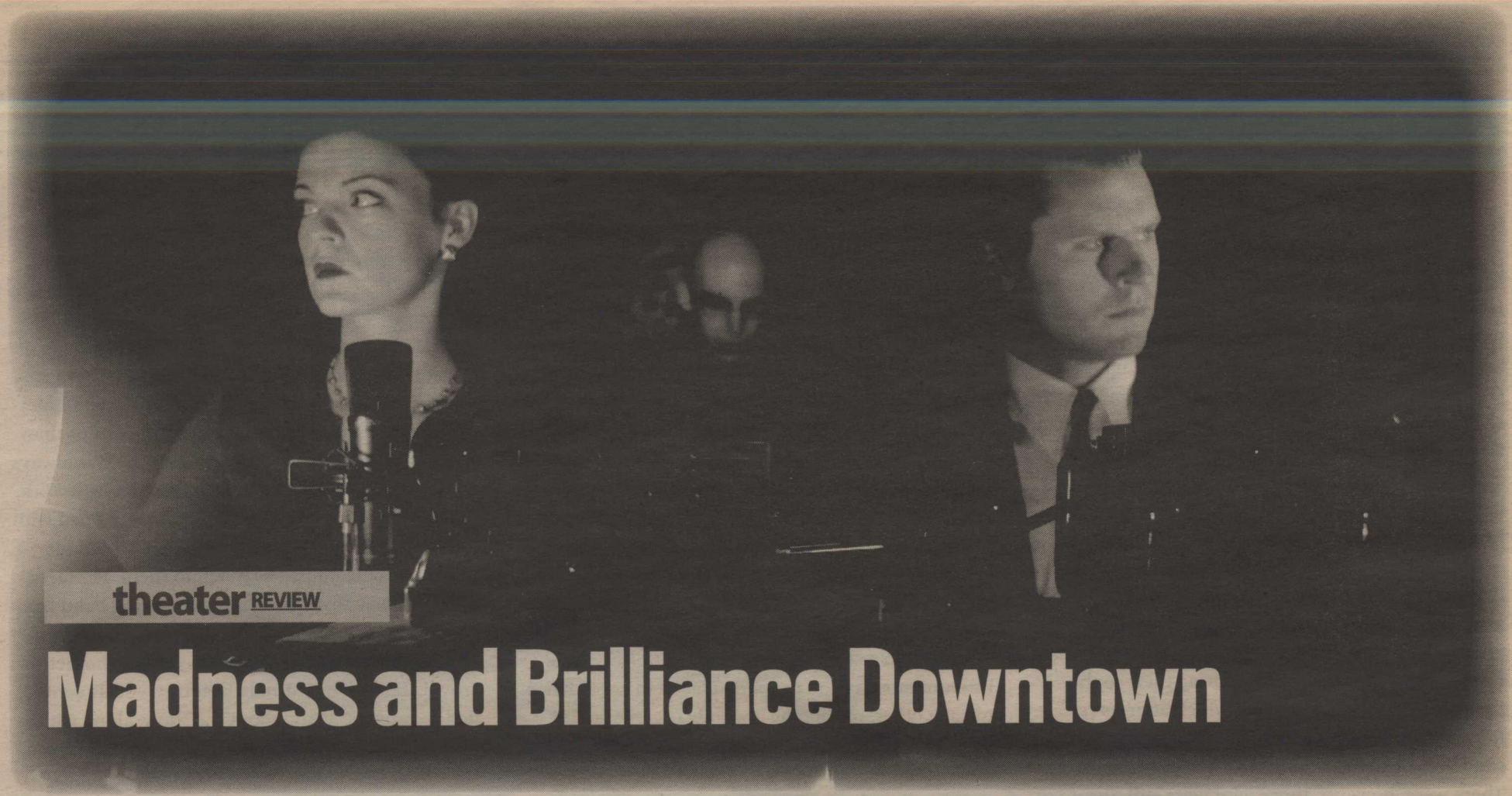
The band depicted a group completely involved with its music. The members: Tabish (vocals, guitar, piano), Jenny Hsu (cello, backing vocals), Jon Mooney (violins, horns, percussion), Colby Owens (clarinet, percussion), Josh Onstott (bass and percussion), could have seemingly swapped instruments without any overt change to the performance. A testament to their arresting musicianship. Other Lives *understands* their music, they know exactly where each piece of sound fits.

Possibly the best example of their expansive versatility came four songs in, when "Weather," and its transcending melody struck delight in the audience. The combination of dissonant piano chords, pronounced horn sections, elegant strings, and Tabish's raw vocals, were especially poignant during this song. The crowd was given an opportunity to experience a band pushing the indie folk genre to its boundaries–a performance composed of an innovative conglomeration of multiple instruments. With the heat of the room now rising, the band was on point.

It also became ever-more clear just how much of a mutual appreciation existed between Other Lives and their audience. "I just want to say, well, I hate to get sentimental, but this means more to us than you'll ever know," said a sincere Tabish. "We always dreamed of playing a headlining tour in New York, this is everything to us." The crowd responded with a raucous cheer, assuring Tabish that he and his bandmates meant just as much to them. Hundreds of miles away from home, this emerging band from Oklahoma was playing with an unadulterated ease as if they were performing to an entirely hometown crowd. Tabish's hauntingly beautiful vocals continued to progress throughout the show, along with the crowd's energy. Smiles beaming on their faces, they went through the setlist with impassioned force. Songs like "Old Statues" and "Dust Bowl III" were delivered with poise. This might be their inaugural headlining tour, but Other Lives played like they'd been doing it their whole lives.

Nearing the end of the night, Tabish came out alone to perform a track from their self-titled debut album, *Other Lives*. As he played the opening piano chords to "Black Tables," the crowd reacted with a unified symphony of claps. Singing along with each word, it was a truly inspiring moment. You'd like to think Tabish will remember such a powerful portion of their only New York City show. When the song finished, and after a few minutes of extended cheering came to an end, Tabish was rejoined by his bandmates for the finale of the show. It was as bittersweet a moment as any, New York had witnessed a dazzling performance by a band on the brink of stardom, and to think, there were only about four hundred of us. Other Lives proved to both new and old fans alike that their. The humble quintet from Oklahoma soon won't be able to play in diminutive venues scattered about New York like the Bowery Ballroom. Their steady ascension into an upper-tier band will mean nights as intimate as these will be hard to come by during their next tour. And that's OK. But as many who were there can attest to, this show was about as good as it gets. Other Lives, you passed the test. New York loves you. Ⓐ

Above: Other Lives at the Bowery Ballroom. PHOTO BY JOSH SARNER



theater REVIEW

Madness and Brilliance Downtown

▶ *Samuel & Alasdair: A Personal History of the Robot War*. Conceived by Marc Bovino, Joe Curnutte, and Lila Neugebauer and created with the ensemble. Written by Marc Bovino and Joe Curnutte. Directed by Lila Neugebauer.

DAN VENNING

It is a common pre-conception of the New York theatrical scene that Off-Off Broadway theatre (which generally shows in houses seating fewer than one hundred audience members) can be strange, goofy, challenging, and even at times opaque. The "downtown" theatre scene of Off-Off Broadway shows has found a variety of homes at venues such as LaMaMa Experimental Theatre Club, WOW Café, Theatre for the New City, Dixon Place, The Kitchen, HERE Arts Center, and P.S. 122. The Ohio Theatre in Soho, a fixture of this scene since the 1980s, closed in August 2010 after the landlord refused to extend the lease. A little more than a year after the old Ohio closed, the New Ohio began its inaugural season in 2011 at a new home in the Archive Building at 154 Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. (My last experience as an audience member at the old Ohio was entirely in line with the aesthetics of New York's Downtown scene. In 2009, I saw Les Freres Corbusier's *Dance Dance Revolution* there. It was a raucous and ridiculous dance comedy, loosely based on the video game of the same name, in which a David Bowie-like alien named Moonbeam Funk led a crowd of street toughs in a dancing revolution against a futuristic dystopian state in which dancing was banned.) Another obvious pre-conception of the downtown Off-Off Broadway scene is that the artists creating this work are frequently young, ambitious, and sometimes unfortunately rather inexperienced. And while the creators of *Samuel & Alasdair: A Personal History of the Robot War* are indeed young—and have aptly called themselves The Mad Ones—the show is an expertly fine-tuned production, both adventurous and masterful, quirky and savvy.

Samuel & Alasdair: A Personal History of the Robot War is a thoroughly funny show, filled with comic moments, songs, and silly interactions, but, like Samuel Beckett's best work, does this all while still offering a bleak examination of what happens when hope is no longer an option. The show is set in the cluttered radio studio "Victory Studio" in Irkutsk (one of the largest cities in Siberian Russia). There, four Russians are engaged in broadcasting the *At Home Field Guide*, a song-and-storytelling radio show clearly modeled on *A Prairie Home Companion*. These twenty-first century Russians work in a space that seems to come directly out of 1950s America: uncomfortable looking wooden chairs and desks, radio equipment with far too many wires, and, directly center stage, a vintage 1950s-style dynamic microphone. As the seventy-five-minute-long play unfolds, it becomes clear why these Russians inhabit a space haunted by twentieth-century Americana: in this alternate history, the entire continent of North America was destroyed and rendered uninhabitable by giant robots in 1959. Periodically, those robots seem to be returning and obliterating cities in Russia. The radio actors in the show—and their audiences—rely on nostalgia for an imagined idyllic past. They see Cold War-era Americana as a lost Garden of Eden. Normally, to call a work of art nostalgic is something of an insult: nostalgia is usually perceived as silly at best, but more often saccharine and pathetic. Yet in *Samuel & Alasdair*, The Mad Ones show how in a world without hope, nostalgia may be the best option—or the only one.

The cast consists of four characters—the show's unnamed Host (co-creator Joe Curnutte), the scientist and author Dr. Mischa Mormanov (co-creator Marc Bovino), the singer and actress Anastasia Volinski (co-creator Stephanie Wright Thompson), and the onstage guitarist Alexei "Tumbleweed" Petrovya (co-creator and music director Michael Dalto). Except Dalto, each of the other actors plays a second role in the radio-play-within-the-play, a depiction of imagined life in Midwestern 1950s America. The Host and Mischa play two brothers, Alasdair and Samuel, respectively. Alasdair, the older brother, is a handsome high school athlete, Samuel a sensitive boy plagued by visions of future apocalypse. Both are in love with their neighbor and former playmate Susie, played by Anastasia. The play-within-a-play is told over several episodes, each of which is told in a different style: the first seems to come from *Leave it to Beaver* (genuine 1950s middle America), the second in American noir style, the third episode as a Western. The stories also include classic American tunes like "Back in the Saddle Again," "You Send Me," and "She's Got You."

The episodes in the story of Alasdair and Samuel are interrupted by breaks for advertisements (whether for borscht or expensive Moscow jewelry stores), technical difficulties, emergency broadcasts in Morse code, and a "this day in history" segment. In the "real" world of the studio, we see the Host trying to keep everything together as it becomes apparent that something horrible is happening outside in the city. He maintains an apparently cheerful demeanor as things fall apart—an attitude that is illustrated by the silly bright red socks he wears with an otherwise conservative three-piece suit. He keeps smiling even when it is clear that the end is very near. Twice the studio loses power and the entire stage and audience are plunged into complete darkness: the first time for only a few seconds, but in the second instance for several minutes. The Host stumbles around and leaves the stage to find a flashlight; when the lights are finally restored Mischa has banged into something and given himself a bloody nose. Mischa, who reveals he hasn't written a book or article for over a decade, pines for the love of Anastasia; during one sequence where the broadcast has been suspended, she tells the story of how she grew up in poverty and became a singer. Near the end of the play, the four broadcasters make a clear decision to finish their radio show instead of trying to escape the city. After their broadcast is complete, they realize the only thing on the airwaves is static; Anastasia and Mischa begin to dance together as the sound of an approaching shockwave becomes audible and the lights go out.

Co-creator Lila Neugebauer's direction is subtle and extremely effective: the show is wonderfully paced and effectively transitions between comic and serious moments. The second blackout is particularly effective: never before have I sat in a completely dark theatre for so long. Throughout the entirety of this sequence, which must have been at least four-to-five minutes long, I remained completely engaged by the story that I could no longer see. So was the rest of the audience: there was no coughing or shuffling in the audience as we sat riveted to our seats while the Host searched for light and Mischa stumbled around the stage, with the only visible objects in the New Ohio being a few tiny strips of glow-tape. The sets, costumes, and lighting are similarly excellent: Laura Jellinek's set, Jessica Pabst's costumes, and Mike Inwood's lighting evoke both nostalgia and decrepitude: the ironically named "Victory Studio" is simultaneously an ode to American radio broadcasting and the last remnant of a society falling onto very hard times. Stowe Nelson's sound deserves special note: not only does it highlight the wonderful singing of Thompson and Dalto's skilled guitar playing, but the inclusion of static clicks, ominous white noise, echoes, and broadcasted sounds of a city in chaos

Continued next page

Above: Stephanie Wright Thompson, Marc Bovino and Joe Curnutte in *Samuel & Alasdair*. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MAD ONES

NEWS FROM THE **doctoral students' council**

DSC Opposes Pathways

The approach of spring and its accompanying vernal zephyrs can only mean one thing for the DSC: Elections. After a successful nominations period, DSC elections for Program Representatives, At-large Representatives, Program Student Academic Appeals Officers, Student Elections Review Committee, Faculty/Student Disciplinary Panel, Advocate Advisory Board, and OpenCUNY Board are set to begin April 1st. Voting will last until May 1st. Elected representatives will be notified shortly thereafter and Program and At-Large DSC Representatives will be expected to attend their first meeting on May 11th at 6:00PM in Room 5414.

The DSC also encourages students to run their own program elections for program standing committees at this time. As per Graduate Center Bylaws, students must be represented on program standing committees. Every program at the Graduate Center is mandated by the bylaws to have the following program standing committees: Executive, Curriculum and Exams, Admissions and Awards, Faculty Membership, and Elections. Program elections can easily be run through Opinio. For more information on program elections and how to run them using Opinio, please see our helpful DSC page: http://www.cunydsc.org/student-elections-programs.

Resolution and Petition Against Pathways

In other news, at the February 24th Plenary, the DSC adopted a resolution in opposition to Pathways. The DSC was resolved that the Chancellor and the CUNY Pathways Task Force halt the implementation of the Pathways General Education Framework and the DSC called for a cross-campus academic policy and curricular change to be determined by duly elected faculty representatives. Pathways continues to spark controversy and perhaps even a few lawsuits against CUNY and the Board of Trustees by the time this article goes to press. The University Student Senate (USS) Chair Kafui Kouakou recently sent a letter to the Chancellor in support of Pathways. A number of student governments, however, across CUNY have opposed Pathways, including now the Doctoral Students' Council, the only all graduate student government within CUNY. In the past few days, the PSC has been gathering faculty signatures on a petition opposing Pathways. The best and most comprehensive source for faculty and student feedback on Pathways can be found at http://cunyufs.org/A/.

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms

The DSC continues to work on issues that relate to students, and a recent success was the addition of a lactation room for GC mothers. Information flyers have been posted. We are also working with the administration on retrofitting bathrooms to be designated as gender neutral.

We have implemented a new reporting process for DSC Program representatives, whereby representatives are to report to their constituents the motions voted upon, the voting totals, and how they voted. The DSC is always aiming to be a leader in transparency and an advocate for open processes; this effort is along those lines. If you have not received a report from your Program representatives, please check the DSC website to find out who your representative is and contact them. If your program does not have a representative, it is still not too late to petition the DSC for a seat in order to claim your program allocations.

Upcoming Events

Lastly, the DSC will have two very important guest speakers at the next two Plenary meetings. Guest speaking at the March 23rd Plenary will be Senior Vice President and Provost Chase Robinson. Guest speaking at the April 27th Plenary will be Graduate Center President William Kelly. This is an important opportunity to ask questions of those in power.

A final note, the DSC's spring student party will be held on Friday March 23rd beginning at 8:30PM in rooms 5414 & 5409. Please plan on attending and spread the good fun.

As always, you can follow the DSC on Twitter @cunydsc, "like" our Facebook Page "Doctoral Students' Council, CUNY", and for the most up-to-date information visit our website http://www.cunydsc.org. Ⓐ

Theater Review

Continued from previous page

crucially contribute to the overall aesthetic effect of *Samuel & Alasdair*.

The highest praise goes to the actors. Curnutte, Bovino, and Thompson effectively transition between their roles in the studio (where they speak in English with Russian accents) and their roles in the radio-play-within-the-play, where they speak in American accents—but, amazingly, ones that sound as if they are foreigners doing their best to sound like "authentic Americans." Thompson's singing of Gene Autry, Sam Cooke, and Patsy Cline is especially effective. Thompson is a genuine crooner who makes the songs powerfully emotional. The one real misfire in the show is Dalto's monologue: throughout the vast majority of the show, Dalto's musician Alexei "Tumbleweed" is completely silent except for his guitar playing. Towards the end of the show, he gives a brief monologue, spoken entirely in Russian. What he says is a complete unknown: a problem both of the creators' choice to give this speech in Russian and in Dalto's performance. The problem was that it was impossible for me to tell either what Tumbleweed was saying, or why he was finally speaking; both what he was communicating and why the creators chose to give him this speech were unclear. He was more compelling when he remained silent.

In addition to focusing on nostalgia, a central theme of *Samuel & Alasdair* is the act of telling stories, of making up a history that is partly known, partly imagined. The radio-play-within-the-play of Alasdair, Samuel, and Susie is obviously such a story, since in the world of the play America was completely obliterated, without survivors, in 1959. Another instance of such obvious fictionalizing comes during one of the ad breaks, when the Host describes Anastasia in order to advertise for an upscale jewelry store. The Host describes her to his listeners as a princess-like opera singer in a gown covered with diamonds and jewelry; onstage in front of us, we see that she is in fact wearing simple, even cheap-looking clothing. The facts as the audience sees them are brushed aside in favor of a more glamorous fiction. Another story that is told onstage is that of the robot war itself: in Mischa's exposition, giant robots came out of holes in the ground, obliterating entire cities, leaving nothing higher than a human being's knee standing. Their attacks also included electromagnetic pulses that disabled any electrical devices for miles and massive bursts of radiation that left the areas attacked entirely uninhabitable. The EMP, radiation, and devastating shock waves sound to me like the actual effects of nuclear weapons, and raise an interesting question in my mind: had there in fact been a robot war? Or was the alternate history presented in *Samuel & Alasdair* one in which Russia had in fact launched nuclear weapons at the United States? Were these new attacks in fact now retaliatory nuclear strikes being made against Russia? Was the robot war itself a fiction that the Russians had invented in order to cover up a violent and brutal attack made by humans generations earlier? There is nothing in the show to explicitly support such an interpretation, other than the omnipresent theme of obscuring the truth in favor of a prettier fiction. And what could be a more problematic truth than the fact of human beings' capacity for war and violence?

Whether or not they in fact intended to depict the aftermath of a robot war, The Mad Ones' *Samuel & Alasdair: A Personal History of the Robot War* is a triumph of downtown Off-Off Broadway theatre. This collaboratively co-created work (which was workshopped in Louisville and presented at the Anti-depressant Festival at the Brick Theatre in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and at Ars Nova's ANT Fest) portends well for the future of The New Ohio. If the theatre continues to present shows of this quality from such adventurous, intellectual, and engaging young artists, it will soon once again become renowned as a star of the downtown theatre scene. It is worth noting that while the show (which is unfortunately now closed after an extension) is extremely compelling, outside of the blackout sequence, *Samuel & Alasdair* was not the most original theatrical performance I have seen. On the one hand, it owes a great deal to Samuel Beckett's post-apocalyptic tragicomedies like *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*; on the other hand it is a blatant collage of *War of the Worlds* and *A Prairie Home Companion* (although that juxtaposition is admittedly a novel idea). Additionally, just last year, the SITI (Saratoga International Theatre Institute) Company revived Anne Bogart's 2000 production of *War of the Worlds* at New York's Dance Theater Workshop. Bogart's production, written by Naomi Iizuka, similarly dramatizes the inside of a radio studio as Orson Welles and fellow actors broadcast their infamous 1938 radio play. The shows are strikingly different: the SITI show dramatizes actual American history, while The Mad Ones are imagining an alternate history and set their show in an imaginary Russia. Nevertheless, the crucial similarities remain, and they display the fact that the downtown experimental theatre continues, decade after decade, to explore themes of metatheatricality and artistic creation in troubled times. New York is lucky that it has talented young artists like The Mad Ones to skillfully continue exploring these themes in New York's vital experimental theatre scene. Ⓐ

Samuel & Alasdair: A Personal History of the Robot War. Conceived by Marc Bovino, Joe Curnutte, and Lila Neugebauer and created with the ensemble. Written by Marc Bovino and Joe Curnutte. Directed by Lila Neugebauer. Sets by Laura Jellinek. Costumes by Jessica Pabst. Sound by Stowe Nelson. Lighting by Mike Inwood. Dramaturgy by Sarah Lunnie. Stage Management by Cadi Thomas. Music by Michael Dalto. Feeaturing: Joe Curnutte, Marc Bovino, Stephanie Wright Thompson, and Michael Dalto. At The New Ohio Theatre. January 5–February 18, 2012 (now closed). Wednesdays–Saturdays, 8pm. Tickets: $ Produced by The Pearl Theatre Company. At New York City Center Stage II. September 13 – October 23. Tuesdays and Thursdays–Saturdays at 7:30pm. Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2:30pm. Tickets: $15 - $25. See http://www.sohothinktank.org/robotwar.htm for further details.

THE back page

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