



CHAPTER 2

theater, music, opera

Radical American and European theater of the 1950s and 1960s was deeply influenced by the innovative theater directors from earlier in the century—Vsevolod Meyerhold, Konstantin Stanislavsky and Jerzy Grotowski. But it would be avant-garde artists and musicians, not theater directors, who would trigger a rethinking of the very nature of performance. The work of idiosyncratic American composer John Cage, especially his writings on silence and chance, was as radically important as the ideas that came from Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, from Marcel Duchamp and Antonin Artaud.

Cage's now famous "untitled event" was presented at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in the summer of 1952. There was improvised dancing by Merce Cunningham in the aisles surrounding the audience, poetry readings by several performers perched on ladders, film projections on the walls, white paintings by Robert Rauschenberg hanging from the ceilings, and music on a "prepared" piano by David Tudor. This watershed event, coupled with Cage's composition classes at New York's New School for Social Research, was to exercise a profound influence on the development of art, dance, and music over the next forty years, particularly in the United States. Cage's contention that theater was in the mind of the beholder was a revelation to those who worked with him; "I try to get it so that people realize that they themselves are doing their experience and that it's not being *done* to them," Cage said.

Allan Kaprow attended Cage's composition class, and absorbed his teachings on chance as a motif and "found sound" as music. But he emphasized that the prime sources for Happenings were visual. "The direct line of historical stimulation (usually conscious)," Kaprow wrote, "seems to have been the Futurist manifestos and noise concerts, Dada's chance experiments and occasional cabaret performances, Surrealism's interest in automatic drawing and poetry, and the extension of these into action painting." American theater director Richard Schechner was, in turn, deeply affected by Cage and Kaprow; their influence, and that of the art world, he wrote, "cannot be overestimated." "It was from the direction of

BERYL KOROT and STEVE REICH

The Cave, Act 1: "Who is Sarah?", 1993

A three-hour visual and sound spectacle combining art and politics, video and music, on-stage singers and musicians, *The Cave* with its operatic scale, pushed the idea of the "total art-work" into the realm of high-tech.

music and painting that theater was revolutionized," he said of developments in the United States. So too, Julian Beck of the Living Theater, expressed his desire for "a revolution in the theater similar to those which had already taken place in painting and sculpture."

The avant-garde art world of the 1960s was a strong magnet for those in theater seeking a break from the psychological approach both to the audience and to acting that had been prevalent in the '50s. New York City in the late '60s—an *event* in itself, according to Spalding Gray who arrived in 1967—was a boom town of alternative theater groups which took their lead from the latest experiments in the art and dance worlds. Performance could be sampled nightly at the Judson Church, the Merce Cunningham studios, Richard Foreman's *Ontological Hysteric Theater*, the Living Cinema, the Film-maker's Cinemathèque or La Mama Experimental Theater. During the day, performers could attend workshops run by fellow artists, where collaborative work was encouraged. Wilson's Byrd Hoffman School for Birds offered classes in movement and body awareness and attracted highly original dancers and performers, among them Meredith Monk, Cindy Lubar, Andrew de Groat, Stephan Brecht, and Spalding Gray.

It was clear that this new performance-art theater had nothing whatsoever to do with even the most basic of theatrical concerns: no script, no text, no narrative, no director, and especially no actors. "No Previous Theater Experience Necessary" read an advertisement for Robert Wilson's *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969). Instead, focus was on movement, "more like dance" Wilson said; on images, which washed the stage like hundreds of blown-up movie stills; and on time, which might be stretched as long as twenty-four hours to allow the eye to absorb the richness of the visual details distributed across the stage. This resulted in a wealth of unforgettable productions; Mabou Mines's *The Red Horse* (1971), Meredith Monk's *The Education of a Girl Child* (1972), Richard Foreman's *Pandering to the Masses: A Misrepresentation* (1975), The Wooster Group's *Three Places in Rhode Island* (1974–78), Robert Wilson's *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1974).

It was Wilson's collaboration with composer Philip Glass, however, on the opera *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) that would have a pan-European influence. It premiered in July 1976 at the Festival d'Avignon, and was afterwards performed at the Venice Biennale. Both the action, which was slowed down in parts as to be almost imperceptible—"it gave you time to think"—and the imagery, which was on the scale of city buildings—"a theater for the eyes"—were indelible visual and visceral sensations for all who experienced it. Even for those who did not, Wilson's reputation throughout Europe, where he worked almost exclusively during the 1980s, had an enormous impact on young performers, such as the groups La Fura dels Baus in Spain and Falso Movimento in Italy, or Jan Fabre in Belgium. They used Wilson's

daring as a springboard for their own work. This new generation of European performance artists had been formed by the traditions of European theater, with its grand Wagnerian-scale productions in state-subsidized opera houses, and such brilliant directors as Peter Brook, Ariane Minouchkin, Giorgio Strehler, and Peter Stein. Yet their bold and complex works remained rigorously text-based and actor-centered, which explains the enthusiasm that greeted the Americans' work from both the theater and the art worlds of Europe. Above all, it was the overwhelmingly cinematic visual effects (particularly in the work of Wilson and Laurie Anderson) that appealed. The Americans' commitment to creating material from scratch, using autobiographical references, everyday life, and media culture as content (Monk, Anderson, the Wooster Group) had a liberating effect, and so did their indifference, for the most part, to narrative and to the actor as a "character." Furthermore, Wilson and Anderson actively sought broader audiences, establishing the contradictory notion of a popular avant-garde as a force for the '80s. These were some of the factors that would radically transform European performance in the mid-'80s, and that would also have a great impact on the evolution of dance-theater.

Much of this new work was introduced into Europe through the gateway of Amsterdam: there at the Mickery Theater from 1975 onward, director Ritsaert ten Cate presented the Wooster Group, Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk, John Jesurun, and many more. By the mid '80s, visual theater groups were flourishing in nearby Antwerp, led by the wildly imaginative Jan Fabre, who also took his inspiration from the complex and cathartic endurance pieces of Marina Abramović and Hermann Nitsch. The more cerebral Jan Lauwers and the pop-oriented Michel Laub, choreographers Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and Wim Vandekeybus, and musicians Thierry de Mey and Peter Vermeersch, made up the Belgian "New Wave," whose innovative productions could be seen in a closely linked network of theaters—the Kaaithater in Brussels, the Theater am Turm (TAT) in Frankfurt, and the Hebbel Theater in Berlin. It was as though, by the end of the '90s, the seeds planted some twenty years earlier by performance artists in Europe and the USA, concerning time, motion, space, imagery, the body, and sound, had at last come to marvelous fruition.

Einstein on the Beach became the model of a new *Gesamtkunstwerk* with its storyboard of non-sequitur scenes, a libretto made up of numbers and solfège symbols and sung by singers untrained in opera and performing mostly from the orchestra pit, with Glass's signature electronic music rendered in cycles of repetitive phrases. It not only left a school of visual theater in its wake, but also inspired many contemporary composers, who, in the next fifteen years, took *Einstein on the Beach* as an inspiration for their own inventions. An explosion of new opera followed, Glass's own *Satyagraha* (1980), *Akhmaten* (1984), and

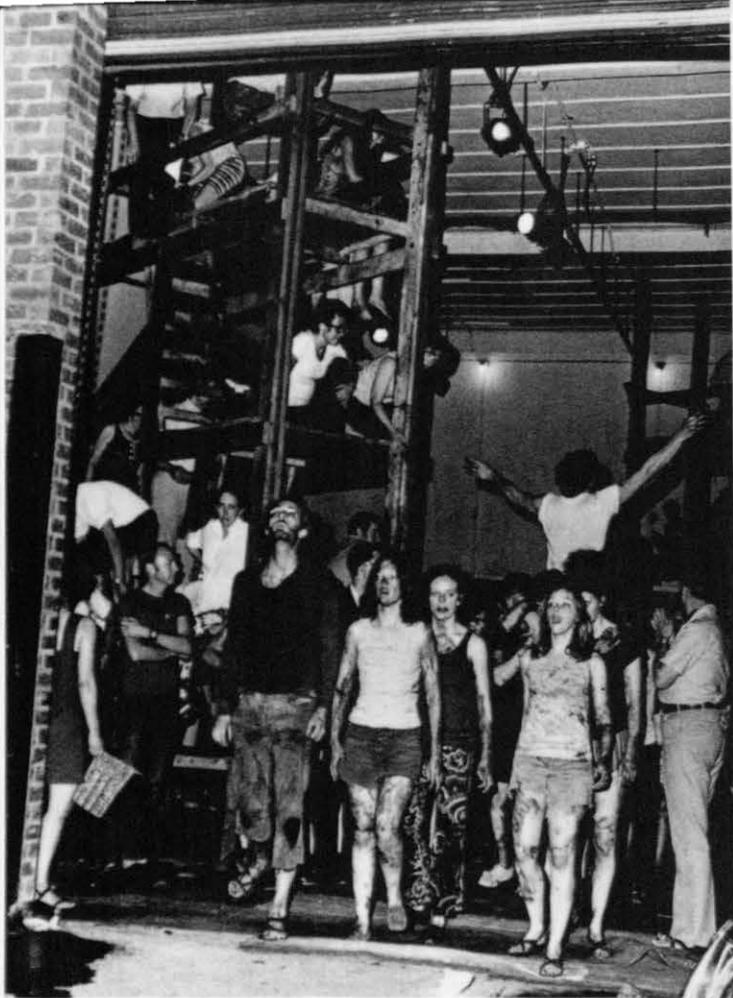
Voyage (1992); John Adams and Peter Sellars' *Nixon in China* (1987), Peter Greenaway and Louis Andriessen's *Rosa, A Horse Drama* (1994), among others. Composer Steve Reich and video artist Beryl Korot introduced yet another dimension for visual opera with *The Cave* (1993), a majestic music-theater piece which meshed the latest in visual and sound technologies; videotaped documentary material projected on to five large screens gave the lead to music that mimicked the speech melodies of the taped performers. The result was a high-tech musical discourse on race, ethics, gender, cultural history, the Torah, the Koran, and contemporary politics.

It needed the confidence of the revitalized art world of late '80s Britain for a visual theater, influenced by live art, to emerge in full force. Works by groups such as Station House Opera and Forced Entertainment, Desperate Optimists, Gob Squad, and Blast Theory produced energetic theatrical performance in the '90s. Performance-theater in Britain in the '60s and the pre-Thatcher '70s, with its labor strikes and marches, was a mix of street-performance styles incorporating mime, vaudeville, poetry, and public confrontation. Troupes such as Welfare State, the People Show, or John Bull's Puncture Repair Kit, toured provincial cities, intentionally avoiding fashionable London, and could be seen mostly up north performing in places where workers gathered—forecourts of steel mills, the docks, the local pub—or performing at rock and arts festivals. At the same time the rock 'n' roll theater of *Hair* or *The Rocky Horror Show* that came on the tail end of London's "Swinging Sixties" and the mood of a highly creative youth culture at its center, kept the gates open between the worlds of art and pop music as it did between the different strata of Britain's social classes. Musicians who emerged from art schools in the north, like David Bowie or Brian Eno had no reverence for the "high-versus-low" debate; Eno's interests lay in working precisely in the spaces in between—art and music, classical and modern, and even performance and recording. For Eno the recording studio itself was a compositional tool, and his "ambient music," "Music for Airports," for instance, a sophisticated avant-garde riff on stale, canned "muzak," provided a means for his invasion of architectural spaces as well. On the other hand, musicians like Bow Gamelan and Stephen Cripps used Cornelius Cardew's eccentric ideas about Scratch Music as the model for their own highly eclectic concert performances. "A Scratch Orchestra is a large number of enthusiasts pooling their resources (not primarily material resources) and assembling for action (music making, performance, edification)," wrote Cardew.

In New York in the '70s, musical innovation continued along the lines introduced by John Cage. *4'33"* (1952) was among his works that opened composition completely to chance; his book *Silence* (1959) inspired a number of American composers to break with the

Europeans Stockhausen, Messiaen, Boulez, and Berlangier. La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier, John Cale, and Pauline Oliveros, and many others, produced work from the mid-'60s that established a place for electronic music and minimalism built on repetitive structures "with reduced pitch relationships." This served as a framework for material that eventually incorporated research into the rhythms of African, Indian, and Asian music, as well as the inclusion of spoken language. The New York clubs of the late '70s such as CBGB's, the Mudd Club, and TR3 were, according to Glass, part of "the most important and vital new music scene today, more challenging and innovative than what I was hearing coming out of the schools or from people imitating me," and they provided a showcase for Peter Gordon's *Love of Life Orchestra*, Patti Smith, Alan Suicide, Glenn Branca, and new jazz by art-world musician John Lurie's *Lounge Lizards*. In the '90s, the Knitting Factory continues to sponsor the most interesting developments in new music from John Zorn to Christian Marclay and DJ Spooky.

Laurie Anderson's early performances in the mid-'70s were a sophisticated mix of her conceptual art background and her training as an accomplished violinist (an ability which she initially disguised in the creative climate of that time in which virtuosity was anathema to conceptually oriented artists, dancers, and performers). Autobiographical, intimate, and punctuated with visual notation, custom-made violins, and fragments of home-made movies or doctored slides, she captured audience attention with a "stage presence" that had previously been absent from artists' performance. This was very evident in her opus of 1983, *United States*, in which she was the single performer at the center of a huge stage for most of the eight-hour production. The kick-off for an '80s fascination with art that moved beyond the container of the art world to the limitless possibilities of the popular media, *United States* with its signature song "O Superman" also led Anderson more deeply into the music world; collaborations with Peter Gabriel and Brian Eno, and recordings such as "Strange Angels" gave her a unique passage through several highly sophisticated industries at once, qualifying her by the late '90s to break new ground in the very latest high-tech territories. *Life* (1998), a "live" installation involving an incarcerated prisoner, whose image is projected via cable into a museum gallery, and *Moby Dick*, an electronic opera that will have its premiere in 1999, show Anderson on the edge of the twenty-first century with the tools to provide us with telling portraits of our society.

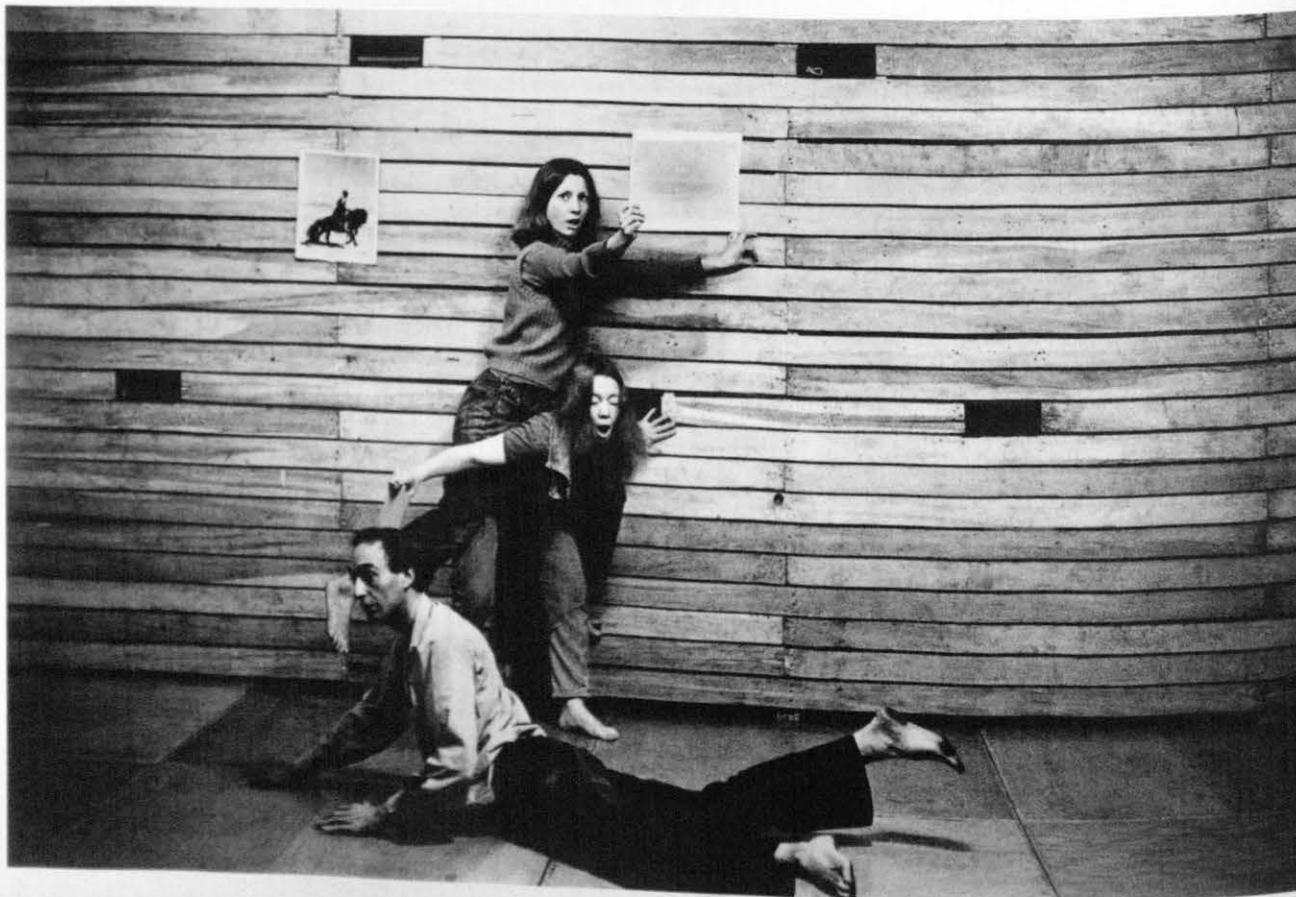


◀ RICHARD SCHECHNER and
THE PERFORMANCE GROUP
Dionysus 1969, 1969

Schechner was fascinated by Cage's notions of chance and "life as theater," and by the radical approaches to performance of painters like Allan Kaprow. Kaprow's rules of thumb for Happenings, such as "the line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps as indistinct as possible," were the model for his own manifesto on theater, *Six Axioms for Environmental Theater* (1967). *Dionysus* 1969 illustrated several of these axioms, such as "all the space is used for performance," and it was a powerful example of his belief in involving the audience (here shown being led into the street).

▼ MABOU MINES
The Red Horse Animation, 1971

Artists' performance, new dance, and the new music of downtown New York freed approaches to theatrical material, but for director and playwright Lee Breuer, acting skills and storytelling were still an important part of the theatrical process. He and the Mabou Mines group collaborated on a series of so-called "animations"—non-sequential stage pictures with a strong comic-book flavor. "Dramatic movements," says Breuer, "have 'POW,' 'KRACK,' and 'AARGHH' written all over them." For this show at La Mama Theater, the slatted wooden wall was "live" with microphones, and functioned as a percussive instrument.

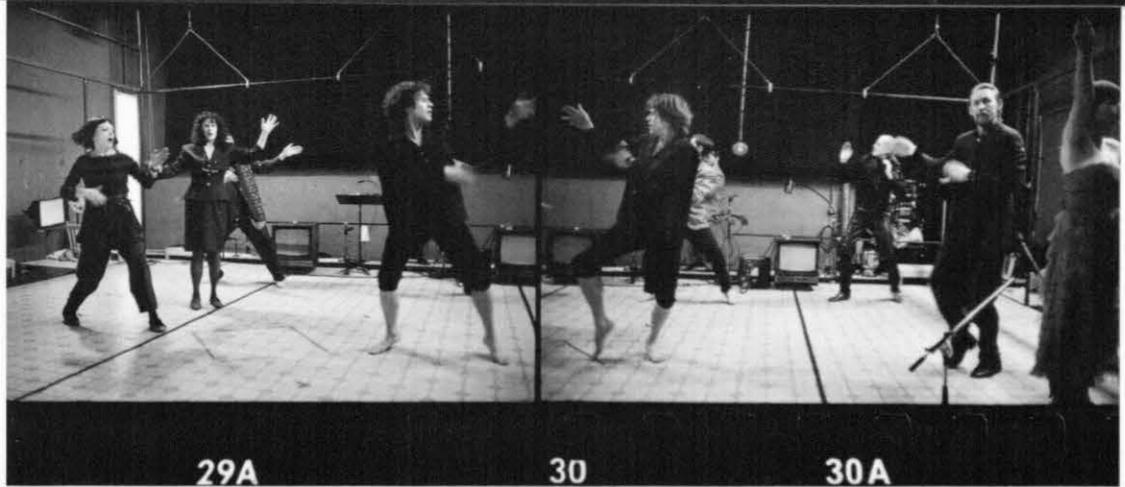


THE WOOSTER GROUP

BRACE UP! 1991

The Hairy Ape, 1997, first performed in 1995

Spalding Gray and Elizabeth LeCompte, both members of Schechner's Performance Group, were drawn to the non-narrative, movement-focused work of Meredith Monk and Robert Wilson. In the spring of 1974, LeCompte, a painter, and Gray, an actor, began experimenting with material from Gray's early childhood; LeCompte created a collage of memories—records, slides, interviews, texts, and actions. From these beginnings came the Wooster Group ensemble which, with LeCompte as director, developed a highly sophisticated and complex collaborative medium for their ideas, made up of film, video, text, and energetically choreographed performances. *BRACE UP!*, an epilogue to the trilogy *The Road to Immortality*, continued their practice of using biographical material as a starting point, while *The Hairy Ape*, based on Eugene O'Neill's 1920s text, is an example of their approach to classic texts, which they cut, splice, and reconfigure to give an entirely modern and radical meaning to contemporary drama.





◀ RICHARD FOREMAN

I've got the shakes, 1995

Foreman's theater is currently as layered, fragmented, and obsessive as it was thirty years ago, with its recurring themes of intellectual doubt and a search for life's meaning. While the earlier material was spiked with a ribald sexuality and driven by the need to find a language to contain it, the more recent work, no less argumentative, confronts unnerving themes of mortality, death, and decay.

MEREDITH MONK

Quarry, 1975

Quarry retells World War II as seen by an American child. It is one of Monk's seminal works for the ways that it threads together her talents as choreographer, filmmaker, composer, singer, and visionary. It is scored for forty voices, two pump organs, one electric organ, magnetic tape, and performers who engage in actions, such as sweeping and cycling, that are part of the precisely orchestrated sound.





▶ **ROMEO CASTELLUCCI/SOCIETAS RAFFAELLO SANZIO**
Oresteia, 1995

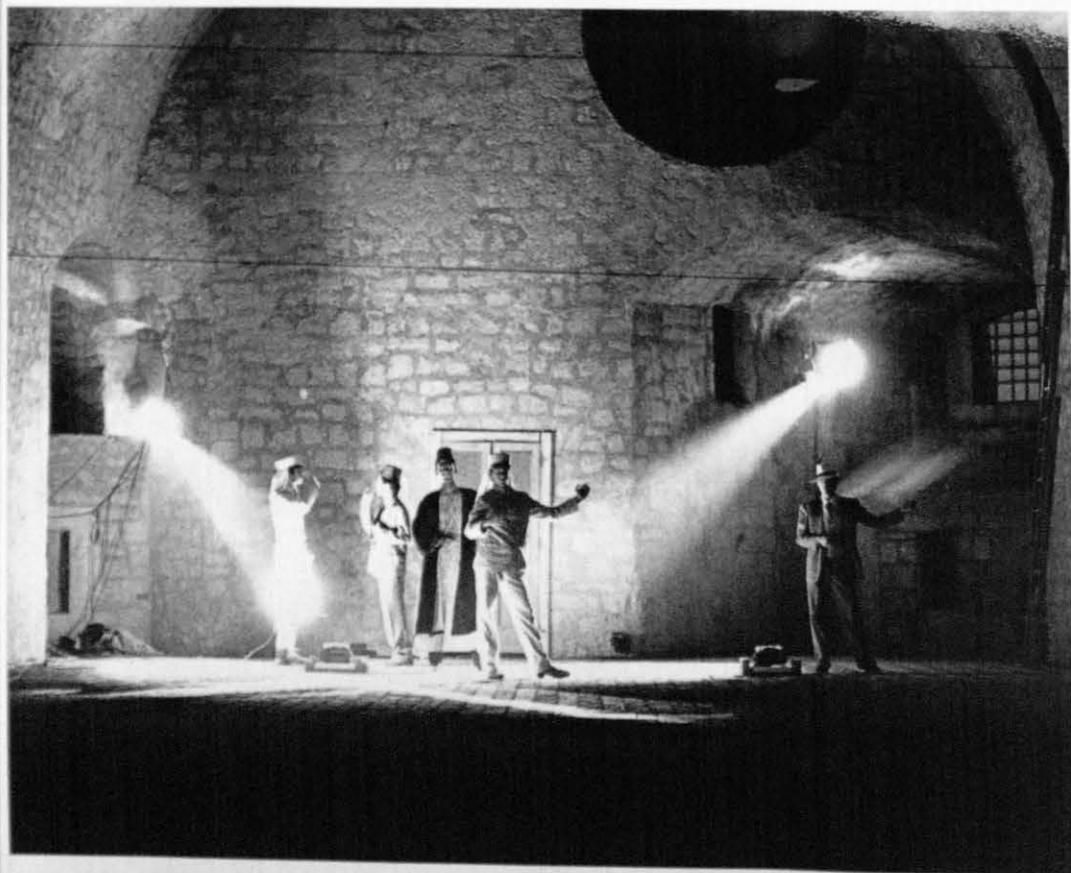
Horses, a donkey, the corpse of a goat, and unforgettably shaped humans made up Castellucci's nightmarish rendering of this classic tragedy. Slow-moving and three hours long, the visually amazing installation included contraptions circulating blood-red liquid through overhead pipes and ominous-sounding wind machines.

◀ **FALSO MOVIMENTO**
Otello, 1983

Verdi's melodramatic opera, reinterpreted by New York musician Peter Gordon, was presented with cinematic bravura in the deepest cellar of a medieval castle in Naples. "Turning the stage itself into a screen," this 60-minute work was structured in the manner of a series of fast-paced film sequences.

▶ **LA FURA DELS BAUS**
Suz/O/Suz, 1991

Oil drums, gas cylinders, supermarket carts, TV sets, unmuffled motors, and a washing-machine are used as noise-makers for this explosive work in which performers hang from suspended racks in tall towers, plunge into tanks filled with water, and toss raw meat in chaotic mock battles.





▼ JAN FABRE

Silent Screams, Difficult Dreams, 1992

Fabre's fantastic imagination and ferocious energy combine to take the form of large-scale operas, dance, installations, solo performances, video, and sculpture, all made with an obsessive attention to visual detail, seductive surfaces and an excellence of execution. For *Silent Screams* (performed at documenta 9 in Kassel), the second in his opera trilogy *The Minds of Helena Troubleyn*, the stage was dark, strung with black beads at the perimeter, the performers dressed in brilliant blue. White china plates were used as shoes, as furniture, as pedestals, and for the dramatic finale as "white rain" when hundreds came crashing down from the ceiling.

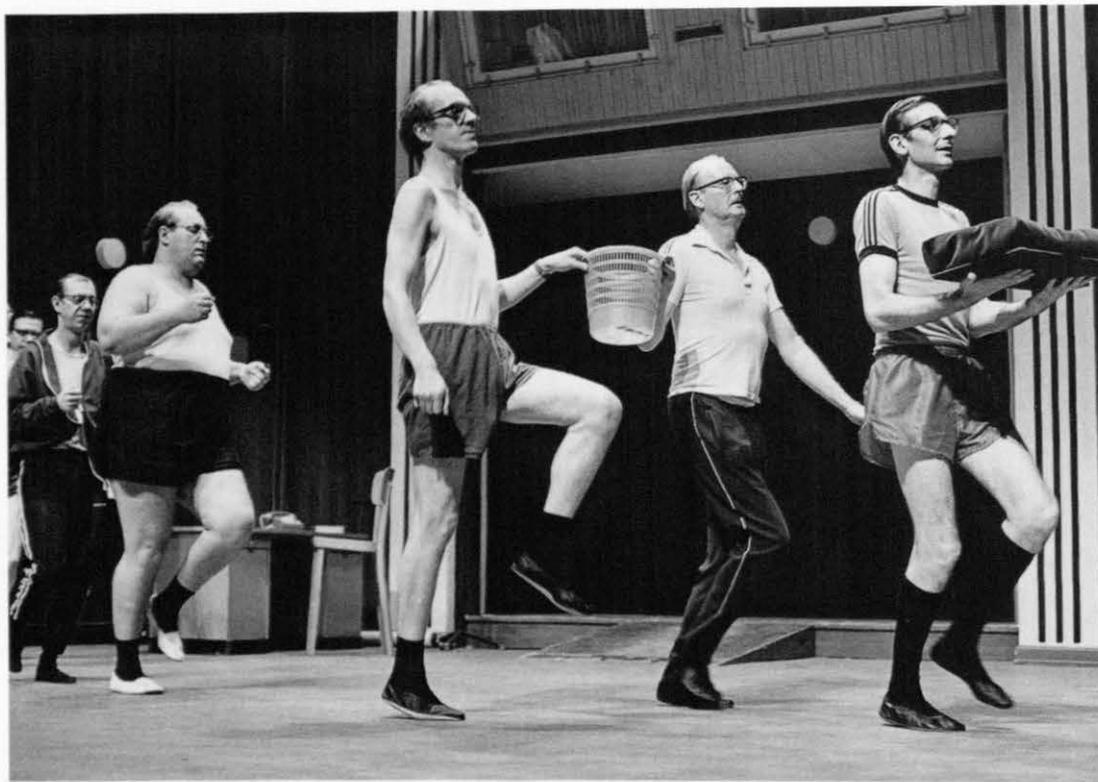
► HEINER GOEBBELS

Ou bien le débarquement désastreux... Or the disastrous landing, 1993

Passionate about radio, and the seamless transitions from sound to text and back again that make the *Hörstücke*, or sound play, of German radio so appealing, Goebbels developed a large-scale and influential music theater in which words and music were absolutely connected. *The Disastrous Landing* (which premiered in Paris) took texts by Joseph Conrad, Francis Ponge, and Heiner Müller and collaged them with music that crossed the boundaries between jazz, rock, art music, and classical compositions. "When I'm directing it's more like composing and when I'm composing it's more like directing," he says.







CHRISTOPH MARTHALER

Stunde Null, oder die Kunst des Servierens
(*Zero Hour: The Art of Waiting Tables*), 1995

A former musician and practicing clown, Marthaler is fascinated by the banality of the everyday; observing people on tramways or in railway stations, he reconstructs their body language for the stage, extracting the inherent slapstick of their ordinary exchanges. In *Stunde Null* the performers have very little to say, yet their bodies speak constantly. Moving awkwardly but rhythmically, they give form to Marthaler's research into training courses for top management in Germany; he urges them, bureaucrats in body and dress, to find individual personalities in improvisation behind the public operators they portray. Set on a stage designed by collaborator Anna Viebrock, with exacting rooms and "public" spaces built of wood, Marthaler's work is a subtle critique of contemporary northern European culture.



◀ JAN LAUWERS

Needcompany's Macbeth, 1996

The Snakesong Trilogy/Part One/Le Voyeur, 1994

Lauwer's signature conference table provides both a format and a framework for his highly aesthetic and rhetorical rendering of Shakespeare's plays. Art, he says, must make room for reflection. Hence, when Duncan lays his head on Banquo's shoulder in *Macbeth* (first performed in Brussels), "you see a picture, and get time to think." *Snakesong* (which opened in Frankfurt) illustrated another of Lauwer's obsessions, that of putting powerful women center stage in his eloquent visual and linguistic dramas.



▼ MICHEL LAUB/REMOTE CONTROL

Planet LULU, 1997

Sexy, trashy, and supremely elegant at the same time, Laub's *LULU* (Arhus Danstheater, Denmark) was an anarchic mixture of media—"I think of it as a radio piece with images and choreography... as a musical rather than an opera," Laub said. It was also a compilation of *Lulus*, five to be exact, based on Wedekind's erotic original and Louise Brooks's portrayal in Pabst's 1929 film *Pandora's Box*. The mint-green chaise-longues were designed by Marina Abramović.





ROBERT LEPAGE

***7 Streams of the River Ota*, 1994–96**

Lepage's eight-hour epic of life at the end of the twentieth-century was a collage of tableaux vivants, film, slides, operatic singing, kabuki, banraku puppetry, and traditional acting so true-to-life that certain scenes achieved a level of excruciating hyper-realism. Canadian-born, raised bilingually, and trained in drama, Lepage glided his elliptical narrative between East and West, past and present. The low horizontal platform with washes of brilliantly textured cloth and celluloid color gave his stage the quality of Cinemascope. Variouslly timed—from the recitative pace of storytelling to the urgency of fast forward—and with a cast of nine performers, *7 Streams* was Lepage's third major epic, following *The Dragon's Trilogy* (1985–86) and *Tectonic Plate* (1988).





▲ **TING THEATER OF MISTAKES**

Going, from Scenes at a Table, 1977

When first performed as *Homage to Pietro Longhi (Scenes at a Table)* at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 1976, each performer imitated the improvised actions of the previous actor. The following year, for the Paris Biennale, all the actions were meticulously rehearsed.

► **GARY STEVENS**

If the Cap Fits, 1985

Inspired by double comedy acts, such as Laurel and Hardy with their bungled speech, mimed action, and games of "tit for tat," Stevens and Caroline Wilkinson continued to put on more clothes all through the performance, blurring the edge between garments, bodies, and objects.

STATION HOUSE OPERA

Limelight, 1995

The ruins of the Frauenkirche in Dresden were the backdrop for this work (music by Agnes Ponizil), which included cabaret acts and a long wall-building sequence (opposite). In a powerful finale, the breeze blocks fell like dominos.

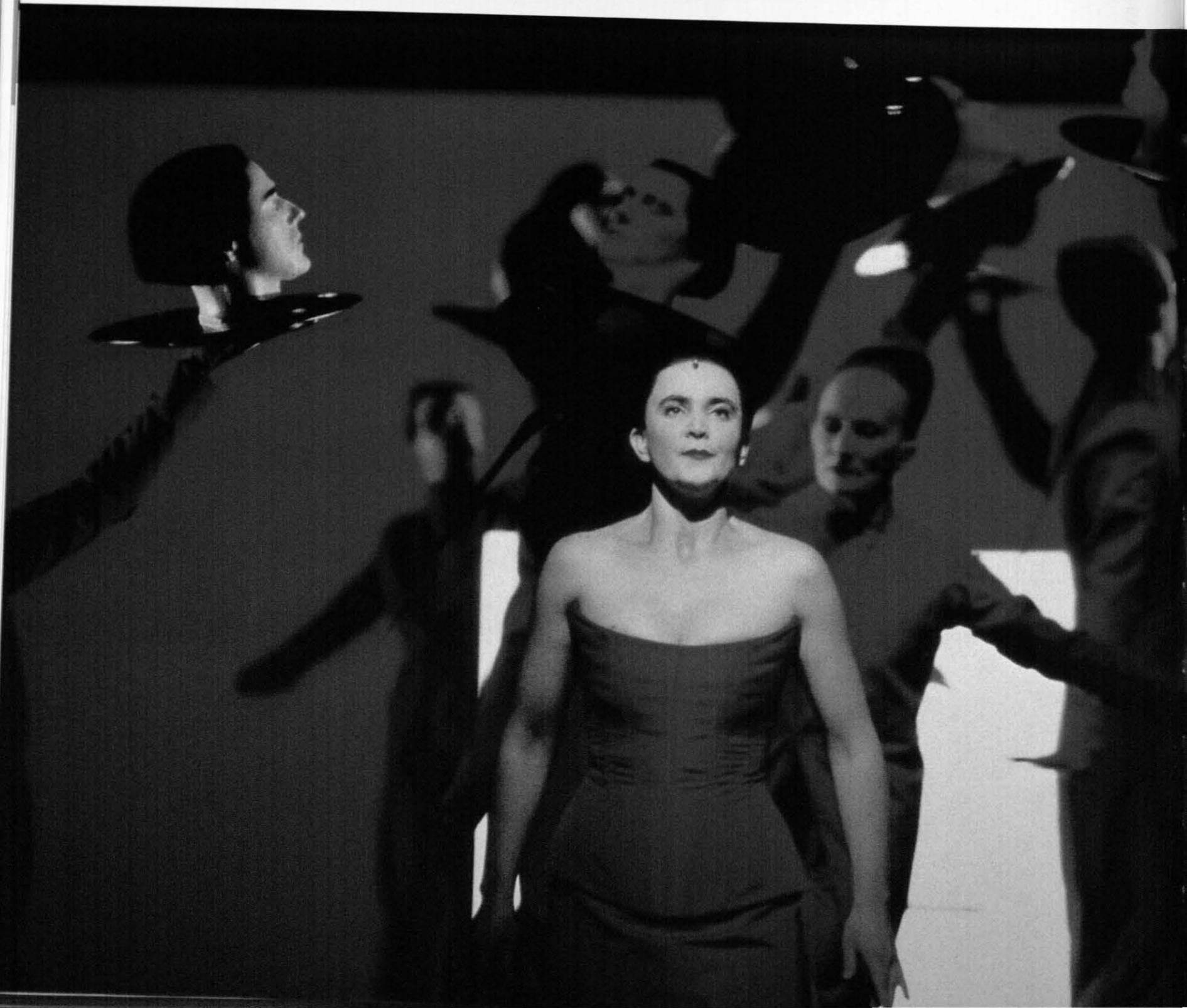




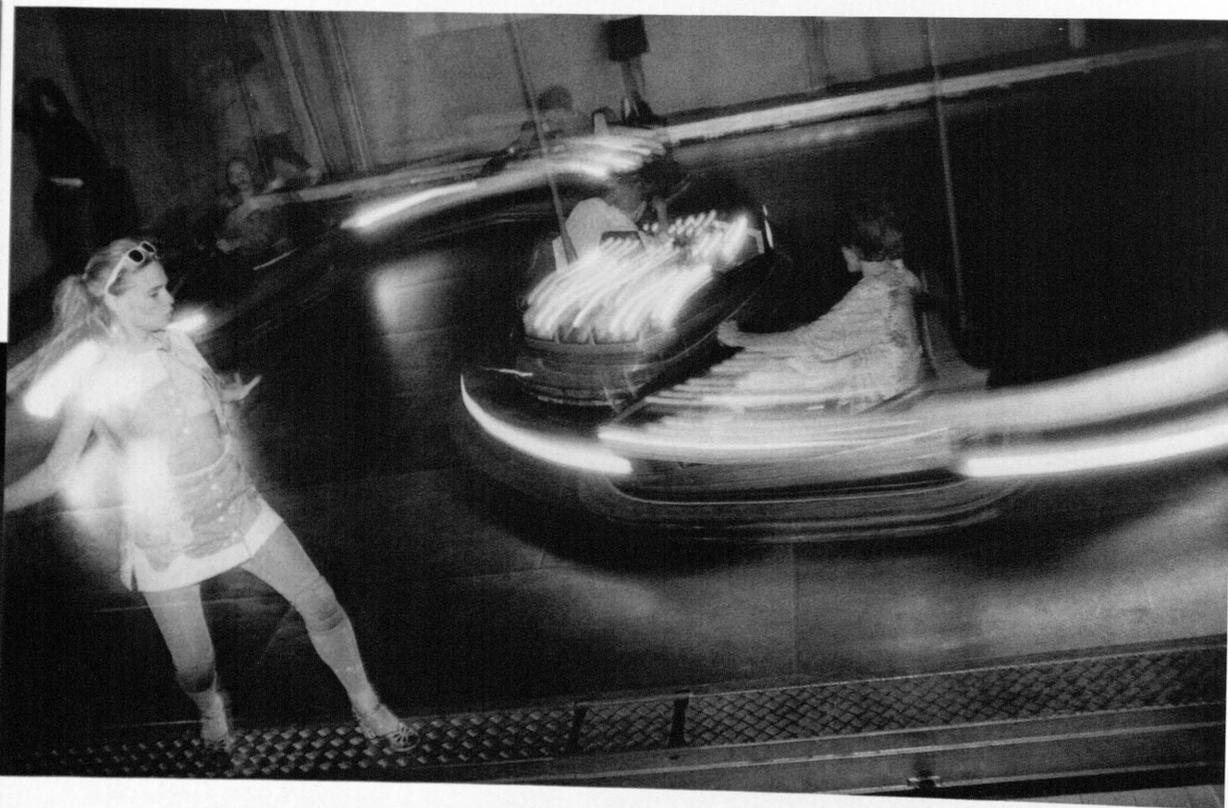
ROBERT WILSON, LOU REED, AND DARRYL PINCKNEY
Time Rocker, 1997

ROBERT WILSON, TOM WAITS, AND WILLIAM BURROUGHS
Black Rider, 1990

Time Rocker was the third in a triptych of spectacular pop operas loosely based on nineteenth-century texts, and created for the intensely physical actors of Hamburg's Thalia Theater. In this theatrical extravaganza, Wilson used H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* as a launch pad for his startling visual imagination, inspiring rock pioneer Lou Reed to create sixteen songs that are both memorable theater-music and charged rock and roll. Like *The Black Rider*, based on Carl Maria von Weber's folk opera *Der Freischütz*, and *Alice*, a reworking of the Lewis Carroll story, *Time Rocker* is a theatrical work "made for the eyes."

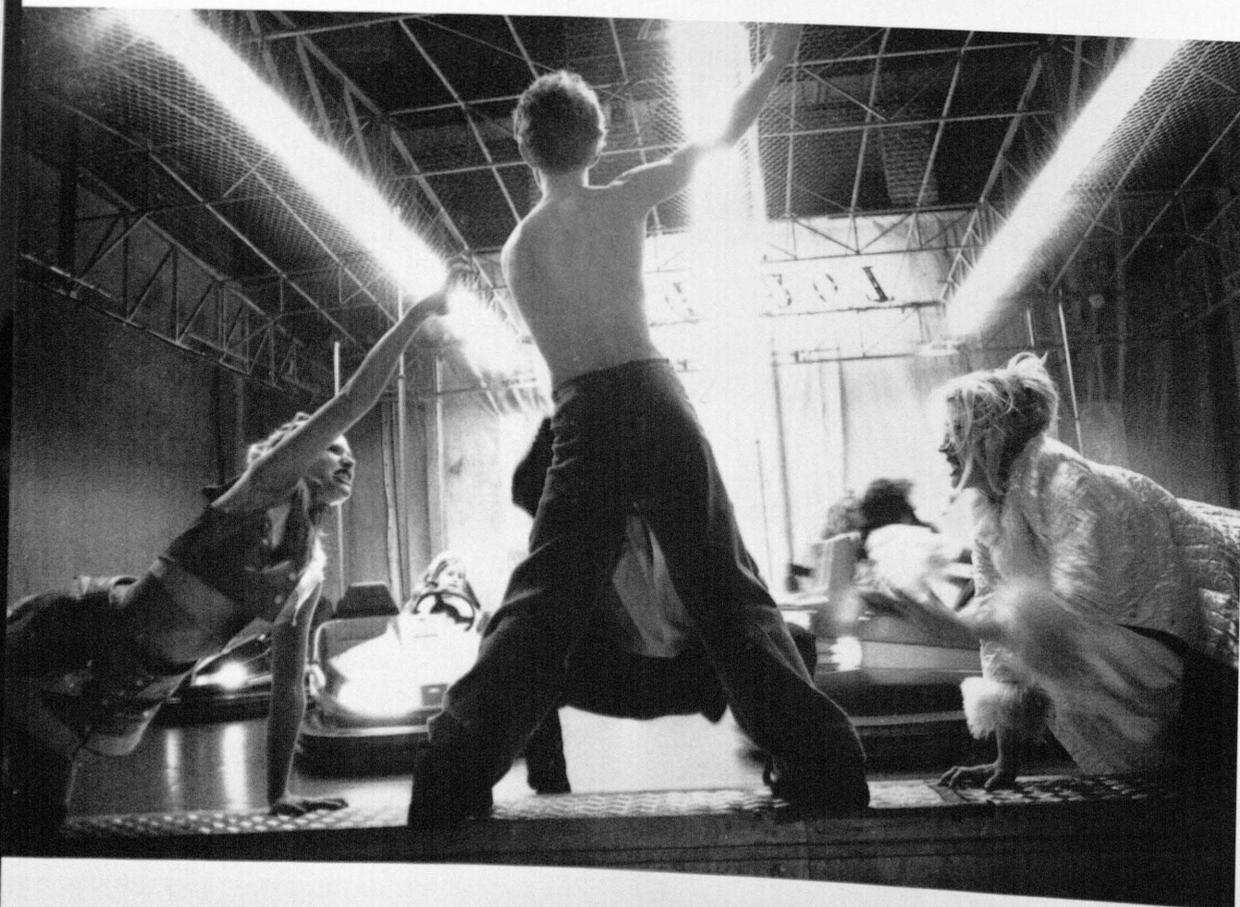






ALAIN PLATEL AND ARNE SIERENS
Bernadetje, 1996

Choreographer Platel and writer/director Sierens wove a modern tale of street life, sexual awakening, and saints into a breathtaking work of hyper-real dance and music theater. The piece (first performed in Ghent) was 75 minutes long, with eleven performers, mostly teenagers who had never acted before, in five bumper cars on a dodgem track. The soundtrack (Bach, House, and disco music) was mixed live on stage. "The cars perform a modern mating dance," wrote one reviewer. "The audience gets not one moment of peace during the performance," wrote another.

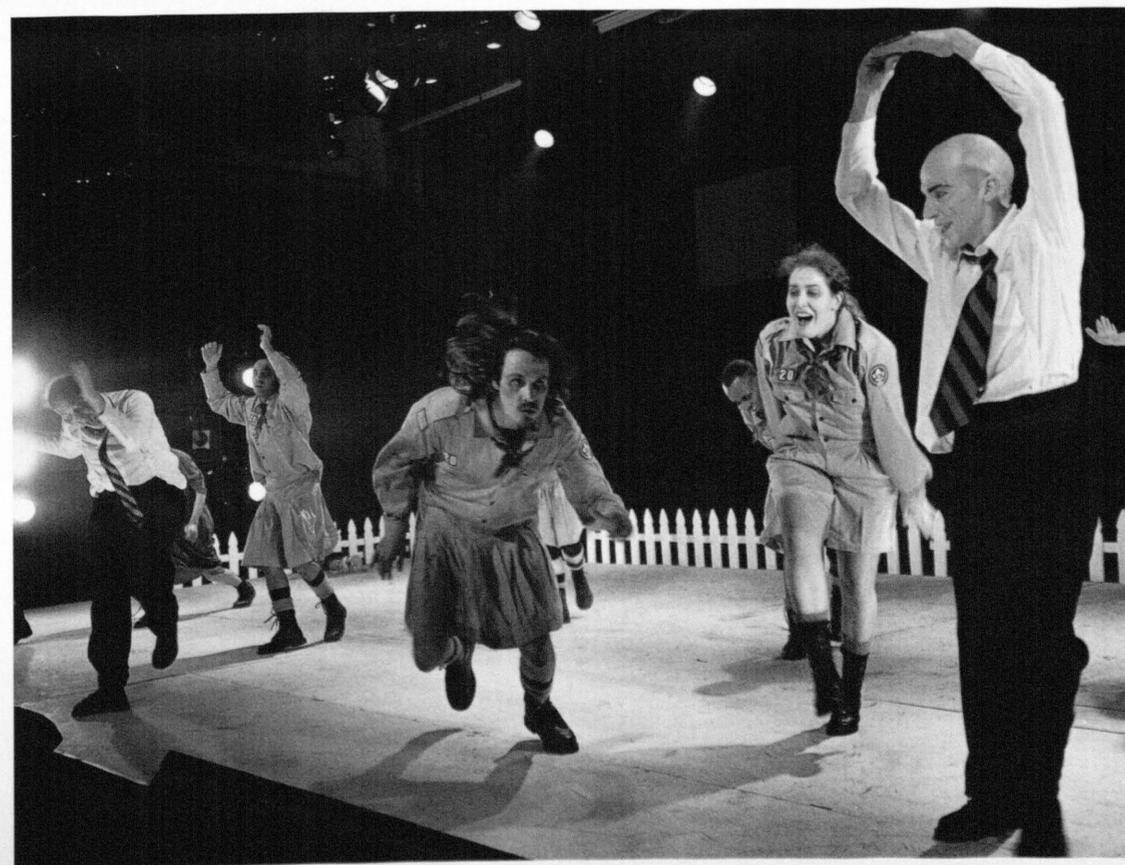




REZA ABDOH

Quotations from a Ruined City, 1994

A white picket fence, barbed wire, metal cubicles, ramps, two separate performance platforms, formed the architecture of this elaborate urban staging in an old warehouse in New York. Abdoh's frenetic actors spewed text, drummers beat snares, and singers performed spirituals—live, on tape, on back-projected film, and on video. All this provided Abdoh with a sufficiently complex and chaotic vehicle for his passionate critique of American culture and his own place in it—"as an outsider; a queer, HIV+, emigre artist of color, born in Iran, and educated in London and Los Angeles."





◀ **GOB SQUAD**
Show and Tell, 1997

Living and working in Nottingham, this British-German group juggle with city life, consumerism, and a passion for the banal in ordinary settings—private houses, offices, shopping centers, railway stations, parks, as well as theaters and galleries.

▶ **STEFAN PUCHER**
Ganz Nah Dran, (Almost there), 1996

In this fractured, disturbing portrait of '90s youth culture, a baroque frame surrounded a huge screen on which live video images of the audience were projected, DJs scratched techno-music, and an eighty-year-old radio personality read Bret Easton Ellis-like tales of over-indulged party-goers. This was performed with members of Gob Squad.

▶ **FORCED ENTERTAINMENT**
200% and Bloody Thirsty, 1987

Three drunks in bad wigs caroused in a sea of secondhand clothes, repeatedly re-enacting the events surrounding the death of one of their friends. The piece, which opened at the ICA in London, combined a brash physicality with high-speed gibberish, broken slang, and the melancholy musings of angels on video monitors who looked down on the protagonists.



200%
& BLOODY THIRSTY



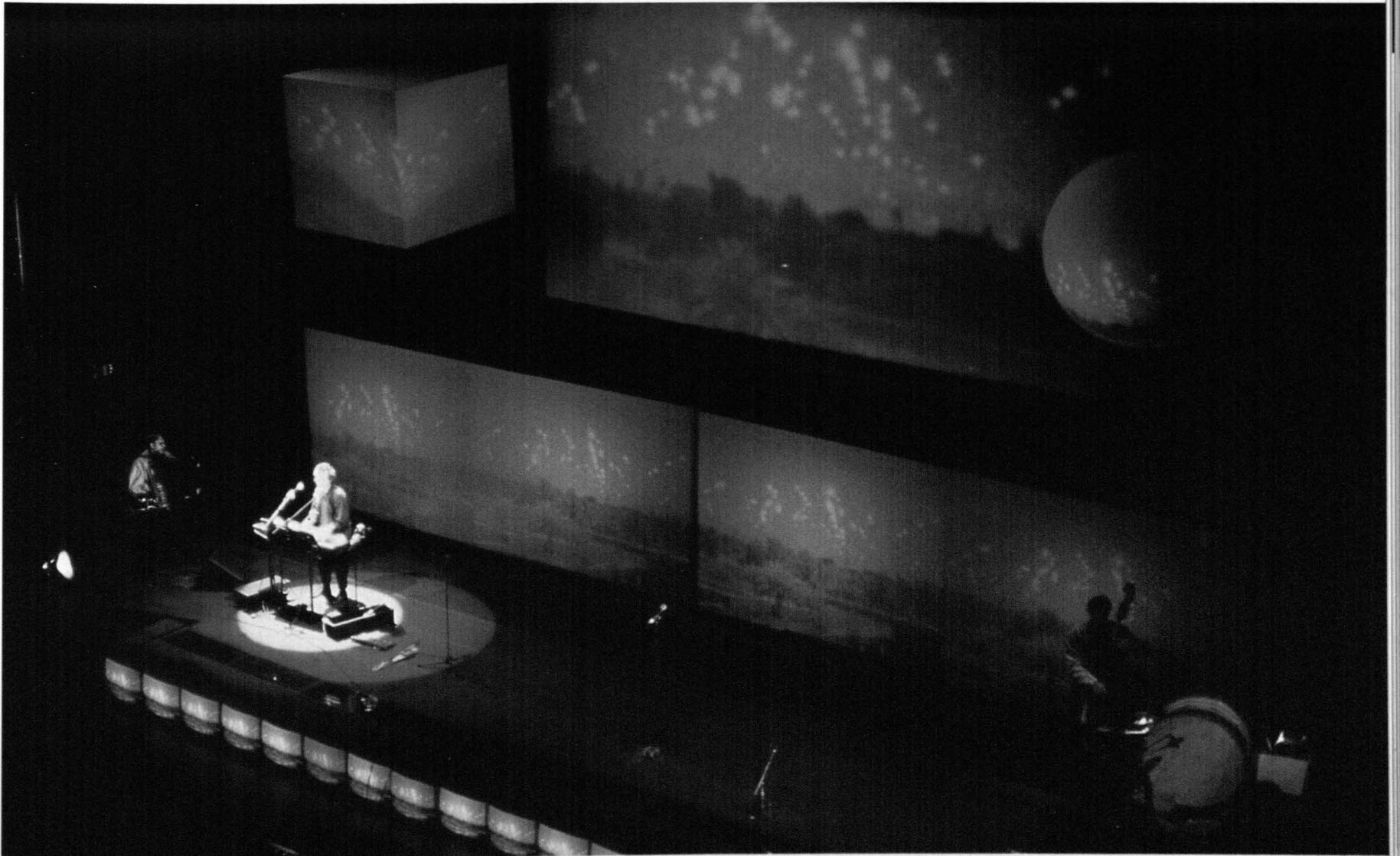


LAURIE ANDERSON

Wired for Light and Sound, 1986

Stories from the Nerve Bible, 1992-93

From her earliest performances, Anderson used custom-built instruments. One was a "tape-bow" violin with a tape-recorder head in place of strings and a bow containing pre-recorded tape. Another was a wiring system that turned her into a human drum, producing a threatening "boom!" when she tapped any part of her body. The special microphone and light bulb in her mouth (left) allowed her to sing "like a violin" and gave her cheeks a blood-red glow. Anderson used her home-made instruments in highly inventive ways in her 1979-83 eight-hour opus *United States*, first performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Against backdrops of low-tech slide projections and Super-8 film, often of rough stick-figure animations, Anderson told stories about the ironies of living in, and possibly being consumed by a high-tech world. A decade later, in her full-scale musical production *Stories from the Nerve Bible*, Anderson transformed the stage into a spectacular three-dimensional media landscape. Enveloped in the latest technology, the work included a holographic tornado, walls of video monitors, and songs such as "War is the Highest form of Modern Art" and "Alien Sex" that were both apocryphal and poignant in their description of the end of the twentieth century. *Stories from the Nerve Bible* toured fifteen cities from Seville to Jerusalem, and had its own website where Anderson kept a daily diary and responded to fans.



► MEREDITH MONK

Atlas: An Opera in Three Parts, 1991

▼ JOHN ADAMS/PETER SELLARS/
ALICE GOODMAN

Nixon in China, 1987

Since *Einstein on the Beach*, experimental opera has increasingly offered powerful new ways of approaching performance. Monk's *Atlas* was constructed from a repertoire of vocal techniques—glottal effects, ululation, and animal sounds. Instead of a conventional libretto, the voice textures and body movements carried Monk's mythic stories of childhood, youth and maturity. Five crucial days in February 1972, when Richard Nixon visited Beijing, are compellingly expressed in Adams's layered musical language. These operas both premiered at Houston Grand Opera House.





▶ PHILIP GLASS

La Belle et la Bête, 1995

▲ PETER GREENAWAY/JEAN-BAPTISTE BARRIERE

100 Objects to Represent the World, 1997

◀ ROBERT ASHLEY

Improvement, 1994

In Part 2 of Glass's trilogy on Jean Cocteau's early films, the music was played below a projection of *La Belle et la Bête*. Computer technology explored "the sonic dimension of words" in Greenaway's "prop opera" with "light, voice, and music." Ashley's spare allegory of the Jews' expulsion from fifteenth-century Spain focused on taped chants and the rhythms of speech rather than movement.

▼ PAUL KOEK AND HOLLANDIA/DICK RAAIJMAKERS

De val van Mussolini (The Fall of Mussolini), 1997

A former gasworks in Amsterdam was transformed into a make-believe 1930s film set for this work by the Hollandia Theater Group, known for performing in unusual settings and for using music as the starting point for highly collaged productions. Original steam engines and old motorized equipment provide both visual and aural effects, while electronic music, collapsible sets, and the mechanized movements of performers, suggest a futurist narrative. For Koek, a percussionist, theater begins with the sound of the human voice. "I very much want to make musical theater," he says, "but without music. Only with words that become music."

► CHRISTIAN MARCLAY

One Hundred Turntables, 1991

Performed in Tokyo's Panasonic National Hall, built as a showcase for the manufacturer's state-of-the-art sound system, Marclay's visually and aurally overwhelming hour-long performance was constructed from standard DJ equipment, but in multiples; 100 Technic MK2 turntables set on cinderblocks in a spiral; hundreds of specially pressed records that were a mix of Japanese *Shakuhachi* (flute) and spoken recordings (manuals, poetry, storytelling); and four DJs. Animating the walls were live video projections (by Perry Hoberman) of the DJs' hands and the light of tiny "beamers" trained on the record grooves.

