

## Center for New Performance at CalArts

### History

In 1999, under the auspices of the newly established Center for New Theater at CalArts (CNT), Zaven Paré, Gregory Whitehead, Valère Novarina and Allen S. Weiss, working with a team of CalArts designers and technicians, created **Theater of the Ears**, a radiophonic play for electronic puppet. The piece was subsequently presented in New York as part of the 2000 Henson International Festival of Puppet Theatre, in Paris at the Biennale Internationale des Arts de la Marionnette and at the 2001 Festival d'Avignon. Other guest artists who have created projects with the CNT include Richard Foreman and Sophie Haviland, co-writers of **Bad Behavior**, which was named one of the 10 best theater productions of 2001 by the Los Angeles Times, and director/designer Michael Counts, whose production of Gertrude Stein's Listen to Me was lauded as "endlessly imaginative."

### 2002/03

Directed by Travis Preston, CNT produced **King Lear** as a bold, unorthodox re-examination of Shakespeare's tragedy performed by an all-female cast before sold-out houses at the Brewery in Los Angeles, the world's largest live-work artist complex. The production garnered five L.A. Ovation Award nominations, received three NAACP Theater Awards and traveled by invitation to France for the 2003 Frictions Festival, the international theater festival produced by Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne.

### 2003/04

CNT presented the world premiere production **Peach Blossom Fan**, a modern re-telling of a classic Chinese opera. Internationally renowned Chen Shi-Zheng directed this sensational signature event written by Edward Mast and composed by Stephin Merritt. The cast included acclaimed CalArts faculty members, students and alumni, as well as guest artists Jon David Casey, David Patrick Kelly and Beijing Opera star Zhou Long.

### 2004/05

CNT produced three adventurous and well-received shows: **Macbeth (A Modern Ecstasy)**, **11 September 2001**, and **Invisible Glass**. Travis Preston directed Tony award-winning British actor Stephen Dillane in a courageous and incandescent one-man performance of Macbeth (A Modern Ecstasy). Robert Cantarella, director of the National Dramatic Center of Dijon, directed a company of CalArts alumni and students in esteemed French playwright Michel Vinaver's 11 Septembre 2001, a meditation on the events of 9/11 composed from newspaper and television reports released in the days immediately following the tragedy. Renowned puppeteer, experimental filmmaker and theater director Janie Geiser directed an ensemble of CalArts student actors and puppeteers in Erik Ehn's haunting play Invisible Glass, inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's short story William Wilson. Geiser created video projections for the piece and incorporated original music composed by Tom Recchion. Invisible Glass was presented collaboratively by CNT and the CalArts Cotsen Center for Puppetry and the Arts.

### 2005/06

**Macbeth** and **September 11, 2001** toured internationally. The boundary-defying production of *Macbeth* as a one-man show featured Tony Award-winning actor Stephen Dillane and was presented at the Almeida Theatre in London in November 2005. It traveled to the Adelaide Festival and the Sydney Theatre in Australia in early 2006. *September 11, 2001* was re-mounted in the summer of 2006 and traveled to Théâtre de Colline in Paris, The Frictions Festival of Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne and the Center Dramatique National de Montpellier.

In Spring 2006, CalArts renamed CNT, the Center for New Performance (CNP) to acknowledge the interdisciplinarity of our work and to draw upon the resources of all of the performance areas of the Institute. Like its earlier incarnation, CNP serves as a forum for the creation of groundbreaking professional performance. Students, faculty and international artists develop work that expands the language, discourse, and boundaries of contemporary performance.

#### **2006/2007**

##### **What to Wear**

The world premiere of a post-rock opera by Richard Foreman and composer Michael Gordon, co-founder of the Bang on a Can Festival was performed at REDCAT. The Los Angeles Times raved about “dazzling, hard-hitting music by Michael Gordon and words, staging, design and equally hard-hitting and dazzling zaniness by Richard Foreman” commenting that “rock opera could, after the premiere of this arresting new hour of music theater ... be acknowledged as having finally come of age.”

##### **Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary**

A solo movement theater tour de force tells an astonishing tale centered on three towering figures in the life of protean performer Marissa Chibas: her father, Raul Chibas, who co-wrote the manifesto for the Cuban revolution with Fidel Castro; her uncle, Eddy Chibas, who was the frontrunner for the Cuban presidency in 1951 before committing suicide during a live radio broadcast; and her mother, Dalia Chibas, Miss Cuba runner-up in 1959. Through her own stories and key episodes in the history of her illustrious family, Chibas gives an impassioned, live-wire performance that is propelled by her near-death experience in the Venezuelan Amazonia. An angel of death and an angel of life serve as guides on this journey. Directed by Mira Kingsley, *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary* was performed at REDCAT and INTAR (New York).

#### **2007/2008**

##### **Vineland Stelae**

A dynamic full-length structured improvisation for 30 musicians was created and composed by Sandeep Bhagwati and directed by Chi-wang Yang. The eclectic and extraordinary New Century Players were led by trombonist Mike Svoboda in a new music performance staged in the round at REDCAT.

#### **2008/2009**

**Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary** was presented in both Spanish-language and English-language versions at the William and Joan Lehman Theater (Miami).

Center for New Performance: History

CNP presented a developmental production of **Smoke, Lilies and Jade** by Carl Hancock Rux, directed by Nataki Garrett at California Institute of the Arts featuring Gina Belafonte, Mary Lou Rosato and students .