

PRESS RELEASE: BREASTS AND BURGERS

First 'Surrealist' play speaks to surreal third millenium...

"Democracy? Civil Liberties? Ha! Ha! Guillaume Apollinaire's original play "The Breasts of Tiresias" ("Les Mamelles de Tiresias"- Paris 1917) first produced 89 years ago makes a poignant statement today about free speech when retold in a post-Iraq world as Bush's Burger Empire grips us by the throat."

Apollinaire's 'surrealist' play "The Breasts Of Tiresias" which shocked conventional Paris in 1917, has a powerful message for the Third Millenium. Not in its absurd and comical solution to a serious problem - but in the fact that such surreal logic was expressed at all. If feminist women won't have babies and the wanton trench warfare of World War 1 has depleted the baby pool then the men must have them!

The wife, happily married to a baker in Zanzibar, becomes a man (plus instant beard), violently swaps clothes with her husband, ties him up, and departs instantly for Paris. A passing randy gendarme falls in love with the husband who he mistakes for a pretty girl. By Act 2 the husband has given birth to 40,049 babies. Problem solved! Surreal lateral thinking wins the day!

Such free speaking is absurd and comical... but the point is - where will it lead? What else may we not say in the "Bollocks to Blair" T-shirt Britain of Blair * and the Guantanamo Bay of Bush? *(Canvasser in Council Elections wearing a "Bollocks to Blair" T-shirt threatened with arrest unless she took it off – May 2006)

Apollinaire's play, not seen since 1917 (and probably never professionally in the UK) is being performed by an underground troupe which is being closely observed by Agents of the FBI in the guise of a French Poodle! Free speech and lateral thinking are ever the enemy of dictators. Seldom heard original sound tracks of Satie, Albert-Birot, Huelsenbeck, Tzara, Janko, Haussman, Antheil and Schwitters point the action.

Listings info

BREASTS AND BURGERS

Venue: Smirnoff Underbelly (Iron Belly) Venue 61

Dates: Thursday August 3rd to Saturday August 12th

Times: 13.15 (14:00)

Prices: Previews £4.00 Mon – Thurs £7.50 (£6.50) Fri – Sun £8.50 (£7.50)

Smirnoff Box Office 0870 7453083 or www.underbelly.co.uk

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ABOUT THE ORIGINAL...

Mama becomes DADA!

“The Breasts of Tiresias” (“Les Mamelles de Tiresias”) was first scripted by Guillaume Apollinaire in 1903 when he was 23 years old. Invalided out of the First World War, and influenced by the terrible loss of life, a falling birth-rate and the upsurge of Feminism, Apollinaire revisited his youthful script and, with the encouragement of Picasso, Francis Picabia and others sensationally presented “Les Mamelles” in Paris in 1917. If the women won't have 'em – then the men must procreate! Man gives birth to 40,049 babies!

Apollinaire coined the word “surrealist” to describe his comically anarchic solution to a real problem. Lateral thinking and non-conformity taken to extremes!

So far as we know, this play has never been professionally staged in the UK, though an Opera version, “Les Mamelles de Tiresias” by Poulenc, is well known.

ABOUT THIS ADAPTATION...

When Bush's Burger Empire strikes...

Breaking free from the stranglehold of stifling convention, thinking laterally, and free thinking may be seen as the energy behind Dadaism, Cubism and Surrealism, as also is the desire to inform and to have fun. Being interesting and having fun was very much in Apollinaire's mind when he staged “Les Mamelles de Tiresias” - and it is our intention too. The shock tactics of the Avant Garde movement of the early Twentieth Century would seem less than shocking today where ‘anything goes’ and ‘form’ is totally relaxed. It is for this reason that we have set Apollinaire's original play as an ‘underground’ performance by a troupe of actors performing in a future era when free thought and speech would meet with severe disfavour and.....

Surrealism meets reality?

.....this era is the “post-Iraq future when Bush's Burger Empire grips us by the throat”. Already in Britain people are threatened with arrest for wearing T-shirts with “Bollocks to Blair” slogans on them - arrested for peacefully reading out a list of names of British service men and women killed in Iraq – an alarming world in which Candidates are forbidden by ‘The Party’ from expressing controversial views in Council Elections: is Stalinist “Guided democracy” here already?

Burgers are bad for you!

From these thoughts (and fears) “BREASTS & BURGERS!” was born.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION...

Surrealist sex orgy!

While Richard Franklin's adaptation of "Les Mamelles" intends to give Apollinaire's play a contemporary resonance the play itself has been faithfully recreated in detail and in style. The sexual extravagance of the original has been left *virgo intacta!*

DADA sounds for a rock-deafened world

Amid a Pythonesque mayhem of flying breasts, Dada transvestitism and a man-sized French Poodle, original Dada soundtracks, very seldom heard, will point the action, and underline the point, and include music, 'poemes simultanes' and bizarre sounds from Erik Satie, Germaine Albert-Birot, Richard Heulsenbeck, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janko, Raoul Hausmann, George Antheil and George Schwitters.

Belly-ache in the Iron Belly!

Where more appropriate to perform this anarchic little piece than in Smirnoff underbelly's highly site-specific cavern, the Iron Belly, under Cowgate? While Designer, Nicky Bunch, is grappling with flying breasts, women who grow beards suddenly, multiple birth, a talking Kiosk and a randy gendarme, Spirit of the Fringe Award-winning Richard Franklin (The Cage: 1993) directs with trepidation! Doubly so, as the first action of the play is the tearing up of the American flag – today already an imprisonable offence in the so-called 'democratic, free speaking' society of the USA. In Britain, Richard's lawyers advise, a flag is just a bit of cloth and you can rightly do what you like with it.

Quote from the President of Venezuela in Britain May 2006...

"The USA is an Empire made of paper – we will rip it up and throw it away".

ABOUT THE CAST...

Matthew Conway - FBI Agent

After graduating from Rose Bruford, Matthew has appeared in several short films and fringe projects. He is currently Presenting live on Quiz TV. This is his first Edinburgh Project

James Arthur Daniels - Director of Troupe

24 years old from Bristol, James trained at the City of Bristol College and then spent a further year at Reading College. Just finished a 5 month tour as Sherrif of Nottingham in Robin Hood for M&M Prods.

Becci Gemmell - Therese/Tiresias

Graduated Drama Studio, London (2005). Theatre: Air Guitar (Bristol Old Vic) Volpone (Wiltons Music Hall & Tobacco Factory). Film& TV: Ward 4 (BBC), Wild Life (Sea Change Productions).

Lee Griffiths - Presto/Back End of Poodle

Lee has recently completed a 3 year course at the East 15 Acting School and is very excited about this as it is his second time performing in Edinburgh.

Lorenzo Martelli - The Husband

Lorenzo trained at the Webber Douglas Academy where his roles included Alceste in The Misanthrope, Costard in Loves Labours Lost, and Dr Prospero in Return To The Forbidden Planet.

Andy McSorley - Gendarme

After years in youth theatres Andy spent time working at the York Theatre Royal and Grand Opera House and, after 3 years at East 15 has just scored his first major film Role alongside Renee Zellweger. Andy would like to thank his friends and family for their support.

Eli Silverman - Lacouf/Anarchist 1

Actor and stand-up comic currently on London circuit. Studied film and drama at University of East Anglia. 1 year L'Ecole Phillippe Gaulier. Founder Member Catapult Theatre Co where he co-devised the physical style hospital farce. The Treatment (dir. Clive Mendus of Theatre Complicite) Starred as Bruce in Independent British feature Dead-pan Valentine.

Benedict Theocleous - People of Zanzibar/Kiosk

Graduated from Cygnet in 2004. Theatre: Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol (Working Space Theatre), Privates on Parade (Jermyn Street Theatre), Julius Caesar (Barbican). Two short films: Domino Effect & God is Greatest.

Tonin Zefi - Son/Anarchist 2

Final year at the Rose Bruford College. Moved from Albania 4 years ago. College roles inc. Pastor Manders in Ghosts, Mischa in Gorky's Children of the Sun, Iago in Othello and Plixenes in The Winter's Tale.

ABOUT THE CREW...**Richard Franklin - Director/ Adaptor**

RADA (Jenny Laird Prize). Wrote/directed The Cage (Sprit of the Fringe Award 1993). Acting –West End: Same Time Next Year (Prince of Wales), As You Like It (Vaudeville), Woman In Black (Fortune). BBC TV: Dr. Who (Captain Mike Yates of UNIT), YTV: Emmerdale Farm (Dennis Rigg – squashed by a bull): ATV: Crossroads (Joe Townsend). Rep: Birmingham, Century Theatre, Bristol Old Vic, Ipswich. Directing: Stockholm Triple-E, Swansea, Chesterfield, Ipswich, Impact Tyne and Wear etc. Writing: 5 professionally performed plays, 3 poems and a slim volume on politics "Forest Wisdom: Radical Reform of Democracy and the Welfare State". Ed Fest 05:Wagner in Twilight of the Gods written directed by Julian Doyle. May 06: Jacob Twisden in revival of John Galsworthy's Loyalties directed by Phil Willmot.

Nicky Bunch - Designer

Nicky trained at The Central School of Speech & Drama where she designed the set for The Balcony in their Embassy Theatre. Recent work includes costume supervision on

two productions of Underground with the site specific theatre company dreamthinkspeak (Theatre Royal Brighton & Barbican BITE/Young genius season). Set & costume design for Wuthering Heights & Twelfth Night with Love & madness Ensemble (UK tour incl. The Riverside Studios), Love Me Dorothy at The Greenwich Playhouse and Sound Theatre, Strangers at The Oval House Theatre and Loyalties at The Finborough Theatre. Future work includes a UK tour of Playboy of the Western World with Love & Madness.

Joshua Thorpe - Translator

Born in 1987, his parents moved to France in 1990, allowing him to live between two cultures during childhood and adolescence. He currently lives in Nimes, a town heavily influenced by Apollinaire. This play is his first major translation work.

Becci Maltby - Production Stage Manager

Biog to come

Andrew Girvan - Stage Manager

Andrew is a local heavily involved in youth theatre productions across Edinburgh. Most recently acting with Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum Youth Theatre he has performed in a mixture of Scottish venues as well as traveling to Port Townsend, Washington State. Last year Andrew managed the Fringe venue at St Mary's Episcopal Church and his previous Fringe experiences include being Technical Director for Capital Theatre Company's Fringe 2004 run of Joey's Last Feed.

Marc Poggia - Assistant Stage Manager

Marc lives in Paris , will be going to College in Bath in the Autumn and is heading for a career in acting. He has just played Lysander in A Midsummer Night's Dream and this will be his first professional engagement.

Colin Brown - Sound Designer

Colin Brown was Head of Sound at RADA for over thirty years. He was also heavily involved at the planning stages with RADA's Centenary redevelopment with respect to the rebuilding of the recording studios and theatres. When allowed by the students to escape he designed sound for a number of companies, such as Theresa for the Paschal Theatre Company, Munich to Athens for the Soho Theatre Company, the Separation at Hampstead Theatre and the Comedy Theatre, The Devils and Jane Eyre at Theatre Clwyd and the Playhouse Theatre. He has recently worked in Diamond at the King's Head Theatre.

Louise Birchall - LX Designer

Freelance Lighting Designer, Technical Manager & Production Manager. Currently 3 shows at this year's Edinburgh Festival. Will be touring this Autumn with various dance companies across the UK and beyond. Chief LX at the King's Theatre Southsea.

Translated by Joshua Thorpe. Adapted and Directed by Richard Franklin.