

A Magic Music sampler

so you're slouching through SUB, crawling over and around the bodies of your fellow inmates, who glide through and stride hard upon, who sprawl out into and squat down around, and who variously inhabit, like comicbook dots on postagestamp carpets, every livable cubit in this floating zoo, when to the sudden whir of chimes and alarms and electronically scraping insistence, an efficient feminine voice purrs "magicmusicperformsattwelveoclockinsub-theatre"; whistling with hands pocketed, you wander over and in and find a seat in that theatre of curtained silence: two figures stroll onstage, one gesticulating and winking to the other, trailing the blurred ends of a sentence, slowly discovering two guitars, which they fall upon, and begin slicing the air with razored acoustic nets and jostling spears of buzzing wires, a smooth, muscled clash of two sets of sonic fist, but suddenly jolting, the bottom falls up an over, and a clever spider's boot-clicking jig rings and the singer smiles as if he already knew you and exclaims "Holy Messiah, Queenscout, what do you think this is all about", while the lead guitar bends into wrenching ten-fingered dives: these introductory remarks are chopped off, to find the audience picking its ear, puzzled: this obviously exothermic event appears to be conspiring upon the uninitiated, knocking with a familiar rap upon the skulls of its listeners, but dashing on approach to the borders of sweet gorgesque but the music boils out again and silences your tongue with an extended suite wired in parallel, and you think of the man who takes off a suit of clothes, only to find another beneath it, and then another, and still another, of a startling assortment of masks and pointed gesture, and the singer puts on a fresh tongue and for two sliding hours flushes of realization seep through and the music begins to impel its own concentrated logic, with the smiling power of the man on the ledge who lures his would-be lifesavers out onto the spinning heights, and two guitars and a human voice speak three voices, which sing of an overlapping thought, and the audience warms and begins to clap sharply, and you realize the music has quickly caught its own context, creating afresh its conventions as it proceeds, sailing through suggestions of gaily coloured handkerchiefs fluttering on Caribbean beaches, under fastidious disgust at the slovenly with a joshing grin at folly in a position of power, and dashes of demand ("salvation's just around the corner") and, all too soon it's over, and the singer introduces the group as MAGIC MUSIC, and they stroll off stage: in wondering disbelief, you laugh to yourself in the aftermath of stillness

—Jim Gilhooley

— Self-satire rampant at poetry forum —

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special jargon abstrating the topic into an obscure haze which she illustrated with "specimen 1-A", Navapoh poem! Back to the Certs line up. Now Mary Carpenter who machine guns the audience with Eskimo revolution and you can hear her ancestors thru the broken ventillating system and then all you hear is people leaving for the last lunch in the Fac lounge. Bill says, "throw up, and eat again".

And thus, the reading 2 p.m. Saturday. "Give the poets a chance." (Ya . . . three days into the conference and now the BIG reading.) BILL . . . YOUR ON . . . (last). First, Lionel Kearns with "Roderick" and other important media

parables, then Earle Birney with his new airplane poem giving us real symbols of double glass windows and damn if we're not all climbing further to the wing now with D. G. Jones and further out with Michael Ondaatje, who reads the beautiful beautiful "Spider Poem" (shivers in the spine) leading us finally to Bissett and the cop/dolphin /chant/scream /night /mare /real/mom/earth/. . . end. The End.

It's over. Go home. Someone carries you to a plane. What did you expect, a memorial poem by Robert Stanfield? An honest visitation? Fun? Poetry?

Plane lifts out of Edmonton. An arc and those you love and writing for them from out the formal wilderness.

Nineteen vaginas usher in age of charisma

Wilfred Watson's play, *Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Principles of Marshall McLuhan* played Studio Theatre last week, and left in its wake a slightly stunned audience, some impossible conundrums, and a perplexing number of weird predicaments.

Clytemnestra—a Greek, wasn't she?—Right. Marshall McLuhan—twentieth century—right? What, then, pray tell, is the combination doing together? McLuhan's principles—the car an expansion of the foot, the television an extension of the eye, the microphone an extension of the ear—what are the extensions of nineteen vaginas or two backbones?

The play opens in the post-McLuhanesque era of the Age of Charisma—with some heavy debates as to which side of the table you, as a member of a supposedly participating audience, are on. The weapon of Dr. Psy's side, the Age of Charisma is PIAI, which is an instant age serum. The weapon of the other side is their belief in long-dead rights of mankind. Of course, they are the subjugated (with a belief like that, who wouldn't be?) and very definitely have no charisma.

The plot—sketchy as it might seem—follows the (mis?) fortunes of Electra after the murder of her mother, Clytemnestra. She is incarcerated in a mental hospital which turns out to be the experimental laboratory of Doctors Psy and Ki Ko Ku, who keep the prisoners orderly with constant threat of again. Electra takes a dim view of all the proceedings changing her mood from indifference to demands for a fair trial.

Electra decides to drop a bomb on the proceedings by noting to all and sundry that Doctor Psy has two heads and Doctor Ki has two backbones, and in the resultant confusion, they notice that she has nineteen heads. The two doctors debate at great length, and Doctor Ki debates with himself at great length, and finally decides, against Psy's orders to administer PIAI to Electra.

Whether or not it was decided that Electra's nineteen heads would make a great combination with Psy's two, Electra becomes extremely desirable to Psy after the aging process has taken place.

However, whichever way it went, and for what reason I cannot fathom, Electra is changed back to her original self. But it is not quite the original. Instead of having nineteen heads, she now has nineteen vaginas, much to the dismay of the rest of the women in the play. On this tragic note to womanhood the play ends, save for one little episode. The audience is asked to make a choice: charisma or blissful ignorance, and . . .

This skeletal plot is played against a stark background, the main feature the operating table symbolically dividing the stage into two camps. A backdrop of slitted plastic was the only large prop used outside of the operating table, a huge operating light, and a small instrument table, if we exclude the huge screen and TV paraphernalia surrounding the stage, but these are more in the realm of externals.

Also included in the province of

design are the costumes. They were all brilliantly coloured, and for the most part simple. They seemed to meld well into the play. The costume, if it can be called that, which clearly was the best of all was the huge grey blanket which was worn by the inmates.

The cast gave a good, if somewhat impromptu in places, performance. The basis of the play was conflict, and it was carried off extremely well by the principals.

The audience enjoyed the performance—that much was obvious from the hearty laughs and applause that the actors received. But the common cry when it was all over was "I liked it—but what was it all about?"

And this was the way I felt. My idea about the whole thing is that, although the original idea was "get the audience to react in the theatre", it soon was changed to "get the audience to realize that they didn't react in the theatre." And just maybe this is what Marshall McLuhan is getting at—the moving away from the idea of no-reaction.

—Johanna Burns



—photo by Terry Malanchuk, courtesy of Publications Office
MEDIA AT STUDIO THEATRE
. . . and they said the age of McLuhan was over

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