

S.F. MIME TROUPE



or 'Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel'

WRITTEN BY SAUL LANDAU AND R. G. DAVIS
FROM ORIGINAL, TRADITIONAL AND IMPROVISED MATERIAL

DIRECTED BY R. G. DAVIS

MINSTRELS

INTERLOCUTOR

ROBERT
SLATTERY

SNOWBALL

RON
STALLINGS

INKSPOT

PETER
COHON

GIMME

JASON

MARC-ALEXANDER

KLINKER

R. G.
DAVIS

HOKUS

WILLIE
B. HART, JR.

BONES

LEE
VAUGHN

Musicians: Kent Minault, David Simpson
Understudies: David Simpson, Kent Minault

MINSTREL STAFF

Assistant Director:..... Peter Cohon
Movie-filmed & edited:..... Robert Nelson
Music: Steve Reich
Costumes: Judy Rosenberg
Mask: Francesca Greene

MIME TROUPE STAFF

Business Manager Harvey Kornspan
Technical Director C. P. Herrick
Secretary Ann Riley
Photographer Erik Weber
Business Manager Robert Slattery
Bookkeeper Sandra Archer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Arlene Sagan, Yuris Svendson, Nina Landau, Bruce Bratton, Peter Arnott

PROGRAM NOTES

What is a Minstrel Show? Some of you over 40 may have seen one. Those under 40 are not supposed to know about them. It is an indigenous art form developed in 1830 and played coast to coast for 100 years. The Minstrel Show began with a black-faced performer, J. D. 'Daddy' Rice imitating a negro named Jim Crow. Rice did a Jim Crow Act, before the words 'Jim Crow' got turned around.

We have worked on this show, improvising, writing, and re-working the material for 9 months. We began with a desire to deal with

racial issues in the theater, but the plays we read and the material available did not talk about what we knew, and feared. The Minstrel form lends itself to some of the subjects that confront us. It is an epic form, an open stage form where social subjects can be bounced around and not reduced to 'adjustment psychology.'

The U.S. melting pot often destroys the beautiful elements of an ethnic group -- often its very life spirit. We bring back the stereotype Negro -- the minstrel. There are bad things about this character, but don't deny him. Look, he is also beautiful -- and funny.

We present our Minstrel Show, a Northern product, for those who live in the streets, by those who live in the streets. We know, we fear, and we rage on.

ON THE S.F. MIME TROUPE

We started the Troupe in 1959 doing what we now call classical Mime. For a definition, we could refer you to numerous books, which define Mime as "different from pantomime" or state that "Marcel Marceau does pantomime and Charlie Chaplin did Mime." But the real point of the San Francisco Mime Troupe is that it is a theatrical company performing ideas and images on a stage.

In 1959, we did mimes and original scenarios using one to five people. Robert Hudson, sculptor, did our first "Happening" or "Event" with us -- we have done one each year since then.

We inaugurated the first outdoor Commedia Dell'Arte shows on the West Coast. In 1960-61 we went outdoors with a small stage and presented free commedia dell'arte (Italian popular and bawdy comedy) to the people in the parks. In 1965 R. G. Davis was arrested while performing the commedia play, Candelaio, in the park. The Park and Recreation Commission had refused a permit for performance on the grounds of 'vulgar' material in the script. The ACLU appealed the commission's action and Judge Joseph Karesh ruled that the commission's refusal was an unconstitutional attempt at censorship. Davis' sentence is now on appeal and commedias are playing the parks five days a week.

Upon opening our indoor theater in December of 1963, we presented Ubu Roi (designed by William Wiley), and followed that production with movies, original plays and "happenings."

We presented a complete movie series in 1964 under the direction of Saul Landau, screening such artists as Brakhage, Conner, and Jean Genet (Un Chant D'Amour).

In 1965 we opened with Brecht's Exception and the Rule coupled with a talk on Vietnam by Robert Scheer. De Ghelderode's Chronicles of Hell was presented on the same program as poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti, David Meltzer, and Lew Welch.

In 1966 Centerman, an original play by Peter Berg, opened at a teach-in rally at San Francisco State College and played theaters in Berkeley and San Francisco. Search and Seizure, written around cast improvisations, opened at a benefit for Dr. Timothy Leary and played as a cabaret-theater piece. We have also begun a series of children's puppet plays.

We have tried to cut through the aristocratic and square notion of what theater is by bringing movies into the work; also speakers who sometimes are far more dramatic than plays; and now a Minstrel show that jumps Jim Crow to the civil rights movement. We have embarked upon a scheme of touring and renting, traveling from our home base in San Francisco. We will continue to risk amateur status, and our own egos in order to keep the search open for better ways of making the theater, in content and in style, a living, radical force.

THE SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE IS A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
924 Howard Street, San Francisco, California GA 1-1984

NO CAMERAS IN THE THEATER

The Minstrel Show premiered June 17, 1965.