Wadsworth Atheneum
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HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Shatterhand Massacre-Riderless Horse

John Jesurun/MATRIX 104
January 27, 1989

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Shatterhand Massacre—Riderless Horse
(1985)
Written, directed and staged by John Jesurun

Friday, January 27, 1989 at 9 p.m.
Avery Theater
Wadsworth Atheneum

Cast: Rebecca Moore, Joe Murphy, Larry Tighe, Michael Tighe, Sanghi Wagner

There will be no intermission.

Acknowledgements


Lights Jeffrey Nash
Production Manager Brad Phillips
Choreography Sanghi Wagner
Jo Andres

Shatterhand Massacre was originally presented at Halwalls in Buffalo, New York, in January 1985.

Special thanks to Paul Brenner, Brian Johnson, Jill Stone and Victor Velt of Real Art Ways and to Jeff Jones, former executive director of Real Art Ways, for their coordination of this production.
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I tried to bring film ideas into live work. That meant imposing techniques like jump-cutting and freeze frames that were developed for a two-dimensional form into a real, three-dimensional space. Once I had done that, I began to explore the use of language within space and the importance of who says what from where. There is also the space within the language itself, between the various people who are saying it, its speed and rhythm.

John Jesurun

Jesurun came to his distinguished work in the theatre inadvertently. He was educated as a sculptor (Philadelphia College of Art, BFA 1972) and turned to film late in his graduate training (Yale University, MFA 1974). He developed an appreciation for the power of words during his tenure as an associate producer on The Dick Cavett Show: "I'd learned what could be done with two people sitting on chairs, the constant talking, the extremely precise accurate terminology...the show was about words." Unable to finance the experimental films he wanted to make, Jesurun improvised theatrical productions in which the audience became the camera. His first effort, presented at the Pyramid Club in New York City, was the unexpectedly popular Chang in a Void Moon. It turned into a downtown, weekly, half-hour "soap opera" with a cult following.

The title Shatterhand Massacree-Riderless Horse comes from a native American folk tale. There is a large body of literature, from the myth of Romulus and Remus to François Truffaut's movie The Wild Child, which is intrigued with the notion of children who, lost or abandoned by their parents, are raised by animals in the wild.

In the absurdist tradition of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, exactly what is happening in Shatterhand Massacree remains unclear. It seems a once-banished (or runaway) son has returned. He either is or was, or isn't or
wasn't, a wolf. "I am not a wolf," says the boy over and over again. This American nuclear family is (or isn't) threatened by his return. Eventually, the family and all of society are (or are not) threatened by outside forces. The attack of the wolves (or are they seawolves or coyotes?) is a parodic take on Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

"It's the end of the world," says the father. However, although the sense of danger from without grows, just what the "real" dangers are remains obscure as have most "facts" during the play. Says Jesurun, hoping to draw our attention to the unreliability of our fact-laden media-saturated culture, "I love giving audiences the facts and then changing the facts." The accumulated uncertainties merely compound our anxieties. Thus does the playwright express his concern for the vulnerability of a society precariously positioned on the brink of some ominous disaster.

Most of Jesurun's productions have featured striking multimedia effects. *Shatterhand Massacre*, however, uses minimal props and emphasizes language and stage movements. Intentionally avoiding a narrative storyline, Jesurun uses language poetically and in a non-discursive manner. It is a surrealist drama in which word play abounds, such as "Siamese fighting fish joined at the head."
In *Shatterhand Massacree*, cadence and rhythm add meaning as does the repetition of phrases, depending on who says the line and how the line is said. Jesurun uses the stage with a sculptor's eye. During the production, both the son and the father circle 'round and 'round, tethered and untethered. Each time this repeated ritualistic gesture occurs, our interpretation of its meaning shifts.

The claustrophobic sense of confinement which intensifies as the production moves along is somewhat relieved by Jesurun's strategic references to the world beyond the family's house (and to the world beyond the stage production itself). Four video screens reflect open windows, with curtains blowing in the wind and a stormy sea in the distance. Each abrupt musical cut startles the audience and interrupts the intensity of the drama. Like the turning of a radio dial, the pre-recorded audiotrack brings into the theatre a range of disjunctive references to popular American culture. Even Jesurun's comic bastardization of the well-known refrain from the Scottish ballad *Lord Randal*, "I am sick to my heart and I'll faint, what'll I do?" ("I'm sick to my heart and I fain wad lie down.") is reference to an earlier popular art form (and to a classic example of a work in which incremental repetition is a significant feature).

Jesurun, who received a 1986 Obie Best Play Award for *Deep Sleep*, has presented his work in West Germany, France, Holland, England, Switzerland, Spain, Italy and across the United States. His films have been shown at alternative spaces around the country. He received a Bessie Award for *Chang in a Void Moon* and is the recipient of a 1987 Rockefeller Foundation's Playwright Fellowship and a 1988 NEA Playwright's Fellowship. Jesurun has been commissioned to create a new work by the Walker Art Center in conjunction with American Museum of the Moving Image, The Wexner Center for the Visual Arts and The Mickery Theatre in Amsterdam. Entitled *Everything that Rises Must Converge*, the work will premiere in Spring 1990.

Andrea Miller-Keller

*Curator of Contemporary Art*
About the cast:

John Jesurun's other works include Chang in a Void Moon, Dog's Eye View, Bird's Eye View, Number Minus One, Red House, Deep Sleep, White Water, and Black Maria.

Shatterhand Massacre–Riderless Horse was originally performed at Halwalls in Buffalo, N. Y., in January, 1985. It has also been performed at the Pyramid Club, The Kitchen and Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church in New York City; the University of Colorado at Boulder; New Performance Gallery in San Francisco; the Valladolid Festival in Spain; the Chieri and Montalcino Festivals in Italy; the Aspen Art Museum in Aspen, Colorado, and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The German version, entitled PFERD OHNE REITER, was performed at Justus Leibig University and the Tahaterstudio in der Zigarrenfabrik in Geissen, West Germany.


Rebecca Moore has performed in various theatre pieces since age 6, beginning with her interpretation of the character Piglet in Winnie the Pooh in 1975. She has worked with Tim Miller, Sally Silvers/Bruce Andrews, Diane Torr, Carol McDowell, Richard Elovitch, Jo Andres, Eileen Myles and previously with John Jesurun in the last three episodes of Chang in a Void Moon at New York spaces such as the Brooklyn Academy of Music, P. S. 122, the Performing Garage, The Collective, LaMama ETC, The Kitchen and numerous clubs. In film, she has worked with Ela Troyano, Uzi Parnes, Carmelita Tropicana (in a piece for the film Candela) and Guido Chiesa, and she was in the first film on AIDS made in the U.S. She is a New York High School of the Performing Arts dropout.
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This marks Joe Murphy's first production with John Jesurun's company. He will be in John Jesurun's new production of the Obie Award-winning Deep Sleep, which will be presented in Amsterdam this summer. In New York City he has been seen in What Does a Blind Leopard See?, All the Great Things at the Actor's Repertory Theatre, and Loss of Roses at the Actor's Conservatory. He is currently studying at Ed Koren's Professional Workshop and with John Basil at the Riverside Shakespeare Company.

Larry Tighe has appeared in John Jesurun's Deep Sleep, Black Maria, White Water, Red House, Number Minus One, Dog's Eye View and Chang in a Void Moon. He was also seen in Prisoners of the Invisible Kingdom by Michael Kirby, Anne Wilson's Faust Projekt, the film Seizing Power by Jonathan George, Before the Rise of the Premonition by Ernie Marrero and in many films by Claribel Cone.

Michael Tighe has appeared in John Jesurun's Bird's Eye View, Black Maria, Deep Sleep and White Water. He has also performed in Paul Selig's Moon City. He has worked in the films Seizing Power by Jonathan George, Before the Rise of the Premonition by Ernie Marrero and Susan Kongeli, and Giotto by Claribel Cone. Tighe has also appeared in the American Ballet Theatre production of Romeo and Juliet at Lincoln Center. Michael Tighe, now fifteen, has worked with John Jesurun since he was nine.
Sanghi Wagner was born in South Korea and raised in the U.S. Her choreography has been presented at the Saint Mark's Danspace Project and P.S. 122 in New York. She was a member of Pooh Kay's Eccentric Motions Company for three years and has danced with Holly Fairbank, Vicky Schick and Hope Gillerman. She was also in the cast of Robert Wilson's The Knee Plays. She has appeared in productions by John Jesurun since 1983.

Jeffrey Nash (Lighting) has lit numerous productions for John Jesurun, beginning with Chang In a Void Moon at the Pyramid Club and including Dog's Eye View, Deep Sleep, Black Maria, Number Minus One, Red House and White Water. He has recently designed four productions for the Opera Company of Philadelphia working with directors Frank Corsaro and Gian Carlo Menotti. He also designed last season's performances of the Hamburg Ballet and the Basel Ballet at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Other production work includes Robert Wilson's Medea, Stuart Sherman's Hamlet, A Portrait at the Performing Garage and Rosalynn Drexler's Obie Award-winning production of Transients Welcome. In addition to his work for the stage, he is active in lighting for fashion and museum exhibitions and last spring lit Yves Saint Laurent, a 25-Year Retrospective at the National Museum of Art in Beijing, China.

Brad Phillips (Production Stage Manager) was production stage manager for Steve Buscemi and Mark Boone, Jr.'s production of Yap Thaw and Dead Reckoning at LaMama ETC. He was also assistant director for Stuart Sherman's Second Trilogy: Chekov, Strindberg and Brecht at The Kitchen. He has been production manager and stage manager for several works by John Jesurun, including White Water in Boston, New York and Amsterdam, Deep Sleep at LaMama ETC and Red House in New York, London and Paris. He was set manager for Black Maria and is a member of the Stage Manager's Association.
Selected Bibliography about
John Jesurun:


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