The Millay Colony for the Arts
Springtime at Steepletop

WELL! It seems like an eon since BARNSWALLOW’s premiere in December 2019: present day life during (COVID-19) wartime now was quite unimaginable way back then, what the future holds may be getting a bit clearer but still remains cloudy at best.

As you know, in order to ensure the safety of all and do our part to flatten the curve, we suspended our residency, workshop, and art education programs for April and May. Currently, if all proceeds according to plan, we hope to start up as of June with some modifications. Other good news is, while it certainly seems like time has stopped these past few months, our alumni continue to dazzle despite the numerous heartbreaks they have had to endure with postponed and cancelled book tours, premieres, publications, exhibitions, and concerts. As you can see from what follows, we are pleased and proud to showcase the ways in which artists continue to distinguish themselves as intrinsically valuable members of communities everywhere, with a special shout-out to the inimitable Luba!

We send our best hopes that all are staying well spiritually as well as physically: we have been reflecting on how the enforced solitude and suffering of these strange times has been made so much better by the wonders of the creative spirit and multitude of offerings of artists. What we have been reading, watching and listening to -- alone together -- has been and will remain the balm that connects and soothes our individual and collective souls. Thinking about a world without such rich cultural contributions evokes an image that is indeed bleaker than bleak.

Which brings us to: GIVING TUESDAY! Our mission -- since 1973 -- is to support artists from across disciplines and honor the space and time essential for creative excellence. WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT THIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE. We will continue to imagine the best and fullest way to do this as the future unfolds and, as always, welcome your essential vision and voice. The world is grim enough, help us ensure the wondrous.

Monika & Calliope
Co-Directors

Alumni Happenings
Alumna Luba Drozd has been working around the clock to make face shields for NYC hospitals in dire need of protective equipment. With the help of a team of volunteers for distribution, she has donated over 200 face shields to health care
professionals in the city.

NYTIMES: CORONAVIRUS INNOVATORS
NYPOST: HERO OF THE DAY
CROWDFUNDING FILLS GAPS FOR VIRUS-DISPLACED WORKERS
MEMBERS OF THE PRATT COMMUNITY SEW MASKS AND 3D-PRINT FACE MASKS TO COMBAT COVID-19

Here's a brief glimpse into Luba's new normal:

"Covid schedule aka sorry i missed your message."

WEDNESDAY
morning coordination, not sure what i did in the morning. i can't recall.
1:50pm left to go upstate to pick up a batch of shields for the mta.
3:30pm met with Mindy, vented
5pm stopped by grimshaw architects-- bruce is laser cutting for us, picked up a batch of 70 shields -- assembly will be easier for tomorrows delivery
5:30pm stopped by catholic worker (they are amazing btw)—dropped off a donation of alcohol, gloves
6pm grabbed a pizza on the way home
6:45 got home, had pizza and wine
8pm realized there is a screw up with the laser and i have to redo everything by hand. full meltdown.
11pm started redoing things by hand -------

THURSDAY
5:30am...still up, finished assembly. drop off is at 7 am so i have to stay up.
6:45am dropped 160 shields a bit earlier—glad the person got to work early
7:15 got home and crashed.
11am woke up and messaged that i did an allnighter so people won't look for me.
3pm woke up again called bruce to discuss going forward
5pm back at grimshaw: for approval of the laser cut.
6:30 went to the grocery. a guy without gloves and mask grabbed me...
7:30pm Dmitri finished assembling the shields I dropped off earlier in the week.
7:45 I call the cobble hill nursing home i reached out to on monday, they got back to me requesting shields. We arrange for me to drop off 1 shield to make sure they will use them.
8pm on the way back from driving to dmitri's to pick up shields. it's raining hard, i am glad it's not acid rain like after chernobyl.
8:45 drop off the shield at the nursing home at cobble hill.
9:15 come home and eat.
9:45 start boxing shields for the next mta batch and weill cornell. continue fixing bad laser cut
1am almost done. a few emails and plan for friday.
2020 Guggenheim Fellows

Zibukle Martinaityte
MUSIC COMPOSITION

Sigrid Nunez
FICTION

Aimee Nezhukumatathil
POETRY

CONGRATULATIONS ALL!
With recent strange days in mind, we offer these timely bits:

Sigrid Nunez
FROM THE FRIEND (RIVERHEAD BOOKS, 2018)

“I once heard a stranger in agitated conversation with her pug: And I suppose it's all my fault again, isn't it? At which, I swear, the dog rolled its eyes.”

“Your whole house smells of dog, says someone who comes to visit. I say I'll take care of it. Which I do by never inviting that person to visit again.”
Aimee Nezhukumatathil
FROM LUCKY FISH (TUPELO, 2011)

BAKED GOODS
Flour on the floor makes my sandals
slip and I tumble into your arms.
Too hot to bake this morning but
blueberries begged me to fold them
into moist muffins. Sticks of rhubarb
plotted a whole pie. The windows
are blown open and a thick fruit tang
sneaks through the wire screen
and into the home of the scowly lady
who lives next door. Yesterday, a man
in the city was rescued from his apartment
that was filled with a thousand rats.
Something about being angry because
his pet python refused to eat. He let the bloom
of fur rise, rise over the little gnarly blue rug,
over the coffee table, the kitchen countertops
and pip through each cabinet, snip
at the stumpy paper bags of sugar,
the cylinders of salt. Our kitchen is a riot
of pots, wooden spoons, melted butter.
So be it. Maybe all this baking will quiet
the angry voices next door, if only
for a brief whiff. I want our summers
to always be like this—a kitchen wrecked
with love, a table overflowing with baked goods
warming the already warm air. After all the pots
are stacked, the goodies cooled, and all the counters
wiped clean—let us never be rescued from this mess.

—

Zibuokle Martinaityte
FROM STARKLAND RECORDS (2019)

IN SEARCH OF LOST BEAUTY...
PART IX: INHABITED SILENCES—EXCERPT
Thomas March
Poetry/Cabaret

NOMINATED FOR A BROADWAY WORLD AWARD
BEST VARIETY SHOW / RECURRING SERIES

Currently in its second successful season, we asked Tom to tell us more about his singular and singularly entertaining brainchild (consistently featured on "things to do" and "best of" listings) that offers something a bit different (and has "Poetry" in its title)...

Poetry/Cabaret is a bi-monthly "variety salon" that I produce and perform in at The Green Room 42 in Midtown Manhattan. It's a fast-paced evening that combines poetry, stand-up comedy, storytelling, singing—and sometimes drag. I don't do all of those things myself. I bring together writers and performers whose work I admire, and I'm fortunate that so many have been willing to be part of what started out as a kind of unconventional show. Before NYC shut down, we were planning to present Poetry/Cabaret: RENEWED! on April 5. But that theme seems appropriate for when we come back from quarantine, too, so I hope that will be the theme, with that cast, when that time comes.

I wasn't always sure poetry had a place in nightlife, at least not in a cabaret setting. But then Lance Horne asked me to be in one of his Live from Gramercy Park shows at The Players, and I realized something that now seems obvious—that there's an intimate connection with the audience in this context that poets can benefit and learn from. Many of us tend to read as if the work was finished once the poem hit the page, and we develop a particular favorite way of reading. There's a responsiveness to the audience's reception and reactions that's asked of you when you're in a cabaret room—you can learn a lot about your own work by sensing how it lands when you've just followed a comedian or a singer who just brought the house down. It can help you to sharpen your own ear and sensitivity to how the poem lands emotionally, when you're reading to an audience of people who came to be moved and entertained, but not necessarily just for the poetry. There's a generosity there, but you also have to earn it.
One of the most satisfying parts of doing this show is exposing different audiences to something they might not already love—maybe someone comes to hear their favorite comic and leaves wanting someone's poetry collection. For instance, I've had people in the audience who had never seen a drag queen perform before, because drag wasn't something they had ever sought out on their own. As an audience member, I've had that experience of learning about myself at a show—discovering a love for a performer or form I might never have discovered otherwise—and I want Poetry/Cabaret to be a place where people can have that experience. Someone was overheard leaving a show saying, "I don't know what the hell that was, but I f*$&ing loved it!" I take that as an enormous compliment.

The show's format has even allowed me to include a visual art component—a recent show featured paintings by Valerie Mendelson for a project we're collaborating on called A Good Mixer. It's based on a cocktails guide from 1933, the year Prohibition ended, and features paintings of cocktails paired with poems in the voices of the people drinking those cocktails.

With the COVID-19 quarantine, I have been talking with the musical director, Drew Wutke. At first I was worried about how well it might translate to the format, especially as a multi-genre, multi-form show. Cabaret is all about intimacy, and I've been worried about losing the immediacy of that audience connection—I was also concerned initially that, if some kinds of performance translated better than others, the show might be less accommodating as a showcase for that work, and the rhythm of the show really depends on that variety. But I've been encouraged by how comedians, singers, storytellers, and writers have all been adapting to the challenge of this format—and by how willing audiences have been to show up and support shows online. I hope our audience will follow us—and we can bring the show to people outside New York this way, too. One exciting advantage of the online format is that I can cast artists I admire who don't live in New York, or even in the U.S.

INSTAGRAM/TWITTER
POETRY/CABARET MAILING LIST SIGNUP
POETRY/CABARET CALENDAR/EVENTS
POETRY/CABARET FACEBOOK
INTERVIEWS WITH MORE ABOUT POETRY/CABARET & A GOOD MIXER
LAMBDA LITERARY REVIEW
STEPHEN MOSHER'S REVIEW FOR BROADWAY WORLD
A GOOD MIXER—V MENDELSON

Normandy Sherwood & Psychic Self Defense
It's been quite a year for alumna Normandy Sherwood. On the heels of her 2019 NYSCA Individual Artist grant (in partnership with the Colony), Normandy has been awarded a $125,000 HARP residency / fellowship ($50,000 cash, $75,000 facilities / resources) from HERE.org. This essential support will make possible the production of a new piece, Psychic Self-Defense, based on "...Dion Fortune's 1930 occult self-help text as a jumping off point...the piece will attempt to create psychic self-defense strategies for a reality where attention spans are regularly hijacked by smartphones, apps, and screens in public spaces." We plan on some readings and sneak peaks in the Hudson Valley before the work premieres in NYC and elsewhere—stay tuned!
curbAlert is LIVE

ON EVERY CORNER. OF EVERY CITY. EVERY DAY.
a SHIFT for the MASSES

"we hired ourselves. a temp job. 9-5. we spent the day tidying up an unused parking lot to prepare a safe space for our guests...or passersby. we partitioned the parking lot using sidewalk chalk into 6ft by 6ft by 6ft by 6ft by 6ft by 6ft squares. an invitation for people to bask in the geometry of it all or just invite a friend to stand beside them...sort of. social distancing is art. now."

curbAlert is a collaboration between J Shelley Harrison and Emji Saint Spero. They curate site-specific performances, interactive events, and roving installations. Their work aims to disrupt the tired relationship between audience and performer and to reimagine new modes of interacting. This dynamic duo creates conditions that invite the unexpected and cultivate openness and odd intimacy as a practice of social engagement.

Or in their words:

"curbAlert is the built environment and our resistance to it. curbAlert is critical inquiry and curbAlert is play. curbAlert is you. They explore how our movements and interactions shape our environment and how it shapes us. We mutate and evolve together. We are flocking.

Participation is encouraged.

You can find us on any street corner near you."

This winter, we invited curbAlert to take a break from their bicoastal lifestyles and come up to Millay to work on their new play. They are currently in Oakland CA and performing more than ever...live on the curb and on Instagram LIVE. They just received a grant from Small Press Traffic for their performance a SHIFT for the MASSES(left).

curbAlert will be streaming performances on Instagram LIVE every Thursday from 2-3pm PST, followed by an artist talk at 7pm.
Notes from the Globe
2019 Alumna Amy Vensel's "Punchre" (left) and "Lix" (right) are on their way to new homes at the U.S. Embassy in MYANMAR. We love the visionary Art in Embassies!

Support the Colony
We are delighted to share that we have received a $1000 MATCHING GIFT FOR MAY that will allow us to offer stipends offsetting travel & materials to 2020/2021 residents that have been hit hard by the pandemic.

Please consider donating A CONTRIBUTION OF ANY SIZE to help us reach our goal!

Yes! I want to join Millay in supporting Creators in Need.

DID YOU KNOW?
We offer alumni—among other benefits—grantwriting assistance & fiscal sponsorships to help ensure their ongoing success & creative evolution.

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