

*this is a*

# Rad Jew Performance Archive

*project*

*the R.J.P.A. aims  
to document and incite  
performative provocations  
from the alleged peripheries  
of the u.s. jewish world  
which share a desire*

*to reinvent meaning and politics  
within the jewish diaspora;*

*to create jewishly engaged politics and culture  
opposing the militarized, nationalistic turn that today dominates  
mainstream jewish communities in the u.s. and elsewhere;*

*to devise new kinds of imaginative and cultural spaces, and  
new kinds of community with room for a diversity  
of bodies, fantasies, and creative sensibilities,  
new ranges of political possibility,  
new ideas of what it means to be jewish;*

*to contest the fundamentalist, assimilationist, Zionist  
trajectory of contemporary u.s. jewish communities  
and the necrophiliac fixation on the kehunah  
as the primary organizer of jewish  
identity, politics, and community.*

## ELEMENTS OF STYLE

OR, HOW WE DO WHAT IT IS THAT WE DO

OR, SPECTACULAR!

assembled from notes and talks by Jenny Romaine

and purimshpil extravaganzas experiences 5761-5767  
in New York City and Philadelphia

with Jews for racial & economic justice,  
workmen's circle/arbeter-ring, suck my tref! gender,  
great small works, Jews against the occupation/nyc  
and other oysterfisher yidn un undzer khaveyrim

## Rad Jew Performance Archive

zine #alef

january–april 2007 / 5767

assembled by daniel lang/levitsky

this zine compiles  
writings which  
explain and document  
the approach

used by the evolving  
collaborative of members of

Great Small Works,  
Workmen's Circle/arbeter-ring,  
Jews For Racial & Economic Justice,  
afitselokhis ladies auxiliary home for the aged  
and other artists, activists, &c

which has created purim extravaganzas  
in new york city in 5761-5767  
under the overall direction of Jenny Romaine

(and in philadelphia in 5763, curated by  
emily nepon/killer sideburns, shira zucker, josina manu  
maltzman, and feygelekh for a free palestine)

## [the calendar]

every official feast is spectrally haunted  
by a Carnivalesque one

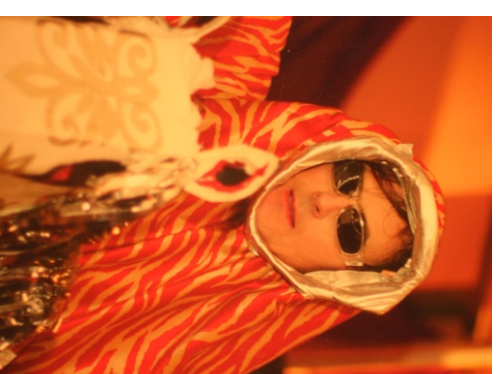
based on local traditions

the right to rite!

people doing the same kinds of things  
all over the world at the same time  
in this season

why Carnival on purim?

purim is the holiday specifically set aside for the Carnivalesque  
megile esther not in the dead sea scrolls  
does not mention god



## [the grotesque body]

focus on the grotesque body  
the body outgrows itself

bowels, phallus, anus, places where bodies leak  
bulges, potbelly, nose, pregnancy, copulation

the center (for bakhtin) of what is revolutionary

food

breaking down of the body

change

rejecting conformity to oneself

the devil is what is familiar

absolute absence of fear!

cross-dressing is connected to submission, rejection, grotesque

excessive elaboration  
sexuality

can't do it alone!

## CONTENTS

### summary

adapted from notes on Jenny Romaine's presentation  
to the purim 5767 planning group  
January 15, 2007

### three variations on a purimshpil introduction

adapted from scripts & script drafts by Jenny Romaine  
(with Rachel Mattson, Hadassah Gross, Adrienne Cooper, Michelle Kay,  
treyl gender crew, et al)

for

No Borders – Nonstop Purim (5764) - draft 3/4/4  
Rehearsal for the Downfall of Shoshine (5765) - draft 3/23/5  
Purim Without Papers (5766) - draft 2/28/6

### carnivalesque?

adapted from notes on daniel lang/levitsky's presentation  
to the purim 5767 planning group  
January 15, 2007

## **[some overall approaches and basic ideas]**

MANY THINGS GOING ON AT ONCE

PRECISE INFORMATION

CLEAR IMAGERY

EXTREME Juxtaposition  
Fantasy & Mythic Imagery vs. Narrative

GET YOUR ART ON!

A HOT SEXY TIME

CULTIVATING CONFUSION

## **[all-consuming]**

in Carnival there is interaction between disparate people, who in official life would not have contact

in Carnival people are not divided into spectators and performers

there is no life outside Carnival  
it takes over the entire world  
the border between life and art is erased

absolute lack of alibi  
there is no outside  
everyone is complicit

creating the “can’t escape” feeling?  
the devil is familiar

can’t do it alone

## **[carnival laughter]**

it is a space of laughter  
(vs. awe and seriousness)

not a cuddly kind of laughter

radicalism, freedom, ruthlessness

cruelty, vicious, parodic, scary  
absolute absence of fear!

## [why we talk about the carnivalesque]

the Carnivalesque is (according to bakhtin) where popular entertainment and radical politics combine

### [the two lives]

the idea of two lives kept separate:  
the official life  
(formal, strict, hierarchical, observant)  
& Carnival life  
(free, unrestricted, blasphemous, ambivalent laughter)

did Carnival keep the official life strong? prop it up?  
was it a social steam valve?

play with the idea that we will go back to the official story

disclosing the possibility of an entirely different world

is this the standard-issue tension between nature and culture?



EXPLORE ORNAMENTATION!  
ORNAMENTATION IS THE OPPOSITE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

USE TRADITIONAL MATERIALS: SONGS, TIRADES, TOYRE, &C

INTERGENERATIONAL

TEACH SONGS AND DANCES

STEAL FROM THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

REMEMBER VIRTUOSITY!  
DEPLOY IT!  
PAY FOR IT IF YOU CAN!

**[about the exact kind of confusion we want to cultivate, and  
the kind we want to avoid]**

REMEMBER

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE UMBRELLA  
TO THE SEWING MACHINE.

THE AUDIENCE SHOULD NOT BE ASKING

“IS THIS AN UMBRELLA? IS THAT A SEWING MACHINE?”

RATHER, THEY SHOULD BE ASKING

“WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE UMBRELLA  
TO THE SEWING MACHINE?”



and three:

on this holiday you're supposed to get so drunk that you can't tell the difference between haman and mordechai, but we know that in our community not everyone can drink or use drugs, for various reasons, but we don't want these people to miss out — so we're bringing you drugs in the form of theater. how will we fuck you up tonight, you ask? for starters, we will be telling the purim story backwards.

it's baktutnian. it's the carnivalesque. it's purim for god's sake. you're supposed to be confused! you're supposed to be disembrained! you're supposed to have your world turned upside down! you're supposed to get taken out of your everyday way of thinking. you're supposed to imagine a way to make the world a better place! you're supposed to get so fucked up that you can't tell the difference between haman and mordechai, between an umbrella and a sewing machine!

## Purim Without Papers (5766)

one:

this is carnival. everything is upside down. we're trying to get to the mystical place of perfect misunderstanding. inversion. the more we don't understand, the more dyslexic we feel, the more we are entering into the space of purim. the more we are supercharged, renewed, transformed. please fight with your own demons but not with the show. enjoy the seeming disorder. and let it open the door to new political unconscious. I chain.

[takes a long swig]

two:

a coalition of people made this show — religious and secular, formerly religious and formerly secular, both the secular and unsecular, neither the secular nor the nonsecular, and the ones who can neither confirm nor deny their secularism or nonsecularism. the point is, where ever you're coming from, and whoever you go home with tonight, it's all good and this bud's for you.

as you know, there's a great tradition of religious people celebrating this holiday and there's a great tradition of secular people celebrating, and so in this great moment of great national unity, we would utterly reject fundamentalism, we would do something so weird that there was no way you could think we were fundamentalists of any kind. we reject literalism. and we hope that everyone will be uncomfortable or fardreyt at some point tonight. because then we know we've done our job.



[an overall metaphor, or way to think about it]

THE PROJECT IS A CO-MINGLING,

OR BRAIDING TOGETHER OF

JEWISH SOURCES,

POLITICAL ANALYSIS,

CARNIVALESQUE ART

ALWAYS ASK OURSELVES

WHICH STRAND ARE WE WORKING WITH?

HOW DOES THE WEAVE LOOK?

**[about the audience]**

AUDIENCE IS ACTIVE

VISUAL AIDS FOR THE AUDIENCE  
TO HELP AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

TEACH SONGS AND DANCES

DIRECT THE AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION CLEARLY  
WITH LIGHT, SOUND, COLOR, MOVEMENT, GUIDES

INTERGENERATIONAL

HOT SEXY TIME

STRONG CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUALS PERFORMING

POSSIBLY FEEDING PEOPLE



## Rehearsal for the Downfall of Shoeshine (5765)

### USERS GUIDE TO THIS PARTY:

audience are extras on the movie. narrators are directors who do the following and teach the audience (extras) what they'll need to do for the shoot – a dance, a song, a chant.

not long. geared to help the audience relax into vibe, and to feel the levels on which they are being addressed.

stresses that on purim, if you are confused, you are doing the right thing.

directors, as ritual experts, know there are many paths towards holy disorder. many routes to the mystical place of perfect misunderstanding.

that is why we are making this movie

the more we don't understand, the more dyslexic we feel, the more we are entering into the practice of purim. the more we will be supercharged, renewed, transformed.

we, the audience, enter into the space of non-understanding. we do not resist the chaos. we fight with our own demons, but not with the show.

we normalize the watching of the unfamiliar, seemingly mysterious events.

activities: we have everyone set their watch to a different time.

### [about imagery]

EXPLORE ORNAMENTATION: ORNAMENTATION IS THE  
OPPOSITE OF FUNDAMENTALISM.

EXAGGERATED IMAGERY

CLEAR IMAGERY

HOT SEXY TIME

USE TRADITIONAL MATERIALS: SONGS, TIRADES, TOYRE, &C

REMEMBER VIRTUOSITY!

DEPLOY IT!

PAY FOR IT IF YOU CAN

[about the script, the narrative, and the words]

A CAREFUL AND EXCITING COUPLING  
OF POLITICAL CONTENT AND PLOT

NARRATIVE GROUNDS PEOPLE,  
KEEP REMINDING THEM OF IT

PRECISE INFORMATION

EDUCATIONAL AND FUNNY SCRIPT

DON'T TALK TOO MUCH!

COMPLICITY WITH VILLAINS



haddassah introduces director: jenny.

jenny continues the guiding:

USERS GUIDE TO THIS PARTY.

not long. geared to help the audience relax into vibe, and to feel the levels  
on which they are being addressed.

she connects chaos to carnival and the immigrant justice theme

she has everyone set their watch to a different time.

she introduces all the performance units: translators, eunuchs, king, trey/  
gender posse, the syndicate, anti-cosmopolitan orchestra.

(MUSIC: can I have some kind of sun-ra style vamp under my explaining?)

we sing nirvana songs cause we want to get there.

# No Borders – Nonstop Purim (5764)

hadassah explains who she is,  
and why she is here to host this event.

she stresses that on purim, if you are confused, you are doing the right thing.

hadassah, as ritual expert, knows there are many paths towards holy  
disorder. many routes to the mystical place of perfect misunderstanding.

that is why she was flown in for this very inverted evening.

spirit guide. performance artist! INVERT! flexible, hospitable, fearless.

the more we don't understand, the more dyslexic we feel, the more we are  
entering into the practice of purim. the more we will be supercharged,  
renewed, transformed.

we, the audience, watch hadassah, enter into the space of non-  
understanding. hadassah does not resist the chaos. she fights with her own  
demons, but not with the show. she normalizes the watching of unfamiliar,  
seemingly mysterious events.



LANGUAGES! WE HAVE MANY.  
THEY FEATURE IN THE STORY

INFORMALITY OF USING A SCRIPT ON STAGE IS A CHOICE  
WE CAN MEMORIZE LINES –  
THE CHOICE IS WHAT MATTERS

INTERGENERATIONAL

REMEMBER VIRTUOSITY!  
DEPLOY IT!  
PAY FOR IT IF YOU CAN

## [about staging]

MULTIPLE PLAYING AREAS

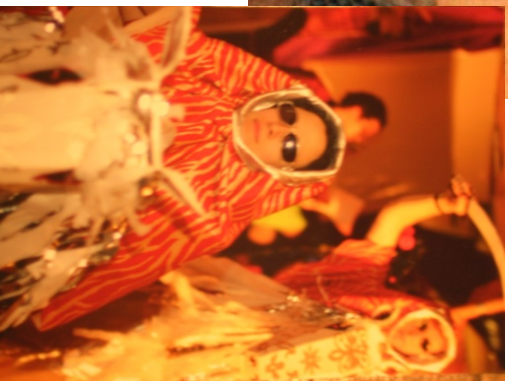
USE OF MAIN ACT CURTAIN (OPEN / CLOSE)

USE OF A CHORUS:  
GROUPS OF FOLKS  
MUSICALLY, IN TERMS OF MOVEMENT, IN COSTUMES

USE TRADITIONAL MATERIALS: SONGS, TIRADES, TOYRE, &c

VIDEO = IMAGE AND SOUNDTRACK





## [about costumes & decoration]

### COSTUMES

ELABORATE COSTUMES  
THAT TAKE TO PEOPLE TO OPERATE.

USE OF A CHORUS:  
GROUPS OF FOLKS  
MUSICALLY, IN TERMS OF MOVEMENT, IN COSTUMES

USE TRADITIONAL MATERIALS: SONGS, TIRADES, TOYRE, &c

REMEMBER VIRTUOSITY!  
DEPLOY IT!

PAY FOR IT IF YOU CAN

[about noise, sound, and music]

MUSIC, ALL KINDS

JEWISH MUSICS

SONGS WITH NO WORDS

POSSIBLY A MUSICAL?

MUSIC AS SOUND TRACK TO VIDEOS

USE TRADITIONAL MATERIALS: SONGS, TIRADES, TOYRE, &c

REMEMBER VIRTUOSITY!  
DEPLOY IT!  
PAY FOR IT IF YOU CAN



next spread (left side, clockwise):

vashiti – 5766

court secretaries – 5764

vashiti & attendants – 5765

esther & deputy (?) – 5766

next spread (right side, top down):

the whole meggle (& maracatu ny) – 5765

vashiti & hagai – 5765

vivian sisters, mordelkay, esther #1 – 5765

gatekeepers, esther #1 – 5765



previous (from front):

narrator – 5766

king ahasherorosh – 5765

king, haman, esther, kol ishas – 5766

vashiti, esther#1, attendants – 5765

esther #2 & king - 5765

vashiti & farsi/russian text – 5765

umbrellas on the balcony – 5765

this page:

persians massacred by jews – 5766

newsies speaking in tongues – 5766

dj rekha & dance lesson – 5766



following (to back):

narrators – 5764

(jeny romaine &

hadassah gross)

yiddish hangman &

narrator- 5764

narrator #1 – 5765

(jeny romaine)

newsie & king – 5766

moshe rabbeuu – 5766

narrator #2 &

kol ishas – 5766

court secretary - 5764