

Oakland Opera's 'Enfants Terribles'

By KEN BULLOCK
Special to the Planet

Here, time stands still. There is only music, and the movement of children through space.

—Philip Glass

Three Steinways line up parallel to the apron of the stage at the Metro on Broadway, facing the podium to the right. Onstage is a pair of iron-frame beds, draped in magenta sheets, while a vertiginous flight of gold-orange steps leads up towards the flies, past a mezzanine to an aqua door.

These are the playing fields for *The Game* which brother and sister play in *The Room*, an autosuggestive and incestuous symbolic game that remakes the world they escape, yet spreads like poison into their tiny coterie in that world as they grow up.

Oakland Opera Theater's production of Philip Glass's



Les Enfants Terribles, after Jean Cocteau's 1929 novel and later play, with musical direction by Deirdre McClure and stage direction by Tom Dean, is reset in Saigon from Paris, which eliminates the ever-falling snow of the original and suggests a colonial ambiance to the milieu and action.

Glass conceived the opera with ballets, and Oakland

LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES

Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Oct. 22 at the Oakland Metro Opera House, 201 Broadway. \$32-\$36
www.oaklandopera.org.

Opera is collaborating with the dynamic dancer-choreographer Danny Nguyen and his company, who provide the fantastic activity that surrounds and amplifies the dreams and perceptions of the little circle that feed off their own caprices.

Glass' music, originally scored for three pianos, has an alternately horizontal or vertical quality of attack, with the recurrent figures, the "suspended animation" (in McClure's words) of building, resolution, and building again. But there's something different, peculiarly enjoyable about this piece in comparison to the composer's excursions into setting libretti in Sanskrit and Ancient Egyptian.

Densely melodic, following the quick exchanges of the singers/characters ("cat and mouse," in baritone Axel Van Chee's words; there are no duets, trios or ensemble singing), the score deserves Glass's preferred designation of "theater music," and seems to be something particularly close to the composer's heart, may be hearkening back to his days in Paris as student of Nadine Boulanger.

There are moments when the playing (excellently performed by Skye Atman, Paul Caccamo and Kymry Esainko, with Daniel Lockert alternating) reminded the audience of études, perfect for a tale of overextended pubescence that starts with slingshots and a dirtclod (originally snowball) fight after school. It may also remind one of Glass' story of submitting period stylistic exercises to Boulanger, who reprimanded Glass for "not composing in the way Mozart made music." Glass then realizing his aesthetic or academic correctness was merely the imitation of art.

That's not the case here in this fluid but difficult work, melodic brightness counterpointed by a libretto of constant verbal battles. The company has found fine collaborators to essay the support and principal roles: Paul's schoolboy friend Gerard (Ben Johns, alternating with Jonathan Smucker), secretly in love with Elizabeth; Cary Ann Rosko as Agathe (and posed on the steps with a sling as Paul's schoolboy crush, Dargelos); and as brother and sister, superb Axel Van Chee and fascinating, feline Joohee Choi extracting the maximum out of a doomed incestuous love that's expressed by lolling on beds in dusky light through blinds or squabbling in front of their friends, even in the bathtub, as Gerard spies on them.

Cocteau, object of surrealist scorn, had a precise sense of the strange mix of tragedy and soap operatic melodrama that descended from Racine into modernism, through Victor Hugo and Baudelaire. This production of "Monsieur Jean's" *Les Enfants Terribles* pushes that extreme disparity of display and concealment to the limit, maybe reveal-

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Oliveto Hosts Aris Books' Author Reunion

By JOE EATON
Special to the Planet

Back at the dawn of Berkeley's food revolution, before the first bit of artisan bread was dipped in extra-virgin olive oil, L. John Harris, a former Cheese Board collective member and waiter at Chez Panisse, published *The Book of Garlic*.

He went on to found Aris Books in 1980, and to bring out a long list of single-subject cookbooks celebrating ginger, goat cheese, olives, peppers, mushrooms, calamari—40 titles in all. If you're a serious cook, you probably have a couple on your own shelves.

This Sunday, Harris and Maggie Blyth Klein, co-owner of Oliveto in Oakland's Rockridge district, will host an Aris Books Author Reunion, Feast, and Cookbook Auction at Klein's celebrated restaurant. It's a benefit for the Berkeley Food and Housing Project, kicking off their annual "We Give Thanks Month" in which local restaurants dedicate some of their proceeds to the 35-year-old nonprofit's seven homeless assistance programs.

Harris and Klein promise delicious food from Oliveto's chef Paul Canales, inspired by some of the Aris cookbooks, plus a silent auction and a drawing for "a wonderful and unusual culinary adventure." A dozen or so Aris authors will be on hand: Klein herself (*Feast of the Olive*), Georgeanne Brennan (*New American Vegetable Cookbook*), Isaac Cronin (*California Seafood Cookbook, International Squid Cookbook*), Michele Jordan (*Good Cook's Book of Mustard, Cook's Tour of Sonoma*), Jim Burns (*Women Chefs*), Linda Burum (*Asian Pasta*) and Jay Harlow (*The Grilling Book*).

"When, in 1981, Harris asked me, then an editor at Cal Berkeley, to write a cookbook about olives and olive oil, neither of us knew that the project would change the course of my and my TV-producer husband Bob's lives," says Klein. Their research for *Feast of the Olive* involved immersion in Tuscan cuisine and culture and inspired them to open their own restaurant. Oliveto will turn 20 this

December.

Many of the other participating authors are still very much engaged with food. Brennan is practically a one-woman cookbook industry, whose other projects include a cooking school in Provence, gardening books, and the Bon Marché line of seeds. Cronin runs a public relations company representing specialty food accounts. Jordan has a food-related radio program in Sebastopol. Other Aris alumni are now food critics, artisanal food makers, specialty farmers, or restaurateurs.

The Aris output also included books by MFK Fisher and Bruce Cost. What was special about them? "We featured unusual single subjects," Harris recalls. "And they were more sophisticated subjects: olive oil, ginger, squid, garlic. They were more of a reading experience than standard cookbooks. We were like armchair travel books: you could get pleasure reading about food."

Some, like Klein's *Feast of the Olive* and Cost's *Ginger East to West*, were enormously influential. "*Feast of the Olive* launched the whole thing of tasting extra-virgin olive oil," says Harris. "*The Grilling Book* was the first book to feature mesquite grilling."

Harris, now a filmmaker (his documentary, *Divine Food: 100 Years in the Kosher Delicatessen Trade*, has appeared on PBS), sold Aris in 1991. But he held on to his inventory, and it occurred to him that the books could be used to help the Berkeley Food and Housing Project. He had worked with the group before, making connections with restaurants that now participate in the "We Give Thanks" program. Berkeley Food and Housing Executive Director Terrie Light was delighted with the reunion idea, and Maggie Klein agreed to provide a venue for the event.

How often do you have a chance to meet culinary celebrities, taste extraordinary Mediterranean food, and assist a worthy local cause?

Tickets (\$100) are available through Oliveto; call 547-5356.

ARTS CALENDAR

Continued from
Page Twelve

SUNDAY, OCT. 15

THEATER

"An Evening with Leonardo da Vinci" with Rob Weiner at 7 p.m. at the JCC, 1414 Walnut St. Cost is \$10-\$12. 848-0237.

FILM

The Mechanical Age "Human, All Too Human" at 5:30 p.m. at the Pacific Film Archive. 642-0808. www.bampfa.berkeley.edu

READINGS AND LECTURES

Strictly Speaking with Paula Poundstone at 7 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall, UC Campus. Tickets are \$24-\$46. 642-9988. www.calperfs.berkeley.edu

Poetry Flash with Elline Lipkin and Lisa Sewell at 7:30 p.m. at Black Oak Books. 486-0698. www.blackoakbooks.com

Poets for Peace with Susan Rich, Robert Lipton and Ilya Kaminsky at 7:30 p.m. at Pegasus Books Downtown, 2349 Shattuck Ave. 649-1320.

MUSIC AND DANCE

University Symphony Orches-

tra at 3 p.m. at Hertz Hall, UC Campus. Tickets are \$5-\$15. 642-4864. http://music.berkeley.edu

California Bach Society "Die Familie Bach" at 4 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2300 Bancroft Way. 415-262-0272. www.calbach.org

Bluegrass for the Greenbelt Benefit Concert with Laurie Lewis, Tom Rozum and Todd Phillips, Eric and Suzy Thompson, The Backyard Party Boys at 3 p.m. at Coventry Grove, in the Kensington Hills. Tickets are \$50-\$65. 415-543-6771. www.BluegrassForTheGreenbelt.org

Vagabond Opera, theatrical mix of eclectic music, at 8 p.m. at La Pena Cultural Center. Tickets are \$10-\$12. 849-2568.

Rahim Al Haj, Iraqi oud master, at 8 p.m. at Freight and Salvage. Cost is \$18.50-\$19.50. 548-1761. www.freightandsalvage.org

Na Leo Nahenahe Hawaiian Chorus at 4 p.m. at Lake Merritt United Methodist Church, 1330 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland. Tickets are \$12-\$15. Children under 12 free. www.naleosf.com

Gift Horse at 11 a.m. at Nomad Cafe, 6500 Shattuck Ave. 595-5344. www.nomad-cafe.net

Tango Number 9 at 8 p.m. at Anna's Jazz Island, 2120 Allston Way. Cost is \$10. 841-JAZZ. www.AnnasJazzIsland.com

Americana Unplugged: The Mercury Dimes at 5 p.m. at Jupiter. 655-5715.

Stephanie Bruce at 4:30 at the Jazzschool. Cost is \$15. 845-5373. www.jazzschool.com

Ziyia, traditional Greek music, at 8:30 p.m. at Ashkenaz. Dance lesson at 7:30 p.m. 525-5054. www.ashkenaz.com

MONDAY, OCT. 16

READINGS AND LECTURES

Soyhel Dahi and Sharon Doubiago read at 7:30 p.m. at Moe's Books, 2476 Telegraph Ave. 849-2087.

Meg Tilly and K. E. Silva read from their new novels at 7:30 p.m. at Black Oak Books. 486-0698. www.blackoakbooks.com

Francine Prose introduces "Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and

For Those Who Want to Write Them" at 7 p.m. at Cody's Books on Fourth St. 559-9500.

Poetry Express with Marsha Campbell at 7 p.m. at Priya Restaurant, 2072 San Pablo Ave. berkeleypoetryexpress@yahoo.com

MUSIC AND DANCE

The Kirov Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre, with Valery Gergiev, conductor and Alexander Toradze, piano, at 7 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall, UC Campus. Tickets are \$38-\$86. 642-9988. www.calperfs.berkeley.edu

Bil Staines at 8 p.m. at Freight and Salvage. Cost is \$18.50-\$19.50. 548-1761. www.freightandsalvage.org

Khalil Shaheed, all ages jam, at 8 p.m. at Anna's Jazz Island, 2120 Allston Way. Cost is \$5. 841-JAZZ. www.AnnasJazzIsland.com

Blue Monday Jam at 7:30 p.m. at the Uptown Nightclub, 1928 Telegraph, Oakland. Cost is \$5. 451-8100. www.uptown-nightclub.com

Marta Topfer at 8 p.m. at Yoshi's at Jack London Square. Cost is \$10-\$14. 238-9200. www.yoshis.com

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'Les Enfants'

Continued from Page Thirteen

ing some conceptual problems in Glass's otherwise excellent vision of the work.

Nguyen and his dancers, especially Sarah Pun-Richardson (who doubles Elizabeth, alternating with Tara Macken and Emily Mizuno) and Peggy De Coursey (in her mannequin death throes as The Mother)—and Nguyen himself, strange Angel of Death and shade of colonial war—are admirable in their sometimes-maniac activity, but sometimes it's too much and obscures the principals, whose real action is admittedly internalized, but isn't that what modern opera's good at representing, especially for Cocteau's cultish brother and sister?

This goes for the narration too, which (taken from the novel)

worked well on the film soundtrack in Cocteau's ongoing elegant tones. But Larry Rekow's voice can't always cut the wall of music and is frequently flat in his handling of the translated poetic passages from the original book. These seem to be, again, cases of the composer not cutting back on the adapted material to allow the unspoken (unsung, unstaged) elements space to grow, like the shadow from The Game (and, presumably in this interpretation, the rising tide of war) that engulfs the lives of its players and their spectators. The choreographer, dancers and narrator deserve praise for their participation in an exciting production—so typical of this remarkable company-on-a shoestring—as do the designers: Rob Anderson, lights; Garrett Lowe, set; Margaret Lawrence, costumes; and Asa Hoyt, credited for "The Theatre of the Two Beds," as Cocteau described them.

Citizen Planners

Continued from Page Two

Retired UC Berkeley administrator and DAPAC member Dorothy Walker, who has said that she favors taller buildings at some locations, said the group should be focusing on where the taller structures should rise.

Taecker said the existing downtown plan favors "more of a low-rise scheme" in its call for preserving the scale and historic character of the existing area.

While some members criticized city staff for offering variations that included more high-rises, particularly in the area surrounding the BART

station, Travis said. "This is not staff setting the agenda. This is staff giving us back what we said."

Lisa Stephens said she favored a five-story limit along Shattuck, while Hawley said that the downtown could handle "quite stunning buildings that are tall."

Patti Dacey said that cheaper building materials used because of skyrocketing building costs meant that new buildings wouldn't be first rate or be built by first-rate architects. She cited a PG&E energy expert's report stating that five-story buildings were the most energy-efficient.

By the end of the session no consensus had been reached, leaving the discussion open for renewal early next year.

Facebook

Continued from Page One

use every kind of communication to answer people's questions. However it still remains to be seen how successful a campaign method this turns out to be."

Overman, registered as a UC Berkeley student with Facebook, created the group "Elect Cal Student Jason Overman to Berkeley City Council" two months ago. His site claims 374 members consisting of students from UC Berkeley, Stanford, University of Pennsylvania and several other universities.

"Eighteen- to 25-year-olds have the lowest voter turnout in the country," Overman said. "Since Facebook has an election section now, I think it's a great way of letting them know that their vote is important."

Overman added that although community members often feel that UC Berkeley students do not feel invested in the local community, this was not the case.

"Maybe they don't have time to attend city hall meetings, but that's another reason why we need to reach out to them more often," he said. "I get messages from students on Facebook who want to talk about crime and affordable housing. UCB students are one of the most vulnerable groups in case of an earthquake in Berkeley. They want to know more about disaster preparedness. We haven't heard about their concerns before because they were never given an outlet for them. Facebook is helping to bridge that gap between students and the local residents. How can we have a local election and leave out students who form one of the most important sections of our community?"

Anna Thongthap is one of the UC Berkeley students who joined Jason Overman's Facebook group. Students care about Berkeley

neighborhood issues, she said.

"We have a major investment in what goes on in local politics, but we don't always know how to make a difference," Thongthap said. "When campaigns target voters, they often write off our generation as not worth their effort. We are seen as a generation that doesn't vote. But we vote when we are given a reason to, and believe me, I am voting this year."

Alan Lightfeldt, a political economy of industrial societies major at UC Berkeley, has indicated his support for District 7 candidate Beier on Facebook.

"I joined the group because I know George and I have supported him all along," he said. "I want to show people where I stand."

There are others, like UC Berkeley freshman Elizabeth Hopper, who are skeptical about Facebook as a vehicle for political action.

"The campaigns that are up there haven't changed my mind about whom I want to support because there's not enough information about the candidates and their policies," she said.

According to Beier, students started joining his group after student group meetings organized by the ASUC and others.

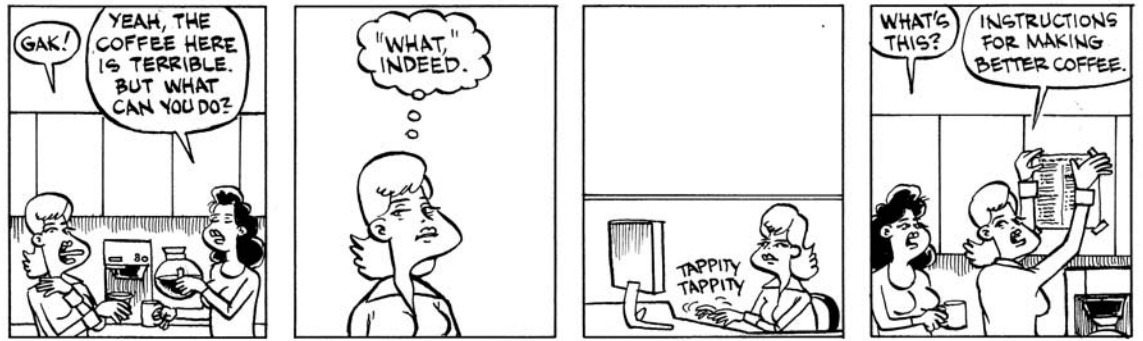
"It's a more environment-friendly and cost-effective way of campaigning," he said. "The bad thing about Facebook is if I spend more time on it, it takes away time from the other parts of my campaign."

Worthington, who said he has helped more students get appointed and elected to city positions than any other Berkeley councilmember, said that students have contributed immensely towards his campaign this year, and his Facebook site is an extension of that effort.

"It's their ideas I look forward to hearing," he said. "The enthusiasm they are bringing to my campaign is just amazing. Getting young people involved is one of the first steps towards creating a better community."

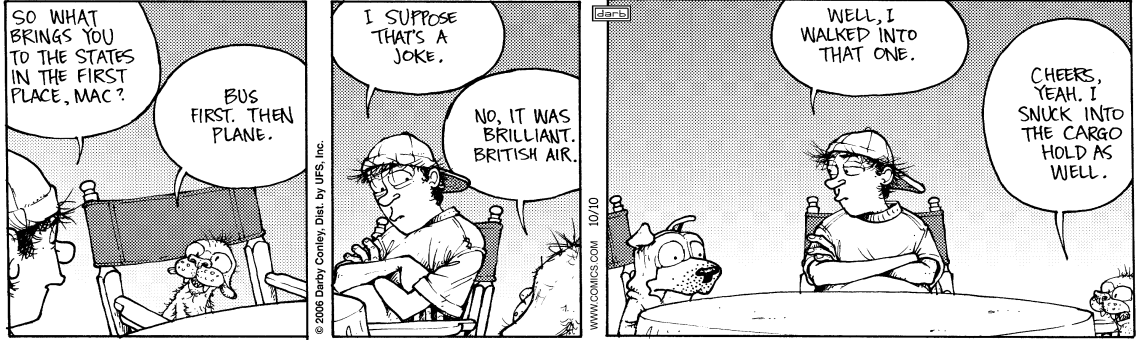
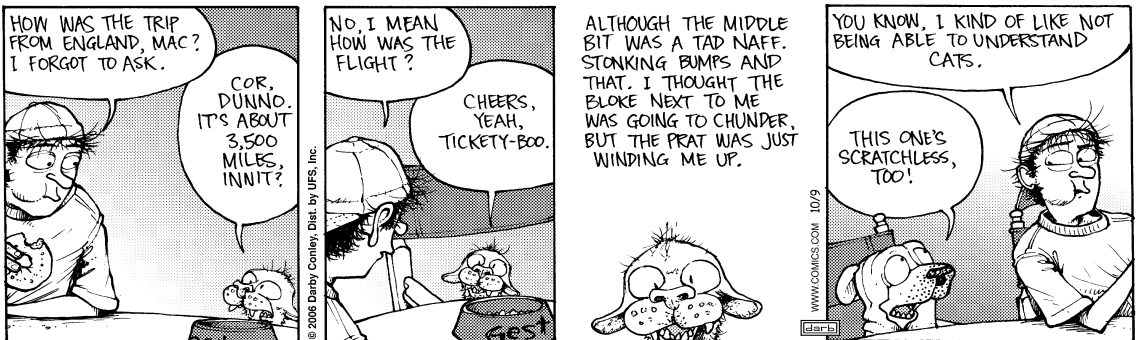
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