

David & Suzanne White Manning's

SynergicTheater



TERRA INCOGNITA

Premiere Performances:

Pace Downtown Theater
(Spruce Street, between Park Row & Gold)

Friday/Saturday/Monday,
October 11/12/14: 8 pm
Sunday,
October 13: 3 pm

General admission: \$12
Students/seniors/artists: \$8
TDF voucher (no surcharge)
reservations: (212) 799-5562

Free preview: Wednesday,
October 9th, 8 pm

NEWSLETTER

September, 1991

The 20-foot-high shadowscreen becomes a giant sail catching images from the winds of imagination. Live, magically-transforming movements, lights, and sounds evoke three historic encounters with **TERRA INCOGNITA** (unknown land), posing the New World as a place that has not yet been discovered. The seminal impressions engage each audience member's own sensory imagination in fulfilling the experience...as in a dream, or life itself.

Part I: PASOS (World Premiere)

The new world idea emerges within the context of 15th-century Spain, as viewed through the eyes of Martin Alonso Pinzon--captain of the caravel Pinta. Pinzon returns from the 1492 voyage facing the passage of his own life and Spain as he knows it. Through Pinzon's reflections, PASOS traces clues left along a path leading from the end of the old world to the edge of the new.

Part II: LOST

(premiere: 1984 400th Anniversary British-American Festival)

In the late-1580's, Virginia Dare--the first English child born in the New World--has been stranded on Roanoke Island, NC for three years, awaiting the return of her grandfather and colony governor, John White. When he finally arrives, Virginia and the rest of the colony have vanished. In LOST, Virginia's and John White's contrasting perspectives on the New World are explored through their imaginary correspondence and White's actual watercolors.

Part III: I, MIGRANT

(premiere: 1989)

A contemporary woman is standing in line feeling a growing sense of cultural displacement. A magazine article about Ellis Island recalls an immigrant grandmother she never knew. Envisioning her grandmother's Ellis Island experience as a "genetic diary", she tries to get to know her ancestor by reflecting on their shared sense of displacement.

All three works are created by co-directors David & Suzanne White Manning. Company members include: Robert Brink, Laura Fernandez, Tom Fountain, Marie-Christine Giordano, Elena Lopez, Charles Navarrette, Mayumi Ohshima and Sima Wolf.

Voices on the accompanying audio soundscapes include: Fermi Reixach (Pinzon), Neville Aurelius (Governor White & Ellis Island official), Janett Pabon (adult Virginia Dare), Margaret Chapman (young Virginia Dare), and O'Mara Leary (grandmother and granddaughter).

Project Origins & Background

In 1984--the Synergic Theater's 10th Season--"Lost" premiered at the 400th Anniversary British-American Festival followed by a two-week run in New York. The Mannings then spent 1984/85 as guest artists in Barcelona, Spain. There, they encountered the themes of "Lost" in reverse--seeking a "new world" identity at it's "old world" source. The resulting dynamic between this sense of displacement and discovery generated a tremendous creative vitality--inspired by the Spanish experience and to be fulfilled by the entire TERRA INCOGNITA production. "Lost" was re-staged in 1988, followed by the premiere of "I, Migrant" in '89. The Mannings began creative explorations of "Pasos" during a residency at Duke University in '89 and then returned to Spain in the winter of '90 for further research.

In keeping with the production's universal themes and goals, participants have included natives of Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and Japan, as well as Hispanic, Asian, African and European Americans.

Project Support

In July of '90, the entire company was in-residence for 3 1/2 weeks at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, PA where the new work "Pasos" was set, along with "Lost" and "I, Migrant".

The October premiere, as well as the past three seasons, is being presented as part of a facilities-use residency at the Schimmel Center for the Arts' Pace Downtown Theater and in cooperation with Pace University's Department of Theater and Fine Arts.

TERRA INCOGNITA is also an officially-designated (but not funded) project of the Spanish government's Spain '92 Foundation and the US Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission.

The Friends of the Synergic Theater's TERRA INCOGNITA contest raised about \$1500 in individual and corporate contributions. Special thanks to Robert French of Spartanburg, SC for donating the prize--a weekend of sailing on NC's Pamlico Sound. Congratulations to winners Dana Arey and James Mercer of Pittsburg (as well as initial winner, Biz Reed of Boston who declined the prize), and thanks to all who participated.

Samuel H. Scripps \$5,000 grant marks the 10th year since "Saint Sam" began supporting Synergic Theater programs.

The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation awarded a \$3,500 grant toward the TERRA INCOGNITA project.

For the 3rd straight year, the Synergic Theater received a grant (\$1,000) from the NYS Council on the Arts' Manhattan Decentralization Program-- administered in NY County by the Cultural Council Foundation; and for the 1st time, a grant (\$500) from the Borough of Manhattan Community Arts Fund--with public funds from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and from the Honorable Ruth W. Messinger, President of the Borough of Manhattan. These two grants support the Wednesday, October 9th free preview performance.

We're deeply grateful to the above individuals and organizations for their support, but are still producing TERRA INCOGNITA at a level far beyond our available resources; filling in the gap with a combination of madness, magic, frustration and desperation. At this point, further help would go a long way toward realizing the production's inherent opportunities, now and into the future. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to the Synergic Theater, c/o Manning, 22 West 90th Street, 5F, New York, NY 10024. But remember that the most important form of support is to come and enjoy a performance.

"...a brilliant integration of live dancers and shadowplay techniques. This breathtaking technical feat allowed visual and verbal metaphors to move pungently and effectively between the real and the imaginary, from personal experience to commentary on human behavior...surprisingly emotional work."

Anna Kisselgoff, The New York Times (9/88)

"...dance, speech, stage settings and lighting effects were so blended that one art became inseparable from another. Watching the shadows was like turning the pages of an old scrapbook kept by someone's immigrant grandparents."

Jack Anderson, The New York Times (9/89)

"Projections, movement, music, shadows and speech combined in a remarkably smooth way. A great deal of deft artistry has clearly gone into this ambitious production."

Jennifer Dunning, The New York Times (6/84)

"...an amazing, delightful and provocative exploration of personality and history...accompanied by an often moving soundscore."

Elizabeth Lee, Durham Morning Herald (5/84)

"Experiencing it is what makes this Synergic experiment come to life...absolutely lovely and inventive...splendidly effective. What the Mannings are doing is potentially important to the arts."

Bernard Weiner, San Francisco Chronicle (12/81)