

BEGINNING DAYS OF TRUE JUBILATION

BY MONA MANSOUR

CONCEIVED BY SOCIETY

DIRECTED BY SCOTT ILLINGWORTH

SOCIETY AND NEW OHIO THEATRE STAND IN SUPPORT OF THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT. WE COMMIT TO FIGHTING AGAINST THOSE INFLICTING VIOLENCE ON BLACK COMMUNITIES, TO WRESTLING WITH NEW QUESTIONS, AND HOLDING OURSELVES MORE ACCOUNTABLE AS WE MOVE FORWARD TO A BETTER FUTURE. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY, PLEASE CLICK HERE TO LEARN ABOUT ONE OF OUR FAVORITE ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING BLACK TRANS LIVES.



BEGINNING DAYS OF TRUE JUBILATION

By Mona Mansour

Conceived by SOCIETY

Directed by Scott Illingworth

Production Stage Manager Caroline Englander

> Produced By Tim Nicolai

Dramaturgy Christy Escobar



CAST

Brian Bock Hana Chamoun Hiram Delgado Christy Escobar Annie Fox Rebecca S'Manga Frank Leslie Fray Meredith Garretson Rosa Gilmore Caroline Grogan Grant Harrison Keren Lugo Kario Marcel Tim Nicolai Simone Recasner Alex Templer Shpend Xani

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This play was developed through a collaborative research model. What started as an exploration of how group behavior operates in crowds eventually focused on the way group-think operates in the world of tech start-up culture. It brought us into contact with a wide range of people who work in and around those companies. We heard stories of wild ambition, excess, success, and utter failure. The satirical company we've created, Asphera, is a reflection of many of the jaw-dropping stories people were generous enough to share.

In many ways our research period feels like it happened in a different world. When I step back, however, I see the seeds of our current state threaded through the play: a world of extreme capitalism wrapped in a PR-crafted veneer of "changing the world" through innovation. They believe that the right messaging can make problems go away. It is a world that rewards ambition and financial success above shared humanity.

There has been tremendous joy in continuing to collaborate with our community in isolation. Experiencing this play through the technology of a corporate meeting platform - whatever else we intended during our process - is delightfully fitting for the story. At the same time, we worked to keep it a theatrical experience in the ways we love: live, favoring the real over the virtual, our stagecraft visible, and using space and movement in ways that prioritize the body in its environment over the frame and the edit.

I'd work with Mona and this company of actors anytime and anywhere.
Until we can share the same room again, I'm grateful for this space and their unfailing humanity.

- Scott Illingworth

ON THE PROCESS

A collaborative process like this one is a rare, delicious treat. We began with a plan to create a show about crowds, and a year and a half later, we have created a show without crowds upon pain of death.

It feels fitting that we ended up as absolutely far away from where we began as possible. What we have now came together as a slow burn over the course of about a year and a half of winding improvisation, discussion, and play among a sometimes rotating group of actors, Scott, and Mona.

Much of what appears in this production comes directly from improvisation, led by Scott, and lovingly recorded and crafted into story by Mona, through a process of trustful creative groping, putting our feet forward in the dark of process one step at a time. With this iteration of Beginning Days of True Jubilation, the process continues. We may still be in the middle of what this play is, or could be, as a Zoom production or, potentially, an in-the-crowd-live-action play. The treat of this collaboration carries on!

- Annie Fox



SOCIETY'S START

In November 2017, I was asked to do a workshop at New Dramatists on a new play written by Mona Mansour and directed by Scott Illingworth. It was the first time I worked on a professional show using the Joint Stock Method that I'd learned at NYU Grad Acting. It felt like being back at home; throughout the workshop, I thought about how I missed working that way.

Mona mentioned - somewhat seriously, somewhat offhandedly - that she wished a professional company existed where we could work this way all the time, and she'd told (an initially skeptical) Scott they should form one. I agreed and offered my services. We kept talking, and over the course of a year a plan took shape for a pilot run that launched in 2019. Perhaps most crucially, Mark Wing-Davey offered us regular space to work at Grad Acting.

We knew a few things: we wanted to use the Joint Stock Method. We wanted actors to be involved from idea phase to production as both researchers and collaborators, never cast aside or replaced. We wanted a radically inclusive group. And we wanted to break the capitalist theatre model.

That pilot run became SOCIETY; and our first discussion eventually became the play you'll see tonight: *Beginning Days of True Jubilation* by Mona Mansour.

There's a book about the original Joint Stock venture in the UK (called *The Joint Stock Book*, simply enough) and its first line is: "It is hard to imagine a more foolish ambition than creating a theatre company."

They're right.

We did it, anyway.

- Tim Nicolai



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If you'd like to become a SOCIETY donor and support our long-term future, visit our <u>GoFundMe page</u>.

You can also Venmo @societytheatreco, or Paypal contactsocietytheatre@gmail.com.

SPECIAL THANKS

Elizabeth Alinikoff

Erin Anderson

Nour Chamoun

Max Cohen

Emily Morse

New Dramatists

New Ohio Theatre

New Ohio Theatre

Navriti Sood

Alex Salamat

Hadi Tabbal

Mark Wing-Davey

Shay Vawn

Emily Zemba

and

NYU Tisch School of the Arts

Video Design Kario Marcel

Poster / Program Design Tim Nicolai

SOCIETY is:

Brian Bock, Hana Chamoun, Caroline Englander,
Jonathan Louis Dent, Christy Escobar, Annie Fox,
Drew Florida, Rebecca S'Manga Frank, Leslie Fray,
Rosa Gilmore, Caroline Grogan, Grant Harrison,
Scott Illingworth, Keren Lugo, Mona Mansour,
Kario Marcel, Tim Nicolai, Simone Recasner,
Joshua David Robinson, Alexandra Templer,
Shay Vawn, Shpend Xani, Emily Zemba



This fall, SOCIETY will resume developing a new play with playwright Emily Zemba about astrology and spiritual wellness in the 21st century.

A live production will follow in 2021, as well as a full stage production of *Beginning Days of True Jubilation*.

A NOTE FROM THE ETHER

We have been forced out of our beloved theatres by a global pandemic. The theatre's core relationship of physical bodies in a shared space is not currently available to us. And yet... artists continue to make art, and storytellers still have stories to tell.

The artists in this summer's Ice Factory have all embraced our current terms-of-engagement and committed themselves to a rigorous and playful investigation of digitally-mediated, live-streamed shared time. Because that is what artists do: they work with the resources at hand to make something radically new. Each of the different artists in IF2020 take different approaches - foregrounding, exploding, and exploiting different qualities of this new medium. They are joyful and fearless in the face of this new and uncharted territory. And that is why we follow them with such giddy anticipation.

Enjoy!

Robert Lyons, Artistic Director, New Ohio Theatre

ABOUT NEW OHIO THEATRE

New Ohio Theatre serves Manhattan's most adventurous audiences by developing, curating and presenting bold work by New York's independent theatre community. We believe the best of this community, the small artistic ensembles and the daring producing companies who operate without a permanent theatrical home, are actively expanding the boundaries of what theatre is and what it can be. From our home in the West Village's historic Archive Building, the New Ohio strengthens, nurtures, and promotes this community, providing a professional, high-profile platform for downtown's most mature, ridiculous, engaging, irreverent, gut-wrenching, frivolous, sophisticated, foolish, and profound theatrical endeavors.

Help us develop and present the best of New York's independent theatre scene by making a taxdeductible contribution at newohiotheatre.org

ICE FACTORY 2020 FESTIVAL LINEUP

July 24-26 SOCIETY

BEGINNING DAYS OF TRUE JUBILATION

A visionary vows to create a life-changing product, with the smartest minds of her generation ecstatically on board. What could possibly go wrong? A satirical journey through the cult-like, group-think of winner-take-all capitalism, from the early euphoria of a new start-up through its epic crash and burn. Written by Mona Mansour, and directed by Scott Illingworth.

July 30-Aug 2

DIBBA/KHANIN/MADRONE/SMITH we need your listening

An empty theater lit by glowing blue screens. Phone calls after dark. Spinning confessionals. In a shifting theatrical landscape, individual audience members enter a dim space between digital and analog reality and are taken through a series of intimate, one-on-one exchanges with performers - discovering and re-discovering the act of listening as radical engagement.

Aug 4-8

THE TRANSIT ENSEMBLE WHO'S THERE?

A Black American influencer accuses a Malaysian bureaucrat of condoning blackface. A Singaporean-Indian teacher launches an Instagram feud calling out racial inequality at home, post-George Floyd. A privileged Singaporean-Chinese activist meets a compassionate White Saviour, and an ethnically ambiguous political YouTuber takes a DNA test for the first time. This cross-cultural encounter involving artists based in Singapore, Malaysia, and the United States uses Zoom as a new medium to explore the unstable ground between us and "the other." In this pandemic contact zone, lines along race, class and gender bleed

NEW OHIO THEATRE STAFF

Artistic Director Robert Lyons
Producing Director Marc Stuart Weitz
Associate Producer Jaclyn Biskup

Ice Factory

Associate Producer Rachel Denise April Box Office Manager Antonio Miniño

Ice Factory CrewRyan Henry, Priyanka KediaPress RepresentativeDavid Gibbs/DARR Publicity

ARCHIVE RESIDENCY COMPANIES

The Archive Residency offers artists a two-year commitment of space, artistic support, and institutional continuity for the development and presentation of a new work. In partnership with IRT Theatre, our neighbors in the Archive Building, we provide independent theatre

INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

New Ohio Theatre is situated on the Lenape island of Manhahtaan (Mannahatta). We pay respect to Lenape peoples and ancestors past, present, and future, and acknowledge our reliance on the land and waters of Lenapehoking, the Lenapehomeland.

into one another, questioning the assumptions we hold of ourselves and the world around us.

Aug 13-15

LEVINGSTON/HARE/LUCKETT A BURNING CHURCH

A kaleidoscopic new musical tracing the lives of church leaders and congregants amid political movements, tragedies, and spiritual rebirth, *A Burning Church* is about an American institution fighting to survive a crisis of faith. This iteration will be presented as a virtual religious service, weaving in performances of songs from the show with sermons, commentary, and moments to hold spiritual space together -- space to imagine the role of the church in movements for liberation, as well as the form that church and theater can take when gathering is not possible.

NEW OHIO THEATRE BOARD

Scott Budlong Chris Dickey

Margaret B. Grossman, Chair

Erich Jungwirth Robert C. Lyons Vanessa Sparling Margaret Weber

companies with that most elusive and invaluable resource: an artistic home.

Current Archive Residency Artists
Byzantine Choral Project (2019-21)
Radical Evolution (2019-21)
Kareem M. Lucas (2020-21)
Levingston/Hare/Luckett (2020-21)

Ice Factory 2020 is supported, in part, by grants from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation; Howard Gilman Foundation; Mental Insight Foundation; and New York Community Trust.