

VENA CAVA by DIAMANDA GALÁS

Wednesday, February 19 - Sunday, March 8, 1992

Performances: February 19, 21, 23, 26, 28; March 1, 4, 6, 8

8:30pm each night

Tickets: \$15, Members \$10

The Kitchen is proud to present *Vena Cava*, a new solo performance by composer/performer Diamanda Galás. Specially commissioned by The Kitchen with funds from the Ford Foundation, Meet the Composer, and the National Endowment for the Arts, *Vena Cava* is a harrowing mental and emotional study, a set of sonic incantations which returns to the themes of claustrophobia, schizophrenia, stigma, extremity, cathartic obsession, and psychic violence found in Galás' earlier work.

Vena Cava draws on both a personal understanding of—and medical studies concerning—a relationship between the dementias of severe depression and what is referred to as AIDS dementia. With a text influenced by both schizophrenic language as well as the theatrical writings of the late playwright and actor Philip Dimitri-Galás (*Mona Rogers in Person* and *Baby Dimitri in Person*). *Vena Cava* is a gripping work of sonic theater.

Vena Cava is centered around the character of the depressed and isolated individual suspended within the institutional void of the modern hospital. Galás has constructed a new music work comprised of the mental wanderings of this person, charting mental and emotional states which range from absolute tranquility to extreme terror.

The work explores the destruction of the mind in extreme isolation through the related illnesses of clinical depression and AIDS dementia. *Vena Cava* refers back to Galás' earlier style of intense solo work found in such pieces as *Wild Women with Steak Knives* and *Eyes Without Blood*. An extension of Galás' concerns with the AIDS epidemic, found in her recent *Plague Mass*, the new work stands apart from that cycle by finding its inspiration in the "intravenous song" Galás began her career with in 1975, works which were first performed by Galás in mental institutions. Of that earlier work, Galás wrote in 1981: "This music is concerned with tendencies towards excessive behavior... [it] is a kind of bloodless and unmerciful brain surgery."

Diamanda Galás is one of new music's most acclaimed composers and performers. Her records include the current *The Singer; Plague Mass* (recorded live at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in 1990); *The Masque of the Red Death Trilogy*, *You Must Be Certain of the Devil*, *Saint of the Pit*, *The Divine Punishment* (all of which comprise the *Plague Mass* series); and *The Litanies of Satan* and *Diamanda Galás*, featuring *Panoptikon*, dedicated to Jack Henry Abbott, 1983.

Galás began performing her original work on the West Coast in the late 1970's. She was then cast by composer Vinko Globokar in the lead role of *Un Jour Comme Une Autre*, an opera based on a true story of a Turkish woman sentenced to death for political "crimes." In the following years she performed solo works throughout Europe, and performed American and Central American premiers of works by Iannis Xenakis and Vinko Globokar with L'Ensemble Intercontemporain, Musique Vivant, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. By the early 1980's, Galás was performing a new set of heretical pieces—*Wild Women with Steak Knives* and *Tragouthis apo to Aima Exoun Fonos* (Song from the Blood of Those Murdered) at the Theatre Gerard Phillippe Saint-Denis in Paris. In 1984, she began work on her *Masque of the Red Death Trilogy* and *Plague Mass* performance, an ongoing work dedicated to people who are "HIV positive, PWArms and PWAs who fight to stay alive in a hostile environment that tells them on a daily basis that they shall most certainly die..." Since 1986, Galás has performed this work in over 25 cities internationally.

Vena Cava was developed during a residency sponsored by Arranged Introductions at The Fleischer Art Memorial, Philadelphia, with funds provided by the Pew Charitable Trust, and the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation.