

NEWS FROM THE KITCHEN

The Kitchen Center for Video · Music · Dance
Performance · Film and Literature

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MIKEL ROUSE's Multimedia Opera **F A I L I N G K A N S A S**

Inspired by Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*

– The American Premiere –

A SOLO PERFORMANCE BY MIKEL ROUSE WITH FILMS BY CLIFF BALDWIN

Dates: February 2 - 4, 1995

8pm / First Floor Main Performance Space

Tickets: \$15, Members \$12

The Kitchen is pleased to present the American premiere of **FAILING KANSAS**, a multimedia operatic work by composer **MIKEL ROUSE**. The opera is based on the events surrounding the murder of the Clutter family in Holcumb, Kansas, and inspired by the examination of these events in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. The libretto is by **Mikel Rouse** who will also be the solo performer of the work; sets and visual realization is by Cliff Baldwin.

The opera *Failing Kansas* is the first full length work to explore the technique of vocal counterpoint writing the composer/librettist refers to as Counterpoetry. Mr. Rouse elaborates: "My goal in writing the opera was twofold: to explore a new vocal writing technique (a parallel may be drawn with Capote's desire to initiate a new art form: the non-fiction novel), and to capture the feeling and the mood of this story without resorting to a retelling of the tale. (There has already been the novel *In Cold Blood* and Richard Brook's faithful and brilliant rendition of the book to film.) Because of these previous works, I was able to move beyond a narrative approach and towards the effect of pure sound, the sound of many conflicting voices assembling the story."

The libretto is composed of actual transcripts and testimony from the event as well as hymns and songs written by Perry Smith, who, along with Dick Hickock, was responsible for the murders. In addition, research on Pentecostal hymns from the period (most notably those of the composer C. Austin Miles) are rearranged into the prism of competing spoken texts. The themes of religion, social justice, and the mystery of fate all combine in *Failing Kansas*, resting uneasily

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with the hope of redemption.

MIKEL ROUSE formed his contemporary chamber ensemble Mikel Rouse Broken Consort in 1979 upon moving to New York, and has toured extensively throughout the United States and Europe. With a background in African and other World Musics, Mr. Rouse's unusual craft allows him to work in various genres including pop music, and he actively produces recordings with his group Tirez Tirez. Warner, IRS/MCA, Crep and Object have all released recordings for the group. Recordings with Broken Consort include *A Walk In The Woods* (1985/ Crammed) which *The New York Times* placed on its top ten best recordings list of 1985. A number of other Broken Consort recordings have been released on Crepescule, CSM and Crammed. Mikel Rouse has also collaborated with choreographers and filmmakers. From 1987-90, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has presented *Vespers* (1986), with choreography by Ulysses Dove and music by Mr. Rouse. He contributed music for the Gary Pollard film *Going Up* which premiered on PBS in 1990. Mr. Rouse has received numerous awards from Meet the Composer, the New York State Council on the Arts and ASCAP. **CLIFF BALDWIN** is a visual artist and filmmaker whose work has been shown at the Yale University Art Gallery, the Anthology Film Archives, the Museum of Modern Art and at numerous other spaces in New York, Philadelphia, Tokyo and several cities in Germany. His work is collected in the Museum of Modern Art Print Collection and Library Artist Book Collection.

Information and telephone reservations for all Kitchen events may be obtained by calling The Kitchen's general number at (212) 255-5793. Advance tickets are available at The Kitchen Monday through Friday, 10am to 5pm, or through TicketMaster at (212) 307-7171.

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