

The Soho News March 16, 1982

PERFORMANCE

Wild and weird nights

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A Program of Finished Works

Re•Cher•Chez

Fixation

Inroads

Watch and Wait

The Kitchen

Rule of 3

The Performing Garage

T-Venus

Danceteria

Refrigerator Madness

St. Mark's Church and Inroads

EVERY performance I've seen in the last two weeks has been just plain weird.

Re•Cher•Chez, the Mabou Mines Theater's workshop/laboratory for emerging artists, presented a three-part program billed as performance art, dance, and theater — although the genre differences were deliberately blurred, just as they are in the parent theater company. Lynn Swanson's *The History of Eurydice: The War Years* presented the heroine's side of this story with contemporary updates; the mythic female talked with Orpheus over a red phone dropped from the ceiling ("What went wrong?"), was pregnant and getting sexist street-hassle remarks, and had filmed atomic explosions projected as if in her womb. The ambitious piece also included surrealist numbers (wrapped head-to-toe in a sheet, Swanson slowly let out a seashell on a string), verbal/visual puns ("Got to put you to work," she says, and puts on a hard hat and performs the piece), and conceptual games (*artelamore* written on a blackboard in red chalk to opera music). Swanson is a confident, physically adept performer, and individual bits in her assemblage were often funny, but as a whole, the piece finally obscured the Muse as much as it evoked her Poetry. Equally murky was Mary O'Connell's dance, *Photo of Maudie*. O'Connell's a striking-looking performer and an assured mover in a moody dance-as-interior-drama way, but I couldn't tell what turn-of-the-century costume and *French Lieutenant's Woman* poses had to do with the work's accompaniment, Laurie Anderson's "O Superman."

Beatrice Roth's *Seventeen* was a dramatic

monologue about her life at that age. Roth, a handsome older woman, appeared in gown and long gloves, and sat at a small table drinking cognac while she talked. Her rap began with a geology lecture, then moved on to sweet memories of Jewish life in a small Pennsylvania town and an account of her mother's extended sickness and death. Roth was an Actors Studio actress for 25 years, and she used any and all Method tricks — exaggerated gesture, modulated voice, and "intense" looks keyed to personal emotions — to present her memories in this theatrically naked form. The combination was more bizarre than perhaps even Roth knew.

Two media performances illustrated the potential and the pitfalls of tech-sensibility. In *Fixation*, a "live radio drama," Jeanne Quinn spoke a schizy monologue to the accompaniment of Bruce Tovsky's synth-drone tones and cartoonish, Caligari-ish cityscape slides. With her raspy, quavery voice and punkette getup, Quinn sounded and looked *right*, like a tough/helpless sexy Tribeca Bulle Ogier. Her script rattled off the stock urban nightmares — rape, whores, punks, slashers, murder, torture, cripples — through the filter of a disintegrating female consciousness to present a sometimes disturbing portrait. But *Fixation* was too static (Quinn either sat at a table or simply stood) and too held-back in its delivery to stir up any really heavy-duty downers. This piece needed to go *too far* to get somewhere.

Richard Baim's *Watch and Wait* also played it too cool. A "slide narrative," it featured state-of-the-art slide technology; his precise dissolves, color washes, multiple imagery, and computerized projection system produced a unique and arresting form, something between a slowed-down movie and a speeded-up slide show. But like that other high-tech romance, *One from the Heart*, Baim's nominal tale of raging desire got lost in the special effects. This was another urban nightmare number about a New Wave voyeur who watches the girls from his loft window. Brooding synth-rock (also by Baim) tried to pump some atmospheric emotion into all the alienation and suppressed sexuality, but the treatment was perversely anti-dramatic — we just watched him watch.