



512 West 19th Street New York, NY 10011
tel 212 255 5793 www.thekitchen.org

Press Contact: Blake Zidell & Associates
tel: 718.643.9052
fax: 718.643.9502
blake@blakezidell.com

For Immediate Release

The Kitchen presents the world premiere of *Bellona, Destroyer of Cities*, April 1—10, 2010

**Adapted and directed by Jay Scheib after
Samuel R. Delany's epic science fiction novel *Dhalgren***

**Interdisciplinary theater work features collaborators including
visual artist Carrie Mae Weems**

Following the critically acclaimed, Obie Award-winning first installment of **Jay Scheib's** *Simulated Cities/Simulated Systems* performance trilogy, **The Kitchen** presents the world premiere of part two: ***Bellona, Destroyer of Cities***, a new theater work based on **Samuel R. Delany's** landmark science-fiction novel ***Dhalgren***. In ***Bellona***, Scheib combines passages from the novel with original material, movement sequences and live video to trace several intertwining plotlines driven by a group of characters with shifting identities. Set in a city doomed to revise its cataclysms again and again, ***Bellona, Destroyer of Cities*** draws on the labyrinthine world imagined by Delany to express the intricate and at times abstract delineations of race, gender and sexuality today. Performances will take place **Thursdays—Saturdays, April 1—3 and 8—10** at The Kitchen (512 West 19th Street). All performances begin at **8:00 P.M.** Tickets are **\$15**.

Scheib's new work for the stage, like Delany's monumental novel, is a story about a family struggling to sustain a reality that has long ago become fiction; a young white army deserter from the South who doesn't believe he is a racist at heart but nonetheless pulls the trigger on a black activist; gangs with strange candy-colored technology roaming the broken streets. And then a newcomer arrives on the scene. She can't remember her name but is determined to become a great writer and in this city that continually reconstructs itself, she learns to write. As the story progresses, we don't know if the world and her experiences determine her poetry or if her poetry determines the world. Time slips, and the catastrophes happen again and again.

The cast of ***Bellona*** includes **Sarita Choudhury, Caleb Hammond, Mikéah Ernest Jennings, Jon Morris, William Nadylam, Tanya Selvaratnam, April Sweeney** and **Natalie Thomas**. The show features scenic design by **Peter Ksander**, costume design by **Oana Botez-Ban**, sound design by **Catherine McCurry**, lighting by **Miranda k Hardy**, and video and photography by **Carrie Mae Weems** and **Jay Scheib**. **Laine Rettmer** is Assistant Director, **ArKtype/Thomas O. Kriegsmann** the Tour Producer, and **Tanya Selvaratnam** the Producer. Makeup will be provided by **M·A·C Cosmetics**.

As William Gibson puts it in his foreword to ***Dhalgren***, ***Bellona*** is a "recombinant city... a metaphoric Middle American streetscape, transfigured by some unspecified thing or process, where nothing remains quite as it was." In the Roman pantheon, ***Bellona*** is the goddess of war, the destroyer of cities. In this sense, we can see ***Dhalgren*** as a parable about the potential for disaster in the modern American city. We think about Detroit and the prospects for renaissance in that demolished urban environment. There may be a lot less people there today than before—but there are still people there. And there are still people who

go there. There are people still making art, still inspiring beyond the city's porous borders. Gibson also wrote that *Dhalgren* is "a prose-city, a labyrinth, a vast construct the reader learns to enter by any multiplicity of doors." In *Bellona, Destroyer of Cities*, Jay Scheib creates something like a time-lapse motion portrait of a city and its people caught up in a permanent revolution, socially, sexually, and racially. The premiere of *Bellona, Destroyer of Cities* at The Kitchen follows work-in-progress showings at the Prelude Festival in October 2009 and at The Performing Garage in November 2009.

About Simulated Cities / Simulated Systems

Simulated Cities / Simulated Systems is a trilogy of multidisciplinary performance works being developed and produced in residence at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Centered on collaborations with disciplines outside of traditional performing arts idioms, each production re-imagines itself through dialogues with civil engineering and urban planning, computer science and artificial intelligence, aerospace and astronautics. Simulation practices in each of these disciplines are extremely high-pressure operations. In Astronautics and in Engineering, simulation has a life or death value to the field. The number of astronauts who have "died," for example, in simulations far exceeds those who have lost their lives due to accidents in reality. Bridges may collapse in simulation precisely because they may not collapse in reality. In the theater, we *simulate* every imaginable human situation—and it's entertaining in part because we are curious about what would happen if... This project proposes to set these operations in relief one against the other, using simulation as a means of contrasting reality with theater and theater with fiction.

The first work in the trilogy, *Untitled Mars (This Title May Change)*, simulated Mars on Earth, coupling material from the Mars Desert Research Station in Utah with the science fiction visions of Philip K. Dick, Stanislaw Lem, and Kurd Lasewitz. The third work, *World of Wires*, models Earth on Earth by borrowing heavily from computer science and artificial intelligence to reinterpret for live performance Werner Fassbinder's science fiction television series *Welt am Draht*. *Bellona, Destroyer of Cities* simulates a world that has become stuck in a loop of civil upheaval.

About Jay Scheib (Director / Adapter / Media Designer)

Jay Scheib's current and upcoming productions include Evan Ziporyn's new opera *A House in Bali* at Cal Performances in Berkeley and *Puntilla und sein Knecht Matti* at Theater Augsburg in Germany. 2008 productions included *Untitled Mars (This Title May Change)*, which premiered at Performance Space 122 in New York followed by a tour to the National Theatre in Budapest, Hungary, and *This Place is a Desert*, which premiered at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art followed by a sold-out run at the Public Theater in New York as part of the Under the Radar Festival. *Untitled Mars* received an Obie Award for Scenic Design; *This Place is a Desert* was named one of the Ten Best Shows of 2008 by Time Out New York. Concurrent with these productions, Scheib's collaboration with punk rock ensemble World/Inferno Friendship Society, *Addicted to Bad Ideas*, toured to numerous venues around the world, including Spoleto Festival USA, Under the Radar Festival in New York, Urban Arts in Helsinki, Peak Performances in Montclair, and the Luminato Festival in Toronto. International works include the world premiere of Irene Popovic's opera *Mozart Luster Lustik* in Belgrade, Serbia, Lothar Trolle's *Vormittag in der Freiheit* at the Volksbühne, Berlin and a new staging of the Novoflot science fiction opera saga *Kommander Kobayashi* in Saarbruecken, Germany. In the Spring of 2009, he was ranked Best New York Theater Director by Time Out New York, and named by American Theater Magazine as one of the twenty-five theater artists who will shape the next twenty five years of American theater. Recipient of the Edgerton Award, The Richard Sherwood Award, and the NEA/TCG Program for Directors, Scheib is a regular guest professor at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria and is Associate Professor for Theater at MIT.

About Samuel R. Delany (Author)

Samuel R. Delany has won four Nebula Awards, two Hugo Awards, and the William Whitehead Memorial Award for his lifetime contribution to lesbian and gay writing. Born and raised in New York

City's Harlem in 1942, from 1988 to 1999, he was a professor of comparative literature at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. After two years' teaching in the SUNY Buffalo Poetics Program, since January 2000 he has been a professor of English and creative writing at Temple University, where he is Director of the Graduate Creative Writing Program. As well, he has taught at the Clarion SF Writers Workshop and for a decade at the Naropa Summer Writing Program. He lives in New York City. Delany's novels include *Nova* (1968), *Dhalgren* (1975), *Trouble on Triton* (1976), and *The Mad Man* (1995). He is author of the four-book series, *Return to Nevèrÿon* (1979-'87), and the short novel *Phallos* (2004). His most recent novel, *Dark Reflections* (2008), won the 2008 Stonewall Book Award and was a runner up for that year's Lambda Literary Award. His stories have been collected in *Aye, and Gomorrah, and Other Stories* (2002) and *Atlantis: Three Tales* (1995). His nonfiction volumes include *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (1977–rev. 2009), *About Writing: Seven Essays, Three Letters, and Five Interviews* (2006), and *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1998). A further collection of his interviews has appeared in the University of Mississippi Press's prestigious Conversations with Writers Series, *Conversations with Samuel R. Delany* (2009), edited by Carl Freedman.

About Carrie Mae Weems (Video/Photography)

Carrie Mae Weems is considered one of the most influential contemporary American artists. Storytelling as well as experiences of racial, sexual, and cultural identity are fundamental to her work, as seen in her earliest documentary photographic series, *Family Pictures and Stories* (1978-1984), and in subsequent series, including *Ain't Jokin'* (1987-1988), *Colored People* (1989-1990), and the *Kitchen Table* series (1990). She explored the African diaspora beginning in America with the *Sea Islands* series (1991-1992). In 1993, a visit to Africa produced several series including *Africa, Slave Coast, and Landed in Africa*. A commission to investigate a body of historical photo-images of blacks from the Getty Museum in 1995 led to an extension of this interest in the diaspora in the series *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, a feverishly toned polemic that integrated photograph and text. In 1997, she began a trilogy of large-scale fabric installations that resulted in *Ritual & Revolution* (1998), commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art, *The Jefferson Suite* (1999), commissioned by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and *The Hampton Project* (2000), commissioned by the Williams College Museum of Art. Each series was a multi-media installation, encompassing digitally produced images on muslin cloth and canvas and an artist-recorded audio piece. Her most recent investigation, *The Louisiana Project*, was part of the bicentennial celebrations surrounding the commemoration of the Louisiana Purchase, commissioned by Tulane University's Newcomb Art Gallery. *Coming Up for Air* (2004), her first video endeavor, screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Among her many awards are The Rome Prize Fellowship, Skowhegan Medal in Photography, and Anonymous Was a Woman Award.

Funding Credits

The Kitchen's presentation of *Bellona, Destroyer of Cities* is made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.

Additional support provided by Massachusetts Institute of Technology School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences; The Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States; the Lucius and Eva Eastman Fund; and The Experimental Television Center's Presentation Funds, supported by the New York State Council on the Arts.



ABOUT THE KITCHEN

The Kitchen is one of New York City's oldest nonprofit performance and exhibition spaces, showing experimental work by innovative artists, both emerging and established. Programs range from dance, music, and theatrical performances to video and media arts exhibitions to literary events, film screenings, and artists' talks. Since its inception in 1971, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence.

Box Office Information:
212.255.5793 ext. 11
Tue-Sat, 2-6pm

The Kitchen
512 West 19th Street
New York, NY 10011
www.thekitchen.org

#####