

Justin Bond Will Hold You Responsible

OCT 20, 2010 by AARON MATTOCKS

in INTERVIEWS



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Photo by Ves Pitts

I caught up with Justin Bond – in Portugal preparing for a concert and (not) getting ready for the House of Whimsy’s upcoming premiere at The Kitchen – via email to discuss aspects of his newest work and to learn more about the Mx behind the myth.

Justin, the source material you’ve chosen for this piece – Re:Galli Blonde (A Sissy Fix) – dates back to Roman mythology. What is your history with the subject matter – and what’s the story of the Galli?

The story of the Galli is that they, as followers of the Goddess Cybelle, originated in Phrygia but they have been documented as far north as London where one of their castration devices was found in the Thames. It is believed to have been there since long after the last temple of Cybelle was burned by the Christians in Rome. I discovered the Galli in Blossom of Bone: Reclaiming the Connections Between Homoeroticism and the Sacred by Randy P. Connor.

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Supposedly the Galli were gender variant priests of Cybelle who worshipped nature, trees and femininity and were the sacred whores of the temple.

One of the theories I've read is that in Paul's letter to the Romans when he said lying with another man was an abomination he was referring to idolatry not homosexuality because by sleeping with the Galli you were worshipping the Goddess. Either way, the Galli are a way of putting homophobia and femmephobia into an historical context.

(A Sissy Fix) – a reference to the castration practices of the galli – but is there also a reference to Sisyphus being played with? It could make so much sense...but maybe I'm stretching it.

Aside from being a play on words, I thought it would work with what we're trying to do with the show. We're calling it a "performance ritual" and part of the ritual is to try to lift the curse of homo- and femmephobia that has been placed on queer and gender variant people. I thought the allusion to Sisyphus rolling his stone up a hill was a good one because as we fight for equal citizen status in this country and

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throughout the world, just as things seem to be about to go our way some organization like the Mormons or the Courts force us to have to keep fighting.

The mythic hero – or hero-ine, is one of the oldest and most compelling structures in traditions of storytelling. How do you see your role in taking on myth, perhaps in making your own new mythology?

I think that we as queers need to take back the power of our own mythologies.

For some reason we project ourselves into the mythologies of others and give them our power. We become handmaidens for the glorification of others: vain straight women, movie stars, politicians.

So many gays are found hiding behind, if not creating, the culture that oppresses us.

It's kind of sick. I think we need to address and change that by creating new mythologies which restore us to our rightful place within society and to acknowledge that what we offer is not a sacrifice but a gift which must be respected and honored.

In terms of queerness, and queer representation in performance, where are we now?

I'm impressed by how rich queer performance has become and by how shallow similar work made by heterosexuals looks by comparison, even with all of the funding and press they receive. So many straight people either don't or pretend not to "get it". I can't tell you how disgusted I am by that.

Where does this piece sit for you with the recent flux of gay teen suicide reports, bullying, the Paladino remarks?

If Paladino feels this way about gays he must also hate women too. He is running in order to keep in place the oppressive male dominated Rape-Head of the Church and traditional male roles that have lead us to the crisis we are living in right now with regards to nature and international tensions. That willfully barbaric mentality is what causes women to shut-down and gay teens to kill themselves and it must be halted at all costs.

How do you relate to people in life? Are you shy, an extrovert? Does this change, or is it made meta, by the presence of an audience?

I'm definitely more comfortable in front of an audience than within a crowd of people. I'm good at parties but I am very su-

perfidious at them because I have A.D.D. So I'm hyper-vigilant about what's going on around me thus find it difficult to engage in anything too deep or meaningful. I prefer to spend time alone or with one or two close friends when I'm not working.

What are some of your favorite ways to spend time in New York? The rest of the world?

I like to be in bed with my love and to watch old movies, eat good food and to read books. I can do those things anywhere but I prefer to do them in New York.

Do you believe in fate, and/or destiny? If so, do we control it?

I believe that at the end of the day we are each the author of our own story. Within that story there are variables thrown at us and how we choose to respond to those variables determines our fate.

If you could name anyone to be your artistic father, mother, grandparents, creepy step uncle, what would your lineage be?

I was brought into the queer performance scene by Kate Bornstein and I owe a huge amount of who I've become to her love

and support. John Vacarro, who lives across the hall from me and was the original director of the Theater of the Ridiculous could be my creepy step uncle. Split Britches and Bloo-Lips changed my life.

Seeing Peggy Shaw and Bette Bourne in Belle Reprieve at the Victoria Theater in San Francisco blew my mind wide open. I also learned a lot about performance and story telling in the church I grew up in which, although conservative, was very loving and accepting of me. I only became aware of how evil Christians could be with the rise of the politicized power-mongers like Jerry Fallwell, Pat Robertson and The Moral Majority who were legitimized by Ronald Reagan in the early 80s. It was then that I began to discover the noxious history of Christianity we continue to be forced to deal with on a daily basis.

Do you see a distinction between where you end and your work begins?

Not really. I had a boyfriend once who asked me if I had to make a choice between him and my work which would I choose? I left him the next day.

As artists, we are constantly informed by other people's work. Has there ever been a show that you wish you could eliminate from your memory?

I don't really wish to eliminate anything from my memory but there are lots of hours that I could've spent making better memories than the ones I got. I hate it when people tell me to come to a show just because they want bodies there. If I go and don't like it I will hold you responsible!

Do you have any anxiety about the show?

I have tremendous confidence in the cast. They are all superb, beautiful talented people. I've spent a lot of time working with them and they are completely inspired. Machine Dazzle's sets and costume are beyond and I know Ben Kato's lighting and Isaac Davidson's wigs will be superb. I, on the other hand, haven't got a clue what I'm going to be doing and I wish I had just directed instead of being in the show. I should be working on my character right now, instead I'm answering these questions in a hotel room in Portugal before going to rehearse for the concert I'll be giving tonight. I go back to New York tomorrow and begin loading-in at The Kitchen the next day. YIKES!

Cynthia Hopkins, in an interview with Annie-B Parson in BOMB Magazine, re-

cently said “Theater: Ritual. Reflection. Repetition.” What is your definition of theater?

I think Cynthia said it very well. The moment we open our eyes the theater begins. Theater is consciousness. Our dreams and intellect are the tools which we harness in order to create through ritual and technique.

What daily ritual are you the most sacred about? Why?

I brush my teeth first thing every day and last thing at night. Why? I don't want to lose my bite!

**Justin Bond and the House of Whimsy:
Re:Galli Blonde (A Sissy Fix)**

Friday–Saturday, October 22–23, 8pm
Wednesday–Saturday, October 27–30,
8pm

*Aaron Mattocks wishes to thank Annie-B Parson for her recent **interview with Cynthia Hopkins** in BOMB Magazine – it was both influence and inspiration.*

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