

kino21 presents  
**THE NEW TALKIES: Hijacking Hollywood**

July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Artists Television Access

Program

Selections from *Dark Brandon* DVD (2007) ..... Brandon Downing

Firestarter (1984) ..... Amanda Davidson

The Man Who Wasn't There (2001) ..... David Brazil

The Golem (1920) ..... Rodney Koenek

*intermission*

Poison (Alfred Hitchcock Presents, 1958) ..... Jennifer Nellis

Minority Report (2002) ..... Konrad Steiner

Vive L'Amour (1994) ..... Stephanie Young

Darling (1965) ..... Wayne Smith

**Neo-benshi** got its start in this very theater. Inspired by the preservation of the art of the benshi, or film teller, by Midori Sawato, Konrad Steiner gathered several filmmakers and writers to try out the practice on modern film clips, with sound muted, at Craig Baldwin's Other Cinema night on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003. That rainy evening, to a packed house Roxanne Hamilton's fabulous queering of *Rebel Without a Cause* proved to us it was good idea.

Since then more shows have been produced in San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles. In addition to Sawato's own tours with Japanese classics, we have been made aware of other kindred transplanted practices and productions including Walter Lew's movie telling pieces going back to the 1990s, *El Automovil Gris* (2003) by Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes (Mexico City), and Canadian Guy Maddin's recent benshi/foley/orchestra extravaganza *Brand Upon the Brain* (2006).

Our version of this practice is quite simply conceived and low-budgeted. It is to take the scenes from narrative features or TV shows, and re-inscribe them with new meanings using primarily words and sounds. Such a plain concept surprisingly yields a great variety of approaches. The scale of intervention runs from not changing a frame or word of the original (Alan Bernheimer's *Letter of Introduction*) to re-cutting an entire film down to a digest version (Dodie Bellamy, Colter Jacobsen and Kevin Killian's *The High and the Mighty*), inserting images directly into the diegetic space of the film (Konrad Steiner's *Minority Report*), and playing and singing along with the star (Brandon Brown's *The Phantom Empire*, a Gene Autry serial sci-fi western).

We hope you enjoy our Neo-benshi Cabaret tonight!

**Amanda Davidson** wanted to see *Firestarter* very badly when it first came out in 1984, but her parents wouldn't let her. Now she writes about movies, books and bad behavior for the *SF Bay Guardian* and *Release Print Magazine*. Her fiction has appeared in *Pocket Myths*, *Other Magazine* and elsewhere. She is an editor of the new multimedia journal *Digital Artifact*, online at [digitalartifactmagazine.com](http://digitalartifactmagazine.com).

**David Brazil** lives in San Francisco. He drew the language for his piece from a wide variety of texts. If you're curious about the provenance, ask him after the performance.

**Rodney Koenek** is author of the poetry collections *Musee Mechanique* (BlazeVOX, 2006) and *Rouge State* (Pavement Saw, 2003). In 2005 he perpetrated a neo-benshi act on Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* (1957). After twenty years around the SF Bay, he moved to Portland, Oregon last year with his wife, Lesley Poirier, and their son Auden. A line from his text is adapted from Isaiah 4:5.

Long before **Jennifer Nellis** was aware of benshi, she spent many late nights in Ohio watching Nick-at-Nite re-contextualizing domestic life of the 1950s with the help of her brothers. She had no idea that the silly game she and her brothers played would prepare her for tonight's performance. Her text incorporates parts of Tristan Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* and *Notes on Poetry*, Andre Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* and some writings by Salvador Dali.

**Konrad Steiner** is a displaced filmmaker trying to adapt to a new habitat. Quotes in his text were adapted from *Tibetan Book of the Dead or The Great Book of Natural Liberation through Understanding in The Between*, Robert Thurman, trans. (Harper Collins, 1994).

**Stephanie Young** lives and works in Oakland. Lately she's working on the collaborative website [www.deepoakland.org](http://www.deepoakland.org). Previous editorial work includes *Bay Poetics* (Faux Press, 2006). Her book of poetry is *Telling the Future Off* (Tougher Disguises, 2005). Her blog at [www.stephanieyoung.org/blog](http://www.stephanieyoung.org/blog) would have disappeared long ago were it not for the periodic invigoration of beloved guest bloggers Dana Ward and Suzanne Stein. Several sources were used for her piece:

Sound: "99 Red Balloons" Seven Seconds, "Combat Baby" Metric;  
Military video from Baghdad / Green Zone: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKh-hsXGaO8>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YqtW63lna4> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOLWI2HrANw>

Text: Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*;  
MidEastWire.com *Daily Iraq Monitor* <http://www.dahrjmailiraq.com/mideastwire>;  
Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings Are Facts*; Judith Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics" from *Precarious Life*

**Wayne Smith** is a visual artist and musician who lives and works in San Francisco. His collaboration with D-L Alvarez, "DIG", was shown at the Derek Eller Gallery, NYC, in Spring 2007. Recording as Aero-Mic'd, he has released four CDs, the latest being *I Think You're Great*.

**Brandon Downing** is a filmmaker, visual artist, and writer, originally from the SF Bay Area. Since 2000, he has lived in New York City. His books of poetry include *Lazio* (Blue Books, 2000), *The Shirt Weapon* (Germ, 2002), and *Dark Brandon* (Faux, 2005). Some of his photographic work can be seen at [www.brandondowning.org](http://www.brandondowning.org). A new DVD Collection, *Dark Brandon / The Filmi*, is forthcoming this Fall, and he's currently completing a monograph of his literary collages under the title *Lake Antiquity*, to be published in 2008.