

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THEATRICAL PRODUCTION

WHAT: *A Very Grand Guignol Christmas* featuring *The Laboratory of Hallucinations* by André de Lorde et *les petits guignolers* (finger puppets) et *These Cornfields* by Georges Courteline. Due to violence, this show is inappropriate for children.
www.grandguignolers.com

This production is co-produced and part of the Los Angeles Physical Theatre Arts Festival, presented by [via] Corpora, a Performance R&D Center.

LOCATION: Art/Works Theatre * 6569 Santa Monica Blvd. * Los Angeles, CA 90038.

DATES: November 24- December 22. Fridays/Saturdays at 8:30 and Sunday 11/25 at 7pm. Check for added late night pay what you can shows * running time about 1½ hours. * Pre-Show Absinthe Demonstration ½ hour prior to start time.

PRICES: \$15-25 (you choose). Cash/check only at the theatre. Credit card online at www.grandguignol.eventbrite.com. 323.871.1912.

IT'S LIKE THE NUTCRACKER ... LITERALLY

Le Théâtre du Grand Guignol was once known as “the greatest horror show on earth.” Now, André de Lorde’s GRAND GUIGNOLERS DE PARIS are returning to Los Angeles with their classic performance of the age-old Grand Guignol favorite, *The Laboratory of Hallucination* written by one of the Grand Guignol’s most influential playwrights and operators, André de Lorde. The show also includes the violent farce, *These Cornfields* by Georges Courteline and *les petit guignolers* (gory finger puppets). Enter the underworld of 1930’s Paris: horrific and erotic, unsettlingly sophisticated and morally dubious. It is a world where retribution is taken to an unimaginably gruesome extreme. The 1930s speakeasy-like atmosphere will feature an absinthe demonstration about a ½ prior to showtime.

The Laboratory of Hallucinations depicts a determined scientist who performs torturous experiments on the brains of his patients, invoking pain and terrible hallucinations before enacting the ultimate revenge on his wife’s lover. *These Cornfields* is a highly physical farce wherein a tempestuous couple, the Cornfields, violently fight through their innocent guest, Herring, escalating to mayhem. Playing with the Grand Guignol theme (meaning ‘big puppet’), the Guignolers are big puppets come to life with their silent Master of Ceremonies presiding and artfully guiding the audience through this strange world. As true to the Physical Theatre Fest of which this event takes part, the evening also features mime, movement, and puppetry.

The Théâtre du Grand Guignol in Paris (1897-1962) achieved a legendary reputation as the “Theatre of Laughter and Terror,” a venue displaying such explicit violence and blood-curdling terror that a resident doctor was employed to treat the numerous spectators who fainted each night. A performance at the Grand Guignol strove to terrify and titillate the spectator through a mixture of horror, laughter and the erotic. A typical evening’s entertainment reveals the sophisticated exploitation of the contemporary audience’s fears, taboos and desires. The plays of the Grand Guignol inevitably featured eye-gouging, throat-slashing, acid-throwing, or some other equally grisly climax.

Produced/directed by Debbie McMahon. Performed by Kevin Dulude, Ramy Eletreby, Ruthie Frank, Jeremy Guskin, Gary Karp, Debbie McMahon, Dani O’Terry, Michael Serwich, and Tina Van Berckelaer.

PHOTO CREDITS

1. Michael Serwitch (puppeteer) and Debbie McMahon (emcee) avec les petits guignoler. Photo by Mark Bennington.
2. Gary Karp in *The Laboratory of Hallucinations*. Photo by Mark Bennington.

BIO OF DIRECTOR/PRODUCER DEBBIE MCMAHON

Debbie McMahon, director/producer, trained at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre where she studied mime, melodrama, Grand Guignol, physical acting, theatrical clown and Commedia Dell'Arte and actor-created material. She earned her B.A. from Connecticut College in Philosophy and Theatre and an M.A. from New York University in Performance Studies where she studied with Richard Schechner and Augusto Boal. She has been a member of The Odyssey Theatre's Koan Ensemble, performing in *Kafka Thing* and a member of The Actors Gang.

PAST REVIEWS OF THE GRAND GUIGNOLERS

"A faithful rendition of the French theatrical tradition of Grand Guignol, in which horror and comedy are employed to terrorize audiences, the Grand Guignolers de Paris present an entertaining, exotic evening of blood curdling thrills and chills in their new show. Evoking a 1920s bohemian flair in its use of American and hot French jazz to set the mood, the show employs sophisticated, elegant Pierrot costumes for its ushers and assistants. The most delightful segments of the evening contain les petit guignolers, stylish miniature puppets who bring a touch of whimsy in their comedic parody of horror, highlighted by outstanding voice work, timing, and sight gags. One of the most touching aspects of the evening is emcee Debbie McMahon, exhibiting vulnerability and charm as Betty Boop meets Edith Piaf..." *The Toluca*, May 2007

"...the production offers an intriguing glimpse of a vanished legendary theater..." *LA Weekly*, May 2007

FROM THE LA-IST, MAY 2007

"The comically drawn-out pauses leading up to the horrible climax of the final play is a genius trick of comic timing."

"The opening "act" is a short puppet show which segues into the life-sized puppet who is to be our Emcee, played by Debbie McMahon. She has those cute little dolly moues down pat, and is a skilled mime who can probably do the robot like nobody's business."

"The puppet play is presented by our grand puppet, Debbie McMahon. It's fantastic. How often do you get to see a puppet's arterial spray?"

"The Grand Guignolers de Paris know how to show a girl a good time."

"... in spite of the meager surroundings and home-spun charm, there was nothing amateurish about the show. The acting was first-rate, and the lighting was both beautiful and spooky. With bare sets and simple clown-white make-up, they managed to draw the audience in and hold us rapt."