

The Actors Gymnasium Performs

By Jack Helbig

Art and the academy have always had an uneasy alliance. On the one hand, a university would seem an excellent hothouse for the cultivation of new work, isolated as it is from the demands of the marketplace but blessed with a built-in audience and a ready pool of eager talent to draw from. On the other hand, artist-teachers have a way of turning, if they're not careful, into teacher-artists: they come to know everything about their art but don't have a clue what they like or what they want to create next, provided they still have time for that sort of stuff anymore. Which is why I'm so taken with the idea of the Actors Gymnasium, a school for the arts staffed entirely by performers regularly struggling on Chicago's theater scene. When the folks at the Actors Gymnasium--from such companies as Lookingglass, Jellyeye, Baubo, and the Blue Rider Theatre--decide to put on a faculty show, it's an opportunity to sample in bite-size pieces of 10 to 15 minutes each the work of performers as different as drummer Rick Kubes, dancer Martha Donovan, and commedia clown John Szostek. Topping the bill is Donna Blue Lachman in a selection from her moving, intensely autobiographical solo show *The Thirst*, about her father's visit to the shtetls of Eastern Europe on the eve of Hitler's rise to power. For \$7 you could do worse. The Actors Gymnasium, Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes, Evanston, 847-328-2795. Saturday, March 23, 8 PM. \$7 (more if you've got it, less if you don't).

--Jack Helbig

Art accompanying story in printed newspaper (not available in this archive): photo/Randy Tunnell.