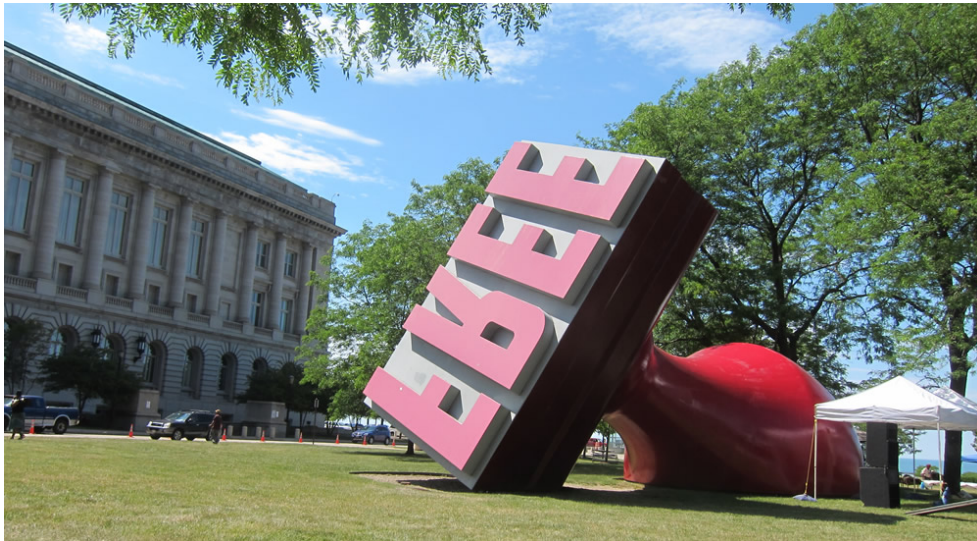


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Occupy the Heart: A Performance Review

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On Sunday, April 29, 2012, Occupy Cleveland put on a play called *Occupy the Heart* as part of its Occupy the Heart Festival, or “Heart Fest,” for short. The play and festival, it was also hoped, would remind Clevelanders about the Occupy movement in their city and perhaps inspire new citizens to join them. (Gomez) Unfortunately, this performance came a day before five members of Occupy Cleveland were arrested, accused of plotting to blow up the Ohio 82 bridge in one of Cleveland’s southern suburbs. Since the Occupy Wall Street movement began in September of 2011, those who have analyzed it in the media have repeatedly remarked upon its seemingly diffuse goals and loose definition. Additionally, critics have questioned Occupy’s potential for long-term socio-political influence versus functioning as a momentary blip in

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the history of social protest. In addition to critical discourse that circulates around Occupy, there are also multiple dialogues and debates within the movement among its participants. I am proposing that one way to analyze how the Occupy movement sees itself is through performance. Much has been written about protest groups such as Code Pink and the Yes Men as they use improvised and performative actions as part of their demonstrations. What I want to examine here, however, is something a bit different. *Occupy the Heart* was a devised scripted performance by members of the group itself, created through interviews, of why the Occupiers chose to endure a Cleveland winter in tents in public urban areas. This performance is defined more as what Peter Weiss called “documentary theatre,” in that “the very process of putting together the material for a closed performance on a predetermined date in a limited space involving actors and audience confronts the documentary theatre with conditions that are different from those that apply to direct political action. Instead of showing reality in its immediacy, the documentary theatre presents an image of a piece of reality torn out of its living context.” (“Notes,” 383) This is indeed a more reflective piece of political theatre.

It is important to understand how Occupiers see themselves, and where they see the movement going if we are to better understand this contemporary social movement. I argue that Occupy Cleveland was “performing” itself through *Occupy the Heart*, the performance of the script they devised, and was setting off on a journey of reflection, declaration of identity, and dialogue. Occupy Cleveland was at a crossroads in its six month history and wanted to reach an audience who might become involved. Through the words and the performance, Occupy Cleveland can be heard discussing the past and imagining the future of Occupy Cleveland, contextualizing Cleveland’s occupation within the local and the international sites of protest, praising and criticizing aspects of the movement, but most importantly, trying to figure out just who Occupy Cleveland is: to paraphrase from the play, are Occupiers just “dirty hippies” on the fringes of society or “normal people”? Are they behind the times and stuck in the sixties or pointing toward a new future?

What I found most interesting about this performance was that it was part of the “Heart Fest” festival, a time set aside by Occupy Cleveland in a place several blocks east from their usual occupation headquarters. Victor Turner has argued that one of the functions of performance is that it can start a dialogue within a community and between communities, and create a forum for discussion, even criticism, by departing from the everyday realities:

...the ‘discontinuum’ of action among the same collection of people, culturally made possible by setting aside times and places for cultural performances, is equally part of the ongoing social process--the part where those people become conscious, through witnessing and often participating in such performances, of the nature, texture, style, and given meanings of their own lives as members of a sociocultural community. (449)

This was, after all, a community only six months old, and an intense six months at that. Occupy Cleveland had already seen 11 members arrested (and ultimately released) for defiance of a curfew against 24-hour protesting on Public Square, its usual home in the center of downtown Cleveland. (Perkins, “24 Hours”) It also had led actions against foreclosures, the most celebrated being the occupation of the backyard of single mother Elizabeth Sommerer, who was due to be evicted in days. (Perkins, “Foreclosure”) Both of these battles Occupy Cleveland ultimately won, but certainly it could be argued that such a busy and impassioned occupation left the community little room for reflection. Along with that, the community was constantly in flux: more Occupiers would come on weekends, while around 65 core members remained on Public Square the entire week and as the months wore on, the number of Occupiers was dwindling (Gomez). It was hoped that Heart Fest would serve as a way to tell the wider Cleveland community the Occupy Cleveland story, and to show them that the Occupiers were people like them; however, the performance also proved to be a means of reaffirming one’s identity as an Occupier. Both of these performative functions are mentioned in this excerpt from an interview with Ellen Bauer, one of the performers and a coordinator of the play:

As far as I know, the idea behind Heart Fest (which was originally going to be an eight-day festival) was to have a big family-friendly gathering...for the purpose of introducing Occupy to the wider community of Cleveland....It was...less-attended than we hoped at first; due to lack of publicity and lack of organization. That being said, the Sunday of Heart Fest did leave me feeling very happy and refreshed. (Message, May 17)

The place of the performance, Willard Park, is at the top of a gentle rise, from which one can see Lake Erie and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum along with the Great Lakes Museum. Lakeside Avenue and East Ninth Street, two busy thoroughfares, run along the east and south sides of the park, and Cleveland City Hall borders the park on the western side. Willard Park is home of the Free Stamp statue, a Cleveland landmark designed by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. This is a huge ink stamp which lies on its side as though the giant office worker using it has gone to lunch. The bottom reads, “Free,” in large letters backwards—once dipped in ink, “Free” would then be legible. According to the Oldenburg and van Bruggen web site, it was commissioned by the Standard Oil Company of Ohio in 1982 for its new office building; when SOHIO was acquired by British Petroleum, the work was rejected but ultimately donated to the city of Cleveland and placed in Willard Park in 1991. The Free Stamp brings to mind “Free Speech” and “Free Assembly” and other “Frees” of U.S. civic life, even while the fact that the word “Free” on the structure is backwards, lending a bit of ironic leavening. It also seems to give permission for the “freedom” of festival behavior. Heart Fest, with its 20-odd participants, was a small, sedate festival compared to the self-conscious disorder of such massive festive protests as that in Tiananmen Square in 1989, where, in contrast to the orderly maneuvers of Chinese troops, the young protesters danced and camped out in unorganized

groups, as described by Richard Schechner (*Future*, 58). However, the arguably conventional staging of this performance and the orderly yet friendly Heart Fest crowd can still be described as festive. In another context, Schechner also argues that in theatre performances, “[s]pecial rules exist, are formulated, and persist because these activities are something *apart* from everyday life. A special world is created where people can make the rules, rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for pleasure.” (“Approaches,” 198) Certainly Heart Fest, although “family-friendly,” was advertised as offering “free food, free hydration, free entertainment, free music and free love” on the Cool Cleveland website. Free handmade jewelry was given out during the performance.

The *Occupy the Heart* performance was conventional in terms of script and staging, but inverted the usual Occupy Cleveland rhetoric and behavior to become more personal and introspective, but also playful. This performance (the written script was also referred to as *The Occuplay Project* online) was conceived by Joseph Zitt, Bill Himmelsbach and Ellen Bauer. In an interview, Bauer said that she collaborated with Himmelsbach and Zitt to see the process through “once it actually came time to get stuff done.” They started doing interviews in late February, 2012. Although Bauer actually compiled the interviews, adapted them, and completed the script, the idea to structure the show around interviews came from Zitt; Bauer took over the process because Zitt thought he’d be moving out of the area and wouldn’t be able to complete it (Message, May 17). Further conversations about a theatre performance included many possible models:

Joe’s inspiration for the structure of the show came from Ntozake Shange’s *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, Steve Reich and Beryl Korot’s *The Cave*, and Anna Deavere Smith’s *Fires in the Mirror*. . . [w]hen I was writing the show, I did draw on experiences with *The Vagina Monologues* and *The Queer Monologues*. (Message, May 17)

The actors were only identified to me by their first names in the script and in interviews, so that is how I am referring to them here. The cast of eight actors included three women and five men; three black actors and five white actors; five actors who looked to be no more than in their late 20s, another in his 30s and another who was in his 40s. This gave a sense of a fairly diverse Occupy group within the performance. Ashley, Andre and Joseph all performed their own interviews, with Joseph also playing a fictional character named Uptight Guy (although it could be argued that Uptight Guy’s attitudes were common in Cleveland and around the country). James performed the General Assembly Leader with some lines written by Bauer and some lines improvised. Bauer, Bill, Brad and Sarah doubled up on characters and predominantly performed other people’s “voices.” (Message, May 6). Some interviewees whose words made it into the script did not want to perform, so other actors picked up the slack. All but James performed the Voices, which were a *mélange* of different Occupiers. Katie and her daughter Molly both were going to perform their story, but were called away at the last minute to be with a sick relative. “The whole situation

with who would be in it was changing right up until we went on—Andre appeared at the last minute wanting to say the lines in Ashley’s scene which were his, and then taking some of Bill’s ‘voice’ lines as well. In order to have Sarah in the show, I had to leave the Free Stamp and drive . . . to pick her up.” (Message, May 6) Some interviews were done at various Occupy sites, tape recorded and then transcribed; others were written and sent via Facebook or by email. (Message, May 6) This contrast of oral transcriptions with written answers can be heard in the performances, where some lines include repeated “likes” and “ums,” seeming spontaneous, while other lines sound more literary and reflective.

In performance, the actors read from scripts. When a performer had lines to read, he or she simply stepped forward, and stepped back when finished. Some might argue this performance was more like a staged reading than a fully memorized theatre event. Like a staged reading, the performance did center on the words of the script, and like a staged reading, perhaps left the script open-ended, with a sense of being “in progress.” I would argue, however, that this performance style seemed fitting to the Occupy community and its goals. Through the use of the various Voices, along with the use of scripts, the reading of lines reminded the audience that all of these stories were important, and that those who might not be on stage at the moment are always present. Like the human microphone, an important framing device in the script, the actors are visibly repeating the words of others, bearing witness to many stories, instead of inhabiting, identifying and privileging only one character at a time in a memorized representational performance. The script’s introduction on Occupy Cleveland’s website reminds the reader that “[t]hese are the words of the members of Occupy Cleveland, adapted from interviews” and the performance style of the script supports this. However, by delineating a clear performance area, directly facing the audience and doubling roles, the actors simultaneously reminded the audience that we were at a theatre event, organized and structured, and not at, say, a demonstration. The actors were a filter through which we learned about the many. To again quote from Turner:

[I]f the contrivers of cultural performances, whether these are recognized as 'individual authors,' or whether they as representatives of a collective tradition, geniuses or elders, 'hold the mirror up to nature,' they do this with 'magic mirrors' which make ugly or beautiful events or relationships which cannot be recognized as such in the continuous flow of quotidian life in which we are embedded. The mirrors themselves are not mechanical, but consist of reflecting consciousnesses and the products of such consciousnesses formed into vocabularies and rules, into metalinguistic grammars, by means of which new unprecedented performances may be generated. (449)

The “general assembly,” “mic check” and “people’s mic” are central to the Occupy cultural identity and in this performance are examples of Schechner’s “restored behaviors” (*Performance Theory*, 162-3), taking a functional behavior and making it self-conscious expression. Reading from scripts also insured that, in practical sense, anyone who was present at Heart Fest, even an Occupier with little or no performance experience, could participate. The show could go on, even if some of the performers

didn't make it to the park, which indeed happened in a few cases. It was one of the stated goals in the written script online that as many Occupiers take part as possible.

The production elements were also simple. Most of the performers did not need to change costume. The one costume change was performed behind the actors by Joseph, playing both himself as an Occupier and Uptight Guy. He started the show as Uptight Guy in a collared shirt and tie. When he was changed into Joseph, he slipped "backstage" behind the other readers and changed into a dark hoodie and orange knitted hat for his monologue. He then changed back into Uptight Guy again at the end. The other actors' costumes consisted of clothing such as long skirts, scarves, tee shirts and jeans, no matter if the performer played themselves or someone else. Only for Uptight Guy did the costume become a specific sign of non-Occupier.

The script is framed by a dialogue between Uptight Guy, who feels that as a "normal" person, the Occupy Movement has nothing to say to him, and the Occupiers, led by the General Assembly Leader James. Uptight Guy sees Occupy Cleveland as a nuisance and a dirty one at that. "Dirty, filthy hippies" are what they are, leftover hippies from the sixties: "It's like 1968 came back from outer space and vomited all over the square." Since many cities have limited or closed or moved Occupy groups on the grounds of being "unsanitary," Uptight Guy is far from alone in his attitude. He then demands to know who the Occupiers are and what they want.

It is at this point that a call for a "Mic check" begins an Occupy Cleveland General Assembly. In the script's stage directions, the General Assembly Leader James comes out of the audience onto the stage and begins yelling "Mic Check!" and the other actors follow him out of the audience, repeating "Mic check!" The Human Microphone is an important part of the Occupy movement. Human microphones were used in Occupy Wall Street from the beginning, since New York City required a permit for amplified sound, including bullhorns, and violators could get up to 30 days in jail (Kim, "Human Microphones"). The nearest people to the speakers simply repeat his/her words, and those behind them continue this until all have heard, no matter how far away. Richard Kim, in his article on this technique, notes that "The overall effect can be hypnotic, comic or exhilarating—often all at once", but notes that it is a medium that slows down and simplifies the message. He also observes that "... in the horizontal acoustics of the crowd instead of the electrified intimacy of 'amplified sound' ... [c]elebrity, charisma, status, even public-speaking ability—they all just matter less over the human microphone." ("Human Microphones"). This performance of the mic check is arguably similar to what Joseph Roach, in referring to African American cultural performance in New Orleans, might call "the transformation of experience through the renewal of its cultural forms" (60). This use of a common Occupy practice in this performance context at the beginning and at the end is not just a literal replication: it is a transformation of the mic check to a means of identity and pride in Occupy Cleveland, and, later, a means of maintaining hope in the future, as well as involving the audience in the Occupy fight. In the performance, the use of the mic check logistically means that there is a call and response repetition of identical couplets, which adds to the rhythm and emphasis of what is said:

James: Mic Check!/Voices: Mic Check!
James: People's Mic!/Voices: People's Mic!
James: We are the 99 percent!/Voices: We are the 99 percent!
James: Don't believe the words/Voices: Don't believe the words
James: Of talking heads and pundits!/Voices: Of talking heads and pundits!
James: They are out of touch with America!/Voices: They are out of touch with America!
James: The 99 percent have their own voices!/Voices: The 99 percent have their own voices!
James: You are going to hear from us now!/Voices: You are going to hear from us now!

James then serves as a sort of emcee for the performance, structuring the play by asking the group intermittently the four questions used for the interviews: who are they, how did they come to Occupy, what has their experience been and what is their vision for the future. What follows in the script are the short answers from a chorus of unidentified Voices, which serve as choral punctuations to longer narratives from Occupiers identified by first names. The Voices who answer the question "Who are you?" range from "a mystic poet artist web designer activist . . . an agent of beneficial transformation" to "I am a farmer. I work in poop" to "I made good money for a long time, until company after company that I worked for was destroyed by the blindness of its leadership and the greed of its investors." One Voice is a Clevelander who "bleed[s] orange and brown, red, white and blue" for its sports teams; another is "a young socialist living on the east coast of the United States . . . white, male and American." Another is a "progressive socialist Green feminist shouting at the world." Some are high school or college students; others "a middle-aged white guy, scraping by in the suburbs. . . . I'm looking at the future but not seeing much at all." As with the casting, the Voices' lines in the script are selected to give the impression of the diversity of Occupy Cleveland.

The first extended narrative in the script, which later grows into a scene with on-stage focus and dialogue, is by a character named John, an unemployed man who first encountered Occupy Cleveland on the way to meet with his parole officer. He kept coming back and hanging around, until he was finally introduced at a General Assembly as "This is John. He is not a cop!" He ultimately agrees to dress up for a demonstration against a local bank as the Monopoly Banker with a monocle and "John Q. Banker was born." He goes on to say:

JOHN: I had zero self-respect, zero confidence, zero of anything positive, and then all of a sudden, I'm the shit! I'm John Q. Banker! I have, like hundreds of friends who don't even know me, but you know, they know me enough to say:

VOICES: Hey, what's up, John Q. Banker?

When answering the question of how they came to be Occupiers, many reference Occupy Wall Street and international events. One Voice answers, "The Arab Spring

happened. Then I heard some vague reports about activists on Wall Street through the grapevine, the ether, the Internet. It was like the reports were coming through a tinny radio signal that grew louder and louder.” Another Voice is impressed by the leadership of women in Occupy Cleveland: “I saw folks like Erin and Rebecca just like pick up the slack and make shit happen and get the kind of respect they deserved for that . . . that was kind of my moment where I was like ‘yeah, I’d love to see if we can fucking sleep on the streets of Cleveland.’” And again, the faltering economy and a sense of injustice brought another Voice: “I watched my store die by pieces, murdered by the neglect of its management and the greed of its owners and customers. While I watched it get dismembered, I watched something else come together: Occupy Wall Street, an implausible idea brought to life because people believed that it must happen.” And another answers, “Occupy came to me.”

In terms of experiences with Occupy, the Voices and the named characters relate to the audience the drama of the October curfew defiance, but also the everyday realities of getting breakfast ready, incredulous frustration with the apolitical St. Patrick’s Day revelers (“these people are literally like 800 people in the street . . . ‘whoa, what do you guys want?’”), frustrations and quarrels, and “major existential crisis like every three hours . . . eventually, things were able to get slightly less insane and it became every six hours.” One of the funniest stories is told by Ashley, one of the “morning shift” volunteers who got harassed by a non-Occupier trying to pick her up, when the only Occupier awake with her, her partner in the morning shift, Tony, leaves her alone. This is a gendered experience that highlights the challenges of women in Occupy Cleveland:

Crazy Guy 2: How old is you?

Ashley: What does it matter?

Crazy Guy 2: You gotta boyfriend?

Ashley: Yeah, I do.

Crazy Guy 2: Occupy, I could buy you what you need. I could buy you some shoes. I could buy you some clothes. Like you need anything?

Ashley: I don’t need nothing. All right, I need you to get out of my face. . . .

Crazy Guy 2: Oh, so you gonna act like that!

Ashley: And I’m like ‘Oh , God, Tony needs to come back. Hurry Up! Goddamnit, get back here already!’” But all the crazy stuff is definitely worth it.

Later in the script, Joseph recounts the emotional high points on the night when the Occupy 11 was arrested for curfew violation on Public Square in October. His monologue got the audience responding with laughter and clapping several times:

We were afraid, as the time of the showdown, the time that we would legally have to leave the park came near, that there might not be enough of us to make a significant stand. But then we heard a roaring sound come toward us from blocks away. Four hundred, five hundred people, college students from all over the region, came down the street together. . . . Everyone cheered. People hugged them as they arrived. One of

the people who would be arrested called for a Mic Check and the People's Mic and called out "I am so blown away!" and the people answered back.

He ends with the lines: "But we're still there, in a single large tent, keeping a vigil, a presence 24/7 for months, through the rains of autumn and some of the worst winter nights that we could imagine. We're still there." The audience at the performance responded with sustained applause.

There was also space for some criticism, however. One Voice states that "Both the greatest and the worst times of my life have surrounded OC. Love, hate, peace, violence, internal fighting, power struggles, police violence, wicked media, betrayal and camaraderie previously unknown," and another says "I'll be honest, it hasn't all been super lovey-dovey and wonderful. Not even close." Interestingly, however, in one instance, the words and performance worked against each other. One Voice criticized the group in this way in the script:

For example, when I see people who take the time to teach workshops or make speeches be ignored, I tend to believe that sometimes the composition of the group is quite amateur or parochial. When I hear fart and ass jokes from consistent over-nighters, I wonder how to hell I will ever be able to connect. When I hear people say "a little love and asceticism is the revolution, man," I want to pull my hair out.

This criticism is included, but the performance of it was played for laughs by the actor who used a pompous voice. And the delivery was met with laughter from the audience. I wondered if some of the audience members knew the Occupier who spoke this in his/her interview. In any case, the criticism was undercut, or was at least softened, with humor.

The script ends with the Voices being asked about their visions for the future. Their lines indicate both pessimistic and optimistic views: from "moments of love that shatter generations of hate" to "resource wars, food riots, the further collapse of the ecosystem on a global scale, the acceleration of class warfare."

One recurrent theme in the script is Occupy Cleveland's relationship to past occupations and past protests decades ago. Uptight Man references this at the beginning of the play when he calls the Occupiers "Dirty Hippies," and later, a Voice responds to that: "it's exciting again for people to realize that, you know, action and mobilization are possible, that that's sort of like, that generation didn't end in the 60s, and that this is also not the sixties. This is not the continuation of the sixties. Um...this is something different." What is different seems to be the desire for lasting change and significance, as referenced by the next Voice:

Eventually, we become so much a part of everyday conversation that the occupations morph into something else, maybe a whole new movement, maybe dissolving into the way everything is done, like an intensely colored dye diffuses into a faint tint when poured into a pool of water, like fireworks finally disperse after they've burned brightly in the air. But things will be different. And as people, as changed people, we'll still be here.

In the last dialogue, Uptight Guy says to the Occupiers, “Well, ok, this is what all this means to you. But what about normal people? What about me? I have a wife! I have a daughter! What can any of you say to all of us, to the Real Americans? What can you say to me?” He is answered by Katie, a stay-at-home mom and an Occupier, who answers, “I occupy because I want my Molly to have the kind of opportunities I was given when I was growing up. Those opportunities seem to be dwindling fast and the only way to fix that is by standing up and fighting:”

KATIE: I remember one night, after we had been coming to Occupy with Molly for a while. I had put her to bed and was walking out of her room, when I heard her behind me really quietly calling out, “Mic check!”

VOICES: Mic check!

KATIE: People’s Mic!

VOICES: People’s Mic!

KATIE: We are the 99 percent!

The actors encourage the audience to call out “We are the 99 percent!” with them, which they did. According to the script’s stage directions, “VOICES bow then move back into the audience,” again, de-emphasizing their difference as performers from the audience. Although Bauer stated that she was happy with the Willard Park venue because “it allowed for ‘more of an ability to have a line of demarcation between ‘stage’ and ‘audience,’” (Message, May 6). I would argue that the boundary between audience and actors was not all that rigid. The audience was still surrounded by Occupy tents and tables set up for Heart Fest, as were the actors. They both shared the Willard Park civic space. The entrances and exits through the audience also gave a sense of unity and shared space with the actors.

Two moments were different in performance than the written script in playful and significant ways. The script called for a drum circle to start things off (and probably to attract an audience), but there was no drum circle the day of the show. Instead, one of the actors improvised a welcome to the audience, and finished with the words, “and we’d like you to...” to which Uptight Guy made his entrance yelling “Shut up!” using perfect timing and cadence, as if Uptight Guy was saying to the Occupiers, “We’d like you all to shut up!” Then, towards the end of the play, when Uptight Guy returned, there was a playful bit of improvisation between him and the General Assembly Leader. GA Leader James came forward and stared at Uptight Guy, who stared right back. They stared for a very long time in silence, and it became so intense that they turned their bodies to the side and back up, to the delight of the audience becoming mirror images of each other. James then said, “So, Anti-Man, what do you think of us dirty hippies now?” The name “Anti-Man” was improvised and someone in the audience chuckled over it. The audience was friendly and as a whole, seemed sympathetic to the Occupiers. There appeared to be a lot of enjoyment in hearing stories, even stories they had experienced or already knew, because they were brought to life in front of them. As Bauer said,

The reaction to the show was overwhelmingly positive. One guy told me he wanted to ‘have Occupy’s baby,’ which was so odd but so wonderful. A couple of people livestreamed and posted these on our Facebook forum; the reactions there were also very positive and desiring of another performance. That was before the terrorist accusations, though. Right now, the future’s very up in the air. (Message, May 17)

The most poignant aspect to this performance was that five members of Occupy Cleveland were missing from this performed conversation. The arrest of the five accused would-be bombers threatened the entire project of *Occupy the Heart*. With the arrest, Occupy Cleveland’s performed ideals of diversity, of representing the 99% and having lasting significance (unlike the hippies of 1968), of being peaceful and “family-friendly”—Occupy’s performed sense of itself and its six month history was put in peril. Bauer noted that “None of the [accused] gave interviews that ended up in the script, but [two of them] show up in other people’s interviews and have ‘lines,’” and remarked upon the subsequently uncertain future of the script, but also, perhaps, toward deeper reflections in future projects:

In the first few days following the show, we were all pretty optimistic about everything, about possibly doing another performance sometime this summer and maybe getting more material for version 2.0. Since the arrest of the five, though, this is seeming like a more distant prospect. I’m not sure what will happen. . . . It might be interesting, though, to interview people now that the arrests have happened, because it was pretty divisive. (Message, May 17).

Through *Occupy the Heart* and Heart Fest, Occupy Cleveland took time out of its usual routines, and inhabited a place different from its everyday occupied space, to celebrate itself, perform itself for others outside and within the group, and re-enact its quotidian realities as a means of expressing what demonstrations and camping out on Public Square could not: its sense of itself in the larger stream of events at this moment in American history. This performance reminds us of theatre’s importance as a means of cultural reflection and dialogue and also the limitations of such a process. *Occupy the Heart* was arguably a type of festive performance which helped Occupy Cleveland participants stop, discuss and communicate some of the different visions of those who participated. In *Theatre and Everyday Life*, Alan Read writes about a community-based theatre company in a London working-class neighborhood facing rapid gentrification. He argues, “Theatre became the means to link the miniature with the massive. It is in this nexus that there is something for theatre to work upon.” (48) The *Occupy the Heart* performance asserted Occupy Cleveland’s place in the larger context of protests around the world and in the past, but also gave voice to the individuals who marched, camped out and lent their voices to create the “people’s microphone.” Theatre was clearly perceived by Occupy Cleveland as important work in this nexus between the protests of the collective and the dignity of each participant. Thus, *Occupy the Heart* is a fascinating case study of the continuing human need for performance.

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