

arts/entertainment

Mime troupe to 'create reality' in Lincoln

By Penelope M. Smith

For the Claude Kipnis Mime Theater, mime means refreshing the human spirit.

Kipnis, a former student of fellow Frenchman Marcel Marceau, is an artist, director, founder of the Claude Kipnis Mime School in New York City and author of a book on mime. He and his troupe have performed throughout the country and will be in Lincoln this weekend.

Performances are 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday in the Kimball Recital Hall. A special children's performance is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Saturday in the Lincoln East High School Auditorium.

Kipnis said he does not mind if the people who experience his company's performances know nothing of mime.

"Frankly," he said "It does not matter that people should know what mime is, I would wish that they could recognize it as a legitimate art form and that they try not to bring any tight prejudices or definitions to the performance—not that mime has no music or that a mime

should never utter a sound, but that mime is a great expression."

Kipnis said he and his company cooperate in the creation of mime pieces by pooling experiences, feelings and ideas.

"WE CREATE OUR own reality," he said, "but it is something we see. It doesn't come out of the sky; sometimes it's music or a painting or an experience. Mime reality is universally human, it's not a weird insanity."

The pieces range from what could be considered classic solo mime in pieces such as "The Bottle" to group works done to jazz music such as "The Body."

Finishing the pieces for performance is a concentrated group effort.

"The group brings these initial ideas. It's not let's jam or random improvisation. When we have an idea we discuss and tighten it, then we write a script.

"It doesn't happen in one big brainstorming session—it is written and rewritten and rewritten again . . .

"We start improvising on the script but there's a lot of leeway. We frame scenes, then we depart from here in

the script to there, but from here to there varies greatly."

The members of the Mime Theater are from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from ballet and jazz to acting. They must band together and cope with a unique problem, that of presenting a group reality, Kipnis said.

"TO WORK IN a group you must have electricity," Kipnis said. "You must put everybody on the same wavelength. Not doing the same thing, they must be creative, but they must not be in their own little world. They must understand each other so that they can play together or off one another or even against one another but always with a sense of purpose."

Despite the difficulties, there are rewards in working with a group, Kipnis said.

"In choosing to work with a company I influence people and I am influenced by them," he said. "Alone one becomes very narcissistic. In a group you develop new horizons."

And despite different social outlooks and values, Kipnis said, the understanding of mime is universal.

"Mime is not so much gesture as it is universal impulses," he said. "There are social differences in different countries; for instance, shaking the head up and down for no, but these are detailed gestures. There is everywhere a basic tendency for the body to expand, contract, jerk out of surprise. There is basic fear and basic job."

Kipnis said the reaction of the audiences to the group's performances always has been favorable.

"EVEN IF THEY are socially inhibited, people experience a moment of recognition, empathy and identification. Mime can do this because it's on stage—it doesn't threaten. It's an illusion world where people can accept the unacceptable.

"For instance, perhaps Americans are a little more physically uptight than people in Italy or Greece. Maybe this is why they enjoy slapstick so much. People need it, it is a perfect physical outlet for something that is not socially welcome," Kipnis said.

Kipnis said he and his company enjoy performing for children.

"When we perform for them," he said, "we try not to take anything for granted. After all, a child by definition is he or she who takes nothing for granted. That is why children are so beautiful."

Kipnis and his troop use a different approach with children.

"We talk to them," he said, "because sometimes they have been given too many standard definitions. They have been told that a mime is silent and cannot speak.

"WE INTRODUCE the pieces, but not in a condescending or patronizing manner. Sometimes we ask the younger children for help, giving them a sense of game or playing."

"Children are special," Kipnis said. "They are more ready to enter the world that is offered to them—they are more immediate."

There are two things Kipnis would like audiences to take away from the company's performances.

"One," he said "is that I would like them to discover mime and what it can do. It is an art form that needs more support. It is in the same position dance was in 20 years ago.

"Secondly, they should be entertained. To entertain is no mean feat, but what I would expect them to discover is that the human being is much richer than they thought before they came to the performance.

"It is a very personal little feeling, a refreshed feeling that life is intricate and a little better than the daily fare. What we do is from the heart. Some people only look on the surface, but we can't win them all."



Photo courtesy of National Artists Management Co.

Claude Kipnis Mime Theater members . . . refreshing the human spirit.

'Born Again' a finely tuned comedy

By Casey McCabe

You really don't need to buy Randy Newman's *Born Again* to enjoy it. The cover art and lyrics graciously printed on the back make for interesting entertainment in themselves.

album review

The front cover features Newman seated in an executive office, wearing pseudo-Kiss make-up and dollar signs literally painted on his eyes. On the back cover, he takes it a step further, with protruding tongue and a mock Gene Simmons expression.

Randy Newman has never been one to beat around the bush with subtlety. One can hazard a guess that the "born again" obsession-with-money theme portrayed on the album is just another of Newman's well-constructed sardonic jabs. This time, the job seems aimed at the people who feared the unexpected success of his *Little Criminals* album would bring out the commercial element in this strangely off-beat, self-effacing musician.

The two-year layoff between albums has provided Newman with a good supply of ammunition.

Still without removing that album from its cover, a careful study of the printed lyrics undoubtedly will heighten the reader's curiosity. What type of mind would, could, or would even want to put to music the words of "The Girls In My Life (Part 1)."

"Met a girl at the bakery
She wanted to borrow my car from me
She took it down to Mexico
Ran over a man named Juan"

or the thoughtful, driving lyrics to "Pants:"

"Gonna do it right now
Gonna do it right now
I'm gonna take off my pants
Gonna take of my pants"

So the person who conjures up a thoroughly demented musical accompaniment for these songs might not expect the slick professional package Newman offers. Enlisting the aid of such noted musicians as Andy Newmark, Waddy Wachtel, Tom Scott and Stephen Bishop, *Born Again* frequently becomes more elaborate than the simple, distinctive piano work that is Newman's trademark.

"It's Money That I Love" opens side one. It uses the distinctive piano, but adds layers of background vocals, saxophone and synthesizer to provide the studio sound which makes the lyrical parody work. The simpler side of Newman emerges in "Ghosts," "The Girls In My Life (Part 1)," and "William Brown."

The more elaborate arrangements most notable on "Pants" and "The Story of a Rock and Roll Band," a hilarious satire of the Electric Light Orchestra. No holds are barred when Newman finds an unsuspecting target for his lyrics, whether it's short people or English rock bands.

Somehow, the listener manages to forget that Randy Newman really can't sing. But then again, you can't imagine the material being delivered any better by Robert Goulet.

Born Again is a lyrical delight and the perfect follow-up to the status Newman achieved on *Little Criminals*. It succeeds somewhere on a fine line between disarming comedy, and a finely tuned, if not slightly demented, musical ear.

Recitals, classes

These concerts and recitals are sponsored this week by the UNL School of Music. Unless otherwise noted, all are open to the public with no admission charge.

Wednesday: Freshman and sophomore general recital at 4:30 p.m. in Room 119, Westbrook Music Building.

Thursday: Freshman and sophomore general recital at 3:30 p.m. in Room 119, Westbrook Music Building.

Lincoln Community Playhouse at 2500 S. 56th St. will be offering acting classes for adults 18 years and older beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 15. The two-hour sessions will continue for 12 weeks. Tuition is \$30. Cathy Madden-Metz is the instructor.