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THEATRE AT CAFFE CINO:
THE AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF REVOLT, 1958-1968

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Theatre

by
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May 2001

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To Mom, Dad, Jessika, Bobbi, and Ernie
Acknowledgments

I have had few experiences as enjoyable, as stimulating, as challenging, or as rewarding as my study at Louisiana State University. I am deeply grateful to the faculty (particularly Dr. Gresdna Doty and Dr. Bill Harbin) for allowing me this opportunity. As I complete this phase of my research into Caffe Cino, I recognize how much family, friends, and faculty have contributed to my work, as did many of the artists and patrons of the Cino. Listing each person is impossible; I am certain to overlook someone, so that it is tempting to issue a general “Thank you” to an anonymous group of people. Yet, to do so slights the debt I owe those who contributed directly or indirectly to my work. Therefore, while risking the ire of anyone whom I overlook, I wish to note the contributions of the following people.

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Abstract

Often considered the first off-off-Broadway theatre, Caffe Cino opened in December 1958 on a quiet street in New York's Greenwich Village. As proprietor Joseph Cino later explained, his goal was to provide a venue in which friends could enjoy coffee, conversation, and artistic events (including lectures, art displays, poetry readings, and play readings). Because of their popularity, the play readings quickly developed into fully-staged performances and supplanted all other artistic endeavors. By the early 1960s, the Caffe offered a demanding production schedule, with performances at 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. every day and additional performances at 1:00 a.m. on the weekend; a show typically ran for one or two weeks. In the summer of 1960, the Caffe produced James Howard's *Flyspray*, probably the first original work performed there. Shortly afterwards, the performance of original works virtually replaced that of existing plays, and the Caffe became an important venue for nurturing new talent. Young playwrights whose early works appeared in the Caffe include Lanford Wilson, Sam Shepard, David Starkweather, Doric Wilson, Robert Heide, H. M. Koutoukas, Tom Eyen, Robert Patrick, William Hoffman, and Claris Nelson; directors who honed their skills in the Caffe include Marshall Mason, Ron Link, Andy Milligan, and Robert Dahdah; actors who gained early experience (and sometimes their first roles) in the space include Hope Stansbury, Shirley Stoler, Matt Baylor, and Bernadette Peters. By the time it closed in 1968, one year after the suicide of Joseph Cino, the Caffe had introduced dozens of new theatre artists, explored new management techniques, helped popularize the use of camp in theatrical productions, and become one of the first
theatres to offer frequent productions by and about gay men. Caffe Cino's influence has been extensive, affecting the direction of avant-garde performance, infusing mainstream, commercial theatre with new energy and talent, and contributing to the emergence of a specifically gay theatre. This dissertation explores the history of the Caffe within the context of several significant cultural battles of the 1960s, with particular attention given to New York's effort to control or close coffeehouses, often the social and intellectual centers of the counterculture.
Introduction

In December 1958, Joseph (Joe) Cino opened Caffe Cino on Cornelia Street, a secluded, single-block street in New York’s Greenwich Village. For the next nine years, until his suicide in 1967, Cino presided over the tiny coffeehouse that introduced dozens of artists who became major theatrical figures, that helped launch a new dramatic movement, and that became a major catalyst in the emergence of a gay theatre. A former dancer whose career seems to have failed because of his build (he was short and overweight), Cino modeled his coffeehouse after the European café, intending a place in which friends could gather for light refreshments, conversation, art displays, and poetry readings. Such coffeehouses were just becoming popular in the Village at that time, and their popularity among Beat poets had begun to arouse the concern of City officials. Cino opened his business at the start of the “coffeehouse wars,” a long struggle in which the City of New York sought to control and, preferably, close coffeehouses. Using zoning, health, fire, and licensing regulations, city officials engaged in constant skirmishes to rid itself of the problems posed by the enterprises which had become centers of the counterculture. Though officials cited the noisy, unruly crowds supposedly attracted by the coffeehouses as the reasons for their actions, a less apparent, but far more important cause seems to have been that the establishments attracted the “wrong” element, notably beats, hippies, homosexuals, and persons of color. The story of the Cino (as Caffe Cino was typically called) is inseparable from the story of the coffeehouse wars. Not only are the cultural issues giving rise to the struggle
central to the history of the Cino, but also the events of the struggle influenced productions, inform some plays, and probably contributed to the death of Joe Cino as well as the collapse of his Caffe.

Shortly after opening the coffeehouse, Cino began offering poetry readings, and occasional play readings, though the impetus for such activity seems to have come from patrons such as Rissa Korsun and Joseph Davies rather than from Cino himself. Stagings of one-act plays or scenes from longer works quickly replaced the readings, leading shortly thereafter to fully staged productions in which the works were almost exclusively chosen from new plays mostly by beginning playwrights. Each production typically ran for one to three weeks, at 9:00 and 11:00 pm each day, with additional shows on Friday and Saturday nights at 1:00 am; for particularly popular productions, an additional late-night performance would be added on Sunday.

Cino’s management style was, to say the least, idiosyncratic: he seldom read any of the scripts which flooded the Cino when it became widely known as a venue for producing new plays; he almost never staged a production based upon the quality of the script (often he could not even know its quality since he frequently scheduled works before they were written); he exerted no artistic control over shows; he sometimes brought back unsuccessful shows only because those shows appealed to him; he never canceled a show or shortened its run, regardless of how poorly executed or attended; he provided little or no budget for productions and never paid actors, directors, or playwrights (they divided money collected from voluntary contributions from the audience). Given Cino’s relaxed approach to management as well as the pride many
participants in off-off-Broadway took in the amateur quality of their work, both the quality and content of shows varied widely. During any particular week, the Cino might be presenting one of the best or one of the worst productions in New York. As one reviewer noted in his review of *Alice in Wonderland*, "There is also no way to predict what will happen. 'We've had bad shows,' Mr. Cino admits. But there is always next week. If, for example, you do not like *Alice*, you may like Jean Genet's *The Maids*, starting Sunday. If you do not like Genet, there is always coffee" (Alpert, n. pag.).

Any limitations arising from the lack of funding and from Cino's managerial style seem to have been offset by the freedom he offered artists and by the strength of his personality, since the Caffe became one of the most respected, cherished, and influential venues of early off-off-Broadway. It offered a safe space in which taking risk was acceptable, in which failure was bearable, and in which friends supported each other in challenging social and theatrical traditions. As Lanford Wilson wrote about off-off-Broadway, a movement whose origins he attributes directly to Joseph Cino, "If Megan Terry broke new ground—as in *Calm Down Mother*, where the setting could change with the speed of light in the middle of a sentence—it was happily ceded to the rest of us" ("The Way it Was" n. pag.). Writers, actors, and directors learned from the success or failure of their own experiments and learned from watching the experiments of other practitioners. Cino supported and nurtured fledgling artists, stroked their egos, helped them through difficulties, encouraged their creativity, gave them food, and acted variously as their father-figure, friend, therapist, champion, defender, critic, and guide. Within this atmosphere of safety and support, Lanford Wilson staged his first plays;
Sam Shepard struggled with the pressures of his early career; William Hoffman and Robert Patrick recognized their own interest in writing for the stage; H. M. Koutoukas exploded gender conventions in his “camps”; Doric Wilson discovered his voice; Marshall Mason honed his directing skills and began a collaboration with Lanford Wilson that continues today; Andy Milligan shaped his directorial talents; Ron Link produced his first play; a host of significant actors, playwrights, directors, and designers worked on their first major productions or redirected their careers (including Bernadette Peters, Al Pacino, Robbie McCauley, Harvey Keitel, Paxton Whitehead, Neil Flanagan, and John Guare). Cino productions explored new forms: performative pop art, camp productions, and gender-fuck. Writers such as Oliver Hailey, Lee Kalcheim, and Tom Eyen gained exposure and moved on to influential careers in television and movies. Joseph Cino popularized a management and operational style that was followed by Ellen Stewart at Café La Mama and which subsequently influenced theatres throughout the United States and abroad, including Paris’s café-theatre and London’s fringe theatre.

Despite these and numerous other accomplishments, the Cino has received little academic attention. When Albert Poland and Bruce Mailman published the first historical data in *The Off-Off Broadway Book: The Plays, People, Theatre* (1972), they noted the difficulty in researching the Cino:

> In *The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* there is no listing for Caffe Cino or Joe Cino. In the Theatre Collection of the library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center there is, in addition to an obituary file, one slim file of written material that contains some notes on Caffe Cino written by Joe Cino for the anthology *Eight Plays from Off-Off Broadway*. . . . It is impossible to do factual research on Joe Cino or his theatre. There are no written records for conventional documentation.
One must depend upon personal remembrances. It is as if the details were made deliberately obscure. (xvii)

Since Poland and Mailman wrote, considerable material has been added to the collection at the New York Public Library, much contributed by Ellen Stewart and others in support of an exhibition in 1985 of Cino material organized by the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center. Yet source material from and about the Cino remains remarkably limited, consisting of a few photographs, letters, posters, and a handful of business records, all housed in the Billy Rose Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

In their study of off-off-Broadway, Poland and Mailman provide a brief history of the Cino. Though the two researchers certainly deserve a great deal of credit for their endeavor, particularly given the limited material available to them, their work is somewhat unreliable, with some rather glaring errors and some questionable conclusions. One of their most significant contributions was the compilation of a list of Cino productions, though it has now been superceded by “Plays Performed at the Caffe Cino” contained in the program for the exhibit at the New York Public Library.

Other than Poland and Mailman, the most extensive studies of the Cino appear in two dissertations, one thesis, and a few scattered articles on gay-lesbian theatre. The quality of these sources ranges from highly flawed to moderately reliable; for the most part, all cover the same historical material. Perhaps the most interesting is Clayton Delery’s thesis, “Caffe Cino: The Drama and Its History” (1981), in which
representative selections from Cino's performance history are analyzed for thematic similarities.

Though the academic press has shown relatively little interest in Caffe Cino, the popular press has been somewhat more attentive, in part because of the Cino's influence on gay theatre and in part because of the efforts of several Cino figures. Articles about the Cino have appeared in various newspapers and magazines around the country. In many cases these articles are of particular significance since they offer first-hand accounts of Cino experiences, including a series by eight different authors that appeared in 1979 in Other Stages. Among the authors are several key figures from the coffeehouse's history, such as Charles Loubier, Cino's close, long-term friend who is now dead.

Because of the lack of information generally available on the Cino, along with the errors contained in the few scholarly documents available, my basic purpose in engaging in this research has been to develop a historical narrative of Caffe Cino. Given the limited number and inadequacy of published accounts of the Cino, I have relied heavily on material amassed mostly from primary sources, much of it unpublished: operating records, interviews, reviews of plays, playscripts, and memoirs. In addition to telling the story of Caffe Cino (or, at any rate, a story about it), I have attempted to contextualize the history of the coffeehouse by presenting also the story of the ongoing struggle between New York City and the Village's coffeehouses. Clearly, any such project has sharp limitations, for we can never achieve the goal of relating the past "as it actually was" (Stern 16), to use the often quoted words of Leopold von
Ranke, who is often credited as founder of the modern objective historical school.
Thus, this dissertation contains my story of Caffe Cino—a story based not on first-hand experience but on four years of research.

As with the construction of any historical narrative, quite a few problems present themselves in producing a history of Caffe Cino. Often the memories of participants conflict with each other or with published accounts, long periods (particularly during the early years) are almost completely undocumented, memories have faded, original documents (including many playscripts) have been lost, major participants have died, and some participants no longer want their names associated with the Cino.

A discussion of playscripts, for example, requires recognizing that most published plays that premiered at the Cino were written by the better-known, male playwrights such as Lanford Wilson and John Guare. A great number of works by lesser-known playwrights are no longer accessible, though those productions and playwrights often had an important influence on Caffe Cino. Furthermore, many of the scripts which are available were published well after their performance at the coffeehouse. The published script of H. M. Koutoukas's *Only a Countess May Dance When She's Crazy*, for example, is based upon the performance by The Ridiculous Theatrical Company about 25 years after the play's debut at the Cino in 1964; the copy of *Now She Dances* available from Doric Wilson's website has been extensively revised and enlarged since its initial Cino production. In many cases, it is impossible to determine how much the published scripts reflect the performances at the Cino.
Further complicating the research into Caffe Cino is the haphazard record-keeping characteristic of Joe Cino. Few operating records survive from the period prior to his death (though a notebook containing show-by-show receipts for several months is in the archives of the New York Public Library). For information on productions, reviews and announcements in The Village Voice remain the most comprehensive, reliable guide, though cumbersome to access since the newspaper is not indexed. But even information in it must be examined cautiously since productions announced there were sometimes canceled just before opening or during the run (thus necessitating a replacement show).1 Furthermore, announcements in The Village Voice are sometimes confusing and contradictory. Occasionally, the confusion is nothing more than multiple listings which give slight variation in titles for the same play: on April 4, 1963, the Cino advertised a new play by Jerry Caruana entitled If I Had a Heart scheduled to open the following week; on April 11, it advertised its current production as Caruana's Why Have a Heart. In other instances, the Cino's listing under off-off-Broadway Theatres conflicts with its advertisement under Cafes and Coffeehouses regarding which show is currently playing and which is to open the following week. Unfortunately, during several long periods, the Cino placed no advertisement at all and did not receive a review from the Voice, making it impossible to determine which shows played during those periods.

1Decisions to cancel a scheduled show originated with the director or playwright rather than with Joseph Cino; reasons included such factors as a script not being completed in time or rehearsals not going as planned.
More subtle problems affect the collecting and interpreting of the data: the bias and selective memory/reporting of those interviewed (not to mention my own bias in what I select as important and how I approach the material analytically). In their descriptions of the Cino, both Michael Warren Powell (1998) and Doric Wilson (1998) use the analogy of the blind men describing the elephant (the part of the elephant the men touch determines their description of it); similarly Magie Dominic (1997) suggests that the Cino is like a family in which each member has a different experience and memory of it. Interviews with Cino regulars often reveal as much about the interviewees as about Joe Cino or his business. Furthermore, interviewees not uncommonly dismiss the information supplied by other people as unreliable, intended to aggrandize the role played by that other person, or intended otherwise to benefit the other speaker. These conflicting stories create numerous versions of the Cino, some differing only in subtle details while others stand in radical opposition to each other.

Ultimately, then, one basic challenge I have had to confront in my work is the traditional question of modernist research: “What counts as data, and what does data count for?” As James Wilkinson has explored, there are important distinctions between history and the events of the past, as well as between data (or evidence) and those things remaining from the past:

Among the distinctions historians customarily invoke when describing their discipline is the difference between history and the past. The past is conceived to include everything that ever happened, recorded or not; history, in contrast, is what historians represent the past to have been. . . .

The remains of the past comprise what survives of everything that happened; evidence consists of those remains that historians use in
making histories. Evidence, in other words, occupies the same relation to remains as history does to the past; it is a tiny subset of a far larger domain. (80)

The methodology used typically determines how the remains of the past are narrowed to a manageable collection of evidence; it also determines the interpretation given to the evidence. Ultimately, even speaking of data, interpretation, and methodology as discrete is problematic, since they are at least partially co-determinative and co-creative.

Drawing from German physicist Werner Heisenberg, anthropologist Michael Jackson explains that

Meaning is constituted through an \textit{interplay} of procedures pretending to be inductive \textit{and} a welter of interpretive preferences and prejudices. . . . Pure objectivity has, therefore, no ‘objective’ status; it is as much a performed, socially constituted attitude as the notion of pure subjectivity. As Heisenberg has noted, this indeterminacy principle implies that ‘science alters and refashions the object of investigation. In other words, method and object can no longer be separated.’ (51)

Further complicating the process is the fact that a historical narrative represents one perspective on other people’s perspective on a series of past events which they could have known only partially.

A major problem in interpreting first-hand narratives centers on the relationships among personal experience, memory, and history: how does each feed, create, limit, transform the other? What is the role of personal experience and memory in the writing of history? How do published histories affect memory of personal experience? Some of the dangers and limitations of oral historiography are apparent enough, ranging from intentional misrepresentation to unintentional confusion or total loss of central details. But several less obvious though fundamental concerns arise with memory. First,
memory often erases the seemingly less interesting details. As Pierre Vidal-Naquet has
argued, “Memory should not be confused with reality. . . . Every memory is, by
definition, selective. It makes choices and, consequently, it eliminates what is flat, what
appears uninteresting, even though that is what, perhaps ten, twenty, or fifty years later,
will, on the contrary, stand out” (15). Second, remembered accounts may be distorted
because of our tendency to impose order; as Cynthia Hay notes, “[P]eople tend to
provide coherent accounts of what may have originally appeared incoherent” (41).

Part of the difficulty in relying upon oral histories arises from the fact that
memory has a political function which can shape and edit the material recalled. Anne
Erickson among others has explored the function of memory in national identity. As
she notes, memory presumes a remembering being with similarities to the Cartesian “I”:

  Under all circumstances memory needs a body, an organism: there must
be somebody who remembers. . . . Memory is not only in itself
subjective, it requires a subject to be present. . . . Memory does not exist
as intersubjective abstraction, but can live only in concrete, bodily
shape—with all accompanying weaknesses and faults. (130; emphasis in
original)

When viewed on a communal level, memory in the form of history endows a group with
identity: “It is the memory aspect of history that makes it so well fit for building
national cultures, because through this the nation is postulated as a subject: It
remembers—thus it exists” (131). Whereas Erickson’s primary interest is in the
relationship between history and national memory, her analysis is also important on a
local—even personal—level. It is my memory of a personal history—of friends, family.
lovers, accidents, trauma, pain, accomplishments, success, happiness—that define me
as a person. All too often I forget (a Freudian might say "repress") events that are psychologically painful or inconsistent with that coherent being I imagine/desire myself to be. Thus, as individuals, we reconstruct, reorganize, re-member the past to make it a consistent narrative.

The structuring of identity such as Erickson describes serves a political purpose for sub-national groups. Through discovering or constructing a shared historical narrative, miscellaneous individuals become a distinct group. Thus, for example, reclaiming forgotten stories about women soldiers, gay dramatists, and African-American scientists serves not just to preserve historical narratives at risk of being lost, but to create the conditions for collective identities as women or homosexuals or African Americans. There can be a gay liberation movement only if there is something linking individual persons who have or desire to have intimate relations with persons of the same sex; that something can be discovered or constructed through the development of shared historical narratives. Just as the individual might forget that which is painful or inconsistent, a group may do exactly the same thing, as for example, in the French histories covering World War II in which the collusion between the Vichy government and the Nazis tends to be repressed. These points are particularly important for historical memory as it relates to Caffe Cino since many of the key players were involved in the emergence of the New Social Movements (particularly feminism and gay liberation). Thus, memories of Caffe Cino often seem to reflect more contemporary interests (the gay movement, feminism, and so forth) of its participants.
As with any historical narrative, the difficulties in researching Caffe Cino limit what we can know about the Cornelia Street coffeehouse. Much of what happened in some periods, particularly during the early years, may be irretrievably lost; in other periods, contradictory evidence and conflicting stories suggest several possibilities. The complexity of the history of the Cino is hardly lessened by the period in which it operated; and the story of the Cino is intricately bound up in the story of the sixties and particularly of the period’s counterculture. Many of the issues and practices common to the counterculture were woven into the productions, operational practices, and social structures of the coffeehouse. Though most of the productions avoided direct political content or activism, many exhibit the political engagement of the period. Generally considered the first original play performed at the Cino, James Howard’s *Flyspray* (1960) touched on a number of issues including class relations and opposition to war; after its premier at the Cino, it moved to various garages and similar venues (usually with support from leftist sponsors). Feminist, poet, actor, costumer, and stage manager, Magie Dominic indicates that other plays touched upon similar issues, including women’s liberation. Even a great many of the plays that avoided political engagement nevertheless centered on those gender issues which would be hotly debated during the following decades, particularly issues relating to gay men. Edward Rubin suggests that “the birth of off-off-Broadway [and] the emergence of gay culture in this country . . . are

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2As will be discussed later, most sources list *Flyspray*, performed in the summer of 1960, as the first original Cino play, though *The Village Voice* has a listing for *And the Dead Cry Lonely*, “an original one-act play” on March 30, 1960 (16).
intricately intertwined” and gives much of the credit for both to “the father of off-off-Broadway, Joe Cino and his long-gone Cornelia Street Café [sic]” \(^3\) (11).

Though we can speak of the Cino as reflecting certain traits common in the sixties, we do so at some risk. To speak of “the sixties” is to enter unstable, constantly shifting terrain. On the one hand, the decade of the 1960s is a historical epoch in which certain historical events occurred (the assassination of John Kennedy, the war in Vietnam); on the other hand, “the sixties” is a cultural construct, a discursive strategy used by some to condemn the move to the left in American politics, by others to lament the passing of a radical (though perhaps naive) politics, and by others to situate the origins of subsequent cultural movements including postmodernism. Though we may not always be clear on exactly what it is and, perhaps, when it was, we are constantly confronting the legacy of the period: politicians are asked to account for their actions in the period, movie stars are condemned for their subversive involvement with peace movements, former radicals (now wealthy Wall Street capitalists) prove to many the shallowness and ultimate demise of the period’s radicalism, and politicians have set out to dismantle the social programs which began years before under Roosevelt’s New Deal and mushroomed under Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society.

Even something so seemingly simple as determining dates for the period is highly problematic. Julie Stephens notes that the term “refers directly to a historical epoch while at the same time defying a precise correspondence to the decade itself”

\(^3\)Still in operation, the Cornelia Street Cafe opened for business much more recently than did Caffe Cino.

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In her summary of past efforts to arrive at historical dates for the period, Stephens notes that Doug McAdam argues that while it is a common assumption that the “sixties experience” began in 1964 as the white, student-led revolt of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the real roots of the activism associated with the decade are much older. McAdam’s periodization of the sixties begins in 1955 with the emergence of the first organized black civil rights protests. Theodore Roszak, in the introduction to the 1995 edition of his seminal *The Making of a Counter Culture*, goes back even further and places the sixties “within a broader setting that stretches from 1942 to 1972.” (11)

Affixing specific dates for the period is heavily affected by how one approaches questions about which issues, persons, movements, events, and organizations are central to the period.

Is the story of the sixties primarily the story of the rise and failure of the New Left, student radicals, SDS, Weathermen, National Organization for Women (NOW), Redstockings, and similar groups? Where do we fit those persons (hippies, yippies, and others of the counterculture) who rejected all totalizing political movements, narratives, and strategies? As Stephens argues, those who comprised the counterculture have largely been slighted in favor of the political activists of the New Left: “[I]t is as though, in hindsight, the real action is considered to have taken place only in the political side of the decade’s experience: the free speech, civil rights, black power and anti-war movements. By contrast, the hippies are rejected as a ‘clownish sideshow’” (22). Yet how “real” is the distinction drawn by Stephens and others between the radicals and the counterculture? Are they distinct groups, do they blend together only at the margins, or are they so enmeshed as to make references to them as discrete groups/movements.
artificial or even meaningless? The answers to these questions largely determines how one defines the period, both in terms of chronological specificity and in terms of central issues and movements.

For the purposes of this research, I have made the assumption that the sixties began sometime just before or after 1960 and ends around 1974, with the conclusion of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. More important than affixing specific dates delimiting the period is recognizing three significant influences from the 1950s: the continuing cold war, the emergence of an organized Civil Rights movement, and the rise of a counterculture as exemplified by the Beats and, later, the hippies. Furthermore, for this research, I assume that a distinction (no matter how unstable and artificial) can be drawn between the political radicals and the counterculture, the latter of whom practice a form of protest and politics which Stephens has termed "anti-disciplinary" because of its refusal to be bound to any particular or fixed agenda, strategy, or ultimate goal. Perhaps the greatest distinction between the two groups derives from their approach to political meta-narratives. The work of the radicals relies heavily upon theories drawn from Marxism, though considerably reinterpreted and revised from that which was popular in earlier leftist movements. They proposed a revolution, a strategy in which capitalism would be replaced by an alternative Marxist system. The counterculture tended to reject all such political ideals, emphasizing resistance over revolution. Rather than working for the demise of one political system and the establishment of another, the counterculture tended to oppose all systems and hierarchies. According to Stephens, the politics of the counterculture include "rejection
of organization, hierarchy and leadership, the critique of intelligibility and coherence, and the call for a ‘money free economy’” (25). Whereas the radicals depended upon those such as Herbert Marcuse working in relatively traditional political forms, the hippies and yippies were as likely to draw their beliefs from popular culture, often merging it with more traditional political philosophies. As Jerry Rubin said, “We’re really brothers because we grew up listening to the same radio and T.V. programs . . . I didn’t get my ideas from Mao, Lenin or Ho Chi Minh. I got my ideas from the Lone Ranger” (qtd. in Stephens 40).

Within the Sixties, two phases are particularly clear. The first, a time of increasing idealism and optimism, covers the years up to about 1964 and reaches its peak when the nation joins John Kennedy in his quest for a New Frontier. It was the period in which the new Camelot was to be built upon the economic and military prestige the United States had acquired during and after World War II. In his study of Sam Shepard, Leslie Wade describes the period:

[T]he early sixties [was] a time of widespread exhilaration and exuberance. John F. Kennedy, the youngest American president, personified the idealism of an upcoming generation and called for a renewal of the national spirit. Against the complacency and consumerism of the 1950s, Kennedy espoused a vision of altruism and sacrifice, and indeed the early sixties exhibited a dramatic expansion of social awareness. (10-11)

The exhilaration and exuberance along with the naivete quickly disappeared, however, as the extreme factions of both the right and left agitated more violently, as first John Kennedy, then Robert Kennedy and finally Martin Luther King were assassinated, and as questions about the Vietnam War, civil rights, and other issues drove deep divides
into the political and social arenas. The assassination of Kennedy in 1963 and the escalation of US involvement in Southeast Asia occurred at the start of the second phase of the period (roughly 1964 to 1972, the peak period of the United States’s involvement in the Vietnam War), a time of disillusionment, unrest, distrust, and increasingly radical politics. These two parts of the sixties are not independent periods—both are dominated by many of the same concerns, issues, and movements. Yet a distinct and important shift occurred near the middle of the 1960s, very much changing the tone for the remainder of the period.

The sixties, then, spans the period of transition from the domestically tranquil, conformist culture of the Eisenhower years through the tumultuous, violent days near the end of the Johnson administration. It was the period of the radicalization of certain segments of American politics as the New Social Movements emerged. The relatively benign work of the NAACP was giving way to the more confrontational movement of Dr. Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Council, with even more aggressive activists moving to such organizations as the Black Panthers. An increasing number of gay men and lesbians were becoming dissatisfied with the accommodationist and assimilationist positions of the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, and similar homophile organizations. The anti-war movement mobilized hundreds of thousands of people for marches in Washington, D.C., and other cities. The Women’s Movement gained a new vitality as it entered its second wave.
Chapter I
Background and Context

As the sixties brought social and political change and as Greenwich Village experienced the growth of the counterculture, theatre was also undergoing significant transformation, not just in the form and content of productions but also in its general operations. During the forties and fifties, Broadway had begun a stagnation that continued into the sixties, with the cause being attributed to a number of factors, from spiraling costs to a political climate grown increasingly conservative during the McCarthy years. Unable or unwilling to take financial and political risks, Broadway, with its ever shrinking number of productions, had increasingly turned to safe work—that dominated by stars (star writers, star performers, star directors) and by an avoidance of overt, challenging social and political commentary. By 1961, the economic situation had become so difficult that Herman Shumlin declared, “Economics is everything that is wrong with the theatre” (qtd. in Little, “Dollar-and-Cents” 15).

Stuart Little summarizes the escalating costs:

In ten years the cost of producing a play on Broadway has nearly doubled, and so has that for musicals. In 1949 South Pacific was produced at a cost of $225,000; it was able to gross $50,600 with a $6 top ticket at the 1600-seat Majestic Theatre. Eleven years later, Rodgers and Hammerstein brought in The Sound of Music for $486,000, the gross has climbed to $75,000 with a $9.60 top at the 1,400-seat Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. (Little, “Dollar-and-Cents” 15)

By 1961, production budgets for a straight play ranged from $100,000 to $125,000 with some going considerably higher, whereas only a decade earlier the budget had been about $60,000.

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With the sharp increase in costs came an equally sharp decline in the number of shows produced: the 1950s alone saw a 30% decrease in the number of Broadway productions, from 81 in the 1950-51 season to 58 in 1959-60. Furthermore, the proportionate number of musicals had increased, from 18.5% of the total number of shows in 1950-51 to about 23.4% in 1960-61 (Little, "Dollar and Cents" 14), leading Shumlin to conclude that "In three more years, because of the increased costs of production and the step-ups in the contracts with the theatrical unions, the serious play will be driven out of the theatre, and there will be only musicals and comedies left" (qtd. in Little, "Dollar-and-Cents" 15). Joshua Logan summarizes the problems then facing Broadway theatre (all of which directly or indirectly relate to economic factors):

Certainly there is an economic squeeze play going on. Prices are too high; everybody gets too much money except the public, who give too much.

Our technical equipment in New York is dated. Most New York stages are too shallow for decent productions—and impossible for repertory. Lighting equipment is awkward. . . .

Playwrights are discouraged from writing the play they feel, and asked to cram it all into one set, to cut down the cast, and to eschew musical interludes, thus avoiding the union demands for stand-by stagehands, electricians, sound men or musicians—the "busy work" brigade who sit backstage in order to draw salaries even though they are not needed. (8)

The financial situation was complicated in 1960 when Actors’ Equity Association led a labor action which resulted in a ten-day disruption of Broadway productions. Arguing that their actions did not constitute a strike but amounted only to a "tactic" ("Strike" 69), Equity leaders summoned the cast of *The Tenth Man* to a show-time meeting, thus forcing a cancellation of the evening’s production. Fearing a continual, one-show-at-a-time disruption of productions, theatre managers decided to close all Broadway theatres.
After ten days the dispute was settled, with Equity attaining significant gains in pay for its members and thus increasing the cost of productions even more.

The economic situation of American theatre in the 1950s and 1960s was not alone in affecting the number and content of productions. As Harold Clurman noted in 1961, with the post-war economic expansion, Americans dared not “rock the boat” or “do anything that might weaken our confidence or prestige as a world power”; with the escalating cold war,

McCarthyism became the chilling emblem that frightened and froze us into a kind of tense dumbness. We dared never suggest—no matter what the provocation—that we were not living in the best of all possible worlds. If a peep of protest issued from your lips, you were thought a crank or a neurotic, if not actually subversive.” (12)

As a result, the politically and socially significant plays common during the twenties and thirties became far less common, disguised when they did appear by altering the place (as in Flight into Egypt) or time (as in The Crucible). Only through such indirection could social critique appear safely on the stage. Clurman assigned the following interior monologue to playwrights of the fifties:

Since too definite an allusion to the somewhat rotten state of world affairs, as manifested by institutions or customs within the boundaries of our country, is now deemed heinously improper, and may arouse suspicion as to my patriotism; since, moreover and most emphatically, I am not certain of the direction of the most desirable social changes or the political means whereby they may be achieved—I am no longer a loudmouthed kid on a soapbox, and have come to realize that most political messiahs and their nostrums are fraudulent—I ought to delve into myself and study the things that have really been troubling me. (13)

Thus, the outward, socially-directed view of the twenties and thirties gave way in the fifties to inward, psychological works.
In the fifties, off-Broadway emerged as a corrective to the conservative, money-dominated Broadway, but soon faced many of the same problems. According to theatre historian Oscar Brockett,

During the 1960s, off-Broadway fared little better than Broadway, for it succumbed to many of the same adverse pressures. When unions began to withdraw the concessions made in the 1950s, producers had to pay actors a prescribed minimum wage and hire union technicians. Consequently, by the early 1960s it cost up to $20,000 to produce a dramatic show off-Broadway and thereafter continued to increase. This has been reflected in higher admission prices and greater caution in the choice of plays. . . . Thus, though off-Broadway has continued to play an important role in New York's theatrical life, the distinctions between it and Broadway have steadily eroded. (*Century* 710)

As production costs for off-Broadway theatres increased tenfold from an average of $1,500 in the early fifties to $15,000 in the early sixties, average weekly operating costs more than tripled, from $1,000 to $3,200 (Little, *Off Broadway* 229). In addition to aggressive fund-raising, off-Broadway theatres pursued several alternatives, notably casting stars to attract an audience and reducing royalty payments by selecting older texts which were no longer under copyright.4

Though, as Stuart Little suggests, off-Broadway developed as “the alternative to the hollowness of Broadway’s professionalism” (*Off Broadway* 105), much of it became hollow and overly professional very quickly. As early as March of 1961 such prominent critics as Robert Brustein were lamenting the decline of off-Broadway: “For over a

4Saving funds on royalties was not the only reason for selecting these plays. Since the emergence of off-Broadway coincided with the entry of a new group of university-educated theatre artists, the new actors and directors tended to be more conversant with the classical texts and acting styles than were many of their predecessors (Popkin 46).
decade now, the off-Broadway movement has been the major source of nourishment for the devitalized American stage, but lately even its robust arteries are showing signs of hardening. Accompanying its heightened prestige... has come a growing reluctance to take bold chances” (21). Facing many of the same economic challenges as did producers of Broadway theatres, off-Broadway producers turned to the same sorts of fare, though often of a lesser quality. “[A] growing proportion of off-Broadway plays look like Broadway rejects,” argues Brustein; many of its productions find their way onto the smaller stages “not because they are too good for Broadway but because they are not good enough” (21). Thus, with such notable exceptions as Beck and Malina’s Living Theatre, off-Broadway suffered from what Barbara La Fontaine called “creeping Broadwayism” (42).

Among the consequences of the economic and management trends on and off-Broadway was the exclusion of new talent. Attracting investors and audiences so that a production could avoid becoming one of the many financial disasters (the 1959-60 season saw about 25% of its shows close with five or fewer performances) often seemed to depend as much upon the names on the marquee as it did on the overall quality of the production. Unknown, untried artists had few options to become known and tried. The situation was particularly limited for playwrights since Broadway depended heavily upon those writers who had already proven their money-making abilities, and off-Broadway depended heavily on revivals and works often by long dead writers. Ultimately, it seemed that new writers and other talent could gain opportunities only if the overall structure of the theatre changed: “A theater which depends entirely on the
production of immediate smash hits is doomed. The immediate cause for concern over
the fate of new playwrights is related to the defects in the internal structure of our
theatre. . . . Such a theater does not encourage, let alone support, the new playwright,
either morally or monetarily” (Clurman, “Where Are the New Playwrights [sic]” 26).

Despite the major problems affecting theatre, many saw hope for a revitalized
American theatre, though their hope seems grounded more in a general desire than in
specific events occurring in theatres. Despite the “discouragement and despair” over
American theatre, Joshua Logan argued in 1961 that “America is potentially the creative
leader in the theatrical world. Perhaps not as exciting a one as she has been, or will be,
but not out of the running” (9). Decrying, on the one hand, the “sociology of flight”
which he finds in plays such as The Connection and, on the other hand, the vapid
entertainment of most Broadway fare, Harold Clurman argues that the theatre will (it
seems, must) turn from effete entertainment to a politically/socially engaged theatre:

We will change because the present tension in our world—due in part to
our lack of any positive personal or social philosophy is untenable. The
extension of atom power creates an inescapable dilemma; our prosperity,
we increasingly sense, is precarious. We are uncertain as to whether we
really do lead the expanding world—or are fit to. The pressure of all
these worries—if it does not drive us crazy—will finally go to make a
social consciousness beside which that of the thirties or early forties will
seem so much kindergarten stuff. (“Frightened Fifties” 77)

Even the less conventional critics of The Village Voice found “an awful lot that’s right
in the theatre now,” though to do so they had to turn “underground to the whole thing,”
that is, turn to groups such as the Living Theatre and to regional theatres (“The
Unending Predicament” 11).
Given the limitations of Broadway and off-Broadway, young artists arriving in New York in the late fifties and early sixties found a theatre virtually closed to them. Thus, at sites such as Caffe Cino, a new underground theatre movement began to emerge, known initially as underground or café theatre and, only later, as off-off-Broadway (OOB). Centered in coffeehouses, churches, basements, and other non-traditional spaces, it arose in Greenwich Village, also the site of the rise of off-Broadway; and OOB was influenced by many of the same forces as was off-Broadway ten years earlier. For both off-Broadway and OOB, the bohemian atmosphere of the Village was an important influence. Referring to the origins of off-Broadway, Stuart Little, for example, notes

The climate of the day favored emancipation and self-expression. Freudian psychology was then coming into vogue among the intellectuals, teaching the release of inhibitions and laying the basis for a new sexual freedom the Villagers began to practice with zest. Liberal ideas were in the wind; full artistic expression was the cry. Uptowners were held in suspicion, and literary life centered on the Washington Square Book Shop on Macdougal Street, a block south of the Square—the exact geographical center of the new bohemia. (Off Broadway 30)

These same influences continued—even intensified—as the Beats gave way to the hippies and as off-Broadway lost its edge to OOB. For both, the financial situation of the New York theatre contributed heavily to its emergence and growth. But, whereas off-Broadway theatres often seemed to be a less-commercialized, miniaturized version of Broadway, OOB theatres typically bore little resemblance to prior New York theatres, whether in physical appearance, in operating methods, in production styles, or in play selection. And whereas off-Broadway theatres initially averaged modest production
budgets of $1,500 or so, OOB theatres operated on minuscule budgets. Shows were typically mounted for $20 or $30 or even less; the budget for the Cino run of George Birimisa’s *Daddy Violet* was the cost of one beer for each performance (about fifteen cents). Even Ellen Stewart’s La Mama Experimental Theatre Club (ETC), among the best funded OOB theatres, allocated only $200 for each show in 1967, when off-Broadway production budgets were in the tens of thousands of dollars. For much of its history, Caffe Cino allocated no regular budget for productions, thus requiring playwrights and directors to pay production costs and to keep shows as cheap as possible, often by using found objects for sets and props (one of the regular directors became so adept at finding discarded items that it has been said of him that he could go in one side of a dumpster empty-handed and emerge from the other side with a complete set).

Perhaps the greatest difference between off-Broadway and OOB is in the focus upon the playwright in the latter. The production often considered to be the start of off-Broadway was the revival of *Summer and Smoke* at Circle in the Square: “But off-Broadway, for historical purposes, may be said to have begun in Sheridan Square on the evening of April 24, 1952, when *Summer and Smoke* with Geraldine Page opened at Circle in the Square and became the first major theatrical success below Forty-second Street in thirty years” (Little, *Off Broadway* 14). Though a comparable moment cannot be identified for OOB, the closest, perhaps, is the production of James Howard’s *Flyspray* in the summer of 1960 (the exact date has been lost), typically considered the first new play performed at Caffe Cino. Thus, the start of off-Broadway is associated
with the revival of an existing work, whereas the start of OOB is associated with the first performance of a new work by a beginning playwright. Michael Feingold notes “By and large the off-Broadway of the '50s concerned itself with the infusion of European writing (except for Circle in the Square, where the specialty was older American plays—O’Neill, early Williams—given new life by a new Studio-trained breed of young actor . . .)” (Feingold, “Caffe Cino, 20 Years” 50). Off-off-Broadway, on the other hand, quickly began introducing theatre audiences to new playwrights, whose work would soon appear off and on Broadway, in movie theatres and on television. OOB became the playwrights’ theatre. It is no wonder then that Ellen Stewart introduced her shows at La Mama with similar words each night: “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to La Mama ETC, dedicated to the playwright and to all aspects of the theater” (qtd. in Greenfeld 20).

As the mainstream theatres of the sixties struggled to overcome political and economic pressures, Greenwich Village’s coffeehouses also struggled against political and economic pressure. For the coffeehouses, however, the struggle often centered on issues and trends common to the emerging counterculture; few commercial establishments became so caught up in the cultural struggles of the sixties as did the coffeehouses in such trend-setting areas as Greenwich Village. Centers for those who sought to change fashions in clothing, ideas, poetry, politics, and entertainment, coffeehouses became popular symbols of the excesses and outrageousness of social rebels. The increasingly unsavory reputation of coffeehouses, particularly in the Village, reflects a long history for such establishments in which they had initially been
linked to subversive forces, only to disappear for many years. When they were
introduced to England during the middle of the 17th century, they quickly became
popular, and many men spent so much time there that a group of women circulated a
petition charging, “This bitter, nasty puddle water [coffee] so attracts that we scarce
have two pence to buy bread, nor can we find our husbands even to call a midwife”
(“Alluring Cupful” 87). The petition further alleged that coffee is a “depressant to
masculine energies.” Arnold Schering noted an even greater concern when
coffeehouses opened in continental Europe: “The taste for coffee did not reach Europe
until the end of the 17th century, spreading from the upper down to the lower classes.
Tea and coffee houses were then opened throughout Germany, including Leipzig, and
not without arousing a certain suspicion amongst the authorities” (qtd. in Diether, 46).
By the start of the twentieth century, coffeehouses had, for the most part, either
disappeared or had been transformed into quiet espresso shops.

By the middle of the twentieth century, Italian espresso shops in which men
gathered for chess and conversation had been a long-standing tradition in the Village.
Beginning in the early to mid fifties, however, a new style shop began to appear in New
York, London, and other cities, spurred, in part, by the patronage of celebrities:
London’s coffeehouse scene became popular in 1952 largely because of the patronage of
figures such as Gina Lollobrigida; New York’s coffeehouses boasted patronage of
Gloria Vanderbilt, Edward G. Robinson, and Vincent Price. By 1956 when
coffeehouses began drawing attention from mainstream news magazines, the sites had
already developed a reputation for exoticism. London’s coffeehouses were described by
Newsweek as filled with “almost stifling quantities” of “atmosphere”: “One called Heaven and Hell offers a ground floor (Heaven) where caged birds set up a clamor, and a cellar (Hell) where the black walls are decorated by licking flames, and charred hands holding devils’ masks” (“Alluring Cupful” 86). New York’s coffeehouses were “similarly offbeat.” According to J. R. Goddard, the Village coffeehouses were “born out of local Italian haunts and tinged by a dash of the European cabaret and the New England cracker barrel” (“Coffee Houses: Many Things” 1). To the exotic, trendy atmosphere of the early coffeehouses would soon be added an element of danger and subversiveness as the Beats and other young intellectuals and political or cultural radicals flocked to them. By the late fifties, coffeehouses had become significant sites of contestation between those representing traditional cultural and social thought and those challenging it.

At the heart of the controversy over New York’s coffeehouses was the struggle between factions within the Village. On the one hand there were those groups who had traditionally made up the population of the area: various ethnic groups (with Italian being the largest) who had settled in the neighborhood years before, and older bohemians and artists who had been attracted to the area’s permissive society and cheap rent. On the other hand there was the influx and growing conspicuousness of other groups, the Beats (and, later, the hippies), homosexuals, interracial couples, prostitutes (both male and female), and drug-dealers. As the new groups became increasingly conspicuous, they drew large numbers of tourists to (in the words of Café Bizarre’s barker) “Step right in and see the Bohemians in their natural habitats” (“Learning” 21).
By the mid-1960s, the influx of tourists was so great that certain areas of the Village, particularly Macdougal Street, south of Washington Square, in the block between West Third and Bleecker Streets (see Figure 1), had developed a carnival atmosphere, leading to frequent comparisons to New York’s famed carnival area, Coney Island. As one of the most visible changes in the community, coffeehouses became the point upon which much of the struggle over change was focused, so that a struggle to control them which began in the late 1950s lasted with various peaks and ebbs throughout the 1960s.

Though most complaints about coffeehouses identified noise and congestion as the primary problems that they brought to the Village, the unease which occurred because of the changing social, political, and cultural climate is evident in the reaction of neighborhood residents. Because many of the new performers at coffeehouses were African American (including such figures as Bill Cosby and Dick Gregory), they attracted a

Figure 1 Partial map of Greenwich Village (Delaney, Lockwood, and Roos xiii).
significant number of African-American audience members. Reports on the struggles over the coffeehouses suggest that the increased number of African Americans visiting and even moving into the neighborhood was a cause of concern for others in the neighborhood. Edith Evans Asbury notes that "prejudice against Negroes" is one of the factors "fanning the flames of indignation against the coffeehouses" (62). A popular folk musician in the area, Len Chandler, notes that blame for conditions in the Macdougal area was often placed on African Americans:

    Of course a lot of hostility still lands on the Negro. But you can’t say it’s a result of anti-Negro feeling alone. There are Negroes, men and women, who’ve worked around here for years and not had any trouble. But the Negro just coming on the street—he’s such an easy symbol to the neighborhood of this new wave of outsiders. Strike at him, and you strike at a very tangible part of the crowd pressure being put on the neighborhood. Naturally. He’s the easiest to pick out! (Goddard, "The Macdougal Scene" 6)

Goddard frames the quotation from Chandler so as to ensure that readers are aware of the speaker’s ethnicity: "Chandler, who is a Negro, also says." Thus, the issue of racism is subtly framed as the concern (perhaps even creation) of the black on-looker.

Even more distasteful to many residents than the influx of African Americans was the increase in the number of interracial couples attracted by the relaxed, open atmosphere of the coffeehouses: "The apartment-house occupants mostly of Italian origin or descent, not only resent the noise but also dislike the kinds of people they see among the crowds: teen-agers looking for trouble, soldiers and sailors on the prowl, interracial couples, panhandlers, motorcyclists, sex deviates, and exhibitionists of various kinds" (Asbury 62). Bernard Weinraub observed seemingly scandalous
behavior in one of the coffeehouses: “A Negro youth and a husky blond girl walked slowly and carefully from the bar to the window and embraced, while passers-by peered inside” (Weinraub 43). Perhaps the most blatant instance of prejudice against interracial couples involves the business and personal partnership of the interracial couple Gene and Judy Nelson who opened a small coffeehouse on Perry Street. After complaints from the Perry Street Association, several city offices (including the Health and Buildings Departments) began investigations of alleged violations by the coffeehouse. The realty company involved received correspondence from the Buildings Department which concluded: “Remedy: to discontinue unlawful occupancy forthwith” (“Complaints, Zoning” 2). After learning that their race had been an important topic in past discussions at the Perry Street Association, the Nelsons asked to be present at a meeting of the Association at which their business was to be discussed. Their request was denied. A “prominent” member of the Association, Reverend Charles Howard Graf, defended the decision not to allow the Nelsons attend the meeting: “[I]t wasn’t a question of anybody’s being prohibited—it was just a question of who was invited. The press wasn’t even invited” (12). Though Graf and others denied that the Nelsons’ race influenced their decision, Perry Street resident Lily Turner told The Village Voice, “I think the reason why people were so upset was very largely because the Nelsons are an inter-racial couple” (12).

Prejudice against gay men was often as pronounced in the condemnations of the coffeehouses as was prejudice against African Americans. Though Mayor Robert Wagner had promised to help resolve the problems with the coffeehouses, he ordered
city officials to proceed with a drive on Village coffeehouses, “acting,” according to Homer Bigart, “on the complaints that the proliferation of espresso establishments, especially in the vicinity of Macdougal Street, draws drunks, deviates and assorted strange characters in the predawn hours after bars close” (31). Bernard Weinraub noted week-end traffic in the same area: “For residents of Macdougal Street, the long night’s journey into day from Saturday night to Sunday morning represents the nightmare hours—the hours when the narrow street swarms with teen-agers, tourists, tough drunks, deviates and, of course, policemen” (37). He adds that “By 11. P.M. Macdougal is a melange of teen-agers, sailors, soldiers, motorcycles, panhandlers, students, interracial couples, homosexuals and tourists” (37).

Whereas prejudice against certain groups contributed significantly to the criticism of coffeehouses, financial issues were a significant, though less obvious, factor. Entertainment was vital to their survival. Though admission and cover charges tended to be quite low, many establishments set minimum purchase requirements for drinks or food that was often unreasonably expensive. Even places such as Caffe Cino, which charged no admission, depended on the entertainment to attract customers for their drinks and food. As early as 1959, Commonweal recognized the symbiotic relationship between performers and proprietors, though poetry readings were far more common than play production at the time:

New York’s poetry readings are largely confined to the coffee-houses in Greenwich Village. There the poets—beat and unbeat—regularly read their works aloud, by arrangement with either the proprietor or the poetry director, who normally is as unsalaried as the poets themselves. Coffee-
drinkers hear poetry, the poets have an audience, and the coffee-shop
proprietor does more business. All in all, a very fine arrangement. (294)

Two years later, after productions of plays had begun to be featured by a few
coffeehouses Henry Hewes defended the activity in a similar vein:

Though at first glance this might seem a commercial device that permits
the owner to tack on a cover charge with no outlay of money on his part,
there is some evidence that the motive is not completely mercenary. If it
were, these coffeehouse theatres would quickly degenerate into the sort
of tourist traps that presents folk singers, beatnik poets, and other
eccentrics for curiosity seekers from out of town. (20)

Many coffeehouses (including Caffe Cino) depended upon donations from the audience
after the show to pay actors (the practice was so common that off-off-Broadway was
sometimes called “the pass-the-hat circuit”). Most performers valued the experience
and exposure far more than any income they gained (the Albee-Wilder-Barr producing
team, for example, took several shows, including several from the Cino, onto off-
Broadway).

Though both artists and coffeehouse owners benefitted from the arrangement,
city coffers lost from it. Until coffeehouses began presenting entertainment, the two
primary venues for live entertainment were theatres and cabarets, the latter of which
operated under regulations most applicable to the physical facilities and the
entertainment generally found in coffeehouses. Yet the license for a coffeehouse cost
$75 whereas a license for a cabaret cost $150, excluding the much more expensive
licenses for sales of alcoholic beverages typical for cabarets. Furthermore, regulations
of cabarets permitted a great deal more control by the City, because all employees and
performers were required to purchase an identification card for which they had to be

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fingerprinted. Rick Allman, owner of the Café Bizarre and president of the newly formed Coffee House Association, suggested that the coffeehouse controversy was fueled by “vested interests” in neighboring liquor and entertainment business (qtd. in Goddard, “Coffee Houses: Many Things” 14). Since bars offering entertainment were required to purchase both an entertainment license at $150 and a liquor license at $1,500 (Asbury 62), their operating overhead was significantly higher than that of coffeehouses.

Jack Diether proposes what may be the most significant financial factor in the battle against the coffeehouses:

Seen from the real-estate developer’s eyes, it [the Village] is purely and simply the most valuable piece of collective real estate in the world. Set in the heart of Manhattan Island, halfway between Wall Street and Times Square, it appears to him a still untapped gold mine, and its “cultural pretensions” simply an obstruction. . . . The coffee-house hassle is simply a small but integral part of the struggle that goes on constantly between those who would like to turn Greenwich Village into a drab but “elite” extension of Riverside Drive and those who would like to keep it an essentially Bohemian and artistic oasis. (49)

In noting that many of the complaints about the coffeehouses came from residents of nearby apartments, Edith Evans Asbury lends credence to Diether’s argument, since Asbury notes that the “luxury” apartment boom which started in the early 1950s had been responsible for displacing many of the artists from the Village so that wealthier tenants could move in.

In 1948, when Joe Cino arrived in New York from Buffalo, the cold war which would fundamentally affect theatre and all aspects of Americans’ lives had just begun and the conditions against which radicals later rebelled were starting to stabilize into the era of conformity and stasis that would characterize the fifties. Though he was born and
raised in Buffalo, New York (less than 400 miles from Greenwich Village), very little is
known of his life prior to his opening the Caffe; even after that point, much information
is missing, contradictory, or unreliable. As Douglas W. Gordy has commented:

[L]ike many gay men and other theatrical characters, he created several
personae, embellishing and stretching the truth about his life when it
suited his fancy to do so. [Robert] Patrick, who knew him for as long and
as well as anyone, says, 'Joe told so many people so many different
versions of every story’” (303-304)

He was born November 20, 1931. Though he sometimes claimed his birthplace as New
York City’s Little Italy (Gordy 304), it seems certain that he was born in Buffalo,
particularly since the city directory for 1931 contains a listing for Cino’s parents, Joseph
and Mary Cino, on 155 Trenton Avenue. The address is within a mile of the funeral
home which would in 1967 arrange for Joe’s5 funeral, the church at which his funeral
would occur, and the address to which cards were to be sent to Mary Cino after her
son’s death. Joe was the third of four children (all boys) born over a nine year period.
Gasper was about three years older than Joe, Richard about two years older, and
Stephen about six years younger. At least on their father’s side, the four boys belong to
the first generation of the family to be born in the United States (Joseph’s father,
Gasper, died in Ricalmuto, Sicily in 1945). Joe was born into a working-class family
(his father’s occupation is listed as “laborer” in the city directory for 1931, though the

5To distinguish father from son, I will refer to the older man as “Joseph” and the
son as “Joe.”
term is so inclusive as to be useless in identifying his specific occupation). Joseph died in 1942, leaving his wife and four sons ranging in age from 14 to 5. As a young child, Joe contributed to the family's income by going in the summer with his mother to nearby fields to harvest crops; more significantly, he helped with chores around the house (including cooking) and picked up odd-jobs at restaurants, a skill that would serve him well after he moved to New York City.

Even as a young child, Joe was passionate about opera, the musical form that he played constantly at Caffe Cino and that heavily influenced his perspective on theatre. Childhood friend Angelo Lovullo recalls going with Joe to a record store to preview opera recordings, though neither child had the money to make a purchase. As much as Lovullo enjoyed the recordings, his response was far more reserved than that of Joe who would often be in tears by the end of the recording. Though the two boys routinely went into the shop, previewed an album, and returned it without making a purchase, the shopkeepers never limited their access to the records, probably recognizing (Lovullo now assumes) that the boys were gaining access to the music they loved in the only way financially open to them.

After their father's death, the Cino brothers seem to have drawn closer together. As attorney T. Louis Palazzo noted recently in a legal proceeding for Stephen Cino, the brothers "shared a special bond ever since their father, Joseph, died" (Ed Koch). Yet a distance soon began to develop between Joe and the other three brothers, who teased him, ostensibly because of his interest in dance, but more likely because of his increasingly conspicuous sexual orientation. According to Michael Feingold, "Before
he got fat, he had aspired to be a dancer; that had estranged him from his family since, as one of his best friends put it, a boy from an Italian family is not supposed to be a ballerina” ("Caffe Cino, 20 Years" 50). Implicit in the friend’s feminization of Cino ("ballerina") is the suggestion that the family was as concerned about Cino’s sexuality as they were about his artistic impulse; he was, after all, quite feminine so that friends of the period fondly called him “Ginger” (after Ginger Rogers). Even in the conservative period just after the war, Cino made no effort to hide his sexual orientation, seeming, on the contrary, to boast of it. On occasions in which Cino overheard strangers making a comment about the little faggot or the cocksucker (referring, of course, to him), he would defiantly stride up to them and say, “I’m all that,” adding with a flip of his head, “and more.” He recognized his sexual orientation quite early, sneaking into gay bars in Buffalo even in his mid-teens. At least once, he barely escaped a police raid of a party climbing out a window nearly nude as Buffalo policemen rushed in the front door.

A group of Cino’s friends (including Lovullo and future antique dealer/artist Tony Vaccaro) decided to move to New York City in February of 1948. Shortly before their bus was to leave for New York, Cino was speaking with Lovullo and Vaccaro, worrying that their departure would leave him largely isolated in Buffalo. Though he remained close to his mother throughout his life, the tension with his brothers and with his classmates had increased and seemed unbearable without his friends. Two hours before the bus was to leave, Lovullo finally said to Cino, “Well, maybe you should come to New York with us... Do you have any money?” When Cino said, “No,” Lovullo suggested that he ask his mother for money to go to Rochester to visit a family
member. It seemed a solution to the problem, particularly when proposed by Lovullo. Lovullo was slightly older than Cino and was much respected by his younger acquaintance. Though Cino’s mother either would not or could not give him any money, he was able to obtain enough for the busfare; the primary contribution from his family, he sometimes claimed, being a dime that his brother had dropped in the bedroom. After hastily packing, Cino dashed to Lovullo’s home, only to find that his friend had already left for the bus station. With only minutes to spare before the bus left the terminal, Cino ran from Lovullo’s home, caught a neighbor who was backing out of his driveway, and pleaded with the unknown man, “Please, mister, take me to the bus station. It’s a matter of life or death.” The neighbor consented, depositing Cino at the station just in time to catch the departing bus—to the cheers of the other passengers. Having never been to New York before, Cino questioned his friends about what it would be like. Would it, he wanted to know, be as it is in the movies?

Cino told Michael Smith that he arrived in New York during a blizzard on Saturday, February 7, 1948: “I didn’t have a dime... and I don’t have one now” (“Joe Cino’s World” 1). Hired within a day of his arrival by the cafeteria of the YMCA at Penn Station, Cino was the first of the group from Buffalo to get a job. To help his impecunious friends, Cino encouraged them to buy milkshakes from him, to which he added three eggs so that they could get a substantial meal for the price of a milkshake. After leaving the YMCA, Cino held a variety of jobs, including positions at a Howard

6Lovullo recalls arriving in New York on a Sunday.
Johnson's restaurant and at the Statler Hotel. Though Cino never returned to high
school, he studied voice and dance in New York, and read voraciously.

Cino had taken dance lessons in Buffalo, and at the age of twelve had made his
first performance debut when he sang "I'm Beginning to See the Light" on Uncle Ben's
Liberty Shoe Hour. In New York, Charles Loubier introduced Cino to the venue in
which he received his professional training, the Henry Street Settlement Playhouse on
Grand Street where Loubier was a student. Loubier describes his first meeting with
Cino:

Joe was something else. I knew him from the time he was 16 years old.
A friend came down to see me one day to urge me to find his lover.
Andrew, who was at Coney Island, swimming. I was 18 or 19. I went
and met this layout of Italian boys . . . and a beautiful boy with great big
black eyes and eyelashes out to there. It was Cino. I recognized the
kindred spirit immediately. (8)

Shortly after the meeting, while working at the Statler, Cino began his study at Henry
Street under the tutelage of Alwin Nikolais. He studied there for two years, taking, as
he told Michael Smith, "courses in everything—acting, dancing, speech, makeup, things
like that" ("Joe Cino's World" 14). Soon, he began having some success in his dance
career, first receiving a dance scholarship to Jacob's Pillow in 1953. Then he danced
with the Mary Anthony Troupe and, in March 1957, toured with Alfred Brooks and
Maxine Munt. The tour was the peak of his professional dance career and pretty much
the end of it as well since his weight seems to have begun to interfere with his
performances. According to Gordy, "Photos of the young Cino reveal a round, open
face, with an olive complexion, bulbous nose, wide-set dark eyes, generous, thick-
lipped mouth, and a high forehead with curly dark hair; later photos show him with longer, straggly hair and a full beard. . . . [H]e felt he was overweight and too short (contemporaries estimate his adult height at 5' 9"" (304). Whether his build was the sole factor limiting his career is unclear. Also unclear is whether Cino decided to end his career or whether it became a casualty of the demands of operating his coffeehouse.

In 1957, Loubier got Cino a job as waiter at the Playhouse Café (so-named because of its proximity to the Neighborhood Playhouse), a coffeehouse opened by Jack Pelsinger and Phyllis Bochner, Loubier's friend and future wife. Pelsinger and Bochner intended to offer entertainment (including poetry and play reading), though Loubier indicates that the plans were short-lived since the coffeehouse was replaced by a Turkish Bordello within six months.7 While working for the Café, Cino hoped to have an opportunity to explore his interest in theatre. A frequent actor at Caffe Cino and a close friend of Cino, Joseph C. Davies recalls that Cino was preparing to present a staged reading of _La Strada_ at Playhouse Café, but it is unclear whether or not the reading ever took place. Davies was called away to perform in tours of _South Pacific_ and _Showboat_; by the time he returned, Cino had started his own coffeehouse and was presenting readings of poetry and plays.

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7Loubier's story is confusing—he uses masculine pronouns in referring to the owner of Playhouse Café (perhaps a reference to Pelsinger), but later notes that Phyllis Bochner was "the woman with the other shop" (8). Though he seems to suggest that the coffeehouse closed within six months, advertisements for Playhouse Café appear in _The Village Voice_ during the sixties, whether or not for the same establishment is unclear.
Even before working as a waiter at the Playhouse Café, Cino had become interested in opening his own coffeehouse: “I started thinking about the café in 1954. It would just come and go. It would usually go when there were too many people trying to have a part in it. I would talk about it with close friends and it would just dissolve away into nothing” (Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 14). Using savings and borrowed funds, Cino opened Caffe Cino in December of 1958, just as the popularity of coffeehouses was escalating.

By 1960 when Caffe Cino began staging original plays, various forces were operating which challenged traditional social, cultural, and political thought. The complacency of the fifties, the conformity fostered by responses to the Communist threat, the hollowness of economic prosperity accompanied by moral and cultural rigidity, the growing unease about America’s position in the world, a reawakening of concern about social issues, fatigue with a vapid, tame art world—these and other factors were coming together to kindle a new period of change and experimentation. After a long period of stasis, the United States seemed ready to face the challenges of the future and to correct the failures of the past. But change came at enormous cost—racial tension in the inner cities exploded into waves of violence, feelings about the war in Southeast Asia tore the nation apart, crime rates skyrocketed, and homosexuals and previously silenced groups challenged moral and legal codes. Often caught in the midst of these cultural and political struggles were the Village’s coffeehouses—for some, they represented exactly what was wrong with the nation and the community; for others, they represented exactly what was right. Constantly jostled
by—sometimes rejecting, sometimes pulled into, sometimes ignorant of—these outside forces, Joe Cino and his collection of artists would create a theatre which simultaneously rejected and coopted the dominant world around it.
Chapter II
The Formative Years: 1958 to 1963

On Christmas Eve 1959, the brutal cold that had whipped into New York the prior day moderated somewhat; instead of a low of 9.5 degrees as on December 23, the lowest temperature was a comparatively mild 19. Despite enormous quantities of salt and the efforts of 4,000 workers, streets remained so treacherous, coated with snow, sludge, and sheets of ice that City officials planned an unusually aggressive effort to ensure that all lanes of major thoroughfares were passable. As the City battled the after effects of the brutal cold, aspiring actress Shirley Stoler stepped onto Macdougal Street from the San Remo, a popular café in Greenwich Village. Carrying more than 200 pounds (perhaps as much as 250 pounds) on her 5 foot 7 inch frame, Stoler hardly sported the physique of a “leading lady,” even in those days before Twiggy and before the emaciated “cocaine look” popularized by models in the 1980s and 1990s; as a successful actress years later, with starring roles in films such as *The Honeymoon Killers* and *Seven Beauties*, Stoler took great pride in being one of the first large women to succeed as a serious actress. In 1959, however, she was a decade away from her first starring role in a film; she was also involved in what she later called a “classic” affair with a married man. Thus, on Christmas Eve, she and her illicit partner had dined early so that he could spend the evening with his wife and children. Loath to spend the evening alone, Stoler decided to visit a small shop that she had noticed a few times, its twinkling lights having caught her eye. It was only a short walk, hardly two blocks from the San Remo, up Bleecker Street and just around the corner on Cornelia Street. As she...
squeezed into the coffeehouse through the door between the plate-glass windows (the entrance was nearly blocked by a huge, antique coffeemill), a man about her height who, like her, carried excess weight called out, “We’re closed, but come on in anyway.” She entered a small room, no more than 18 by 30 feet, with red-brick walls on which hung a variety of paintings. In all likelihood, the jukebox played an opera recording, perhaps Maria Callas since she was a favorite singer of the proprietor. Stoler worked her way through the large pine tables and chairs (with built-in benches at points along the walls) and reached the group sitting in the back. Thus, Stoler paid her first visit to Caffe Cino; she returned often, sometimes as performer and sometimes as audience member. That Christmas Eve, she became part of the Cino family.*

Stoler’s tale of her introduction to the Caffe captures several central facets of the Cino story: the transgressive sexuality as exemplified in her relationship with a married man; the easy openness and warmth of Joseph Cino and the group that gathered around him; the thin, perhaps non-existent, boundary between personal and business interests at the Caffe; and the intriguing mix of people of varying ethnicities, temperaments, and artistic tastes who made up the group. Precisely who was at the Cino the night of Stoler’s first visit is unknown, though she does mention Asterios Metakos, the Greek artist and tailor who sometimes performed at the Cino, making his accordion sound like an organ. Others who might have been there include Cino’s Italian friends from Buffalo (such as dancer Angelo Lovullo or painter Tony Vaccaro), the petite, Japanese-born

*Information on the weather conditions is from the New York Times for December 24 and 25; the story of Stoler’s first visit to the Cino is taken from her speech at the 1985 exhibit of Cino material at the New York Public Library.
Taka Nakano who was a fan and friend though not a theatre artist, the French-born Nanouche⁹ who was one of Cino’s closest friends (and one of the very few women linked romantically to Cino), petite Johnny Dodd¹⁰ who designed the lights and operated the light board for many Cino productions, and actor Joseph Davies who appeared in, designed, or directed many of Cino’s early shows. Figures who would later be inseparably associated with the Cino (Kenny Burgess, Robert Patrick, and Jonathan Torrey) had not yet arrived on the scene.

By the time of Stoler’s visit, the Cino had entered its thirteenth month of operation. We have only Joe Cino’s account of the founding of Caffe Cino, and, unfortunately, he was notoriously unreliable in his self-reporting. Although others have supported the account as told by Cino, they may very well have gotten their information from Cino himself. Assuming the veracity of Cino’s story, the beginning of the Caffe established a pattern of reliance upon happenstance and accident which would appear repeatedly throughout the coffeehouse’s history. According to story, Ed Franzen, who was Cino’s lover and an employee of the printing department of New York University, was looking for a studio in which to paint and exhibit his work at the same time that Cino was looking for a space for a coffeehouse. It seemed only logical to combine these two interests, thus creating a coffeehouse which displayed artwork. One day in

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⁹Though her name was mentioned in several interviews, I have not seen it in print and, therefore, have guessed at the spelling.

¹⁰Sources conflict on when Dodd first visited the Cino, though it seems likely that he had begun working there by the end of 1959.
November 1958, Franzen called Cino to tell him that he had noticed a “For Rent” sign hanging from a piece of Manila rope in front of a storefront studio on Cornelia Street:

When I got there Ed was in conversation with Josie, the landlady, who was hanging out the upstairs window with blonde sausage curls. He said, “This is Mrs. Lemma.” I said, “Oh, you’re Italian.” She says, “Yes, what are you?” I said, “Sicilian.” So she said, “I don’t even have to come down. I’ll throw the keys,” She threw the keys and we went in and viewed the ruins. The first thing you saw when you looked down the room was the toilet at the back. I thought, “There’s a toilet, and there’s a sink, and there’s a fireplace. This will be a counter, a coffee machine here, a little private area.” (qtd. in Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 14)

Cino and Franzen rented the space and began renovation.

The cost of opening a coffeehouse was relatively modest: “Last year [1965], people bought out Village coffeehouses for as little as a thousand dollars or started from scratch for four thousand dollars and up” (Lynch 137). Given the limited size and decor of the Cino, it undoubtedly cost significantly less than four thousand dollars, particularly since Cino and his friends completed the renovation themselves. Estimates of the amount and source of funds for the Caffe vary, though Cino claimed to have started his business with change saved from his job at Playhouse Cafe: “I saved every penny I made there, I knew the next thing would be my own room. I saved all the money in a drawer, and I emptied the drawer out into a paper bag and took it to the bank, and it was $400”11 (Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 14-15). Other sources (including Angelo Lovullo) suggest that he borrowed money from friends (including Lovullo’s brother), to help cover the initial investment. Franzen may have invested in the enterprise also, though

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11Loubier gave the amount as $200 of Cino’s money, with additional funds from loans (Scrapbook 118).
his involvement was short lived. Robert Patrick told Gordy that a rumor around the Caffe held that Cino “had talked a lover into backing the Cino for him and then dumped the lover and taken the lease” (306). Undoubtedly, the lover to whom Patrick refers is Ed Franzen, though it seems improbable that Cino cheated him out of his investment. Franzen left the Caffe and New York because of health problems, probably a brain tumor (Baylor).

As December approached, Cino and his friends prepared for the opening. One day, a young actor, Matt Baylor, who lived in the area, stepped in to find out what type business was moving into the space. Baylor recalls Cino turning to him and saying, “Oh, I’m building a candy store.” Shortly afterwards, Baylor stopped by the storefront only to find a discouraged Cino: the inspector from the Fire Department refused to permit occupancy until the fireplace was repaired (it was only the first of many conflicts between Cino and various New York agencies). Having some knowledge of construction, Baylor volunteered to do the brickwork. With the fireplace repaired, tables in place, and the antique coffeemill at the entrance, Cino was set to open his doors to the public. The events of opening night, however, proved to be less than auspicious: Cino had his espresso machine, restaurant supplies, and so forth; what he did not have and had never even considered needing was a waiter to take orders or deliver the food. Even worse, the coffee machine malfunctioned, so, at least briefly, Caffe Cino became a coffeehouse without the capacity for brewing or serving coffee. Fortunately, friends rushed to the rescue, some acting as waiters while others rushed to nearby apartments to borrow coffeepots; to maintain a more professional appearance,
Cino pretended to get drinks from the commercial machine while actually getting them from the borrowed coffeepots. Cino received scant reward for all the work leading up to the opening and for weathering the various crises of the night: his revenue for the night is said to have been only $2.00 (Scrapbook 118). As Loubier once wrote, “So was born the Caffè Cino” (Scrapbook 118).

Since funds for staff were scarce, Cino continued to rely on the assistance of friends, often with rather interesting results. Years later, Charles Loubier recalled the night that he and Joe Cino waited on tables while both men wore German helmets with veils thrown over them. The first customers were Metakos and two of his friends: “Decked out in these helmets and veils . . . we went over to serve them . . . I must say that Metakos didn’t bat an eyelid. He simply asked for Turkish coffee which he ended up making himself. And so it went” (Scrapbook 107).

For Cino and many of his associates, the space occupied by the Caffe possessed almost mystical qualities—an air of the exotic and preternatural filled the room. Lucy Silvay, the actress who originated the role of Girl in Lanford Wilson’s The Madness of Lady Bright, recalls that the twinkling lights, the candelabra, and the other decor gave the space a “fairy tale” quality (Silvay 2000). Though reported six years after the event, Cino’s comment to Franzen on originally seeing the space is revealing: “This is the room, I have no idea what to do with it” (qtd. in Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 14), suggesting that something about that particular space appealed to him. When productions became a regular feature, Cino emphasized the mystical nature of the space, typically introducing shows with words such as, “Ladies and Gentlemen, it’s almost
Magic Time.” Through the magic of theatre, the tiny room on Cornelia street was converted into the deck of a ship, the interior of a sewer, a brothel, the Garden of Eden, and so forth. Not surprisingly given Cino’s emphasis on magic and transformation, references to the space often carry a semi-mystical quality; thus, Robert Patrick refers to his position with the coffeehouse as being that of a temple slave, the title to which he gave his fictionalized account of Caffe Cino (Temple Slave, 1994). The sense of magic and mysticism was increased by the fact that the Cino became a place in which one could explore alternative religions, as Johnny Dodd and others probed astrology, eastern mysticism, and Native American religions.

From Cino’s perspective, the space had its own needs and powers. It needed productions. Even if no customers came to a show, Cino demanded that the actors “do it for the room” (Heide 1997, Wilson 1998, Hanft 1998). Actress Helen Hanft relates an incident in which three people (a mother, her prepubescent son, and a drunken sailor) were the only people in the audience for a production in which she appeared. The sailor fell asleep at his table while the mother and son, offended by the material, soon left. Cino refused to cancel the production, demanding that the performance continue for the sleeping sailor. And for the room. Heide, Wilson, and others speak of times when no one at all showed for the performance, particularly for the late-night performance on weekends; even in those instances, Cino demanded that actors perform for the room. Often, those were the performances remembered by the actors—the solitude seemed to enhance the magic they created. If the room had its needs, it also offered its protection to those in it. After a particularly bad day, Helen Hanft went into the Caffe, where Cino
comforted her, concluding, Hanft recalls, with “While you are in here, nothing can hurt you” (Hanft 1998). Actress, prop manager and costumer Magie Dominic summarized the feelings of many when she attributed the magic to Cino himself: “I never met anyone like him before, never met anyone like him since. He made magic. . . . Those of us lucky enough to work in that room learned magic from him” (1997). Not surprisingly, as I interviewed her more than three decades after Caffe Cino closed its last show, one of her first instructions to me was to go to the space (now a trendy Italian restaurant) and learn what the walls have to tell me.

Little is now known of the first months of operation of the Cino. Even the origin of the name with its two “f”s in “Caffe” has created some confusion. Loubier attributes the spelling to an error by the telephone company: “There were problems when the Cino started. People couldn’t find the place, it was listed wrong in the phone book—it was spelled with two f’s” (Loubier 1979, 8); supposedly, in typical Cino fashion, he chose to change the name to match his telephone listing. An equally plausible explanation for the spelling has been offered by Michael Smith who suggests that “Caffe” comes from the Italian which Cino intentionally chose (Smith, “Caffe Cino: Homage”. B1).

When Cino left his job at Phyllis Bochner’s Playhouse Café to start his own coffeehouse, Bochner and her future husband, Charles Loubier, switched their focus from the Playhouse Café to the Cino, with Bochner acting as the Caffe’s bookkeeper. When not occupied with the Caffe, Loubier and Cino would sometimes entertain themselves by dressing in drag and walking the streets to provoke fights with homophobic street thugs who typically ended much the worse for the encounter (Heide
and began their family, thus decreasing the time that they spent at the Cino. After their departure, the financial records for the Cino became haphazard at best, since Cino’s “system” consisted of tossing receipts and other records into a shoe box.

Sometime in 1959, Johnny Dodd became the resident lighting designer and waiter. According to Michael Smith, Dodd’s close friend and roommate for many years, Dodd was born in New Orleans, a product of a jazz family, but his family soon moved to Toronto; as a teen, he ran away from home, completing high school in Indiana. He followed friends to New York and met Cino when walking down Cornelia Street; within two days of the meeting, Dodd was assisting with lights, which, at that time, consisted of simply a rheostat to dim or brighten the lights (Gross 179). Over the years, Dodd and Jonathan Torrey who later assisted with lights added more and more equipment, often by convincing Cino to purchase a fixture or two when the funds were available, though sometimes the procurement of fixtures may have been through less legitimate means.

Michael Smith recalls Dodd:

Dark of hair and eyes, small, quick, vivid, he wove the room together as he maneuvered among the tables with his tray and his little change apron. Then he perched himself at the light board and ran the show...

It was largely Johnny’s personal magnetism that kept me going back to the Cino... (Smith, “John P. Dodd, 1941-91” n. pag.)

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12 In an interview, Dodd told Tillie Gross that he met Cino in 1959; Smith recalls Dodd telling him that the meeting was sometime later than that.
Though he became a lighting designer of some note, forming 14th Street Stage Lighting and designing for many rock concerts and national and international stage productions, Dodd was largely self-taught, with the exception of a few lessons from Nikola Cernovich:

It was through Joe [Cino] that I learned about lighting, and became interested. There were no lighting designers in the fifties, except perhaps, Jean Rosenthal. But modern dance happened, and they needed lighting for their concerts. Joe knew Nick Cernowitch [sic], who worked with Merce Cunningham, and he sent me to Nick to take lessons.... (Gross 179)

Dodd quickly became one of the central figures at the Cino, though by the mid-sixties his attention had begun to shift to other venues as well.

Sometime after meeting Cino, Dodd introduced a friend, Kenny Burgess, who had studied art in Indianapolis. Burgess became the dishwasher and poster designer (he sometimes worked as an usher at a theatre on 57th Street to help support himself). Because of the legal actions by the City of New York, Burgess intentionally created posters that were difficult to read so that only those persons who understood the complicated designs would be able to decipher precisely what was being offered; in creating the posters, Burgess pioneered what has since been called the “hippy style.” In addition to designing many of the Cino posters, he was an artist who worked primarily in collages.

Though Burgess designed many of the posters for shows, authors often had to design their own. Thus, for example, Lanford Wilson designed the poster for This is the Rill Speaking, but signed it as Walter Tate, assuming that it would look more

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professional to have the poster created by an artist other than the playwright. He chose the name “Tate” because it was his mother’s maiden name; he may have taken “Walter” from his step-father’s name (Scrapbook, 101). Posters seldom gave the dates of performance, since shows were often extended. As the Cino matured, posters became easier to read, leaving behind the complex, arcane designs of Burgess (though his collages still graced the Cino’s walls).

Throughout its existence, the Caffe remained on the edge of financial collapse; the first months of its operation were so financially precarious that Cino to worked a day job until 1960. An exceptionally fast typist, he worked in the office of the American Laundry Machinery Company (it was through American Laundry employee George Marino that Robert Dahdah, who directed the most successful of the Cino’s shows, met the struggling coffeehouse owner); later, Cino may have worked at the Music Inn on West Fourth Street (Gross 167). From his job, Cino would rush to Cornelia Street, often stopping at the Bleecker Street Bakery for pastries, at Murray’s (across Cornelia Street) for cheese, or at another supplier for ham for the sandwiches he served. His schedule was daunting, working days at the Laundry and evenings to the early hours of the morning at the Caffe, with only a few hours of sleep each night. Robert Dahdah recalls an instance in which the exhausted Cino fell over in his chair and went to sleep on the floor while working at the Laundry; the other employees (including his supervisor) quietly worked around him, stepping over the sleeping man when needed, but without disturbing him.
Though Cino’s rent was relatively modest (less than $100 per month), he often had difficulty paying it, relying on friends such as Joseph Davies to assist (Gross 167). According to Loubier, “He never made money. . . . [I]t was through Josie, the landlady’s, tolerance that we were there. She’d come down at night, in her robe and curlers—‘Joe, when you gonna pay the fuckin’ rent?’ And she’d sit down and say, ‘Is the play on?’” (8).

Until he installed soundproofing, Cino constantly struggled to keep the noise level as low as possible to avoid disturbing residents of the building during late performances. He sometimes urged patrons, for example, to adapt the practice of snapping their fingers rather than applauding. When the noise became excessive, Josie would bang on the floor above them or, if necessary, come down (in her robe, of course) to complain, often staying for the rest of the show.

When entertainment became a regular feature at the Caffe is uncertain, though different kinds of entertainment were probably offered almost from the opening. Very early in the Cino’s history, a fortune teller moved from table to table reading Tarot cards. At some point, Taylor Mead, the “homosexual clown” (Kempton 19) and star of various Warhol and other underground films, read poetry there, as did Butterfly McQueen, the African-American actress famous for her role in Gone with the Wind. Some of the performances seem to have been early examples of “happenings,” as, for example, the pro-athlete who dressed in drag and tore a telephone book in half while reciting a monologue. Many of the early performances were improvised. Speaking at the 1985 exhibit at Lincoln Center, Stoler told of the New Year’s Eve on which nothing
was scheduled, so she and a few other people got together and devised an evening’s entertainment, the highlight of which was the auction of a slave girl. When time for the auction came about, the slave girl, heavily veiled, walked on the stage and was auctioned to the highest bidder in the audience. As the winner waited expectantly, the veils were removed, one by one, to reveal Joe Davies. Performative events often continued after-hours as Cino and others would dance, gradually stripping until they were completely nude. Mona of Mona’s Royal Roost, a tavern across Cornelia Street and a favorite of Cino regulars, would occasionally bring over patrons who would pay to watch the dances. One of the hotly contested rumors about the Cino is the extent to which the dances evolved over time into drug-hazed orgies. Some suggest that, at least late in the Cino’s history, orgies were rather commonplace. Others, while acknowledging the open sexuality typical of the sixties, flatly deny that such events ever took place, sometimes arguing that such stories reflect the actions of their narrators outside the Cino—that those who speak of the orgies have overlaid a template onto the Cino reflecting their experience in backroom bars and bathhouses rather than their experience in the Cino.

In addition to the performative events during the early years of the Caffe. Cino hosted several art shows, one of the first of which was of work by Esther Travers, mother of singer Mary Travers of the folk group Peter, Paul, and Mary. Travers, who lived six flights above the Cino, painted in a “musing, metaphysical manner” (Scrapbook 107); she also appeared in the only production Cino is known to have directed for a theatre other than his own (Tennessee Williams’s Auto da Fe, March
1963, at La Mama). Dishwasher and poster-designer Kenny Burgess was given three art shows in which to display his work.

In an interview in 1965, Cino credited a group called “Chamber Theatre” with the first regular performances at the Cino, though his comments are hardly a ringing endorsement of their success:

We started doing poetry readings and we had the Risa Corsin [sic] Chamber Theatre Group. It turned out to be a bunch of flunky poets. What a farce! They were given every second Sunday, a matinee and an evening. This went on maybe for five months. (Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 14)

So little was known about the Chamber Theatre that the 1985 exhibit of Cino memorabilia at Lincoln Center by the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts ignored them and other poetry readings. Yet it can be argued convincingly that Caffe Cino as a theatrical venue and off-off-Broadway as a movement owe more to the history of poetry readings at coffeehouses than to the traditions of Broadway, off-Broadway, or the little theatre movement.

Chamber Theatre (at one point called the Chamber Players) started at Caffe Cino under the direction of Rissa Korsun, a stocky, “Mother-Earth-Goddess type” (Switkes) sometimes called “The Bearded Lady” by Cino regulars because of a physical condition which caused her to have an unusually heavy growth of facial hair (Lovullo). The group’s name probably has a dual origin: their performances were intended for small, intimate spaces much like chamber music (in addition to being an actor, Elliott Levine, a key player for the group, is a photographer and violinist); furthermore, the name alludes to a theatre in Israel named the Chamber Theatre. Korsun recruited performers
by placing a poster in the window of the Cino to which at least two of the primary
performers, Willy
Switkes and Elliott
Levine, responded.

Their
performances may
have started as
early as February
1959, though they
were certainly
underway by
March 1, 1959,
when they
presented “Stories
and Tales from
Jewish Life” with
Korsun, Allegra

Figure 2 Program provided by Willy Switkes.

Jostad, Elliott Levine, Gordon Matthews, and Willy Switkes. An undated poster for a
reading of French surrealist poetry probably predates this performance and is the only
instance in which the troupe’s name is listed as Chamber Players. As indicated in the
program in Figure 2, performances by the Chamber Theatre consisted of readings of
anthologized poems, mime performances, story-telling (“animal stories for sophisticated
adults"), and similar events. Korsun directed and produced the shows using only her first name. Though she was a poet and illustrator (Figure 3), the group read only published work by other authors. They performed first at 4:00 and again at 8:30, after a meeting to revise their strategy based upon the results of the first performance (Levine). Since most of the readers were aspiring actors, they tended to add dramatic flourishes to their performances. Neither a stage nor specialized lighting was available—Switkes recalls refocusing tract lighting used to illuminate the art on the walls so that it illuminated readers. Actors were not paid for their performances, though they were often given free food (a practice that continued throughout the Caffe’s history). Despite Cino’s disparaging remark regarding the “bunch of flunky poets,” Levine argues that the group was quite popular: “We played to S.R.O. houses, with people waiting on the sidewalk for seats to become vacant. Along with laughter and applause, flashbulbs kept popping, and sales of food and drink were lively. Our only pay were light meals on the house” (letter from Levine to Richard Buck, 8mwez x n.c. 27,646 #21, Caffe Cino). Switkes recalls one of the highlights of the performances for him was the time in which Butterfly McQueen was in the audience.
Born Jewish, Korsun converted to the Bahia Faith in the 1950s (she sometimes opened the Cino programs with a Bahia prayer), and ultimately to Protestantism after a troubled period in which she concluded that neither the Jewish nor Bahia community had been supportive. Though she was briefly an intimate of Cino and Loubier, she had split with them by the fall of 1959. She had a tendency to anger coffeehouse owners, perhaps accounting for Cino’s disparaging tone when he talked of her. Neither Levine nor Switkes appeared in theatrical productions at the Cino after their experience with the Chamber players since both began accepting only paying jobs shortly after Korsun’s group dissolved; and neither remembers dramatic productions being presented in the Caffe during the period in which they offered readings. The group split sometime after they ended their work at the Cino, though Switkes and Levine remained friends with Korsun, joining her for a reading in her hospital room shortly before her death in 1977.

By the end of Korsun’s work at the Cino, the Coffeehouse Wars had begun in earnest, the central question being whether or not the entertainment offered by the establishments fell (as the City contended) under provisions relating to cabarets (provisions which grew out of the prohibition era):

Basing his case in part on historical precedent, Cohen [attorney for the coffeehouses] insisted that references to “cabarets” had been introduced into local legislation in the 1920’s to control the flood of speakeasies. From that time on, he said, the term has come to refer to those establishments where entertainment, food, and alcoholic beverages are present. Since espresso houses do not serve liquor, Cohen’s contention was that the police had extended their authority without cause. (Ellison 1)
If the readings and performances they offered met the legal definition of
“entertainment,” coffeehouses would have been required to purchase a $150 cabaret
license, with employees and entertainers having been required to be fingerprinted and to
purchase a $2 identification card from the Police Department.

After a flurry of summonses to coffeehouses early in 1959, the City suffered a
setback in its efforts to control the establishments when Magistrate Walter J. Bayer
ruled on April 13 that the Epitome, a Bleecker Street coffeehouse, had not violated the
law by holding poetry readings; other courts, however, ruled in favor of the city, thereby
establishing unclear, inconsistent judicial precedents. After pressure from coffeehouse
patrons and limited success in the courts, Deputy Police Commissioner William Ames
announced in June 1959 that the Department would no longer cite coffeehouses, reading
a “non-beat poem” of his own:

> Technically, a beatnik spouting poetry is an entertainer under the law.
> But though in violation, to the cops he’s just a bore.
> He can talk throughout the night if he doesn’t incite to riot.
> We hope he keeps talking till his audience yells quiet. (“Police Take
> Heat off Cool Poetry” 31)

Though a coffeehouse offered to let him read his poetry in it, Ames declined: “It was
like he passed it up, man” (“Police Have Heart” 1). The truce between the Police
Department and the coffeehouses was short-lived. Police officials were soon dispensing
additional summonses, including one on October 4 to the Figaro which presented
classical music concerts. During a Schubert trio, two policemen entered, stopped the
performance, and issued a citation to the coffeehouse. Not to be deprived of his concert,
one patron invited the performers and patrons to his apartment where they finished the
concert. With occasional lulls, the Coffeehouse War continued through the sixties.

It is unclear whether the Cino continued performances in 1959 after Korsun left
and as the Coffeehouse War was brewing. The next events that can definitely be dated
are the poetry readings in 1960 led by figures such as George Economou, David Antin,
and Robert Kelly. Economou and others of the group, including Antin who lived across
the street, were regular patrons of Caffe Cino. Several of the them had been involved
with The Chelsea Review but had begun disassociating themselves from it because its
editors had decided to focus more on prose than poetry. Gathered at the Cino one
evening, a group including Economou (then a graduate student at Columbia) and
husband-wife team Robert and Joan Kelly decided to start their own journal. In
choosing a name for it, they sought to reflect their interest in the roots of the European
poetry which they admired, thus choosing “Trobar,” a word from the Middle Ages
literally meaning “to find.” The root for words such as “troubadour,” “trobar” became
associated with poetry during the Middle Ages, perhaps because the troubadour
improvised (or “found”) poetry. The journal was in print from 1960 through 1964,
eventually expanding to include the Trobar Press which published important collections
of poetry.

With Cino’s support, the group began a series of poetry readings sponsored by
the Trobar and held every Tuesday at the Cino. Though readings may have been held
earlier, the first advertised in the “What’s On” section of The Village Voice was on
Tuesday, March 23, 1960, at 9:30, with Economou and Armand Schwerner; the last
advertised reading by the group was held on May 17, 1960 with Economou and Robert Kelly (though it is unclear if that is actually the last reading or only the last advertisement for the events). Typically one or two poets read from her/his work each week, including, in addition to those persons mentioned, Jerome Rothenberg, David Antin, Paul Blackburn, and (perhaps) Rochelle Owens. The highlight of the events was an evening of medieval poetry and jazz. Blackburn read his troubadour translations while Schwerner played the clarinet, Jimmy Weeks played the saxophone, and a now unknown person played the bass. The readings by the Trobar poets were short lived because Cino’s interest shifted to the dramatic performances which were, by May 1960, occurring each weekend. Furthermore, the poetry scene was quickly shifting from the West Village to the East Village.

Determining when performances of plays began at the Caffe is impossible, though it is clear that Cino had not intended to start a theater:

My idea . . . was always to start with a beautiful, intimate warm, non-commercial, friendly atmosphere where people could come and not feel pressured or harassed. I also thought anything could happen. I knew a lot of painters, so my thought immediately was, I’ll hang their work. I was thinking of a café with poetry readings, with lectures, maybe with dance concerts. The one thing I never thought of was fully staged productions of plays. I thought of doing readings, but I never thought any of the technical things would be important. (Smith, “Joe Cino’s World Goes Up” 14)

In his essay on Joe Cino, Douglas Gordy includes a piece of misinformation (very possibly started by Cino himself) which appeared early in the study of the Caffe and has been so frequently repeated as to be accepted as truth: “Consensus has it that the first theatrical offerings were initiated by an acting student named Phoebe Mooney: she and
other thespians would try out monologues and short scenes before performing them for their classes" (308). Mooney, however, does not accept credit for starting the dramatic performances, since her first visit to the Cino was to audition for scenes directed by Andy Milligan. She was, however, an important early performer in Cino productions, appearing in scenes from Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde. Her most significant work there was an adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* in January 1962, for which she was adaptor, director, and performer.

In his interview in 1965 (the most extensive ever documented), Cino set forth the steps by which the Caffe’s production schedule developed. First were the performances by Korsun’s group:

> What came right after that was Sunday night readings at a long pine table. The first reading we had was Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit*. They did it with three chairs and three scripts. The room was packed, but I didn’t even think of doing it again. I thought there were people who didn’t want to see this, and I didn’t want to disturb the rhythm of the room. But that was a Sunday reading, and soon after that we added Monday. It was one performance a night, and before long we added Tuesday, and so on. The hardest thing was to avoid having performances on the weekend. It took almost two years to get from those Sunday readings to a full week. It was always something different every week. They went into staging right away. (Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 14)

In this discussion Cino suggests a progressive development of the performance schedule, beginning with one performance on Sunday evening, quickly adding performances on subsequent days of the week, increasing the number of performances each day to 2 or 3, ultimately reaching a staggering 16 performances per week (two performances every day with an additional performance on weekend nights). In the broadest sense, the production schedule did develop in such a way, though not quite so
smoothly as is often implied. Comments by Cino, Joseph Davies, and others point to
Cino’s intent to have a variety of different informative or entertainment events: lectures,
poetry readings, play readings, and so forth with something different every night of the
week. Now, we can piece together a schedule of only those events for which some
record remains, probably a fairly limited list of the events. The following outlines the
development of the performance schedule:

- Poetry readings, beginning probably in February 1959; 4:00 and 8:30, Sunday;
- Play readings; possibly beginning in 1959 (by Saturday, February 7, if the dates
  offered by the New York Public Library are correct);
- First advertisement in the “What’s On” section of The Village Voice on February
  17, for a Play Reading offered on Sunday, February 21, 1960, at 7:30; dramatic
  activity becomes a fixture on Sundays (though not always since The Village
  Voice for March 2, 1960 advertises Poetry Reading of Light Verse for the
  following Sunday);
- First review (Robert Dahdah’s version of No Exit), December 15, 1960;
- Addition of Monday to schedule for play readings (also at 7:30), by March 21.
  1960;
- Begin series of poetry readings sponsored by Trobar on Tuesday at 9:30, by
  03/29/60, (anecdotal evidence suggests that other such activity may have
  occurred on Thursday nights as well);
- First announcement of an original play, March 30. 1960;
- Monday night play reading moved to 9:00, April 25, 1960;
• Last advertisement for a poetry reading, April 11, 1960 (held on April 17);
• Extension of play readings to Saturday at 9:30 on June 18, 1960;
• Regular schedule of performances on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday at 9:30 by July 1960;
• New “Café Drama” list with limited details begins running in The Village Voice, September 22, 1960;
• Shows running Saturday to Tuesday, by October 1960;
• First review of an original play (Talbot’s Herrengasse), February 2, 1961;
• Shows opening on Sunday and running through Saturday, by November 1961;
• Shows given 16 performances weekly by July of 1962 (probably much earlier), with a schedule that would remain for some time: two performances nightly at 9:00 and 11:00 with additional performances Friday and Saturday late night (first at 12:30 am then at 1:00 am).

Though the Cino initially offered only readings of playscripts, fully staged plays quickly became standard; when the transition occurred remains unclear.13 Matt Baylor recalls his performance with Peter Ratray in scenes from Tea and Sympathy in 1959 or 1960 as being the first staged production.14 Jeremy Johnson (who performed at Caffe

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13The problem in identifying a developmental genealogy may, in fact, derive from the term “fully staged.” Because of the extremely limited space and budget, the distinction between “fully staged” and “staged reading” has somewhat less sharpness than it might in other venues. In neither case would sets, props, and so forth have been particularly elaborate, and participants were often under-rehearsed amateurs.

14Baylor does not recall exactly when the performances occurred, though it seems possible that he refers to the performances in May 1960.
Cino under the name "Larry" recalls performing in 1959 in *Separate Tables* in what he believes to be the first production at the Cino. He does not, however, recall a time in which plays were read, rather than staged. Quite possibly, many of the events listed as "play readings" were, in fact, fully staged productions.

To determine which works were actually performed at the Cino is another difficult task. Albert Poland and Bruce Mailman relied heavily on Johnny Dodd in developing their list of productions because he had been a fixture at the Caffe for so many years. Unfortunately, according to Marshall Mason, Dodd thought that everyone was taking the work of the Cino too seriously, so he made up the titles of shows when he was unsure what played there or when he thought a play should have appeared there. The most reliable source of information is *The Village Voice*, though even its accuracy is limited. Beginning on February 17, 1960, the Cino advertised fairly consistently for the remainder of its existence, though it did sometimes go for several weeks without placing an ad (including the summer of 1960 when what has been accepted as the first original play is said to have run). While the missing weeks pose a significant problem, an additional problem arises in that announced productions sometimes failed to show or closed early, thus forcing impromptu replacements. Furthermore, the format of *The Voice* changed several times, giving varying amounts of information, and directors were responsible for advertising, making announcements frustratingly inconsistent.

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15 Lawrence R. Johnson performed as Larry Johnson until he became a member of Actors Equity Association, at which time he changed his professional name because another member of Equity used "Larry Johnson."
As for the reading of *No Exit* which Cino describes as the first play reading, we no longer know the day or even year of that event, nor can we be sure whether any advertised production was the event to which Cino alludes. According to the announcements in *The Village Voice*, the play ran at least three times: in a reading on February 28, 1960, in a production that ran December 10 through December 13, 1960, and in a production directed by Joe Cino running May 5 through May 11, 1963. A February 2, 1961 review notes that Talbot's *Herrengasse* "marked the 50th straight week of one-act performances at the Caffe Cino" (Schmidt 12), which would place the first production around February 28, 1960 (the date of the advertised reading of *No Exit*).

Yet readings (and, perhaps, productions) occurred prior to that, including scenes from Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot* and Williams's *This Property is Condemned*, advertised in the *Village Voice* on February 17, 1960. The program for the New York Public Library notes the following productions preceding any of those listed in the *Voice*:

- Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory*, February 7, 1959;
- Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, February 7, 1959;
- Owen G. Arno's *The Street of Good Friends*, 1959; and

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16Michael Feingold considers the production in October 1960 of *The Street of Good Friends* to be the first new work to appear in the Cino's listings, though, in fact, the announcement in the March 30, 1960 issue lists *And the Dead Cry Lonely* as an original play.

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Poland and Mailman also list three productions occurring in 1959, though they do not give specific dates for them:

- Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* [sic];
- Owen G. Arno’s *The Street of Good Friends*; and
- Lady Gregory’s *Hyacinth Halvey*.

The reliability of these two sources on the dates of shows is open to question. It is particularly problematic that neither source notes the run of *The Street of Good Friends* in March 1960 or of *Hyacinth Halvey* in October 1960, thus at least raising the possibility that those productions were mistakenly attributed to the earlier year.

Though many of the same directors (Marshall Mason, Robert Dahdah, Richard Nesbitt, and Andy Milligan) worked frequently at the Cino during this period, the plays and production styles vary widely, from classics by Chekhov (*The Boor* in April 1960) to recent Broadway hits such as Ketti Frings’s 1958 Pulitzer Winning adaptation of *Look Homeward Angel* (June 1960). A great many of the productions were recent European hits, particularly those of the absurdist or other avant-garde movements: Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit* (February 1960), Giraudoux’s *Madwoman of Chaillot* (February 1960), and Pirandello’s *The Man with a Flower in His Mouth* (April 1961). Several of the European plays were written by gay men: Andre Gide’s *David and Bathsheba* (August 1961) and Jean Genet’s *Deathwatch* (October 1961). Other plays were by American gay men: William Inge’s *Bobolink for Her Spirit* (November 1960). Without a question, however, the most frequently performed playwright of the period was
Tennessee Williams, whose work is represented at least ten times and probably appeared more frequently than can now be documented.

While the plays themselves varied broadly, presentation also varied greatly, from highly experimental to quite realistic, often foregrounding issues of difference (particularly as they relate to sexuality). According to William Hoffman, the early Cino productions were not necessarily of “gay” plays, but “can only be described as homosexual in style” (xxiii). Elements that Hoffman associates with this style include “sexy,” “drag,” “frequent references to homosexuals,” “campy,” “witty,” “affirmed in a positive fashion the existence of gays,” and so forth (xxiv-xxv). Exemplifying this “homosexual” style is the work of Andy Milligan, often considered one of the key directors of this period; according to Robert Patrick, Milligan’s “Deathwatch was done near-nude, The Maids near-porno” (“The Other Brick Road” 3).

Regardless of which plays were performed, the Cino never obtained permission to perform the works and never paid royalties, sometimes resulting in disputes with agents and publishers. These confrontations were most often handled in a typical Cino style: by evading the issue, often by pretending ignorance. Thus, if a letter arrived from an agent or publisher (or, for that matter, Equity), it was often “lost” until the end of the last performance on closing night, when it suddenly and mysteriously reappeared to be opened and read; the announcement was then made that the production would have to close to avoid legal action. When a threatening telephone call came from an agent, Cino used whatever evasions he could to sidestep problems; a statement such as “How do I
know anything? I'm just the little, fat Italian dishwasher” seems to have served him well.

One of the best known such events involved Harold Pinter’s 1959 radio play A Slight Ache which appeared at Caffe Cino in December 1962. When Cino received an irate call from Pinter’s agent, he pleaded ignorance about everything relating to the production and the actors: “I don’t know anything about it; they just showed up.” The frustrated agent bellowed, “You mean to tell me that a fully rehearsed, fully costumed, fully lit Pinter production just happened to walk down Cornelia Street, just happened to turn into your Caffe, and just happened to step onto your stage and begin performing.” Despite the agent’s incredulity, his statement is remarkably close to the truth. As both Dahdah and actor Andrew Eliot recall, Ira Zuckerman assembled the cast and rehearsed the show without having a commitment for a performance space, making arrangements with Joe Cino for the performance very shortly before its opening. Thus, the fully rehearsed, costumed, and lit show may not have just happened to have walked into the Cino, but it did so on the spur of the moment, without prior planning.

Many of the works presented during the first years were adaptations of short stories or novels (Neil Flanagan’s version of Voltaire’s Candide, for example) or abbreviated versions of full-length plays (Robert Dahdah’s adaptation of Abraham Shiffrin’s Angel in the Pawnshop). Among the figures who presented such works was

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17 The story was told by Robert Dahdah both at the 1985 exhibit by the New York Public Library and in a private interview with me. The quotations are recreations based upon the story as told to him by Joe Cino.
Alan Lysander James who adapted and directed a series of productions (some of which played as late as 1966), based on the life and works of Oscar Wilde:

- *The Wit and Humor of Oscar Wilde* (also called *The World of Oscar Wilde*) on October 21, 1962;
- *Oscar Revisited: The Live of Oscar Wilde* on December 2, 1962;
- *Triumphs and Tragedies by Oscar Wilde* on October 19, 1965;
- *Fairies I Have Met: A New “Wing” Play* on December 21, 1965; and
- *Dearest of All Boys* on August 30, 1966.

James’s productions were noted as much for their performers as for anything else: “A sweet older man, Allan [sic] James, with a cast of exquisite pretty boys, then mounted *The World of Oscar Wilde* and *Oscar Revisited*, romantic readings of the great martyr’s love poems and letters” (“Where Gay Plays Began” p 26).

One of the major factors contributing to the diversity of work at the Caffe was Cino’s method of play selection which was, to say the least, idiosyncratic, often done without any review of the script whatever, sometimes before the work had even been written. As the Cino was flooded with scripts when playwrights learned of it as a venue for producing new plays, Joe Cino developed neither a system for handling the incoming scripts nor a means of selecting shows for the calendar. According to Neil Flanagan who frequently performed at the Cino, “No judgement was made on these scripts, often a play produced was done because Joe [Cino] liked the person’s face. He had a way of reading people, and usually knew what you needed and wanted. It is in that way, he would agree to give you a date [for the performance of a play]” (Gross

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Furthermore, Cino exerted little artistic control over the productions; he provided space, lighting, sometimes free food, and that was about all. Everything else was dependent upon each director. Rehearsals were often held away from the site because of the need to avoid inspectors and other City officials during the day.

One of the earliest performers at Caffe Cino was Larry Johnson, who worked briefly as a disk jockey in Crowley, Louisiana, after graduating from Leland Powers School of Radio, Television, and Theatre in 1956. He then served in the military as an actor entertaining the troops, after which he moved to East 14th Street. There he met Cino at poetry readings (his first meeting was on the rooftop of an apartment building where a friend of his—and most likely Cino himself—lived). Johnson’s first play at the Cino was *Separate Tables*; he went on to appear in a variety of productions, including

- a two man comedy show with Joe Mitchell (to give each man equal billing, the poster in one window of the Cino advertised “An Evening of Comedy with Joe Mitchell Assisted by Larry Johnson” while in the window on the other side, a poster advertised “An Evening of Comedy with Larry Johnson Assisted by Joe Mitchell”;
- A production of *A Moon for the Misbegotten* directed by Richard Nesbitt as his thesis production in the graduate program at Hunter College;
- Two productions of Jean Anouilh’s *Antigone*.

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18 As noted above, Johnson performed as Larry at the Cino but began using the name Jeremy when he joined Equity.

19 Johnson recalls this performance as being in 1959 and believes it to be the first production at the Cino.
One of the more intriguing productions with which Johnson worked was George S. Kaufman’s *If Men Played Cards as Women Do*, for which he was both director and a performer. Other members of the cast included Fred Willard and Dean Selmier. Now a successful performer in such films as *Dropping Out* (2000), *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999), and *Waiting for Guffman* (1996), Willard appeared in other Cino productions, including Tennessee Williams’s *Mooney’s Kid Don’t Cry* in 1961. Along with a career on the stage and in films (both here and abroad), Selmier seems to have used his acting as a cover for his real career. In *Blow Away, A Killer's Story* (1979), his autobiography co-written with Mark Kram, Selmier claims to have been a hit man for a governmental agency while disguised as an actor. After a troubled record in the military, he was sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment for assaulting an officer. Sometime in 1960, Selmier received a visit from a nondescript man who resembled an insurance agent: “The kind of guy who sits across the coffee table from you with the actuarial tables in his brain . . .” (12). The man offered him a chance at freedom, but a chance that entailed working for him in “whatever the assignments are” (14), including murder. That day, Selmier walked out of the military prison and boarded a Greyhound bus headed to New York, the blemishes from his military record having been officially expunged by his new employers and a new career as an actor having been constructed as his cover.

Perhaps Johnson’s most important contribution to the history of the Cino came in 1960 when he introduced Joe Cino to a young, aspiring playwright named James Howard. Howard had written a play, *Flyspray*, which he wanted to stage.
considered the first original script produced at the Cino, the play appeared sometime during the summer of 1960, directed by Earl Sennett and starring James Howard, Al Greenfield, and Joe Davies (see Figure 4). According to Joe Davies, the play was part of a trilogy (along with Mound and a now forgotten play), though he is unsure whether the other two plays were performed. A statement on the poster suggests that they might have been; it refers to the production as “an original plays [sic] by James Howard,” the word “an” having been blacked-out (Poster for Flyspray MWEZ++ n.c. 5268). There is also some confusion over who was involved in the production since Johnson recalls appearing in it with Davies, though Johnson’s name does not appear on the poster.

According to both Davies and Johnson, the play satirizes capitalism and military proliferation: “The play is set in a desolate bombed out area of the world; James Howard played a man who sold fly spray after the devastation. . . . He gave a pep talk . . . encouraging them to buy this fly spray and everything would be all right” (Johnson). The play ended with the explosion of an atomic bomb so realistic that passers-by would sometimes file a report of an explosion with the police (Davies). After its run at the

\[2^{0}\] As noted elsewhere, And the Dead Cry Lonely appeared before Flyspray and may have been an original script.
Cino, it played at different socialist events and radical rallies throughout New York City. Despite the play's success, however, Howard soon after left New York to enter graduate school to study psychology.

As the Cino became increasingly involved in theatrical productions, the enforcement of ordinances against coffeehouses and unlicensed cabarets increased. By June 1960, the Fire Department had closed two popular sites, The Gaslight and the Bizarre. As the year progressed, the tempo of legal action increased; city officials issued summonses freely to owners, to serving staff, and to cashiers. In the fall, the Figaro was cited again for illegally presenting concerts even though its earlier citation had been dismissed for lack of evidence. Jack Diether describes the outcome of the second legal action:

Judge Bayer's decision, interestingly enough to musical people, was not based on the arguments concerning the intent and general scope of the law, but purely on aesthetic considerations. Serious chamber music, he declared, could not be classified as "entertainment" under the meaning of the law. Thus, high musical art had laid steam-roller bureaucracy low. Orpheus had tamed the furies again. (46)

The Figaro, then, was allowed to proceed with its concerts. By September, city officials targeted coffeehouses for legal action every night of the week; also in September, fourteen Village enterprises formed the Coffee House Trade Association, electing David Gordon of Phase 2 as its president. The Association sought legitimacy and legal rights for its members, though with little success.

By the end of 1960, off-off-Broadway and café theatres were facing a dual legal threat, on one side from the City of New York and on the other from Actors Equity
Association. In October, the Fire Department again closed a popular coffeehouse, Take 3 at which *Stewed Prunes*, one of the most successful OOB shows, had originated and was still playing. Perhaps even more threatening since the establishments were learning to adapt to actions by the City, Equity increased pressure on off-off-Broadway sites when it ruled that its members could not appear in productions unless paid the minimum weekly rate of $45. Since few of the sites actually paid a wage of any sort, actors depended upon donations from the audience for the small sums they earned.

Most actors worked for an average of $16 or 17 each week, far less than union scale: the Coffee House Trade Association offered a twofold defense from Equity’s actions: none of the café theatres was sufficiently profitable to pay union scale and the establishments provided a service to their performers by giving undiscovered, inexperienced talent venues in which to gain experience and exposure. Equity, however, was unrelenting, threatening to punish any union members who appeared for less than scale. Because of this pressure, actors often appeared under assumed names: Davies sometimes played under the name J. O. Davis; during the run of Doric Wilson’s *And He Made a Her*, Alan Zamp, the only Equity member of the cast, had to change his name four times ("Everything But the Dates" 7).

A point of some debate about Caffe Cino concerns whether or not it was subject to the same degree of legal action as were other similar establishments, with many people alleging that Joe Cino received protection (as Feingold put it, “capital F Family”)

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21 *The New York Times* compared the action by the Fire Department to similar actions in 1954 against Circle in the Square when off-Broadway was emerging.
because of his family’s reputed Mafia associations (Feingold, Gordy 304, and others). As will be explored in a subsequent chapter, we have grounds for believing that Cino’s family did have Mafia connections. We do not, however, have grounds for believing that Joe Cino’s operation either benefitted or suffered from those connections. Caffe Cino may or may not have faced fewer legal actions than other establishments, but it was clearly not immune to such actions: its name appears occasionally in news accounts of police action, and Diether notes that “[T]he owner has received four summonses, twice as many as the Figaro” (46).

According to Johnny Dodd, legal action was not infrequent:

> We got fines for not paying fines. There was once or twice when we received a deluge of summonses, but Joe, and most of the others, were not around during the day or not up early enough to go down to the department to take care of them. Everyone had been up most of the night or had day jobs. Nor was there anyone that had the personality to cope with such matters. Ellen [Stewart of Cafe LaMama] faced it. Joe couldn’t. (Gross 175)

Furthermore, several factors most likely made the Cino a less conspicuous target for official action. It was located in a quiet area, a few blocks from the carnivalesque scene on Bleecker Street which was the primary target of neighborhood complaints; its operation was more sedate, neither employing a Barker such as that used at the Bizarre, nor catering to the tourist or Beat trade. Furthermore, Cino took some precautions to avoid policemen and inspectors by operating only after regular business hours (at its peak of success, the Caffe was open from 5 pm to 5 am). He encouraged rehearsals outside the Cino so that no one would be there during regular office hours when officials were most likely to be at work. And Cino was not above a little deception to
avoid legal complications. When he happened to be in the Caffe during an inspection, he typically handled the situation much as he handled calls from writers' agents: "What do I know? I'm just the little fat, Italian dishwasher. I don't know nothing" (Dahdah).

Amidst these troubles with Equity and the City, the winter of 1960 brought the Cino its first recognition in print when Robert Dahdah's production of *No Exit* was reviewed by *The Village Voice*. One of the first of many productions at the Cino by Dahdah, *No Exit* reflects the difficulties characteristic of working at the Caffe. On the night that Seymour Krim visited to review the work, the lead actor had left so suddenly that the replacement, Bob Castagan, had not had time to learn his lines. Thus, he appeared with script in hand. Krim gave the production a good review, though he was less thrilled with Sartre's work than with Dahdah's: "P. S. In all frankness, I don't think Sartre's brain can compensate for his lack of humor and juiceless tone as far as a U. S. audience goes" (11). Nor was Krim (who had some months previously written a passionate defense of homosexuality) offended by what would later be referred to as the "homosocial orientation" of the Caffe:

The Café [sic] Cino is a big, roomy, informal coffee house on Cornelia Street. It has a precious air—or had the night I was there—with incense burning and the faggots camping (a big boy in glasses offered his hand to be kissed by a smaller guy wearing a single earring and chewing a toothpick yet); but in spite of all the froufrou, director Robert Dahdah had staged a responsible version of Sartre's *No Exit*. (11)

In a conclusion that helps distance him from the "faggots camping," Krim says of the performances of Moletta Reagan and Elizabeth Shanklin, "[T]he girls made the evening worthwhile for this bachelor" (11).

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In addition to being significant as one of Dahdah’s first works at the Cino, No Exit was important as the first work seen at the Cino by playwright Robert Heide; it was also actress Mary Boylan’s first experience of work done at the coffeehouse. Though the young Heide, still fairly new to New York, having arrived shortly after graduation from Northwestern University in 1959, quickly became a regular of the Caffe, the first production of his own work was not done there until several years later. Like Dahdah, her partner of many years until her death on February 21, 1983, Boylan quickly became a regular performer for the coffeehouse, appearing in numerous productions, including Arno’s The Street of Good Friends in which she appeared with Joe Cino in one of his few acting roles (he was the porter who took Boylan’s bags into their hotel room). A gifted comedic actress who bore a striking resemblance to Eleanore Roosevelt, Boylan is now best known for her appearance in Women Behind Bars and in the film of The Night of the Iguana (as Miss Peebles). Born in Plattsburgh, New York, and educated at Mount Holyoke College, with theatre training at Herbert Berghof Studio, the New School, and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, she did so much work off-off-Broadway that she was sometimes called “the Mother Superior of the Underground” (Boylan Clipping File).

The first review of an original Cino play (Story Talbot’s Herrengasse) appeared two months after Krim’s review. Voice critic Sandra Schmidt described the conventions Talbot used in the play: “If you are a playwright and you want to say a lot of weighty things without seeming ponderous you say them with a fairy tale. Preferably you use a couple of prostitutes and/or artists, a ‘character’ or so, and a convertible villain. A little
one-to-one symbolism never hurts” (12). She concludes, however, that the play is not so trite as her description makes it appear. Immediately after its run at the Cino, Herrengasse moved to the Cinderella Club for a long run, perhaps the first of the Cino plays to transfer to another theatre.

By the spring of 1961, off-off-Broadway had become sufficiently established to gain the attention of a major national journal; Theatre Arts ran an article entitled “Fresh Grounds for Theatre” by Henry Hewes. According to Hewes, the 1960-61 season presented a third category to New York’s theatre which already included Broadway and off-Broadway shows:

It is something called coffeehouse theatre, and at the moment this theatrical brush fire is contained within a few Greenwich Village blocks. There, in way-out espresso palaces where ghoulish-looking girls serve exotically spiced coffee at exotically spiced prices, owners with nothing to lose are giving house room to productions by unproven writers and performers. (20)

Though it now seems likely that Caffe Cino was engaged in productions earlier, Hewes credits the start of the movement to David Gordon’s Phase 2, a coffeehouse started for the purpose of presenting low-cost productions of dramatic and review material. Hewes’s article gave the Cino its first national exposure (the article opens with a full-page photograph of Fred Willard at the Cino in Mooney’s Kid Don’t Cry).

Though several playwrights had already presented original work at the Cino, Doric Wilson became the first playwright to be indelibly associated with the Caffe. Fresh from a small wheat town in rural Washington, the young playwright had moved to
New York to study set and costume design, bringing with him the script of his own one-act play. A friend, Regina Oliver, took him to meet Joe Cino:

Joe was busy behind the counter. He smiled, asked me my birth sign, again smiled (with marked patience) when I answered Pisces, made an incomprehensible comment to someone (Charles Loubier) in an impossible language (Simuloto), gave me a cup of cappuccino (my first), and a performance date, and politely refused to read my offered script.

Regina moved me to a table. I asked her where the stage was, she pointed to an eight foot by eight foot space of open floor. An aria from Tosca ended on the juke box, a Greek song began. ("Everything But the Dates" 7)

Charles Loubier remembers the event slightly differently:

A well-dressed young man appeared at the front door (of the Cino one day). He walked briskly over to the table (where I was sitting). He was really quite young, very red-haired and (his eyes) literally twinkled. “Hello,” he said in a clipped accent, “my name is Doric Wilson and this is what I do.” He plopped a big black-covered manuscript down in front of me. “I do other things, but this is what I’d like to do here. . . .” (8MWEZ x n.c. 27646 #20, Caffe Cino (NYC) Scrapbook, RE NYPL Exhibit, March 5-May 11, 1985, p.108)

The play was And He Made a Her.

As Wilson’s description of his first introduction to the Cino notes, the “stage” consisted of a small area among the tables and could be moved, thus permitting the playing area to be in the round or thrust, as desired for each production. Later, according to Joseph Davies, Andy Milligan added the first raised stage. If it was the same platform used when Lanford Wilson arrived, it was made of wooden crates such as those in which soft drinks were shipped. The raised stage could be placed in any part of the room, but the crates made for a somewhat unstable floor for the playing area since
they were not attached to each other or to anything else until Lanford Wilson attached them together for one of his productions.

In the bare eight foot by eight foot stage area used when Doric Wilson arrived, Paxton Whitehead directed *And He Made a Her*, which opened on March 18, 1961. Whitehead quickly cast the male roles from Cino regulars, but he had difficulty casting the role of Eve, finally settling on Jane Lowry, whom one of the other cast members had met at another audition. Lowry became one of Joe Cino’s most beloved actresses.

Wilson describes opening night:

Marshall Mason remembers the date of my first opening night—I don’t. I remember Mona’s Royal Roost. Mostly I remember Lowry’s entrance as Eve—a vision sheathed in apple green, sensually, elegantly toeing [sic] her way (in three inch heels) from the Cino’s front door, through the tables, and out into Johnny Dodd’s let-there-be-light to the waiting, less than convinced Adam of Larry Neil Clayton. (“Everything But the Dates” 7)

Set in “a part of paradise commonly called the garden district / After Adam’s usual afternoon nap” (manuscript in NYPL), *And He Made a Her* is an adaptation of the biblical story of Adam and Eve beginning immediately after her creation. Adam opens the play complaining, because, during the nap, God has taken one of his ribs. The creation of woman produces so much unrest in the garden that the angel Disenchantralista questions God’s sobriety for having made this new creature. Throughout, Adam remains obstinately defiant, refusing to have any contact with Eve and instructing her to describe what she wants: “so that once and for all time, I can tell you that I won’t let you have it” (20). Eve attempts different ways of reaching out to Adam: she appeals to him as an equal; she appeals to his intellect; she cites the Divine
plan; she tries to dominate him. None of her attempts work until she begins to play the role of seductress. Only when Adam sees her as a sexual object does he begin to accept her presence. In an interview with Clayton Delery, Wilson rejected the charge that the play is sexist; as Delery summarizes:

When this play was performed at the Cino some people received the impression that Wilson was saying that God intended men to relate to women primarily as sexual beings. However, that is precisely the reverse of the intention of the play. In the play it is man not God who has subjugated woman to her sexual role and man who refuses to see her in other ways. Ultimately it is a feminist message, not a chauvinistic one. (95)

The play was a huge success. Originally intended to run only one week, it was extended for an additional week and brought back for a return engagement.

Three months after *And He Made a Her*, Wilson opened *Babel, Babel, Little Tower* (June 1961), probably the first play written specifically for the Cino. At the time, the New York Police Department not only handed out summonses to coffeehouses but would sometimes physically stop performances. Wilson incorporated this "living history" into his production: After the actors in *Babel, Babel* had built a tower of the tables in the Cino, an actor (dressed as a policeman) entered. According to Wilson,

[A] coppish looking actor entered from Cornelia street, ad-libbed a fracas with the waiter/doorman (Scotty), demanded the actors put the tables back where they belonged. The actors... refused. Authority in blue destroyed the tower. Most of the audience thought it was for real. It was very convincing. Too convincing. Opening night a front table was occupied by strippers from Third Street. They were very protective of us innocents in theatre. As the actor playing the cop approached the stage, Sunny (her specialty was tassle [sic] twirling) kneed him in the groin. The show did go on—limpingly. The actor has since taken up Scientology. (Wilson 7)
As an unidentified reviewer noted, *Babel, Babel, Little Tower* is a “morality pastiche” which “has fun at the expense of organized religion, professional fund-raising, and the military mind” (unidentified clipping supplied by Wilson). As the characters look at the “tower” created from the tables, each interprets its significance in quite different terms; Saint Augustine sees it as a shrine to Mammon, Helen as a “cupola...of love” (25), Augustine as a “shrine of upliftance” (28), and so forth. Bringing together such classical figures as Helen Troy, Hector, and Agrippine Caesar with the medieval Christian Saint Augustine and the contemporary coffeehouse waitress Eppie, *Babel, Little Tower* reflects a form of textual and intertextual play that was to become popular at the Cino, mingling time, place, and aesthetic styles.

On September 1, 1961, Marshall Mason arrived in New York, almost immediately contacting Jane Lowry who had been his classmate at Northwestern. She invited him to attend the play in which she was performing “down on Cornelia Street.” Within the next day or two, Mason trekked down to see her in Doric Wilson’s *Now She Dances!*, a “short comedy in direct reference and indirect reply to *Salome* by Oscar Fingall [sic] O’Flahertie Wills Wilde” (copy of program supplied by author; see Figure 5). Mason was enchanted by the place, a small room seating only 50 people or so with its twinkling lights and tiny little area in the center of the room in which *Now She Dances* was being done on the floor more or less in the round. He was also captivated by the waiter Johnny Dodd, “a devilish sort of person” who refused to take

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22 Though Mason gave the year as 1960 in his interview, it would have to be 1961 if *Now She Dances* was playing.
anything too seriously. Mason was struck by Dodd’s long hair, making him look (so the
still naive Texan thought) like a woman. Mason returned regularly.

Doric Wilson’s

last play at the Cino

was Pretty People,

notable for two

reasons. First, the

young electrician

(Jonathan Torrey), who

worked on the set, was

new to the Caffe and

rumored to be Joe

Cino’s new lover;

Torrey quickly became

a central figure in the

history of the Caffe and

of Joe Cino. The

second significance of

the show is that a

breach developed between Cino and Wilson, largely as a result of an argument over
Cino’s desire to charge admission. Because of the complications it would cause with
Equity, Wilson opposed the charge and, after a heated argument, left, canceling a

Figure 5 Program for Now She Dances provided by Doric Wilson.

September 1961
scheduled revival of *And He Made a Her*. It was his last visit to the Caffe during Cino’s life. The night of Cino’s death in 1967 brought self-recrimination for Wilson: “I stood outside of it the night of Joe’s death, kicking the wall, too angry to cry, or crying too hard to harm much but my foot” (“Everything But the Dates” 7).

From his first work on Wilson’s play, through his last moments at the Caffe, a veil of mystery surrounds Torrey. As recently as 1998, Douglas Gordy described him as follows:

By the time the Caffe Cino was in full operation . . . Joe had become involved in a long-term, tempestuous relationship with a young man named Johnny Torry (whose name has alternately been printed as Torrey, Torre, Tory, and even Torres), who worked as a professional theatrical electrician. Torry seems to have been everything Joe prized in a partner and felt lacking in himself: the proverbial tall, dark, and handsome, but also educated (Patrick recalls Torry had a Ph.D.), and strongly masculine. (305)

Descriptions of Torrey vary widely, even among those who knew him well. He is typically described as being handsome and sensual, exceptionally masculine, wearing the sort of working-man’s style popular in gay circles a few decades later. Many people describe him as having dark hair and a somewhat olive complexion (suggestive of a Mediterranean descent); others say that he had dirty blonde hair that bleached very blonde during the summer. When he became a regular at the Cino, he was a young man of twenty in 1961 (born April 2, 1941) who had previously worked as an industrial electrician at Bean Fiber Glass Company in New Hampshire.

Though his own jobs tended to be blue collar, Torrey was adopted into and grew up in a family of remarkable learning and academic distinction. His adoptive father.
Norman Lewis Torrey, was appointed professor of French at Columbia University in 1937, eventually becoming Chairperson of the Department (his work won him an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Paris in 1951); Jonathan’s adoptive step mother, Elizabeth Bixler Torrey, was dean of the Yale School of Nursing; his cousin, Jane Wheelwright Torrey, is a well-known psychologist whose work has been influential in feminist studies; and his grandfather, David Clarence Torrey, was a well-known New England minister. The Torreys adopted Jonathan sometime after the death of their son by birth who was killed while sitting at a restaurant when a next-door laundromat was demolished by a gas explosion. Though it has been suggested that Jonathan may have also had a Ph.D., that seems most unlikely—his age and experience limit his opportunities for having finished college, much less having completed graduate school; furthermore, a perusal of Dissertation Abstracts International, shows Norman Lewis Torrey’s 1926 dissertation from Harvard University, “The English Critical Deists and Their Influence on Voltaire” and Jane Wheelwright Torrey’s 1952 dissertation from University of California at Berkeley “The Effect of Meaning and Organization on Reproductive Inhibition,” but contains no reference to any work by Jonathan.

Opinions about Jonathan Torrey’s personality are as sharply divergent as are descriptions of his physical appearance. Many people found him unsettling, even somewhat frightening, and attribute the primary problems in his relationship with Joe Cino to Torrey’s violent temper; others believe that Torrey has been maligned, often by _

23That no dissertation appears containing both the names “Jonathan” and “Torrey” can hardly be taken as definitive proof but, in conjunction with other evidence, strongly suggests that he never completed a Ph.D. program.
those who knew him the least. Drawn to sado-masochism, Torrey would, as Robert Patrick recalls, “strip, drip candle wax all over himself, turn to his target for the night, and ask them to peel him” (“The Other Brick Road” 3). His sexual proclivities sometimes led him into situations that those around him found disturbing: several Cino regulars recall the time that Torrey turned to them for advice regarding a man who wanted Torrey to murder him during their sex-play. With the exception of Andy Warhol and his Factory crowd, few figures involved in Caffe Cino have been as sharply criticized as has Torrey, perhaps, as some have suggested, because of jealousy over his close bond with Cino, or perhaps because of the darker streak he brought to the Cino. (Taka Nakano was so disconcerted by his presence that she discontinued her close association with Cino.) Undoubtedly, Torrey could become violent when angry, a fairly common occurrence in his tempestuous relationship with Cino: in one rage, he splashed paint throughout the coffeehouse, destroying many of the paintings hanging on the walls; in another, he may have set fire to the Cino (though the incident was officially determined to have originated from a gas leak).

A few months after Torrey’s arrival, Marshall Mason went in one day to propose a play by Claris Nelson who, like Lowry, was among his Northwestern colleagues. The play, *Rue Garden*, opened July 29, 1962, starring Nelson and Linda Eskenas, a frequent Cino actress. Despite some criticism of the acting, the production received a good review: “[T]he play itself, fathered by Lewis Carroll and obviously nourished on nothing but rose petals and tears, is almost pure magic, and director Mason did an admirable job with it” (Sainer 6). Two months later, a second Nelson play *The Clown*
(also directed by Mason) opened. Voice critic Arthur Sainer was less impressed with the new play than Smith had been with Rue Garden: “[I]t is a failure, though her [Nelson’s] faith has tempered the inadequacies” (12). Whatever the play’s shortcomings, the plot as described by Sainer is interesting in the context of the Cino:

The plot: the Prince has guests and badly needs an entertainment within the hour. The Superintendent of Theatres is too high-toned to respond. His actors perform tragedies and need months to rehearse. The Philosopher feels the problem too vulgar for his consideration. The Circus manager will bring his troupe to perform, for a fee—but the coffers are empty. Thus no one can respond properly, until the boy [a troubadour] appears and is turned into a clown for the contemptuous amusement of the guests. (12)

Whether or not intended, the show clearly parallels many events at Caffe Cino: the frequent need for last minute replacement shows; the criticism of stilted and staid mainstream theatre; and the dismissal by learned circles. Most interesting is the appearance of the outsider, the boy, whose naivete and innocence contrasts sharply with the sophisticated world of the court. Raised in the forest where he and his father are the only people, the boy has no concept of evil or ugliness. The Superintendent of Theatre is so taken with his innocence that he proclaims:

You see gentlemen? He is completely innocent! He’s perfect, he’s divine, he’s delicious! I must have him, Your Majesty. For years I have tried to find a living example of innocence. My actors don’t believe that such a thing exists, and they refuse to play anything that doesn’t exist. I’ve found examples of witches, and ghosts, and evil incarnate, but innocence seemed impossible. Now, at last, I have found it. (18)

Convinced to entertain at the court, the Boy can only sing the songs taught him by his father and tell stories of his bucolic world—all to the great amusement of the
sophisticated members of the court. Crushed by the laughter at his expense, the Boy loses much of his innocence and begins composing new lyrics that grow from his pain:

Now, now,
My heart is an old thing
Lonely and old thing
Better than nothing,
Nothing would do.

Now, now,
My heart is a child's toy
Made for a small boy
Full of a child's joy,
Broken in two. (30)

In the person of the Boy, the outsider moves from the margins to the center, but, in doing so, discovers a threatening world that shatters his innocence. The cast of *The Clown* included Lanford Wilson, fresh from Chicago, making his New York debut. His own first work (*So Long at the Fair*) would soon appear on the Cino stage (Feingold, “Caffe Cino, 20 Years”). Of all the work done at the Cino, *The Clown* was Jonathan Torrey’s favorite and was scheduled for a revival on his birthday in April 1967, though he died three months beforehand.

At least one other production from this period deserves mention: Michael Smith’s *I Like It*. From most accounts (including Smith’s own), the play itself was not particularly significant, though his involvement with a production is important. A recent graduate of Yale University when he arrived in New York in the late 1950s, Smith volunteered to work in the offices of *The Village Voice*, then a small, little-known weekly newspaper of twelve pages. After writing occasional reviews for the *Voice*, he became a regular theatre critic and eventually worked his up to the position of...
Entertainment Editor. Though the use of the term off-off-Broadway is generally attributed to Smith’s predecessor, Jerry Tallmer (Brockett 710), Smith contributed more to the discovery and popularization of the movement than any other critic. He was the first to give regular, serious attention to productions in coffeehouses, basements, churches, and so forth. Smith challenged the traditional role of the critic as a passive spectator, an outsider, and an idealized representative of the general audience. The best that can be achieved by this “uncomfortable” and “dull” role is “the work of a man like Walter Kerr, whose reviews fulfill the function he is paid for by expressing generally popular opinions in highly readable prose, but whose effect on the theatre is useful only in industrial terms” (Smith, “Theatre Journal” December 2, 1965,19). It is almost certainly not coincidental that Smith served on the Judges’ Panel for the Voice’s Obie Awards in 1965, the same year in which Caffe Cino and Cafe La Mama were jointly awarded their first Obie, and in which Kerr received an Anti-Obie for his outstanding disservice to the modern theatre: For his determined resistance to the works of Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Pirandello, O’Casey, Brecht, Sartre, Ionesco, Genet, and Beckett; and for turning his skills instead to the promotion and maintenance of a commodity theatre without relevance to dramatic art, the imagination, or our age. . . . (“Anti-Obie” 17)

Of the playwrights who were reviewed by Smith, few owe him a greater debt than Sam Shepard, whom Smith strongly supported.

During its first four years, the Cino established its basic aesthetic and management style, which was largely an anarchic rejection of fixed or stable styles. Though some shows (such as Flyspray) made significant social or political commentary.
no political perspective dominated, nor did many shows attempt to make an overt political comment. Thus, various critics have suggested that the Cino was a place to escape from the chaos and political maelstrom of the sixties. Tillie Gross, for example, says, “Although Cino and others attended demonstrations and marched for Peace, political activism was left to the Becks (Julian Beck and Judith Malina) and The Living Theatre. For the alienated, Caffe Cino became a place to hide and to escape to, because here they were accepted” (164-65). While noting that the Cino served many as a haven from the flux and turmoil characteristic of the sixties society, Michael Feingold suggests that the work at the Cino reflected the chaos of its contemporary society:

The 1960s cracked American society apart; at the Cino, a private world tucked away on its quiet side street, a batch of theater artists took refuge from the debris flying all around them. Having no obligation to paint a unified picture for the outside world, they let their works crack in imitation of the cracked society outside, inventing a new style of play in the process. (“Caffe Cino, 20 Years” 51)

Thus, the “cracked” works in the Cino reflected a cracked society outside. As Cino artists were “inventing a new style of play” in the early sixties, however, the fundamental divisions and disorder characteristic of the late sixties were only beginning to form. The early sixties tended to be a period of belief in the potential for change and for overcoming the failures of past decades. Certainly, unrest was growing among certain groups and about particular topics: the quest for Civil Rights was becoming increasingly divisive, the Cuban Missile Crisis had exacerbated fears of nuclear proliferation, activists (gay, African-American, and others) were becoming increasingly willing to challenge the prevailing system, working outside and against it when
necessary. Also, misrepresentations by politicians and others during the Cold War had begun to spread a distrust of governmental organizations and other entities involved with institutional power. Yet the fundamental social divisions and political chaos most often associated with the sixties did not occur until after the United States’ escalation of the Vietnam War, the assassination of John and Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr., and similar tragic events. Thus, it seems that the Cino is less a simple mirror of the social fragmentation and unrest around it than it is a participant in a complex web of change, in which it both reflects and affects the transformational dynamics in the world outside. Taken as a microcosm, as one instance out of many, of the countercultural alliances, the Cino is not merely a passive reflector but of active resistance to dominant ideologies. Even the earliest productions reveal a profound anarchistic impulse.

Fundamental to the work (on stage and off) at the Cino was the examination of various forms of community and family. As Sally Banes has set forth in *Greenwich Village 1963*, the early sixties were a time of exploration and re-invention of the meaning of “community.” According to Banes, the Village saw an influx of artists from throughout the country, with the artists attempting to create the rural village within the urban Village. As a result, they were “involved in self-consciously founding communities; and further, their sense of communitas was integral to the decade’s revitalization of city life” (31). In her brief glance at the Caffe Cino, she notes that the Cino has been mythologized more as a family than as a collective, with the playwrights playing the role of the bad children, spoiled by success (47). This familial spirit of Cino
artists is apparent in the reminiscences in which the word “family” appears repeatedly. Often the reference to family is literal, as for example, when used in reference to the three Borskes, two Brookes, and all eight of the Harrises who worked at the Cino. Other references to “family” are to a family of choice (rather than kinship) or to a sense of community. Jean-Claude van Itallie noted that the Cino “was a clique, a family, an atmosphere in a small, dark place, special: fellow gay men, mostly gallantly trying to express their individuality at least ten years before gay consciousness became an active movement” (van Itallie, “War” 6).

In considering the various meanings of “family” in regard to Caffe Cino, it is important to keep in mind that the term refers to a socially determined, historically situated set of linguistic codes used in ordering real or presumed kinship relationships. Precisely who makes up a family and how those individuals relate to each other are determined far more by social semiotics than by “blood.” Furthermore, the concepts “family” and “community” are not discrete, separable terms, but overlap in a constant semantic play. Semioticians Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress have pointed out the relationship between the two terms, as well as the means in which we use the model of the family to which we are introduced as children to structure and to make sense of other relationships:

The familial text that children first construct is deeply learnt, and it provides the starting point for a chain of transformations that make sense of every other major social relationship. Ideologues in many societies at many times have exploited this transformational chain, explicitly linking structures of power in the state with structures within the family, evoking the authority of the father (e.g., the monarch as father of his people), in defense of the mother (land). (206)
This is not to suggest that there is some deep structure or other natural construct
determining the nature of family structures, only that the family pattern that we learn
serves as a template for ordering and understanding other relationships, including, for
example, those among the regulars at Caffe Cino.

When Joseph Cino opened his coffeehouse, he had no intent of opening a
theatre. Even in March of 1965 only two months before receiving an Obie, Cino
emphasized repeatedly that his establishment was a café, not a theatre: “We’re not off-
off-Broadway,” he told Michael Smith; “we’re in-café” (“Joe Cino’s World” 15). It was
a place for friends to gather and, in his words, to “do what you have to do”—and what
they had to do was to create theatre. As long as theatrical productions served a
communal need—as long as it brought the Cino family together—Joe Cino would
continue to sponsor it.

Despite (or, perhaps, because of) the official condemnation of coffeehouses in
the fifties and sixties, those who frequented them created within them intellectual,
aesthetic, or sexual communities. As one of the figures instrumental in popularizing
coffeehouses, particularly with the Beats, Allen Ginsberg described the need for them:
“In the past decade in the United States, the curious combination of homogenization of
public discourse through mass media and decline of community intimacies of
conversation through overpopulation in large cities has led to the emergence of new
forms of socializing and personal contact for artistic and political conversation” (qtd. in
Ranzal 118). One “new form of socializing” was the coffeehouse which served a
function similar to “town halls, village squares, forums, agoras, community halls, etc.
for bards and travelers to meet and exchange information and religious gossip and political insights.”

In 1966, Nancy Lynch published an article based upon interviews with coffeehouse owners and customers. Lynch found that the patrons tended to select one coffeehouse for their primary social outlet, banding together with others at the coffeehouse to form “The Group,” a circle of close friends. Quoting a coffeehouse patron who was also named “Nancy,” Lynch notes, “The Group is exclusive. Nancy says: ‘You don’t bring your friends into it . . .’ It is loyal in its way. The actresses share leads on juicy parts in new plays. . . . Money is loaned back and forth. Confidences are exchanged.” The Group served many of the same functions as a family:

In spite of the inevitable hostilities, The Group seems to provide a cozy, family-like pocket for young people who find New York cold and unfeeling. And the word ‘family’, you notice, is one that is used by many habitues of Village coffeehouses when they talk about the attractions of their hangouts. Some speak crossly of the day ‘they broke up the family table’ at such and such a coffeehouse. (Lynch 127)

Coffeehouses became “everybody’s living room.”

Thirty-four years after the Mademoiselle article, Joseph Davies still uses the term “living room” to refer to the Cino. Furthermore, some of his fondest memories of Caffe Cino are the times that he and others would bring in neck bones or other cuts of meat, and Cino would make a large pot of stew on the little stove in the back of the Cino. The Cino family—Davies, Torrey, Burgess, Dodd, and others—would sit around the Caffe and enjoy the familial spirit.
For many patrons and artists, Joe was as much father-figure or sibling as he was artistic champion, critic, or financial supporter. Thus, as Charles Loubier notes, “What happened at Cino’s was you not only wrote a play, you became part of the family” (Loubier 8). And the family was a remarkably diverse one. Playwright Robert Patrick describes Cino regulars as “ex-cons in overcoats, future cons in leather jackets (no boy went horny or hungry while Joe was around), turbaned art-ladies trailing their veils in spilled coffee, failed or failing actors underlining scripts or casting notices, and media mutants like me” (Patrick, “The Other Brick Road” 3). The Cino family included feminist poet, costumer, and actress Magie Dominic, gay playwright/activists Robert Patrick and Doric Wilson, straight playwrights and actors Sam Shepard and Harvey Keitel, African-American performers Butterfly McQueen and Robbie McCauley, Warhol’s Factory members Ondine and Soren Agenoux, and a host of other figures. Some (such as playwright Lee Kalcheim or actor Al Pacino) worked at the Cino only once or twice and had no other association with it; others (such as Lanford Wilson and H. M. Koutoukas) used the Cino as a social and artistic base, working on many shows and spending much of their free time there. In general, the regular patrons and artists shared a sense of being “other,” some because of sex, others because of sexual orientation, and almost all because of their interest in alternative theatrical styles.

In *Greenwich Village 1963*, Banes shows that many artists of the sixties believed that art (particularly the urban “folk” art as exemplified in the pop art of Andy Warhol, as well as many of the productions at the Cino) both constitutes and is constituted by community:
The groups that constituted the Greenwich Village avant-garde constructed themselves as a community. Since folk art may be defined as the art that a community makes for itself, perhaps it seemed to them that to make art that somehow resembled folk art could work backward, as an index of potent, productive communal bonds. That is, if community implies folk art, then to have what looks and feels like folk art must, in part, constitute community. In the paradox of avant-garde folklore, folk art was thought to create communal bonds, rather than vice versa. (95)

In addition to the pop aspects of the work at the Cino (a characteristic evident as early as the work of Doric Wilson but which became much more important in later years), the Cino artists used their productions to define themselves as a community. By challenging traditional theatrical standards through drawing from the new European movements and by instituting alternative production and management values and by challenging traditional social values through their acceptance of homosexuality, female sexuality, sado-masochism, and so forth, Cino artists created a family (or community or collective) standing apart from the dominant culture. But in reference to the term “family,” it is worth stressing again that my reference uses the paradigm “family” only as a means of ordering and making sense of a very loosely constructed, mobile structure.

By the summer of 1963, a growing professionalism was evident in the work at Cino as original work increasingly dominated the production calendar and as Cino collected larger numbers of talented directors and actors. For most, work at small off-off-Broadway venues such as Caffe Cino remained an end in itself; few of the artists worked to build a career which would take them to off-Broadway and then to commercial success on Broadway. As Sally Banes notes, “But for off-off-Broadway, graduating to off-Broadway—leaving the alternative home and the alternative
community—was a fate to be avoided, for it altered the relations of production, turning artists into alienated labor” (46). In the early fall of 1963, the Cino began its most successful period, introducing new works by Lanford Wilson, Sam Shepard, and other major writers.
Chapter III
Early Success: 1963-1965

One Saturday night in February 1963, a small crowd at Caffe Cino sat sipping coffee, eating pastries or sandwiches, chatting to kill time, and waiting for the eleven o’clock performance. The play for the night was the second by David Starkweather to appear at the Cino and the first in which Starkweather worked with director Robert Dagny. Dagny had never directed for the Cino nor had any association with it until Joseph Cino attended another theatre to see a production of *What is There*, a play by Bob Downey (father of the movie star Robert Downey, Jr.), directed by Dagny. After the production Cino went to Dagny and offered him a script to direct. When Dagny asked about the play, Cino refused to give him the title or any other information, saying only, “Read the play.” Dagny read it and leapt at the chance to direct it. The work which Dagny directed and which the February audience awaited was *So, Who’s Afraid of Edward Albee*. As the audience waited, some cast furtive (and not so furtive) glances at a young man sitting at one of the small tables slightly stage right. He was, in fact, Edward Albee, the man who had influenced much of the theatre created at Caffe Cino and other underground theatres. Furthermore, with works such as *The Zoo Story* and *Sandbox*, Albee had helped revitalize and popularize the one-act form, still the staple of off-off-Broadway in 1963.

About ten minutes after the scheduled eleven o’clock curtain, a man sitting alone at a table near the stage became increasingly frustrated at the tardiness of the production, finally asking very loudly, “When the hell is this thing going to start?” For most of the
crowd, the delay was simply accepted as a typical late start in the disorganized world of off-off-Broadway. The man, however, became increasingly loud and belligerent. As Lanford Wilson said, "You got annoyed with him because he was such a prick" (interview 1999). Only when the audience realized that the lights throughout the house had almost imperceptibly dimmed—all lights except an amber over the belligerent man’s table—did many realize that the play had, in fact, started. The annoying “prick” at the table was actor Neil Flanagan, who was shortly joined by his date, a nurse played by Brandy Carson. The play was a dark comedy, set in a coffeehouse very much like the Cino, in which the two characters awaited the start of a production of a play by Edward Albee (the only overt allusion to Albee in the play). Unable to navigate the intricacies of a relationship, the man berates his date who has come to end their relationship. Unable to control her in “real” life, he creates a fantasy in which he exerts the control he cannot manage otherwise. But even in the fantasy scene (which moves from the table onto the stage), he fails to master her since she leaves him there as well.

To the disappointment of the cast, Albee never reacted during the performance and left immediately after the show without speaking to anyone associated with the production. Even now, Carson is unsure of his opinion of the work. Regardless of what he thought of the piece, Albee visited the coffeehouse periodically as did Richard Barr. The Albee-Barr-Wilder producing team moved several Cino shows into off-Broadway theatres.

Though Albee, like most of Starkweather's work, is now nearly forgotten, the playwright is often considered one of the most brilliant and innovative of the Cino
writers, with experimentations in style, content, and form that often led him to draw from a variety of traditions (particularly those from the East). His works include *You May Go Home Again*, which is subtitled *A Domestic Noh*, and *Oh I Wish You Were There*, which uses a different style in each act: Kabuki for the first, Shakespearean for the second, and naturalistic for the third (Dagny 2000).

The production of *So, Who's Afraid of Edward Albee* is significant for several reasons. It attracted sizable audiences, including Edward Albee. It was among the first productions that aspiring playwright Lanford Wilson saw at the Cino and helped introduce him to avant-garde theatre (Wilson still vividly and fondly recalls the production). It established the talent of the reticent Starkweather whose previous work Michael Smith called “a pretentious and tiresome amalgam of Thornton Wilder and the heavier sort of expressionism” (Smith, “Theatre: Caffe Cino” 15). Thus, even in these two very early works, Starkweather shows his fondness for teasing and toying with styles of other authors:

[For] two weeks running the Cino . . . has given premiere productions of plays by David Starkweather. The current one, playing through Saturday, is a striking romp called *So, Who's Afraid of Edward Albee*? Obviously Mr. Starkweather is not, and he need not be. His one-act play gambols through the field of Albeean symbolism like a ram in spring. Scattering Absurd techniques right and left and blithely ignoring all rules of structure, he nonetheless manages to evoke hilarity, sympathy, and bizarre terror by turns. . . . (Smith, “Theatre: Caffe Cino” 15)

*Albee* established Starkweather as the Cino’s leading intellectual writer.

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24 The title was given during an interview by someone other than the playwright and may not be accurate.
Lanford Wilson's fondness for Starkweather's work is not particularly surprising since both playwrights were concerned with many of the same issues. As yet unproduced, Wilson might easily have recognized in *Albee, You May Go Home Again* (Starkweather's first Cino work), *Love Pickle*, and similar plays one central theme common to *The Madness of Lady Bright*, *So Long at the Fair*, *Sex is Between Two People*, and *Ludlow Fair*: the difficulties of communication and of personal relationships. Not unusual for Starkweather at the time was *LOVE Affair* (May 1963) also directed by Dagny, described by Dagny as

about a hippy couple who are so bored with everything and so blase that they decide to go to a men's room to have a new experience; and in the course of having the experience, a man comes in who represents all the virile manhood in the world. You know, he is a symbol—he has no lines, but he is a symbol in the play. And, of course, she comes on to him, and they have this ritualistic coupling. And she uses the fact of this guy having . . . virility and so forth to beat verbally her date. At one point he [the date] tries to offer dental records and pictures of himself in various stages of undress, and she just laughs at him. So basically . . . both plays [*LOVE Affair* and *Albee*] dealt with men who were very neurotic, very high strung, and [who] had difficult relationships with women. And they were also brilliantly imagistic and brilliantly funny. (Interview 2000)

Using effects such as contrasting images of impotence and virility, the play examines the dynamics of the relationship among the three characters, particularly the difficulties in the relationship between the hippy couple. In his early work, Wilson often explores similar themes of isolation and disrupted relationships.

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*LOVE Affair* was revived in January 1966 with Marshall Mason as director. It was retitled *The Love Pickle*, a title which Robert Dagny considers both more appropriate and more amusing since “pickle” can be taken as an allusion to the penis (and issues of impotency figure into the play).
With productions such as *So, Who's Afraid of Edward Albee* and *LOVE Affair*, the Cino entered its second and most productive phase. Already established as one of the leaders and central venues of the emerging avant-garde theatre scene, the years from 1963 to 1966 saw the emergence of some of the most accomplished individuals and director-playwright teams: actors Bernadette Peters and Harvey Keitel, playwrights John Guare, Robert Patrick, William Hoffman, and H. M. Koutoukas, teams of Marshall Mason with Lanford Wilson and Ron Link with Robert Heide. The middle years, however, offered remarkable contrasts: extraordinary successes followed dismal failures; catastrophes brought a rush of community support; and shows cancelled at the last minute were replaced by extemporaneous productions of incredible creativity. And the highs had their dark side. As the Caffe attracted more attention and as many Cino artists achieved commercial success, some bemoaned and avoided success, referring to it as the “Bitch Goddess” (Delery 8) because of its fickleness. The lows had their positive side. The devastating fire in 1965 brought a community together to rebuild the coffeehouse. Perhaps no year in the period so effectively exemplifies the movement through the peaks and valleys of success as does 1965. Opening and closing with highly successful productions by H. M. Koutoukas (often considered the quintessential Cino playwright), the year witnessed the devastating fire, the first Obie awarded to the Caffe, and the first significant coverage of off-off-Broadway by the *New York Times*.

This peak period in the Cino’s history brought its greatest aesthetic and commercial successes. Most of the works now remembered from the Cino come from that period: Lanford Wilson’s *The Madness of Lady Bright*, Robert Patrick’s *The
Haunted Host, and George Haimsohn and Robin Miller's Dames at Sea. The once infrequent reviews in The Village Voice became much more regular, and increasing attention came from other newspapers, including the venerable New York Times; more often than ever before, lines formed outside awaiting the few available seats; patrons arrived in limousines, as well as by foot, taxi, and subway; Cino playwrights began to see their work in print, on television, and in commercial theatres. Two ominous shadows were very nearly obscured by the success of the coffeehouse: the increasing influence of Ed Koch and others working to close the coffeehouses; and a growing addiction to drugs experienced by Joseph Cino and Jonathan Torrey. Both these factors weighed heavily upon Cino, with one threatening the continued legal existence of his coffeehouse and the other threatening his ability to manage it.

During this central period of Caffe Cino’s history, playwrights and directors continued exploration of the themes and styles typical of earlier years. Pop culture references common in Cino productions as early as 1961 in Doric Wilson’s work became central to playwrights such as Robert Patrick and to the Comic Book Productions; the camp stylistics of Andy Milligan and other early Cino artists were taken to remarkable heights by H. M. Koutoukas and Tom Eyen; issues regarding sexual orientation which had more often remained subtextual (though barely disguised) in early works were treated with increasing frequency and explicitness in works by William Hoffman, Lanford Wilson, Robert Patrick, and Robert Heide.

In the early months of this period (particularly in the spring and summer of 1963), Joe Cino seems to have been at his creative peak. In March, he directed
Tennessee Williams's *Auto da Fe* for La Mama. In April, during the same week in which La Mama promoted its first production of a full-length play, the Cino advertisement proclaims “By Popular Demand: 2 One-Acts by Joe Cino & Neal Flanigan [sic]” (“Cafes & Coffee Houses,” April 25, 1963, 10). Whether the plays were written by, adapted by, or only directed by Cino and Flanagan is unclear, though the possibility that Cino may have written a one-act play is particularly intriguing since the only written piece attributed to him is a brief introduction to a play in a collection. Both men did offer Cino audiences adaptations of other work, including Flanagan’s version of Voltaire’s *Candide* (April 1962) and Cino’s version of Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* (July 1963), which he retitled *Miss Julia*.

During the summer of 1963, Cino directed an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (May) and *Miss Julia* (July). Though Clayton Delery suggests that *As You Like It* was performed in full (51), that was almost certainly not the case. The advertisement notes that the piece is an adaptation (“Cafes and Coffee Houses.” May 23, 1963, 16), and it played the traditional 9 and 11 pm, and 1 am schedule. As a quasi-postmodern blending of styles and texts, *Miss Julia* followed a trend well-established at the Cino, intermingling contemporary references and slang from various periods.

During the early months of 1963, attacks on coffeehouses by City officials and neighborhood groups continued, resulting in late spring in the formation of the Greenwich Village Café Theatre Association (or GVCTA) by seven establishments26

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26 The members of GVCTA were The Bitter End on Bleecker Street, The Café Bizarre on 3rd Street, The Gaslight Café on Macdougal Street, The Phase 2 on Bleecker Street, The Thirdside on 3rd Street, The Take 3 on Bleecker Street, and The Café Wha
which had earlier been members of a similar organization, The Greenwich Village Coffee House Association. GVCTA developed and promoted a “strict new self-policing code of ethics” (Goddard, “Macdougal Cafes” 3). The code attempted to address the basic concerns of neighborhood residents:

Briefly, it prohibits the use of loudspeakers at café doors, all disturbing noise after 11 (and no undue noise at any time), doormen acting as barkers, entertainers sitting in windows or within fifteen feet of entrances, girl “shills,” loitering in front of establishments, misrepresenting of prices (price policy must be clearly displayed on the door, or on menus and tables inside), and serving drunks. (Goddard, “Macdougal Cafes” 16)

To promote a better relationship with the community, the GVCTA ran an advertisement in the *Village Voice* in which they agreed “that something must be done about the conditions on Macdougal Street” and pledged to join in the search for a solution (“Advertisement for Greenwich Village” 3). The advertisement contains a less-than-subtle suggestion that they (being civic-minded businesses) do not cater to gays and lesbians: “We’d like the Villagers to discover and distinguish between the type people, (primarily couples) that frequent our establishments, and the undesirable loiterers on Macdougal Street, whom we absolutely do not cater to” (emphasis added).

The increased visibility of coffeehouses in the Village is evident from the extent to which they were centered in popular cultural images. Boxer Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) chose the Bitter End, a coffeehouse featuring readings of Beat poetry, as the site for a press event to publicize his upcoming fight in Madison Square Garden, on Macdougal Street.
though he rejected the customary patrons of the Bitter End when questioned by a
reporter:

"Do you consider yourself a beat poet?"
"What do you mean? I'm a Country boy."
"You know, beatniks."
"Oh, you mean the guys who look like Castro, the ones who look like
the Smith Brothers? I'd like to get in a ring with one of them."
And he reminisced about an incident on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, a
discussion he had had with a "beatnik." "He was so ugly, and I was
tellin' him about it." (Gervis 1, 25)

The attempt by coffeehouses to recuperate their image through such events as the
Cassius Clay publicity incident and the creation of a business organization had little
success. The establishments quickly became pawns of various political factions,
notably that of future Mayor and Congressman Edward I. Koch (representing the
Village Independent Democrats) and his primary opponent, Carmine G. DeSapio (of the
Tamawa Club).

Without a doubt the important event of 1963 for the Cino was the arrival of
budding playwright Lanford Wilson and his actor protege Michael Warren Powell.
Born in Lebanon, Missouri, Wilson moved with his family to the small town of Ozark,
Missouri when he was about 15, after his divorced mother (a factory worker) married an
inspector at a dairy plant. When he graduated from high school in 1955, he went to visit
his father in San Diego. (For information on the period, Wilson recommends reading
the largely autobiographical Lemon Sky.) He attended one year of college at San Diego
State University while working full-time as a riveter in the aviation industry. At the end
of the year, he left school and went back to Missouri to locate a friend, but soon moved
to Chicago, his first exposure to life in a large city since he had lived in the suburbs while in San Diego. He fell in love with Chicago and with city life. He found work in an advertising agency and began writing short stories, hoping that he could support himself through his writing while pursuing a career in art; as he comments, he hoped to write "stories to support my art habit." One day when working on a story, he realized that it was "more play than story," and began converting it to dramatic form.

His background in theatre was very limited: he had been in two productions in high school (one one-act and one full-length), and he had been assistant stage manager for a touring production for Southwest Missouri State University when he attended one-term there. Despite the lack of experience, he became enamored of playwriting immediately:

I started writing the play and on page two said "I am a playwright." It was just as clear as day. It would always be a challenge. I would never be thoroughly happy with anything. And I had a real talent for writing dialogue and really enjoyed the process more than anything I've ever done.

His first major project was a farce, though "I had no idea what a farce was; I thought, 'You just keep it funny'" and though he had chosen a setting (Fire Island) where "I had never been and knew nothing about." Without finishing the farce, he began work on a full-length play which was "so bad that I don't even tell anyone what the title was."

Realizing that "I may need help with this," he enrolled in a course at the downtown center of the University of Chicago. Wilson was exhilarated by the course.

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27 Unless otherwise noted, information about Lanford Wilson is taken from my interview with him.
in part because the structure of the class allowed him to hear his words in performance shortly after they had been written. The instructor began the course by saying, “Every play has to have conflict. . . . Read this scene of conflict and this scene of conflict. . . . Write a scene of conflict between . . . a man and a woman or between a man and a man or a woman and a woman.” The students returned with their completed scene for the next class at which time a group of actors from the Goodman Theatre performed each scene: “You could tell who had written it by who squirmed. . . . That was my education in writing a play.” With one course in playwriting, Wilson concluded, “OK, so now I’m a playwright in Chicago where there is no theatre. So the logical thing was to go to New York.”

Wilson, Dean Morgan, and Michael Warren Powell decided to move to New York together. Before moving, however, Wilson decided to have one last party with his four Chicago roommates. The five had taken a four bedroom, two story apartment (“the best in Chicago”) in an art deco building. Since Wilson was the only one of the group with a job at the time, he signed the lease:

We were there for three months without paying a nickle, except the first month’s rent, and not even a security back then. So we owed two months rent; we were certain that the Mafia owned the building and was going to kill us. We had no furniture. Everyone had brought a mattress, and sheets, and a blanket, and that was what we owned. There was this huge living room with no furniture in it.

Michael Warren Powell, who had gotten a job in a display house, used the corporate credit card to rent “an outrageous number of plants.” After decorating the house with
the plants and display lights, the group went to all the touring companies in town, putting up big signs “Big Party Tomorrow Night”:

Jammed. Jammed. Crushed. The best party you have ever been to in your life. The police were called three times. All three times, two policemen would come. You enter the door and go up this winding stairway to the living room. It’s all enclosed until you get up to the living room. All three times about four chorus girls would meet them at the top. All three times they stayed. We had policemen with guns dancing, boogying all night long. It was just great. We had six policemen there. The party was over about five in the morning. It was summer—July. And we left everything right where it was, got on a bus and came to New York. Michael Powell and I [and] Dean Morgan all came.

The three men left for New York during July 4th weekend 1962. According to Powell, Morgan did not have money for the bus ticket to New York (the three started the trip with total combined funds of about $40), so Morgan decided to hitchhike and join them when they arrived. On one of the first stops just outside Chicago, however, Morgan was waiting, his effort at hitchhiking having been less pleasant or successful than he had hoped. Wilson and Powell used much of their remaining funds to buy him a ticket, so that they arrived in New York with only $7.20 (interview with Powell).

None of the three knew anyone in New York well. Wilson had visited the city the year before and had encountered an acquaintance (a “screaming queen”) who had moved from Chicago to New York:

I was [seated] outside a café in the Village and this screaming queen -- there are no queens like Chicago Queens. I was appalled at the quality of the queens in New York when I first came here. I mean, they just didn’t know how to do it. So this screaming Chicago queen screamed. “Lanford Darling, I have the most marvelous house here. It’s just wonderful. You must call me.” And that was the phone number I had in New York.
Unfortunately, according to Powell, the three had not considered the holiday so no one answered the telephone at the home of the screaming queen despite their repeated calls. With little money and no lodging, they spent the first night in the park, reaching Wilson’s acquaintance sometime the next day. When he greeted them at the door, he referred to a friend who was with Wilson when they met the previous year: “You know I could not remember who your friend was at all. And I just thought of who it was. It was this terrible person who was here one day. And if I had remembered who it was, I would have hung up on you. But I am very pleased to see you....” Back then we were all gorgeous.”

The three men soon found jobs and began making a home in New York: Morgan (who had managed a nice hotel in Chicago) quickly got a job at the Plaza and moved out of Wilson’s life; Powell took a job with an upscale decorator and began acting; Wilson continued writing plays while working at various odd jobs. Powell and Wilson found a small apartment on 74th street (*Balm in Gilead* is set in the café on that block). The two men were under almost constant financial pressure. In one instance, they were about to be thrown out of their hotel (the one in which *Balm in Gilead* was written). As Powell noted, “So Lance wrote a play to be done at the Cino which would incorporate our bed and all of our possessions. After performing the play we would turn down the bed on stage and go to sleep” (qtd. in Stuart 36).

Wilson quickly found the local areas in which gay men cruised for sex: “There used to be a wonderful cruising neighborhood at Central Park West.” It was there that he met William Hoffman (whose roommate was composer John Corigliano). When
Wilson told Hoffman of his writing interests, Hoffman replied, “Oh you’re a playwright; do you know the Caffe Cino? That’s where everyone starts out.”28 Wilson was unable to go to the Cino that night; Powell went instead. The next day he told Wilson, “You’ve got to come down and see the outrageous show.” Wilson went the next night. Though the precise chronology is somewhat obscure, it seems likely that Wilson first attended the Cino early in January 1963 when Ionesco’s *The Lesson* was playing. It was Wilson’s introduction to Ionesco, to existentialism, and to the fledgling off-off-Broadway theatre scene that became his theatrical base. He continued to attend productions at the Cino and was particularly impressed with David Starkweather’s *You May Go Home Again* and *So, Who’s Afraid of Edward Albee* (both of which ran in February 1963).

Powell recalls the night that Wilson introduced himself to Joe Cino: “Lanford said to Joe, I want to be a writer and he [Powell] wants to be an actor. What should we do? ‘Well,’ Joe said, ‘you write a play for him and do it here.’ I was like ‘Oh my god, isn’t that brilliant.’ You would have thought that something like that would be so . . . that we could have thought of it ourselves” (interview with Powell). On August 25, 1963, Wilson’s *So Long at the Fair*29 opened to a strong review by Michael Smith of *The Village Voice*: “Lanford Wilson’s tense little comedy ends with one of the funniest

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28 Hoffman recalls Corigliano as being the person who directed Wilson to the Cino.

29 Wilson originally intended *Home Free!* to open in the slot taken by *So Long at the Fair*. By the time he convinced Neil Flanagan to direct the show, however, he had submitted it to the Spoleto Festival which considers only plays that have never been performed. Thus, he substituted *So Long at the Fair* for *Home Free!*
single stage events I have ever witnessed. . . . What redeems Mr. Wilson’s writing is the exactness and inner logic of his dialogue . . .” (Smith, “Theatre: So Long at the Fair 6). Some years later, the only known copies of the manuscript were lost when Wilson sublet his apartment, leaving behind various materials (including the manuscripts for So Long at the Fair and Sex is Between Two People). Though some of the manuscripts have recently been returned to him, the only copy of So Long at the Fair now known to exist predates that performed at the Cino.

Though all accounts suggest that So Long at the Fair was not equal to his later work, it was strong enough to attract favorable attention from Marshall Mason who had already begun to gain a reputation for his skills as a director. After directing three plays (all by Claris Nelson) at the Cino, Mason says that he was “full of myself” (Mason, “A ‘Shared Vision’” 212). With Nelson and seven other graduates of Northwestern University, Mason formed the unsuccessful Northwestern Productions, an endeavor which took him away from the Cino for some time. He returned to see the final performance of So Long at the Fair. Though he considered it “amazing, a wonderful play,” he was most impressed with Powell’s performance (Mason, “A ‘Shared Vision’” 213).

Mason returned a few months later for Home Free! (January 1964), Wilson’s second play at the Cino. Though, again, Powell was “fabulous” in the production,

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30 Actually, Home Free! may have been Wilson’s third play performed at the Cino, since the record is somewhat confusing regarding possible performance of an untitled play beginning November 3, 1963. Though the off-off-Broadway section of the Village Voice for October 31, 1963 lists the untitled play as opening on November 3 (which, given the Cino’s normal schedule, would suggest an ending date of November
Mason was most impressed this time with the quality of the writing: “Not since Tennessee Williams had there been a writer like this. The first play, So Long at the Fair, was good, but what had struck me about it was Michael’s performance. What struck me about Home Free! the minute I saw it was the writing” (Mason, “A ‘Shared Vision’” 214; emphasis in original). On at least two points, the first version of the play (the one Mason saw initially) differs markedly from that used in the revival (the latter of which is the published version): the original uses a gyroscope (instead of a Ferris Wheel) and the revelation that the two characters are brother and sister occurs near the end of the play (rather than at the beginning). In his interview with Jackson R. Bryer, Mason indicates dissatisfaction with the second version, noting that the first was a “tremendous experience” whereas the second was only “very good,” reserving his primary criticism for the less “magical” staging of the second production (214) as conceived by director William Archibald (who subsequently directed a version of The Madness of Lady Bright at the Cino). According to Wilson, Mason’s response to the second version of Home Free! directed by Archibald was significantly less favorable than Mason indicates in his interview. When Wilson asked him what he thought, Mason replied, “You’ve ruined it” (interview with Wilson).

9. Yet the listings in both the off-off-Broadway section and the Café/Coffeehouse section for the following week (dated November 7) show the current production as Lorca’s Don Cristobal. At least five possible explanations for the confusion exist: 1) the untitled Wilson play never ran, being replaced by the Lorca piece; 2) the Wilson play ran the full week, with the listing for the Lorca piece being incorrect; 3) both pieces ran for the entire week; 4) the Wilson piece ran part of the week (perhaps until Wednesday, as happened once or twice) and was replaced by Don Cristobal; and 5) all advertisements are wrong and neither piece ran during the week. Finally, the possibility exists that the untitled play (if it was performed) was an earlier version of Home Free!
Mason did not meet Wilson until he saw the revival of *Home Free!*. According to Mason, “Joe Cino said, ‘Well, what did you say to Lance?’ I said, ‘I’ve never met Lance.’ He said, ‘You haven’t met Lanford?’ and I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Sit down, I’ll bring him out.’ So he brought Lanford over and sat him down” (Mason, “A ‘Shared Vision’” 214). The meeting, of course, was one of the most important in recent theatrical history, resulting in a writer-director team of remarkable durability and productivity. Ironically, though the team was forged at Caffe Cino, only two of Wilson’s plays at the Cino were directed by Mason, one of which (*The Sandcastle*) moved to the Cino only after premiering at La Mama.\(^3\)

On May 18, 1964, the most successful of Wilson’s Cino shows opened when veteran Neil Flanagan stepped onto the stage as Leslie Bright, an aging drag queen going slowly mad in the solitude of her room. After seeing a production of Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro*\(^3\) (which he did not particularly like), Wilson recalls

\(^{31}\)Wilson was typically called “Lance.” An advertisement for one of his plays conflates his real and nick names, listing the author as “Lanceford.”

\(^{32}\)The notebook for the 1985 Lincoln Center exhibit seems to suggest that *Sandcastle* premiered at Caffe Cino in 1965 and was revived twice, once in 1966 with Robbie McCauley and William Haislip and again in 1967.

\(^{33}\)It has been suggested that Wilson’s idea for *Lady Bright* came from Robert Patrick’s *Haunted Host*, which was written prior to *Lady Bright* but performed after it. Though Wilson was familiar with Patrick’s play when he wrote *Lady Bright*, he credits the production of Kennedy’s play for his inspiration. In part, he was reacting to his dislike of *Funnyhouse*: “... talking about *Funny House* [sic] of a Negro, trashing it, seeing this silly black girl flip out in her room was the most uninteresting idea. I’d just as soon see some screaming faggot go mad, and I said, ‘Wait a minute!’” (Ryzuk 45).
working on *The Madness of Lady Bright* at the reservation desk of Americana Hotel.

During a slow shift,

I was down there, and I was thinking of a play by Adrienne Kennedy. And I called up, because it was still early, Neil Flanagan. "Neil what can we do at the Caffe Cino? I mean, what can we get away with?" He said, "What do you mean? As to what?" I said, "Well, can we write a play about a screaming queen going crazy alone in her room one afternoon?" "Write it and we'll see." And so I wrote *The Madness of Lady Bright* in a couple days on the typewriter down there in the bowels of that hotel. And took it in to him [at the Cino]... He and his wife read it in his dressing room while the play [in which he was performing] was on. It was really a first draft. (interview with Wilson)

After reading the script, Flanagan came out to talk to the anxious playwright, who was not quite sure what to expect. Wilson recalls Flanagan saying

> "Well, you're going to have to get a very, very good director for this." I said, "Oh, I was hoping you would want to direct it" He said, "No. no. I'm going to play it." "Neil, you are not at all what I had in mind.” “That's why you are going to have get a very good director.”

After some consideration, Wilson selected Denis Deegan who eleven months earlier at Caffe Cino had directed Michael Smith's first work, *I Like It*. One of Deegan's first comments after reading the play was to suggest the music, Mozart's 23, 2nd movement.

It was, according to Wilson, the perfect music for *Lady Bright*.

Response to the production was tremendous. In the *Village Voice*, Michael Smith observed that the work displays Wilson's "unmistakable talent for swift, biting dialogue," even though it "a few times slides toward sentiment and moralizing." He lauded Flanagan's performance as "expert and delightful, with a clear sense of modulations between joy and manic desperation" (*Theatre: The Madness of Lady Bright* 12). Scheduled to run only two weeks (May 18 to May 31, 1964), the work was
so popular that it was brought back two weeks later (though the Boy and Girl, originally played by Carolina Lobravico and Eddie Kenmore, were replaced by Lucy Silvay and Tom Bigornia); it was revived frequently thereafter.

Though the subject matter was controversial in 1964, the play seems to have offended few audience members because, Wilson argues, of how beautifully it was done. Audience members often walked out of *So Long at the Fair* because of the language (Wilson was unaware that the word "fuck" was strictly avoided on the stage); and many in the audience objected to the incest of *Home Free!*, an objection which John Costopoulos suggests may have been shared by Cino and Flanagan: "Cino hated it [*Home Free!*]. When Wilson next showed it to Neil Flanagan, a Cino director, Flanagan said, 'Lance, I don't know . . . I'm Catholic, and I'm not sure I can direct a play that's all about incest' (359). Wilson, however, believes that Flanagan's objection to the play was playful hyperbole and did not represent a serious objection. *Lady Bright* drew far less criticism than did the earlier two works. According to Wilson, audiences seemed to "get" what he was trying to say: "So many older women came to me and said, 'Your play is not about homosexuality, it's about loneliness'" (interview with Wilson).

In the various revivals of the play, the structure changed, though precisely how fully is no longer clear. The scrapbook for the Caffe Cino exhibit in 1985 at Lincoln Center, reviews, advertisements, programs, and posters provide conflicting information. The most apparent difference between the various versions is in the number of characters involved, with the three possibilities being Lady Bright only; Lady Bright
with a young man; or Lady Bright with a young man and young woman. The following table summarizes the differences in number of actors and the source for the information:

Table 1. Number of Actors in *Madness of Lady Bright*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date performed (Week of):</th>
<th>Scrapbook</th>
<th>Review or Advertisement</th>
<th>Program/Poster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05/18/64</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Three (Village Voice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/15/64</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Three (N. Y. Post)</td>
<td>Three (program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/13/64</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18/64</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td></td>
<td>Two (poster)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/23/67</td>
<td></td>
<td>Three (Village Voice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the notebook from the Lincoln Center, the work again became a monologue when it appeared off-Broadway at Theatre East; this assertion is supported by press releases announcing selection of the "sole actor" for the production ("Three Actors", n. pag.; also, "Hunt Picks Casts" n.pag.)\(^\text{34}\) and by the program for the production.

For Leslie Bright, madness is the consequence of loneliness. Sitting alone in his room, he is surrounded by memories of past sexual partners in the form of signatures on the wall—essentially hollowed-out, vacant signs of empty, one-night relationships. Even the concept of "God" is emptied of meaning, being replaced by an anonymous recording on Dial-a-Prayer. Wilson strongly rejects any reading of the play that places

\(^{34}\)From articles in the Wilson Clipping File of the New York Public Library; page numbers were not identified.
homosexuality as the central issue of the play, suggesting that the play is about the effects of loneliness and an inability to form meaningful relationships:

Boy [*faking a hurt voice*]. Well, you might consider—I looked over expecting you to be there—and there was nothing but loneliness.

Leslie [*to himself—listening in spite of himself*]. Loneliness. [*He is not looking toward them.*]

Girl. You were asleep when I came back.

Boy. It’s a terrible thing to wake up to loneliness. [*Leslie looks sharply toward him at the word repeated.*]

Leslie. You know nothing about loneliness. (82)

Leslie Bright is left with only imaginary companions—Dial-a-Prayer, the Boy and Girl, and the signatures on the wall, all meaningless, empty, or imaginary remains of past shallow relationships.

Wilson’s Cino plays share several basic qualities. They are less experimental in regard to form and structure than were many of the productions at Caffe Cino. In discussing a group of Wilson’s plays, Michael Smith describes them as “distinguished by flexible naturalistic speech that establishes characters expertly and precisely. . . . His works deal mostly in character rather than idea or image and are similar in impulse, if not in style, to many plays by Tennessee Williams” (“Theatre: Two by Wilson,” February 11, 1965, 13). Also, as Smith comments with some justification, Wilson’s plays from the Cino period often fail to reach deeper meanings or emotions:

Lanford Wilson is still operating among familiar and safe emotions: he has not yet dived down among the feelings within feelings, the nameless surges that lie behind a true tragic or comic vision. He is creating a flexible and promising technique. How far he can go with it depends on the extent and courage of his vision. (“Theatre Journal” September 30, 1965, 30)
Of the Cino plays, *The Madness of Lady Bright* and *This is the Rill Speaking* are the most complex and adventurous structurally. Probably the most frequent theme running through the plays relates to the difficulty and challenges of close relationships. In *Sex is Between Two People* (1965), for example, two young men meet at a gay bath house (perhaps modeled on the old St. Marks Bathhouse), but part frustrated, having only nervously chatted briefly. They are unable to overcome the gulf separating them. The more timid and naive of the two dresses to leave; the other (who pretends a sophistication and self-assurance he probably lacks) initially decides to leave but changes his mind and goes to join an orgy in another part of the bathhouse. Ironically, their inability to relate to each other means that sex does not occur between the two people in the play; rather Roger goes off in pursuit of anonymous, group sex.

Wilson’s arrival in 1963 helped move Caffe Cino toward increasingly professional, polished productions. Like others involved in the off-off-Broadway movement, most at the Cino were not offended by a certain degree of amateurishness in their productions; many even valued that amateurishness. In many ways, Joe Cino’s idiosyncratic method of selecting plays only enhanced the appearance of nonprofessionalism. Thus, for example, he presented a play by high school student Kelly Davis on October 7, 1963 even though Cino was not particularly impressed with the work:

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35The notice in the off-off-Broadway listings in October 1963 gave the playwright’s name as “Kelly Davis”; a *Village Voice* article written six months later (Harrington, “Dimly Lit”) lists his name as “Kelly Smith.”
The youngster, Kelly Smith [sic], got a showing on Cornelia Street not because his play, *Flywheel*, was really great—for, in the opinion of Joe Cino, who decides what gets produced at his café, that's precisely what it wasn't. "But," Cino explains, "the fact that the kid was so young and that he did have something to say made us fell [sic] there was a value in doing it." (Harrington, "Dimly Lit" 3)

Cino's reason for staging Davis/Smith's work seems central to his overall method of operating: he encouraged artists who had no other venue in which to perform because of age, sexuality, experience, subject matter and so forth if they genuinely had something to say.

By the fall of 1963, new salvos were fired in the coffeehouse wars. In 1962, the City had moved responsibility for licensing coffeehouses from the Police Department to the Department of Licenses, in large part because of the charges of corruption against the Police Department. The move, however, brought no respite in the actions against the coffeehouses. The efforts of the Café Theatre Association at self-policing had little effect on the operation of most coffeehouses (including some of its own members); in August, the *New York Times* listed the abuses of coffeehouses as being the same as those frequently listed in past articles:

Among the practices complained of, and observed, were vague menus with prices too small to read, light too dim to read anything, barkers out front urging passers-by to go in, admission prices up to $2.50 each plus a minimum charge of a dollar a person inside, exorbitantly priced soft drinks and coffee, and collections taken after each performance by an entertainer. (Asbury 62)

36 Anecdotal evidence suggests that Caffè Cino's prices were hardly as exorbitant as those at some other coffeehouses but were somewhat higher than those at many diners and restaurants. According to the 1962 menu, the price for tea and pastries was 50¢, for coffee-based drinks the price ranged from 40¢ to 85¢, and for sandwiches from 75¢ to 95¢.
Despite the continued actions by City officials, rulings by courts remained inconsistent: the City won a case in May 1963 when a court ruling reversed an earlier action and forced Café Figaro to discontinue its concerts; less than a year later the City lost a case when Judge James Camerford dismissed a suit brought by the Department of Licenses against LeMetro Caffe Espresso for allowing poetry readings.

Aggressive action against coffeehouses and other arts establishments continued in 1964. Citing zoning which permitted only limited local retail for the Macdougal Street area, City officials issued summonses to coffeehouses throughout the area (since they were not considered "limited local retail"), including Caffe Cino (Gansberg 81). At the same time, the City seems to have increased enforcement of regulations requiring that films could be shown only if licensed by the New York State Board of Regents, as operation of three theatres (Grammercy Arts, Pocket Theatre, and New Bowery Theatre) was suspended for showing unlicensed films. The action effectively closed any live performances scheduled for the three facilities as well. (They were variously used for live productions and presentation of films.) Conjecture about the City's more aggressive stance against avant-garde artists varied:

Speculation as to the reasons for the crackdown on off-beat cultural centers have ranged from the probability that the city administration is trying to clean up New York in time for the World's Fair to suspicions that officials within the License Department interested in succeeding former Commissioner Bernard J. O'Connell, who has just been appointed a justice of the Criminal Court by Mayor Wagner, might have picked on the most vulnerable of the city's licensed establishments to demonstrate their zeal for serving the people. (Harrington, "City Puts Bomb" 14)
With the aggressive actions by the City in late March 1964, artists and patrons became increasingly discontent. Poet and playwright Diane di Prima described their concerns:

An epidemic has seized Manhattan Island, an epidemic of rage and fear and frustration. Bit by bit, all the life of downtown Manhattan is being turned off. The coffee houses have had to fight to keep going. The number of off-Broadway theatres has been lessened by four by the License Bureau. Screenings of experimental films—which were flourishing and had just developed a large audience—have stopped altogether. The Living Theatre has been seized, and the New York Poets Theatre has been effectively stopped. Painters and sculptors are again facing the possibility of losing their loft situation... [Artists] want one thing: to live in the community by their own standards, not those imposed by self-styled sociologists, and to do their work for whoever loves it or has need of it. ("Epidemic of Frustration" 4)

To express their concerns, artists and cultural activists planned a march for Wednesday, April 22, beginning at 6 p.m. at 41st Street and Sixth Avenue from which they would march to Lincoln Center by way of Times Square. Led by Diane di Prima and Julian Beck, the march went much as planned, though participants were not allowed to carry the coffin labeled “Will Freedom be Buried?” According to police, to do so would turn the march into a parade “which requires more formal permission” (Smith, “Drizzle” 1).

In the summer of 1964, Edward Koch increased his efforts to get the City to take action against unlicensed coffeehouses and other organizations in the Village, arguing that action to that date had not decreased the congestion in the Macdougal area since many coffeehouse owners “simply regard fines as part of their ‘rent’ and continue to operate in violation of the law” (Harrington, “Koch Enlists City” 1). In July, Koch began an effort that would be among the most successful movements against the coffeehouses when he announced the formation of the Macdougal Street Area
Neighborhood Association (MANA). At the organizational meeting for MANA, a spokesman for the Department of Licenses announced the problem to the group: "There are only six legal coffee houses in all of Greenwich Village. The rest are illegal" (Goodman, "South Villagers" 9); his Department could do nothing about increasing fines for those facilities operating illegally. He failed to note that coffeehouses blamed infighting between City departments and inaction (perhaps intentional) by the Department of Licenses for the fact that applications for licenses lay for month after month without resolution.

The coffeehouse wars had little effect on the productions at Caffe Cino. In February 1964, Ruth Yorck presented *Lullaby for a Dying Man*, the only one of her plays to be presented at the Caffe Cino, though Yorck was a significant figure around the Cino and in the early off-off-Broadway scene in general. Her *Happening at the Cafe* has sometimes erroneously been called *Happening at the Cino*, as occurred in her obituaries (Sherman, “An Appreciation” 14; “Ruth Yorck” 35). Yorck served as a link with an earlier, European avant-garde tradition. Born Ruth Landshoff in Berlin, Yorck grew up at the center of the European intellectual and artistic life, counting among her friends Ernst Toller, Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann, and Albert Einstein. As a young woman (before she had begun studying acting at the Reinhardt School), she appeared in several avant-garde films, including *Nosferatu* (1922), the landmark silent film about Dracula; she created something of a scandal by appearing nude in Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *Die Gezeichneten* in 1922. From a privileged background, Yorck enjoyed the
decadent life of Berlin in the twenties, sneaking away from home to frequent one of the many gay bars:

I liked the soft, pretty boys. And they of course liked me. Because my hips were as narrow as they hoped theirs to be. I liked to dance with them. And listen to them. They liked to talk clothes. I was of course offered cocaine and was very excited and tried. It made my nose feel funny . . . but it made me sleepy and not high. (Yorck, Unpublished Autobiography 87)

Yorck occasionally cross-dressed, having “learned how to enhance my secondary male attributes. That is I learned to look more like a boy than nature intended me to” (178). Dressed as a boy and called Rene, she wore a tangerine in her left pants pocket “so that girls would not find me out when I danced with them” (178). One evening she met and danced with a new girl: “pretty of course, doelike brown gentle very thin and long legged” (179). Over the course of the night, she continued to dance and flirt with the young woman, having consequences that Yorck claims not to have expected: “Come home with me she said. Don’t be a goose I said. She begged. I stopped dancing. She did not want to let go. Don’t be silly I said. I am a girl. Don’t you know that?” The only way Yorck could convince her was to take her into the toilet and strip from the waist up. She showed no compassion for the distraught woman: “I had not been serious. How stupid to fall in love with me. The gril [sic] sat down on the lid of the WC and started to cry. I tries [sic] embarrassed to console her. For what. Ridiculous. She cried very hard . . . . What a bore” (180). Later, Yorck donned male clothing to audition for the part of Lord Alfred Douglas in a play by Carl Sternheim (she did not get the part).

37In her unpublished autobiography, Yorck often reveals shortcomings in her English, with awkward phrasing, missing words, and misspellings.
Eventually, she gave her men's clothing to her brother when he got his first engagement with an orchestra since he had no evening clothes. Through a short marriage to a member of German’s nobility, Landshoff became Countess Ruth Yorck von Wurtenburg. Yorck (like her former husband) opposed the rise of Hitler, ultimately fleeing to safety in the United States where she lived in comparative poverty and where she continued her opposition to Nazism. By the time she fled Germany, she had established a significant reputation for her novels and poems.

Four decades before entering Caffe Cino, Ruth Yorck had violated and made fun of traditional gender codes—cross-dressing for parties, dancing with “pretty boys” in bars, and flirting with “pretty girls” at parties. She had also discovered the fluidity of identity: “I was leading a double life. I was leading a triple life. Or changed my way of life twice a day or once a week. No I was I R[uth]. L[andshoff]. an image. I was the young well behaved daughter of a middle class family, a happy house. I was a call girl. My honest father’s telephon [sic] number figured in many a small black book” (213). Issues of gender and identity appear in many of her American plays. *Lullaby for a Dying Man*, her only work to appear at Caffe Cino, centers on a homoerotic attraction; in *Lovesong for Mrs. Boas*, Yorck suggests a lesbian undercurrent to the relationship between Biblical figures Ruth and Naomi.

*Lullaby for a Dying Man* opened at Caffe Cino in February 1964; it is the story of a condemned man (Victim) who “killed because he failed in his fear to be able to express his love. Loneliness is the source of murder” (Sherman, “Theatre: La Mama”)
12). Sentenced to death for murder, the Victim experiences an existential crisis in fearing that he will die without having ever lived:

I’ve never had anything happen in my whole life. I mean important things like hate or love or spending sprees or a trip to somewhere. A man has to create something special to fill his life. Make it worthwhile. I am short on time. I have got to cram an experience into my last minutes. Quickly. (6)

The Victim’s comments predate a similar comment in H. M. Koutoukas’s Awful People Are Coming over So We Must Be Pretending to Be Hard at Work and Hope They Will Go Away (written after his days at Caffe Cino):

What the hell am I doing out here in the cold wondering and wondering so deeply about the weather for? Nothing’s happening in the house except for Lawrence Welk on television, nothing’s happening out here but the end of March. Come to think of it somethin’s [sic] never happened in my life, no moment has ever made it special, wonderful or especially mine. Almost as if my life is just a ragged concoction of snatches, happenings, an anthology of ordinariness. (17)

In both instances, the underlying significance seems to be the existentialist’s belief that (in the words of Robert G. Olson) “the commanding value in life is intensity, as manifested in acts of free choice, individual self-assertion, personal love, or creative work” (19).

As a prisoner who is being transported to his execution, the Victim has few options open to him in deciding how to “cram” experience into his life. He chooses what seems the only option open to him, falling in love:

I want to live before I die. What shall I do? What can I do? I have to fall in love. That’s the least I can do. Who is there to fall in love with? This whole prison is full of men. Shouldn’t I fall in love with a man? . . . perhaps a man behind bars, there are so many. My heart goes out to them. No, not really. They are broken, vanquished men, conquered men.
Down in their luck. They demand compassion, not passion. No. I want a person who is not conquered. If I cannot conquer him, I will submit to him. I have to submit to make it love. And life is that: submission. (6)

Contrary to the Priest’s advice that he turn his thoughts to God, the Victim chooses to love the Guard; but the Victim does not want the Guard to become a murderer by participating in his (the Victim’s) execution. To do so would mean that the Guard has fallen to the same level as has the Victim. His only means of preventing such a downfall is to murder the Guard:

I have to do this. You will be grateful. I have to save you. I love you. I cannot stand and watch you to be guilty of my death. I tell you it is hell being a murderer. You must not be a murderer. And for me it does not make any difference. I hold your sweet throat in the palm of my hand, your heart, your sweet life, my angel. I love you. There is a moment in love when a man dies a death of splendor. (20)

By killing the Guard, the Victim allows him to die in innocence.

In addition to several plays, Yorck’s literary oeuvre after her arrival in the United States includes a few novels, many poems, and several pieces “drawn from memory” about the famous people in her life. She worked tirelessly to support Ellen Stewart during the early, crisis-laden years of La Mama Experimental Theatre Club and shared her knowledge and experience with aspiring playwrights, directors, and actors. As she told John Gruen, she had been discovered and rediscovered throughout her life: “I am rediscovered every year, but like Persephone, I always return underground” (Gruen, “Pop Scene” n. pag.). She died January 19, 1966 while she and Stewart were at the Martin Beck Theatre awaiting the opening curtain for a matinee production of Peter Weiss’s play Marat/Sade. Initially, Stewart’s cries for help brought no assistance.
because the audience seems to have thought that the commotion was the opening scene of the production. At the time of her death, Yorck lived at 21 Cornelia Street, only a few doors from the Cino. One year after her death, Ellen Stewart offered the Ruth Yorck’s Golden Series, a presentation of nine full length off-off-Broadway plays beginning with Leonard Melfi’s *Niagara Falls*.

While Ruth Yorck served as a link between the avant-garde of off-off-Broadway and the earlier European avant-garde, Haralimbus Medea Koutoukas sought new directions in experimental theatre, often by infusing older, traditional forms with new meanings and perspectives. From the mid-1960s, when the first of his plays appeared at the Cino, and for many years afterwards, a Koutoukas play was certain to attract a large audience. A prolific writer, he had supposedly seen 75 of his plays performed by 1972, according to his biography in Michael Smith’s collection *More Plays from Off-Off Broadway*; a press release in 1978 referred to *Too Late for Yogurt* as his 152nd play (“Scrapbook” 1985, 116).\(^{38}\) Noted for his wild, campy style, his surreal, existential worlds, his highly poetic language, Koutoukas wrote in a variety of styles, from the highly poetic *Tidy Passions, or Kill, Kaleidoscope, Kill* to the slightly more prosaic *With Creatures Make My Way*, from the outrageous camp of *Only a Countess May Dance When She’s Crazy* to the gentle sentimentality of *A Letter from Colette*.

Characteristic of Koutoukas’s plays is the creation of a bizarre, inscrutable world in which characters attempt to construct or determine some meaning, both for the world at

\(^{38}\)Perhaps the accuracy of these numbers could be challenged since many off-off-Broadway playwrights were prone toward exaggeration in their biographies; nevertheless, Koutoukas has been a remarkably prolific writer.
large and for their own lives in particular. His plays are often less concerned with the interaction of characters than with one or a few characters' search for meaning and meaningfulness. Even in the larger-cast plays in which the interaction of characters dominates, much of the focus remains on the individual's search for meaning. Though Koutoukas was both popular and prolific, very few of his plays have ever been published. According to his friend and fellow playwright, Robert Heide, Koutoukas has always hesitated to publish his works because he wrote for a specific moment and does not wish to have them, through publication, either frozen in time or removed from the context of the specific moment (Heide 1998).

Koutoukas's biography is not always easily determined since he (like Joe Cino, Tom Eyen, Ellen Stewart, and other off-off-Broadway figures) often told conflicting stories about himself. In a forthcoming publication about Koutoukas, Jameson Currier writes, "The details of Koutoukas's early life are either sketchy or varied, preferably so, it seems, since the theatrical personality himself told a friend and interviewer for a gay newspaper in Manhattan in 1990, 'Let's just say I arrived in the Village'" (Currier).

Koutoukas was born June 4, 1947, though the place of birth has variously been listed as Athens, Greece (Gruen, "Chamber Theatre" 114) and Endicott, New York (biographical entry in Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Volume 47, 255), with the latter being the correct location. As a teenager, he apprenticed in summer stock, working with Veronica Lake, Constance Bennett, and Margaret Truman. After studying at the New School for Social Research with such notable figures as Maria Ley Piscator (wife of Erwin Piscator and a notable theatre figure in her own right), he launched a career that
included creating performance pieces with Yoko Ono (long before her marriage to Beetle John Lennon), writing plays that range from the outrageous and experimental to naturalistic and sentimental, and directing glittery productions which pioneered the style now known as "genderfuck." By the time he met Joseph Cino, he was already a produced playwright, his first play having won the National Arts Club Award for experimental playwriting in 1962. It was after a producer approached him to do the play that Koutoukas began work at the Cino:

I went to his [the producer's] office and asked, "What can you do for me?"—that's what 20-year-olds are supposed to ask. He reached in his pocket and pulled out all this money. I pretended I had to go to the bathroom.

On the street, I ran into Joe Cino and decided I wanted to work someplace where money wasn't the first thing that came up. Now, age has taught me that it comes up no matter where you are. (Koutoukas. "The Poets are Right" 5)

In his work, Koutoukas frequently turns to traditional, classical structures for his experimentation: "But if you want to get wild or campy, you need the strength of the Classical structure. Then your teapots can have nervous breakdowns" (5). As David Hirsh explains, Koutoukas merges the classical and romantic: "Classical structure becomes a common device supporting the weight of a Romantic inflection which is meant to bring down the stars. The Romantic and Classical are united by sexual longing at its most campy" (5).

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Koutoukas's age is questionable. If he had been born in 1947 as biographies indicate he would only have been 14 or 15 years old when he won the National Arts Club award and only 17 when his first Cino play opened. According to John Gruen, Koutoukas was twenty during the 1964-65 season, thus suggesting that his birth is around 1945.
Though many of the Cino playwrights and directors used camp in their productions, Koutoukas is the artist most closely associated with the style. His work has been characterized by the use of glitter, cross-dressing, and outrageous styles. Though his biography in *The Off-Off-Broadway Book* credits Koutoukas with having invented camp, the style had, of course, been in use for quite some time previously. For gay men, camp was a means of covert communication and of publicly acknowledging their sexuality without the risk of an overt statement. In terms that apply to Koutoukas’s plays, Michael Bronski describes camp and its use for gay men:

Gays have hidden themselves from oppressive straight society through circumlocution—camp—and defended themselves through wit. In gay life nothing is what it seems to be. By pulling the rug out from under usual gender expectations—is it a boy or a girl?—or sexual arrangements—what do they do in bed?—homosexual life and culture undermine patriarchal and heterosexist social assumptions. (46)

At about the same time that Koutoukas’s first play, *Only a Countess May Dance When She is Crazy*, was being performed (December 1964), Susan Sontag published her “Notes on ‘Camp’” (in the fall 1964 issue of *Partisan Review*). She defines camp as “love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration. And Camp is esoteric—something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques” (53). Sontag’s essay has proved particularly important in discussions of camp, with many subsequent writers refuting or supporting her various contentions. One of the points which has generated considerable debate is her argument that camp is, as Moe Meyer argues decades later, “solely a queer (and/or sometimes gay and lesbian) discourse” (1). Other writers have challenged Sontag’s essential premises. Though she refers to camp as a
"sensibility" (53), her general argument seems to make camp an inherent, essential quality of an object. As Charles Ludlam argues:

Susan Sontag really did a number on camp by saying it was specific things—a Tiffany lampshade is camp, a Ronald Firbank novel is camp, a Hollywood movie with a Busby Berkeley number in it is camp. What’s wrong with that is camp ceases to be an attitude toward something and loses all of its relativity. It nails it to the wall and makes it very literal. (226)

Thus, for Ludlam, camp is a way of seeing and of interpreting, not an innate quality within an object. The intrusion of straight critics such as Sontag has been detrimental to camp: "The worst thing that happened to camp was that the straight world took this cult word and decided they were going to do camp" (226).

In the mid sixties, camp became an object of debate in the Village Voice when Vivian Gomick published an essay which seems to equate the rise of Pop Art and certain strains of sexism with the growing visibility and strength of homosexuals. Gay men, Gomick suggests, have taken over popular culture: "It is homosexual taste [e.g., camp] that determines largely style, story, statement in painting, literature, dance, amusements, and acquisitions for a goodly proportion of the intellectual middle class" (1). To Gomick, underlying the camp sensibility is a rejection of women. Furthermore, she argues that the influence of camp has become so strong because "[w]e have become disheartened, demoralized, and finally hysterical—so intolerable is our circumstance. The world thus must be declared a topsy-turvy place, the banners of renunciation must wave" (21). Responding to Gomick, Suzanne Kiplinger argues that the characteristics of camp that Gomick attributes to the homosexual actually are the characteristics of the...
hipster, particularly Norman Mailer's superman-psychopath as described in "The White Negro." Gornick notes:

Still, in analyzing the emerging scene, the symptoms Miss Gornick gives are closer to Mailer's hipster than to the homosexual. The triviality, hatred of authority, impatience, exaltation of style, and so on, can be found in some degree in both groups, but the emotional aloofness and charm are distinctively the mark of the psychopath. (18)

In a period of increasing political activism, camp was seen as either politically ineffectual or disengaged. As Avery Corman argued in a letter to the editors of the Voice in which he decried the amount of coverage given to "zany wacky stuff infused with pop, jazz, rock 'n' roll, vamp, and camp": "Direct your influence toward what is really needed in the theatre—scripts and writers with commitment, with vision, and with balls. Nobody is going to make the world a better place by giggling or waltzing through with butterfly nets." (Corman 4). The implication, of course, is that a politically engaged theatre is efficacious only if its commitment and vision are accompanied by an appropriate austerity, severity, and masculinity.

Koutoukas's work can hardly be considered austere or severe. While none of Koutoukas's Cino plays have explicitly gay characters, he frequently challenges and transgresses gender codes. Koutoukas was fascinated by the classical practice of men playing women's roles. Thus, his work was often written with the intent of being played by either a man or a woman: Countess Ollie Samovitch, for example, in one of Koutoukas's first Cino plays, Only a Countess May Dance When She is Crazy (1964), was initially played by Carole Griffith but has since been played by both men and women (including the 1990 production in which Everett Quinton played the role).
Shortly after the opening of *With Creatures Make My Way*, Elizabeth Davidson who played the sole character (Creature, sovereign of the sewers) was replaced by Warren Finnerty.

Koutoukas creates in his plays an existential world devoid of meaning, but always on the verge of meaning, a nonsense realm threatening, but never achieving, clarity. Through paradox, inversion, oxymoron, and so forth, Koutoukas shows people inhabiting a world that defies meaning, as in *With Creatures Make My Way*:

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Come come and know the reason
No promise can be kept
For secrets are for knowing
And voices are for the dumb. (5)
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This world, in which basic signifying systems are turned on their head and understanding is always deferred, reflects the existentialist’s understanding of existence. Kaplan explains:

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It is not in the least accidental that existentialism should have taken hold of the public mind some hundred years after it might have done so: its basic tenets were already quite clearly expressed in the nineteenth century. For today large parts of the earth’s population feel that they are confronted with a world they never made, a world too vast and complex to yield to human urging and one which is indifferent—if not downright hostile—to human aspiration. (98)
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It is the skirting of meaning, the presentation of an indecipherable, paradoxical universe that so frequently leads to the linking of madness with Koutoukas’s work: Robert Heide says, “His plays came out of an internal, psychic madness. It is as if he did not always know what he wrote—the plays came out of a dream scape” (Heide 1998); similarly, John Gruen wrote to a *Vogue* audience in 1969, “Koutoukas dwells on fantasy and
madness, stretching reality toward points of no return” (“Chamber Theatre” 116);
finally, Dan Sullivan, critic for the New York Times, wrote of the 1968 production of
Only a Countess May Dance When She is Crazy: “Like the lady doing the talking . . . it
[the play] seems to want desperately to make sense, but cannot—which, one imagines,
is precisely how it feels to be mad” (41).

Much of this sense of madness stems from the instability of meaning within the
plays; neither people nor objects seem to have a fixed, stable identity. Thus, for
example, in Only a Countess, when Countess Samovitch answers the telephone, she
does so by speaking into a “coffee cup on strings [that] descends from flies” (35).
Heide recounts seeing the production and asking Koutoukas if he could not have
obtained a real telephone, to which the playwright replied haughtily, “In a Koutoukas
play, we use a paper cup” (Heide 1998). As a result of this world, many of Koutoukas’s
characters, like existentialist humans, live in what Kaplan calls “almost unbearable
anxiety and despair” (98).

Among the most notorious of Koutoukas’s works is Medea or Maybe the Stars
May Understand or Veiled Strangeness. In quick succession, Medea premiered at La
Mama, only days later opened at the Cino, and subsequently played at Theatre Genesis,
leading (according to Koutoukas) to advertisements headed “coming soon, to a theatre
near you.” At Theatre Genesis, Medea was played by a woman; at La Mama and Caffe
Cino, under the direction of Koutoukas, the role was played by the bearded Charles
Stanley, probably now best known for his pioneering work with Deborah Lee and
Yvonne Rainer in postmodern dance. Though he generally remains faithful to the
overall concepts of the original myth, Koutoukas takes many liberties, recreating and revising the story. He reduces the scope of his play, focusing on only the concluding scenes of the original work, reduces the number of children to one (making a cast of four characters: Medea, Jason, the child, and a Red Cross Nurse), and presents Jason as weak and ineffectual. Perhaps most indicative of the style of the piece is the setting (a Laundromat). Koutoukas mingles the common with the exalted, the mundane with the sublime, the comedic with the tragic. In her fury, Medea dashes bleach in Jason's face and kills their child by throwing him into a washing machine (not forgetting, of course, to include an appropriate measure of Oxydol detergent). In his review for *The Village Voice*, Michael Smith describes the play as being so eccentric as to be nearly unthinkable. This play is a straightforward enactment of the final terrible scene when Medea murders her child to avenge herself on Jason. The language is high-flown as befits tragedy, the tragic impulse is pursued without deviation, and Koutoukas has injected a philosophical content of evident seriousness—the play is violently anti-logic, anti-Greek. Medea is the very heroine of old—fanatical, hideously wronged, ecstatically suffering. (22-23)

In Medea, Koutoukas may have captured the heroine of old, but he did so through a ludic subversion of the traditional form of the tragedy.

When Stanley performed as Medea, he did so with a full beard and with no effort to "pass" as a woman. As one spectator noted, Stanley played the character not as a woman expressing her love for a man, but as a man in a dress expressing his love for another man. Koutoukas suggests that Medea emerges from a position of rage, pain, and marginalization so great that she is outside of or beyond terms such as "gender" and "sex." (His inspiration came from learning of a mother in Harlem who killed her child.)
It was, in fact, this position of absolute marginalization which intrigued Koutoukas and became central to many of his plays, thus, perhaps, contributing to the number of his works with a single character:

- *Only a Countess May Dance When She is Crazy* tells of Countess Ollie Samovitch who is, perhaps, mad and is, perhaps, one of the few survivors in a world devastated by an experiment gone awry;

- *With Creatures Make My Way* is set in a sewer; the only character seeks companionship from a lobster which, like himself, has been granted eternal life.

Most of Koutoukas’s characters are outrageous and bizarre. To be ordinary or mundane in Koutoukas’s world is the great tragedy.

According to Koutoukas, we strive to be different, to be extraordinary, to be individuated from the mass of people, and not to be what Abraham Kaplan calls “a personified type without human personality” (103). As Clackety Clack says in *Awful People Are Coming Over So We Must Be Pretending to Be Hard at Work and Hope They Will Go Away*, “I guess each man would like to find something a little different in his life; something that made his living a bit of a parable. Wouldn’t it be nice to leave a little story of your life behind? It wouldn’t have to say much, it would probably do more if it just gave others a chuckle” (18). Koutoukas’s characters strive for the exceptional and the unique, which Koutoukas values, a quality captured by Stanley in his performance (despite the “amateurishness” Smith found in the production). In his review Smith notes that “Charles Stanley is a grotesque Medea, in not quite the same
way that Medea is a grotesque woman, but as the play goes on he becomes invidiously convincing.” Interestingly, when Linda Eskenas played Medea at Theatre Genesis (opening just before Stanley’s final performance in the role at the Cino), Smith seems to have found the introduction of a “real” woman’s body into the role to have weakened and confused the production: “Linda Eskenas plays Medea more naturally, with less madness and ecstasy than did Charles Stanley. . . . One is more able to see the real woman inside this monster of suffering and vengeance, which is valuable. But the monster is diminished in the process, the mythical grandeur yields to comprehension, and the performance fails to accumulate the headlong force the play requires” (Smith, “Theatre Journal,” review of Medea at Judson 27). The actual presence of a woman’s body, then, makes the performance too real, too understandable, too recognizable. Smith’s analysis of Eskenas’s performance echoes Goethe’s comments in “Women’s Parts Played by Men in the Roman Theatre”: “We come to know this nature [of women] even better because someone else has observed it, reflected on it, and presents us not with the thing itself but with the result of the thing” (qtd. in Ferris 58). A distillation of “womanliness” presented by and through a male body has greater validity and clarity while also being more pleasurable to watch because removed from the real object. Both Smith and Goethe seem to mistake a socially-coded performance and audience reception of gender with what they assume to be a real, essential gender. They are conflating gender as performance with gender as a reality tied to a specific type body.

Koutoukas became one of the most popular and eccentric figures at the Cino. Even his calls for actors showed his particular flair; according to an unidentified
clipping in the files of the New York Public Library, “Harry says he needs the following: one trained panther, a male-female dwarf chorus that can tap dance, and a sort of rough Dietrich-type male impersonator. Freaks of all kinds are also wanted, but they must be able to sing and/or dance.” He directed most of his own shows and appeared in others, notably as Wonder Woman/Diana Prince in The Secret of Tabu Mountain, the first of the comic book productions. In 1966, Koutoukas won a special citation in the Village Voice Obie Awards “for the style and energy of his assaults on the theatre in both playwriting and production” (http://www.villagevoice.com/cgi-bin/obies/obies_year.cgi?year=1965-66).

Koutoukas’s arrival late in 1964 helped shift the direction of Caffe Cino. About the same time, three events occurred which helped shift the direction of the coffeehouse wars. First, the newly formed Coffee House Employees Guild led a strike against the Why Not Cafe and Basement Cafe (both owned by Harry Cropper). The union demanded a minimum wage of $1 per hour plus tips for waiters and a guarantee of at least $5 per day for performers. Among the reasons Cropper cited for not paying the requested wages was, according to the Village Voice, the problem of licensing:

He is unable to pay entertainers salaries unless he has a coffee house license. He can’t get a coffee house license because of hang ups with zoning, and the zoning problem will never be eliminated because Macdougal Street merchants and residents are against coffee houses--some of them violently against. (Burrows 8)

To show the animosity some in the area felt toward coffeehouses, the Voice quoted a figure whose name often appears in opposition to the establishments: “Izzy Young, proprietor of the Folklore Center at 110 Macdougal Street, wants to see the owners
‘extirpated. They are animals,’ he said, ‘making a lot of money on underpaid kids who are being held up for the tourists to laugh at. They should be shot’ (8).

The second event of the fall of 1964 was the growth of the bohemian community in the East Village, further weakening the arts community in the West Village. For some time, Stewart’s La Mama had been one of the few arts venues on the east side, but new locations began to open and older establishments changed their operations to attract the young artists. Among the most significant of this latter group was Speedy Hartman’s Old Reliable. Like many other establishments in the area, it had been a quiet Polish bar, depending upon sales to afternoon drinkers with sales boosted by the occasional wedding reception. According to the Voice, Hartman decided to make changes in his clientele:

Then, one night last winter, proprietor Speedy Hartman corralled a passing beatnik and asked him how he could turn the place into a Village bar. “You need atmosphere,” said the beatnik. “What’s atmosphere?” asked Speedy. The beatnik thought for a minute and answered, “More people like me.”

So Speedy put in a nickel juke-box, hired a couple of local hipsters to tend bar, and began to serve free french-fries. Within two weeks the Old Reliable was so crowded that he had to lock the doors. (Kempton 1)

As community action against coffeehouses escalated and as rent and property prices in the Macdougal Street area increased, poetry readings and poets migrated eastward.

Soon, Speedy Hartman converted his small back room (used in 1964 as a dance floor) into a theatre; a few years later, when the Caffe Cino was in decline and finally closed, many of the Cino regulars such as Robert Patrick moved to the Old Reliable.
The third event in the fall and winter of 1964 threatening coffeehouses was, yet again, renewed vigor in official actions against coffeehouses. Perhaps responding to MANA and Edward Koch's pressure, on Monday, November 2, City Corporation Counsel Leo Larkin ordered a crackdown on coffeehouses in the Macdougal Street area. Only a month later, however, Village coffeehouses received one of the few pieces of encouraging information when a meeting of MANA concluded in a "hands-across-the-political-factions moment of good will" (Nichols, "Mess on Macdougal" 8). Even the nemesis of coffeehouses, Edward Koch, expressed concern about the well-being of the Gaslight, noting that then existing laws and regulations made it difficult to distinguish between "good and bad" coffeehouses, with the Gaslight presumably being one of the good establishments (8). The conclusion of the MANA meeting brought with it hope for a conclusion to the politically charged coffeehouse wars.

By 1965, Caffe Cino was becoming known as a venue in which gay plays could be and were often presented. The significance of gay plays to the history of the Cino is among the most controversial issues relating to the coffeehouse, with many Cino regulars arguing that, though the coffeehouse certainly offered a space for performances by and about gay men to a degree never before experienced, such performances were only a relatively small part of the work done there and are not central to the Cino's story. Even William Hoffman who wrote gay-themed plays for the Cino and who edited Gay Plays: The First Collection (1979) noted that the presentation of gay plays was not a central purpose of Caffe Cino:

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Joe Cino became a play producer because many of his customers wanted to put on shows, and he and many of his customers were gay. Joe Cino did not have an obsession with homosexuality. He simply had an extraordinary largeness of spirit that allowed other people to explore, set other people aflame to express what they never had been allowed to before. So at the Cino we experimented with the theater in both straight and gay plays. (xxiii-xxiv)

The Cino was, according to many, a theatre which centered diversity, featuring among its productions those created by a wide range of persons reflecting a broad spectrum of issues. There were plays by and about straight men; there were plays centering issues of feminism; there were plays protesting the war in Vietnam, and there were plays with no political or social commentary at all.

Others who were involved with the Cino offer quite a different perspective on the coffeehouse, stressing that the central figures in its operation were gay or bisexual (Johnnie Dodd, Jonathan Torrey, Kenneth Burgess, and Joe Cino) as were the primary artists (William Hoffman, Doric Wilson, Lanford Wilson, Marshall Mason, Roberta Sklar, Neil Flanagan, and Tom Eyen). Hoffman has spoken of productions which, though they did not have lesbian or gay characters, reflected a gay sensibility when produced at the Cino: “Both gay plays and gay theater were pioneered at the Cino from the beginning. Early productions can only be described as homosexual in style: a vivid sexy Deathwatch (Jean Genet) and Philoctetes (André Gide)” (xxiv). In his autobiographical novel Temple Slave, Robert Patrick created the Espresso Buono, a coffeehouse in Greenwich Village. Though it is fictionalized, figures resembling Joe Cino, H. M. Koutoukas, Marshal Mason, Lanford Wilson, and others are easily recognizable. With its emphasis on orgiastic sexuality and rampant drug abuse, the
portrait in *Temple Slave* is believed by many to be an honest portrait of the Cino (though with obvious fictionalization).\(^{40}\)

Whatever the validity of his novel as a description of Caffe Cino, Patrick is certainly a significant figure in the history of the Cino, as well as the histories of off-off-Broadway and gay theatre. As Hoffman suggests in his introduction to *Gay Plays*, the three (Cino, off-off-Broadway, and gay theatre) are very nearly inextricably intertwined.

Born Robert Patrick O'Connor on September 27, 1937, in Kilgore, Texas, to Robert Henderson and Beulah Adele Jo O'Connor, Patrick’s childhood was dominated by instability, as his father sought to keep the family out of poverty by moving from town to town seeking work in the oil fields. Patrick found a means of escape from the difficulties of the period through the radio programs, movies, and other popular culture of the period, an influence that surfaces repeatedly in his Cino plays. One of his favorite childhood pastimes was reenacting movies or creating his own plays with his friends and two older sisters. Having never attended a live performance, his understanding of theatre came from movies, so that he had no understanding of the aesthetic differences between the stage and film. He learned of the power of the stage during World War II when a traveling theatre troupe was stranded in Grand Prairie, Texas, where he was then living. To raise funds so that they could continue to travel, the troupe hastily raised a tent and offered a variety of entertainments, including a play from the Jewish theatre (though adapted for protestant Christian audiences), a puppet show, and an amateur

\(^{40}\)Patrick’s novel is extremely controversial among those who were at the Cino, with some strongly deriding it and others recommending it as a means of getting a sense of what being at the Cino was like.
Patrick's first performance was his competition in the troupe's amateur contest. Shortly afterwards, he and his family moved to Roswell, New Mexico, where, for one of the few times in his life, he attended a full year at one school. There, he participated in his first production of a play. As he developed as an artist, Patrick became increasingly convinced of the political, social, and aesthetic power of the stage as compared to film, since the former is an experience shared between the actors and audience at the moment of creation: "Unlike films and literature, which record experiences that once happened, a play presents an event. Its reality makes it a powerful moral and psychological tool" ("Patrick, Robert" in Contemporary Authors).

After attending three years at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico, Patrick worked in the kitchen of a summer stock theatre. At the end of the summer, he traveled to New York City, intending a short visit. During his first hour in the city, he went sightseeing in the city's bohemian section (Greenwich Village), encounters a young man with what he calls an "ass of infinity" (19) in Temple Slave, and follows him to Caffe Cino:

Two actors were rehearsing the "muffin scene" from The Importance of Being Earnest. They would stop when they missed a line and go back. I thought that was the play, and I thought it the most brilliantly experimental work I'd ever seen. (I thought so 14 years later when Tom Stoppard did it in Travesties.) (Patrick, "Off Off Broadway—A Personal History," Off-Off Bway Theatre Choice, n. pag.)

Enamored of the people, the atmosphere, and the productions, Patrick returned frequently, soon volunteering for various chores and becoming a self-described slave at the temple of Caffe Cino:
I didn’t know that movement would be the most important, innovative, experimental theatrical event of the second half of the century. I just knew that I had found a lot of wonderful, gay people, an alternative to the dreary chain gangs of the bars and baths and streets, a breeding-place for gay dignity and wit. (“Robert Patrick on Caffe Cino” 41)

His introduction to the Cino and to gay-oriented theatre came through Doric Wilson’s work: “When I fell in love with the Cino’s first playwright, Doric Wilson (a fact he will learn here for the first time) I didn’t know he’d wind up a famous gay theatre manager and movement dramatist. I just knew he wrote wonderful, obscure, Absurdist plays” (41).

Associated with the Cino from 1961, Patrick did not write his first play until 1964. Although the remarkable quantity and diversity of his work has won him a comparison to Lope de Vega (Feingold, “Can a Kid” 116), Patrick attributes his initial interest in writing as having originated in his enjoyment of theatre professionals: “And my writing was a means to be around those fascinating, deranged, charming characters called actors” (Hawthorn 216). When Patrick presented his first play, *The Haunted Host*, to Joe Cino, the coffeehouse entrepreneur initially tried to dissuade Patrick from becoming a playwright. Cino allowed Patrick to present his play only after Lanford Wilson, Tom Eyen, and David Starkweather intervened on Patrick’s behalf.

*The Haunted Host* shows the personal growth of Jay, a writer who has sacrificed his career to support that of his less-talented and now dead lover (Ed, the ghost referenced in the title of the play). When beginning-writer Frank enters, he resembles the dead lover both in appearance and behavior; like Ed, he wants to draw emotional and creative support from Jay, a situation which would again require Jay to sacrifice his
own talent to nurture that of someone else. Though heterosexual, Frank seems ready to enter into an emotional and, perhaps, physical relationship to attain Jay’s support. In an act of self-protection, however, Jay rejects the opportunistic advances of the younger artist. Patrick has spoken of at least two levels of meaning in *The Haunted Host*, one general to the gay male community and the other specific to Caffe Cino. By rejecting the parasitic relationship with Frank, Jay has overcome a harmful, demeaning relationship: that between a “heterosexual” male (often a prostitute) and a gay man. To Patrick, *Haunted Host* presents a new, stronger image of the gay man: the play is “about a much tougher gay who throws out an opportunistic hustler” (Patrick, “Where Gay Plays Began” 26). Patrick has also noted parallels between the relationships of Jay and Frank and those of Joseph Cino and the artists of his coffeehouse. In Patrick’s opinion, Joseph Cino often neglected his own self-interest to provide financial, emotional, and aesthetic support to the actors, directors, and playwrights who worked at his Caffe.

Because of the subject matter of *The Haunted Host*, Patrick had difficulty recruiting actors for the first production so that he had to play Jay; Cino regular William Hoffman, an employee in the publishing industry and not yet a playwright, played Frank. As Leah D. Frank explains, Patrick’s pen name emerged from the production:

[I]nfluenced by Joe Cino’s creative energy along with playwrights like Lanford Wilson, Paul Foster, David Starkweather, and the entire Cino gang, he wrote his first play, *The Haunted Host*. In fact, he got his name with that production in a typical Cino haphazard manner. Marshall Mason . . . was rushing out to get *The Haunted Host* programs printed. Patrick, who was acting in his own show, asked that Mason break up his name and list Robert Patrick and Bob O’Connor, one for playwright and the other for actor, because he didn’t want people concentrating on the fact that the playwright and actor were the same person. When Mr.
Mason came back with the program, Robert Patrick O’Connor was known as Robert Patrick, playwright. (420)\(^{41}\)

Patrick vividly recalls a particular night when a young man attended the show with his parents; during the production, Patrick overheard the man say, “You see, Mom, Dad? That’s what I am. I’m a homosexual.” That a young man could use his production as a means of coming out to his parents epitomizes for Patrick the importance of the stage as an educational tool and a means of building a gay community.

On March 2, 1965, Jean-Claude van Itallie’s War opened at Caffe Cino, with Jane Lowry (who had previously appeared in such Cino plays as Doric Wilson’s And He Made a Her) and Gerome Ragni. Cino had encouraged Itallie to write a play for the coffeehouse even though the young playwright was neither a regular nor even particularly fond of the place. His first exposure to the Cino (also his first exposure to off-off-Broadway) hardly impressed him: “I remember the first time I went to the Cino. I don’t remember what was playing, but I know I thought it stank. At the end of the performance someone got up and said if we wanted more, we could go to the just newly opened La Mama Café. We laughed. Who wanted more?” (‘War’ and ‘We’” 6).

Though he came to appreciate La Mama and off-off-Broadway in general, Itallie was never particularly fond of the Cino: “That’s okay—there were other places for me in ’64: Open Theater, La Mama . . . I was touched when Joe Cino asked me to do a play there. . . . Cino offered me a place to work, his home in fact (Cino lived in his café)” (6).

\(^{41}\)This story is available in several sources and was repeated to me during an interview with Patrick.

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Written in 1962, *War* had been performed once (for two nights) before its opening at the Cino. The coffeehouse’s space was hardly ideal for a play such as *War* written for a proscenium stage and needing distance from the audience for the Edwardian dream-moments:

However providing ideal space or environment was not the point at the Cino—the Cino provided a space, that’s all, and that was a lot. The existence of the Cino was for the barely born avant-garde theatre, and, in a more personal way, for Cino and his friends, a survival measure with some taste of desperation in it. (I hope I am fair, with hindsight and distance, in saying that.) (6)

Feeling depressed over the less-than-satisfactory production of *War*, Itallie was walking down Cornelia Street just a day or so after the March 2nd opening “[w]hen Gerry Ragni rushed at me from the other direction, pushing the baby carriage in which he later carted around the unproduced script of *Hair*, yelling, ‘It’s burned down! It’s burned down! The café’s burned down!’” Initially Itallie dismissed Ragni’s shouts as another of his pranks, only to discover that, in fact, the Cino had been destroyed by fire. As Itallie and Ragni surveyed the damage, Jonathan Torrey crossed the street and unlocked the iron grill across the door to allow them into the charred space. They gathered the surviving costumes and props most of which had been borrowed from NBC for the production:

“We formed a sad procession, a few of us, including Gerry with the baby carriage, others carrying a long harpoon, swords, a charred chest, a few wet costumes, single-file, to my apartment on Christopher Street, like defeated Goths, returning from *War* indeed”(6).
Ironically, the fire occurred on Ash Wednesday, March 3, 1965. Officially, it was determined to have been caused by a gas leak, though many believe that Jonathan Torrey set the fire. On more than one occasion, Torrey and Cino had argued violently, resulting at times in extensive damage from Torrey’s (perhaps drunken) rages. Once he splashed paint over the artwork displayed on the walls of the Café; on another occasion he destroyed the props borrowed for one of Lanford Wilson’s shows. Whatever the cause of the fire, however, the result was devastating. As Michael Smith noted, the fire “completely destroyed the interior of the café. . . . Credit for containing the fire goes to the fireproof ceiling of the café, recently installed as part of a new lighting system” (“Joe Cino’s World” 1). Almost immediately, friends and patrons throughout the City flocked to Cino’s aid. Actor and playwright Donald Brookes (assisted by his brother) did much of the reconstruction; leaders of the off-off-Broadway movement sponsored benefits to help offset construction costs and revenue losses; Ellen Stewart offered use of La Mama’s space on Sunday and Monday until Caffe Cino could move back into its regular space.

Over the weeks after the fire, benefits were held at theatres and coffeehouses throughout the Village and, in a few cases, elsewhere. According to Tillie Gross, the benefits featured virtually all the major figures of off-off-Broadway:

The playwright, H. M. Koutoukas, quickly put together a benefit, and other fund raising efforts were held by almost every theatre person in the Village—the Becks, Al Carmines, Richard Barr, and Edward Albee—to help rebuild the café. The Becks obtained a mailing list of institutions and private persons offering grants and subsidies for Joseph Cino, submitting his name for one grant. (189)
Cino had always avoided pursuing grant money, fearing that to do so would bring unwelcome changes to the Cino. He is reported to have received one grant of $1,000 which he gave away, but when or why he received the grant (and whether or not it related to Beck’s effort or even to this period at all) is unclear.

H. M. Koutoukas was among the most active in arranging benefits for the Cino, one of which even predated the fire (presumably intended to help the struggling coffeehouse survive one of its perennial financial crises). Included in the archives of the New York Public Library is a pledge card dated 15 February 1965 (a few weeks prior to the fire), asking for two, four, eight, ten, or fifteen dollars every month “in order that Mr. Cino may continue his vital work.” One advantage to making a pledge was to have been a subscription to a monthly newsletter detailing Cino events, though the newsletter seems to have been an unfulfilled plan since no record of one exists. After the fire, Koutoukas organized a major benefit given on March 15 at Writers’ Stage on East 4th Street in space donated by Edward Albee. Performances for the benefit included work by such veteran Cino writers as Michael Smith (I Like It, directed by Roberta Sklar), David Starkweather (Chamber Play, directed by Alec Rubin), Lanford Wilson (Or Harry Can Dance, directed by Michael Kahn), Koutoukas (Pope Jean or A Soul to Tweek, directed by Koutoukas), Claris Nelson (A Road Where Wolves Run, directed by Marshall Mason), Ruth Yorck (Love Song for Mrs. Boas, directed by Neil Flanagan), Paul Foster (Madonna of the Orchard, directed by Sydney Schubert Walter), and Oliver Hailey (Little Tree Animal, directed by Alec Rubin). Performers included such Cino
veterans as Harvey Keitel, Claris Erickson, and Michael Warren Powell. Otherwise involved in the benefit were such Cino regulars and theatre professionals as Jim Perkinson, Kenny Burgess, Robert Dahdah, Hope Stansbury, and Richard Barr.

The cover of the program for the benefit shows a double-headed eagle because of Cino’s admiration for the symbolism of that creature. To try to capture the significance and spirit of the Cino, the program for the benefit includes a section in which five people speak about the coffeehouse. Three are artists who worked there (playwright Claris Nelson, director Marshall Mason, and actor Michael Warren Powell); two are persons affected by the Cino, though “not related directly to the theatre, people with various skill and different cultures” (Gallery Curator Ed Brohel and an unidentified resident an apartment above Caffe Cino). The most moving and prophetic tribute is Nelson’s statement:

The Cino is an island where our souls can play. There is no city there; only plays written over coffee under the Christmas lights; our own plays performed with freedom and love; actors, directors, theatre people who believe in magic; wild, drives, beautiful plays by other young playwrights that show us what’s about to happen in American theatre.

The most unusual of the quotes (and the one that reflected the opinion of many Village residents about coffeehouses in general) was that given by the unidentified woman who resided above the Cino: “They should all be blown up - - - - all coffee shops in the Village - - - - every one of them. Why’s the newspapers so interested, they should come up to my apartment, Ill tell them a thing or two. ... weirdo’s hang-out - - - - children could have been killed - - - - the FIENDS!” Her comment was given before she learned

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42 Claris Erickson is the name under which playwright Claris Nelson performed.
that the firewall installed by Cino had prevented the fire from spreading to the rest of the building.

Director Ronald Link organized two benefits for the Cino, the first held on April 15 at the Village Gate, a well-known performance venue, and the second at the Sullivan Street Playhouse on April 26. The latter event was composed of the following performances

- *Humilities* by Diane di Prima, starring James Waring, directed by Jerry Benjamin;
- *Little Tree Animal* by Oliver Hailey, starring Marion Herrod, directed by James Struthers, set by Whitney Blausen, and stage managed by Glenn Johnson;
- *The Bed* by Robert Heide, starring Donald Brooks and James Jennings, directed by Robert Dahdah;

*The Bed* became one of the Cino’s most successful productions when it was given a regular run after the coffeehouse reopened.

Other benefits included a special performance of Gertrude Stein’s *What Happened* at Judson Poets’ Theatre on March 12 with the income going to the Cino fund, and, on Friday, March 26, from midnight until dawn, Caffe Gomad hosted a
“Show Him You Luv Him” party to benefit “Joe Cino’s World” (Advertisement for Caffe Gomad 23). Probably the last benefit for the Cino was one entitled “The Cino’s Not for Burning,” held on Tuesday, June 29 at 8 pm and midnight, over a month after the May 18th reopening of the rebuilt coffeehouse. Along with emcee Ellen Stewart, the event featured the following performances:

- *The American Rainbow* with words by Arthur Williams, music by John Herbert McDowell, and performances by Edward Barton and John Herbert McDowell; directed by James Waring;

- A Medley by The Fugs;

- *The Customs Collector in Baggy Pants* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti;43

- A selection from Avital’s Mimi Repertoire with Virginia Allen and Abby Imber;

- *The Treasurer’s Report*, a monologue by Robert Benchley, with John Herbert McDowell;

- A Judson Medley (songs form Judson works, including *Home Movies, Promenade, Sing Ho for a Bear*) with Al Carmines “and friends”;

- Patter for a Soft Shoe, by George Dennison, with Al Carmines and George Bartenieff.44

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43In the program, *With Creatures Make My Way* by Harry Koutoukas has been crossed-out by hand and Ferlinghetti’s piece added.

44In the program, the title is given as *Pattern for a Soft Shoe*, with the “n” of “Pattern” crossed-out by hand and a parenthetical note “midnight show only” written in the margin.

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Though this seems to have been the last benefit held relating to the fire damage, a few years later a similar effort was undertaken to help pay legal and other costs incurred during the final days of the coffeehouse’s operation.

As the benefits occurred at various venues, some supporters encouraged Cino to expand his business. According to Tillie Gross,

At this time, it was suggested to Cino that he try to move to larger quarters, which were available nearby, rather than renovate his storefront, but again Cino refused. He never wanted to enlarge and change the café though he dreamed of having a building in which everyone would live and work together. (189)

Though Cino never achieved his dream of sponsoring a building in which his artists could live and work without economic pressure, he continued rebuilding his coffeehouse with the Brookes brothers as the primary carpenters. Cino’s only ambition was to reopen his café as quickly as possible:

I firmly believe that there is a definite place for café theatre ... where hot coffee or hot anything may be spilled on an actor if he doesn’t pay attention to the audience. It’s very exciting to be working so close to people.

The way we are doing things, there is no end to the possibilities of improvement. This is without becoming a theatre. My only thoughts about expanding are not commercial but only to make it more difficult. Good always comes from what is supposedly bad. What we need now is the room, to be open again as soon as possible. I am very anxious to get open again and continue what we’re doing. It is all worth it forever. (Smith, “Joe Cino’s World” 15)

While awaiting completion of the construction, Cino presented shows that he had previously scheduled on Sunday and Monday evenings in space provided by Ellen
Advertisements from the period indicate that the Cino followed La Mama’s policy of admitting only members, since the advertisements include the warning “Members Only” (Advertisement for Caffe Cino at La Mama 20). Shows produced by Cino at La Mama include Beat poet Diane di Prima’s *Poet’s Vaudeville* and poet Ruth Krauss’s *Cantilever Rainbow*. Two shows (Mitchell’s *Who Put That Blood on My Long-stemmed Rose* and an evening of two plays by Itallie) were co-productions by the two the Cino and La Mama. Like Leroi Jones’s *Dutchman*, Canadian playwright Mary Mitchell’s *Who Put That Blood on My Long-Stemmed Rose* is set in a subway train, though the plays are similar in few other details. Like many other Cino plays from this period, it raises the issue of homosexuality. Perhaps it is most significant for the difficulties arising around Actor’s Equity which tried to prevent the production from running. A delegation from Cino and La Mama (including Robert Dahdah who played the Conductor in Mitchell’s piece) went to Equity to try to resolve some of the problems. Though neither side was fully satisfied with the results, Equity decided not to proceed with an effort to prevent the show from running. Equity would be less generous with future shows.

The fire might easily have brought an end to Caffe Cino had it not been for the support and assistance of friends and patrons. As work on rebuilding continued, Cino and his colleagues began planning a reopening celebration. Cino selected *With

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45 According to Tillie Gross, “Stewart of Café La Mama, whom Cino had helped with her café, donated three nights a week at her place to Cino after the fire, billed as “Caffe Cino at La Mama E.T.C.” (189). Advertisements in the *Village Voice*, however, list show dates and times as Sunday and Monday at 9 and 11 pm (Advertisement for Caffe Cino at La Mama 20).
Creatures Make My Way by H. M. Koutoukas as the first production for the refurbished space. Somewhat to her surprise, Roberta Sklar was chosen to direct it. Sklar had directed several times at the Cino, mostly scenes from European absurdist work, though she had also directed a "very traditional" version of the medieval cycle play Flight into Egypt during the Christmas season of 1963 (interview with Sklar 2000). Despite having been acquainted with Neil Flanagan before working at the Cino, Sklar was not on particularly intimate terms with him, nor was she a part of the Cino inner circle. To Sklar, the limitations of her friendship are indicated by the fact that neither revealed to the other his/her attraction to members of the same sex. Given her relative distance from the core Cino group, Sklar remains unsure why she was chosen to direct one of the most important and anticipated productions in the Caffe's history. To Koutoukas, however, the choice was simple: the quality of her work with past Cino shows made her the most logical person to direct his show. For the Cino, the show was one of its most important, as it reasserted the presence of the Cino on the avant-garde theatre scene.
Chapter IV
The Peak Years: 1965-1966

The Cino reopened on the evening of May 18, 1965, with Elizabeth Davison in the role of Creature in H. M. Koutoukas's *With Creatures Make My Way*. The new Cino was a huge success, filled with crowds and congratulatory telegrams. From Lucy Silvay, Phoebe Wray, Lance Wilson, and Bill (perhaps Hoffman) came a telegram reading “All our best wishes and love.” Mary Boylan and Robert Dahdah were somewhat more metaphoric, using a particularly apt image, “Here’s to the New Cino. May it live longer than the Phoenix” (8MWEZ X n.c. 27.646, Folder 2, Correspondence, May 1965, RE: Congratulatory messages). The next eighteen months were the most successful of the Cino’s history, with productions including Oliver Hailey’s *Animal* and *Picture*, a revival of David Starkweather’s *You May Go Home Again*, Robert Heide’s *The Bed*, Sally Ordway’s *A Desolate Place Near a Deep Hole*, and Lanford Wilson’s *This is the Rill Speaking*. The first play by William Hoffman appeared, soon followed by two more; a John Guare play opened in August 1965, though the listing in *Village Voice* credited authorship to Paul Guare (see “Cafes and Coffeehouses” 10). Michael Smith explored the role and nature of the critic when he directed Sam Shepard’s *Icarus’s Mother*. Tom Eyen, H. M. Koutoukas, and Alan James presented popular, gender-bending productions. Marco Vassi, future proponent of free love, author of *Stoned Apocalypse* and *Metasex Manifesto*, contributor to *Penthouse* and

46 Gross incorrectly gives the date of the reopening as May 20, 1965 (188), which is the date of the issue of the *Village Voice* announcing the event.

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victim of AIDS, produced his play under the name “Fred Vassi” (“Marco” became his preferred name sometime after his work appeared at the Cino). And, yet another poet saw his work on the stage of the Cino when poet Michael Benedikt’s *Vaseline Photographer* was placed on a double bill with *Newsletters* by poet/children’s writer Ruth Krauss.

The opening of *With Creatures Make My Way* in the renovated space was one of the two or three most celebrated events in the Cino’s history. One of Koutoukas’s most sweetly sentimental works, *Creatures* is an “Intensive Camp” set “When the full moon rises and sewer grates are smoldering, about the time when insomniacs are screaming for sleep, and every corner proves a threat” (program from clipping files in New York Public Library). The Creature, Sovereign of the Sewers, drank a potion that gives eternal life, though he inadvertently let one drop fall to the ground. The drop had been swallowed by a lobster, thus giving it eternal life. As Creature speaks, he addresses a pearl-colored lump, telling it that some day he will find the lobster and that they will live together and know what not to say for eternity. The play ends with a joyous reunion as the pearl colored object is revealed as the lobster (the red having turned to pearl over many hundreds of years).

Though the text of *Creatures* never refers specifically to Caffe Cino, it clearly has elements alluding to the coffeehouse. Robert Patrick has suggested that Koutoukas was the only one of the many Cino playwrights to write specifically about the Cino:

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47a*Intensive Camp*” is taken from the manuscript in the archives at Lincoln Center; the display during the Cino exposition in 1985 called the play a “Bitter Camp.”

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The Cino playwright asoluto [sic] was H. M. Koutoukas, a true poet who enshrined such Cino cult-objects as mirror-balls, cheap glitter, dyed feathers ("cobra feathers"), rhinestones, toy pianos, sequins, shattered mirrors, valentines, and all other forms of "tacky glamour."

Lots of people wrote for the Cino, but only Harry wrote about it. In his feverish fantasies it became: a sewer where an immortal lived with a pearl-coated lobster; the basement of a mad scientist's tower; and the "Heaven of Broken Toys" in his lovely All Day for a Dollar. ("The Other Brick" 3,10)

Patrick goes too far in naming Koutoukas as the only playwright to write about the Cino; various writers, including Doric Wilson and Claris Nelson, incorporated aspects of Caffe Cino and its clientele in their work. Yet no other playwright so clearly creates or evokes the Cino magic or captures the essence of Cino camp as does Koutoukas, and few of his plays so clearly evoke this magic and essence as does Creatures. While recognizing Sklar's admonition that we should not overly emphasize associations between Koutoukas's sewer and Cino's coffeehouse, we can note essential similarities between the two. Over the years leading up to the fire and, again, in the years after, the walls of the Cino had become encrusted with layers of old posters, clippings from "muscle" magazines, photographs, and various memorabilia from Cino artists and patrons. That and the perpetual invasion by cockroaches gave the coffeehouse a cluttered, never-quite-clean air that could be reminiscent of Koutoukas's sewer. More significant are the references to "temple" in the two descriptions of the setting for With Creatures: according to the manuscript, the action takes place "deep in curvature" of the sewer, a "temple of pastey [sic] consistency with lighting of amber and mauve. It reminds us of the churches of the White Anglo Saxon Protestants" (1); and, according to the program, the place is "A temple, deep within the curvatures of the sewers of
Timisoara in Transylvania, where all that has been left to die congregate.” For many, the Cino had elements of a temple, from the alternative spirituality expressed through the reliance of several figures on eastern traditions, to the sacredness of the “magic” created on the stage, culminating, perhaps, in the almost mystical bonds of family and brotherhood created within an atmosphere which respected differences of sexuality, ethnicity, and class. The most important echo of Caffe Cino reverberating through *Creatures* is that which centers difference, which challenges traditional gender/affectional roles, and which marginalizes the conventional. Creature (initially played by Elizabeth Davison, who was replaced shortly after opening by Warren Finnerty) recognizes his uniqueness—his marginality—and accepts it as “just one of the aggregations of my being” (7). As a result, he chooses to live in a marginal world: “That’s why I’m here with all the things that have been left to die — because they’re only things that understand me — or need me in a way that I can return. Here in mud and rot and death—— I can remind and always show that death is just a release from getting bored” (8). Though *Creatures* can hardly be called a “gay play,” it depicts a liminal world—both a sacred sewer and a profane temple—in which one who is different finds companionship with an unlikely partner, an apt description for the Cino itself.

The size and layout of the program for *Creatures* indicate the production’s importance since it is one of the very few to exceed one page. At a time and location in which programs were often handwritten (as with that for *All Day for a Dollar*, Figure
6) and seldom consisted of more than a simple listing of credits. The program for Creatures consists of

- a graphic on the cover page (see figure Figure 7);
- a list of contributing artists and acknowledgments on page 2;
- and acting/directing credits with details of the plays setting on page 3.

The list of contributing artists contains eleven names (including Cato Typing Service for program printing), with sixteen names in the acknowledgments section (including Joseph Davies, Tom Eyen, John Brooks, and Ruth Yorck)—quite an extraordinary list for an off-off-Broadway program of the time, particularly given that With Creatures is a one-person piece. Also unusual for Caffe Cino, the program for Creatures contains advertisements—a soul-food restaurant, a fur dealer, two art galleries, and a frame shop.
The period after *Creatures* was particularly successful for the Cino. Among the particularly noteworthy productions is Robert Heide’s *The Bed*. First performed at the benefit on April 26, the play opened to a full run in July 1965, with a revival the following September. Though the play became one of the most popular performed at Caffe Cino, several early incidents threatened to end its run prematurely. A brief, two-character work, *The Bed* is set almost exclusively in a bed. Under Robert Dahdah’s direction, the cast for the benefit was Donald Brookes and James Jennings; the cast for the full-run at the Cino was to have been James Jennings and Walter McGinn, though McGinn had to be replaced. The concluding scene of the work calls for McGinn’s character to get out of bed, a point for which the actor could never find an acceptable motivation. Thus, he refused to budge from the bed. According to Brookes and Dahdah, Dahdah presented McGinn with alternatives as to why the character might get up: because he wants a cigarette; because he has to urinate. But McGinn was adamant: “I don’t think this character would get out of bed” (interview with Brookes 1999).

Growing increasingly frustrated, Dahdah pointed to the script and said, “You get up because it says so right here”; when that did not work, Dahdah turned to McGinn and said “You get up because I’m the director and I say you get up” (interview with Dahdah). Since neither physical nor psychological motivation nor direct commands could coerce McGinn from the bed, he was replaced at the last minute by Larry Burns (advertisements for the first week of the run had already been placed when the cast change occurred). The second major threat to the show came from official concern over its content—a show in which two men spend virtually the entire time in bed drew the
attention of legal officials, particularly given the “homosocial orientation” of many of
the Cino’s productions. It was rumored that officials were so concerned about the work
that agents from the FBI attended to ensure that, in the words of Heide, no “homo-sex
[sic] hanky-panky” was being presented (Costopoulos 1985, 361; Heide related the
same story in an interview with me in 1997). Ironically, actor Brookes recognized the
homoerotic quality of the work only after the woman he was dating saw it and was upset
at seeing her boyfriend romantically involved (even if on stage) with another man.

Heide had previously written gay-themed work. In December 1960, his first
play to appear on the New York stage opened on a bill with *Pericles* by Kenneth Koch
and *Marriage on the Eiffel Tower* by Jean Cocteau, when Lee Paton and James Spicer
presented Heide’s one-act play *Hector*. Described by *Village Voice* critic Jerry Tallmer
as a piece “in the style of Beckett,” *Hector* was the most successful of the three plays,
both because of the performance of actress Jean Bruno and because of Heide’s script.

Given the success of *Hector*, Paton presented it, a second play by Heide (*West of the
Moon*), and a play by Harry Tierney, Jr. (*The Blood Bugle*) as the inaugural productions
of the New Playwrights Theatre, a venture intended to bring promising new playwrights
to the public’s attention. With frank and sympathetic allusions to homosexuality, sexual
promiscuity, and substance abuse, *West of the Moon* attracted harsh criticism from
conservative reviewers, including the suggestion made in *Theatre Arts Magazine* that
Heide “break his typewriter over his hands.” (qtd. in Heide “Magic Time” 29). In the
*Village Voice*, Tallmer offered a defense of Heide’s work:
Butchery with an extraordinary amount of violence was committed last week in the daily papers against a girl named Lee Paton whose sole crime was to present two new one-act avant-garde dramas at the tiny playhouse she has taken over. . . . [T]he critical slaughter was unjust, hysterical, and vulgar. (Tallmer, “Theatre: New Playwrights” 9)

Despite such defense from a few critics, Heide was so deeply offended by the overall response to *West of the Moon* that he considered abandoning writing for the theatre. It was about four years before another of his plays appeared on stage.

Soon after the production of *West of the Moon* came Heide’s “illumination”: “A first visit to the Divine Shrine—the mad mythic mystical Caffe Cino” (biography in *New American Plays: 4*, 73). Having seen the production at New Playwrights, Joe Cino encouraged Heide to write for his Caffe, saying, “I think it’s about time you wrote that existentialist play. But make it a play for blond men. You know what I mean, Heide. It’s time to get off your ass and write it. *Now*” ("Magic Time" 30). The resulting play was *The Bed*. In addition to its successful run at the Cino and, subsequently, off-Broadway, it was made into a movie by Andy Warhol (his first experimental split-screen film), but disputes over ownership of the film forced it off the market after a brief run at the Cinematique in New York; later, footage from it was spliced into Warhol’s *Chelsea Girls*. The film of *The Bed* in its entirety has been restored by the Museum of Modern Art.

As the producing debut of Ron Link (an important producer and director until his recent death), the play focuses on two men whose relationship is crumbling because of too much boredom, alcohol, and drug abuse. The set of the production at the Caffe Cino was dominated by a bed which occupied virtually the entire, quite small, stage. In
his unpublished notes to the script, Heide indicates the complexity of the bed as an image: “As a symbol it could represent gravity-pull-limitation, a death slab in a morgue, a ‘padded cell,’ a coffin, sleep, sexuality, whatever problem the bed might represent itself to be to an audience” (from manuscript supplied by the author). The bed, then, signifies a broader context of human experience, one in which the existentialist crisis is paramount:

JIM. I feel nauseated. This process going on like some great senseless flux. On and on and on. You. Me. Sex is dead. No, it’s God. God is dead. No, it’s Neitszche, Neitszche [sic] is dead. No, I am alive, here, and yet . . .

JACK. Why don’t you just drop dead?

As critic Elenore Lester has argued, the characters “are caught in the nightmare of living death. Time and space, as areas for meaningful action are annihilated. . . . The playwright clearly establishes that what we are witnessing here is the anguish of existence” (“Theatre: The Bed” 10). Thus, Jim tells Jack, “We don’t do anything. We’re . . . we’re like two objects frozen in time, in space, not even on earth, really . . . . suspended. Weightless being. Occasionally we go to the john to pee or to take a crap. We shove food down our throats. . . . Basic functionalism.”

Among the productions coming between the two full productions of The Bed were two by a young employee of a publishing company, William Hoffman. Like Robert Patrick, Hoffman frequented the Cino for years before he presented any work there. His introduction to Caffe Cino came in 1960 when John Corigliano took him to
see *The Boy Friend*. Corigliano (with whom Hoffman was intimately involved at the time) chose the Cino because someone whom he had previously dated was working there. Though Hoffman had little interest in the theatre at the time, most of it “bored the shit” out of him (interview with Hoffman 1999), he quickly became a regular of the Cino. His first acting experience (in Patrick’s *Haunted Host*) came largely by default since so few actors were willing to appear in a gay play; the experience proved to Hoffman that acting was not where his skill lay. Though he considered himself a poet and had no interest in playwriting, he soon turned to writing for the stage, in part because he wanted to share some of the attention that Lanford Wilson and others were receiving:

> I started to get jealous because all of my friends were getting attention. So, I think out of self defense, I turned from poetry to playwriting, although I didn’t know that’s what I had done until Lanford told me a short story I had written was really a play. (Interview with Hoffman 1999)

Like Wilson, Hoffman converted a short story he had written into his first play.

In August 1965, Hoffman’s first produced play (*Thank You, Miss Victoria*) appeared at the Cino. As the play opens, the only character, Harry Judson, has just started work for his father’s business. According to critic Eleanor Lester,

> Although he is young, attractive, the possessor of a substantial income and friends of both sexes who are ready and eager to go to bed with him, he is in hell. He suffers from a wicked case of alienation d. t.’s, aggravated by a Daddy hang-up. He is alcoholic, compulsive, manic,

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*In an interview, Hoffman could not recall the year that he first began going to the Cino, but recalls seeing *The Boy Friend* on the occasion. The only production of the play seems to have taken place on August 20-22, 1960.*
more or less impotent and possibly suicidal—as are his friends. (Lester, “Theatre: Caffe Cino” 10)

By intercom, Judson instructs his secretary not to disturb him as he makes various telephone calls to friends. Most of the play is occupied with a call to Miss Victoria who has placed the following advertisement: “Aggressive New York business woman will employ male secretary. Experience and accuracy required. Telephone Miss Victoria, Rector 5-1296” (159). The call to Miss Victoria quickly moves from a job interview to a sado-masochistic, sexual play in which Judson submits completely to the unseen Miss Victoria. As Lester notes,

Out of the interesting fact that the language and quality of experience of intense sexual passion sometimes comes close to that of fiery religious ardor, playwright Hoffman has fashioned a funny and poignant little dramatic piece about a man who makes a psychic journey from despair to ecstasy via a crackling telephone wire. . . . Harry's sterile Wall Street office is the equivalent of a Beckett tomb-room and his telephone is like one of those ambiguous windows or doors on the modern stage; it may open out to something, but we have a strong feeling that the something is unlikely to be any different from or better than whatever is in the room. (“Theatre: Caffe Cino” 10)

Like other works at Caffe Cino, Thank You, Miss Victoria centers transgressive sexuality, along with the complexities of communication in a technological, mediated age.

Though Thank You, Miss Victoria was Hoffman's first produced play, Good Night, I Love You, based upon his short story, was the first play he wrote. Appearing in September 1965 at the Cino on a double-bill with his Saturday Night at the Movies, Good Night centers on a telephone call between a man (played by Michael Griswold) and his girlfriend (played by Linda Eskenas) in which the man confesses that he has
gotten pregnant as a result of a same-sex relationship. On September 16, 1965, in his column, “Theatre Journal,” Michael Smith wrote,

Both plays [Good Night, I Love You and Saturday Night at the Movies which played on a bill with it] were attractively staged by Neil Flanagan. Hoffman’s vision of people trying to break out of their isolation and self-indulgence is sweet and sometimes perceptive, but the derivative and commonplace naturalism of his method limits him to fairly routine results. (24)

Good Night, I Love You and Saturday Night at the Movies were the last plays Hoffman presented at the Cino.

About two months after reviewing the two plays by Hoffman, Smith found his own work at the Cino reviewed in the pages of the Voice as he directed the premier of Sam Shepard’s Icarus’s Mother. As Leslie Wade has noted, Smith was one of Shepard’s first and most ardent champions:

Shepard’s work thus became something of a rallying point for the counterculture, and the production of each new piece became a cause célébre. The Village Voice in particular hyped his productions. Openly partisan in their backing, reviewers such as Michael Smith and Ross Wetzsteon—who would claim Shepard as “our playwright”—cast the writer as the emblematic spearhead of an emerging alternative consciousness. (21)

Wade recognizes the importance of Smith in promoting Shepard’s career after critics had censured a performance of his one-act plays: “After a number of reviewers panned the one-acts, Shepard’s disappointment was checked by Michael Smith’s favorable notice in the Village Voice. Smith’s confirmation underscores how important support can be for a beginning dramatist” (21).
In addition to displaying his partisanship, his work on *Icarus’s Mother* provided Smith a means for extending his assault on the traditional divide between artist and critic, which, Smith believed, makes the critic an enemy of theatre:

I have devoted most of my organized energy over the past six weeks to a production at the Caffe Cino of Sam Shepard’s one-act play *Icarus’s Mother*. In recent tradition the critic has become an outsider, a representative of the audience who views the finished product and judges the merit. Such a role is not only uncomfortable but also dull. The critic tends to become an enemy of the theatre rather than its ally, and his implicit generalized audience point of view is depersonalizing and false. ("Theatre Journal," Comments on *Icarus’s Mother* 19)

Participating in the creation (as well as reception) of theatre helps the critic counteract the debilitating effects of isolation and practical inexperience. Without experience, the critic is limited in what s/he can either understand or address:

Apart from the discomfort of this isolation, I have felt often that I simply didn’t know what I was talking about. I can discuss playwriting because I know what it feels like to write a play. But otherwise I have little experience in the theatre. I acted and designed sets in high school, designed lighting in college... Then I happened to become a critic and did nothing for years but see plays and write and talk about them.

To compensate for his limited experience, Smith began working in the theatre, directing at Judson Poets’ Theatre and Caffe Cino, acting at Cafe Au Go Go, writing for Caffe Cino and La Mama, and participating in the “experimental activities” at Open Theatre. Rather than serving as “an unpredictable but necessary publicist” for theatres, Smith saw his function as critic to enter into a more generalized aesthetic discourse about works he reviewed, intended not for the audience-recipient but for the artist-creator: “I have tried to define a different role for the critic. . . . [M]y reviews are basically addressed to the artist. By discussing the work in terms of its creation, rather than the
objective' terms of a judge, I provide one side of a hopeful dialogue." The critic, then, becomes not an objective, all-seeing, judging eye removed from the creative fray, but rather a lesser among equals. His contribution may not equal that of the playwright, actor, or director, but he enters the discourse on very nearly equal terms, as an artist, drawing upon his knowledge of and experience in theatre practice to discuss the artistic process and product with the other artists.

The Cino closed 1965 with two plays by Lanford Wilson, Sex is Between Two People and Days Ahead. Lost until recently, the former play, as mentioned earlier, is set in a gay bathhouse and relates the misadventures of two young, inexperienced men who have met there. More a sketch than a full play, Sex shows the inability of the two characters to communicate comfortably or freely:

ROGER. I was at a party. Got pretty high. I mean I had to - it was the god-awfullest party anyone had ever seen. People just sitting around talking. Endlessly.

MARVIN. Yea. God I hate those.

ROGER. Me too. I kept thinking if someone would just start dancing or something. You know - instigate something.

(Unpublished manuscript supplied by author 4)

Roger and Marvin talk endlessly because neither is capable of initiating anything.

Unable to break the barrier between them, Roger and Marvin part frustrated, with Marvin dressed to leave and Roger going to an orgy in another part of the bathhouse.

By the end of 1965, off-off-Broadway had been "discovered." For several years, critics in the Village Voice had closely followed the developments at Caffe Cino, Cafe La Mama, Cafe Wha?, Judson Poets' Theatre, and other underground performance spaces. Show Business, the New York Post and other periodicals had published
occasional articles (a few as early as the beginning of the coffeehouse wars) reviewing productions or discussing the movement. In 1964, for the first time, off-off-Broadway made a significant showing in the Obie Awards for the 1963-64 season. The awards (given by the Village Voice for work off-Broadway) had previously largely overlooked off-off-Broadway. In 1964, Judson Poets’ Theatre dominated the event, winning for

- Best Production of a Musical (Judson Poets’ Theatre for *What Happened*)
- Distinguished Play (Rosalyn Drexler for *Home Movies*)
- Distinguished Direction (Lawrence Kornfeld for *What Happened*)
- Best Music (Al Carmines for *Home Movies* and *What Happened*)
- Special Citation “for its sponsorship of experiment and experimenters in the performing arts, through the Judson Poets’ Theatre and the Judson Dance Theatre” (http://www.villagevoice.com/cgi-bin/obies/obies_year.cgi?year=1963-64). 49

Other important awards for the season include Distinguished Performance award to Taylor Mead (whose poetry readings had been popular in Village coffeehouses, including Caffe Cino) and Distinguished Play award to Adrienne Kennedy for *Funnyhouse of a Negro*. Awards for the 1964-65 season continued to recognize work by off-off-Broadway theatres as Caffe Cino and Café La Mama were given a joint Special Citation for “creating opportunities for new playwrights to confront audiences

49 All additional information and quotations about the Obies are taken from www.villagevoice.com/obies/ unless otherwise noted.

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and gain experience of the real theatre.” It was the first of many awards for Caffe Cino and its artists. In the following year, H. M. Koutoukas won a Special Citation for “the style and energy of his assaults on the theatre in both playwrighting and production” and Sam Shepard won for Distinguished Plays for three works, including *Icarus’s Mother*.

With the increasing acceptance of Caffe Cino and other off-off-Broadway theatres as forces in New York theatre, these small underground venues drew increasing attention from publications outside the Village, finally including even the *New York Times* which had given attention to the fracas over the coffeehouses but virtually none to the productions being offered in them. On December 5, 1965, the *Times* released its first major piece on off-off-Broadway, publishing *Voice* critic Elenore Lester’s “The Pass-the-Hat Theater Circuit” (the title, of course, referring to the tradition of collecting donations at the end of productions). Like others involved in off-off-Broadway as producers, artists, or critics, Lester suggests that the intimacy of the venues contributes to the success of the works they produce:

Members of the audience are never far enough from the stage lights to feel totally blacked out. They must, in a sense, participate in the action by keeping their chairs from grating and their coffee cups from rattling. This gives them the feeling that they count as individuals, and some OOB-niks believe this quickens their responses. They also claim that the sense of involvement and immediacy gives them a definite sensuous experience that can’t be duplicated in ordinary theatre, even theatre-in-the-round, which still maintains a kind of formal barrier between stage action and audience response. (98, 100)

The sense of involvement and immediacy described by Lester harkens back to the early description of coffeehouses (typical venues for off-off-Broadway) as places in which intimate cliques formed and pseudo-families gathered. Whereas Norman Mailer’s
hipster lived in a world constantly threatened by nuclear annihilation, off-off-Broadway playwrights "write as though they were born into the world the day after some metaphysical H-Bomb exploded, and they accept this blasted world as the natural environment":

Although these characters are disconnected from society, they are unlike the traditional American outcast heroes in the works of Eugene O’Neill or Tennessee Williams, who are oppressed by the hostile power of society. In this sense, the young writers seem “farther out” than either Albee, whom they regard as an old master . . . or Le Roi Jones . . . who, despite his own youth, is generally regarded as an aging bohemian somewhat tainted by commercialism. (Lester 100)

For off-off-Broadway writers, sex in all its variations becomes a means of exploring the new sense of alienation as well as alternative and traditional relationships.

Lester’s article gives a fair amount of attention to Caffe Cino and its artists, describing the "sensuous experience" of the Cino and other venues: “All of the permanent OOB spots have hard chairs, but each also has its special tribulations. At the Café [sic] Cino, OOB audiences sit at precariously balanced tables pushed close together and risk getting coffee and actors in their laps” (100). In addition to Starkweather’s So, Who’s Afraid of Edward Albee?, Lester discusses several works and playwrights, including Robert Patrick, Sam Shepard, Heide’s The Bed, Lanford Wilson, and Claris Nelson. Lester provides a brief summary of the origins of Caffe Cino:

Joe Cino, who officially started the OOB theater seven years ago when he came down from Buffalo and opened his café on a side street in the Village, would agree about the [lack of] money. His idea was to have a gathering place for his friends, an art gallery, and a setting for poetry and play readings. He thought the profits from the sale of pastries and coffee would keep the tiny place going, but instead he found himself taking a full-time job to support the café.
The play readings grew into a full-scale dramatization of Voltaire’s *Candide*. The actors, 16 in all, chased one another around the tables, for the stage was everywhere in the house. Gradually, Cino, who had no special background in the theater, started to get original plays from young writers and decided to try out a few. It worked well, and playwrights started “crawling out from behind boards and under rocks.” (106,108)

This new-found attention was not greeted with universal acclaim among Cino’s cadre of artists.

Most off-off-Broadway artists took either of two positions on recognition and commercial success: they shunned it or they worked (usually with little success) for it. As Sally Banes has argued, “But for off-off-Broadway, graduating to off-Broadway—leaving the alternative home and the alternative community—was a fate to be avoided, for it altered the relations of production, turning artists into alienated labor” (46). Thus, many derided those artists who chose to move from underground theatres to success in commercial venues. For those striving for such a transition, however, the move was far from easy. In introducing off-off-Broadway to his readers, French journalist Bernard da Costa describes some of the problems, citing Deborah Lee and Caffe Cino’s first comic book production:

Deborah Lee who periodically plays a role in *Wonder Woman* took hours getting into heavy make-up in Joe Cino’s dirty backroom. Her performance will not affect the audience. No one will talk about her. Yet all her friends will be there to applaud her and to find her “marvelous.” In place of making progress [in her career], she risks taking on “bad habits.” It is the danger which lies in wait for the actors, the authors of OOB. One ages badly in Greenwich Village and the
material conditions are so bad that everyone is willing to do anything to live a little better. (85)

Even as the styles and issues explored by off-off-Broadway artists began appearing in commercial theatres, the artists who had originated the styles or first explored the issues remained ignored as other artists recreated them for the commercial stage. Animosity between the two groups (those who sought and those who shunned) success sometimes flared. Helen Hanft, for example, told da Costa

"I am a Stanislavskian actress," states Helen Hanft, "and I will leave off-off-Broadway one day to go to Broadway. OOB authors write too misogynist plays, and there are too many homosexuals in the movement. I do not know Joe Cino. He is behind his machine. He makes espresso. Ellen Stewart is pretentious. Off-off Broadway is a world of chickens who would like to pass for eagles. (87)

Despite these difficulties and the opposition to success, some artists did begin to move from OOB to commercial success. Not only was Lanford Wilson, for example, able to move several of his works into off-Broadway venues, he also saw a collection of his plays published. Works by Robert Heide, Robert Patrick, John Guare, Sam Shepard, and other writers eventually appeared off-Broadway, on Broadway, and in regional and international theatres. Ellen Stewart toured Europe with La Mama productions, several of which had premiered at the Cino.

50 My reference is to a copy of the article in Réalités available from the Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute at Ohio State University; since pagination is not always clear in the copy, page numbers in my citations are approximate. This and all other references to da Costa are my translations from the original French.

51 The Madness of Lady Bright was among Wilson's works to play off-Broadway, though the director chose not to cast Neil Flanagan as Bright.
Events occurring in late fall and winter of 1965 seemed to shift the focus of the coffeehouse wars. In a news summary of the period in which it was not in publication because of a strike, the *New York Times* noted,

> The City Council raised the fines against operators of illegal coffeehouses convicted for the first time from $50 to $250. Second offenders are subject to prison terms under the new law. An illegal coffeehouse can operate as a restaurant but may not provide entertainment. ("A Summary of International and Domestic News" 60)

The change in fines was part of an overall effort to increase the regulation of coffeehouses. According to a revised city code, a coffeehouse was defined as

> Any room, place or space in the city, except eating or drinking places, which provide incidental musical entertainment either by mechanical devices or by not more than three persons playing piano, organ, accordion, guitar, or any string instrument, which is used, leased or hired out in the business of serving food or non-alcoholic beverages and has a permit issued by the commissioner of health to maintain or operate a restaurant and provides entertainment without a stage . . . and is restricted to instrumental music, folk, popular or operatic singing, poetry or other literary readings or recitals, dramatic or musical enactments and which does not permit dancing. (8-MWEZ x n.c 27,646 #18)

Clearly a concession to those residents who complained of late-night/early-morning noise, the new code stipulated that coffeehouses must be closed from 3 am to 1 pm on Sunday and from 4 am to 8 am all other days.

Perhaps the most significant event of the period was the election in November of John Lindsay as mayor. Before assuming his duties, Joel Tyler, the License Commissioner appointed by Lindsay, visited two unlicenced coffeehouses in the Village: "It may sound utopian . . . but I hope I can be somehow effective in getting

52The copy in the Cino files at the New York includes a handwritten note: "Went into effect 12/4/65" (8-MWEZ x n.c 27,646 #18).
down to the needs of the individual citizen as far as licensing is concerned. This, to me, is the meaning of this election" (Harrington, “New Man on Licenses” 1). One of the two coffeehouses Tyler visited was Caffe Cino: according to the Voice, “[T]he Cino, an experimental theatre center with coffee on the side, has been leading a precariously unlicensed existence due to zoning problems. The new License Commissioner reported that he had enjoyed himself at both places” (Harrington, “New Man on Licenses” 1). Tyler promised a study of licensing procedures in view of the difficulty the Cino had obtaining a license despite never having had a complaint about noise.

The new year opened at the Cino with H. M. Koutoukas’s All Day for a Dollar or Crumpled Christmas with a cast that included Robert Dahdah, Ronald Link, J. P. Dodd, Charles Stanley, and Joe Cino (as St. Peter): “It seemed to me a perfect meeting of event and place, and within its confines it was a source of special pleasure” (Smith, “Theatre Journal,” review of All Day 15); “The best Christmas play I have ever seen” (Al Carmines quoted in the Advertisement for Caffe Cino’s All Day 18). All Day for a Dollar was followed by a revival of David Starkweather’s The Love Pickle (formerly The LOVE Affair) and a few weeks later one of Koutoukas’s most sweetly sentimental pieces, A Letter From Colette, or Dreams Don’t Send Valentines (A Bittersweet Camp). With a cast of many of the Cino’s favorite stars (George Harris, George Harris II, Robert Dahdah, Deborah Lee, and Mary Boylan), The Easter All Star Spectacular celebrated the first anniversary of the fire that had gutted the space.

Immediately preceding the celebration of the first anniversary of the reconstruction, an unusual and particularly Cinoesque incident occurred in the
production of Maurice Maeterlinck’s *The Death of Tintagiles*. According to the Cino’s press release, it was the first performance of the piece since Katherine Cornell and Margaret Mauer had appeared in a production presented by the Washington Square Players (Caffe Cino Clipping File). The Cino cast included Suzanne Caddie, who had appeared on Broadway in *The Lovers*, *The Tender Heel*, and *Talent 61*, as well as Jane Harris, a young member of a family in which both parents and all children appeared in at least one Cino production. In the audience on Saturday, April 2, was H. M. Koutoukas, one of the better known and respected Cino playwrights who was sometimes considered to be less than respectful of other productions. He was notorious, for example, for waiting until the lights had gone down and actors were scurrying to their places to light his cigarette (with a lighter that seemed to have an excessively large flame), so that actors were caught in mid-scurry by unexpected and unwelcome light; for some reason, Koutoukas seemed always to choose nights that a critic was in the audience to light his cigarette during the blackout. As he sat that Saturday watching *Tintagiles* during the 1 a.m. showing, the playwright giggled hysterically at the most inappropriate moments, particularly at moments when one particular actress was at her most serious. Increasingly disturbed by the strange giggles, the actress broke character, turned to him, and told him that either he had to stop or she would leave. She returned to character and continued the play. As the young Jane Harris stood waiting for the cue for her entrance, she heard giggles, a sword being thrown down, and the actress storming out. The run of *The Death of Tintagiles* ended one week and one day early.53

53This story is based upon that told to me by several people.

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At about 2:30 a.m. that same night, Michael Smith stopped by the Cino on his way home from a production of his *The Next Thing* at La Mama. He helped organize a replacement show for *Tintagiles*:

The immediate challenge was to create a program to be performed the next night, since Cino was determined that some show—if not the show—must go on.

In addition to Cino, playwright H. M. Koutoukas and actor designer Charles Stanley were there, and we got busy devising a program. Stanley offered to play Jean Harlow in a scene from Koutoukas's play *Tidy Passions*, which he had previously done last summer, and they began rehearsing with a new actor, John Berger, as Narcissus. John Herbert McDowell, the composer, had been in the Cino earlier in the evening, and he agreed to perform Robert Benchley's monologue *The Treasurer's Report*. Cino called playwright Lanford Wilson and director Marshall Mason; they came right over and made plans to do a brief three-character play that Wilson had written last spring. ("Theatre Journal," comments on the closing of *Tintagiles* 27)

Other performers also agreed to appear in the show. Al Carmines offered to sing if someone could provide him with an instrument (the next day Smith located a harpsichord for him). Someone asked Mary Boylan to join the show, but she had to come up with her own material since they had nothing for her to perform. Smith convinced Joyce Aaron to perform *More! More!* a play directed by Remy Charlip and written by Smith, Charlip, and Johnny Dodd. Dancer Deborah Lee agreed to operate lights.

The new show opened as scheduled and played both performances to full houses. Despite never having had a complete run through, the production ran as smoothly as if it had been completely rehearsed. With this success, Cino asked the
performers to continue the run for the following week (variously called the *Easter All Star Spectacular with All Star Cast* or, more aptly and simply, *Pot Luck*):

The entire experience of creating the show was delightful, an unstructured collaboration in which everyone was pleased to do what he could do well, and the result proved the virtue of the method. The production will continue through Sunday, with additions and omissions according to who’s free when, and I recommend it for your pleasure. (Smith 28)

The only major flaw, according to Smith, was in John Berger’s undisciplined performance as Narcissus in the selection from Koutoukas’s *Tidy Passions*. As a result, the decision was made to strike Berger from the cast and eliminate Narcissus so that Harlow would appear alone for the next week’s run.

The spring and summer of 1966 brought several skirmishes between the factions fighting over what had come to be called the “Macdougal Street mess” (Goodman, “SRO Audience” 1), though neighborhood residents and business owners finally reached a “temporary detente” (“Marcus Gets Backing” 9). In March, Building Commissioner Charles G. Moerdler with various aides and their wives, visited three Village coffeehouses (The Basement, Four Winds, and The Feenjon Café) in “dignified raids” (“3 Dignified ‘Raids’” 18). During the visits, none of the establishments violated coffeehouse regulations concerning public performances. When asked about music, the host at Four Winds, for example, replied, “No, Man, we can’t have any of that, you know; it’s like we haven’t got the right license” (18). Though Commissioner Moerdler enjoyed his visit to Bohemia, he warned that Mayor John Lindsay had told him “only a few hours ago ‘clean this place up and clean it up quick’” (18). A few days later, a
spokesman for the Police Department announced a “top priority crackdown” on crime in the Village and the Times Square area, because those areas “have become magnets for some of the more disreputable elements of our society and require our immediate and urgent attention” (Pace 1). Among the moves he announced was a more aggressive search for building code violations in bars and coffeehouses.

At 8 pm on Friday, March 18, policemen attempted to carry through their crackdown on problems in the Village by cordoning off a fourteen block area, preventing traffic into the Village, and thus, they hoped, decreasing crowds. The effort backfired, as headlines the next day touted the failure of the policemen to control hundreds of young people and as newsreels showed the teenagers roaming through the streets shouting, “Down with cops!” The next day, Saturday, March 19, was even worse than usual, as a hoard of youngsters poured into the area:

The publicity brought a seismic wave of youth, aroused as much by curiosity (and spring) as by rebelliousness, to an area already atremble with adolescents. Crowds as thick as in Times Square on New Year’s Eve, but different because almost all were white and all young, were channeled along the narrow sidewalks by the “keep moving” orders of police. (Gurin, “McD: A Losing Battle” 1)

For several hours that Saturday evening after the initial police action, complete chaos threatened to erupt, as crowds wandered through the streets.

In the aftermath of the “barricades botch” (Harrington, “Street” 3), the different Macdougal-area factions sought a compromise acceptable to all sides. In a move supported by the Macdougal Area Neighborhood Association, Village District Leader Edward Koch put forward a proposal that seemed to please many coffeeshouse and
residents: change zoning regulations so that coffeehouses could move into the commercial district, away from the residential area. With all sides agreeing that a solution had to be found and with Koch's plan as one possible solution, the groups settled into a period of relative peace: Though the Department of License continued to act against theatres and cinemas presenting sexually-oriented material or certain politically oriented acts (such as flag burning), the truce in the Macdougal area seemed to hold, as residents and businessmen formed a four-person committee to discuss the problems. Mayor Lindsay attempted to relieve further neighborhood problems by having a meeting with representatives of various sides of the Macdougal controversy. As in past meetings, issues included problems with noise and congestion, entrapment of gay men by undercover policemen, and harassment of alternative arts establishments.

In the summer of 1966, Caffe Cino opened its most successful show, when a young Bernadette Peters stepped onto the stage in her first adult role as Ruby in *Dames at Sea* or *Goldiggers Afloat*. An affectionate spoof of the Busby Berkeley musicals of the thirties and forties, *Dames* continually refers back to those musicals with its naval setting and its militaristic-drill style in many numbers, with the character names echoing those of the stars of the Berkeley musicals (Ruby [Keeler], Dick [Powell], Frank [McHugh], and Joan [Blondell]), and even with its title (Berkeley staged numbers for or directed shows such as *Dames, Gold Diggers of 1933*, and *Gold Diggers of 1935*). The Cino production even included a subtle contrast between sections that were intended to reflect the tradition of black-and-white film with sequences in "technicolor" (interview with Haimsohn 1999).
Because of conflicts among persons involved in the production, information on the show’s origin and development is now somewhat confused, having become a hotly contested issue between the writers and Robert Dahdah. The concept probably originated with George Haimsohn who spoke with British author Robin Miller about his idea. They developed either a fairly complete show or a brief cabaret sketch (depending upon who tells the story) to which James Wise added music. Haimsohn initially submitted the script to Andy Warhol with whom he was friends and with whom he occasionally worked; Warhol was not interested. Sometime later, Haimsohn left a copy of Dames with the owner of an art gallery across the street from the Cino; the owner passed the script on to Cino, who placed it with a stack of other neglected scripts. Sometime later, Robert Dahdah walked into the coffeehouse to find Cino sorting through the stacks of scripts and other clutter, throwing away much of it. Exceptionally concerned about the waste of anything that might be useful, Robert Dahdah looked through some of the scripts, including the yellowing copy of Dames lying at the top of the pile. According to Dahdah, the work was a short—perhaps fifteen-minute—nightclub sketch (interview with Dahdah; also, Gross 173), but Dahdah saw in it potential for a full-scale production. He took the script with him and worked with Haimsohn and Miller to extend the show to about a fifty-minute production. Changes Dahdah made ranged from the relatively minor (such as changing the Admiral to a Captain and the Producer to a Director) to the more substantive (such as insisting that Haimsohn and Miller add the song “Raining in My Heart”).
Casting was a problem from the start. According to a letter addressed to Richard Buck who organized the 1985 exhibit of Cino material at Lincoln Center, someone with the production team asked Randi Dundee to audition for the show: “I was asked to come and audition for *Dames at Sea* after they had seen me do a French monologue, but I told them that my tap dancing was non-existent, but I should have ‘faked’ it. I went there to see the show and absolutely loved it. Congratulations to Robert Dahdah” (Scrapbook 142). One of the most challenging roles to cast was that of Joan for which they had difficulty finding an actress who captured just the right degree of sarcasm. When they finally settled on Jill Roberts for the role, they began rehearsals with the following cast:

Ruby -- Judy Gallagher;
Frank -- Joe McGuire;
Dick -- David Christmas;
Joan -- Jill Roberts;
Mona -- Norma Bigtree;
Director and Captain -- Gary Filsinger.

As a novice actress, Gallagher became concerned about her ability to fill the role of Ruby adequately, especially since she, like Dundee, could not tap dance. After she withdrew from the production, Dahdah began recruiting other people to play the role. Choreographer Don Price recommended Bernadette Peters, with whom he had worked in summer stock. Peters and one other actress were scheduled for an audition. Dahdah recognized immediately that the fresh-faced, “kewpie-doll”54 Peters was perfect for the

54The term “kewpie-doll” appears repeatedly in descriptions of Peters.
part. In many ways, she was the part; though a native of Queens, she was very much the young Ruby, determined to become a star.

Born Bernadette Lazarra ("Peters" comes from her father's first name), Peters grew up in Queens where her father delivered bread. Peters began taking tap lessons at the age of three and singing lessons shortly thereafter, with her professional television debut at age five in *The Horn and Hardart Children's Hour*. Though her mother encouraged her to pursue a career in performance, Peters denies that her mother was a stereotypical stage mother: "It was my mother put me in show business . . . but she wasn't an obnoxious mother and I wasn't an obnoxious child. I didn't resent it, and she never made me do anything I didn't want to do" (from Bernadette Peters Clipping file, New York Public Library, *New York Post*, date and page number not identified). Peters was cast in her first play when she was only nine, but the production (*This is Goggle* with Kim Hunter and James Daly) closed out of town. Prior to *Dames*, her only significant stage role came when at the age of thirteen she played Baby June in a road tour of *Gypsy*. After *Gypsy*, she did little performing until she was seventeen: "I think I was just waiting to grow up. I didn't like being a child and I couldn't wait for it to be over" (unidentified clipping in Bernadette Peters Clipping File in the New York Public Library). Then, at seventeen, she went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to perform in summer stock: "It was awful. . . . We slept in a broken down inn and when I learned there were a few bats loose in the building it was the end of any sleep" (unidentified clipping in Bernadette Peters Clipping File). During the summer, she met Don Price, the man who choreographed *Dames* and who introduced her to Robert Dahdah.
Even as a child, Peters passionately enjoyed the musicals from the thirties and forties. She told Jerry Tallmer,

“But when I watched all those other movies as a kid,” says Bernadette—long hair, bright brown eyes, little kewpie-doll mouth, just right for the 1930s—“when I watched all those movies I would dance, so I happen to dance like the ladies on TV, with my shoulders up, so it came in very handy, so when they first did this show at the Caffe Cino, almost three years ago, I guess, I was 18, and it was in summer, I said I can do that.”

(from New York Post clipping in Bernadette Peters Clipping file, New York Public Library, date and page number not identified)

Given her love for the form, her years of training, and her air of innocence, Peters gave a remarkable performance as Ruby. She remained in the role through all of June, but left to pursue other opportunities, when she was followed by her older sister, Donna Forbes.

A press release from Caffe Cino describes the various casting changes for the role:

When Bernadette Peters left the show for a tour in Riverwind, her sister Miss Donna Forbes took over the part and appeared in the role for three weeks, her understudy was to take over when Miss Forbes left for a European Tour... two days before she was to take over the part her doctor told her that she would not be able to do it... she had lost her voice. What an experience for Dames at Sea.

A rush call was made for Miss Sandy Bigtree who took the next bus to New York and arrived Sunday night... went into rehearsal Monday and did the show Tuesday at 9 pm. Never in the history of the American Theater has any actor or actress taken a part and did it as well as this young starlet, who only had a twenty four hour rehearsal for song, dance and acting. (Dames at Sea Clipping Folder, New York Public Library)

Sandy Bigtree completed the run of the show. The following list contains the names of all characters and the actors who played them during the run at Caffe Cino.

Ruby — Judy Gallagher (never performed); Bernadette Peters; Donna Forbes; Sandy Bigtree

Frank — Joe McGuire; Chris Barret; Paul McCarthy
Dick — David Christmas; replaced by unknown person

Joan — Jill Roberts;

Mona — Norma Big-tree;

Director and Captain — Gary Filsinger.

Of the twelve persons, only Peters and Christmas appeared in the off-Broadway production.

Like her younger sister, Donna Forbes recalls their mother as being encouraging but not demanding of their careers in performance. She recognizes the experience as a turning point in Peters’s career, if not in her own, and notes that Dames has “never been as magical again” (interview 1999), a point repeated by members of the audience and cast. Even before opening, Joe Cino told Haimsohn, “I think this is going to be special” (interview with Haimsohn 1999).

Part of the fascination of the production at Caffe Cino is the degree to which a cast of six, led by an inexperienced teen, could recreate the effect of the Berkeley routines, which featured 70 or more dancers. Part of the credit clearly must go to the limited size of the space available; Caffe Cino’s stage could barely accommodate the small cast, thus making it seem more crowded than it actually was. But primary credit must ultimately go to the ingenuity with which Dahdah and his cast staged the work. They sported flashy costumes, some made by Peters’s mother; and they taped small pieces of mirror onto umbrellas so that, when the umbrellas were twirled under the stage lights, they reflected specks of light back onto the walls in an effective simulation of rain during the “Raining in My Heart” sequence. Not all of Dahdah’s ideas met with
equal success: his original intent had been to sew pin flashlights onto the umbrellas rather than the mirrors. Lighting designer John P. Dodd vigorously opposed the idea. When Dahdah bought the flashlights anyway, the angry lighting designer stormed over to Dahdah, grabbed the flashlights, and threw them into a hole that had been previously punched into one of the walls. The *Dames* flashlights may still be encased within the wall.

The dispute with Dodd was neither particularly intense nor harmful to the production. A much more serious dispute began to develop between Dahdah and the writing/composing team. At least one member of the team had not wanted to work with Dahdah, arguing that he was too much of a method director to handle *Dames* effectively. As the production moved from rehearsals to performances, the conflicts increased, particularly between Wise and Dahdah, with Dahdah becoming convinced that Wise and his partners were attempting to force him out of any future earnings potential the show might have. Dahdah had met a producer interested in moving *Dames* into a larger house, though he wanted to lengthen the production since it was less than one hour long. Ultimately, the group could not reach an agreement, and the plans with the producer collapsed. In 1968, however, *Dames* opened without Dahdah’s involvement off-Broadway in the Bowerie Lane Theatre under the direction of Neal Kenyon. Neither Joe Cino nor Robert Dahdah benefitted from the initial off-Broadway run of over a year nor from subsequent productions, despite their investment in the piece. Dahdah’s work with the show has been virtually erased from histories of the work. When it was revived in 1985, for example, *Stages* reported
Normally when a show on the scale of the revival of *Dames at Sea* opens, the producer, director, and set designer have good reason to be nervous. As they well know, anything can happen. Such was not the case with producer Jordan Hott, director Neal Kenyon, set designer Peter Harvey. For a very good reason: they all had been through the same experience nearly twenty years ago. Indeed, this production seems like a class reunion creative venture. All three are repeating their functions from the original Off-Broadway production which began as a small scale revue at the Caffe Cino in 1968. It was quickly expanded and moved to Off-Broadway where it was an enormous success. (Scheck 5)

The article makes no mention of Dahdah.

Normally when a dispute arose around a show, Cino refused to take sides, cancelling the show if the different factions could not resolve their dispute quickly.

*Dames*, however, was bringing in more money than any production in the history of the Cino. Crowds lined up to see it, limousines regularly dropped off uptown patrons, house after house sold out, even when the run of the show had been extended repeatedly (it was the only production at the Cino to have an open-ended run). Given the financial success of the show, Cino refused to cancel it despite the growing animosity between Dahdah and the others. Having been involved with dozens of shows presented in the coffeehouse (including the first show ever reviewed), Dahdah felt betrayed by Cino whom he considered to be a close friend. *Dames* was the last show Dahdah did at the Cino, and he seldom returned afterwards. His friendship with Joe Cino was seriously harmed and began to recover only near the end of the proprietor’s life.

*Dames* clearly represents the commercial peak of Caffe Cino’s work. Though it embodies many of the traits of other Cino productions, it shuns the more subversive style or content of the most significant work presented at the Cino. In many ways, it
represents a trend that was beginning to emerge and would become increasingly
common in subsequent years: the commodification of the subversive and transgressive
strategies explored by Cino and other off-off-Broadway artists. H. M. Koutoukas and
Andy Milligan created their mad, camp worlds foregrounding issues of gender and
sexuality; Tom Eyen, Doric Wilson, and Robert Patrick employed iconic figures from
both popular and high culture to challenge heteronormative values, traditional concepts
of identity construction, and so forth. In *Dames*, camp and the borrowed cultural
material are gutted of political significance; they are used to celebrate the musicals of
the thirties and forties without really commenting on or foregrounding more significant
issues. As Robert Patrick comments in his novel, *Temple Slave*, “What was acute [in
Pop Art] got lost in what was cute” (116). And what was politically challenging got lost
in what was commercially appealing.

One of the aftereffects of the production of *Dames* may have been a growing
presence of members of Andy Warhol’s Factory, a group often blamed for the fall of
Caffe Cino. Precisely when the Warhol crowd became regulars is unclear, though many
believe that it was late in the Cino’s history, thus lending support to Dahdah’s assertion
on his cable television show *Chelsea Journal* that *Dames* attracted the group. Certainly,
several figures (such as Robert Heide) associated with the Cino very early had
connections with Warhol. And as early as October 27, 1964, drug-related death struck
near the Cino when dancer Freddie Herko (star of Warhol’s *The Thirteen Most Beautiful
Boys* and *Rollerskate*) went to a friend’s apartment on Cornelia Street, put on Mozart’s
Coronation Mass, and danced to his death out a fifth story window, while naked and
under the influence of LSD. Like Billy Name, Ondine, and other Warhol associates, Herko was closely associated with Cino regulars.

Though many who frequented the Cino do not recall seeing Warhol in the coffeehouse, we know that he occasionally went there. Asked when he met the artist, Warhol’s painting assistant Ronnie Cutrone replied:

I guess 1965. I wasn’t in art school yet. I was interested in being an artist. I was just running around meeting people. I got involved in the underground theatre, and I just knew a lot of people, I guess. The first time I met him was at the Café [sic] Cino, and I was pretty slicked up. I was wearing a raincoat, and my hair was longer, and it was combed up. And I said to ————, “Is that another one of your amphetamine queens?” And ———— said, “No, that’s [an] amphetamine glory.” (Patrick S. Smith 343)

Dates in personal reminiscences must, of course, be taken cautiously; Cutrone’s “guess” could easily be off by a year, or two, or even more. Thus, it is entirely possible that the meeting occurred before Herko’s 1964 jump from the Cornelia Street window or in 1966 after the opening of Dames. Regardless of when they arrived, the Warhol crowd was securely enough ensconced in the Cino by November 1966 for Ondine (star of The Chelsea Girls) to appear in the Thanksgiving (Jury Duty) Horror Show, followed by several other productions by Warhol figures.

A hotly debated question among some Cino veterans is the issue of how much blame Warhol and his followers deserve for the escalating use of heavy drugs by Joe and his followers. Most of the artists involved in the early and middle years of the Cino (Magie Dominic, Ann Harris, and Robert Dahdah), argue that the drugs, if, in fact, they were present to any great degree, were carefully hidden and represented only the
relatively safe forms (such as marijuana). Cino is even said to have fired a waiter whom he suspected of selling drugs. Tillie Gross explains,

Drugs became a serious problem in the last years at the café, and yet, Michael Warren Powell remembers Cino, in the early years, firing a waiter because he suspected him of selling them. Though members of the café do not remember him taking pills, drugs, or smoking marijuana at the shop, they do admit knowing Cino took amphetamines, benzedrines, and dexadrines. These pills were taken by Cino primarily to help him diet. He also took these pills to help him stay awake as he often had little sleep, working at the café at night and at his typing job during the day. In addition, he took LSD or mescaline for his own pleasure. In the sixties, these drugs were not illegal, and many young people used them freely. (186-187)

By the fall of 1966, drugs were unquestionably becoming a significant problem, interfering in the relationship between Cino and Jonathan Torrey and threatening the health of the two men. Justly or not, Warhol and his crowd have been harshly criticized for their role in the drug problems affecting Joe Cino. Paul Foster, for example, has written about the Cino, referring to it as Camelot:

Then, into Camelot came the serpents, the Pop Art golems, spawned in a silver factory. When these slimy drug slaves entered the door they infected the place and made it unclean. These angels [of] death came with their Campbell soup cans filled with drugs and destroyed the Caffe Cino. They are directly responsible for the death of Joe Cino. No one knows how many other deaths these insect larvae have encompassed, but as I see it, it’s just a short jump from this zombie horde to a Reverend Jones Kool-Aid party. They succeeded in their lethal work. The Caffe Cino is now a used furniture shop, and Camelot is no more. (“A Nurse in a Madhouse” 7)

Foster is far from alone in targeting anger at the callousness of Warhol and his crowd. Many have condemned the group as cruel and heartless, pointing, for example, to

55Clearly, it is also possible (and perhaps likely) that friends are protecting the memory of Joe Cino by minimizing the extent of his drug use.
Warhol's response to Herko's suicide: "Why didn't he tell me he was going to do it? Why didn't he tell me? We could have gone down there and filmed it!" (Bockris 208).

Taylor Mead who had read poetry at Caffe Cino claimed his move to Europe came "because I was going to kill Andy Warhol! He was manipulating people like crazy, lying to everybody too much and being too cold-blooded" (Bockris 208). Similarly, a friend of Warhol performer Jackie Curtis said

Andy was a cocksucker, a venal man. He was not a nice person. Andy robbed Jackie Curtis. He never paid anyone. A little pocket money and all the drugs they wanted he acquired for them. Heroin. Amphetamines. For *Women in Revolt*, Jackie Curtis got $163. At the most. All the drugs and booze they wanted, and boys. He would acquire young men for that purpose only, to fuck 'em or suck 'em, whatever, from sixteen to twenty-two, young and foolish and impressed by Andy Warhol. Andy Warhol, when you come down to the bottom line, was an unscrupulous bastard, and when you come down to it, he was a charlatan. (Bockris 332)

Ondine (who appeared in several Cino productions) was heavily into the drug culture.

Warhol actress Mary Woronov (who appeared at the Cino in *Vinyl*) was friends with Ondine and the "Mole People" (members of the Warhol crowd noted for their heavy drug use); she describes Ondine in several passages in her memoir of her Factory years:

- [There was] nothing he wouldn't do in the area of drugs and perversion (106);
- My nights were spent with Ondine and our good friends, the Moles, and these nights always began the same way—with drugs (149);
- If you hung with the Mole People, somewhere, somehow, either their drugs, one of their thoughts, or just one of their little hairs got into your

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skin and burrowed deeper and deeper, quietly driving you insane. It was
the law, and nobody escaped, not even Andy (169):

• The only one who seemed to glory in the oncoming wreck of his body
was Ondine, and this he did with a vengeance, a rage against the
mortality that was threatening his friends (190).

If even Warhol could not escape the fate of those who hung with the Mole People, then
certainly neither could Joe Cino nor Jonathan Torrey.

While the astonishing twelve week run of Dames marked the commercial apex
of Caffe Cino, the following months saw the effect of two significant forces that would
begin the downward spiral ending in the death of Joe Cino and the closing of his
beloved coffeehouse. First, the drug addiction of Cino and Torrey reach a critical point,
ultimately leading the two men to leave New York briefly in an effort to overcome the
problem. Second, the Macdougal Area Neighborhood Association launched a new
action against coffeehouses. When the truce between the Village factions fell apart,
MANA began its most successful effort to control coffeehouses and other Village
businesses. Like a shadow behind these and other problems, aggravating all the
difficulties and constantly weighing Cino down, was a factor that may have been equal
to any other problem of the period: Cino’s dissatisfaction with his own success. The
Bitch Goddess (Success) had struck. As Robert Heide told Clayton Delery, “[S]uccess
is a sort of bitch goddess. Sometimes, when you’re not looking, she smiles on you and
things go well. Later, when you try and court her, she turns her back” (8). Crowds lined
up to see shows; money flowed in—certainly not enough to make anyone—least of all Joe
Cino—wealthy, but enough to keep the café functional; and his friends were doing what they wanted or had to do: creating theatre. Yet the café for which Cino had worked so hard, into which he had poured so many hours, had vanished in spirit if not in fact; his intimate coffeehouse had become a bustling business enterprise. The pleasures of quiet conversations with friends and of a casual celebration of all aspects of creativity had been replaced by a focus on the logistics of managing audiences, scheduling productions, and tending to other mundane operational tasks.
Chapter V
The Last Years: 1967-68

Whereas the spring and summer of 1966 held promise for the possibility of a compromise in the coffeehouse wars, the fall saw an end to any real hope for such a truce. With opinions becoming even more sharply divided, the City increased efforts to control the crowds in the Village by issuing even more summonses to unlicensed coffeehouses. As the Village Voice reported, “The Caffe Cino, the Feenjon, and the Grand Slam were given summonses during the week for operating without the cabaret licenses they cannot get under existing zoning laws. The Cino, on Cornelia Street, is not in the troubled Macdougal Street area” (Nadle 2). Playing at the time was Eyen on Eyen, the show which immediately followed Dames at Sea; it was not to be the last time Tom Eyen saw one of his productions involved in a City action against the Cino. A compromise between the various Macdougal factions seemed impossible:

As part of their exercise in futility the area’s residents who are members of the Macdougal Street Neighborhood Association (MANA) had their 80th meeting in two years last week. Most of them came away from it with the feeling that they have been let down.

Democratic Leader Edward I. Koch, founder of MANA, is still searching for a solution, but even he isn’t sure there is one. If a mutually agreeable solution cannot be found, Koch believes property rights must be made to yield to individual rights. Because most of the coffee houses are illegal, he feels this position is especially justified. (Nadle 25)

While Koch framed his dispute with coffeehouses in terms of concern over the congestion and other problems in the Village, many coffeehouse owners and patrons argued that the dispute revealed a deeper cultural and political schism. A letter in the
window of the Rienzi outlined some of the fundamental issues separating the two groups:

To the living dead and Macdougal Street Society and Mr. Scrooge Koch:
You didn’t like the way we dressed—You didn’t like the way we looked—You didn’t like our guitars—You didn’t like our long hair—but my dear pretentious hypocritical prejudiced zombies— it was really our zest and love of life that you did not like—we are not evil—it is you who are evil—evil in your hate—evil in that you can see only your little narrow world—Well, you might get rid of Rienzi’s—You might get rid of Macdougal Street, but you will never get rid of us. Remember, the children will bury you—You are the past—we are the future... May God have pity on your dead souls and we will dance and sing on your graves. (Nadle 25)

The coffeehouse wars centered on a struggle over fundamental social values, over essential political beliefs, and over basic issues of community (how “community” was to be defined, who was to comprise it, which sources of authority were legitimate within it, and so forth).

As the City threatened coffeehouses from one direction, Actors Equity Association threatened from another. In March 1966, Equity had passed rules prohibiting its members from appearing in virtually any off-off-Broadway production—the rules were so broad, in fact, that they prevented actors from appearing in the union’s own showcase Equity Theatre, which offered a full season of productions each year. For months, the rules went unenforced. Then, as La Mama prepared for a tour of Europe to present works by off-off-Broadway playwrights, Equity filed charges against Marilyn Roberts and Patrick Sullivan for appearing without union contracts in Robert Heide’s Why Tuesday Never Has a Blue Monday at La Mama. A few weeks later, Equity forced two of its members to withdraw from a production of Saul Paul Sirag’s

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There’s the Wrong Number of Teeth; Sirag played both roles so that the production could complete its run. Equity argued that its actions were intended to force off-off-Broadway managers to pay a reasonable wage; actors averaged only $2.60 per performance for Why Tuesday Never Has a Blue Monday (“Equity Files Charges” 28), with all income being dependent upon contributions from the audience. Stewart, however, suggested that the actions against her theatre resulted from an effort to protect the revenue of off-Broadway theatres. According to Stewart, the union enforced its rules on showcase and off-off-Broadway productions only after off-Broadway theatres complained that La Mama engaged in unfair competition since she did not pay wages (Novick 16). Stewart was trapped: she could not pay Equity wages on the small revenue generated by La Mama, but she refused to make the changes that might bring in sufficient revenue to allow such wages. As she told a reporter for the Village Voice, “I refuse to turn La Mama into a commercial scene” (“La Mama Theatre Club”). Complicating the situation was the $350 penalty assessed against Sullivan for appearing at La Mama. Stewart needed the actors and the actors needed the exposure and experience, but they risked stiff penalties (far in excess of any earnings potential) if they appeared in such productions. Faced with these problems, Stewart decided to close her theatre; Equity, it seemed, would manage to achieve what the licensing officials had not.56

56 Though Stewart’s Café La Mama ETC was in the East Village, far removed from the congestion on MacDougal Street, she had been subjected to many of the same problems as had the coffeehouses in the MacDougal area, including licensing problems.
As the coffeehouse wars and Equity battles raged in various parts of the Village, Caffe Cino continued a successful season, with Tom Eyen's *Eyen on Eyen*. Born in Cambridge, Ohio, Eyen was educated at Ohio State University (B.A., 1961) and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts (1961-62). His first play was probably *Frustrata, the Dirty Little Girl with the Red Paper Rose Stuck in Her Head, Is Demented!* presented at Café La Mama on May 7, 1964. For the next few years, he was closely associated with La Mama, though he had begun working at the Cino by the mid-sixties, often under the production of his Theatre of the Eye Repertory Company. Several major themes to which Eyen would return repeatedly are central to *Frustrata*, including the struggle of the individual pitted against society, or, in Eyen's words, "[M]y basic theme is the freak against society" ("Eyen, Tom" in Contemporary Authors New Revision, Volume 22, 127). Techniques common in Eyen's work include:

- rapid changes in scene, often shifting location or time; in particular, plays such as *The White Whore and the Bit Player* move almost frenetically about in time and place.

- a plot centered on a strong woman (often she is punished: she commits suicide, is killed, loses her sense of self, and so forth); Eyen described his work in general: "I always have a large lady in some abstract situation who's the villain" ("Eyen, Tom" in Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol 22, 127).

- references to popular culture. Aspects of Marilyn Monroe, for example, are identifiable in *Frustrata*, as well as in the character Hanna of the
Three Sisters trilogy and in the split, eponymous character in The White Whore and the Bit Player.

- structure and stylistics heavily influenced by genres such as the revue, film, and burlesque. Frustrata and many of his plays use filmic devices such as rapid scene and setting changes, often with actors assuming a variety of different roles.

- the individual situated within a mediated culture. Central to Eyen's work is the question of how identity operates when the individual is surrounded by mediated images. Thus, in The White Whore and the Bit Player, the two characters are different aspects of one person, an actress who has committed suicide; according to Eyen's note to the published play, the characters represent the actress as "the nun-mind—what she imagines herself to be" and as "the whore-flesh—what the world saw her to be" as a result of her filmic images.

Because of its emphasis on surface and appearance rather than content and because of its parodic qualities, camp offered Eyen an ideal instrument for exploring the themes that dominate his work. By appropriating images from sources as diverse as Andy Warhol, the Living Theatre, television commercials, and various sitcoms and movies. Eyen created characters who are both products of and trapped within mediated images. Images from popular culture framed through a camp aesthetic became a means through which Eyen explored such issues as identity construction.
With *Eyen on Eyen*, Tom Eyen created a collage work which (according to the exhibition at the Lincoln Center in 1985), “did on stage what the Cino artists were doing on the walls and in the window.” In addition to the campy, wild production on the stage, Eyen insinuates his outrageousness into programs, posters, and advertisements: “As usual with Eyen works, the program and the biographies are as outrageous as the production” (Scrapbook, 109). The advertisement for the show carried the following comments: “from his Collected Works as Performed and Executed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Experimental Theatre Under the Direction of his Chinese Half Brother, Tom Lee... Due to surprising success (47 Buddhist nuns walking out) this program shall run until its scheduled California tour through Disneyland” (Advertisement for Caffe Cino’s *Eyen on Eyen* 12). His biography in the Cino program read, “Eyen O. Eyen (1908-1962) wrote for Vanity Fair in its [sic] hayday [sic]. A good friend of Dorothy Parker and ee cummings, the three could usually be seen at Martha’s Vineyard picking grapes. Eyen has written only ten plays all of which were before their time. He is survived by his wife Olga, and seven assorted children” (from the archives of The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute of The Ohio State University). The biography contrasts with the one used later for his *Four No Plays* presented by Theatre of the Eye Repertory Company at the Extension, Etc.:

Tom Eyen (Author) has been presented in New York with 75 productions since he began writing 5 years ago... Mr. Eyen has never received a Ford or Guggenheim grant, has never been invited to the O’Neill Foundation, is not a member of the Playwrights’ Unit or the Actors’ Studio. He is 54 years of age and lives with his 9 children and his Puerto Rican wife, Mira, in an efficiency apartment on Sutton Place. He is the leading playwright of Sweden, and, as clearly demonstrated by the
quality of his work, has slept his way to the top. (From the archives of The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute of The Ohio State University)

Thus, the program and similar non-performative aspects of the production were an important part of experiencing an Eyen work.

The period following the run of Eyen on Eyen is the only one for which we have a record of the shows that Joe Cino intended to run during a given period. In a notebook containing various information (including show-by-show receipts for several months), Cino had written the plans for August 30, 1966 through January 22, 1967. The following table shows Cino’s plans along with the shows that actually ran during the period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Planned</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08/30/66</td>
<td>Oscar Wilde</td>
<td>Dearest of All Boys by Alan Lysander James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/06/66</td>
<td>Starkweather</td>
<td>So, Who’s Afraid of Edward Albee by David Starkweather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/13/66</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Indecent Exposure by Robert Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/20/66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>09/27/66</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Indecent Exposure by Robert Patrick</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/04/66</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/66</td>
<td>Haimsohn Psychedelic Follies</td>
<td>Psychedelic Follies by George Haimsohn</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/18/66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/25/66</td>
<td>Sally Ordway</td>
<td>Something I’ll Tell You Tuesday and The Loveliest Afternoon of the Year by John Guare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/01/66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/08/66</td>
<td>Koutoukas</td>
<td>Cobra Invocations &amp; John Guare &amp; Cobra Invocations by H. M. Koutoukas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/15/66</td>
<td></td>
<td>GBS's ABC's From Annihilation to Ziegfield: A Shavian Kaleidoscope by Alan Lysander James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/22/66</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thanksgiving (Jury Duty) Horror Show by H. M. Koutoukas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/66</td>
<td>Eyen</td>
<td>Why Hanna's Skirt Won't Stay Down by Tom Eyen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/06/66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/66</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Probably either Tom Eyen's Hanna's Skirt or his White Whore and the Bit Player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/66</td>
<td>Koutoukas</td>
<td>Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol by Soren Agenoux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/27/66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/03/67</td>
<td>Heide</td>
<td>The White Whore and the Bit Player by Tom Eyen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/10/67</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/17/67</td>
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Why the changes in the planned schedule occurred is unclear, though the Lanford Wilson piece scheduled to begin September 27, 1966 was probably not ready in time.

The first two productions ran as planned, with Alan Lysander James's *Dearest of all Boys* opening on August 30 and a revival of David Starkweather's *So, Who's Afraid of Edward Albee* on September 13. On September 27, however, in a period intended for a work by Lanford Wilson, *Indecent Exposure* by Robert Patrick opened. Sometime
during the week of September 20, Phoebe Wray received a telephone call from Marshall Mason who explained that the show scheduled to open on September 25 either had been cancelled or was not ready. He asked her if she would appear in the replacement show. When she asked Mason for the title of the work, he replied “I don’t know, Patrick is writing it right now” (interview with Phoebe Wray). Patrick recently quoted Wray on the play, “Overnight Bob wrote a short, pungent little one-act called Indecent Exposure. I never knew the names of the other actors in it. I’m not sure I ever saw the whole cast. We did the show so fast I don’t even remember how Lanford was as a director. We were a hit. . . . Joe, as usual, stayed out of the way to let us do our work (“Caffe Cino Memories” 21). Indecent Exposure is an anti-war play about a young man who shows his objection to the Vietnam War by taping his draft card to his wrist and walking the streets until he is arrested.

For the most part, the remainder of the shows presented in 1966 were written by established Cino writers. On October 11, George Haimsohn opened Psychedelic Follies, his second and last production at the Caffe. One of the early uses of “psychedelic” to refer to the burgeoning sixties drug culture, the production was a review celebrating that culture, with songs or skits about marijuana, acid, speed, and other drugs. Donna Forbes returned to the Cino to appear in the production which featured music by John Aman. Ironically, the play ran as drugs took an increasing toll on both Cino and Torrey, probably contributing to the death of both men.

Psychedelic Follies was followed by a double-bill of John Guare’s works, Something I’ll Tell You Tuesday and The Loveliest Afternoon of the Year. Though the
production received only fair reviews, it is significant in that a cancellation of a performance led to the start of the comic book productions. When Cino was informed that the Guare plays would not go on one night, he had only a few hours to replace it. He was frantic: soon people would arrive expecting to see a show, and he had nothing to present to them. Perhaps of more importance to Cino, the room itself would be without a show, and it demanded one. In desperation he turned to the regulars who happened to be there at the time. Someone (at least four people have either claimed or have been given credit) suggested that they stage the Wonder Woman comic book that one of them was reading (or, perhaps, the comic book with the most issues in a nearby store). Who was reading the comic book and who suggested staging it are now points of contention: Donald Brooks recalls being the person to suggest the idea; the exhibit in 1985 relied upon Charles Stanley’s resume to give him credit (Scrapbook 115); in the sign-in sheet for the Symposium that Robert Patrick and Robert Heide jointly conducted at the exhibit, Patrick wrote beside his name, “incidentally, creator of the comic book shows” (Scrapbook 115); in an essay, Patrick gives credit to Merrill Mushroom, “an impressive icon of the Lower East Side political and artistic scene—a figure to whom many of us showed our plays for approval” (“Caffe Cino Memories” 13). Douglas Gordy gives the origins of the comic book plays as follows:

Often, productions were not ready on time or had to be canceled due to actors not showing up or other unforeseen circumstances. Cino refused to deny his audience the entertainment they’d come for; when John Guare canceled a production at the last moment, the ingenious solution (Merrill Mushroom’s inspiration) was to have [Robert] Patrick run to the corner drugstore and purchase all of the copies of whatever comic book they had most of in stock. Cino commandeered any actors he could find.
dressed them in makeshift costumes, and made them perform with no rehearsals, the comic book scripts in hand. The actors, whose improvisational skills were already well honed by the campy "regular" Cino offerings, relished the opportunity; results were so popular that impromptu comic book theatre became a Cino staple, with Archie and Wonder Woman particular favorites. (316)

Gordy’s information raises several problems, not the least of which is a date conflict with the program issued by the New York Public Library for its exhibit. According to the Library, the first comic book production occurred on December 8, 1966, during the second week of Tom Eyen’s *Why Hanna’s Skirt Won’t Stay Down*. Donald Brooks supports Gordy’s version of the events, noting that the comic book play originated because a Guare production failed to show. The notebook in Cino’s handwriting gives further support to Gordy and seems to situate the run of the Wonder Woman production during the week of November 8, 1966, immediately after John Guare’s *Something I’ll Tell You Tuesday* and *The Loveliest Afternoon of the Year*. The notebook is often confusing with information missing or out of order; one section, for example, includes a day-by-day listing of revenue for 1966 with amounts scrupulously entered for every day except during the months of October (which has only six entries) and November (which has no entries). Other entries in the notebook give the receipts for each performance of many of the 1966 productions, though the entries are often undated or bear only notations such as “1st Week.” The section containing daily income amounts for the two Guare plays in October 1966 is immediately followed by an entry labeled “Wonder Woman,” though amounts for Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday are blank.57 The

57Gross sales during the production were $21.80 on Wednesday, $15.91 on Thursday, and $38.00 on Friday (page 2 of the handwritten notebook: 8-MWEZ x n.c.)
positioning of the Wonder Woman entry suggests that the production finished a run originally intended for Guare’s work. Furthermore, the advertisement for the week lists a production entitled *Cobra Invocations & John Guare & Cobra Invocations* for which no author is given credit, though the program for the 1985 exhibit lists Koutoukas as the author (Bernard da Costa also attributes authorship of the Wonder Woman piece to Koutoukas). According to Donald Brooks, the original comic book production was performed for a full week after its first appearance and was advertised as *Cobra Invocations & John Guare & Cobra Invocations* (though more commonly called *The Secret of Taboo Mountain*). It was the only comic book production presented during Joe Cino’s life.

How, and when, and by whom it originated, *The Secret of Taboo Mountain* was staged with no rehearsal. Actors carried the books on stage, reading lines and improvising the action; Donald Brooks, the light operator, improvised lighting changes as well, based on the action on stage and any of the script he managed to read. Though it played for at least a week, the improvisational nature of the production remained. As Bernard da Costa comments,

> Any subject is appropriate for destroying some old prejudices or for ridiculing some good American habits. For example, comic strips. . . . [T]he play *Wonder Woman*, played at the Cino and subtitled *The Secret of Tabu Mountain*, tells a story of stolen treasure. . . . The text changes each evening “because a large part must be improvisation.” (87)

The inversion of the sexes in the production included Koutoukas’s performance as Diana Prince/Wonder Woman. He had walked into the Cino just as the group was

27,646 #5).
trying to sort out roles. Other performers included Cino as a bear, Johnnie Dodd as a cat, and Deborah Lee as an Amazon, with Charles Stanley reading all other parts.

After Wonder Woman, both H. M. Koutoukas and Alan Lysander James returned to present their work, with James departing from the life and work of Oscar Wilde to focus on George Bernard Shaw and with Koutoukas presenting the Thanksgiving show. As one of the Cino's most accessible, conventional, and least offensive shows, James's G.B.S.'s A.B.C.'s From Annihilation to Ziegfield: A Shavian Kaleidoscope gave Cino the opportunity to invite his family to visit and watch one of his productions. At least some members of the Caffe's regulars mirrored Cino's affection for his mother, while feeling less than comfortable with his brothers.

Near the end of 1966, La Mama, the Cino, and other off-off-Broadway theatres received a reprieve from Equity. After fining members earlier in the year who had appeared in La Mama productions, Equity announced in November that it would relax its rules so that members could appear in off-off-Broadway productions without pay if the productions met certain criteria. Under the Showcase and Workshop Code, La Mama was required to meet the following conditions:

- productions must be able to show that they are not making a profit;
- the original cast must be given the option of appearing in professional productions resulting from their showcase work; and
- no advertisements were permitted (announcements to members through listings in papers such as the Village Voice were allowed as long as they did not include location and similar information).
Ironically, the Equity decision also mandated an end to soliciting donations ("passing the hat") from the audience, the sole means by which most off-off-Broadway theatres paid actors. Though the ruling applied specifically to La Mama, *Village Voice* journalist Stephanie Harrington suggested that the same rules would probably apply to Caffe Cino, "the oldest and one of the most vital, respected, and debt-ridden of off-off-Broadway institutions" (Harrington, "O-O-Broadway" 24).

The Cino production which closed 1966 and opened 1967 was Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol* by Soren Agenoux, managing editor of Andy Warhol's *interVIEW* magazine. The play originated as a faithful rendition of Dickens's novel, but, like so much else at Caffe Cino, ended as a campy, playful production that refused to take itself seriously, even toying with and commenting on its own self-referentiality. The opening paragraph of Ross Wetzsteon's review of the production clearly describe its style:

> There's something rather appealing about a pro-Scrooge interpretation of *A Christmas Carol*. . . . And even a homosexual interpretation of Scrooge isn't as preposterous as it might seem—if you read the story for double entendres ("they often 'came down' handsomely") you'd be surprised. . . .; and the visit of "the spirit of Christmas Past" really is, in a sense, an attempted heterosexual seduction; and the idea of Scrooge's saving Tiny Tim's life for, shall we say, rather dubious motives, could be effective satire of the impulse to charity. (Wetzsteon, "Theatre: "Chas. Dickens" 17)

Most of the remaining review focuses on the shortcomings that Wetzsteon noted in the production, primarily its in-jokes, self-referentiality, and refusal to take itself seriously. It winked at the audience and then made fun of, even winked, at its own winks: "But the trouble with Soren Agenoux Chas. Dickens' *Christmas Carol* is that it eludes itself in its mockery. If there's anything worse than taking oneself too seriously, it's taking
oneself too ridiculously. For when self-mockery becomes compulsive, it isn’t mockery any more. . .”

The production occurred during the peak of the drug problems at the Cino; many of those associated with *Christmas Carol* were so heavily into narcotics (especially speed) that Donald Brooks withdrew from the production entirely, out of concern for what the drugs were doing to the production, to the Cino in general, and to his friends. Ondine, who played Scrooge, had become increasingly immersed in the drug culture. Robert Heide recalls that one day about this time Joe Cino told him to go to the restroom and look inside. When Heide did, he saw Ondine standing in front of the mirror, watching himself masturbate (he was noted for the large size of his penis). Heide quietly closed the door and went back to talk to Cino; a few moments later, Ondine came out of the toilet with a syringe, walked up to Cino, and gave him an injection.

By the end of 1966, his addiction had become so much a problem that even Joe Cino could not ignore the toll it was taking on his body and his business. Perhaps on the advise of a doctor, Cino decided that he had to overcome the problem. He decided to leave New York and to spend time with his family in Buffalo while he withdrew from drug use; he convinced Jonathan Torrey that he too had to overcome his addiction by returning to his family in New Hampshire. To hide his problem from his family, Cino told them that the withdrawal symptoms he experienced were symptoms of the flu. He stayed with his family only a few days before returning to New York without achieving his goal; Torrey never returned.
As with so much else concerning Caffe Cino (particularly in so far as Jonathan Torrey is concerned), Torrey’s death is surrounded by innuendo and speculation, ranging from suggestions that his death was intentional to a complete misrepresentation of the events leading to his death. Douglas Gordy, for example, describes the events as follows:

Toward the end of 1966, Torry [sic] took a trip to New Hampshire to work on the lights for a stock production. What happened there is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps also high on drugs, Torry, who surely knew better, was not wearing gloves as he hung the lights. Whether he intentionally touched a live wire, as some believe, or whether a wrench he wore on his belt accidentally brushed against one, Torry was electrocuted and died instantaneously. (319)

Gordy’s account is, for the most part, incorrect. Actually, Torrey left New York for Jaffrey, New Hampshire, sometime late in 1966 to spend time at the home to which Norman and Elizabeth Torrey had moved sometime in fifties (both eventually died there); Jonathan Torrey himself had lived there, working at Bean Fiber Glass, Incorporated. After arriving in Jaffrey, Torrey returned to a job at Bean Fiber Glass, working in plant and machine maintenance. On Thursday, January 5, 1967, Torrey began repairs on a loom used in the manufacturing process. The repairs involved adding gears to the loom, but to do so part of the frame had to be ground away. Torrey suggested the grinding could better be done with a tool that he owned, so he went home, got the tool, returned, and crawled under the frame of the loom. According to a local paper, the Monadnock Ledger, “When he turned the grinder on, it shorted out. Torrey was lying on a metal plate beneath the loom. His head was resting on a steel cross member. He was almost perfectly grounded. The grinder started, No outcry was heard”
employees removed Torrey from under the loom, he was no longer breathing, though mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and a mechanical resuscitator brought a moment of hope: “A slight pulse was felt and some breathing was restored for an instant. The doctor arrived. The resuscitator worked a while and then buzzed. Dr. Wozmak examined the victim and shook his head. Jonathan Torrey was dead” (1).

Shortly after Torrey’s death, Cino performed in public for probably the last time when he danced to Ravel’s Bolero as a tribute to his deceased friend. A memorial program organized by Neil Flanagan and Marshall Mason was scheduled at the Cino on April 4, 1967. The operation of the Cino continued much as before, though Cino became increasingly despondent. On January 31, 1967, Jeff Weiss opened A Funny Walk Home, for which he won his first Obie (which the Voice called the Joseph Cino Memorial Award). In a glowing review of the work, Ross Wetzsteon attempted to define not just what the play is about but also what it is. The play is “about” a young man (Weiss) in a “lobotomized state” (“Theatre: A Funny Walk” 23) returning home from an asylum. In one of the few tender scenes in the play, Weiss attempts to seduce his younger brother (played by George Harris); much of the play is given to what critic

Figure 8 “in memory of John Torrey one of the dearest i have ever known-- from Liz: it is a dark night tonight” (NYPL, 80MWEZ x n.c. 27646 #1).
Ross Wetzsteon calls “re-enacting his birth trauma—‘sex and violence’” (23), as Weiss rapes his mother and assaults his father. For Wetzsteon, then, determining what the play is becomes more difficult than determining what the play is about:

I’ve spent some time looking for a concise way to sum this up, but the best I can come up with is this: it [A Funny Walk Home] isn’t “personal statement about,” it’s “personal experiencing of.” Jeff Weiss’s play wasn’t so much an expression of his attitudes about family life, homosexuality, politics and love-hate... as it was a re-enactment or re-living of his feelings. He didn’t remember these feelings, he seemed to re-experience them, and with such unrelieved honesty, that his play-performance at the Caffe Cino was not only enormously moving but almost terrifying. (23)

Because the play seems so personal to Weiss, it could never (Wetzsteon argues) be performed as effectively by any other person. And whether Weiss was in or out of character seems not to have always been clear, as at the point at which he turned to the audience to engage in a verbal attack on the Village Voice critic who had disliked his only other performed piece (done at La Mama). Near the end of the work, an emotionally and physically exhausted Weiss again turned and talked directly to the audience:

Weiss moved to the front of the stage, drenched in sweat and tears, and asked the audience “won’t somebody please stop this? If anyone has been moved, if anyone has felt love or pity, won’t somebody please stop this play?” Some of us were probably embarrassed by such naked need, some of us were probably intimidated by the direct appeal, and maybe there were even a few who snorted about self-pity. (23)

On several nights, the production did end at this point at the request of horrified patrons.

Central to the work is an effort to implicate spectators in the course of events; the audience becomes responsible for the events which happen on stage. The effort to
draw them into the action and to break down the barrier between spectator/actor began from the moment the production opened. According to Claris Ericson (for whom A Funny Walk Home was a favorite play), the opening scene was of the Mother and Father passing out party hats to the audience, thus making them both observers and participants in a celebration that quickly goes awry. Critic Wetzsteon suggests that the work developed several images into significant metaphors:

Several themes are building up: the way we bring up our children is equivalent to sending them to an asylum (education as lobotomy); our society values sterile "seriousness" over joyous laughter (the parents won't believe their son is "cured" until they see him in tears); all current political positions are rotten (the father is a Birchite, the mother an empty-headed liberal); our forms for expressing love and hate and emotional need have become grotesquely distorted. (23)

By demolishing the fourth wall, by integrating the audience into the performance, and by blurring the line between life and art, the work forces the audience into the position of recognizing its responsibilities for (and complicity with) many of the situations which it critiques. Breaking the action at a critical moment to ask someone to stop the production placed the responsibility for the outcome directly upon the audience. As Claris Ericson argued, "If no one said, 'Stop the play,' everyone ended up being dead. If they said, 'Stop,' they are good people, and they may go home; if you see mayhem about to ensue you need to take some responsibility to say, 'Stop'" (interview with Nelson, 2000).

Weiss has often been accused of being self-indulgent in his work; as he told Wetzsteon a few years after the performance of A Funny Walk Home, "People are always saying my plays are just an opportunity for me to have a free psychiatrist"
On the night he won the Obie, he addressed those who made a similar critique of *A Funny Walk Home* and *And That's How the Rent Gets Paid*:

"'To all those who've called my plays self-indulgent . . . schizophrenic . . . juvenile . . . paranoid,' he said, lingering lovingly over each word, then that stuttering giggle, looking out over the 500 people jammed into the Village Gate, 'all I have to say is, I can only promise you more of the same'" (111; emphasis in the original).

Immediately after *A Funny Walk Home*, Robert Heide opened *Moon: A Love Play Written Specifically for The Cino St. Valentine Centennial* his second (and last) Cino work. Though quite different in style from *Bed*, *Moon* repeats a device used in the earlier play, one that was becoming a rather distinctive trademark of Heide's work. According to critic Michael Smith, "Heide is the sole user of one odd trick. He likes to play a record during a play, usually rock and roll, and stop the action till it's over. He did it in *The Bed* to good effect: enough had been set in motion to make the record work as music to think about the play by. In *Moon* Heide plays two records before the action begins and another later on" (*Theatre Journal* 27). As the play opens, a couple (Sally and Sam) are recovering from the previous night's party at which they had had too much to drink; they are joined by a second couple from the party (Ingrid and Harold) to whom they appear to have extended an invitation (though neither Sally nor Sam recall doing so). Harold is a taciturn, guilt-ridden former marine, haunted by a homoerotic relationship with a friend; Ingrid and Harold fight, resulting in Sally excusing herself to flee from the apartment. After the two guests leave (at the request of Sam), a new tenant in the building (Christopher) drops by to introduce himself. Significantly.
Christopher (originally played by John Gilman) introduces the only relationship which appears to be stable and secure: that between himself and his male roommate/lover. In his introduction to the published version of the play, Michael Smith offers a particularly cogent description of the work: "Moon is meticulously written in a style that might as well be called superrealism. Robert Heide is preoccupied with the experiences of alienation and pointlessness and transmits them with exquisite intensity. His characters make contact only when they panic" (47).

Following Moon was Terry Alan Smith's God Created the Heaven and the Earth . . . but Man Created Saturday Night, with music by Jack Aman. When the work is contrasted with Jeff Weiss's A Funny Walk Home, the range of styles and political approaches of Cino productions becomes apparent. Whereas Weiss challenged both theatrical and political conventions, Smith challenged neither, even applauded both. In his review of the work, Michael Smith described it as "a right-wing protest play . . . [which] mocks unionism and women's suffrage, dramatizes the evils of alcohol, and ends with a rousing plea for God's stern justice, all within the framework of a Biblical morality pageant" ("Theatre Journal," review of God Created 26).

God Created the Heaven and the Earth . . . but Man Created Saturday Night was the last original work presented during Cino's life time. On March 21, 1966, The Madness of Lady Bright opened again with Neil Flanagan, Fred Forrest, and Brandy Carson in the cast under the direction of Lanford Wilson. Though it had previously run for 168 performances under different directors (including Denis Deegan and William Archibald), Smith considered the March 1967 version to be the "definitive" version
(“Theatre Journal,” review of Lady Bright 31), concluding, “Let this be a lesson: flamboyant theatricality and emotional realism are not incompatible” (38).

In the last months of his life, Cino became increasingly depressed over his weight, his aging, and Torrey’s death. Joseph Davies who had appeared in, designed, or otherwise assisted in many of the early plays went into the coffeehouse near the time of Cino’s death. He was shocked at the transformation in his friend. Referring to himself as “Maria,” the name often used by Cino and his associates to refer to themselves and other people, Cino said to Davies, “Look at Maria, look at what Mommy’s done”: he had died his hair to cover the grey (interview with Davies). Particularly depressed about a week before he died, Cino took LSD and had a terribly frightening hallucination while in a taxi. He demanded that the taxi stop, got out, and walked for a long time to try to clear his mind. Afterwards, he swore that he would never use LSD again. Unfortunately, he did continue to use other drugs though, perhaps, not LSD. Al Carmines recalls seeing Cino the night before he attempted suicide:

I saw Joe Cino wandering the midnight streets of New York the day before he committed suicide. He asked me to take a boat trip to the Statue of Liberty with him. I was too busy. How I regret that business. The next time I saw him Ellen Stewart and I sat by his bedside in St. Vincents Hospital as he agonizingly died. . . . He gave till it hurt. He loved till it killed him. (Qtd in Patrick “Caffe Cino Memories” 21)

Perhaps later that night58, an exhausted, frightened Cino arrived at Robert Dahdah’s apartment on 46th Street near St. Clements Church. Though Dahdah had never worked

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58 This narrative is pieced together from several sources (primarily interviews with Carmines, Davies, Dahdah, Smith, and Lovullo, but also several print sources). Unfortunately, the different sources sometimes conflict, therefore certain details particularly concerning the chronology of events might be slightly in error.

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at the Cino after the problems surrounding *Dames at Sea*, his friendship with Cino had gradually healed so that the coffeehouse owner would occasionally spend the night at Dahdah's apartment (Cino had an apartment, but he seldom stayed there; he slept frequently for a day or two or sometimes more at the apartment of various friends, particularly Robert Dahdah, Kenny Burgess, and Joseph Davies). When Cino arrived at Dahdah's apartment, he was convinced that someone had been following him, a paranoid delusion that had occurred before when he was taking drugs heavily. Dahdah invited him in, tried to soothe him, and finally got him to lie down to try to sleep. Without thinking about the recent loss of Jonathan Torrey until he overheard Cino crying, Dahdah played an album with the song "Where Are You" on it. The next day, assuming that Cino had recovered, Dahdah left to work on a show; it was the last time he saw Cino outside the hospital.

On the day that Cino attempted suicide, Joseph Davies was in Baltimore. He had offered to help take down the set for *Madness of Lady Bright* and erect the set for *The Clown* which was to play next. To get back to New York, Davies rode in the back of a large truck, carrying the glitter he had bought for the upcoming show. Still unsettled from a nightmare he had had while sleeping on the trip, Davies jumped out of the truck as soon as it reached New York and ran toward the Cino. As he approached it, he met a friend who wanted to talk to him. Davies tried to rush past him, "I have to get to the Cino."

"Oh you haven't heard anything have you?"

"Heard what? I'm in a hurry, I can't talk."
When Davies got to the door of the Cino, it was barricaded with glitter thrown all over it. Since he had assumed that the Cino would be open, he had not brought his key; so, he returned to his apartment and called Neal Flanagan to find out what had happened. As soon as Flanagan realized who was calling, he said, “Are you sitting or standing? Well sit down and count to ten and take a deep breath. Now I’m going to say something and then hang up.” Flanagan told Davies of Cino’s suicide attempt.

When Davies met with Flanagan and Flanagan’s wife Jacquie later that day, they told him what had happened as well as they were able to piece it together with the help of Johnny Dodd, Kenny Burgess, and others. Apparently, on Thursday, March 30, 1967, the day before his suicide attempt, Cino had argued with a close friend, one of the playwrights at his coffeehouse. Disturbed over the incident, Cino had gone to Flanagan’s apartment to talk with the actor about the argument. When Flanagan was not home, Cino went to Kenny Burgess’s apartment on the Bowery (an apartment that Burgess had taken over from Cino), but Burgess also was not home. Since several books had been opened to his favorite passages, it is clear that Cino let himself in, perhaps to wait for Burgess, but before Burgess returned, Cino left for his own basement apartment on Cornelia Street, a few doors up from Caffe Cino. When Burgess came home, he telephoned Flanagan to ask if he knew anything about the conflict between the playwright and Cino. As the two men talked, they became increasingly concerned about Cino, deciding to go look for him to see if he needed help. They never found him.

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The sources upon whom Douglas Gordy relied in his version of the last hours of Cino’s life tells the story slightly differently, though the essential details are the same as that given by Davies:

Four months after Torry’s [sic] death,59 on Friday, March 31, 1967, Cino began hallucinating while at the home of actor Neil Flanagan—someone had slipped him LSD earlier in the evening. Although Flanagan tried to keep Cino there, Joe insisted that he was all right and wanted to return home to the theater. Later that evening, the upstairs landlady overhead [sic] an argument in the Caffe: someone screaming at Joe, daring him to kill himself and end it all. Cino took a kitchen knife and cut his wrists and arms and opened his flabby stomach. He maintained consciousness long enough to phone for help to his friend, director and Village Voice critic Michael Smith, who lived just down the street. Smith brought Thorazine, thinking that Cino was experiencing a “bad trip,” but found him in a pool of his own blood. (319)

Whether someone was in the Caffe at the time ordering Cino to “Do it!” is questionable. The interior of the Cino had been treated to reduce the spread of both noise or fire, thus making it unlikely that the incident would have been overheard had it occurred. Some have suggested that the story is true and that the person involved was a Cino regular sometimes called the “Angel of Death” because of the frequency with which he happened to be in places in which drug-related deaths occurred. Also, Smith does not recall carrying Thorazine with him when he went to the coffeehouse. About six weeks earlier he had administered Thorazine to Cino because of a bad trip in which Cino seemed suicidal. Smith stayed with him until Cino recovered and appeared to have overcome any thoughts of self-injury.

59 Gordy is slightly mistaken about the time frame. Cino’s suicide attempt occurred less than three months after Torrey’s death.
According to Smith, the events of the early morning on which Cino attempted suicide began with a call by Cino for Johnny Dodd near dawn (sometime around 5 a.m.). Dodd was asleep, so Smith answered the telephone (Smith and Dodd lived together, having been lovers for quite some time). When Cino asked for Dodd, Smith tried to wake him but was hesitant to disturb him while he was sleeping soundly. Smith returned to the telephone, asking Cino, “Where are you? What’s going on?” Cino’s only reply was that he was dying and wanted to say goodbye to Johnny. When Smith pressed Cino to reveal his location, Cino refused, disconnecting the call without revealing his location. Smith woke Dodd, “Joe Cino called and he sounds like maybe he is killing himself. I don’t know where he is.” Dodd suggested checking the Caffe, so Smith grabbed Dodd’s keys and ran the few blocks. After he opened the iron gate and door of the coffeehouse, he found Cino lying in back near his beloved coffee machine, with knives on the floor nearby. Weak and covered in blood, Cino continued trying to stab himself. Smith tried to get knife away from him, but never managed to do so because the blood covering everything made Cino and the knife too slippery to grasp. Smith could never get a secure enough hold to force Cino to release the knife. Though weakened by blood loss and injury, Cino was still a powerful man, with his strength enhanced by absolute determination and, perhaps, drugs. Unsure of what to do next but realizing the need for immediate medical attention, Smith ran across Cornelia Street to Murray’s Cheese Shop, asking them to call for help. When they seemed unresponsive to his plea, he went out again looking for someone to help or, at the least, to call for
help. Seeing a police car on Bleecker Street, he ran to it and briefly explained what had happened. They returned to the Cino and called an ambulance.

The gravely injured Cino was rushed to St. Vincents Hospital where a medical team struggled to save his life. According to Ellen Stewart, Dr. Gonzalez who was head of emergency services at the hospital cared for Cino, using heart massage (then, a new technique) to revive him. News of the incident spread quickly. One of the first to arrive as Cino regained consciousness was childhood friend Angelo Lovullo who, at the suggestion of the medical staff, sat beside Cino’s bed talking to him to prevent him from falling asleep (the doctors were concerned about shock and did not want him to sleep at that point). Eventually running out of things to say, Lovullo asked the first question that came to mind, “Are you hungry?” Lovullo then turned to the medical staff and said that Cino “wants soup.” When he left Cino’s bedside, Lovullo called Buffalo and asked that a family member inform Cino’s mother of what had happened and assist her in making the trip down from Buffalo. Cino’s family arrived shortly thereafter, checking into the New Yorker Hotel and going to the hospital quickly thereafter.

In her essay on Caffe Cino published in Other Stages, Mary Boylan describes arriving at the hospital after she learned of what had happened:

When I arrived at St. Vincents Hospital early Friday morning, the first people I saw were Bob Dahdah and Ellen Stewart. They had been there all night. So began our three-day vigil: sitting in the hospital lobby, going and coming back, phoning the hospital, waiting, waiting for news. Joe was a strong man. He had been pronounced dead when the ambulance picked him up, but they opened his chest and massaged his heart and he lived for three more days. ... Joe needed blood, and more blood donors came forward than the hospital had seen since the days of World War II. (3)
One of the many people who gave blood was a young actor, Steve Van Vost, who appeared at the Cino in Tom Eyen’s *Why Hanna's Skirt Won't Stay Down*. Underage, he sat by anxiously awaiting his family’s permission for him to donate blood.

For a brief period, Cino seemed to be gaining strength and recovering from his wounds, enough so that his condition was upgraded from critical. On Sunday, however, his condition worsened. Late that afternoon, Boylan returned to the hospital to find Dahdah speaking quietly to one of Cino’s brothers.

Dahdah said to Boylan, “You don’t know? Well, maybe it’s just as well... he’s back on the critical list...” Then Dahdah quietly added, “Mary, an era has ended.” Boylan continues,

> Joe, you manic magus,  
> Can you hear me?  
> I wanted to let you know  
> I killed myself too. stupidly  
> And more than once but rising  
> Always with the silent scream  
> Of a phoenix eager to scram  
> Hearing guns reload in the grass  
> Well, you said do your thing  
> And you topped everybody’s show  
> Melodramatic, sordid, insane  
> The mystery of the mysteries  
> And it was magic time forever.

> Perhaps you hated the flesh  
> You indulged, couldn’t fly  
> With Tinkerbell or Iolanthe  
> Refused to dance with Giselle  
> So you decided to be Dracula  
> And the angel Gabriel ringing  
> The bell of horror and hope for ever  
> In the magic of our minds.

And I knew Joe was gone. Joe’s mother arrived and they took her away to tell her. I sat alone in the lobby. I heard someone ask, “Is that boy with you?” I looked down the street and saw Marshall Mason leaning against a parked car, sobbing his heart out and not caring who saw him. Harry Koutoukas walked in, got the news from me and left again to “break it carefully” to Charles Stanley, who was managing the Cino in Joe’s absence. (3)
Shortly afterwards, Dahdah and Boylan left the hospital, stopping to get a drink. As they sat talking, Dahdah told Boylan about the nun at St. Vincents who comforted Mary Cino:

“She said, ‘Your son helped lots of people, directors, writers and people who thought they were actors.’ I wonder what she meant by that.” I said, “I doubt if even she knew what she meant.” We looked at each other and suddenly realized that we were laughing. We were heartbroken, but we had to laugh. I think Joe would have laughed too. (3)

Unlike some who wanted to close Caffe Cino because they could not imagine it without its founder, Boylan applauded those who took over the coffeehouse in its last days. For her, Joe Cino remained a presence in the coffeehouse even after his death. Thus, she was in the audience on the following Tuesday to show her support.

Joseph Cino was buried in Buffalo, with services conducted on Friday, April 7, 1967, at 9:00 in the Joseph Spano and Sons Funeral Home and at 9:45 at the Holy Angels Church. According to both Joseph Davies and Angelo Lovullo, Cino was permitted a full Catholic service despite his suicide effort because he requested food while in the hospital, thereby showing a will to live. His death, then, resulted not from his own hand but from peritonitis.

On April 10, 1967, Al Carmines hosted a memorial service at Judson. The event featured numerous scenes, songs, and readings, most from popular Cino productions (including Tom Eyen’s *Why Hanna’s Skirt Won’t Stay Down*, Alan Lysander James’s *The Life of Oscar Wilde*, and Robert Heide’s *Moon*), with performances by many of the

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60 The *Village Voice* announced the date of the funeral as April 6 (Smith, “Theatre Journal,” obituary of Joseph Cino 1), whereas the obituary in the *Buffalo Courier Express* gives the date as April 7 (Cino, Joseph obituary 21).
Cino’s central figures and supporters (Deborah Lee, Helen Hanft, Bernadette Peters, Tom O’Horgan, Remy Charlip, Robert Cosmos Savage, Robert Patrick, Claris Nelson, Mari-Clair Charba, Mary Boylan, Robert Dahdah, Phoebe Wray, and John Gilman). The occasion also featured Al Carmines reading from “Requiem for Cino” by H. M. Koutoukas. Perhaps the most unusual and touching moments was the appearance of the actor Ed Barton who had performed with Boylan in A Letter From Colette, or Dreams Don’t Send Valentines: A Bittersweet Camp: “And when Ed Barton, his [nude] body covered with glitter, walked on his hands the length and breadth and up and down all the aisles of that large church, it was as though he were performing some ancient, sacrificial rite of mourning” (Boylan 3).

Why Cino took his life is a matter of dispute among Cino regulars. Perhaps Mary Boylan put it best when she wrote,

> Why did Joe do it? I don’t think anyone really knows. Some said that he thought no one loved him; he could not have been more mistaken. They said he was grieving for his best friend, Joe Torres [sic], killed without warning in a tragic accident some months before. They said drugs were responsible. All I know is, Joe could not have been himself when he did it. (3)

Over 30 years after Cino’s death and 20 after Boylan penned her words, John Borske, who, like his wife and brother, performed at the Cino, echoes Boylan’s sentiment, arguing that any effort to determine the cause for Cino’s action will always be incomplete and insufficient—and, perhaps, incorrect (interview with Borske). While recognizing the validity of Boylan and Borske’s comments, it is nevertheless worthwhile to consider some of the factors which may have contributed to Cino’s
actions. In her brief list, Boylan covers the factors most frequently cited by Cino’s friends: his concern about aging, his loneliness, his drug addiction, and his grief for Jonathan Torrey. Along with those concerns, perhaps even underlying them, are at least two other major issues of fundamental significance to Joe Cino: the constant threat to Caffe Cino posed by City officials aggravated by the financial precariousness of the establishment and his dissatisfaction with his own success.

For almost ten years, Cino had labored tirelessly to keep his coffeehouse in operation, often working a full-time job to raise operating money and, if necessary, skipping or directly violating laws and regulations when necessary to the survival of the Caffe. He was physically and emotionally exhausted by the time of his death, leaving him with no reserve to recover from the stress of the period. Robert Heide echoes the sentiment of many when he says, “He gave so much to everyone else, but when he needed help no one was there for him” (interview with Heide 1998). Though, most likely, few recognized how desperately Cino needed help. By the time he killed himself, his coffeehouse was significantly more financially stable than ever, but pressure from the City and the Macdougal Street Area Neighborhood Association continued unabated. Though well removed from the congested Macdougal area and though seldom the subject of complaint about noise or other disturbance, the Cino continued to receive summonses for operating as a coffeehouse without a license. Clearly no compromise seemed forthcoming. Caffe Cino operated within an area zoned only for local and limited retail; coffeehouses were assumed to violate that zoning; no chance for an exception seemed possible given the political climate; therefore Caffe Cino seemed
destined to operate unlicensed until the issue of coffeehouses was resolved one way or another. Ironically or, perhaps, prophetically, police officials issued a summons to the Cino for operating without a license the week after Joe Cino’s death.

As Cino fought financial and legal difficulties to keep his coffeehouse in operation, another, more subtle, factor weighed heavily upon him: his dissatisfaction with the success of his operation. Articles about Caffe Cino had begun to appear around the world; small theatres in New York, London, Paris, and elsewhere copied his model; Cino productions won prestigious awards; Cino artists began appearing on major commercial stages and in film; Cino houses were often full; major stars attended productions (Marlene Dietrich, Edward Albee, Arthur Miller). The problem for Cino, however, was that the Caffe had become what he never wanted: a theatre. As he stressed repeatedly in his interview with Michael Smith after the 1965 fire, his interest was in operating a coffeehouse—an intimate place in which friends could gather and converse. The theatre was the provisional complement to the coffeehouse, not the reverse. The coffeehouse in itself was sufficient; the theatrical aspect of his business was purely ancillary and transitory, to be offered as long as his friends and customers wanted and needed it but to be discontinued when they did not. In a brief memoir written for the 1985 exhibition of Cino material, Waldo Kang Pagune (whose plays appeared in 1962 and 1964 at the Cino under the name Pagoon) spoke of a demoralized Cino: “Cino grumbled how tough it was to run the coffee house, surviving barely week by week. ‘It’s a bitch you love and hate,’ he said. He wanted to get out of the coffee
house business, but he did not see an easy way out” (8-MWEZ x n.c. 27,646 #21).61

Joseph Davies (who was among Cino’s closest friends) told interviewer Robert Dahdah on *Chelsea Journal* that Cino was never happy “when the theatre part took over.”

According to Davies, Cino had intended the Caffe as a place to be enjoyed by all creative people, painters, poets, and others (not just performers). Cino was particularly distressed by Lester’s 1965 article in the *New York Times* and equally so by Bernard da Costa’s 1967 article in Paris’s *Réalités*. Deeply offended and agitated when he learned of the articles, Cino ran to the door of the coffeehouse, locked it, and yelled to Davies, “Get them out! Out! Out!” referring to the journalists who had long since left (interview with Joseph Davies). In many ways, the Caffe was spiraling out of control, just as Cino’s own life and drug addiction were spiraling out of control. Cino could do nothing to stop the constant assault by the Department of Licenses or MANA, and now he had lost control of the very nature of what his coffeehouse was to be. By giving his patrons and friends what they needed (or, as he so often phrased it, by allowing them to “do what you have to do”), he had lost the intimate, quiet coffeehouse he needed and wanted. In the end, however, as Boylan and Borske point out, none of these factors, nor even all of them in conjunction, are sufficient to explain Cino’s actions.

With the death of Joe Cino, management of the coffeehouse passed to Charles Stanley, though precisely why or how is unclear. It has been suggested that the Cino family (or, perhaps, Joe Cino himself) asked Ellen Stewart to take over the coffeehouse

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61References in Pagune’s text suggest that Cino’s remark dates from June 1964 when *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* was in rehearsal.
but that she refused after Cino regulars objected. They feared that she would destroy the unique character of the coffeehouse as she turned it into an extension of La Mama Experimental Theatre Club. Though Cino and Stewart were close friends (Giuseppe, as she called him, often visited her in the early morning after closing his coffeehouse), a rivalry existed between certain central members of the core group from each establishment—so much so that Cino seldom spoke of his late-night visits with his friend and competitor. According to Magie Dominic (who acted in, costumed, and managed Cino shows, Cino believed that she brought good luck, so he asked directors to use her as frequently as possible), a loosely knit group of five or six people worked together to keep the Caffe in operation after Cino's death. In addition to Charles Stanley who took over primary responsibility for management, the group included Wolfgang Zuckerman, Michael Smith, Robert Patrick, and Dominic. Their intent was to make as few changes as possible in the coffeehouse.

Reporting a few months after the Stanley took over management, Dan Sullivan of the New York Times suggested that their goal to continue Cino's work had succeeded: "Two recent visits to the tiny coffeehouse-theater at 31 Cornelia Street confirm not only its survival but also its continued artistic vitality" (17). According to Sullivan, Stanley not only took over management of the Caffe, but even purchased it from the Cino family:

62 My source for these late-night visits is Ellen Stewart. Other sources are divided on the extent of the friendship between the two. One considered the relationship between the two so bad that he was relieved upon hearing her comments during the memorial service for Joe Cino since she neither attacked Cino nor made a homophobic comment. The speaker had feared either or both.
The night we heard that Joe was dead, there seemed nothing else to do but keep on with what we were doing—folding napkins, whatever. Later some people said that they thought I should try to keep the place going. Joe’s people in Buffalo (Mr. Cino was not married) said they realized there was something precious to a good many people here and promised to do whatever they could to help—which means that they agreed to sell the business to me, in installments, instead of to some delicatessen.

Sullivan suggests that Stanley’s management style was quite similar to that of Joe Cino:

“Like Mr. Cino, Mr. Stanley selects the plays that will be performed at the café on an intuitive and, at bottom, pragmatic basis. ‘I’ll look at anything that could happen in a space like this that there isn’t room for anywhere else in New York’ . . . .”

Ironically, the weeks immediately following Cino’s death saw some of the strongest and most public efforts by MANA to force the City to act on their grievances. On the night of April 6, several hundred Village residents marched to protest their “losing battle with the turned-on [Macdougal] street” (Kent, “Marching” 3). The tenor of the protest was heightened by the recent murder of a Marine in the area and by concern over the annual influx of hippies that came with warm weather. At a meeting after the march, speakers railed against the City for failing to protect the residents’ rights; priests from the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii described the area a “jungle” and a “Sodom and Gomorrah”; and Edward Koch (wearing an armband reading “MANA Monitor”) argued that the murder of the Marine was “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” According to Koch, action against illegal coffeehouses was an essential element in any effort to make the area safer:

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^233 Precisely what Stanley meant is unclear, since no evidence of any sort of sale exists. Both Michael Smith and Magie Dominic recall the transition as being a formality only, with no formal transfer of assets ever taking place.

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We believe that if the Mayor would close up the illegal coffee houses and cabarets, it would help. The city has brought seven cases against illegal coffee houses—all were dismissed. Either . . . the city is unwilling or incapable of preparing proper cases. MANA is going to bring private lawsuits against these illegal operations because . . . you have a right to come home at night. (9)

After the post-march meeting, MANA’s steering committee decided to picket Gracie Mansion, the Mayor’s official residence, if the City had not met its demands within 30 days.

In response to MANA’s march, the Police Department began a more vigorous enforcement of licensing laws, citing any unlicenced establishments whether or not they were in the congested Macdougal Street area. Thus, only days after Cino’s death, Caffe Cino was cited for operating without a license (neither the Police Department nor the Department of Licenses would reveal the names of any other coffeehouses issued summonses during the period). The Reverend Howard Moody, pastor of Judson Memorial Church, called the City’s action a “phony solution,” noting that licensed coffeehouses and cabarets “turn over many more people in an evening than the unlicenced ones” (Kent, “Caffe Cino” 1, 29). Even Edward Koch argued that citing establishments such as the Cino “is not what MANA wants”; their objective, according to Koch, was action against unlicensed establishments in the Macdougal area only. Ironically, the policemen who served the summons to Caffe Cino stayed to see the evening’s production, Lanford Wilson’s *The Madness of Lady Bright.*

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64 If the article discussing the issuance of a summons to Caffe Cino is correct and if productions were performed as advertised, the summons had to have been issued to Caffe Cino on or before April 9, since Claris Nelson’s *The Clown* was scheduled to open on April 11.
During the period immediately after Joe Cino's death, all productions were revivals of past Cino plays. Jonathan Torrey's favorite play, The Clowns, opened on April 11 for a one week run, followed by Jacque Lynn Colton and Fred Forrest in Lanford Wilson's This is the Rill Speaking (part of the Lanford Wilson Festival to which most of the spring was devoted). The Wilson Festival concluded on May 21 when Ludlow Fair (with Brandy Carson and Sandy Lessin) closed. Six weeks passed after Cino's death before an original script (Soren Agenoux's Donovan's Johnson) appeared on stage at the Cino.

In June 1967, Robert Patrick returned with a new production, the tri-part Lights/Camera/Action (advertised not by its title but simply as “New Works: 3 Mini Plays by Robert Patrick”). In addition to the elements of postmodern stylistics in the three works (which will be discussed in the following chapter), the second play, Camera Obscura, is significant in that it was performed nude, which according to Patrick was the first time an entire play had been performed in the nude. Andy Milligan (who, in a nearby shop, sold fashions he designed) was the costumer, but could produce nothing acceptable to Patrick or director Neil Flanagan:

There was very little time between plays [Lights and Camera Obscura] for actors to change elaborate clothes; there wasn’t much space in the single tiny dressing-room; it would be clumsy for the boy, heavily dressed, to fumble his way through tables up to the front in the blackout between plays, and as actor David Gallagher put it, “There isn’t room on that little box for both me and that costume.” (46)

Thus, Flanagan and Patrick decided to dispense with costumes and stage the show with the actors nude. Not only did the decision resolve the issues of costume changes and
between-play mobility but it also "expressed the depersonalization of the machine-like state that would mate people in such a manner" (46). On opening night, as lights came up on the two nude actors, costumer Milligan whispered to Patrick, "Well, Bob, this proves what everybody says; I really can whip up a costume out of nothing" (47). By the end of the first week, the actors asked for a costume because the extreme nearness and gawking of many in the audience broke the mood of the piece. Much to the annoyance of a critic who had come intent upon creating a scandal, they opened the second week with "slicky-stylized bikinis made of transparent vinyl, with matching futuristic headbands" (46).

Following Lights/Camera/Action came George Birimisa's antiwar play Daddy Violet, brought to the Cino by Michael Smith after he saw a production of it in a small theatre on 23rd Street. The production of Daddy Violet occurred during a difficult period of Birimisa's life. He had just ended an eight year love affair, leaving him crushed and despondent; furthermore, he found the homophobia of many in the off-off-Broadway movement increasingly disturbing. Struggling with issues of sexual identity and homophobia as well as with the loss of his lover, Birimisa was "a nervous wreck": "I was so crazy" (interview with Birimisa). In Smith, he found a guardian angel, someone to worry over him and to help him through the difficult period.

Having attended many off-off-Broadway shows, Birimisa (who had, until then, written realistic plays) decided, "I'm going to out avant garde everyone else." The result was a short play entitled Three Violets (first performed at Theatre Genesis as part of their new play readings). Birimisa had some difficulty casting it: "When I first wrote
it, and I tried to get actors to do it, they thought I was nuts. ‘I’m not gonna do that! Are you crazy? With all the improvisation and everything.’” Other actors read a few pages and threw the script down: “I’m not going to do a fucking faggot play” (interview with Birimisa). Finally he cast the three performers: a friend who was studying acting, Dan Leach, and Sylvia Strauss (A “girl about twenty-one who had never acted before. . . . She played this really dumb novice actress and it somehow worked with her”). Although Strauss warned him that she was inexperienced as an actress and as a singer, it was her rawness and lack of conventional stage polish that appealed to Birimisa. One week before opening, Birimisa’s friend dropped out of the production. Birimisa quickly rewrote the play, changed the title to Daddy Violet, and took over the part himself, adding the line “There’s nothing symbolic about this beer--it’s just that this is opening night and I’m nervous” (84) because he was nervous and wanted the can of beer on stage with him.

*Daddy Violet* was one of the cheapest productions at Caffe Cino--the entire production cost fifteen cents for the can of beer (Patrick, “Caffe Cino Memories” 13). Birimisa was so tense before each performance that he took an upper just before walking on the stage “and washed it down with a can of beer; after I did it for 61 times [across the country], we were in San Francisco in the 62nd performance. I looked out at a sea of faces: ‘Oh my God, I didn’t take my upper’; so I stopped taking them after that.” Though Birimisa was especially nervous, all three actors were tense during the performance: “We were all scared. It was terrifying. We never knew what was going to happen since the play has so many pools of improvisation.”
The play opens with the three actors moving about the space and performing routine functions such as distributing programs. The published version is based upon performances at the Firehouse Theatre in Minneapolis and includes three characters named after the actors who played them: George [Birimisa], Dan [Leach], and Sylvienne [Strauss]. The action starts when George walks onto the stage, points out the props for Arthur Sainer’s new play that was scheduled to open the following Friday, and begins to sweep. He calls Dan to check the music and Sylvienne to distribute the programs. The show was heavily improvisational and each production was transformed according to where it was played: “When *Daddy Violet* is performed it must be involved with the reality of where it is being performed—where it is ‘happening.’ The actors must accept the total reality of where they are and the total reality of the audience” (84). At Caffe Cino, the play opened as follows:

People would be in the audience. I had a hammer. I would go around and be putting nails in the walls, another actor would be sweeping and another actor would have the programs. The actor with the programs would yell, “Should I pass out the program now?” We would do an improv on all that stuff. . . . The man who did the lighting, Charles Stanley, was a little upset with me because I didn’t want any lighting. I didn’t want any illusion at all. He would turn off the lights in the audience and I would ask him to turn them back on. (Interview with Birimisa)

After the opening sequence, the three actors start doing exercises based upon the actor training techniques of Michael Chekhov. After various improvisational games (such as becoming a turkey), Dan starts working on placing his center in different parts of his body:
When he starts he has his center in his chest, and he goes out to the audience and tries to date a woman . . . ; and I say, all right now, put your center in your mouth. He just transforms into a gay man. He runs out into the audience and makes a pass at a man. Thank God Dan was a huge man, otherwise he might have been belted. So I say to him, “Put your center back in chest.” He says, “No I won’t.”

Birimisa chases him through the audience, yelling, “Think of Warren Beatty”; he says, ‘Ooooooh . . . I love it, I love it.”

The actors begin doing impersonations of flowers, with Birimisa becoming Daddy Violet, Strauss becoming Violet, and Leach becoming Easter Lily. When they discover their roots in a mountain overlooking Vietnam’s Mekong Delta, the view of women and children being tortured and killed in the valley below causes them to lose their centeredness and their identity:

Dan: I feel so empty! Empty! Dear God. I can’t . . .
Sylvienne: You’ve been working too hard. Doing your famous turkey must be a terrible emotional strain.
Dan: My center is gone. (98-99)

Without his center, he cannot remember who he is

Sylvienne: You’ve got to remember. You’re clear, cool and such an eggshell white. You’re Easter Lily!
Dan: I am?
Sylvienne: Yes! Yes! Yes!
George: Now don’t panic. Let me think. (He twists Dan’s head around until they are eyeball to eyeball.) Dan? Dan?
Dan: Who? (99)

Only by convincing themselves that the Mekong Delta is actually Salinas Valley can they overcome the problem, remember their names, and quickly conclude the play.

According to Birimisa, the performance of Daddy Violet at Caffe Cino is “really what got me started. . . . I was at the base of what the new off-off-Broadway theatre was

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about. It was such an honor to be a part of that.” After performing at the Cino, the three actors toured the production to universities and small theatres around the country. The published version is based upon performances on July 15 and 16 at the Firehouse Theatre in Minneapolis, managed by Sydney Schubert Walter who had previously directed Samuel Becket’s *Embers*, Paul Foster’s *Hurray for the Bridge*, and Foster’s *Balls* at Caffe Cino. The work was given a professional production in San Francisco in 1968.

On July 4, Wallace Stevens’ *Carlos Among the Candles* with Deborah Lee opened on a double bill with *Opening July 4th for Joe*, written and performed by Charles Stanley. The production was followed by *Sandcastle* (with Walter Harris, Tanya Berezin, and Robbie McCauley, among others); originally performed at La Mama and moved to the Cino, it was Lanford Wilson’s last work in the coffeehouse.

Also in July, the coffeehouse wars took an entirely new turn when Emanuel Popolizio, chairman of and attorney for MANA, prepared to file a writ of mandamus against Mayor Lindsay, Police Commissioner Howard Leary, and Commissioner of Licenses Joel Tyler. The writ charged Lindsay and the commissioners with dereliction because of their failure to enforce various laws, particular those relating to the licensing of coffeehouses, thus causing “an increase in acts of assault, murder, robbery, rape, purveying of narcotics and use of hallucinogenic drugs, prostitution and pandering and contributing to the impairment of morals of minors, and general deterioration of public morals and public peace” (“MacD. Group” 3). Rather than refute the charges in the writ, City attorneys sought to have the suit thrown out of court, alleging that it was
groundless since the proper means of resolving the issue was through the political
(rather than judicial) process. On August 24, the City lost its effort to end the suit when
New York Supreme Court Justice Charles Loreto ruled in favor of MANA. As the suit
gradually worked its way through the court system that fall and winter, one significant
victory came for theatres, cabarets, and similar establishments in September when the
city abandoned its practice of requiring identification cards and fingerprinting for
performers and cabaret employees.

On August 8, 1967, the Cino opened *Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs*, the first
comic book production to be given a regular run. The production originated as a last-
minute replacement for a cancelled show (most likely, one of the performances of
*Sandcastle*). Magie Dominic describes the first performance:

Charles Stanley was one of the best directors I have ever worked with
anywhere. One August evening, in the mid-60's, he came flying out of
the Caffe around 9 p.m. as I strolled up Cornelia Street, grabbed my arm,
said that the scheduled show had been cancelled and that we were doing
Snow White and that I was in it. As we ran across the street, I asked him
what part he wanted me to do and he said, Snow White. We leaped
through the door (I was wearing a red, white and blue polka-dot dress
from Lamston’s), ran through a packed house down to the back of the
Caffe where Harry Koutoukas was in makeup and costume as the
Wicked Step-Mother; Kenny Burgess had an entire costume of little
birds and animals, twinkle lights and fur and feathers as the birds and
animals of the forest; Bob Patrick was ready as Doc, and David
Starkweather as Sneezy with a box of Kleenex; Wally Anderchauk [sic]
was in royal robes as the Kind Hunter; the prince was handsome; Charles
Stanley did the part of The Magic Mirror in a head dress... (“Caffe
Cino Part VIII” 5)

The production was given a regular run during the second week of August, though the
number of dwarfs varied each night depending on how many actors were available to
play the roles. Patrick recalls in at least one show having played all seven dwarfs, with Doc's hat on his head and three hats on each arm.

On August 22, 1967, the Cino opened Charles Kerbs's *Phaedra*, the first of three plays by writers from New Orleans (two by Kerbs and one by Josef Bush). Kerbs moved to New York to become a painter, but soon found the cost of painting supplies beyond his meager budget. He turned to writing because "writing was cheap" (interview with Kerbs). When he began taking acting lessons, Joseph Chaikin recommended instructor Nola Chilton who became one of the most important influences on Kerbs's artistic development. While studying with Chilton ("an exceptional teacher"), he learned of Caffe Cino through other students, many of whom were involved with various off and off-off-Broadway theatres. After seeing a few productions at the Cino, Kerbs decided to submit one of his plays for consideration: "It was marvelous... You would go hand them a play and they'd read it and let you know." The work was accepted, and his *Phaedra* opened on August 24, 1967. A loose, free form interpretation of the classic work, the play has only two characters, the mother, played by Tina Nandes (acting as Gina Ginakos to prevent problems with Equity) and the son, played by Albert Sinkus. One of the devices Kerbs uses in the play may (he believes) account for the work's popularity with Cino audiences: when Phaedra can no longer bear listening to her son, she grabs a trumpet and begins to play: "And, of course, she couldn't play the trumpet, so she just made a horrible noise" (interview with Kerbs).
Four weeks after the close of *Phaedra*, the Cino opened *The Sleeping Gypsy*, Kerbs’s second and last play performed there. A coming-of-age play, *The Sleeping Gypsy* tells of a man trying to initiate his son into adulthood; like *Phaedra*, it is a two character work, performed at the Cino by Sully Boyer (even then, an actor of some reputation who went on to a successful film career) and William Faulkner. The set consisted primarily of a large “cut-out of a completely naked woman with huge breasts and big hips.” As the father tries to initiate the son into adult sexuality, he points to the cut-out and says, “See the naked lady see the naked lady; the naked lady loves you,” resulting in “terrible fights” between the two men (Kerbs).

Like Cino before him, Stanley gave artists wide latitude in presenting their work. According to Kerbs, “When it was your production, it was your production. I mean. You could’ve brought in dancing dogs to do the play and they would’ve let it happen.” And houses were full, mostly with uptown people (“young movers and shakers”).

Between the works by Kerbs were plays by Robert Patrick (*The Warhol Machine*, his last work at the Cino) and Louisiana native Josef Bush whose *French Gray*, a play about Marie Antoinette, was written specifically for Phoebe Wray. *The Sleeping Gypsy* was followed by *Goethe’s Faust*, the last of the advertised comic book productions.

On October 31, 1967, a group from Warhol’s Factory returned to the stage of the Cino with a production of Ronald Tavel’s *Vinyl*, the play upon which Warhol based his film of the same name. Directed by Harvey Tavel (the author’s brother) and choreographed by Ron Pratt, the production purported to trace the cure of a sadistic man

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who “gets his kicks from random cruelty and buggery” (Smith, “Theatre Journal,” review of *Vinyl* 28). Dan Sullivan of the *New York Times* describes the work:

> Whips slash, chains lash; high-heeled boots stomp. Ribs are cracked, fingernails yanked, eyeballs squished. The characters attired in skin-tight basic black, include a hairy chested hood who loves to carve people up (Mike St. Shaw) and the serpentine lady inquisitor (Mary Woronov) who tames him. (“*Gorilla Queen Man,*” page number not identified; from New York Public Library *T-NBL + (Coll) 1967/68 T-Z)

Michael Smith found the sadism heavily ritualized: “The tortures are stylized into a ceremonial of pain. . . . Most of the time this formalization works, but sometimes it becomes too dancy and arty and just looks fake. Sado-masochism is ceremonial to begin with and needs real pain to connect it with reality” (Smith, “Theatre Journal,” review of *Vinyl* 28). Though the production was popular, it offended many people, including critic Robert Pasolli: “The word of mouth had billed it as a ‘must see’ for daring and shock. I thought it was abominable—a succession of badly faked beat-ups and stomp-ons complemented by the non-acting characteristic of the Warhol world” (Pasolli.39).

The Cino closed 1967 with a series of productions which, with the exception of Haal Borske’s *The Brown Clown*, ran only one week each. One of the few original scripts of the period, *The Brown Clown* tells of Zephyrus, god of the west wind, who was banished by Zeus and who is now the love object of a scientist who visits him. Smith describes the play,

> It’s a weird, even unaccountable subject for a play, and the style is equally weird—campy, downbeat, sarcastic, often funny. The play continually puts itself down and refuses to be taken seriously. . . . Borske

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is an original and already, apart from echoes of Koutoukas, speaks with his own voice. (Smith, "Theatre: The Brown Clown" 44)

The final production was Chekhov's *The Marriage Proposal* presented by students of Mira Rostova, a production that Smith found refreshing because it showed the "joys of conventional, minor, trivial masterpieces" (Smith, "Theatre Journal," review of *The Marriage Proposal* 35).

On New Year's Eve, the Cino closed its doors for three weeks to renovate. After eight months as manager, Charles Stanley was exhausted and could not continue, the ever present financial pressures and harassment from the City having taken their toll. As a result, Michael Smith and Wolfgang Zuckerman took over the management.

Smith, of course, had been a critic for the *Village Voice* for several years; a businessman and inventor of a "build-your-own" harpsichord kit, Zuckerman had the financial resources that the Cino desperately needed. The two men had worked together previously when Smith managed Sundance, a theatre festival in Pennsylvania sponsored by Zuckerman. They decided to renovate the facility, installing a new light board and removing layers of posters, photographs, memorabilia and other material from the walls to apply a fresh coat of paint.

At the end of December as the management transitions occurred at the Cino, Justice Charles A Tierney ruled in favor of the members of Macdougal Area Neighborhood Association in their suit against Mayor Lindsay and his commissioners. Noting that the suit was "replete with dates, times and places of the illegal acts complained of" (qtd. in Tomasson 1), Tierney ordered "each and every complaint with
respect to violation statutes, ordinance or regulation specifically made therein, remanded
to respondents [the three city officials] for further effective and appropriate action” (74).
After the ruling, Lindsay noted that all but six of the twenty-five unlicensed
coffeehouses operating in the area when he was elected had been forced to close or to
comply with licensing laws. Frustrated coffeehouse owners and patrons charged that the
lawsuit had less to do with the interests of neighborhood residents than with Edward
Koch’s political ambition and his effort to gain votes from the predominantly Italian
wards in the South Village, areas often openly hostile to the bohemian element in the
Village. Koch’s political strength lay with middle-class professionals of the West
Village; his support was weaker in the older, ethnic neighborhoods. The day after the
New York Times reported Tierney’s decision, the Cino received a summons for
operating without a license. One month after Tierney’s decision, Koch announced his
candidacy for United States Congress.

As the controversy over the decision receded, Caffe Cino reopened on January
23, 1968, presenting Tom La Bar’s Empire State as the first production in the newly
renovated space. Robert Pasolli used his review in the Village Voice to suggest a new
direction for the Cino, after he had railed against past productions at the coffeehouse
because of their “slap-dash” incompetence and “homosocial orientation” (Pasolli,
“Theatre: Empire State” 26 and 39). If Cino productions were frequently inconsistent or
even inferior in quality, they were consistent in tone: “What one could go to the Cino
for, however, was to dig its specialty: a barely bridled indulgence and an impulsive
bizzarrerie that only the Playhouse of the Ridiculous has outdone” (26). Pasolli argues
that the Cino presented many gay plays: "The Cino has had what you might call a homosocial orientation, and has proliferated productions presenting homosexuals at play." (26). As the manager following Cino's death, Charles Stanley "confirmed and deepened the Cino's homosocial orientation" (39). With the production of *Empire State* (originally scheduled by Stanley but performed after he left), Smith and Zuckerman perpetuated the worst excesses of past productions: "And, as a whole, it was just the Cino doing its level worst while depicting homosociety at play" (39). Though it may have escaped Pasolli's notice, even the program, with its names and other information carefully positioned so as to form the head and shaft of a penis (see Figure 10), foregrounds the homosocial recreation so detested by the critic. Pasolli concluded: "The important thing is for Smith and Zuckerman not to go on with it. The old policy, or the old non-policy, which allows if not encourages this kind of work should be scuttled" (39).
Empire State featured "a lady bum touched by mad inspiration, a smart-assed boy of ten, and two window-dresser queens" (39); it also featured an obscenity that caused problems for the coffeehouse. When he learned of the 1985 exhibit at Lincoln Center, Zuckerman wrote Richard Buck, "[T]wo inspectors dressed as hippies came and watched one of our plays [Empire State] containing what was then considered a dirty word, starting with 'mother'" (Scrapbook 136). Because the obscenity was said in front of the child performing in the play, Zuckerman and one of the actors (the boy's uncle) were arrested on January 26, 1968, three days after the Caffe's reopening. According to the arrest record, the criminal act was "Permit child to act in theratical [sic] production, acts and diolgue [sic] impair morals charge" (Scrapbook 137). Police also issued a summons for operating a coffeehouse without a license. In addition to ending the run of Empire State, the incident was deeply upsetting to Zuckerman, recalling the oppression that his family (he was of Jewish descent) suffered before they fled Nazi Germany when he was in high school.

After a revival of Heide's Moon and a production of Tom Eyen's Who Killed my Bald Sister Sophie (which attracted a review from the Wall Street Journal), the Cino opened Diane di Prima's Monuments on March 5, 1968. The entire work consists of eight monologues, any two or three of which were done for the performance each night. Changing the combination and order of monologues changed the story line. According to di Prima, the monologues were "written for the people as if I were pretending to be in their heads" (interview with di Prima). The device posed a problem for critic Ross Wetzsteon:
At first glance, Diane di Prima's Monuments seems a very simple theatre piece—eight monologues written specifically for and in a sense about the people who perform them. But immediately a problem arises—are they performance pieces, or characters sketches, or self-images, or Miss di Prima’s images of the performers’ self-images? This isn’t merely a quibble of definition, for the answer determines the very mode of our response—by what criteria does one judge them? (“Theatre: Monuments” 45)

Unable to satisfactorily answer his questions, Wetzsteon devotes most of his review to an examination of the monologues as poetry, not as theatre.

The first of the monologues was written for James Waring (who co-directed the production with Alan Marlowe). Originally performed at the Actors Studio, the piece prompted Lee Strasberg to comment, “You are such a good writer. Too bad you don’t do realism” (interview with di Prima). In addition to a monologue for herself, di Prima included pieces for or about Deborah Lee, John Herbert McDowell, John Braden, Freddie Herko, and others. All pieces were performed by the individuals for whom they were written except that for Deborah Lee (who was out of the country) and that for Herko (who was dead); di Prima performed under the stage name Myra Munk. One or two of the pieces were written for male lovers of di Prima’s husband, and Herko’s monologue was delivered by Lee FitzGerald, also a lover of di Prima’s husband. Because of Lee’s absence, several people performed her monologue, including Teresa King, Sierra Bandit.

On Sunday, March 10, 1968, the Cino closed abruptly. The number of summonses issued had become overwhelming to Smith and Zuckerman:

We were left alone for a while after that, scared but running, and the good Caffe Cino spirit began to revive. We got another summons after a
week, another one ten days later; the pressure was mounting almost too slowly to feel. We hired a lawyer and found out all we could. Then a License Department inspector began to haunt us and we had to cancel performances to avoid getting more summonses. . . . But a few got through anyway until by Sunday we had seven of them, seven trials, seven potential fines [of $250 each], nothing we tried seemed to protect us from them. . . . (Smith, “Theatre Journal,” on the closing of Caffe Cino 41)

Before closing the Cino, Zuckerman sought assistance from Edward Koch since “it was his and MANA’s actions, and that action alone, which (even if unintentionally) loosed the city’s fury on us” (Zuckerman 4). Koch refused to help, arguing “Do you think you are above the law? Only in a dictatorship does the law make individual exceptions” (4).

In response to a letter regarding the Cino, Koch explained,

No one objects to off-Broadway theatres, and Café (sic) Cino’s contributions to our cultural life is unquestioned. However, when an off-off Broadway theatre intentionally and in violation of laws moves into a block which is zoned for residential use only, in all fairness, it cannot request special treatment.

Café Cino can function on almost any avenue in the Village legitimately or, for good cause, it can apply to the Board of Standards and Appeals for a zoning variance. The owners have refused to take either alternative. (Scrapbook 124)

The dispute with Koch became public when Smith wrote his “Theatre Journal” for the Village Voice for the week of March 14, 1968 suggesting that Koch’s actions were politically motivated, intended to win votes in his congressional campaign. Koch fired back:

Mike’s fantasies bear no resemblance to the facts. The South Village community which he refers to, the area below Washington Square, is not in the Congressional area in which I am running for election. It undoubtedly will be difficult for him to accept the fact that a politician would continue to assist people who cannot vote for him. (Koch 4)
Without Koch’s support, Smith and Zuckerman saw no alternative but to close the Caffe. To relocate or to apply for a zoning variance entailed expenses and difficulties that the two men could not meet.

One possibility that Smith mentions in his “Theatre Journal” for the *Village Voice* is that of forming a private club, much like that formed by Stewart for her La Mama. Josh Greenfeld describes the procedures at La Mama:

An audience at La Mama consists of “members” only. One becomes a member by taking the trouble to find out where La Mama is, going there, and filling out an application form; in return one receives a membership card. One cannot attend a La Mama performance at that time. Instead, whenever a member desires to attend a performance he must call and make reservations in advance. How does he know what is being presented? An ad appears weekly in the *Village Voice* announcing the bill, but giving neither the phone number nor the address for La Mama. How does a member know the phone number? It’s on the membership card. But, of course, in order to have received the card one must first have gone directly to a theoretically unknown address. (11)

Efforts were begun to reorganize the Cino as a private club. A Certificate of Incorporation for Club Cino for the Advancement of the Theatrical Arts, Inc., dated March 1968, states the purpose of the club:

To cultivate, promote, foster, sponsor, and develop among its members the appreciation, understanding, taste, and love of the theatrical, musical, film, and allied arts; to increase cooperation among[,] and advancement[,] of artists . . . ; to provide an opportunity for its members to produce and view new talent in the arts; to promote the improvement and advancement of the arts. (8-MWEZ x N.C. 27646 # 18; Caffe Cino [NYC] Miscellaneous 1965 - ?)

Though the certificate of incorporation is unsigned, the last advertisement placed by the Cino (still, as always, in the “Coffee House” section) includes the words “Arts Club” after Caffe Cino’s name.
Many who were involved in the operation of the Caffe Cino have suggested that the plight of Caffe Cino cannot be attributed solely to the actions of Koch and MANA. In the words of one person, a WASP and a Jew were an unwelcome combination to operate a business in a strictly Italian community. And one of the questions about the Caffe Cino which has lingered over the years is that of how Joe Cino was able to avoid much of the legal action to which other coffeehouses (Phase 2, Gaslight, Take 3, Bizarre, and others which, like the Cino, offered entertainment) were subjected. Part of the answer lies in location; City officials concentrated their action in the Macdougal Street area, that part of the Village which had become impossibly congested with tourists and teens. The Cino was tucked away a few blocks from the busiest scene on a quiet street which was primarily residential but also home to a few neighborhood businesses. The Cino operated quietly, attracting little attention from neighbors. Many of those establishments most often subjected to action employed barkers to stand on the streets and lure people into their doors; others were known for over-pricing their products or for false advertising (such as advertising only a cover charge, but including an additional minimum purchase once patrons were inside). Finally, the Cino was hardly exempt from legal action: its name regularly appears in articles about summonses issued to coffeehouses. Tom Eyen recalls police interrupting one of his shows (probably Saga of Sophie in February 1968):\(^6\)

\[\text{One Friday night, the police arrived during a performance, a warning was given, the actors fled the stage, the police looked around, left, the actors}\]

\(^6\text{Eyen's statement is one of the few which suggests that Cino shows were actually interrupted by law enforcement officials.}\)
Helen Hanft composed herself over (which I personally like to think) her now semi-famous breeze hole, stared straight at the audience, threw her arms into the sky of lights and screamed, “Alright, folks, it’s back to ‘Magic Time’” And it was and there was now champagne with the Italian pastry and we ate and we laughed and we wondered if the one o’clock show would be better.

(Scrapbook 133)

The archives of the New York Public Library include at least one summons issued for not having a coffeehouse license and several copies of health inspections noting various violations.

Yet many people question the degree of action against the Cino, implying that during Cino’s life it was less seldom the subject of official action than comparable establishments. Though friendship and ethnic solidarity may have helped Cino avoid some legal action, many believe that Cino received protection because of his family’s ties with organized crime. Doric Wilson, for example, describes an incident in which an agent of the FBI questioned him regarding Cino; when Wilson met the agent later (somewhat surprisingly, in a gay bar), the agent told Wilson that Cino’s family was closely associated with a major Mob organization. Wilson is far from alone in speaking of the Cino family’s association with the Mafia; Joe Cino himself sometimes claimed that his father had a connection with the Mafia, perhaps, as Douglas Gordy has suggested, accounting for the Cino family’s reticence in sharing information about Joe or the family (Gordy 304).

Other persons close to Cino vehemently deny the rumors about the Mob, suggesting that they are based solely upon ethnic stereotype and bias (interview with Dominic 1998). Certainly, one should not discount the potential ethnic bias in
suggesting Mob ties for a second generation Sicilian in a somewhat unsavory (for that
time at least) business in New York City, nor should one immediately assume the
validity of Cino's statements about his family. As has been previously noted, Cino
often created stories about himself, making him an unreliable witness to his own life.
With these limitations noted, it must be remarked that sufficient evidence exists to
suggest that Cino's brothers have had significant involvement with organized crime. In
1989, the *Buffalo News* reported the arrest of Gasper ("Gabby") Cino for violating the
Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Law (RICO) (Metz, "Crackdown").
Though nothing in the article directly ties the arrested Gasper Cino with Joe Cino's
older brother, the age, name, and location are certainly suggestive of such a relationship.

With Stephen ("Stevie the Whale") Cino, however, there can be little doubt of his
relationship to Joe Cino. When Stephen was on trial in September of 1999 for several
Mob-related charges (including contracting for murder), he was denied the opportunity
to attend his brother Richard's funeral; according to the *Las Vegas Sun*, "The brothers,
Stephen Cino's attorney T. Louis Palazzo said, 'shared a special bond ever since their
father, Joseph, died in 1941' (Ed Koch). At the time Stephen was 4, Richard was 12
and their brother, Gasper Cino of Buffalo, N.Y., was 13" (09/07/99 *Las Vegas Sun*,
downloaded from Rick Porrello's AmericanMafia.com,
http://americanmafia.com/News/9-8-99_Cino_Kept_From_Funeral.html, on 02/07/00).
Now reportedly associated with the Milano family from Los Angeles, Cino was among
a group from that crime family to be convicted in 1988 on charges related to

\[60\] Other evidence suggests that Joseph Cino, Sr. died in 1942.

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racketeering. In September 1999, Stephen was sentenced to 15 years in prison for conspiring to extort longtime mob figure Herbert “Fat Herbie” Blitzstein; the Buffalo native was acquitted of murder-for-hire charges in the death of Blitzstein. Because of his convictions on these and other charges and because of his association with the Milano Family, as documented in Jay Robert Nash’s Encyclopedia of World Crime, his name was added to the “Black Book” on September 25, 1997 (see Figure 11). Officially known as the “List of Excluded Persons,” the Black Book is issued by the Nevada Gaming Commission and contains the names of those persons who are excluded from licensed gaming establishments because of prior conviction for certain crimes or because of their “notorious or unsavory reputation which would adversely affect public confidence and trust that the gaming industry is free from criminal or corruptive elements” (“List of Excluded Persons” 3).
Despite the possible association of Cino family members with the Mafia, nothing indicates that Joe Cino was also associated with them. As Feingold notes, he seems to have been estranged from his family; though it may be speculation, several close to the coffeehouse proprietor suggest that the Cino family preferred to keep him away from Buffalo and away from their Mob associates because of his sexual orientation. Gordy, for example, suggests the embarrassment helped him keep his business in operation, “When there was a shortfall, Joe often told friends, his family, embarrassed by their gay offspring, sent supplemental funds to keep him far from Buffalo” (306). Whatever Joe Cino’s status or non-status with his family and their Mafia family, it seems very clear that he (like other coffeehouse proprietors) paid protection money to different law-enforcement officials. According to Robert Patrick, “I used to see Joe slip bills to some of the neighborhood cops. Others he’d take ... in the back and they’d come out red-eyed and sniffing, or zipping their flies. The cops never bothered us while Joe was alive” (“The Other Brick Road” 3). Paul Foster suggests that knowledge of such pay-offs was so widespread that Cino would even include it in his introduction of plays: “Tonight, we dedicate this performance to . . . la luna and the rockettes, oh, and to the cop who just took the last ten in the drawer to let us perform” (Joseph Cino, qtd. in Foster, “A Nurse” 7). Though we have only rumor and speculation to substantiate the allegation of payoffs, the likelihood of their occurring seems quite high. As the battle between the coffeehouses and the City heated in 1961, John Mitchell, owner of the Gaslight Poetry Café, charged that various policemen solicited bribes of $5 to $7 a week. When he stopped paying the bribes, he
was given summonses alleging various infractions in the operation of his coffeehouse.

On May 1, 1961, Patrolman Edward L. Balfe was suspended for soliciting and accepting bribes from both the Gaslight and the Commons. Patrolman John N. Schneider replaced Balfe, but was also charged with soliciting bribes shortly afterwards. Sergeant John P. Griffin was subsequently charged with soliciting a monthly gratuity to “control service of summonses” on the coffeehouses (“State Reports New Evidence” 21). The State of New York investigated the charges and turned over to Police Commissioner Michael J. Murphy a report detailing these and other indications of corruption in the police force. Though quietly dropped soon afterwards, the charges against the policemen lend credibility to the assumption that Cino paid protection money to prevent legal problems.

With the Cino closed in 1968, no real effort was made to reopen it. As Smith said in his “Theatre Journal,”


Maybe the Cino is tired. Maybe it’s a relic of less up-tight Village days. Maybe what I loved was not the Cino but simply Joe. maybe his was the life of the room, maybe this new life was artificial, backward facing, forced, the effort to live it cowardly, not brave. Maybe Joe Cino is dead. (“Theatre Journal,” on the closing of Caffe Cino 42)

Tom Eyen lamented the lack of response to the closing of the Cino, particularly given the extent to which the community supported the Cino after the fire in 1965:

What amazes me, aside from the politics of this fun city (which shall never fail to amaze me) is the cool reaction, both artist and public, to the shut-out of the Cino—which has been in the planning since it opened. back whenever.

[A]fter the] Fire . . . everyone screamed, “Benefit time.” And a front page of the Voice was devoted to the item. Being burned down by a blazing fire and being shut down by numerous summonses are two separate entities . . . No Village Voice headlines, no gala benefits, just a sad little comment in an article about it. (Scrapbook 127)
Though the efforts to raise funds for the Cino hardly parallel those after the 1965 fire, some people did attempt to raise funds to help offset existing legal expenses. On Monday, April 15, a benefit performance was held at the Village Gate. The highpoint of the event was performance of a scene from *Curley McDimple*, the musical forerunner of *Little Orphan Annie* written by Robert Dahdah and Mary Boylan.

Perhaps the Cino closed because neither Smith nor Zuckerman made payments to City officials; neither even knew how to go about broaching the subject to inspectors or police officers. Thus, having lost protection afforded by bribes and (perhaps) organized crime connections, the operators of Caffe Cino may have lost its only shield at a time when it was most needed. And amidst the speculation about bribery and organized crime, it is certainly true that the City of New York increased action against unlicenced coffeehouses and cabarets.
Chapter VI
Effects and Aftermath

The coffeehouse wars and the emerging counterculture largely shaped the history of Caffe Cino, always placing the coffeehouse somewhere outside the boundaries of legality, acceptability, and respectability. From this marginal position, the Cino used its productions and even its daily operations to challenge accepted theatrical practices, political philosophies, social structures, and gender constructions, but without offering ideologically coherent or systematically developed alternatives. Works presented at the Caffe came from a wide range of political perspectives and covered a diverse group of issues. As reflected in many of his comments, Joe Cino was less interested in what one had to say than in the fact that one had something to say and no venue in which to say it. Thus, Caffe Cino opposed, resisted, transgressed, and subverted dominant social and political structures, without proposing, supporting, ratifying, or establishing anything of its own. In this refusal to commit to any particular political or social ideology (and, even, the refusal to take such ideologies seriously), the Cino reflects a trend that had been growing among certain sixties radicals, that is, a tendency to question all totalizing narratives. Like the hippies, Diggers, and other members of the sixties counterculture (of which ultimately they were a part), Cino artists engaged in what cultural historian Julie Stephens calls “anti-disciplinary protest,” a term revealing its roots in Foucaultian theory and referring to a rejection of ideological commitment. It is in this form of protest that Stephens sees the origins of certain strains of postmodernism, particularly that strain popular in the United States. Unlike those scholars who link postmodernism
with the failure of the sixties radical movement (most notably including the failure of
the student uprisings of 1968), Stephens suggests that the emergence of the postmodern
narrative came through the “creative lunacy” (35) of the anti-disciplinary protest of the
counterculture. Central to the Cino’s challenge of modernism—central to its creative
lunacy—is its challenge of our understanding of self, particularly the gendered self.
With its celebration of a fluid, unstable sexual identity, the Cino occupies an interstitial
moment between the medical model of sexual identity of prior decades and the ethnic
model of sexual identity that would become commonplace after the Stonewall Riots in
1969. Caffe Cino and many of the other coffeehouses were rewriting and redefining
space, bringing a new, more diverse, complexion to a predominately Caucasian or
Italian community. Thus, they opened a space to rewrite and redefine performances of
the ethnic and sexual, gendered self. Coffeehouses such as the Cino became visible
evidence of the rupture working its way through the social fabric of the city and the
country as the younger generation challenged authoritarian establishments.

As Stephens argues, the youth movement of the period consisted of two factions,
the student radicals of the New Left and the dropouts of the counterculture. While
reinterpreting and challenging the traditional approaches to Marxism of the left,67 the
student radicals were strongly politically engaged, intent upon reforming society.
Traditionally, attention has focused on the student radicals, while the counterculture, the
second major faction of the period, has largely been dismissed as unimportant: “[I]t is as

67 One of the most important transitions in Marxist thought taking place at the
time was a shift of focus from economic structures (such as base and superstructure) to
libertarian issues (civil rights, women’s rights, and so forth).
though, in hindsight, the real action is considered to have taken place only in the political side of the decade’s experience: the free speech, civil rights, black power and anti-war movements. By contrast, the hippies are rejected as a ‘clownish sideshow’" (22). Though it tuned in, turned on, and dropped out, the counterculture was politically engaged despite their clownishness, but their commitment was not to a prescribed political agenda or dogma but to a constant action in opposition to the dominant culture or any fixed, totalizing political narrative. Theirs was that aspect of sixties radicalism to which Stephens refers when she speaks of anti-disciplinary protest. Characteristics of the counterculture include a rejection of organization, hierarchy, and leadership and a critique of intelligibility and coherence, as well as a recognition of the “impossibility of grand revolutionary projects or more particularly in macro-political theory of the Marxist kind” (3). Stephens argues that “[t]he anti-disciplinary politics of the sixties counterculture has also contributed to the widespread popular and theoretical acceptance of the postmodern notion of the present political field as impasse” (5).

Attempting to fix a moment or cause of origin for postmodernism, a movement that challenges originary claims, is, of course, a dubious project at best. We have yet even to agree upon what it is: an age, perhaps one of the four of human development; an esthetic movement; or a brief moment or transitional phase between other moments. Some of the central theorists in defining postmodernism have suggested that it is a particular period or stage of human development: Fredric Jameson speaks of it as being the cultural logic of late capitalism; Huston Smith argues that the postmodern period is the most recent of what have to date been the four ages of human civilization. Ihab
Hassan poses the question, “Is postmodernism only a literary tendency, or is it also a

cultural phenomenon, perhaps even a mutation in Western humanism?” (32). In the

day, however, Hassan finds himself unable to answer his own question: “One is left to

wonder: is some epistemic as well as social mutation—involving art and science, high

and low culture, the female and male principles, fragments and totalities of every kind—

active in our midst? We can only guess and guess again: the invisible writing, the ink of

time, becomes legible only as history” (36). Other writers have been less concerned

with periodization. Elzbieta Oleksy, for example, speaks of postmodernism as having

appeared after World War II, though she views it less as a period than as a “quality” (3).

Similarly, Hans Bertens summarizes certain strains of postmodern thought: “It’s not the

world that is postmodern, here, it is the perspective from which that world is seen that is

postmodern” (9). Whether postmodernism constitutes a universal epoch or only a

movement/perspective in the humanities, one of the most cogent descriptions of it has

been given by Pauline Marie Rosenau:

The appearance of post-modernism in the humanities and the social

sciences signals more than another novel academic paradigm. Rather, a

radically new and different cultural movement is coalescing in a broad-

gauged re-conceptualization of how we experience and explain the world

around us. (4)

The extent and direction of that re-conceptualization depends upon the particular strain

of postmodern thought to which one adheres.

The term “postmodernism” has been used with somewhat different meanings for

quite some time. Perry Anderson traces the term back to Spanish literature in the 1930s

and then to historian Arnold Toynbee, though the use in both instances seems
somewhat different from that now common. The term had begun to acquire a meaning comparable to that in current use at least as early as 1961 when Huston Smith published an article in *The Saturday Evening Post* foreshadowing much of what would later be written about poststructuralism and postmodernism. Anticipating the postmodern challenge of metanarratives, for example, Smith notes that “[f]or twenty-five hundred years philosophers have argued over which metaphysical system is true. For them to agree that none is true is a new departure” (9); and “[w]hat is necessary and eternal for everyone is so impossible for a man to know that he wastes time making the attempt” (10). Smith speaks of the “dissolution of cosmic order, moral order, and the hierarchic order of subject matter” (15).

While Smith links the emergence of the postmodern age to the dissolution of order, other critics have linked it to the effects of the Cold War. Ann Douglas notes:

I am not suggesting that World War II or the cold war caused postmodernism or that each enterprise did not have its own agents and agendas; I tend to believe in something like synchronicity when it comes to sorting out the relations between base and superstructure, between economics, politics, and culture. I am suggesting, however that postmodernism cannot be fully explained or understood outside of its cold war context; they group together as one “composition” as Gertrude Stein might say. (77)

Certainly, Douglas is supported by Gerald Howard’s description of the sixties:

The real difficulty of the Sixties was getting a straight answer—and not just from the artists. Were we being lied to about the Vietnam war all along? Was the Warren Commission a snow job? Was there really such a thing as the “new Nixon”? Was media oracle Marshall McLuhan for real? Serious? Right?

So questions of sincerity and authenticity arose in the realm of art communications as well as in the personal and the political. (16)
As Ann Douglas and Gerald Howard have suggested, these questions of sincerity and authenticity (as well, perhaps, as the emergence of postmodernism) predate the 1960s and can be seen in the obfuscation surrounding the cold war from its start.

Recently, however, many scholars have suggested that postmodernism arose sometime after the end of the sixties since they link its emergence with the end of that epoch. Undoubtedly, in the late sixties, particularly in France following the failure of traditional Marxist groups to support the youth movement, the schisms within the left fundamentally affected major figures such as Michel Foucault. Clearly 1968 with first the promise and then the failure of the student movement was a turning point for him, as his work took on quite a different tone and approach than it had in earlier years. His arguments regarding the operation of power, his distrust of organized movements, and other basic premises of poststructuralism and, subsequently, postmodernism become more pronounced in his work after 1968. Steven Seidman locates the rise of postmodernism in the 1970s and 1980s as the left fragmented into various New Social Movements (NSM) such as feminism and gay liberation, most of which lost their Marxist base: “The shift in left politics in the 1970s and 1980s from the politics of class and labor to the post-Marxian social criticism of the NSM forms a pivotal social setting for the rise of a left postmodern social discourse” (107). Thus, as Stephens argues regarding many accounts of postmodernism,

[A]n explanation which sets so much store on May ‘68 [and the failure of the sixties radicalism] leads to two different but related conclusions: one contending that this failure marks an end to all opposition, and the other that this end opens up the opportunity for alternative forms of political engagement. My fascination is with the former as it is this view that

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dominates the accounts which link the emergence of postmodernism with the death of the sixties. (3)

Stephens then proceeds to challenge this link, posing instead her connection between the emergence of postmodernism and the practices/views of the counterculture.

Whenever its origins, one of the most apparent characteristics of postmodernism in art is the erasure of the boundary between fine and popular art. In her essay on the “new sensibility” of the sixties, Susan Sontag argues for a form of art that begins a movement toward a “ludic” art (in the postmodern sense): “The new sensibility understands art as the extension of life—this being understood as the representation of (new) modes of vivacity” (300). An important consequence of the new sensibility outlined by Sontag is the abandonment of the “Matthew Arnold idea of culture” and, thus, the challenge of the distinction between high and low culture (302). At about the same time that Sontag wrote her article on the new sensibility, Leslie Fiedler also championed the new sensibility of postmodern literature. According to Perry Anderson, Fiedler “celebrated the emergence of a new sensibility among the younger generation in America, who were ‘dropouts from history’—cultural mutants whose values of nonchalance and disconnexion, hallucinogens and civil rights, were finding welcome expression in a fresh postmodern literature” (13).

Exemplifying Stephens’s description of the counterculture in general, the artists at Caffe Cino explored styles of resistance, of transgression, and of subversion without committing to any particular political narrative or agenda. According to director Roberta Sklar (2000), they were more interested in exploring cultural issues and cultural
change than in promoting any political issues. In these explorations, the Cino artists drew from or fashioned methods which would be incorporated into certain postmodern theatre: they created pastiches and verbal collages (much like the Kenny Burgess’s graphic collages which decorated the walls of the Cino) involving a free play of texts drawn from high art, popular culture, inside jokes, and references to the Cino culture. They often displaced the boundaries of space and linear time, intermingling Helen Troy (no “of”), General Hector, Saint Augustine, Agrippinne Caesar, with characters of contemporary Greenwich Village; setting Medea in a laundromat (she kills her children by throwing them in a washing machine, not forgetting to add the requisite amount of Oxydol detergent); placing a pseudo-classical priest alongside a movie star, a Greek God, and a dove. They often drew their inspiration and images from popular culture: using comic books as scripts, drawing from a famous Marilyn Monroe film to create the lead character and primary situation of the work. They consistently subverted sex and age, casting Harry Koutoukas as Diana Prince/Wonder Woman in the first comic book production; casting bearded Charles Stanley as Tiny Tim in a version of Christmas Carol which owes more to Disney’s Scrooge McDuck than to Charles Dickens’s novel. They explored sexuality in virtually every form imaginable, with plays about sadomasochism, telephone sex, homosexuality, and masturbation.

The intermingling of existing with original texts and of literary characters with “real” people of different periods goes back to the earliest original plays produced at the Cino. Doric Wilson’s Now She Dances (August 1961) brings together Lane from The Importance of Being Earnest, Salome from the Wilde play of the same title, events in
Oscar Wilde’s life, and autobiographical details from Wilson’s arrest for sexual impropriety. Wilson describes the play:

Operating on three main levels, Now She Dances! is a metaphor for this [Wilde’s] trial, blending characters from Wilde’s Salome and Earnest with a Post-Modernist America. The denizens of Herod’s decayed and corrupt court discover themselves constrained in the lace and frippery of a polite Victorian comedy of manners where they sit in judgement on a contemporary stand-in for Wilde. The proceedings of this play are ruled over by Moloch, a deity who demanded of parents that their children be burnt in sacrifice. (n. pag.)

The mingling of styles was not limited to original texts, but appeared in productions of classics such as Miss Julia (sic), directed by Joe Cino. An adaptation of Strindberg’s Miss Julie, the production confused critic Arthur Sainer because of its merging of contemporary and Victorian styles, thought, and methods: “The adaptation seems at times to be set in modern-day Sweden and at other moments to be happening at the turn of the century, the characters mingle hip colloquialisms with Victorian rhythms, and the psychology is fuzzy” (10). Ultimately, the production was dominated by the psychotic character of Julie, the changing social structure, and the boots of the master. As Sainer concludes in his review, “The only dominant feature of the Cino version is the existence of uncertainty” (10).

Central to much of the work at the Cino was the challenging of cultural hierarchies, particularly the elevation of high over popular art. As playwright Robert Patrick has noted, the artists at the Cino were the first generation of artists to mature during the enormous increase in media outlets in the early part of this century (1999),

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68 The accusations upon which Wilson’s arrest were based were false.
leading him to describe himself as a "media mutant" (Patrick, "The Other Brick" 3). Not only did these artists have the influence of such outlets as radio, film, television, and newspaper, they were also one of the first generations to have widespread access to inexpensive copies of the works of canonical writers and philosophers, because of the increase in the number of libraries and the widespread availability of inexpensive paperback books. Thus, influences on these writers included radio programs, the daily news, advertisement jingles, and classical philosophy. Their works often draw these influences together in intriguing ways. In *Tidy Passions, or Kill, Kaleidoscope, Kill*, Koutoukas brings together Jean Harlow (played by Charles Stanley), Narcissus of Greek myth, a Dove who thinks that she is dying but is only molting, a Cobra Priest, and three Witches (reminiscent of *Macbeth*). With the comic book productions, the Cino gave living expression to the pop art that Andy Warhol explored on canvas.

In addition to (often in conjunction with) incorporating elements of popular culture into their work, Cino artists also began exploring the effects of technology on our lives. The world created by Harry Koutoukas often has a post-apocalyptic feel of decay and destruction. His *Tidy Passions* is set at a Cobra Temple, with the set being made of found objects: "It is important that the setting be made of remnants of glass, cellophane, etc. It is vital that no part of the setting or costumes be bought; the designer of costumes and sets must spin them of remnants of castaway items" (3); his *With Creatures Make My Way: An Intensive Camp* is set "deep in the curvature of the sewer." His *Only a Countess May Dance When She’s Crazy* is set in an underground bunker, below the laboratory of Dr. Till for whom the only character (the Countess Olie
Samovitch) is the administrative administrator. Responding to a telephone call, the countess sets the conditions of the world: “Well I don’t think that just because you people are the last survivors of a world shaking, mushrooming event that it’s any reason to disturb him in his quest for truth and eternal life. What do you mean his last experiment killed the world. Don’t you know the ancient laws of glitter... many must suffer for the few” (35-36).

In Robert Patrick’s tri-part *Lights/Camera/Action*, each of the three plays deals with the difficulties inherent in communicating in a technological, mediated age. In the first play, *Lights*, a woman in her forties is assisting a young artist with his show. With her opening lines, she foregrounds difficulties in communication: “No, you don’t understand. How could you understand? For me it’s all over. . . . Do you understand? Can you understand?” (113). As the play progresses, she maintains her role as the-one-who-understands as she interprets his artwork for him. Ironically, in presenting her interpretation, she refuses to allow him to speak, taking away his power of communication and reassigning meaning to his work. Thus, the play explores the privileging of the older person’s voice over that of the younger and the critic’s voice over that of the artist.

A science-fiction story *Camera Obscura* tells of the first correspondence between a young man and a young woman who live on different planets. Patrick describes the play as follows: “A boy on a planet where there were only men is computer dated via long-distance television with a girl on a planet where there are only women. For this one, we built two little platforms... thirty inches high, which we
placed at the front and back of the room” ("Nudity on Stage" 46). The two have
difficulty communicating because the distance between them causes a five second delay
in the reception of the transmission. When either of the two attempts to talk, s/he does
so just as the signal is being received from the other person, so that the characters’ lines
continuously overlap, constantly confusing their efforts to communicate. Since they are
allotted only five minutes for the communication, they waste all of their time in
confusion and mis-communication. The technological systems intended to foster
communication are thus implicated in the breakdown of communication.

The third play, Action, is a four character piece which opens with two men
(“Man” and “Boy”) onstage, each of whom is composing a script that details the
existence of the other. The well-dressed, older Man writes about a young Greenwich
Village writer in his underwear working at a typewriter, while the younger Boy (wearing
only underwear) types a script about an older, wealthy Man dressed in an expensive
smoking jacket and writing into an elegant leather portfolio. The play raises
fundamental questions about the nature of reality. Is one of the men “real” and the
other “fictional”? Is the younger man a product of the older man’s imagination? Or is it
the reverse? Ultimately, the dilemma is irreconcilable since, in a postmodern paradox,
the two are co-creative and are each products of the other’s imagination. Perhaps, also,
the play suggests that the creation of art is, in essence, a closed system in which no work
is created independently but rather in which one work influences, even determines,
another.
Though many of the writers and performers at the Cino eschewed political engagement, their work made important political contributions. William Hoffman has written, "I wasn’t looking to do anything political; I just wanted to write about all the kinds of people I knew and loved, and that turned out to be very political" ("Forward" to Untold Decades, x). What Stephens says of the counterculture in general is certainly applicable to the Cino: they were exploring a new form of politics, one based upon transgression and resistance. Perhaps their most important contribution is their destabilization of sex and gender codes and, thus, of the identities based upon those codes. Identity is freed from the body and becomes an object for play, teasing, parody. Thus, Medea can be played by a man in a dress, and Only A Countess is a "tour-de-force for one actor, male or female."

During the years in which the Cino operated, fundamental shifts occurred in the political and social structures affecting gay men and lesbians. The foundation of a community and a distinctive gay social identity began to emerge, fostering "legitimate" businesses catering to a larger population which publicly self-identified as homosexual. Discontent with the conservative direction of homophile organizations such as the Mattachine Society grew as a new generation of activists looked to the Civil Rights movement for a model of a more aggressive and confrontational style of activism. Though Cino and most of his regular customers were removed from the political turmoil of the period, the coffeehouse had a significant political effect by providing a space in which gay men could model alternative identity performances both on and off stage, thus contributing to the emergence of gay community and a gay (as opposed to
homosexual or homophile) social identity. Since identity is both constructed and expressed through discursive, performatve strategies, different strategies and different negotiations of power relationships create different identity structures. To borrow a phrase from Michel Foucault, the artists at Caffe Cino were actively engaged in strategies through which gay identity is “put into discourse” (History of Sexuality: 11). Camp became the fundamental strategy through which the artists at the Cino put gay identity into discourse and modeled alternative identity practices. Through camp, they 1) valorized and centered the outsider, the marginalized, the “other,” 2) constructed the male body as an object of (male) desire, and 3) established a safe space within which alternate identities could be rehearsed.

The Cino opened when the influence of the Mattachine Society (the first of the homophile organizations) was at its peak. Initially, the Society had reflected the radical politics of its founders, many of whom, including Harry Hay, had ties to Marxist organizations. It quickly, however, retreated “to respectability” (D’Emilio 75) by rejecting both the radical politics of Hay and his belief in a distinctive homosexual identity. Rather than working to define and support a unique minority group, the new leaders sought to dispel any sense of difference between homosexual and non-homosexual persons. Thus, the goal of the movement became that of working with various professionals (such as psychologist Evelyn Hooker) to prove that the homosexual “is no different from anyone else except in the object of his sexual expression” (D’Emilio 81). As D’Emilio concludes, “In sum, accommodation to social norms replaced the affirmation of a distinctive gay identity, collective effort gave way to
individual action, and confidence in the ability of gay men and lesbians to interpret their own experience yielded to the wisdom of experts” (81). Dissatisfaction with such accommodationist and assimilationist tactics grew throughout the sixties so that activists were galvanized by the riots of June 1969, in which a group of hustlers and drag queens fought back against police raids on the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village gay bar. Occurring two years after Cino’s death and one year after his coffeehouse closed for the final time, the riots on Christopher Street, the emblem of the new activism as the gay liberation movement emerged, may have been fueled by the growing sense of community fostered by such venues as Caffe Cino.

Because neither Cino nor his productions exemplified radical politics such as was typical of some other venues, Caffe Cino is often considered to be have been a non-political theatre, leading Tillie Gross to assert that “political activism was left to the Becks (Julian Beck and Judith Malina) and The Living Theatre” (164). Yet, as suggested by Julie Stephens’s arguments concerning the emergence of the postmodern narrative, it is an oversimplification of the Cino’s contribution to conclude (as does Gross) that the Cino’s approach resulted only in a place to which to retreat: “For the alienated, Caffe Cino became a place to hide and to escape to, because here they were accepted” (165). That “they” were accepted at the Cino provides grounds for challenging the assumption that the Cino had no political effect, since, in fact, the political effectiveness of the Cino grows out of that acceptance. Rather than being simply a place for the marginalized to hide, the Cino provided a public space in which they could assert themselves and could rehearse transgressive performances of self. As
playwright Doric Wilson noted, we may not be able to show a direct correlation between the existence of venues such as Caffe Cino and the rise of the gay political/social movement, but such a movement would be "unthinkable" without such sites (1998).

In arguing the merits of queering the Cino, Village Voice columnist Randy Gener notes that "The Caffe’s misfit, boho [i.e., bohemian], theatrical-fringe status jibed with the displacement of being a sexual other" (5). Though the core practitioners and audience at the Cino were not exclusively gay, they could perhaps most appropriately be described as "queer" (in an expansive definition of the term) since most were marginalized and disenfranchised: gay men, feminists, sex workers.

Given the diversity of styles and content of the productions, no Cino style ever really emerged. Leah D Frank, for example, uses "Cinoese" and "off-off-Broadway eclectic" as synonyms. Yet one stylistic device--camp--linked many Cino productions, from the first review in which Seymour Krim spoke of "faggots camping" to the reviews near the end of Cino's history in which Pasolli speaks of the "homosocial" orientation of its productions. Because the "whole point of camp is to dethrone the serious" (Sontag 62), it became a means of destabilizing high art, often by merging high and low art. And, of course, camp provided a basis for challenging traditional gender constructions; as Sontag says of camp:

What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine . . . Allied to the camp taste for the androynous is something that seems quite different but isn't: a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms. (56)
William Hoffman alludes to camp when he notes that the early Cino productions “can only be described as homosexual in style” (xxiv). The critic Robert Pasolli describes Cino productions as “romps conceived in the spirit of mockery” (39). It is, in fact, these “romps” with their mockery that seem to have been objectionable to Jean Claude van Itallie:

> The atmosphere at Cino’s was never exactly my own style. . . . Cino seemed to me too full of sequins, fishnets, and a general swishy loudness. It was a clique, a family, an atmosphere in a small, dark place, special: fellow gay men, mostly gallantly trying to express their individuality, at least ten years before gay consciousness became an active movement. ("‘War’ and ‘We’" 6)

One of the means through which camp appeared at the Cino was through Cino’s construction of an alternative language: “Caffe Cino was a pool of light toward the end of a dark, empty ally . . . , a mostly male universe in a shoebox room where everyone spoke a secret camp-operatic language” (Gener 5). According to Charles Loubier, “Cino and I invented a language based on how Sicilians speak English. He was American Sicilian. We had this mad tongue going. It was made to titillate each other, but it got out of hand. It became a sort of Frankenstein . . . Ultimately, Joe probably died in it” (8). Thus, for example, because of his weight, Cino referred to himself as “porchesa” (a word derived from the Italian feminine form of “pork”).

But camp was hardly limited to the linguistic play of Cino and his compatriots; rather the atmosphere in general was dominated by camp. Bernard da Costa, a young French journalist who, after attending shows at the Cino, La Mama, and other off-off-Broadway houses, became a driving force behind the development of Parisian café-
theatre, describes the Cino as follows: “They sing opera, they worship knickknacks, glass trinkets, by-gone stars, the eccentric and certainly parodic plays. They serve too-sweet pastries, chantilly cream in coffee, chantilly cream in beer, chantilly cream everywhere” (85). Da Costa then describes a production of Wonder Woman, one of the comic book plays performed at the Cino, noting in particular the gender inversion in the piece: “The author, Harry Koutoukas, dresses his players in prehistoric costumes, inverts the sexes, mixes reality and fiction, memories of television and political allusions, laughs at his own jokes” (85).

Perhaps the most strongly contested of Sontag’s claims about camp is her description of it as a “sensibility” empty of political content: “To emphasize style is to slight content, or to introduce an attitude which is neutral with respect to content. It goes without saying that the camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized—or at least apolitical” (107). Michael Bronski, however, directly challenges Sontag on this issue: “Because it has been used by gay people as a means of communication and survival, camp is political. And because it contains the possibility of structuring and encouraging limitless imagination—to literally create a new reality—it is not only political, but progressive” (43). Camp serves as a form of resistance and of identity construction. In Saint Foucault, David Halperin examines the relationship between power and camp, arguing for a subversive potential to the latter:

Camp, after all, is a form of cultural resistance that is entirely predicated on a shared consciousness of being inescapably situated within a powerful system of social and sexual meanings. Camp resists the power

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69 Quotations from Da Costa’s article are my translations from the French.
of that system from within by means of a parody, exaggeration, amplification, theatricalization, and literalization of normally tacit codes of conduct. (29)

Moe Meyer describes camp as “strategies and tactics of queer parody . . . Camp emerges as a specifically queer parody possessing cultural and ideological analytic potential, taking on new meanings with implications for the emergence of a theory that can provide an oppositional queer critique” (9-10). Through parody, camp “becomes the process whereby the marginalized and disenfranchised advance their own interests by entering alternative signifying codes into discourse by attaching them to existing structures of signification” (11). Or, as Ellen Willis has argued, camp is a means of assuming disguises and trying on different identities (Winkler 37). For the artists at the Cino, the parodic nature of camp, then, offered a means of resistance to, and subversion of, the dominant culture, within the context of the counterculture’s anti-disciplinary politics; it also served as a means of exploring alternate performances of identity.

H. M. Koutoukas, the most successful Cino playwright in using camp to center the marginalized, created in his plays an odd, mad, cluttered world inhabited by the eccentric, the different, the marginal. Thus, the Creature in With Creatures Make My Way recognizes and accepts his uniqueness, choosing to live in a marginal world. Countess Olie Samovitch in Only a Countess May Dance When She’s Crazy, a Historical Camp (in a later revival, “An Almost Historical Camp”) occupies a similar position. She faithfully serves the unseen Dr. Till in a world in which it is difficult to determine which is the crazier, the Countess or the world she inhabits. Everything about the Countess is unstable, indeterminate, packed with multiple meanings/identities.
or with none at all. As Dan Sullivan said in his review of the 1968 revival of the play: *Only a Countess* "is dead serious at the core. Like the lady doing the talking ... it seems to want desperately to make sense, but cannot — which, one imagines, is precisely how it feels to be mad" (41).

Representations of the gay male in plays prior to the 1960s typically take four forms according to William Hoffman: silence (the total invisibility of gay and lesbian characters); false accusation (ostensibly heterosexual characters accused of homosexuality); stereotyping (swishy men, butch women who are often mentally disturbed or evil); and exploitation (sensational use of gay men and lesbians, perhaps for "local color") (Hoffman xix). In contrast to these earlier representations of gay men, productions at the Cino provided a space in which to center the gay male body as an object of desire. Positioning the male body as the object of desire, however, tends to subvert the traditional structure of the theatrical gaze, particularly when that body is framed to be desired by other men. As Laura Mulvey and others have noted, desire originates from (rather than points to) the male. Man is the desiring subject, woman the desired object of the idealized spectator/actor on stage and, through him, of the less ideal(ized) audience. In some Cino productions, then, the male body was subjected to the gaze which it has traditionally generated and controlled.

Many of the plays in which the male body is presented as the object of desire do not overtly structure the desire as homoerotic. Among the earliest plays featuring telephone sex and sadomasochism, William Hoffman's *Thank You, Miss Victoria* (1965) is a one-character piece in which Harry Judson responds by telephone to a
personal advertisement placed by Miss Victoria. Though the play nominally centers heterosexual desire, it foregrounds Judson as both the desired and the controlled object, thereby ultimately challenging the monolithic position of heterosexual desire. Judson is not excited by the prospect of Miss Victoria’s body; rather, it seems to be the very absence of that body—the uniqueness and strangeness of the situation—which intrigues and excites him. After reading several personal advertisements to a friend over the telephone, he discovers the advertisement placed by Miss Victoria: “Oh, Jesus Christ, listen to this. “Aggressive New York business woman will employ male secretary. Experience and accuracy required. Telephone Miss Victoria, Rector 5-1296.” Is that to be believed? Strictly from Krafft-Ebing” (159). When he telephones her, she immediately assumes control of the situation and of Judson’s body, commanding, prohibiting, or permitting him to engage in certain actions: “Yes, it’s sweltering in here. May I open my shirt? (Starts to open shirt. Closes shirt to top.) Thank you for not letting me do what I would like to do” (165). Throughout the play we do not so much see his desire for her as we see her desire for him reflected through his physical and verbal responses. Thus, desire is dislodged from its site within a heterosexual construct to become a free-floating force that washes over his body, structuring him as the sign of the desired object. The absence of the desiring subject (she exists only as a name) allows us to restructure and reassign the desire, particularly since many of the exchanges echo gay master-slave roleplay. Ultimately, his body is completely objectified: “I would like to strip naked for your examination, for your use. I would like to have my disgusting slave’s body naked for your use.... I’d love to come crawling to you like a
dog, with a dog collar on my neck, by which you lead me where you will, guide me, mount me, and drive me like a horse . . . ” (167). Who is to use him? Who is to guide him and mount him? With desire dislodged from a visible subject, could I, as an audience member, not claim that as my desire? Does the play not open a position for transgressing heterosexual desire and for transforming it into homosexual desire?

Through camp and particularly through placing the gay male body on stage, the artists at the Cino began a process of reinterpreting and rewriting space. Bodies exist within space, use and manipulate space in the performance of identity. In essence, we remap, reinvent, and rewrite space to reflect our own interests, beliefs, values, and psychic being (no matter how transitory). But the relationship between self and space is not a unidirectional movement; as Tim Cresswell has argued, “I insist that the social and the spatial are so thoroughly imbued with each other’s presence that their analytical separation quickly becomes a misleading exercise” (11). To “social” we should add “personal,” since the creation of self and the writing of space are coproductive.

We can see the personal/social written into the spatial at Caffe Cino in a number of ways, with its location in Greenwich Village influencing it as it influenced Greenwich Village. Once a haven from the plague and other dangers of New York City, Greenwich Village had earned a reputation as “America’s Paris” by the end of the nineteenth century (Heide and Gilman 1995, 2). By World War I, the area had begun to symbolize a repudiation of traditional American values, a reputation that would increase during the middle of the century into the present. According to Heide and Gilman, sexual freedom and experimentation was nothing new for the Village even in the 1950s.
and 1960s: “The freedom to be who and what you are in terms of one’s sex or sexuality was always a prerogative of Village life” (7). Joe Cino opened his coffeehouse in the heart of this bohemian area, not far from the point at which John Reed, Marcel Duchamp, and John Sloan had declared the Village a free republic and a new Bohemia in 1916. The Cino was within easy walking distance of the future location of the Stonewall Inn, the gay bar made famous during the Christopher Street riots of 1969. In the fifties, the area around Cornelia Street was becoming a well-known cruising area for gay men. The Cino reflected the social and historical nature of the Village. Like the Village itself, the Cino was home to many avant-garde writers and to lesbian and gay persons. As Cornelia Street had been home to a gay bar (the Jungle) in the 1920s, it was home to Caffe Cino in the 1960s.

If the location in the Village helped define Caffe Cino, the Cino helped define the Village. Formerly used as a laundromat, the shoebox-like space of the Cino measured only 18 feet by 30 feet (thus allowing a stage of only 8 feet by 8 feet). The walls quickly became encrusted with clippings and posters: they were “covered with photos and newspaper clippings of movie stars, opera stars, naked and near-naked youths, and glitter scattered over everything” (Costopoulos 354-55). Only a child when he first visited the Cino, Walter Michael Harris describes the coffeehouse in which he, his parents, and his five siblings would perform over the years:

We could see it from the end of the block - twinkle lights and a warm orange glow spilling out into Cornelia Street in the night air. Inside was a world of wonder. The delicious aroma of coffee, the lilt of opera, the strange hissing sound of Joe’s [sic] Cino’s magic espresso machine and millions of colorful twinkle lights gave the place the air of Charlie’s
Chocolate Factory, or Café Society in Paris. The efficient, effeminate waiters deftly maneuvered around the tiny tables, swishing by with giant platters of food and exotic drink. The tiny stage in the middle of the room made us feel right at home. (Harris, “Cino Cuisino” no pagination)

The space, then, became an area in which the Cino regulars could practice identity performance in relative safety, in which effeminate waiters could intermingle with the straight and gay audience, and in which theatre productions could give physical presence to the gay male body. In turn, these performances (both the “real” and the staged) manifested themselves in part by writing onto the space itself, through the photographs of youths adorning the walls, through the glitter (used often in H. M. Koutoukas’s campy shows) covering everything, and through the twinkling lights. As Harris’s reminiscence of the Cino suggests, the world of the Cino spilled out of the confines of 31 Cornelia Street into the Village itself.

These three strategies (representations of marginality, portrayals of the gay body, and the remapping of space) came together through camp to permit new ways of experiencing and performing the self. In many ways, the emergence of sites such as Caffe Cino and areas such as Greenwich Village and San Francisco’s Castro district represent a remapping of the civic body in much the same way that camp, leather, and so forth represent a remapping of the individual body. That the civic and private bodies were being remapped simultaneously seems to destabilize the accepted, neat distinction between the two.

While Caffe Cino influenced both the emergence of the postmodern narrative and the transformation of the gay social identity, it also fundamentally influenced the
direction of theatre in the United States and abroad. Though certain individuals from
the United States such as Eugene O'Neill had attained international popularity,
influential movements had, more often than not, moved from Europe to the United
States rather the reverse. Never had our theatre launched a movement of as great an
international significance, particularly in terms of theatre operation and management.

As cultural domination became a strategy of the Cold War during the sixties, the
arts drew increasing support from various quarters in their effort to assert the economic,
political, moral, and cultural superiority of the United States. Early in the decade, the
Ford Foundation and similar organizations increased their contributions to theatres, and
the National Endowment for the Arts was established in the middle of the decade, all of
which led to a significant increase in the influence of regional theatres (though the Cino
never received support from such organizations). Communities across the country had a
wider variety of locally-controlled theatres than ever before. With the growth of
mainstream theatres in the 1960s and 1970s came also an increase in less traditional
spaces: the Glines, Medusa's Revenge, and Spiderwoman in New York, the Gay Men's
Theatre Collective in San Francisco, and similar theatres around the country.
Undoubtedly, many of those starting such theatres knew little (if anything) about Caffe
Cino, but Merrill Mushroom has suggested that the Cino's influence was felt in various
parts of the country:

The spirit of the Caffe Cino remained with many of us over the years and
was a motivating force in the formation of many similar café/theatres
around the country. The women's coffeehouses in Knoxville, Tennessee,
and in Nashville—both of them started in the 70's—owe their origins to
the Caffe Cino; and even though the Knoxville coffeehouse closed years
ago, the one in Nashville is still going. And even though the beverages are now beer and soft drinks, and most of the performances are by musical artists, the spirit of community is what keeps it all going. For this, thanks to Joe Cino, wherever you are. (Qtd. in Patrick “Caffe Cino: Memories” 18)

Furthermore, the Cino’s influence has been extended by those who worked there.

Lanford Wilson, for example, has spoken of his commitment to the off-off-Broadway of Cino, “the thing to know about off-off Broadway is that it was never a showcase to us. It still isn’t. It’s where we worked, the way we chose to work, and it’s where we work still” (“The Way it Was” 2). As Dixie Gilbert told Robert Patrick,

A painter can paint alone, a dancer can dance alone, but theatre people need others to develop and hone their craft. Caffe Cino was a place where these artists could come together, free to experiment, free to let their talents blossom and mature sans dictates of conventionalism and profit. Joe Cino nurtured this environment and made possible theater that had vitality and passion. We didn’t always exit laughing or feeling comfortable. We always left with a lot to think about because theatre at Cino’s was free to be unsafe. . . . (“Caffe Cino: Memories” 19)

In Patrick’s Kennedy’s Children the character Sparger describes the off-off-Broadway theatre at which he started (clearly based on the Cino)

It was the first place that did that, the first place where we got together and did plays without worrying about whether we were going to be a hit, or get a review, or become a star, or take it to Broadway, or get a grant, or anything else in God’s forsaken gonorrhea-green underworld except whether we wanted to do it. We got away with it by calling it a coffeehouse, but what it was—was a temple.™ (27)

For Patrick (as for many others), Caffe Cino and off-off-Broadway offered a tremendous burst of freedom:

70Patrick’s novel based upon his experiences at the Cino is entitled Temple Slave.

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For the first time a theatre movement began, of any scope or duration, in which theatre was considered the equal of the other arts in creativity and responsibility; never before had theatre existed free of academic, commercial, critical, religious, military, and political restraints. For the first time, a playwright wrote from himself, not attempting to tease money, reputation, or licences from an outside authority. (Frank 420)

Since the end of Caffe Cino, Patrick has devoted much of his energy to keeping alive the memory of Joseph Cino and his small coffeehouse.

Perhaps the most direct descendent of Caffe Cino is the Circle Repertory Theatre Company (1969 to 1996), founded by Marshall Mason, Lanford Wilson, Tanya Berezin, and Rob Thirkield. According Phillip Middleton Williams, “Berezin and Thirkield had met while performing in small theatres such as the Caffe Cino, and it as [sic] at this Greenwich Village coffeehouse that Mason and Wilson first met . . .” (17). Though no sources mention Thirkield’s name in regard to any Cino productions, Berezin is listed as a Cino performer in both Maeterlinck’s Death of Tintagiles (March 1966) and Wilson’s This is the Rill Speaking (April 1967). Actor Michael Warren Powell, who moved to New York with Wilson and appeared in several Cino productions, became director of the Circle Repertory Lab (subsequently, the LAB Theatre Company of which he remains Artistic Director). The first production of Circle Rep was A Practical Ritual to Exorcise Frustration After Five Days of Rain by veteran Cino playwright David Starkweather. Other Cino playwrights to work there include Claris Nelson (A Road Where the Wolves Run in the 1972-73 season) and William Hoffman (As Is in the 1984-85 season). Like Caffe Cino, Circle Rep offered an opportunity for less-experienced playwrights, actors, directors, and other theatre artists.
In one of his essays, Patrick suggests the extent of the international influence of

Caffe Cino:

Joe’s work gave us hundreds of theatres around the world which have influenced literature, films, and music as well. When I arrived unknown in England in 1974, I had but to say, “The Cino,” and people in all the fringe theatres begged to hear about this legendary place. In Canada, France, Holland, Austria, Venezuela, everywhere, I found Cinos thriving. In Capetown I arrived to work at the only theatre in South Africa that admitted all races, and found it playing works by Paul Foster, Lanford Wilson, and Sam Shepard. (“Caffe Cino: Memories” 21)

Central to extending the influence of off-off-Broadway were the tours conducted by

Stewart’s La Mama in 1965 and 1967. In both cases, some of the plays and many of the performers were more closely associated with the Cino than with La Mama. The 1965 tour, for example, included several plays which first appeared at Caffe Cino: Lanford Wilson’s *This is the Rill Speaking*, William Hoffman’s *Thank You Miss Victoria*, and Jean-Claude van Itallie’s *War*. The tour also featured actors who were veterans of Cino productions, including Michael Warren Powell. The plays that toured in 1967 again included Wilson’s *This is the Rill Speaking*, with actors in various casts including Cino performers such as Victor Lipari, Marie-Claire Charba, Claris [Nelson] Erickson, and Jacque Lynn Colton. Ingmer Bjorksten notes the importance of La Mama’s tours:

The last visit was in the fall of 1965 and hardly anybody knew anything about them either before they came or while they were here. Only after they had left Stockholm did they seem to become established as prophets from a new land of theatre. But since then the news of off-off-Broadway, in particular, La Mama, the Caffe Cino, and the Open Theatre, has become important in Swedish theatre magazines and TV and radio reports. (Bjorksten 18)

Thus, heavily influenced by Cino herself, Stewart helped extend the Cino’s influence.
The influence of off-off-Broadway on international theatre came not only through those instances in which Stewart and others took theatre abroad, but also through visits to New York by persons from other countries who later borrowed from off-off-Broadway. An important figure in London’s fringe theatre, Roland Rees traveled to New York to pursue academic research. He discovered an exciting theatrical and cultural scene that changed the direction of his life:

In 1965, America, and New York in particular, was the place where major cultural and artistic upheavals were happening. Experiments in film, theatre, the visual arts, contemporary music and the fusion of these forms . . . the Feminist movement, and experiments in collective and personal life styles, all made a lasting impact during my two years in that city. The energy of New York taught me that you can step out of tradition, start your own and “Go for it!” I did not need much nudging to give up my academic future and start work in theatre. (16)

When he returned to London two years later, he found that the spirit of off-off-Broadway had just begun to appear in London: “New York had pioneered and London was to follow” (19). Influenced by his experiences in New York, Rees co-founded the Foco Novo company in 1972.

Another means through which the influence of off-off-Broadway spread to England was through artists who traveled from the United States. As Rees notes: “If much of the inspiration for the work was American, so were many of the actors, directors and writers. Whether it was for reasons of avoiding the draft or the atmosphere of America . . . , there were lots of American actors and directors in London” (21). Among those who traveled from the United States to London was Charles
Marowitz who co-founded The Open Space Theatre and London Traverse Theatre.

According to Marowitz,

\[\ldots\] Caffe Cino produce[d] a kind of theatrical fare which was new to New York—plays by marginal types, mavericks, and non-belongers that made up the Greenwich Community of the late 50's and early 60's. The new ambiance spawned a new kind of play; not only a new way of experiencing a play, but material which reflected experience peculiar to the denizens of the world that created it. So Cino has two great claims to fame: it created a place and it created an oeuvre. There are innumerable theatres that are part of its progeny—in England, the King’s Head, The Bush, the Traverse Theatre Club, the Arts Lab in Covent Garden, and virtually all the fringe theatres that combine playgoing and dining. (Qtd. in Patrick, “Caffe Cino: Memories” 18)

Among the figures influenced by Caffe Cino was Bernard da Costa. Fresh from Bordeaux in the mid 1960s, da Costa attempted to make his mark as a journalist and playwright, having arrived in Paris with several plays that he thought would help him move into the city’s artistic and literary circles. He quickly discovered, however, that few opportunities existed for a beginning playwright. Thus, as Pierre Merle notes, “In the end and as a last resort, one lone solution presented itself to him: to draw inspiration from what had been happening in New York for sometime already (and with a certain success), off-off-Broadway, and to create shows on the margin” (9). Merle posits da Costa’s reasoning as follows: “If there are no theatres ready to welcome plays by new authors, there will be proprietors of cafes (and of cafes there is no shortage) which will accept them, although not officially licensed to present performances, to let us play in a corner of their establishment” (9). Thus, on February 26, 1966, on Raspail Boulevard in

\[\text{\footnotesize 71 All quotations from Merle’s Le Café Theatre are my translation from the original French.}\]

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Paris, Le Royal Café began offering works first by Philippe Adriene and, only later, by da Costa.

In addition to introducing the off-off-Broadway’s management and production techniques to Paris, da Costa helped introduce many of the names from New York’s youngest theatrical movement. In the Parisian periodical Réalités, da Costa published an article on off-off-Broadway, with virtually all of his attention focused on La Mama and the Cino. Among the works he discusses from Caffe Cino are The Secret of Taboo Mountain and Why Hanna’s Skirt Won’t Stay Down.

Thus, either directly or indirectly, Caffe Cino influenced theatre in the United States and in other countries, in part by allowing previously taboo topics onto the stage (such as homosexuality and sado-masochism), in part by exploring alternative production styles (notably camp), and in part by pioneering a unique management style that allowed playwrights, directors, and performers freedom to explore their own voices. According to actress Shirley Stoler, “The Cino was a place where you were not only encouraged, you were required, to express every bit of madness you ever had” (qtd. in Feingold, “Caffe Cino, 20 Years” 50). Perhaps the greatest freedom that Cino offered his artists was that of taking risks, whether relating to subject matter, production style, or amateur players. Most important of all, Cino artists were allowed to risk failure. Budgets for shows were minuscule and often supplied by the director or playwright. Claris Nelson’s The Clown, one of the most expensive Cino productions, cost just over $300; for many shows, the total cost was equal only to the coffee and pastries that Joe

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Cino often gave the cast. Freed from financial constraints, directors and playwrights could focus on aesthetics. According to Randy Gener,

The random logic of creativity ruled. Folks were free to succeed or screw up because they weren’t worried about economic risk and compromise. Magnanimous to the worthy and the worthless, Cino brought to bear Mother Teresa instincts: he fed people . . . he provided space and nifty lighting equipment, he scheduled dates for your next one-act. It’s not written yet? That’s okay. “Do what you have to do” was his mantra. After weeks of trying, still no cigar? No problem. Neil Flanagan will read and perform comic books; they only cost 12 cents. *Finally* the fucking play is done, but there’s not a single sonuvabitch in the house! Hey, man, cool it. We’ll do it for the room, for the experience of *doing* it. Joe Cino put on a show without paperwork, subsidies, or corporate grants. He believed in no aesthetic theories, no movements, no pressure. (5)

In addition to the inexpensive productions, costs at the coffeehouse were minimal since Joe Cino required little for his livelihood: “Material things didn’t mean a goddam thing to Joe. His waiters always made more than he did” (Charles Loubier, qtd. in Feingold, “Caffe Cino, 20 Years” 51).

Perhaps Mary Boylan and Robert Patrick are correct when they suggest that Cino’s suicide might have been influenced by the fact that no one was available for him when he needed them. Yet more than three decades after his death, the survivors of Caffe Cino remain remarkably devoted to his memory. Ellen Stewart acknowledges his pioneering role in American theatre; major playwrights such as Lanford Wilson acknowledge their debt to him and to the off-off-Broadway movement to which he contributed so heavily; numerous actors and directors speak of the importance of Caffe Cino to their professional development. Each year on November 20, the date of Cino’s birth, and on April 2, the date of his death as well as Jonathan Torrey’s birth, a small
group gathers in a coffeehouse near the former location of Caffe Cino to remember the short, fat, Italian who brought them together. The group also gathers periodically to mourn the death of one of their members, as they did during the summer of 1999 at the Cornelia Street Café (next door to the old Cino) to acknowledge the death of Ron Link. Sadly, such deaths have become all too frequent in recent years.

By the time that the doors of Caffe Cino closed for the final time, the small coffeehouse had become one of the most recognized off-off-Broadway theatres, with productions of Cino shows having appeared throughout the United States and much of Europe. It contributed to the reinvigoration of the small theatre movement and (directly or indirectly) served as a model for numerous theatres in the United States and around the world—particularly theatres focusing on issues regarding women, gays/lesbians, and persons of color. Only weeks before the Caffe closed, the United States Overseas Information Agency sent a request to the coffeehouse asking permission to film it as part of a documentary on our “cultural assets and the freedom of the Arts in our democracy” (“Caffe Cino Closed” 1).
Works Cited

Books


Buffalo City Directory. (Clipping supplied by Buffalo and Erie County Public Library; no additional bibliographic information given), 1931.


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Nevada Gaming Commission, State Gaming Control Board. List of Excluded Person.


**Dissertations and Theses**


**Articles in Periodicals**


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Boylan, Mary. “Take the IND to 4th Street.” *Other Stages* 19 April 1979: 3.


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—. “Nudity on Stage in Greenwich Village.” *Nude and Natural*: 46-47 (clipping provided by author; no additional bibliographical information available).


—. “The Other Brick Road.” *Other Stages* 08 February 1979: 3+.

"Where Gay Plays Began." 26-27 (clipping provided by author; no additional bibliographical information available).


---In "Theatre Journal," Smith typically reviewed three or more plays. The bibliographical entry on refers to those produced at Caffe Cino.

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van Itallie, Jean Claude. "‘War’ and ‘We’." *Other Stages* 17 May 1979: 6.


**Plays**


---. “West of the Moon.” Unpublished play typescript provided by the author.


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---. “Neon in the Night.” Unpublished play typescript provided by the author.

---. “The Rue Garden.” Unpublished play typescript provided by the author.


---. “Sex is Between Two People.” Unpublished play typescript provided by author.


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Interviews


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Birimisa, George. Telephone interview. 12 April 2000.


Brooks, Donald. Personal interview. 11 July 1999.

Carmines, Al. Personal interview. 05 July 1999.


Cranefield, Paul. Telephone interview. 12 April 2000.

Dagny, Robert. Telephone interview. 10 September 2000.

Dahdah, Robert. Personal interview. 24 November 1998.\(^\text{73}\)

Davies, Joseph. Telephone interview. 04 April 2000.

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DeSeta, Donna. Personal interview. 22 July 1999.


---. Personal interview. 19 July 1999.

Economou, George. Telephone interview. 18 April 2000.

Gilman, John. Personal interview. 18 December 1997.\(^\text{74}\)

---. Personal interview. 22 June 1998.

---. Personal interview. 20 November 1998.

---. Personal interview. 22 November 1998.

\(^\text{73}\)This was the first of many formal and informal interviews with Dahdah.

\(^\text{74}\)This was the first of many formal and informal interviews with Gilman.
Greene, Sam. Telephone interview. 11 September 2000.

Haimsohn, George. Telephone interview. 05 April 2000.

Hanft, Helen. Personal interview. 30 November 1998.

Harris, Ann. Personal interview. 20 November 1998.\(^7^5\)

Heide, Robert. Personal interview. 18 December 1997.\(^7^6\)

---. Personal interview. 22 June 1998.

---. Personal interview. 20 November 1998.

---. Personal interview. 22 November 1998.

---. Personal interview. 13 July 1999.


Kerbs, Charles. Personal interview. 11 September 2000.

---. Personal interview. 02 June 1999.

Latimer, Dolores Cino. 08 March 2000.


Lovullo, Angelo. Personal interview. 22 July 1999.

---. Telephone interview. 18 April 2000.

Mooney, Phoebe. Telephone interview. 17 November 1998.

---

\(^7^5\)This was the first of several formal and informal interviews with Harris, one of which included her husband, George, and their three daughters.

\(^7^6\)This was the first of many formal and informal interviews with Heide.

Nelson, Claris. Telephone interview. 02 June 2000.

Oberley, Charlet. Personal interview. 22 July 1999.


---. Telephone interview. 11 December 1999.


Sickinger, Bob. Telephone interview. 09 April 2000.

Silvay, Lucy. Telephone interview. 29 April 2000.

Sklar, Roberta. Telephone interview. 21 April 2000.

Smith, Michael. Telephone interview. 09 April 2000.

Starkweather, David. Personal interview. 22 November 1998.

Stewart, Ellen. Personal interview. 20 November 1998

Strauss, Stacy. Telephone interview. 04 April 2000.

Switkes, Willy. Personal interview. 05 July 1999.

Talbot, Lise Beth. Personal interview. 13 July 1999.

Torrey, Jane Wheelwright. Telephone interview.


Whitt, Dale. Telephone interview. 03 April 2000.

Wilson, Doric. Personal interview. 25 November 1998.

Wilson, Lanford. Personal interview. 29 June 1999

^This was the first of several formal and informal interviews with Nelson.

^This was the first of several formal and informal interviews with Patrick.

Wray, Phoebe. Telephone interview. 09 April 2000.
Addendum: Details of Cino Productions

The following plays can not be dated:

*An Evening of Comedy with Larry Johnson Assisted by Joe Mitchell* (most likely 1960 or 1961 according to Johnson).

*Moon for the Misbegotten* directed by Richard Nesbitt with Larry Johnson; Nesbitt’s thesis production for the graduate program at Hunter (interview of Johnson).

Kaufman’s *If Men Played Cards as Women Do* with Fred Willard and Dean Selmier (interview of Johnson); probably 07/01/62, but difficult to determine because of the confusion in the ads in *Village Voice*.

Unknown work in which a professional football star dressed in drag and tore a telephone book in half while delivering a monologue (probably Spring 1961) according to Wilson’s “Everything But the Dates.”

*Civil War* a performance piece by Matt Baylor about the Civil War first performed at Caffe Cino in April 1965.

*Tidy Passions* by H. M. Koutoukas, summer of 1965; though the New York Public Library lists it among the Koutoukas plays done at the Cino, *Tidy Passions, or Kill, Kaleidoscope, Kill* may not have been done in its entirety there. The published script gives the first place of performance as La Mama Experimental Theatre Club; in discussing Charles Stanley’s reprise of the Harlow role for a scene used in a replacement show at Caffe Cino, Michael Smith notes that the play was done during the summer of 1965 but does not give a location (*Village Voice*, April 7, 1966, 27).

According to the program for the 1985 Caffe Cino Exhibit sponsored by the New York Public Library, the following plays are included in the list of works performed at the Cino:

Soren Agenoux’s *Speak, Parrott* on 24 November 1966

Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata* in 1960

Mary Boylan and Robert Dahdah’s *A Christmas Show* on 24 December 1964
Truman Capote’s *A Christmas Memory* on 7 February 1959

John Chace’s adaptation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *The Devil and the Good Lord* in May 1960

John Chace’s adaptation of Felicien Marceau’s *The Egg* on 1 October 1960

Paddy Chayefsky’s *The Mother* in 1960

Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* in 1961

The Comic Book Production *Archie and his Friends* in 1967

The Comic Book Production *The Secret of Taboo Mountain* incorrectly dated as 8 December 1966

The Comic Book Production *Wonder Woman* in 1967

E. T. Conlin’s *Minnie Field* on 12 April 1962

Noel Coward’s *Blithe Spirit* in 1961

Noel Coward’s *The Cat’s Cradle* 1960

Noel Coward’s *Fumed Oak* 14 March 1963

T. S. Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party* in 1962

T. S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1962

T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in 1962

Tom Eyen’s *Frustrata* on 9 March 1964 (probably incorrect)

Jean Genet’s *The Maids* in July 1961 (the Library probably erred in the date of the work since it seems to have been performed in February 1962)

Lady Gregory’s *Glittering Gates* in 1964 (perhaps a mistaken reference to Lord Dunsany’s *The Glittering Gate*)

A Benchley Monologue (date unknown, though *The Treasurer’s Report* was performed at one of the benefits in 1965 and again as part of the replacement show for *Death of Tintagiles* in March 1966)
Wandering (no further information given); see 04/07/66 in the table

Vorspiel Nach Marienstein with or by John Dodd, Ondine, and Michael Smith on 1 June 1967

James Howard’s Flyspray in the summer of 1960

William Inge’s The Tiny Closet in 1961

Alan Lysander James’s Sunflower Lily and Green Carnation on 12 October 1966

H. M. Koutoukas’s Cause Celebre in 1966

H. M. Koutoukas’s Michael Touched Me in 1967

H. M. Koutoukas’s View From Sorrentino (date unknown)

Larry Loonin’s Our First Gobi Fossils in summer 1965

Garcia Lorca’s The House of Bernarda Alba in 1962

Edgar Lee Masters Spoon River Anthology in September 1966

Moliere’s The Affected Young Ladies in 1961

Claris Nelson’s The Girl on the BBC in 1965

Claris Nelson’s A Road Where Wolves Run in 1965

Abe Paconofsky’s Caldwell Corners in 1961

Abe Paconofsky’s The Tycoon in 1960

Pagoon’s Tales of Thiezes on 14 October 196? (year unknown)

Robert Patrick’s Cornered in January 1968

Robert Patrick’s Halloween Hermit on 31 October 1966

Harold Pinter’s The Dumbwaiter in 1962

Racine’s Phaedra in 1962
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. D. Salinger's <em>Just Before the War with the Eskimos</em></td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. D. Salinger's <em>Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes</em></td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenes from Shakespeare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas's <em>Three Kinds of Murder</em></td>
<td>196?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(year unknown)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Stephenson’s <em>Heart of Gold</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Stock’s adaptation of Eudora Welty’s *Why I Live at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the P.O.*</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown author’s <em>Goodbye Mama</em></td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar Wilde’s <em>The Little Prince</em></td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar Wilde’s <em>The Picture of Dorian Gray</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornton Wilder’s <em>The Happy Journey</em></td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>Camino Real</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>The Dark Room</em> in winter 1960 or</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring 1961</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>Field of Blue Children</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>The Glass Menagerie</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>In the Winter of Cities</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>The Last of My Solid Gold Watches</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Williams’s <em>The Rose Tattoo</em></td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes to the table:

"VW Date" refers to the publication date of the *Village Voice*.

"DOW" refers to the day of the week.
When "same" is entered in a row, all information not otherwise provided is the same as that of the prior week.

When more than one play was performed on any given date, the titles and other information are typically listed on separate rows.
Table 3. Performances at Caffe Cino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>DOW</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Playwright</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/17/60</td>
<td>02/21/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Madwoman of Chaillot</td>
<td>Jean Giraudoux</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This Property is Condemmed</td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/24/60</td>
<td>02/28/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>No Exit</td>
<td>Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td></td>
<td>Al Campisi, Regina Oliver, Margaret McDonagle</td>
<td>&quot;Free&quot; (p. 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/02/60</td>
<td>03/06/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/09/60</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/16/60</td>
<td>03/20/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>A Phoenix Too Frequent</td>
<td>Christopher Fry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presented by the Caffe Cino Repertory Players</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/21/60</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Same</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IV 'Date</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>DOW</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Playwright</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/23/60</td>
<td>03/29/60</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Poetry Reading</td>
<td>Poets: George Economou, Armand Schwerner</td>
<td>Economou, Schwerner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/30/60</td>
<td>04/03/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td><em>And the Dead Cry Lonely</em></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Described as an original Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/05/60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Poetry Reading</td>
<td>Poets: David Antin, Jerome Rothenberg</td>
<td>Antin, Rothenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/06/60</td>
<td>04/10/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td><em>The Boor</em></td>
<td>Anton Chekhov</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>04/11/60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>04/12/60</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>Reading of Works in Translation (Poetry Reading)</td>
<td>Breton, Claudel, Michaux</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>04/13/60</td>
<td>04/17/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td><em>The Land of Heart's Desire</em></td>
<td>William Butler Yeats</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>04/19/60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Poetry Reading</td>
<td>Robert Kelly, Frank Kuenstler</td>
<td>Kelly, Kuenstler</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/20/60</td>
<td>04/24/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td><em>Aria di Capo</em></td>
<td>Edna St. Vincent Millay</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/25/60</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/27/60</td>
<td>05/01/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Scenes</td>
<td>Shaw, Rostand, Shakespeare</td>
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<td>05/02/60</td>
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<td>9:00</td>
<td>Same</td>
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(table continued)

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Title</th>
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<th>Director</th>
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<td>Poetry Reading</td>
<td>Jack Hirschman</td>
<td>Hirschman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/11/60</td>
<td>05/15/60</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Tea &amp; Sympathy</td>
<td>Robert Woodruff</td>
<td></td>
<td>Probably Matt Baylor and Peter Ratray (according to interview with Baylor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/16/60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Poetry Reading</td>
<td>Robert Kelly,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kelly, Economou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>George Economou</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/18/60</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/25/60</td>
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<td>Wed.</td>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Bach's Chromatic Fugues</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>06/01/60</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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*Begin Café Dramas List in the Village Voice*
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<td>Robert</td>
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<td><em>And He Made a Her</em></td>
<td>Doric Wilson</td>
<td>Paxton Whitehead#</td>
<td>Lary (sic) Neil Clayton, Alan Zamp (replaced by Whitehead), Karl Schenzer, Gary Filsinger, Jane Lowry#</td>
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<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td>Probably Stoler#</td>
<td>Wilson in Other Stages</td>
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<td><em>The Man with a Flower in His Mouth</em></td>
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<td>“Cafes &amp; Coffeehouses” replaces “Nightlife” as section of Village Voice</td>
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<td><em>Two for Shakespeare</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Antigone</em></td>
<td>Jean Anouilh</td>
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<td><em>I Rise in Flames, Cried the Phoenix</em></td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td>Richard Nesbitt</td>
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<td>10/19/61</td>
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<td>Saturday to unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Deathwatch</em></td>
<td>Jean Genet</td>
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<td><em>My Side of the Matter</em></td>
<td>Truman Capote</td>
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<td>DOW</td>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>Playwright</td>
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<td>11/23/61</td>
<td>11/19-12/02/61#</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Pretty People</td>
<td>Doric Wilson</td>
<td>Doric Wilson</td>
<td>Suzanne Smith, Robert Corpora, Nancy Wilder, Thomas Lawrence, Patricia Dillon</td>
<td>#Dates Taken from Program; Set John India; Lights Bill Mitchell; Electricians John Dodd, Jonathan Torrey; Asst Director Joan Mackland</td>
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<td>11/30/61</td>
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<td>Through Saturday</td>
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<td>Rose Hennessey</td>
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<td>12/07/61</td>
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<td>The Candles</td>
<td>Rose Hennessey</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/21/61</td>
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<td>Write the Real Mavis Pugh Please (A Myopic Fable)</td>
<td>Bill Ashley, Jerry Kahn</td>
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<td>12/28/61</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/18/62</td>
<td>To Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Purgatory</td>
<td>William Butler Yeats</td>
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<td>The Glittering Gate</td>
<td>Lord Dunsany</td>
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<td>01/25/62</td>
<td>01/28-02/03/62#</td>
<td>Sunday to Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alice in Wonderland</td>
<td>Adapted by Phoebe Mooney</td>
<td>Phoebe Mooney</td>
<td>Jerry Ames, Keith Winters, Lois Zetter, Phoebe Mooney</td>
<td>#per review; 102nd consecutive week; costumed by Mooney; review indicates Genet's The Maids for next week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>DOW</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Playwright</td>
<td>Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/01/62</td>
<td>02/04/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>9:30   11:30</td>
<td><em>The Human Voice</em></td>
<td>Cocteau</td>
<td>Joseph Liberman</td>
<td>Elizabeth Shanklin as entire cast</td>
<td>From here on out will only indicate last day if it is shown in text (most likely a Saturday until the production schedule changes to Tuesday through Sunday)</td>
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<td>02/08/62</td>
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<td>Perhaps <em>The Human Voice</em> or Genet's <em>The Maids</em></td>
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<td>02/15/62</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>A Village Wooing</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>G. B. Shaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/22/62</td>
<td>02/25/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repertory of Plays</td>
<td>Moliere, Cervantes, &amp; others</td>
<td>Earl Dossey</td>
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<td>03/01/62</td>
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<td>04/05/62</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/12/62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 11:00 &amp; 12:30 Fri/ Sat</td>
<td><em>Apollo de Bellac</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jean Giraudoux</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/19/62</td>
<td>Religious Accordion Music</td>
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<td>04/22-04/28/62</td>
<td>Apollo de Bellac</td>
<td>Jean Giraudoux</td>
<td>John Chace</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/29/62</td>
<td>Mannikins</td>
<td>Jerry Caruana</td>
<td>Richard Nesbitt#</td>
<td>Joan Peters, Alan Zampese, Jed Harrison</td>
<td># from program for Mannikins; unless otherwise noted, the performance times remain the same</td>
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<td>05/03/62</td>
<td>Impromptu</td>
<td>Tad Mosel</td>
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<td>05/10/62</td>
<td>I'm in Love with W.S.</td>
<td>Michael Locascio</td>
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<td>05/17/62</td>
<td>Scenes from Bald Soprano and Jack</td>
<td>Eugene Ionesco</td>
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<td>05/24/62</td>
<td>Candide (Stolen from Voltaire)</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>Lady of Larkspur Lotion</td>
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<td>06/14/62</td>
<td>All My Saints</td>
<td>Tad Mosel</td>
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<td>06/21/62</td>
<td>As We Were</td>
<td>Arthur Adamov</td>
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<td>OOB listing shows My Lost Saint directed by Andy Milligan; Dates are unclear</td>
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<td>06/28/62</td>
<td>As We Were</td>
<td>Gary Filsinger</td>
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<td>No ad in Cafes; Dates are unclear</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/05/62</td>
<td>07/08/62</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptation of <em>One Arm</em></td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td>Andy Milligan</td>
<td>George S. Kaufman's <em>If Men Played Cards as Women Do</em> ends on 07/07; OOB listing <em>As We Were</em> but not <em>If Men...</em></td>
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<td>07/12/62</td>
<td>07/15/62</td>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td><em>Talk to Me Like the Rain</em></td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td>Jack di Lucia</td>
<td>Wallace Androchuk, Elizabeth Shanklin</td>
<td>Review: &quot;16 performances presented different play every week for 2½ years&quot;</td>
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<td>07/19/62</td>
<td>07/22/62</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Episode</em></td>
<td>Ron Colby</td>
<td>Ron Colby</td>
<td>Joseph Davies</td>
<td>Only <em>Talk to Me</em> in OOB listings</td>
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<td>08/02/62</td>
<td>08/05/62</td>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td><em>A Country Day in the Quiet</em> (an original play)</td>
<td>&quot;Nobody at All# based on Schnitzler</td>
<td>Jesse Bigelow</td>
<td>Maggie Rogers, Anthony Osnato</td>
<td>#qtd from review 8/16</td>
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<td><em>On a Park Bench</em></td>
<td>P. Winthrop Clark</td>
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<td>08/16/62</td>
<td>08/19/62</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Escurial</em></td>
<td>Michel de Ghelderode</td>
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<td>08/23/62</td>
<td>08/26/62</td>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td><em>The Chairs</em></td>
<td>Eugene Ionesco</td>
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<td>No OOB or Café listing; ad on back page</td>
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<td>08/30/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>A Perfect Analysis Given by a Parrot</em></td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Williams</td>
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<td>OOB listings for 9/6 The Perfect Analysis as Told by a Parrot</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>Two Executioners</em></td>
<td>Fernando</td>
<td>Arrabal</td>
<td>Andy Milligan</td>
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<td>09/13/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>'I'gnite</em></td>
<td>Ronald Colby</td>
<td>Ronald Colby</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/20/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>The Clown</em></td>
<td>Cloris Nelson</td>
<td>Marshall Mason</td>
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<td>09/27/62</td>
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<td>Perfect Analysis playing at La Mama Thurs-Sat</td>
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<td>10/04/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>A Phoenix Too Frequent</em></td>
<td>Christopher Fry</td>
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<td>La Mama: Pagoon play (title listed differently) directed by Milligan</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/11/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>Among Dummies</em></td>
<td>Pagoon</td>
<td>Andy Milligan</td>
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<td><em>IV</em> begins breaking OOB listings into Theatres, Cafes, etc.</td>
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<td>10/18/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>Wit and Humor of Oscar Wilde</em></td>
<td>Alan James</td>
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<td>listing for A Depressing Evening with Willy Switkes at Café Manzini</td>
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<td>10/25/62</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ave A Banahmah</em></td>
<td></td>
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<td>per Café ad on 11/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/01/62</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>Sweeney Agonistes</em></td>
<td>Presumably T. S. Eliot</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Chacc directs evening of modern drama at La Mama</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/08/62</td>
<td></td>
<td>An original one act</td>
<td>Jerry Caruana</td>
<td>Richard Nesbitt</td>
<td>Warren Miller, John(?) Jahoda, Paula de Gaetano, Allan Zampese#</td>
<td>Title: My Chair, My Table per café listing 11/15; lights: John P. Dodd# (actor and lighting info from program)</td>
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<td>11/15/62</td>
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<td>Melancholia (an original one act)</td>
<td>Jerry Caruana</td>
<td>Richard Nesbitt#</td>
<td>Leonard Raymond, Paula de Gaetano, Warren Miller, Joan Jahoda#</td>
<td>#from program for Melancholia; lighting by John P. Dodd</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/22/62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medea (new play)</td>
<td>Claris Nelson</td>
<td>Marshal Mason</td>
<td>Caryn Kent</td>
<td>La Mama starts this week/next week ad like Cino</td>
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<td>11/29/62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oscar Revisited: The Life of O.W.</td>
<td>Alan James</td>
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<td>Ad for 11/29 says “New every Sunday” but does not list the new show; title taken from ad for 12/6 gives</td>
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<td>12/06/62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Swan Song</td>
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<td>Chekhov</td>
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<td>12/13/62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Slight Ache</td>
<td>Harold Pinter</td>
<td>Ira Zuckerman</td>
<td></td>
<td>May have been a replacement? OOB says closes 12/15; Café says opens 12/16; Review indicates that it closed 12/22</td>
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<td>Laugh with Leacock- A Musicaless Review</td>
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<td>Ad indicates that a Revue directed by Ira Zuckerman plays through Saturday</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/27/62</td>
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<td>Once Upon an Ugly</td>
<td>A. A. Milne</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
<td></td>
<td>No listing for 12/27; info taken from 1/3/63; runs thru Saturday</td>
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<td>01/03/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Lesson</td>
<td>Eugene Ionesco</td>
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<td>Closing date changed to Sunday</td>
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<td>01/10/63</td>
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<td>1/10 ad does not list opening show; 1/17 does not list current show; Bathsheba directed by Davies at La Mama</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/17/63</td>
<td>01/20/63</td>
<td>Morning After</td>
<td>Lee Kalcenim</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phillip Baker Halls, Amy Miles</td>
<td>Note that it opens Sunday; review in VV</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/24/63</td>
<td>01/27/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/31/63</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/07/63</td>
<td>02/10/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>02/14/63</td>
<td>02/17/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/21/63</td>
<td>02/24/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/28/63</td>
<td>03/03/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>03/07/63</td>
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<td>The Office</td>
<td>Barbara Guest</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/14/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Still Life</td>
<td>Noel Coward</td>
<td>Edward Maxey</td>
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<tr>
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<td>So Who's Afraid of Edward Albee</td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/28/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crime in the Streets</td>
<td>Reginald Rose</td>
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<td>03/31/63</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/04/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>If I had a Heart</td>
<td>Jerry Caruana</td>
<td>Richard Nesbitt</td>
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<td>04/07/63</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/11/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>The 12-lb Look</td>
<td>James M. Barrie</td>
<td>Richard Smithies</td>
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<td>04/14/63</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/18/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outstanding New Production Gala Premier (04/25 ad: &quot;By Popular demand, 2 One-act plays by Joe Cino and Neal Flanagan&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td>La Mama advertises 1 full-length play (by Bruce Kessler)</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/25/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Dock Brief</td>
<td>John Mortimer</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/02/63</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Exit</td>
<td>Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Joe Cino</td>
<td>Liz Shanklin, Molitta Reagan, Richard Smithies, Dennis Curran</td>
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<td>05/05/63</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/09/63</td>
<td>05/12/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>For Esme with Love and Squalor</em></td>
<td>J. D. Salinger; attributed solely to Sydney Schubert Walter (whose name is elsewhere spelled Sydney Schubert Walter) by the New York Public Library</td>
<td>Sydney Schubert Walter</td>
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<td>05/16/63</td>
<td>05/19/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptation of <em>As You Like It</em></td>
<td>Joe Cino</td>
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<td>05/23/63</td>
<td>05/26/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The LOVE Affair</em></td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
<td>Robert Dagny</td>
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<td>05/30/63</td>
<td>06/02/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>An Anthology of Love</em></td>
<td>Peter Symcox</td>
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<td>06/06/63</td>
<td>06/09/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Every Bomb Shelter Has One</em></td>
<td>Glenn Barrett</td>
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<td>06/13/63</td>
<td>06/16/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Lesson</em></td>
<td>Eugene Ionesco</td>
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<td>06/20/63</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I Like It</em></td>
<td>Michael Smith</td>
<td>Denis Deegan</td>
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<td>06/27/63</td>
<td>06/30/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>To the Angels on Sunday</em></td>
<td>Jim Perkinson</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>DOW</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/04/63</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Julia (Note Spelling with “a”)</td>
<td>adapted from Strindberg (by Stanley Wallace according to the New York Public Library)</td>
<td>Joe Cino</td>
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<td>07/04/63</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/11/63</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>07/18/63</td>
<td>07/21/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Petrified Man</td>
<td>Eudora Welty</td>
<td>Leigh Dean</td>
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<td>07/25/63</td>
<td>07/28/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Readings from Truman Capote</td>
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<td>Jim Perkinson</td>
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<td>08/01/63</td>
<td>08/04/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedtime Story</td>
<td>Sean O'Casey</td>
<td>Richard Smithies</td>
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<td>08/08/63</td>
<td>08/11/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>A Recollection of Cabbage Roses</td>
<td>Jim Perkinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/15/63</td>
<td>08/18/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Weak Spot: A Satirical Comedy</td>
<td>Jan Kelly</td>
<td>Tony Osnato</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/22/63</td>
<td>08/25/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>So Long at the Fair</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Glenn Dubose</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/29/63</td>
<td>09/01/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Love and Vexations: A Masque and The Masters: A Curtain Raiser</td>
<td>Tom O'Horgan</td>
<td>Tom O'Horgan</td>
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(table continued)

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<th>1/T Date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>DOW</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Playwright</th>
<th>Director</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09/12/63</td>
<td>09/15/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hurrah for the Bridge</td>
<td>Paul Foster</td>
<td>Sydney Schubert, Walter</td>
<td>Paul Boesing, Judith L’Heureu, Edward Lader, Scott Micance, Keith Carey, David Spielberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/19/63</td>
<td>09/22/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Love and Variations: A Masque</td>
<td>Tom O’Horgan</td>
<td>Tom O’Horgan</td>
<td>Margaret Meigs, Raymond Dodd, Robert Dangy, Don Madia</td>
<td>costumes by Jim Feliciana; lights by John Dodd</td>
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<td>09/26/63</td>
<td>09/29/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Didelum Algii, A Fenage</td>
<td>John Dunn</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>Hurrah for the Bridge is at La Mama</td>
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<td>10/03/63</td>
<td>10/06/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Party for a Divorce</td>
<td>Lee Kalcheim</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>Confusing period; the ad for 10/10 shows The Fall playing during this time period</td>
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<td>10/10/63</td>
<td>10/13/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flywheel</td>
<td>Kelly Davis</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>10/17/63</td>
<td>10/20/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry-Henrietta</td>
<td>G. Roy Levin</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>10/24/63</td>
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<td>Before Breakfast</td>
<td>G. Roy Levin</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>10/31/63</td>
<td>11/03/63</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Untitled Play</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Glenn Dubose</td>
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<td>DOW</td>
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<td>11/07/63</td>
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<td>Confusing period; there is the untitled play announced in prior week; the ad for this week shows a Lorca piece playing thru Sunday; 11/14 shows the Salinger piece; opens at 7:30 pm</td>
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<td>11/14/63</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>Ron Colby</td>
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<td>Joseph Davies</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/05/63</td>
<td>12/03/63</td>
<td>Tuesday to Sunday</td>
<td>Eugenia Wore an Evening Gown</td>
<td>David Mueller</td>
<td>Walter L. Brown</td>
<td>Walter L. Brown</td>
<td>New Production opens Sunday per OOB list; Café listing says Eugenia opens 12/03, Tuesday</td>
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<td>12/12/63</td>
<td>12/10/63</td>
<td>Tuesday to Sunday</td>
<td>A New Place</td>
<td>Ross Alexander</td>
<td>John Thompson</td>
<td>John Thompson</td>
<td>New Production Opens Tuesday; open 5pm to 5am</td>
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<td>12/26/63</td>
<td>12/25/63</td>
<td>Wed. to Sunday</td>
<td>The Flight Into Egypt</td>
<td>Roberta Sklar</td>
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<td>Roberta Sklar</td>
<td>No show Christmas Eve</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Playwright</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/02/64</td>
<td>12/31/63</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guitarists Paula Ballan and Ron Rosoff</td>
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<td>Open 7 days from 5pm to 5am; with only occasional exceptions, the weekly production schedule remains Tuesday through Sunday</td>
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<td>01/03/64</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>no ad</td>
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<td>Pantagleize by Ghelderode directed by Loone and An Old Tune by Peter Fledman were at Judson</td>
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<td>01/16/64</td>
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<td>Home Free and No Trespassing</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>Through 1/26, except 1/20 (Monday); the two plays were performed in alternation with each other</td>
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<td>Home Free and No Trespassing</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
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<td>Home Free: Michael Warren Powell, Gloria Rakovic; 9:00 = Home Free; 11:00 = No Trespassing; 1:00 Fri No Tres; 1:00 Sat Home Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>Playwright</td>
<td>Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/20/64</td>
<td>Salome</td>
<td>Oscar Wilde</td>
<td>Jim Perkinson</td>
<td>Complete, uncut, unexpurgated version</td>
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<td>03/05/64</td>
<td>A Scene from Merchant of Venice and A Modern View of Marriage: A Comic Dialog</td>
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<td>03/12/64</td>
<td>Laughter 'Love' Lunacy with Special Guest Star Laurayne Nelson, dynamic Guitarist</td>
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<td>No Show on Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/19/64</td>
<td>Doe Poe Doe</td>
<td>B. L. Dorr, Do Cox</td>
<td>Al Viola</td>
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<td>03/26/64</td>
<td>Street of Good Friends: A Comedy</td>
<td>Owen G. Arno</td>
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<td>04/02/64</td>
<td>Michael Alaimo's Commedia del Arte Troupe performing in the 16th century Italian Style with Music</td>
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<td>04/09/64</td>
<td>What Did You Say to Me in the Last Scene</td>
<td>Donald Kvares</td>
<td>Wallace Androchuk</td>
<td>Michael Cantine, Merc Dunetz</td>
<td>Review dated 4/16 says Kvares's work runs thru Sunday</td>
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<td>04/16/64</td>
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<td>04/23/64</td>
<td><em>Auto da Fe</em></td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/30/64</td>
<td><em>The Creditors</em></td>
<td>August Strindberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/07/64</td>
<td><em>The War Against Women (A Prejudiced History of Male and Female)</em></td>
<td>Edith Laurie</td>
<td>Robert Dahdah</td>
<td>Clara Hoover, Edith Laurie</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/14/64</td>
<td><em>The Run to the Sea</em></td>
<td>William Carlos Williams; adapted by Larry Loonin</td>
<td>Lawrence Sucharow</td>
<td>Hope Stansbury, Blanche Dee, Walter McGinn#</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/21/64</td>
<td><em>Madness of Lady Bright</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Denis Deegan</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan, Carolina Lobraivo, Eddie Kenmore</td>
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<td>05/28/64</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<tr>
<td>06/04/64</td>
<td><em>Between Yesterday and Tomorrow</em></td>
<td>Pagoon</td>
<td>Claire Kincaid</td>
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<tr>
<td>06/11/64</td>
<td><em>Incidents</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yvonne Rainer, Larry Loonin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Playwright</td>
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<tr>
<td>06/18/64</td>
<td>Madness of Lady Bright</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan, Lucy</td>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>Silvay, Tom</td>
<td>set: Joseph Davies; Lighting: John Torrey#; Stage Manager: Wally Androchuck#; Choreography: Howard Benson#; Promotion: Michael Powell &amp; Jim Perkinson#; #from program</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/09/64</td>
<td>Filling the Hole</td>
<td>Donald Kvares</td>
<td>Robert Dahdah</td>
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<td>Confusing listings: Cafes and Coffeehouses lists Lady Bright; OOB lists Hole; Old Reliable advertises &quot;Home of French Fries&quot;</td>
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<td>Madness of Lady Bright</td>
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<td>07/23/64</td>
<td>The Singing Lesson</td>
<td>Daniel Habin Clark</td>
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<td>08/06/64</td>
<td>Dark Night of the Soul</td>
<td>Joseph Eppert</td>
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<td>08/13/64</td>
<td><em>Home Free</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>William Archibald</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/03/64</td>
<td><em>38 Haikus</em></td>
<td>Adapted by</td>
<td>Lawrence Sacharow</td>
<td>Gary Gross, Arlene Rothlein</td>
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<td>Lawrence Sacharow</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/10/64</td>
<td><em>Home Free</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>William Archibald</td>
<td>Joanna Miles, Michael Powell</td>
<td>Rewritten for this production</td>
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<td>10/01/64</td>
<td><em>Neon in the Night: A Revenge Comedy</em></td>
<td>Claris Nelson</td>
<td>Marshall Mason</td>
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<td>10/08/64</td>
<td><em>Madness of Lady Bright</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>William Archibald</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/12/64</td>
<td><em>Balls</em></td>
<td>Paul Foster</td>
<td>Sydney Schubert Walter</td>
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<td>12/03/64</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Haunted Host</em></td>
<td>Robert Patrick</td>
<td>Marshall Mason</td>
<td>Bob O'Connor, William Hoffman</td>
<td>OOB ad continues to show <em>Balls</em>; Bob O'Connor is stage name for Patrick</td>
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<td>12/17/64</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hello From Bertha</em></td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td>Robert Dahdah</td>
<td>Gwen Van Dam, Mary Boylan, Marion Gaines</td>
<td>New York Premiere</td>
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<td>12/24/64</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Carolers</em></td>
<td>Claris Nelson</td>
<td>Rod Nash</td>
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<td>Closed Christmas Night</td>
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<td>12/31/64</td>
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<td><em>Only a Countess May Dance When She's Crazy</em></td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
<td>Carole Griffith</td>
<td>Listed as <em>Only a Contessa May Dance</em> in OOB; lighting by Denis Parichy</td>
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<td>“Held over”</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/21/65</td>
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<td>“Held over”</td>
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<td>01/28/65</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Family Joke</em></td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
<td>Michael McGuire</td>
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<td>OOB continues <em>Countess</em></td>
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<td>02/04/65</td>
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<td>02/11/65</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ludlow Fair</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Neal Flanagan</td>
<td>Martha Galphin, Jennie Ventriss</td>
<td><em>Balm in Gilead</em> had just played La Mama</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/18/65</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/04/65</td>
<td>War</td>
<td>Jean-Claude van Itallie</td>
<td>Michael Kahn</td>
<td>John Coe, Jane Lowrie, Gerome Ragni</td>
<td>Note: The use of &quot;Lowrie&quot; in the advertisement may or may not be a misspelling</td>
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<td>03/18/65</td>
<td>&quot;The CalTe Cino, pending reconstruction, is presenting its scheduled productions on Sunday and Monday at Café La Mama ETC&quot;</td>
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<td>03/25/65</td>
<td>Poet’s Vaudeville</td>
<td>Diane di Prima</td>
<td>Jerry Benjamin</td>
<td>Louis Waldon, Marva Abraham</td>
<td>&quot;Members Only&quot;; ad for benefit to be held Mar 26 at Caffe Gomad</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/08/65</td>
<td>Who Put That Blood on My Long-Stemmed Rose</td>
<td>Mary Mitchell</td>
<td>Cliff Tobey</td>
<td></td>
<td>played La Mama and Cino together</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/15/65</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/22/65</td>
<td>The Cantilever Rainbow (a group of 10 plays)</td>
<td>Ruth Krauss</td>
<td>Laurence Sacharow</td>
<td>Yolande Bavan, Peter Berry, Naomi Carroll, Arlene Rothlein</td>
<td>First done at Spencer Memorial Church; speak stage directions also</td>
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<td>04/29/65</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>America Hurrah</td>
<td>Jean-Claude van Itallie</td>
<td>Michael Kahn</td>
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<td>played La Mama and Cino together; doll figures by Robert Wilson and Tanya Leontov</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/06/65</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pavane</td>
<td>Jean-Claude van Itallie</td>
<td>Peter Feldman</td>
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<td>played La Mama and Cino together</td>
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<td>05/13/65</td>
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<th>Director</th>
<th>Actors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05/20/65</td>
<td><em>With Creatures Make My Way</em></td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
<td>Roberta Sklar</td>
<td>Elizabeth Davison (replaced by Warren Finnerty)</td>
<td>OOB still shows at La Mama; &quot;Caffe Cino Rises Again&quot;; Stage manager: Charles Stewart; Lighting and Special Effects: John Dodd; Egg Shell Creatures, Feathered Moth, Pearl-scaled Creature: Kenneth Burgess; Arial Creatures: Henry Ansel; Production Secretary: Hortense Plum; Publicity: Jane Friedman; Sets: Ron Bose and Charles Stewart; Jewels for Pearly-scaled creature: Sascha Gaholz; Program Cover and Graphics: Henry Ansel; Sound: Carol Patella; Program Printing: Cato Typing Service</td>
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<td>05/27/65</td>
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<td>Abraham Carewe</td>
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<td>Note change in actors</td>
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<td>06/03/65</td>
<td>New Plays (see next week)</td>
<td>Oliver Hailey</td>
<td>Jim Struthers</td>
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<td>OOB still shows Creatures</td>
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<td>06/10/65</td>
<td><em>Animal and The Picture</em></td>
<td>Oliver Hailey</td>
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<td>OOB Still shows Creatures</td>
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<tr>
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<td>06/17/65</td>
<td>You May Go Home Again (A Domestic Noh)</td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
<td>Jim Jennings, Walter McGinn</td>
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<tr>
<td>06/24/65</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/01/65</td>
<td>The Bed</td>
<td>Robert Heide</td>
<td>Robert Dahdah</td>
<td>Jim Jennings, Larry Burns</td>
<td>Note change in actors</td>
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<td>07/08/65</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/15/65</td>
<td>This is the Rill Speaking</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>John Kramer: Michael Warren Powell, Claris Erickson, Alice Conklin, Jacque Lynn Colton, George Harris</td>
<td>&quot;World Premier... With an All-Star Cast&quot;</td>
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<td>07/22/65</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/05/65</td>
<td>A Desolate Place Near a Deep Hole</td>
<td>Sally Ordway</td>
<td>Bernard Hiatt</td>
<td>&quot;A new comedy&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/12/65</td>
<td>A Day for Surprises</td>
<td>Paul [John] Guare</td>
<td>Bernard Hiatt</td>
<td>The Cino advertisement lists</td>
<td>John Guare's name as Paul</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/19/65</td>
<td>Thank You, Miss Victoria</td>
<td>William Hoffman</td>
<td>Bernard Gersten</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
<td>Gersten designed set; paintings by Albert Josefs</td>
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<td>09/16/65</td>
<td>Same. Sat Night @ 9pm; Goodnight @ 11pm &amp; 1 Fri/Sat</td>
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<td>09/23/65</td>
<td>The Bed</td>
<td>Robert Heide</td>
<td>Robert Dahdah</td>
<td>Larry Burns, Jim Jennings</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/30/65</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;A work of Genius,&quot; Andy Warhol</td>
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<td>10/07/65</td>
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<td>10/14/65</td>
<td>Triumphs and Tragedies by Oscar Wilde</td>
<td>Adapted by Alan James</td>
<td>Alan James</td>
<td>Koutoukas's Medea playing at La Mama</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/21/65</td>
<td>Medea</td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
<td>Charles Stanley, Pat Holland</td>
<td>Musical Score by Robert Cosmos Savage</td>
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<td>10/28/65</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/04/65</td>
<td>A Field of Poppies</td>
<td>David Shumaker</td>
<td>Joel Thurm</td>
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<td>11/18/65</td>
<td>Icarus's Mother</td>
<td>Sam Shepard</td>
<td>Michael Smith</td>
<td>John Kramer, Lee Worley, Cynthia Harris, James Barbosa, John A. Coe</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/25/65</td>
<td>Why Hanna’s Skirt Won’t Stay Down</td>
<td>Tom Eyen</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
<td>Helen Hanft, Steve van Vost</td>
<td>Sets by Josef Bush; at La Mama: Miss Nefertiti Regrets</td>
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<td>12/09/65</td>
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<td>“A definite sensuous experience that can’t be duplicated in ordinary theatre,” New York Times</td>
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<td>12/16/65</td>
<td>Fairies I Have Met: A New “Wing” Play</td>
<td>Alan James</td>
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<td>Prior week’s ad mentions New Xmas program by Koutoukas</td>
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<td>12/30/65</td>
<td>Sex is Between Two People and Days Ahead</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan, Robert Dahdah</td>
<td>“Xmas ecstasy returns 1/4 for another gala week”; Sex is Between Two People is set in St. Marks Baths</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/06/66</td>
<td>All Day for a Dollar or Crumpled Xmas</td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
<td>Joe Cino (per ad); Deborah Lee (per review)</td>
<td>“Performing Celestial beings are Candace Scott, Charles Stanley, Ronald Link, Robert Dahdah, J. P. Dodd, Joseph Cino”</td>
<td>Lighting Design: J. P. Dodd; “Ecstacy Movement by Deborah Lee”; “Music master of the woven gods: Robert Savage”</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/13/66</td>
<td>The Love Pickle</td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
<td>Marshall Mason</td>
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<td>Stage Manager: Donald Marc Goldberg</td>
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<td>01/27/66</td>
<td>The Re-enactment</td>
<td>Fred Vassi</td>
<td>Alec Rubin</td>
<td>Morna Reid, Frank Baker</td>
<td>Set and lighting: Peggy Crain</td>
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<td>02/03/66</td>
<td>Sometime Jam Today</td>
<td>Story Talbot</td>
<td>Story Talbot</td>
<td>Lise Beth, Story Talbot</td>
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<td>02/17/66</td>
<td>A Letter From Colette, or Dreams Don't Send Valentines: A Bittersweet Camp</td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas</td>
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<td>Mary Boylan, Edward Burton</td>
<td>Music: Robert Cosmos Savage; Costumes &amp; sets: Charles Stanley; Lights: J. P. Dodd</td>
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<td>03/03/66</td>
<td>Vaseline Photographers</td>
<td>Michael Benedict</td>
<td>Lawrence Sacharow</td>
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<td>Music by Don Heckman; choreography by Deborah Lee</td>
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<td>Carlos Among the Candles</td>
<td>Wallace Stevens</td>
<td>James Waring</td>
<td>Deborah Lee</td>
<td>Lights: J. P. Dodd; music: Mozart</td>
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<td>03/31/66</td>
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<td><em>Death of Tintagiles</em></td>
<td>Maurice Maeterlinck</td>
<td>Carole Griffen#</td>
<td>Suzanne Caddic, Michael George, Jane Harris, Tanya Berezin, Jane Wilson, Renee Maugin, Miles Waadewijn#</td>
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<td>04/07/66</td>
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<td><em>Easter All Star Spectacular with all Star Cast (called Pot Luck in OOB listing)</em></td>
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<td>Michael Smith, H. M. Koutoukas, Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Replacement for previous week's show; included <em>Wandering</em> by Lanford Wilson</td>
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<td><em>Springtime Gala</em></td>
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<td>04/21/66</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Why Hanna's Skirt Won't Stay Down</em></td>
<td>Tom Eyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helen Hanft, Jack Quinn, Steven David van Vost</td>
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<td>04/28/66</td>
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<td>05/19/66</td>
<td><em>Dames at Sea</em></td>
<td>Book and Lyrics: George</td>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Bernadette Peters (see full cast in body of</td>
<td>Choreography by Don Price; Lights by J. P. Dodd; Gowns by Orry</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Haimsohn and Robin Miller;</td>
<td>Dahdah</td>
<td>dissertation)</td>
<td>Kelly; Hairstyles by Nellie Manley; Stage Manager Jim Barrett; Musical</td>
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<td>music: James Wise</td>
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<td>director Karl Stewart; &quot;Cobra Innovations by 1,000 Cino Rockettes&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/11/66</td>
<td><em>Eyen on Eyen</em></td>
<td>Tom Eyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marie Clair Charba, Jacque Lynn Colton, Charles Stanley, Carol Silon, Walter Harris on Piano-Drums</td>
<td>From ad (<em>IT</em> p. 12): &quot;(from his Collected Works as Performed and Executed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Experimental Theatre Under the Direction of his Chinese Half-Brother, Tom Lee); “Due to surprising success (47 Buddhist nuns walking out) this program shall run until its scheduled California tour through Disneyland&quot;</td>
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<td>08/18/66</td>
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<td>Walter Harris is on “Piano &amp; Axe”</td>
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<td><em>Dearest of All Boys</em></td>
<td>Adapted by Alan Lysander James</td>
<td>Alan Lysander James</td>
<td>Nick Rock, Jim Jennings, Alan James</td>
<td>Setting and Lights by Charles Stanley</td>
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<td><em>So, Who's Afraid of Edward Albee</em></td>
<td>David Starkweather</td>
<td>Phoebe Wray</td>
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<td>Lighting by J. P. Dodd</td>
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<td>09/29/66</td>
<td><em>Indecent Exposure</em></td>
<td>Robert Patrick</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
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<td><em>Psychedelic Follies</em></td>
<td>George Haimsohn; music by John Aman</td>
<td>Don Price</td>
<td>Donna Forbes, John Aman, Myma Charles</td>
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<td>10/27/66</td>
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<td><em>Something I'll Tell You Tuesday</em> and <em>The Loveliest Afternoon of the Year</em></td>
<td>John Guare</td>
<td>Russ Kaiser</td>
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<td><em>Cobra Invocations &amp; John Guare &amp; Cobra Invocations</em></td>
<td>H. M. Koutoukas#</td>
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<td>11/17/66</td>
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<td><em>G.B.S.'s A.B.C.'s From Annihilation to Ziegfeld: A Shavian Kaleidoscope</em></td>
<td>Selected by Alan Lysander James</td>
<td>Alan Lysander James</td>
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<td><em>Why Hanna's Skirt Won't Stay Down</em></td>
<td>Tom Eyen</td>
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<td>OOB Listing: <em>Hanna's Skirt</em>; Café Listing: <em>The White Whore and the Bit Player</em>, &quot;A New Play&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Conflicting listings in the OOB and Café-Cofleehouse sections&quot;</td>
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<td>12/22/66</td>
<td><em>Chas. Dickens' Christmas Carol</em></td>
<td>Soren Agenoux</td>
<td>Michael Smith</td>
<td>Ondine, &quot;with several thousand Cino Rockettes&quot;</td>
<td>Lighting by J. P. Dodd; Costumes by Charles Stanley</td>
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<td><em>The White Whore and the Bit Player</em></td>
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<td>Lights by J. P. Dodd</td>
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<td>02/02/67</td>
<td><em>A Funny Walk Home</em></td>
<td>Jeff Weiss</td>
<td>Ricardo Martinez</td>
<td>Jeff Weiss, Mac Durhelm, Bruce Israel, George Harris, Clark Carr</td>
<td>Stage Manager: Arnold Horton; Cobra Assistant: J. P. Dodd; Musical Sounds of America: David Walker; Light Design: Michael Smith</td>
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<td>02/16/67</td>
<td><em>Moon: A Love Play Written Specifically for The Cino St. Valentine Centennial</em></td>
<td>Robert Heide</td>
<td>Robert Heide</td>
<td>Victor LiPari, John Gilman, Jacque Lynn Colton, Jim Jennings, Jane Buchanan</td>
<td>&quot;Happy Love to the World&quot; (&quot;I&quot; p. 28); Lighting by Donald Brooks</td>
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<td>03/02/67</td>
<td><em>God Created the Heaven and the Earth but Man Created Saturday Night</em></td>
<td>Terry Alan Smith; Music Jack Aman</td>
<td>Earl Durham</td>
<td>Tracy Newman, Pat Wynn, Sandi Lessin</td>
<td>Choreography Tom Andrisano; Lights by J. P. Dodd</td>
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<td>Lanford Wilson Festival: <em>Madness of Lady Bright</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan, Fred Forrest, Brandy Carson</td>
<td>Set design by Joseph C. Davies; Lights by J. P. Dodd; Stage Manager: Lee Cozart; review notes that the play (with all revivals) ran for 168 performances (<em>PP</em> 03/30/67, p. 31)</td>
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<td>Wilson Festival: <em>This is the Rill Speaking</em></td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Lanford Wilson</td>
<td>Tanya Berezin, Phillip Clark, Jacque Lynn Colton, Fred Forrest, Marvin Pelsner, Mae Durnshelm</td>
<td>set: Francis Gilligan; lights: Charles Stanley stage manager: Arnold Horton; poster: Lanford Wilson# from poster</td>
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| 11/23/67   |      | Vultures Over Miami | Attributed to Charles Stanley by the New York Public Library |           |                                             | ""Turkey Surprise! By the Wonder Woman Company"
| 11/30/67   |      | The Marriage Proposal | Anton Chekhov                   | Wallace Androchuk |                                             |                                                 |
| 12/07/67   |      | The Brown Clown   | Haal Borske                       |           | Haal Borske, Irving Metzman, Walter Harris | In the review and elsewhere sometimes listed as "The Brown Crown"
<p>| 12/14/67   |      | Same              |                                   |           |                                             |                                                 |
| 12/21/67   |      | The Marriage Proposal | Anton Chekhov                   |           |                                             | Return engagement                               |
| 12/28/67   |      | Same              |                                   |           |                                             |                                                 |
| 01/04/68   |      | No Listing        |                                   |           |                                             |                                                 |</p>
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<td>02/01/68</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Robert Heide</td>
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<td>The Saga of Sophie</td>
<td>Tom Eyen</td>
<td>Neil Flanagan</td>
<td>Helen Hanft, Connie Clark, Steven Davis</td>
<td>p. 43: &quot;Helen Hanft returns in Eyen's Who Killed my Bald Sister Sophie&quot;; lights by John P. Dodd; Set by Josef Bush; Stage Managed by John Hartnett</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/07/68</td>
<td>Monuments</td>
<td>Diane Di Prima</td>
<td>James Waring and/or Alan Marlowe</td>
<td>Eddie Barton, John Braden, John Herbert McDowell as themselves, Teresa King and/or Sierra Bandit as Deborah Lee, Lee FitzGerald as Fred Herko, Myra Munk as Diane di Prima (though she billed herself as Myra Munk, di Prima played herself)</td>
<td>Lights by John P. Dodd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vita

Born in Roanoke, Alabama, Wendell C. Stone graduated from Handley High School in 1972. He received his bachelor of arts degree in English from Vanderbilt University (1980) and his master of arts degree in communication with a concentration in theatre from Georgia State University (1996). In addition to presenting papers at numerous regional, national, and international conferences, he has published essays on several playwrights from Caffe Cino. After receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Louisiana State University in May 2001, he will begin a postdoctoral fellowship at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.
Candidate: Wendell C. Stone

Major Field: Theatre


Date of Examination: April 06, 2001