

FINAL REPORT ON HRF GRANT 013/88A/035
ARM-OF-THE-SEA: HUDSON RIVER EDUCATION THROUGH THEATER

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SPONSORING INSTITUTION: OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE
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Arm-of-the-Sea Theater has experienced its most successful year in its seven year history. Largely made possible through the support of the Hudson River Foundation, the Theater has been able to coalesce a professional company of six performers and launch an on-going theater program. This program brings Hudson River presentations to schools, festivals, museums, and parks in a 10-county area and metropolitan New York.

Originally we had planned to put all our material in a single show. However, when we looked at the time and space constraints imposed by schools and festivals (our biggest customers), we chose to create two separate Hudson River programs and have material that will go into yet a third. The principal show developed through this grant is entitled A Silver Swarming. It opens with the universal aspects of water -- the earth as the watery planet, the quintessential realm of the plankton, and the flow of energy through the aquatic food chain. The show then moves to the particulars of the Hudson Estuary, dramatizing the critical functions of spawning and nursery ground that the Hudson serves. Here the Striped Bass become the symbol of this fecundity. Human interaction with the estuary is portrayed through the main character of a fisherman along with images of a fish market and a dining room table set for a feast of Striper. The second part of the play moves into our present paradox: an incredibly abundant resource rendered largely inedible for human consumption due to toxic contamination.

We focused on PCB's as the single most determining factor in this dilemma. This family of chemicals is portrayed as a sinister, unearthly-looking, venomous snake that enters the estuary, accumulates in the food chain, and winds up in the platter of fish on the dining table. This poison spectre results in the fishery being closed and the fisherman losing his livelihood. Then, in a leap of imagination and hope, the snake is confronted by a snake fighter who wrestles with it and finally captures it. Four giant Striped Bass figures swim in for the finale that is an affirmation of the continuity of life and the renewal of the estuary.

A Silver Swarming is not highly sophisticated by today's electronic media standards but its large-scale format, vivid colors, and immediacy of live performance combine to make it a very engaging and thought-provoking experience. The fact that it works primarily on its visual force enables it to communicate across barriers of language and educational background. This was affirmed

for us mostly at the festivals where audiences reflect the ethnic diversity of the region.

Our second Hudson River presentation is entitled The Secret Lives of The Estuary. It is an imaginative travelogue/exploration of the estuary designed as an introduction to the Hudson for young audiences. One of our best known characters, Jake, is the archetypal fisherman and crusty but effective narrator of this piece. Our next presentation will combine the material we've developed about the power plant controversies along with the battles over the Westway project in the third of our series called Estuary Tales that focus on the inter-relatedness of estuarine and human communities.

Over the past year Arm-of-the-Sea Theater presentations have been seen by over 10,000 people at diverse locations including Shad Festivals, the Putnam County 4-H Fair, Sullivan County Community College, The Hudson River Revival, Croton High School, Dutchess County Artscape, Mills Mansion State Park, Beacon Strawberry Festival, N.Y.C. Riverside Park, The Hudson River Maritime Center, Wave Hill, and Orange County Community College. The Theater is listed in the director of educational resources through Arts Councils and B.O.C.E.S. in seven counties, and has pending contracts for programs in school districts throughout the region.

Much of the energy and attention this year has gone into shaping the material and bringing together a working company to deliver it. Consequently, the promotional aspects of our endeavor have really just begun. The Theater's format of giant puppet and mask presentations has the ability to bring estuarine education into the realm of the arts and entertainment industry. We are encouraged by the response thus far, and know that we are on the way to having a viable, far reaching, and absolutely one-of-a-kind program for Hudson River Education.

In a related development, Arm-of-the-Sea has been selected to participate in Partners of the Americas -- a cultural exchange program between the peoples of the United States and those of Latin American and Caribbean countries. The education director of Dominica's forestry service has approached us to assist that island nation in creating a theater that would address the importance of its natural resources.

The process of professionalizing our Hudson River Theater program has made us aware not only of its potential but the diverse skills necessary for sustaining it. We need to continue developing new material and, at the same time, cover the administrative and promotional aspects of the project. We foresee this developmental period continuing over the next several years while Arm-of-the-Sea's Hudson River Education program gets solidly on its feet. We greatly appreciate the Hudson River Foundation's support for this project.

NY STATE PERMIT TO DUMP POISON

WE MAKE THIS PLAY ABOUT WATER & FISH BECAUSE EARTH IS TWO THIRDS WATER. AS ALSO OUR BODIES. NO MODERN THEATER DEALS ONLY WITH THE HUMAN BUT FISH ARE THE QUINTESSENTIAL WATER BEING & AS PUPPET THEATER WE ARE NOT STUCK IN BIOMAN FORMS. STRIPED BASS OR "STRIPERS" ARE REMAINED FOR THEIR STRENGTH & VERVE ALSO FOR THEIR TASTE FLESH. THEY HATCH IN RIVER ESTUARIES & YOUNG PASS TWO YEARS IN PROTECTED WATER BEFORE JOINING ADULTS IN VAST COASTAL MIGRATIONS. THEY RETURN TO THEIR HOME ESTUARY TO SPAWN. AS BIG PREDATOR. EATING FISH ON THE AQUATIC FOOD CHAIN. STRIPES UNDOUBTEDLY EMBODY THE HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY.

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sequence of
aquatic food-
chain in
A SILVER SWARMING



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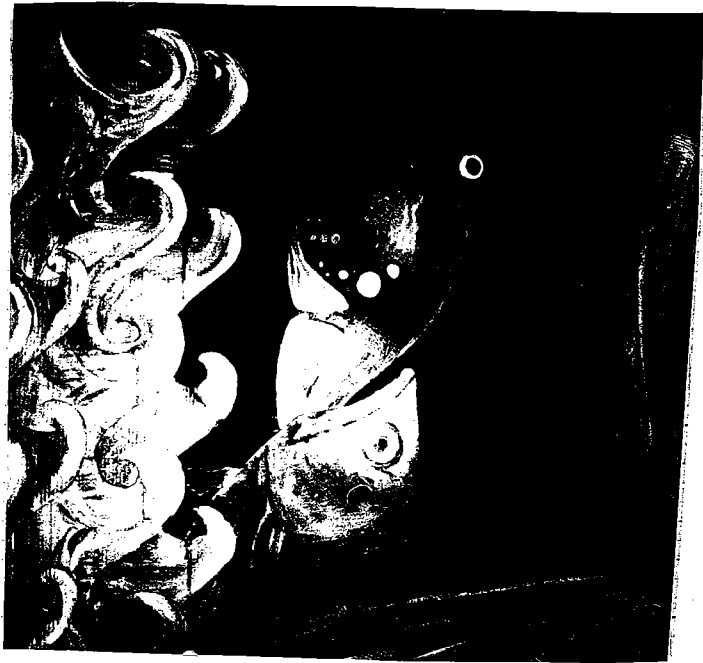
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3.

(COVER)

4.



5.



6.



**ARM-OF-
THE-SEA
THEATER**

PRESENTS

A SILVER SWARMING

- THE PLAY IS IN THREE PARTS BY MARGARET
- A WATERY PLANET'S DANCE OF LIFE
 - HUDSON RIVER HOME
 - POISON & HOPE





RIVERS OF FISH — A RIVER IS WAITING
ON A GREAT CIRCLE COURSE —
YOU COME IN SPRINGTIME —
WITH EGGS & MILK TO SPAWN
MORE RIVERS OF FISH
BUT MY NETS ARE WAITING FOR YOU
STRIPED BASS —
THIS RIVER FEEDS US BOTH



