

A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP

a performance dedicated
to the memory of Mr. S. Solomons

DECOR by ROBIN WHITMORE
TEXT by NEIL BARTLETT

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE

FEBRUARY 18-21 1987

ng of the night, at that time when t
then dreams wrap us about more closely,
[redacted] is shed upon our spirits, three saying
[redacted] e unto me. These are they :—*I sleep,*
[redacted] also, *Many waters cannot quench love ; and*
the wind bloweth where it listeth, and
[redacted] *the shadows flee away ; and I*
[redacted] king much upon them. Then there came a voice, sa
d behold, I walked in a land that I knew not, and saw a
ange light I had not seen before ; and I was filled therewith. In one hand I carried a staff, and in the other the heavy folds of a colourless garment ; and my eyes cast upon the earth, pondering, and

A HISTORY OF SIMEON SOLOMONS FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

Mr. Simeon Solomons was born in 1840 in Bishopsgate. Jewish. It was an easy life. The family had grown rich selling straw hats, ostrich feathers and embossed paper doilies. His sisters were called Betsy, Ellen and Rebecca. His brothers were called Abraham, Aaron, Isaac and Sylvester. He was a painter; he painted naked young men, young men dressed as priests, young men with wings. His reputation grew. He was exhibited at the Royal Academy at the age of eighteen. He was seen at all the best parties. He must have been a charming man; he knew Swinburne, Pater, Hopkins, Burne-Jones, Oscar Browning, Oscar Wilde, Rosetti, Hunt, de Morgan, Burges, Morris, Leighton. He danced naked in a studio on Cheyne Walk; in Swinburne's house he appeared as a Greek youth with a laurel wreath and flowing drapery.

HE WAS VERY JEWISH BUT NOT OF AN ATTRACTIVE TYPE

Oscar Browning 1881

He was short, red-grant. He shaved off his attractive to young men. peared in public with

haired, ugly and fla-beard to make himself He is said to have ap-boys.

HE TWISTED IDEAS

Sir William Blake Richmond 1929

In the summer of 1869 paint, but all he painted of the handsome young had fallen in love. He begin. In 1871 he published VISION OF LOVE RE- was dedicated to the he had spent the happy- a series of erotic tab- orical journey from the pressed to the bliss of he created the pictures imagine painting. His about his lack of caution.



he went to Rome to was a single watercolour Roman with whom he gan to think about writ- a prose poem entitled A VEALLED IN SLEEP. It young man with whom est month of his life. It is leaux depicting an alleg- agonies of Love Op- Love Revealed; in words, which even he couldn't family began to worry

POOR LITTLE DEVIL, WHAT WILL BECOME OF HIM?

Rosetti 1871

At ten past seven on the evening of February 11 1873 Simeon Solomons was fucking a sixty-year-old stableman named George Roberts in a public toilet off Oxford Street. George Roberts could read but not write. They were arrested. Solomons got off with a fine of one hundred pounds, but Roberts got eighteen months' hard labour. Maybe it killed him.

A PREY TO FORCES WHICH HE WAS POWERLESS TO BATTLE, ALL TOO VULNERABLE TO FERVID INTOXICATION AND COVERT CORRUPTION

Simon Reynolds 1985

Simeon didn't die. He didn't even leave town. He lived off his friends and dedicated his fallen life to the pleasures of alcohol and rough trade. He sold matches on the Mile End Road. He worked as a pavement artist on the Brompton Road. Lord Burne-Jones invited him to tea, but Simeon got blind drunk and tried to steal the silver. He could never afford to paint in oils again, but he continued to produce pictures for the rest of his life, drawing in coloured chalks. His drawings got worse: stranger and braver and more bitter and more beautiful. He lived in the workhouse at High Holborn. When they interviewed him, he said, I like it here, it's so central.

MY BEHAVIOUR HAS BEEN PERFECTLY DISGRACEFUL

Solomons 1870

He had the nerve to live on into our, twentieth century. On May 25 1905 he had his first heart attack. On August 14 he fell over and died.

SOME CARRIED AN AIR OF SCORN UPON THEM, AND OTHERS OF DECEIT: SOME FEIGNED MOURNING, AND OTHERS WERE NOT MOVED BY WHAT THEY SAW

Solomons 1871

THIS IS ONLY THE FIRST STAGE. Although intended to be a pleasure in its own right, this solo performance/installation is only the first stage of an extended work in progress. **A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP** will also be the inspiration and title of a devised theatre piece for five performers – an expansion and development of the present work – for national and international touring in 1987/8, design by Robin Whitmore, scenario and direction by Neil Bartlett. We also intend to produce an affordable illustrated edition of Solomons' original text.

If you are interested in discussing or contributing to the future of the work then please contact us on 01-987 8413.

A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP is the third in a series of gay theatre pieces created in collaboration by Robin Whitmore and Neil Bartlett, each exploring and reinterpreting the history and cultural traditions of begins with the debris of recorded images (in this and work of a forgotten attempt to relate them porary London. We are lost, to understand what now, to imagine what

gay London. Our work of gay history, its frag-
mentation of unloved and unc-
ase the scandalous life
Victorian painter) and an
to our vision of contem-
trying to rescue what is
we have in our hands
does not yet exist.



Photography by Cheryl Hubbard

A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP continues the work of two earlier pieces:

DRESSING UP 1983 a devised spectacle for six gay performers created for SEPTEMBER IN THE PINK, the GLC-funded Lesbian and Gay Arts Festival. "In the darkness of the theatre, in the bedroom, in the nightclub, the men are dressing up . . . changing their clothes, changing themselves. From Restoration queens to the brand new drag of a London disco – a whole wardrobe of images." Text from Otway to Edmund White.

PORNOGRAPHY 1984/5 ICA/British tour/Canada. "Strip joints, drag shows, public toilets. Now that the dreams we had as boys have turned into the nightmare of pornography, it's time to take those dreams apart, put them together again. So tell me, what are you into?" Filth, confessions, high heels, controversy.

We also created **THE MAGIC FLUTE** ICA Christmas 1985 and **MAHAGONNY** Oxford/London 1986.

Neil Bartlett was a founder member of the 1982 THEATRE COMPANY; directed MORE BIGGER SNACKS NOW for THEATRE DE COMPLICITE (Perrier Award 1985, Time Out Award 1986); promoted the British tour of THIS IS FOR YOU ANNA 1985; was a guest artiste at NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART 1986; directed Annie Griffin in BLACKBEARD THE PIRATE; directed MAN ACT TWO: MIRACLES. Robin Whitmore exhibited BRIXTON ART GALLERY 1983, 1984, THE FRIDGE 1984; designed decor for LIMELIGHT disco 1986; RAINMAKER Children's Theatre Group 1986.

A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP is a joint commission, funded by BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE and THE MIDLAND GROUP. It is the sixth project by Neil Bartlett to be supported and sponsored by Nikki Millican.

ception.

Vision (vi'-zhən), *sb.* M.E. [—(O)Fr. *vision* — L. *visio*, *visiōn-* sight, thing seen, f. *visc*; see *-fox*.] 1. Something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight; esp. an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character, or having the nature of a revelation, supernaturally presented to the mind in sleep or in an abnormal state. **b.** A mental concept of a distinct or vivid kind; a highly imaginative scheme or anticipation 1502. **c.** A person seen in a dream or trance 1611. **d. transf.** A person, scene, etc. of unusual beauty 1823. 2. The action or fact of seeing or contemplating something not actually present to the eye; mystical or supernatural insight or foresight. late M.E. 3. The action of seeing with the bodily eye, the exercise of the ordinary faculty of sight, or the faculty itself 1491. **b.** An instance of seeing; a look 1855. 4. A thing actually seen; an object of sight. SHAKS.

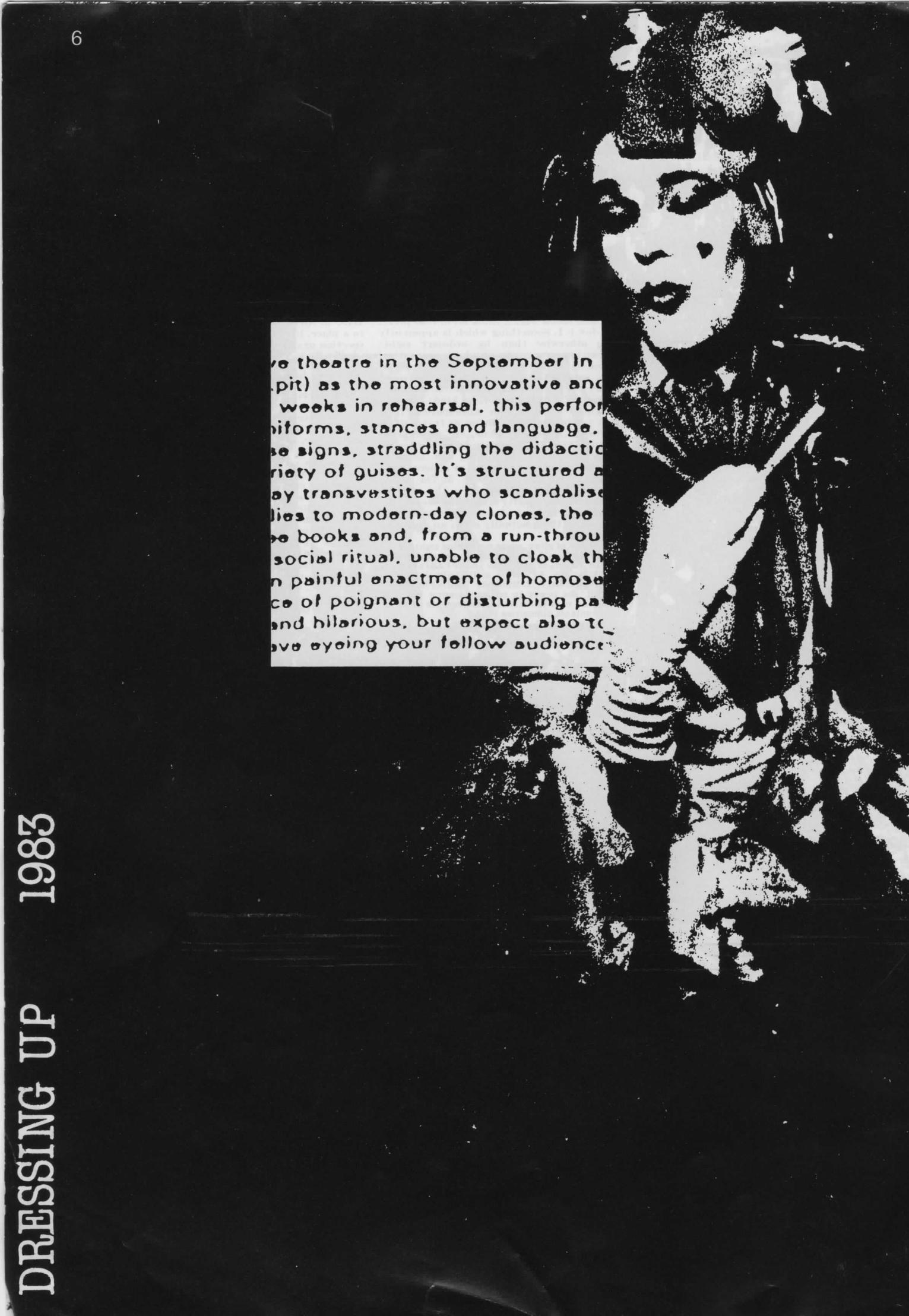
1. Visions of glory, spare my aching sight GRAY. The art renown'd, V. and omen to expound SCOTT. **b.** The visions of romantic youth CAMPBELL. **c.** The v. bright, As with a smile more brightn'd, thus repli'd MILT. **2.** Ministers, neither have v. to foretell, nor power to confer, blessing 1857. **3.** Even the v. of natural objects presents to us insurmountable difficulties 1832.

Vision (*visiōn*) *s.* 1501. If prec. 1. *trans-*

part of his
fessional ca-
1719. 3. An
to a place, h-
spection or t-

1. Phr. *To n-*
to Lyme 1839.
belligerent hi-
every mercha-

Visit (vi'zit)
1–6. II. 1) an
the Vulgate
go to see, f-
visit, f. *vis-*
trans. Of the
in order to c-
come to (a p-
amine his c-
trial of; to s-
3. To inflig-
upon; to de-
sons or thing-
ME. **b.** To
poverty, or
etc.: To co-
To punish c-
To avenge, c-
(doing) on 'c-
absol. To tu-
ment, late M-



ive theatre in the September In
pit) as the most innovative and
weeks in rehearsal, this perfor
iforms, stances and language.
so signs, straddling the didactic
riety of guises. It's structured a
ay transvestites who scandalise
lies to modern-day clones, the
se books and, from a run-throu
social ritual, unable to cloak the
n painful enactment of homos
ce of poignant or disturbing pa
and hilarious, but expect also to
ove eyeing your fellow audience

f the raunchiest queens ever find gracing a "We promise you a show," one of them come up on lurid chiffon and flaunted flesh. Let me tell you, these bad boys from New Jersey really know how to

1984-5

PORNGRAPHY



gay life after dark-night clubs, strip joints, drag shows, public toilets, filth mixed with inspired longings."

As a heterosexual, rate-paying Manchester male I think that the financial support afforded to such a venture by the City Council, is in thoroughly bad taste and against the wishes of the majority of ratepayers, who thank goodness are normal, responsible people.