

“WE COULDN’T CALL IT WHAT WE WANTED TO CALL IT SO WE CALLED IT HOLY CRAP”

PRESS RELEASE

Jonathan Slaff & Associates

Press Representative - 55 Perry Street, #1M - New York, NY 10014

Tel. (212) 924-0496 - Fax (877) 534-4061 - js@jsnyc.com - www.jsnyc.com

LA MAMA & RONALD RAND TO PRESENT

"We couldn't call it what we wanted to call it, so we called it HOLY CRAP !!"

THE PLAY THAT ROCKED SPAIN AND THE WORLD

The inflammatory comedy by Iñigo Ramirez de Haro that created controversy, outrage and constipation - Thousands marched in protest – Churches, mosques & temples demanded the play banned!

WHERE AND WHEN:

April 28 to May 15, 2011

La MaMa (First Floor Theater), 74A East Fourth Street, East Village

La MaMa and Ronald Rand Production.

Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30 PM (OR IS IT 8:00?), Sundays at 2:30 PM

Tickets \$18.00 general admission. Box office (212) 475-7710,

www.lamama.org

Running time 65 minutes. Critics are invited on or after September 28, 2011.

NEW YORK, March 24 -- Iñigo Ramirez de Haro's "We couldn't call it what we wanted to call it, so we called it HOLY CRAP !!" the most famous/infamous Spanish play of a generation, translated by Ronald Rand and Iñigo Ramirez de Haro, caused mayhem in Madrid when it was presented there in 2004. The comedy, originally called "Me cago en Dios" ("I Shit on God"), draws on a long Spanish literary tradition of dark humor and blasphemy in the arts. La MaMa and Ronald Rand will present the U.S. Debut April 28 to May 15, performed by Broadway star Stephen Mo Hanan, directed by Erica Gould.

Of the play, John Guare says: "It bowled me over. Iñigo Ramirez de Haro is Arrabal, Artaud, and Lorca rolled into one with the look of Picasso's erotic etchings."

Caustically wild and hilarious in its low comedy, meditatively touching in its tragedy and hauntingly beautiful in its poetic soaring language, it has even been called "orgasmic !!"

An argument between man and God about indoctrination and the abuses of religion, he appeals for relief from his constipation, mental and physical, finding a way of coping with

it, is forced to relieve traumatic experiences of his youth. The playwright relates: "Suddenly one morning while seating on the toilet, I was possessed again by the raptures of my childhood experience of God and priests, sainthood and superstition, supernatural and natural, mysticism and agitation... The writing was very fluid. Many things came back to me. After so many years I was impressed of how easily all that world of joy and terror was still stuck somewhere in my mind."

The play opened for a two-week run at Madrid's Center for Fine Arts, (the biggest and most prestigious in Madrid). As reported by Lawrence Van Gelder of The New York Times in 2004: "Mayhem in Madrid – Chaos engulfed a Madrid play with an unprintable title in mid performance on Sunday night when a young spectator, shouting, "Long live Christ the king," tried to torch the set and was tackled by the lead actor and the playwright and defended by a second spectator before the audience realized that the turmoil was not part of the entertainment, The Guardian of London reported. The play by Iñigo Ramírez de Haro, in which the protagonist argues that religion, like tobacco and alcohol, should be prohibited to minors, had attracted criticism from church officials and politicians since its opening a week and a half earlier. The archbishop of Madrid called for an immediate closing of the play."

A video of the attack can be seen on <http://www.ramirezdeharo.com/videos.htm>, and at the website: www.HolyCrapThePlay.com. The playwright was sued by more than 3,300 people. By the last performance, it became a political act to buy a ticket. "We couldn't call it what we wanted to call it, so we called it HOLY CRAP !!" ran for over a year in Mexico City, Paris, and in Lisbon, a production directed by the playwright.

STEPHEN MO HANAN, Actor, appeared on Broadway in the original cast of "Cats" (Tony Award nomination), as Captain Hook opposite Cathy Rigby in "Peter Pan," in "The Pirates of Penzance" with Kevin Kline, and in the London cast of "Les Miserables" as Thenardier. He also co-wrote and starred in the Off-Broadway musical "Jolson & Co." He received a Carbonell Award from Florida's theater critics for his performance as Pseudolus in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" and headlined in the recent "Broadway Musicals of 1921" at Town Hall. He sang the lead role in Verdi's "Ballo in Maschera" for the Amato Opera and for Hawaii Opera starred as Voltaire/Pangloss in "Candide." He is the author of "A Cat's Diary," a first-hand account of the making of the legendary show (five stars at Amazon.com). His career as a street performer has spanned the globe from San Francisco to the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

INIGO RAMIREZ DE HARO, Playwright, also a director and actor, has had many plays staged in Europe, America and Africa, translated into different languages. They include "Today I Can't Go to Work Because I'm in Love," "Extinction," "Your Weapon to Fight the Persevering Cellulite," "Humanity is Ugly," "Drunken-Bomb, History of a Winner, Do I

Have to Die so That You Take Notice of Me?." "That Fellow, Peter," "I Wish You Were Dead," "To Be Faithful in Congo is Not Easy," "Amen Zim," "The Duchess Goes Wild" and "Mankind is Ugly." He has also written many published articles and essays, including "The current situation of the Tragic" and "On Excellency." His latest book, "The Medina Sidonia Case," was a best-seller in Spain. Mr. Ramírez de Haro has received death threats for years. He believes in the life force of the theater as a powerful tool to make audiences tremble while they are entertained. He also views life tragically, observing that it's the most serious moments that bring forth the loudest laughter.

RONALD RAND Co-translator, Co-producer, has written the plays "LET IT BE ART!," "The Group!" (about the famed Group Theatre), "A System of Government," "A River, A Seed. A Cloud, A Lamp, The Wind" and "IBSEN." In NYC, he has produced "An Evening of Exceptional Poets" with Ruby Dee, and Irene O'Garden, "A Tribute to Harold Clurman & Robert Whitehead" with Roy Scheider and Joseph Wiseman; Janis Stevens in "Vivien" as Vivien Leigh; "An Evening with Vijay Tendelkar" (India's greatest playwright); John Rothman as "H.L. Mencken;" "LiLiA!" with Libby Skala; Andrea Reese as Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in "Cirque Jacqueline;" Vinie Burrows as "Rose McClendon;" and new plays by Dale Wasserman and Ty Jones. Founder & Publisher of "The Soul of the American Actor" newspaper (12th year). Author of "Acting Teachers of America," co-screenwriter of "The Group," the new film about The Group Theatre with Joan Micklin Silver. Rand steadily performs his solo play, "LET IT BE ART!," (Off-B'way twice, 14 countries & 15 states). Adj. Professor of Acting – Pace University, guest professor at over 75 festivals, conferences, and universities around the world.
www.ClurmanThePlay.com -
www.SoulAmericanActor.com

ERICA GOULD's directing credits include the world premiere production of Neil LaBute's "autobahn" and the premiere of LaBute's one-acts, "Sound Check" and "Stand Up" with Mos Def; "What Light From Darkness Grows" (for NPR with Phylicia Rashad, Harry Lennix – Golden Reel and Gracie Allen Awards); "The Minotaur" by Anna Ziegler with Mario Cantone, Jill Clayburgh, and Campbell Scott (The Fire Dept/Players Club); "As You Like It" (Shakespeare Theatre/ACA, DC); "Troilus and Cressida" (NY Stage and Film); the new musical "Max and the Truffle Pig" (NYMF); "Adopt a Sailor" with Sam Waterston and Liev Schreiber (Brave New World, Town Hall); Ms. Gould's adaptation of Milorad Pavic's "Dictionary of the Khazars" (Culture Project, Williamstown, Yale); "The Rover" (Bank Street Theatre); "SpeakEasy," a site-specific theater piece by LaBute, Theresa Rebeck, Rajiv Joseph, others (Joe's Pub/Public Theater); and a staged reading presentation of Kate Maracle's "Pretty Ugly Things" with Kyra Sedgwick and Brian Dennehy. She is Co-Artistic Director of The Fire Dept Theatre Co (www.thefiredept.org), and was the inaugural recipient of the SDC LiveOnScreen Initiative for directing on-camera. She has taught Classical Acting, Voice and Movement, Directing, and stage combat at Yale, NYU, Fordham, Pace, O'Neill/NTI, Bard, others.

La MaMa Co-Producer. Ellen Stewart founded La MaMa in 1961 in a tiny basement on Manhattan's Lower East Side. She dedicated it to the playwright and all aspects of the theater. Today, La MaMa is a world renowned cultural institution recognized as the seed bed of new work by artists of all nations and cultures.

To date, La MaMa has presented artists from over 70 nations. Each season, over 100 productions with over 400 performances are staged in our three theaters. Among those artists who began at La MaMa include: Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson, Harvey Fierstein, Tan Dun, Joel Zwick, Mike Figgis, Jackie Curtis, Blue Man Group, John Kelly, David and Amy Sedaris. La MaMa has been honored with over thirty Obie Awards, Drama Desk Awards, Bessie Awards and Villager Awards.

Set design is by Stephen Dobay. Lighting Design is by Driscoll Otto. Costume design is by Kevin Thacker. Composer/Sound Design by Scott O'Brien.

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CRITICS ARE INVITED on or after April 28, 2011.

Captioned, high-resolution photos of this show and all other shows currently represented by Jonathan Slaff are available for download at:<http://picasaweb.google.com/jslaff/Jsnyc>

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PLAY

One day I received an invitation from the Hemispheric Institute of NYU to have a reading of one of my plays in their annual festival. That year the topic was: "Religiosity". As I hadn't ever written any play on that subject I decided to write a new play. It was the first time-and surely the last one-that I was to deal with religion. In Europe, religion is no longer an interesting subject and has become a relic of history. Only a few minorities care about religion and they are seen as right wing conservatives with little attraction to modernity.

As religion had nothing to do with my present life I decided to go back to my childhood when I was a fervent catholic (up to age 13) under the last fascist dictatorship in Europe thanks to the American government. I was born and raised Catholic in a traditional family. Though nobody asked for my permission I was baptized, indoctrinated and sent to a Jesuit school as so many millions of people around the globe under different brands of religions.

Suddenly one morning while seating on the toilet I was possessed again by the raptures of my childhood experience of God and priests, sainthood and superstition, supernatural and natural, mysticism, agitation and masturbation. The writing was very fluid. All the fluids and touching came back. After so many years I was impressed of how easily all that world of joy and terror was still stuck somewhere in my mind.

I titled the play "In God we shit" after the American dollar. It has always remained as a surprise to me that the major symbol of money and capitalism carries the motto: "In God we trust". In Spanish I used a very popular exclamation, "Me cago en Dios" (I shit on God), which is heard daily in the streets of Spain with no semantic meaning.

The reading in the Kimmel Theatre of NYU by Tony Henderson under the direction of Daniel Banks went very well. Someone came up to me: "Fortunately you are in New York because in the Midwest you would be killed by now". Certainly a good reminder in the aftermaths of 9/11 that reading the Bible, reading the history of Christianity, reading the history of Islam- religions have become a weapon of mass destruction.

A year later the play was premiered in the very prestigious "Círculo de Bellas Artes" of Madrid. After several performances the Catholic Church started to complain. The archbishop of Madrid demanded the play be banned. Thousands of believers from the three monotheistic religions demonstrated together in front of the theatre. By the way, it is fascinating to see how their differences suddenly disappear in the face of their common enemy: secularism. I received my first death threats. More than 3.300 people spent several hours in police stations around the country trying to sue me. They wanted me in jail and the sooner the better.

One night at the beginning of the performance two Catholic "Taliban's" jumped from the audience and attacked the actor. I went to defend him and I was beaten too. This beating lasted a long time because the audience thought that it was part of the show. They didn't move. On the contrary, they were admiring how realistic and well done a beating could be on stage- that is until the attackers tried to set the house full of toilet paper on fire -perhaps in unconscious memory of the old saying: The only churches that enlighten are the ones burning. We all ended up at the hospital. The news went all around the globe. In New York the main critic of the New York Times, Lawrence Van Gelder, wrote about the play.

Though sold out, the play was not extended in that theatre and moved to another theater in Madrid, Teatro Alfil, famous for their historical struggle against all kind of censorship. By then the religious organizations, related to the extreme right wing groups, had a permanent bunch of militants insulting anyone approaching the box office to buy a ticket. There were constant threats of new violent attacks. The police had to intervene constantly. Buying a ticket became a political act. Since people go to the theatre for entertainment and not to be insulted and abused, after several week the play was down. No other theatre in any Spanish town dared to confront the church by staging it. I received an increasing number of death threats for two years with such nice messages as: "Son of a bitch we are killing you tonight on your way home. We know where you live". The building where I lived was covered every day with all kinds of new religious graffiti: all that in the name of the God of Love.

After all these experiences and after my whole experience of religion in my childhood, I then organized an Association of Victims of Religion. I wrote a Religion's Victims Manifest that was given with the Playbill. Our demands were:

- *To consider religious indoctrination of a child a criminal offense of “child abuse”*
- *To prohibit Religions until the age of 18*
- *To label “Religion kills” in all the products of religious consumption and, for sure, at the entrance of Churches, Mosques, Synagogues and other Temples of Sects or Religions which, for the case, are the same*
- *To include Holy Shit and others similar texts in religious classes at schools*
- *To never call “truth” words like God or similar, but what they really are: “fiction”, “faith”*
- *To exclude religious texts and language from the education of our kids because they are against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conquest of western democracies.*
- *To oblige to sexually vent priests and nuns, at least, twice per month with their corresponding account books*
- *To compensate all religions’ victims*

AND WE ASK ALL THE VICTIMS to come out, although it hurts so much to open that Pandora’s box, and share your experiences, to legally report and identify, giving proper names and surnames, the ones responsible for that suffering whether they be individuals or Institutions. The Association hopes to count with a number of attorneys and specialists for the best legal efficiency.

So the play had to travel to foreign countries. In Mexico city it was premiered the following year in the Theatre La Capilla with Omar Medina and directed by José Luis Saldaña where it ran for a year and a half. Was it a fantastic Buñuel's joke that this very play was performed in a theatre called The Chapel? The day of the press conference a journalist once again came to me and said: “Fortunately you called it ‘I shit on God’ because if you had called it ‘I shit on the Virgen of Guadalupe’ I can assure you that you would be dead”. A very interesting remark that makes clear that God remains far too abstract compared to a more carnal Virgin.

In Paris the play was staged in the public theatre “Theatre 14 Jean-Marie Serreau” with François Granier, directed by Susana Lastreto. In the cradle of Enlightenment the director declared: “We publicly assume all the cheerful blasphemy this show may exhibit in transmitting its caustic and critical humor”.

And finally I myself directed the Lisbon production in the public theatre “Teatro de la Comuna” with Carloto Cotta. From the very first day when a woman came out in pursuit of both the actor and me, the controversy opposed those who defended “freedom of speech” as a milestone in western civilization from those who considered it “a cowardly insult” and asked for the play to be removed.

In some other countries the play was translated to their local languages, as in Austria, Chile, Congo, Egypt, Israel, Italy... but it couldn't get through.

Let's see how "Holy Shit" or "We couldn't call it what we wanted to call it so we call it HOLY CRAP" works in America. After all America is the Land of Freedom with the first secular Constitution in the world.

HOW I WROTE THE PLAY ON GOD AND SHIT

Suddenly one morning while seating on the toilet I was possessed again by the raptures of my childhood: God and priests, sainthood and superstition, supernatural and natural, mysticism, agitation and masturbation. Toilets have always been an important source of inspiration for me, so the writing was very fluid. All the fluids and touching came back. After so many years I was impressed of how easily all that world of joy and terror was still stuck somewhere in my mind.

It all came back as I re-experienced how Religions, ideologies, fictions didn't like to mix God and shit. Men invent God and by a very strange mechanism they decided that the invention invented the inventor. They intend to despise shit, nature as something vile, inferior, dirty compared to their God and supernatural inventions. But this is simply bullshit. God, heaven or any concept of that sort comes from the same nature as shit: the human body. God is as earthy as shit; or shit is as sacred as God. That's why in my experience each time I have an idea the bowels move. The more sublime the idea, the bigger the shit.

The problem in life has a very simple name: constipation. Writing this play I was startled by the heavy contrast between the constipation of a grown up person compared to the spiritual diarrhea of his childhood. The writing became a self-aid guide to combat all sorts of constipations, physical or mental, to liberate from the increasing dryness.

That's why the purpose of all religions is to indoctrinate children so as to engrave God in the guts. The world is hallowed; every eruption of the body, physical or mental, is contaminated with holiness. The very special of this menu of eruptions is sex. Religions are about repressing sex. Instead of a natural way of feeling and communicating with others, of socializing, it becomes an obsession, a holy broth. Therefore when a priest, pastor, rabbi, mullah or monk rapes a child is not just a criminal child abuse. It's a holy rape.

Ever after God becomes a weapon. In the name of God you love and kill. They call it morals. Nothing could be more moral than a holy shit.

And my first experience of death became present. I was a little boy in The Prado Museum watching those haunting Bosch and El Greco paintings with the vertical construction of heaven on the top and hell underneath. I was constantly said that heaven was the ultimate place to be if you are a good man. I would ask: Who goes to heaven?

They would explain to me that saints and nuns and priests go there. And to hell? All bad people. Heaven seemed so boring. Hell so full of action. I really want to go to hell!

RELIGION'S VICTIMS MANIFESTO

RELIGION'S VICTIMS, on their effort to create a religion's victims association for justice and

CONSIDERING THAT:

- Religions are still brainwashing kids' minds while this flagrant form of "child abuse" is not being persecuted neither by UNICEF or other *bien-pensant* organizations.
- Drugs and alcohol are prohibited in all of our countries until the age of 18
- We can see all over the place that "Smoking kills" but they want us to forget the billions of people killed in the name of Religions throughout History as the funny example Monotheism is trying to show us almost everyday
- The word "truth" means proved with facts in reality
- The language of religious texts with Lords, servants, sheep and shepherds reflect a Feudal period of History
- If priests and nuns, particularly the ones obliged to maintain their celibacy, are still messing around, our kids will not be safe from the danger of being touched, raped, sodomized or any other type of physical or psychological torture.
- Millions of religion's victims, with their lives deeply affected if they are not already destroyed for the rest of their days, have never received any symbolic or economic compensation either from the Church or Public Institutions, which have been vicars and accomplices for centuries

WE DEMAND

- To consider religious indoctrination of a child a criminal offense of “child abuse”
- To prohibit Religions until the age of 18
- To label “Religion kills” in all the products of religious consumption and, for sure, at the entrance of Churches, Mosques, Synagogues and other Temples of Sects or Religions which, for the case, are the same
- To include *Holy Shit* and others similar texts in religious classes at schools
- That words like God or similar are never called “truth” but what they really are: “fiction”, “faith”
- To exclude religious texts of the education of our kids because they are against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conquest of western democracies.
- To oblige to sexually vent priests and nuns, at least, twice per month with their corresponding account books
- To compensate all religions victims

AND WE ASK ALL THE VICTIMS to come out, although it hurts so much to open that Pandora’s box, and share your experiences, to legally report and identify, giving proper names and surnames, the ones responsible for that suffering whether they be individuals or Institutions. The Association hopes to count with a number of attorneys and specialists for the best legal efficiency.

WE ARE NOT RELIGIOUS; PLEASE, TAKE US OUT FROM STATISTICS!

EXCERPTS OF REVUES

“A mental constipation satire”... José Henríquez, “Guía del Ocio” Spain

“Scatological Eschatology”... García Garzón, “ABC” Spain

“A holy diarrhea”... Tomás Cuesta, “ABC” Spain

“Well written... Bold comedy”... Haro Tecglen, “El País” Spain

“People don’t talk on anything else”... Carmen Pasadas, “La Razón” Spain

“Clearly humorous”... François Musseau, “Liberation” France

“Caustic (acerbic), wild and disrupting”... Audre Bedy, “L’humanité” France

“Spiritual catharsis... It makes you think... A purification metaphore”... Patricia Cordero, “Reforma” Mexico

“Utterly sarcastic”... Carlos Paul, “La Jornada” Mexico

“A liberating ritual of purification”... Verónica Díaz, “Milenio” Mexico

“You roar with laughter”... Cristina Tamariz, “El Universal” Mexico

“Ironic, subtle and rich”... Maria Francisca Seabra, “Woman” Portugal

“Controversial”... Sofia Canelas de Castro, “Correio de Manha” Portugal

“A provocative meditation on religion”... Maria Joao Caetano, “Diario de Noticias” Portugal

“A satirical and critical reflexión on guilt and faith... to exorcize intestinal problems” Ines Calado Saraiva, “O Publico” Portugal

“The best orgasm”... Rosa Pedroso ¿? Portugal