

# Disappearing act:

## first the circus, then the deposit

by Marjorie Beggs

"But where are the clowns? Send in the clowns.

Well, maybe next year."

— Steven Sondheim, "Send in the Clowns," from the 1973 stage musical *A Little Night Music*

**A**sad, sad tale — because of some hooligans across the Bay, neighborhood kids got gyped again, S.F. Rec and Parks Pat Wiley told the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative at the Sept. 11 meeting.

Not only did Make\*A\*Circus have to cancel its July 31 performance at Children's Playground at the last minute, but the circus has refused to return Rec and Park's \$500 deposit, which was part of an event grant from the Salvation Army, Wiley said.

"Apparently, the circus truck was vandalized in Oakland that morning, so they couldn't come," Wiley said. "When I asked for the deposit back, they told me the contract says the deposit isn't refundable if an 'act of God' causes the cancellation."

Collaborative members commiserated and came up with ideas for putting the clowns in their place: Sic the media on them; call the Better Business Bureau; make a few threats; send a letter from the Collaborative, signed by members, complaining of shady business practices. Collaborative chair Rev. Glenda Hope urged everyone to sign, and almost everyone did.

"After all," Hope quipped, "I don't think God broke into their truck."

The deposit flap still hadn't been resolved by late September.

"I'm talking with the city attorney's office now," Wiley told the *Extra*. "I looked more closely at the contract and the act of God cancellation reference is to the presenter — that would be us, Rec and Park — not to the circus. But we didn't cancel, they did, and I think someone there just read the contract wrong."

Kristy Lin Billuni, Make\*A\*Circus' co-managing director, told the *Extra* that the contract is more general, and she's sorry to hear that Rec and Park is upset.

"Our policy is not to return the deposit when it's no one's fault for a cancellation, presenter or performers," Billuni said. "But we're very willing to carry over the money. We're a small struggling nonprofit — we want to have good relations, and we do our best to do well by our communities."

In a note to the Salvation Army about the nonrefundable deposit, Billuni wrote, "We're quite certain that it was not God her-

self who stole the engine from our truck," and again offered to credit the Tenderloin event for a later date. On Sept. 26, Billuni said she'd heard nothing back from the Salvation Army or Wiley.

Make\*A\*Circus' season is over until next year. Wiley said she's feeling iffy about carrying over the money.

"It's a pretty terrible thing for one nonprofit to do to another," she said. "We were all ready for the event — we even bought the extra water they said we had to supply for the performers."

And worst was the kids' disappointment. "Maybe we don't want to support them here," she said.

### Hold the date: Saturday, Oct. 26

Get organized now, urged Steve Conley, media rep for Alliance for a Better District 6 and Tenant Associations Coalition. On the 26th, from noon to 6 p.m. in the 201 Turk Community Room, TAC will sponsor a Tenant Leadership Summit — a muster on issues that residents and service providers consider important.

In the morning, the Coalition on Homelessness, Independent Living Resource Center, SRO Collaborative and other groups will report on community discussions and panels (see sidebar) to be held earlier in the month. The reports will be followed by panel discussions, and a buffet will keep the summit participants fueled throughout the day.

"We want the summit to be a real grass-roots event,"

Conley said, "one that starts to get at gut issues in the Tenderloin and that has good diversity."

Conley passed out flyers that suggested a veritable litany of Tenderloin woes, including domestic violence, fires, traffic problems, substance abuse, elderly concerns, merchants' problems, lack of disabled access.

Action, not just talk, is the goal of the summit, Conley said. In early October, TAC will announce the names of members of an advocate panel, at least 10 "high-profile people with interests in specific issues," Conley said, who will take the reports generated by the summit and decide how to use them to create positive change.

"We chose October for this event because it's election time, a good time to get action on issues," Conley said. "And we have media — local radio and perhaps even NPR — that say they'll come and cover the community's concerns."

In late September, Conley told the *Extra* that 10 groups had signed up to hold panels, and he expected at least 15 to be on board by mid-October. He wouldn't hazard a guess about total attendance, but the community room can hold 250 people, he said, and he expects to fill it.

While coordinating and sponsoring the summit is a volunteer effort, TAC is planning a fund-raiser for Oct. 24.

"We'll have a dating giveaway — a date with some District 6 candidates and other known politicians, but I'm not telling who...," Conley said. ■

### Tenant Leadership Summit Community Forums

The following panels and community meetings will submit reports on priorities and hoped-for changes at the summit.

Tues., Oct. 8, 6 p.m. TL Police Station Community Room, 301 Eddy.

Safety Panel sponsored by Alliance for a Better District 6. Information: 820-1560.

Tues., Oct. 15, 6 p.m., Tenderloin Police Station Community Room, 301 Eddy.

Community forum sponsored by North of Market Planning Coalition: elder abuse and domestic violence. Information: 474-2164.

Tues., Oct. 22, 6 p.m., Tenderloin Police Station Community Room, 301 Eddy. Community Development Panel sponsored by North of Market Planning Coalition: community development and zoning. Information: 474-2164.

Wed., Oct 23, 1-5 p.m., 201 Turk Street Apartments Community Room.

Hotel Tenant Convention sponsored by Central City SRO Collaborative to plan for hotel improvements. Raffle, information on resources and rights, refreshments. Information: 775-7110.

Thur., Oct. 24, 6 p.m. 'til you drop, 220 Jones. A Seductive Halloween Costume Party, a summit fund-raiser sponsored by TL Summit Coalition and Gays for District Six. Reservations and information: 289-2024.

[This list, complete when the *Extra* went to press, may grow as the summit gets closer.]



## You won't sleep in this one

Rita Lukatsky

**R**eality quite enough resembles dreaming with open eyes. Living with this sense of unexpectedness we might hope to be awakened when going to the theatre. So try EXIT Theatre, which, starting Oct. 4, is running a monthlong one-man show "As If In Sleep."

My interview with the author and actor, Tim Barsky, created a promising impression that his way of performing has a sound ring of the present. The actor, from Providence, R.I., now lives in the East Bay.

Barsky's style juxtaposes epic elements — dramatization of stories — with the hot modernity of tap dancing and hip-hop. I met with Barsky at the City Circus Center in the Haight and as we spoke I couldn't help feeling a bit like I was balancing on a trapeze. Barsky radiates freedom and is at once self-contained. He smiles on the spur of the moment but is extremely sober in his speech. Behind the mask of itinerant mime and a strolling player are years of studying folklore, wonder tales, and the art of storytelling.

Barsky says that he was fascinated with the biblical Song of Songs. He found in them richness of images and freshness of spirit, which he believes people want to hear today. Barsky wrote the script, following the epic tradition of a storyteller's journey through life. We follow a fisher named Molly and meet talking seals, anarchists, thieves, squatters, Hassidic rabbis, paramedics, runaways, an Iraqi bard and the King of the Birds.

Barsky's hero embraces life with generosity and freedom. He amuses and instructs the public in the democratic theatrical form of burlesque farce, extemporizing songs, recitals, and other kind of stagecraft. His images stem from and mingle with dramatic characters in the biblical books, medieval minstrels and modern street performers. Barsky follows the great tradition of folk theater.

By hosting "As If In Sleep," EXIT Theatre gives to the Tenderloin an enriching cultural atmosphere and the promise of a gifted merrymaker for a month. Don't miss your chance at the wonderful experience of awakening to reality, the reality of our childhood — the best reality of our life — and hear again about distant wonder lands and other unbelievable stories. ■

October 4 – November 2,  
Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.  
Exit Stage Left, 156 Eddy St.  
Tickets: \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door  
Pay what you can on Oct. 11  
(415) 346-6040 or www.ticketweb.com

**EXIT theatre**  
**congratulates NOMPC**  
**on 25 years of service**

**extra**  
**Central City**  
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