

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2009

Flying Actor Studio presents

John Gilkey, Leonard Pitt, James Donlon in

'The Zany and the Surreal'

Two performances only July 18, 5pm & July 19, 3 pm

SAN FRANCISCO – Flying Actor Studio leaps into *The Zany and the Surreal* with a rare weekend of performances by three acclaimed physical theatre artists – John Gilkey, Leonard Pitt, and James Donlon – each a renowned international artist of neo-classical mime, clown and physical theatre.

The Show

Gilkey, Pitt and Donlon bring their individual "greatest hits" to the main stage of the EXIT Theatre, 156 Eddy St., San Francisco for two performances only, July 18, 5pm, and July 19, 3 pm.

The Saturday show is followed by an 8pm Gala at the new Flying Actor Studio, 40 First St. between Market and Mission, celebrating the launch of the new school dedicated to physical theatre and movement for actors.

The History

Following a 40 year international teaching and performance career, Donlon was inspired to create a physical theater school in San Francisco, building on the rich history of clowning, mime, and circus that had flourished in the city for decades. Donlon invited fellow master teacher Leonard Pitt to share this vision, and earlier this year they founded Flying Actor Studio. It is one of the few centers in North America for the study of physical theater.

Donlon observes, with some astonishment, that he, Pitt and Gilkey can claim a combined 110 years of performing experience! They and their cohorts are part of a larger generational change. Most of them learned their individual artistry in the 60s and 70s, some from world masters. Now they are the masters, and they want to pass

the baton to the next generation.

The Artists

Leonard Pitt traveled to Paris to study mime with Etienne Decroux in 1961, later becoming his assistant for two years. Pitt studied mask theater and carving in Bali and performed with the Balinese in their villages and temple festivals. In 1970 he opened a school of physical theatre in Berkeley, attracting students from around the world. He was a founding member of the George Coates Performance works and co-founder of Life on the Water Theater. Film work includes movement consultant for *Jurassic Park* and motion-capture specialist for the films *Dragonheart* and *Three Wishes*.

JOHN GILKEY has played a lead role in three Cirque Du Soleil productions; *Quidam*, *Dralion* and *Varekai* - more than any other performer. He also directed and performed in the clown troupe in Franco Dragone's spectacular water show, *Le Reve*, in Las Vegas. He was a featured clown for the Pickle Family Circus and has performed internationally in circus, variety, comedy clubs, theater and television. Gilkey's innovative routine with a coat rack is widely seen as a landmark juggling act of the contemporary circus movement.

JAMES DONLON has been a celebrated international performer and master teacher of physical theatre for 40 years, presenting original works throughout North America, Europe, and Latin America. He is the only physical theater artist invited to perform with legendary San Francisco street mime Robert Shields. He has been on the faculties of acting schools including American Conservatory Theater, The North Carolina School of the Arts, The Denver Center, Yale School of Drama, UCSB, and UCSD, and has presented residencies with special institutions including El Teatro Campesino, Mexico City's Bellas Artes, Prague's national Academy of Performing Arts (AMU), Dublin's Gaiety School of Acting, and Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus Clown College where he taught Tony Award-winner Bill Irwin. He has been a film movement coach for Oscar-winners Javier Bardem, Kathy Bates, and Frances McDormand.

The School

The newly established San Francisco studio “celebrates the imagination and invites a profound journey into the very heart of life,” says co-founder Donlon. Flying Actor Studio students learn the great world theater traditions of physical expression, neo-classic clown and mime, mask, circus, vaudeville, and *commedia dell'arte*. The school offers a selection of classes from weekend intensives to month-long courses. The Professional Program is 28 weeks of daily rigorous training, designed for those who are interested in a seven month commitment. The neo-classic art of the clown/mime is a special emphasis of study. Actors expand the command of their bodies and imaginations. Directors discover new ideas about dramatic structure, space, timing and energy.

The Faculty

In addition to Donlon and Pitt, the faculty includes Tony Award Winner Bill Irwin, Geoff Hoyle, John Gilkey, Robert Shields (CBS' Shields & Yarnell show), Karen Quest, Nancy Gold, Kat Zdan, Arne Zaslove, Moshe Cohen and Judy Finelli, a founder of the American new circus movement.

Tickets for the EXIT performances are sliding scale, \$10 - \$15 - \$20. Tickets at the door are all \$20. To purchase advance tickets or to register for the free Gala at Flying Actor Studio on Saturday, July 18, 8pm to 11pm, go to www.brownpapertickets.com/event/71642/ Or phone: 800-838-3006

Flying Actor Studio is located at 40 First St. between Market and Mission. For more information on the Flying Actor Studio and the performers please visit www.flyingactorstudio.com

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