

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS **ELECTRIC CABARET**

Liminal
Performance at the Threshold



BENEATH THE SURFACE OF ELECTRIC LIFE

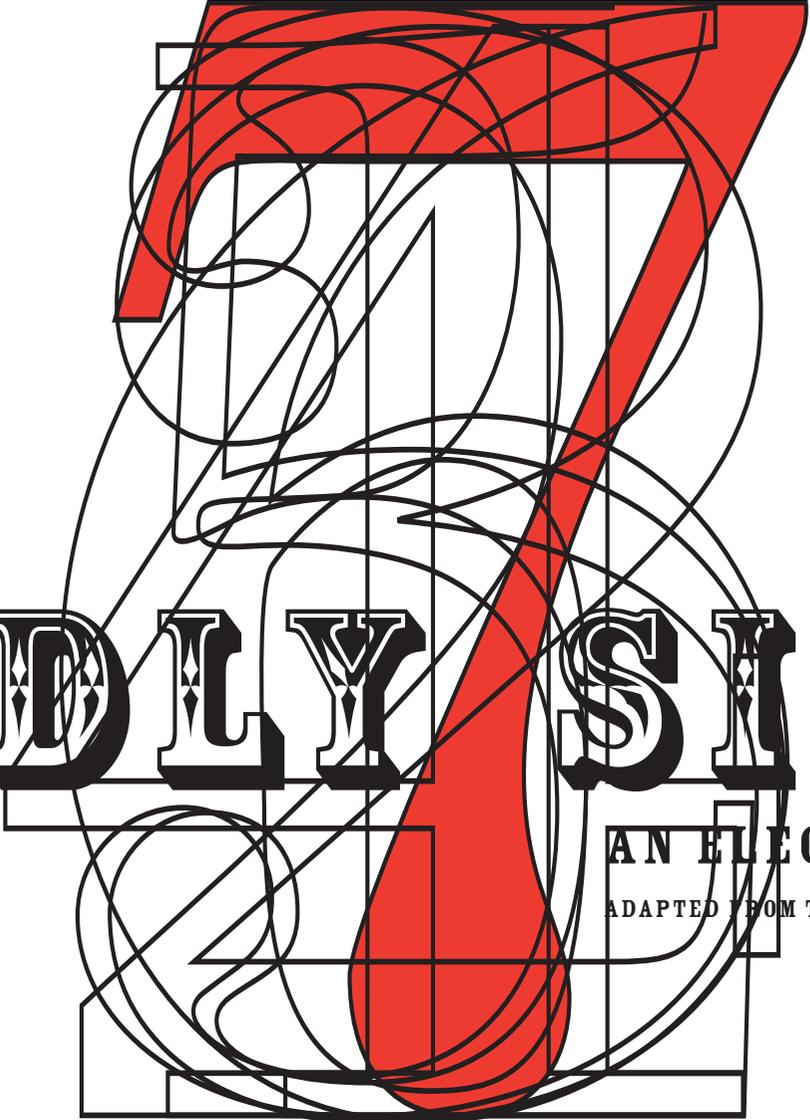


WE DREAM OF UNSPEAKABLE SINS



THAT MAY ERUPT AT ANY MOMENT

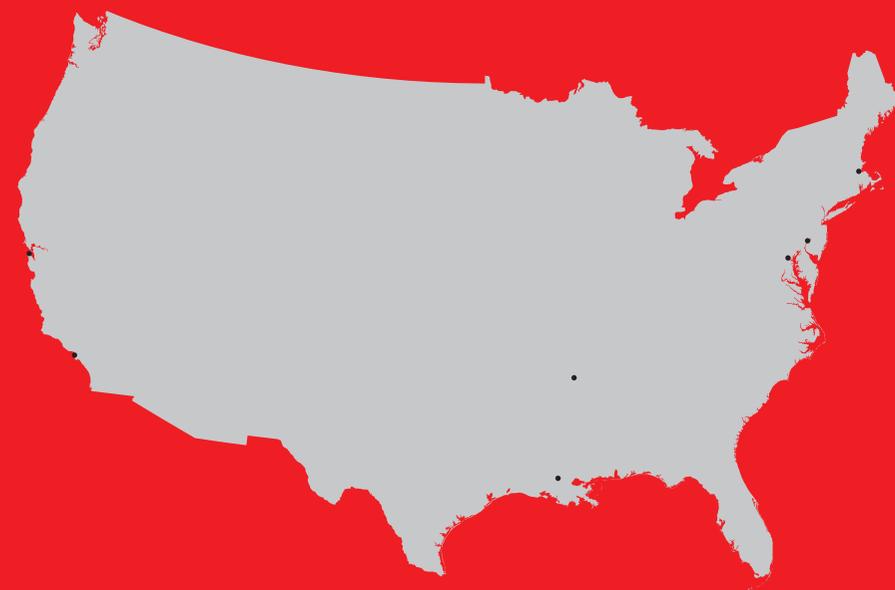
LIMINAL
PRESENTS



DEADLY SINS

AN ELECTRIC CABARET

ADAPTED FROM THE WORK BY **KURT WEILL AND BERTOLT BRECHT**



SEVEN CITIES FOR SEVEN SINS

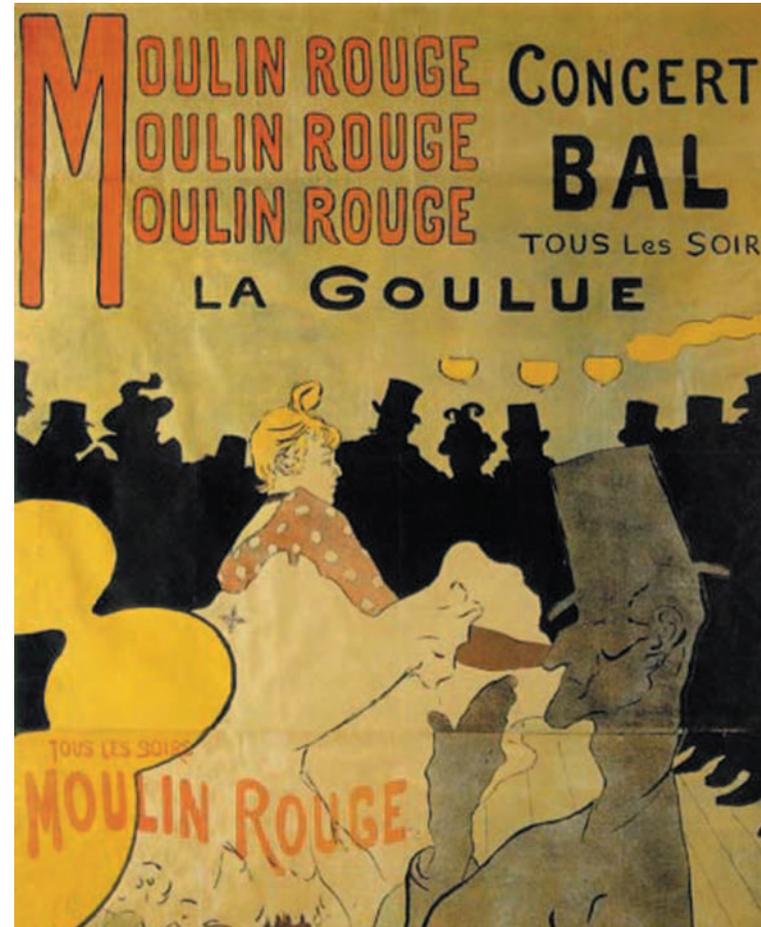
THE HISTORY OF CABARET is a sordid tale. Since the Industrial Revolution, innkeepers, producers, bar maids, artists, dancers, musicians and those “in the know” have converged in the most subversive parts of cities to flaunt their irreverence and drink away the evenings.

When the **MOULIN ROUGE** opened in Paris on October 5, 1889, it immediately gained popularity within the bohemian community and attracted an exclusive crowd of artists and socialites that all of Paris wanted to see. The Moulin Rouge was the “rendezvous du high life.” It was a theater, a concert hall, and a dance hall – all at the same time. People came from all over Paris to dance, to watch the dancers, and to watch each other watching the dancers.

Years later, Zurich’s **CABARET VOLTAIRE** was founded on February 3, 1916 when Hugo Ball made an agreement with the owner of a tavern to use the back room for an artists’ gathering. Ball promised to increase the sale of sausages, sandwiches and beer. Through uproarious evenings filled with noise-music, abstract-poetry readings, and other performances, the age of Dada was born.

Leap ahead to the decadent 1970’s when **STUDIO 54** reigned as the hottest, most elite and outrageous, one-of-a-kind “mother of all nightclubs.” Studio 54 was like real-life theatre with a fascinating cast of characters being selected for each night’s grand cabaret party from the multitudes begging to get past the famed velvet ropes. During its first 33 months, Studio 54 was the universal epicenter of ‘70s hedonism – a thundering disco hothouse of beautiful people and every sinful vice imaginable.

What made each of these **HAPPENINGS** so much more than just houses of feel-good music, fashion and hedonism was a palpable and utterly unique mood, an atmosphere – a non-stop display of unaccountable indulgences and excesses subliminally conceived in response to the changing world order of the time.



Toulouse Lautrec’s famous poster of La Goulue at the Moulin Rouge

“When I founded the Cabaret Voltaire, I was sure that there must be a few young people in Switzerland who, like me, were interested not only in enjoying their independence, but also in giving proof of it. I went to Herr Ephraim, the owner of the Meierei, and said, ‘Herr Ephraim, please let me have your room. I want to start a night-club.’ Herr Ephraim agreed.”

– Hugo Ball



Laughing gas at Studio 54



WE CLAMOR FOR A NEW CABARET

WE DREAM OF THE NEXT SENSATION.
WE DEMAND THE NEXT MINGLING OF ART AND VICE.

We hope it will happen in Portland – where the young and discontented will create the most licentious of cultures in the dark recesses of urban space. The 90's silicon forest will give way to mp3 bohemians climbing mountains by day and sinfully slipping into cocktails and electric cabaret during the blue hours of Northern summer nights – reveling in anticipation of the undeniable upheavals awaiting our global age.

At the heart of this movement you will find **LIMINAL**, an ensemble of performance and media artists producing shows for a cognoscenti cult of night crawlers. Our shows are found in the most unusual settings – including ancient ballrooms, night clubs and downtown parking garages. We specialize in immersing audiences in 360-degrees of simultaneous action, music, words and media that respond to the unique qualities of a live situation. Our theatre scrutinizes the original and irreducible moments of reality until they become hallucinatory experiences. No two individuals experience our work in quite the same way.

This summer, Liminal will revive – or shall we say reinvent – Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's **SEVEN DEADLY SINS**. Directed by Bryan Markovitz, Liminal's fast-paced electric cabaret features diva soprano Lyndee Mah, the intemperate dance theatre of Georgia Luce, a sinful barbershop quartet, an electric score by sound designer John Berendzen, live piano by Stephen Alexander, a cast of deviant characters, screens saturated with video media and a healthy injection of Postmodern irony.

We invite Portland to join us at what promises to be the most unusual and desirable performance event of the season.

SEVEN DEADLY SINS are at the core of this epic story, which was written in exile. It started as a collaboration between composer Kurt Weill and writer Bertolt Brecht, who fled Germany shortly after Adolf Hitler came into power. *The Seven Deadly Sins* was to be an act of personal reconciliation and recovery, reuniting Brecht and Weill in the safety and comfort of Paris, reuniting Kurt Weill and his estranged wife, the cult star singer and actress Lotte Lenya, and reuniting their British producer Edward James and his wife, the German Expressionist dancer Tilly Losch.

Brecht did his work quickly, creating lyrics for the story using materials such as the Luther Bible, newspaper stories and an imaginary, yet fairly accurate, America three thousand miles away. After two weeks work, he left Paris. Weill composed the music in less than a month capturing the flavor of the 1930s with his standard combination of Bach chorales, Berlin cabaret music, German-filtered jazz, march music, beer hall songs and big attitude. *The Seven Deadly Sins* is regarded by many as the

crowning masterpiece of Weill's European career. Finally, it was choreographer George Balanchine's task to encompass the lyrics and the music in a ballet. The Russian born choreographer was already working on seven other ballets at the time but completed his task in time for the production's premiere at the Theatre des Champs Elyseés in Paris on June 7, 1933.

The show flopped. And no wonder, said the critics of the time. A vanity project, thrown together on short notice by a composer and playwright who weren't speaking to each other and staged by a young Russian choreographer with no musical theatre experience. What do you expect? The show was forgotten.

But its creators weren't, and two generations after the 1933 opening night, people started asking how it could have flopped. Words by Bertolt Brecht? Music by Kurt Weill? Obviously, the score was ripe for revival. And they revived it. And it flopped again, and again, whenever anybody's tried to bring it back to life.

Bertolt Brecht (left) and Kurt Weill in Berlin in 1929.



LIMINAL REVIVES THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS ONCE MORE

Why should Liminal, a Portland minority of avant garde performance artists, want to produce this landmark of 20th Century Modernism? Simple. It fits our style like a glove, combining music, dance, story, and awkward spectacle in ways rarely attempted. You don't need to be an opera buff or theatre historian to sense what an extraordinary piece it is. From the first wailing duet over Liminal's dilapidated synthesized organ, the piece casts a spell – a rapid, yet bittersweet blues melancholy like nothing else ever written. Like all of Liminal's work, *The Seven Deadly Sins* is full of contradictions. And like so much of contemporary life, the work is dualistic, expressing an arrested fantasy of what we want America to be and a sardonic commentary on its realities.



Left to right: Georgia Luce and Luis Moreno

Unlike most productions that have tried to smooth out the rough edges of the work and beautify the gaping contrasts in tone, Liminal's version will embrace the fractured, disintegrated nature of the performance in order to amplify the simple idea that goodness cannot exist without evil.

Panorama, Portland's quintessential late-night techno club sets the tone for this electric cabaret, where a 15-member ensemble of Liminal musicians, performers and media artists will fill the space with a constant stream of information. Our goal is to blur class lines between club denizens and arts patrons, contradict distinctions between high and low art, and create new settings for live performance.



Chorus members left to right: Ammon Morris, Branko Glad, Michael Cook.



Lyndee Mah and Georgia Luce as Anna I and Anna II, respectively

"Liminal is creating some of the most innovative, intriguing, and thought-provoking work in Portland's theatre community. Their use of movement is particularly strong, and they are willing to take risks, which is important in creating successful work. Perhaps what is most impressive about Liminal is their commitment to work together as an ensemble – training and creating new work together. This is all too rare in American theatre today, and it is vital for the continued health and growth of theatre here and across the country."

– Michael Griggs,
Former Artistic Director,
Portland International
Performance Festival

THE ELEMENTS

The Seven Deadly Sins holds true to Brecht's desire for an epic theatre that dismisses melodrama, distances the psychological situation and separates performance elements into independent agents. Entertainment is the merchandise. The stuff we're selling is designed to provoke. Following are the principal elements used in the performance:

MUSIC

- ✿ The score is sequenced into a series of synthesized orchestrations, evocative of early 1980's art-pop music (cf. W.C. Williams and Art of Noise). These are layered onto Weill's fusion of opera, folk, and jazz idioms, making the work equally at home in the concert hall or on a house dance floor.
- ✿ Mezzo-soprano Lyndee Mah and the chorus of four male voices sing Brecht's libretto in the original German. Unlike popular forms of opera and musical theatre, the singers do not fully embody their characters. Rather, they comment on their characters through the music. The singing reports on the action as it unfolds.
- ✿ The computerized orchestra is controlled live by sound designer John Berendzen as music director Stephen Alexander accompanies on piano.

TEXT

- ✿ Translator Emily Ford has collaborated with Liminal to write simple yet contemporary subtitles and episodic descriptions.
- ✿ Sung words and written words share equal weight. The narrative is a vehicle equal to other elements.

- ✿ The work presents a moral tableau. Morality is relative. Pragmatism is essential. Characters are given freedom to produce and consume.

ACTION

- ✿ Gesture and tableau are the basis of action.
- ✿ Cliché is demonstrated and deconstructed.
- ✿ Opposing actions are juxtaposed to estrange the familiar. The profane is layered with the sacred.
- ✿ Scales of intimacy and isolation are contrasted.
- ✿ Simultaneity of multiple actions is encouraged.

IMAGE

- ✿ Still and live images are projected along with text on two 10 x 10 foot screens.
- ✿ Projected visual aids reinforce, recontextualize and magnify live action. Most visual media is captured directly from the live performance.

A survey of audience members at our 2000 production of *Interrupt: Interactive Hypermedia* reflects that Liminal's average audience is 51 percent male and 48 percent female with a racial makeup similar to the total population of Portland. Liminal's audiences are between the ages of 18 and 66 with an average age of 31. Liminal audiences are well-educated – 29 percent have attended some college, 34 percent have undergraduate degrees and 25 percent have advanced degrees. Nearly 14 percent are students and 32 percent are professionals in their field. Our audiences also represent a broad cross section of incomes. Forty-three percent of respondents earned less than \$25,000 annually (which we estimate primarily pays for rent and local microbrews), 23 percent earned between \$25,000 and \$40,000 annually, 15 percent earned between \$40,000 and \$65,000 and nine percent earned more than \$65,000 annually.



Left to right: Luis Moreno, Ammon Morris, Branko Glad

MORE ABOUT THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Music by Kurt Weill, libretto by Bertolt Brecht

This “ballet chanté,” or sung ballet, is the last collaboration between Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. It is a deceptively simple work with many complexities and contradictions at its core. It is simultaneously a ballet, a cabaret musical and an epic drama of gestures and life lessons.

The main character, Anna, is shown as two persons – Anna 1, the singer, who represents her stoic and practical side and; Anna 2, the dancer, who represents her idealistic and emotional side. The sisters set out “to the cities” to find money so that their family in Louisiana can build a new house. On their journey, the sisters confront the seven deadly sins of pride, wrath, sloth, lust, envy, gluttony and greed in seven episodes. As Anna 1 looks on and tries desperately to stay the course, Anna 2 succumbs to laziness, is hired as a nightclub dancer, fired as an actress, loses a job due to a weight clause in a movie contract, is sexually exploited, exploits others for financial gain and ultimately comes to terms with her own lost innocence. In each of the seven scenes, the sisters face the realities of modern life and work, and the resulting conflict between pragmatism and idealism. Finally, they return home to their family in Louisiana.

Kurt Weill’s music perfectly reflects the harsh, yet seductive gestures of Brecht’s words and is quite possibly the composer’s finest work. As with all of Liminal’s creations, the ensemble will present *The Seven Deadly Sins* through a sharp lens of mediated sound, imagery and a healthy dose of reflexivity.

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and piano accompaniment (grand staff). The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system includes the lyrics: "will man nir-gend-wo ha-ben, und wer ü-ber die Big will show he's of-fend-ed. If a curse or a". The second system includes the lyrics: "Ro-heit in Zorn ge-rät, der las-se sich gleich be-blow can en-rage you so, your use ful-ness here is". The third system includes the lyrics: "-gra-ben. Wer kei-ne Ge-mein-heit dul-det, end-ed. Then mind what the Good Book tells us". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "mf". There are also performance instructions for instruments: "Fl. Klar." and "1. Trp., Pos. c. s. dolce".

Excerpt from the score for *The Seven Deadly Sins*

OUR MISSION

Liminal is an ensemble of artists collaborating within the context of live performance to discover creative disciplines that are emerging at the threshold of traditional structures of theatre, the fine arts and multimedia technologies.

We work to expand public interaction with performance and engage in critical dialogues about contemporary culture through an ongoing evolution of new work.

For more information please contact:

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Visit us on the web at www.liminalgroupp.org



Liminal members (left to right) Amanda Boekelheide, Christoph Saxe, Alex Reagan, Jeff Marchant, Georgia Luce, Linda Miles, John Berendzen, Bryan Markovitz, Jennifer Olson, Trent Moore

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