

For Immediate Release:

INSURGENT THEATRE'S

ULYSSES' CREWMEN

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ulyssescrowmen.blogspot.com

Digital photos, interview and photo opportunities are available upon request.

HEAR THE SIREN'S SONG!

A militant dissenter abuses her hostage from the US delegation while faintly aware of the audience surrounding her. This claustrophobic scene creates a space for radical introspection, defiant theatre and tactical conversations. With only a few props, two actors, one of who is bound and gagged, and a serious commitment to DIY politics, Insurgent Theatre refutes ancient dogmas found in Homer's *Odyssey* and examines the psychosexual underpinnings of empire and rebellion.

Written by Ben Turk

Starring Kate Pleuss and Ben Turk



ULYSSES' CREWMEN

ON TOUR SINCE SEPT 09

Insurgent Theatre has staged over 30 performances of *Ulysses' Crewmen* in various theatres, bars, infoshops, and other non-traditional spaces across the US, including a performance in Pittsburgh during the G20 summit protests on Oct 24th.

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**INSURGENT
THEATRE**



Ben Turk co-founded **INSURGENT THEATRE** in the summer of 2003. That year he also began the first outlines of **Ulysses' Crewmen**. Over the next six years he repeatedly put down this play to write, produce and occasionally act in others.

Successful full length plays like **BRING THE WAR HOME**, all kinds of absurd one act festivals, wild theatre experiments like **PLAY IN A DAY** and the first Insurgent DIY touring show **PAINT THE TOWN** were self-taught lessons in every aspect of theatre production, from promotion and fundraising to set construction and lighting to playwriting, acting and directing.

Ben looks forward to continuing to create radical theatre in punk basements, dive bars, classrooms, art galleries, alleys, bookstores, and any other autonomous space that will serve as a temporary performance venue, even the occasional black box theatre.

Statement from the playwright...

*"I'd rather die at sea, with one deep gulp of death,
than die by inches on this desolate island here!"*

-Eurylochus' fatal reasoning in Homer's *Odyssey*

Homer's *Odyssey* contains two episodes of mutiny. The first –when Ulysses has his crew plug their ears, tie him to the mast, and steer the ship past the sirens– is a false mutiny. The crew is put into an apparent position of power, and ignores their captain's commands, but they do so at his request. This episode teaches us the lesson of rational restraint. We must limit our freedom now because we know temptation can make our desires and impulses untrustworthy. The second mutiny –when the crew eats the sun god's cattle against Ulysses' commands– is a genuine mutiny. The crewmen make a rational calculation that death by starvation is assured, while death by the gods' wrath is only their captain's speculation, a product of his faith. When Homer frees the ship from Hyperion's isle and then promptly sinks it, killing everyone but the reverent (and miraculously unstarved) Ulysses, he teaches us the lesson of obedience to forces beyond rationality. For Homer, faith and reverence trump survival.

These lessons have persisted in many forms throughout western civilization and remain issues of ethical contention today. I see echoes of Homer's lessons in the rhetoric of both the religious right and modern liberalism. This ideological conspiracy allows us to believe that others' exploitation and slavery are at once the rocky part of their path to prosperity and a punishment for ignoring the graces of god. The people of "developing" nations must tie themselves to our profit-making machines today so that their descendents can at some future time share in the wealth we currently enjoy. This future time remains perpetually just over the horizon. In the meantime, missions of conversion pacify the starved and dying. I abhor these lessons, yet I- and all who participate in or benefit from the global economy, am complicit in their brutal edification.

We live in an era when the best that representative democracy can produce is Obama's vague hope that the world civil war will be managed without disrupting business as usual. Today, protests and demonstrations are less a struggle and more an emotional outlet for the guilt of activist communities. Our every attempt to create alternatives is recuperated by "green" capitalism before we can find our legs. What can do we do in such a world?

The story of **ULYSSES' CREWMEN** explores one answer: insurrection! Kidnap the bureaucrats. Attack the empire, stop the machine by any means available. Make total destroy! Do it now! Pacifism is a lie. Hesitation is complicity. Hear the siren's song! Never mind those rocks. Listen!

This answer is certainly far more compelling than electoral politics or absolution through chanting and sign-waving. But it still leaves me dissatisfied. The production of **ULYSSES' CREWMEN** offers a second answer: our material methods and economic practices attempt to participate in the creation of a radically post-capitalist economy.

Will this economy find it's legs, or should we dash toward the rocks? To even approach this question we must first unlearn the lessons of rational restraint and obedience to faith. We must stage a mutiny against both religion and liberalism, against the very roots of western civilization.

Responses to Ulysses' Crewmen

"Fearless acting. Fearless writing. Fearless plot. Fearless art."

-Jospeh Pigg

Spore Infoshop, Columbus, OH

"Intensely destructive and aggressively beautiful, a thoughtful play that asks the age old question of 'How the hell can we fix this fucked up world without fucking it up even more?' Since the world has stopped listening to meek questions, this play screams it."

-Peter J Woods

FTAM, Milwaukee, WI

"One of the most inspiring DIY tours I have ever encountered. Its execution is intensely captivating and provocative. What other play features an hour of harsh interrogation and pistol-whipping followed by remarkably constructive conversation with its audience?"

-Robert Inhuman, Realicide

"Insurgent's project is noble and high minded... it takes guts to do work like this."

-Kurt Hartwig

SnapMilwaukee.com

"A drama animated by dark brutality [that]... creates a fascinating dynamic." "This is theatre that strives to become more real than reality."

-Russ Bickerstaff

Shepherd Express Online
Milwaukee, WI

And for Paint the Town

"Satisfying, disturbing and highly entertaining. Its glimpse into a world of terror – devoid of emotion – chills, even when we feel, somehow, a little sympathetic."

-Burt Wardall

ThirdCoastDigest.com,
Milwaukee

INSURGENT THEATRE

has been producing bad-ass DIY theatre since 2003. Insurgent's goal is nothing less than to take the future of theatrical production out of the clumsy hands of obsolete bourgeois institutions, one production at a time.

Milwaukee shows include:

- An original modernization of John Paul Sartre's *No Exit*.
- An Iraq / Vietnam mashup called *Bring the War Home* which inserts the Weather Underground into current events.
- *None of These is Nothing*, a show packed with over 40 absurd and experimental plays.
- Many short and community-based works about things like whale-to-ape transmogrification, the artist's ego, suicidal writer's block, straight men fucking, class guilt rape fantasies, terrorism, and race-based cannibalism, in addition to more conventional fare.
- Experiments in theatre under severe time restrictions, like **BERZERK!!!** (write a script in ten minutes) or *Play in a Day* (produce a full scale play in merely 24 hours).

These plays were all produced with no budgets, little fundraising, no grant support, and throngs of first time actors, writers and directors. Many of these people have gone on to pursue careers in theatre, activism, and community organizing.

In 2008, Insurgent joined the burgeoning DIY touring theatre phenomenon with *Paint the Town*. This homegrown terrorist fairy tale about realizing it's hero's revolutionary potential by murdering her entire family (and plenty of innocent bystanders along the way) toured sporadically for over nine months with over 40 performances. *Paint the Town* included a full scale collapsible set, a van full of props, an hour and forty five minutes of elaborate plot, combat, esoteric references and Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt* and ended with a murder-by-paint-can, after which the audiences were encouraged to paint the floor and walls of the venues. *Ulysses' Crewmen* travels much lighter (requiring a single chair and a few props) but weighs heavier, thematically and formally.

