

The New York Times

SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2011

Metropolitan

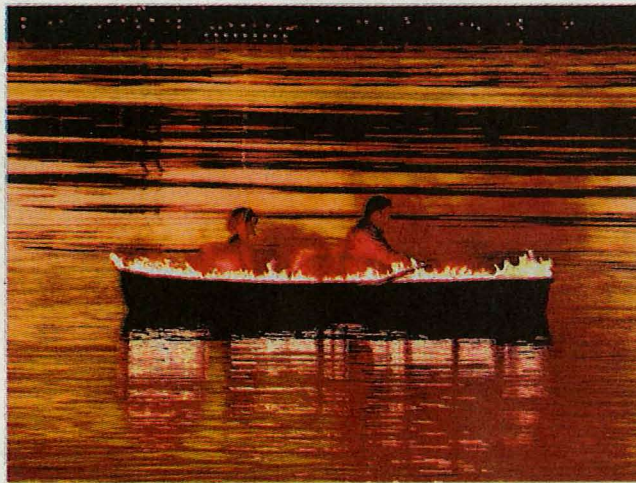
SPOTLIGHT | MONTCLAIR

A 'Passport' to a Parallel Experience

FOR "Passport," a new theatrical work by Robert Whitman that will be staged April 16 and 17 at Montclair State University and on the banks of the Hudson River in Beacon, N.Y., the artist relied heavily on "technical guys," he said.

The piece comprises two simultaneous performances, with selected images transmitted from one site to the other in real time, through video capture, wireless transmission and Internet streaming.

An outdoor audience seated on bleachers at Riverfront Park in Beacon, for example, will watch as a flaming boat



BEN BLOOM/DIA ART FOUNDATION

HUDSON RIVER Rehearsing Robert Whitman's work.

makes its way down the Hudson. In Montclair, N.J., that same image will be projected for the indoor audience at the Alexander Kasser Theater. Likewise, as the Montclair audience watches a dancer levitate, the Beacon audience will see a live feed of that, so that both places are joined in something like a dialogue, Mr. Whitman said.

The goal, he said, is "to get a sense of pull between the two parts," which is some-

thing he hopes to experience firsthand at both locations. On April 16, Mr. Whitman will be directing in Montclair. The next night, he will travel to Beacon.

"I don't know what people will take away from it," Mr. Whitman said. "They might think it's interesting. It's the kind of thing I don't think about."

"Passport" was co-commissioned by Peak Performances, the presenting arm of

Montclair State University, and the Dia Art Foundation, a longtime supporter of Mr. Whitman's work. Mr. Whitman, 75, of Warwick, N.Y., has made a career of braiding theater with multimedia elements since the 1960s, often collaborating with engineers and scientists.

Mr. Whitman lived in Englewood as a teenager and graduated from Rutgers University. In 1966, he was one of 10 New York artists who worked with more than 30 engineers and scientists from Bell Labs in Murray Hill, N.J., to create the performance series "Nine Evenings: Theater and Engineering," which paved the way for the non-profit group Experiments in Art and Technology, co-founded by Mr. Whitman, Robert Rauschenberg and others.

Mr. Whitman hopes that Dia and Peak Performances' efforts to publicize "Passport" will propel the work, which he may try to duplicate elsewhere.

"This is the first time this kind of energy has been put behind something of mine," he said.

TAMMY LA GORCE

"Passport" runs April 16 and 17 at 8 p.m. at the Alexander Kasser Theater, at Montclair State University, 1 Normal Avenue, Montclair. Tickets are \$15; (973) 655-5112 or peakperfs.org. "Passport" also will be presented the same dates and time at Riverfront Park near Dia: Beacon in Beacon, N.Y. Tickets, which include museum admission, are \$25 (seniors, students and members, \$15). (845) 440-0100 or diaart.org.