

# Tyson vs Ali

## Press Pack (2014)

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THE Arts

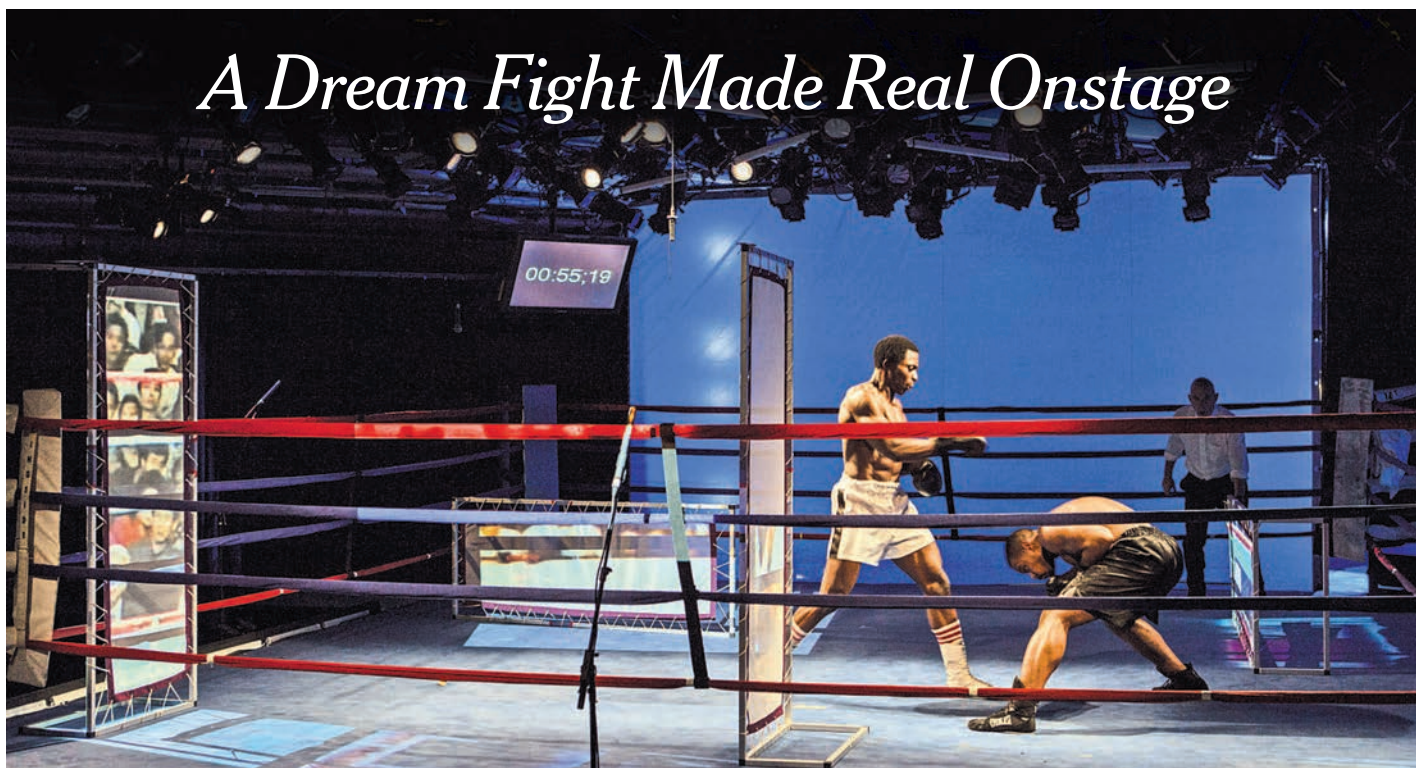
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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2014

The New York Times

### *A Dream Fight Made Real Onstage*



EMON HASSAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Tyson vs. Ali** This play, which uses video and live performance to create a theoretical boxing match, stars Femi Olagoke, left; Dennis A. Allen II; and Dave Shelley, in background, at the 3LD Art & Technology Center.

The sweat, the combativeness and even the body blows feel mighty real, but the fight itself is pure fantasy in “Tyson vs. Ali,” a sleek mixed-media meditation on a boxing bout that never was, and never could have been. Currently bobbing and weaving around a simulated ring at the 3LD Art & Technology Center in Lower Manhattan, the production is conceived and directed by Reid Farrington, who deftly splices together video

**CHARLES  
ISHERWOOD**

**THEATER  
REVIEW**

footage and live performance to offer a prismatic take on a theoretical matchup of Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali, two of the great names in boxing history.

Presented as part of the Coil festival, the show stars four committed actors — Dennis A. Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke and Jonathan Swain — who take turns portraying the title characters, as well as some of their fiercest opponents. Thanks to their collectively and individually charismatic presence, and Mr. Farrington’s seamless integration of

movement and video, “Tyson vs. Ali” is always watchable, even when it’s sometimes opaque (unless you happen to know a lot about the history of boxing).

For all its physical exuberance — the actors often appear to pummel one another with an intensity that you half expect to draw blood — Mr. Farrington’s approach to the material is primarily cerebral, inspired by his fascination with the psychology of boxing and boxers. Divided into thematic “rounds” (“Beauty and Brutality,” “Endurance/Strat-

egy”), the text employs speeches from interviews and news conferences Ali and Tyson gave, but there’s little in the way of standard information conveyed about the victories, setbacks and scandals of their careers. Mr. Farrington is more interested in the men’s psyches — at times surprisingly similar, despite their very different boxing styles — rather than in their historical achievements and the arcs of their lives.

*Continued on Page 8*

# Dream Fight That's Been Made Real Onstage

From First Arts Page

The four performers try only vaguely to impersonate either Ali or Tyson. Mr. Casey bears a nominal resemblance to Ali, and nails his blustery braggadocio. When they are portraying Tyson, the actors sometimes mimic his oddly endearing, whispery lisp. But if you spend too much time trying to figure out who's who at any given moment, you're likely to miss the larger point of the show, which is to excavate the drives, fears and obsessions that race around the heads of boxers before, during and after they meet in the ring.

There are, of course, differences in how each of these two celebrated fighters met the challenges of a brutal game that often involves almost as much psychological warfare as it does physical interaction. "I want him to be the hero," Ali says, speaking of his opponent. "I want everybody to cheer him, and I want them all to boo me . . . I always love to be the underdog, the bad man. He's the good American boy, and I'm the bad boy."

Ali used that kind of me-against-the-world attitudinizing to pump himself up, but also to disarm opponents, who would then be taken by surprise when the underdog started to bite with unerring aim. We hear Tyson evincing a more conflicted and complex version of the prefight mind-set: "When I come out, I have supreme confidence," he says, but then follows this Ali-like statement with a seeming contradiction: "I'm totally afraid. I'm afraid of everything. I'm afraid of losing. I'm afraid of being humiliated."

The show follows through on the suggestion of the title by having the actors portraying Ali and Tyson throw fistfuls of punches at one another in the ring. Here, their differing styles are vividly contrasted, with Ali's elegant floating-butterfly and stinging-bee approach firmly at odds with Tyson's more aggressive style. Video from their careers is projected on a series of small screens — they look like miniature trampolines — that Dave Shelley, who portrays the referees and coaches, flings around the ring with impressive dexterity and exactness, so that, at times, we can see the actors imitating the footwork and choreography of a fabled match.

Mr. Farrington worked for many years with the Wooster Group, whose pioneering work in melding video, sound and live performance set the template for this kind of show. He brings an often spellbinding exactitude



EMON HASSAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Femi Olagoke in "Tyson vs. Ali," conceived and directed by Reid Farrington.

## Tyson vs. Ali

Conceived and directed by Reid Farrington; story by Mr. Farrington and Frank Boudreaux; script by Mr. Boudreaux; choreography by Laura K. Nicoll; video and sets by Simon Harding; lighting by Laura Mroczkowski and Nick Ryckert; costumes by Karen Flood; sound by Juan Aboites; lead editor/assistant video design, Jeff Wood; director of photography/assistant video design, John Hurley; assistant director, Christopher Burris; stage manager, Cady Knoll; music by Marco Panella; fight trainer, Martin Gonzales. Presented by Performance Space 122 and 3-Legged Dog as part of PS122's Coil 2014 festival. At the 3LD Art & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich Street, at Rector Street, Lower Manhattan; 212-352-3101, ps122.org/coil. Through Jan. 25. Running time: 1 hour.

WITH: Dennis A. Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke, Jonathan Swain and Dave Shelley.

to his melding of video and performance. (Mr. Farrington's prior productions include "Gin and 'It,'" a live simulation of the Alfred Hitchcock movie "Rope," and a cinema-stage mash-up of "A Christmas Carol.") Some of the more notable — or scandalous — passages in the fighters' careers are seen in archival footage, as when we watch Tyson infamously chomping on Evander Holy-

field's ear, or an episode of "This Is Your Life" devoted to Ali.

Yet, as is often the case with shows including generous amounts of video, the onslaught of sound, image and physicality can sometimes leave you wondering where to look. But Mr. Farrington's compassionate fascination with the brutal difficulties of forging a successful career in the sport comes through.

Tellingly, this fictional fight doesn't make it to a ninth round. In a late segment, the grim toll of the boxing life is highlighted. His career long over, Ali is heard denying that he's suffered any neurological damage. ("Do I sound like I have brain damage to you?")

Tyson speaks with sadness of the end of his career. "I just don't have this in my heart anymore," he says, and then struggles to express how he has lost the ferocious desire to win — to hurt — that drove him on. "I'm not an animal anymore," he says, sounding bewildered, and oddly forlorn.

Do not forget the Neediest!

January 21, 2014

THE THEATRE

# KNOCKOUT

*Violence and desire in "Machinal" and "Tyson vs. Ali."*

BY HILTON ALS



"Machinal" (a Roundabout Theatre Company production, at the American Airlines) is hard to get a handle on and often hard to handle, because it's a flop and a hit. The hit part has less to do with Rebecca Hall's acting than with her presence: she's beautiful, with dark features set in skin as white as a cloud. Looking up at her long form, as she turns this way and that—she has an interesting, off-center rhythm that slows the action down even as the script and the director want to speed it up—you may mistake the subtlety of her movements for depth, but clouds are surface attractions, and Hall's performance is mostly just that.

"Machinal," which premiered in 1928—

this staging, directed by Lyndsey Turner, is the play's first Broadway revival—was written by the journalist Sophie Treadwell, whose imagination was captured by the infamous Ruth Snyder murder case. In 1927, in Queens, Snyder murdered her emotionally remote husband, with the help of a lover; Snyder and her man were found guilty of the crime and subsequently executed. All we remember of Snyder these days—aside from the Warhol-like photograph of her dying in the electric chair—is the work that her story inspired: Treadwell's expressionistic piece, and James M. Cain's noir novel "Double Indemnity."

Treadwell's protagonist—called, simply, Young Woman (Hall)—is the only

daughter of an overbearing mother (Suzanne Bertish), who offers no solace to her perpetually frazzled child; instead, she pushes her into a loveless marriage with her former boss, Husband (Michael Cumpsty), the vice-president of a company where all the employees, from Telephone Girl (Ashley Bell) to Filing Clerk (Ryan Dinning), speak in hard, metallic tones, like vaudeville performers who have forgotten the joke—or have repeated it so many times that they grit their teeth while saying it again. Treadwell's Young Woman sees language as an obligation; she says only what she means, and her sensitivity—her authenticity—is a horse and buggy beside the other characters' roadsters. Turner has Hall emphasize her character's strange inviolability by staring straight ahead, wide-eyed, her mouth slightly atremble. I'm not sure that's the best way to play it, but I can see Turner's point: she has to accentuate Young Woman's innocence in order to cook up some kind of dramatic tension; in Treadwell's script, things happen, and rather quickly, but there's little exposition.

Following her marriage, Young Woman has a baby. In the ugly white light of the maternity ward, as nurses and doctors weave past in the background (Es Devlin's set ably shows the world swirling around Young Woman), she refuses to nurse her daughter. Having given birth to a girl horrifies Young Woman; will her daughter's story equal her own in powerlessness? She'd rather not know. This is a harsher response than Daisy Buchanan's ambivalence-laced hope that her daughter will grow up to be a "beautiful little fool," admired by men in relative comfort. But Treadwell, unlike Fitzgerald, was writing about womanhood and economic deprivation from the inside, in much the same way that her contemporary the novelist Jean Rhys wrote about lost women in the cafés of Europe, falling time and again for the unavailable and feckless other.

Eventually, Young Woman, too, falls for the wrong guy, Lover (the attractive Morgan Spector), but at least it's her mistake—one of the few choices she's allowed to make for herself. We're halfway through the show by the time they meet, and Hall looks stunning. In a yellow frock and a cloche hat, she's a ray of sunlight in a grimy, self-interested world. (She carries the chic of the costume designer Michael Krass's fabulous period styles effortlessly.) But, de-

*Rebecca Hall, as a murderous wife, in a revival of Sophie Treadwell's 1928 play.*



January 21, 2014

spite her strong stage image, it's something of a mystery to me what the British-born actress draws on for her performance; she doesn't have a dramatic center so much as an interest in enacting "dramatic" roles—in a bid, I think, to be looked at by the audience. Hall's Carol Burnett-like mouth hints at a flair for comedy, but her choice of parts, including that of the spoiled, rich heavy in the recent BBC adaptation of Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End*, doesn't always suit her looks, let alone her capabilities. And she doesn't have the psychological wherewithal to make us believe the bewilderment and sense of abandonment that her character experiences in *"Machinal."*

Actors with an instinct for the stage know that it takes more to engage us than flouncing around looking pinched or pained. They have to both absorb and reject the audience—that is, they have to allow us into their interiority, and at the same time push us away, so that we can observe it. Hall doesn't flounce; she lopes along, like a gazelle, in the bright lights of Broadway. She doesn't act; she performs. Gertrude Stein, in her brilliant *"Lectures in America"* (1935), wrote, "At the theatre there is the curtain and the . . . emotion of you on one side of the curtain and what is on the other side of the curtain are not going to be going on together. One will always be behind or in front of the other." We are always in front of Hall's somnambulist interpretation, even as Young Woman commits murder, and pays for it. In fact, Hall's slowness to react in rapid-fire situations is the only thing that holds our attention: it's like watching your own anxiety try to calm itself—but how?

What keeps us watching Frank Boudreaux's *"Tyson vs. Ali"* (a 3-Legged Dog and P.S. 122 production, directed by Reid Farrington, at the 3LD Art & Technology Center), on the other hand, is its speed. While *"Machinal"* centers on a white female body, *"Tyson vs. Ali,"* an hour-long piece set in a boxing ring, is about black maleness making a spectacle of itself. Both plays present violence, but here the violence is orchestrated, in the same way that violence levelled at black men in general—department-store profiling, stop-and-frisk—is often orchestrated by what some might call the police state. A number of actors—Dennis A. Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke, and Jonathan Swain—play Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali, and all of them are physically beautiful and clearly

aware of what the play is about: self-invention. How does one become something without becoming a thing?

*"Tyson vs. Ali"* is a work of historical invention—the real boxers never fought each other—that addresses the present. As a referee (Dave Shelley) separates the battling stars, another Ali and Tyson speak into microphones, telling their stories and sharing their bravado and their fears, like prisoners whispering through the bars of a cell: they are imprisoned by their own iconography and, like all of us, by their own bodies. To watch the boxers circle the ring in their silk boxing trunks, as we listen to their sound bites, is to be reminded of the irrefutability of being human. But neither Farrington's direction nor Boudreaux's minimal, poetic script is trying to make an ideological point; the freshness of the show—which doesn't entirely jell, because of the inconsequential ending—is due, in part, to the lovely choreography, by Laura K. Nicoll, and to Juan Aboites's sound design, which brings actors, video, and soundtrack together with a stop-and-start fluidity reminiscent of the work of the exceptional music producer Madlib. (Aboites relies perhaps too heavily on video, which explains too much too quickly. He may have been inspired in this regard by Paul Pfeiffer's haunted videos on visibility and invisibility among men of color in sports.)

The fight scenes are brief. The actors trade off, as if in a dance, and it's those pauses which allow us to reflect on the intense erotic pull of the material: the boxers are not only engaged in a dance of wits; they are trying to "top" each other in a contest of masculinity. In Albert Maysles and Bradley Kaplan's remarkable 2009 film about Ali, *"Muhammad and Larry,"* there is a scene so powerful in its homoeroticism—it shows Ali hanging out in bed as some of his handlers massage his feet—that it is almost a cliché. Hasn't male competition been equated with sexuality before? Yes, because, like most clichés, it's true. And Farrington mines that truth in this expansive but controlled theatrical mixtape—just as Hall, in her odd performance, evokes the Rhys-like drift of female existence. Watching *"Machinal"* and *"Tyson vs. Ali"* one after the other was instructive. Treadwell's white-female-centered modernism and Farrington's black-male post-modernism both told a familiar story: a tale of marginalization amid the forces of aggression, idolatry, and disenfranchisement. ♦

# The New York Times

January 3, 2014

Performances

## Weekend Arts I

JANUARY STAGES

### Theater Meant to Keep You in Your Seat but on Your Toes



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMIN HASSAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Roger Casey, left above, Dave Shelley, standing, and Femi Olagoke in "Tyson vs. Ali," directed by Reid Farrington, below, at 3LD Art and Technology Center.

### In This Corner, A Fantasy Bout

If all goes according to plan, audience members won't see blood spurt from the performers in "Tyson vs. Ali," a show that imagines perhaps the greatest boxing match that never was. But the fight sequences — and there are plenty of them — are realistic enough to prompt gasps.

Part of the Coil festival, this production is a creation of the director and designer Reid Farrington ("Gin & It"), a former technical artist with the Wooster Group who is known for his inventive melding of live action and multimedia. It also features choreography by Laura K. Nicoll and text by Frank Boudreaux.

"Tyson vs. Ali" is structured like a fight, with a series of three-minute rounds followed by short rest periods during which Mr. Farrington visits various incidents — an unflattering quote from the boxing promoter Don King at one point; a quick impersonation of Mike Tyson from "The Arsenio Hall Show" at another, an episode when Muhammad Ali, Mr. Tyson and Sugar Ray Leonard all appeared and the topic of a



matchup between Mr. Farrington's title characters came up.

Mr. Farrington describes the project as a "rumination" on the sport. "I'm not trying to frame a story for you," he said. "I'm trying to begin a conversation."

"Tyson vs. Ali" includes a lot of video projection, including sequences when real fight footage is shown on a screen

directly in front of performers who are recreating the same event. The show, which begins this weekend, is at 3LD Art & Technology Center, which has long been a home for complicated technical productions (and where Mr. Farrington has worked before).

Mr. Farrington, an energetic and affable 37-year-old, has been a boxing fan

since he was growing up in New Jersey and often headed to New York with his father to see matches, both professional and amateur. He has spent the past two years merging his love for boxing and his passion for the theater, which also dates to his childhood, while watching countless hours of YouTube videos and DVDs of every Ali or Tyson match he could find.

Four actors play boxers in the show, taking turns as Tyson and Ali. All of them — Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke, Dennis A. Allen II and Jonathan Swain — have been involved with "Tyson vs. Ali" for months, spending a lot of that time training at Gleason's Gym, the Brooklyn spot where Mr. Tyson, among many other greats, learned the ropes.

Though the fight sequences are impressive, "Tyson vs. Ali" is not meant to glorify the sport. There are sections, including a moving portion about postcareer boxers, highlighting the downside to fighting.

"Inherently it's a beautiful artistic expression when watched, but the gears that maneuver it and run it are inherently corrupt and also hurt the boxer," Mr. Farrington said. "That's the savage and difficult part of a love of that sport, because I can't ignore that part of it."

STEVEN McELROY

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

January 3, 2014



Dennis A. Allen II and Roger Casey during a rehearsal of 'Tyson vs. Ali.'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Dream Bout at Last, In a Ring Performance

By PIA CATTON

It is one of the most enduring questions in boxing: Who would win if Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson could face off?

In their primes at different times, the heavyweight champions never met in the ring. A multimedia performance opening Friday at the 3LD Art & Technology Center in Lower Manhattan, "Tyson vs. Ali," imagines what might have been.

"This is the biggest 'what if' in boxing," said its creator, Reid Farrington, who, for the record, would put his money on Ali.

Four actors rotate between the roles of Messrs. Tyson and Ali, each one bringing a different perspective to the boxers' theatricality and physicality. The stage is a boxing ring, with the

audience seated on two sides of it.

Sparring choreography alternates with monologues during a series of rounds that are three minutes on, one minute off, as in a boxing match. Video screens of various sizes—some behind the ring, some carried by a referee—show historical footage, including a montage of every knock-out punch the men delivered.

The performance opens with a scene re-creating the 1985 fight between Marvin Hagler and Thomas Hearns, considered one of the most brutal in boxing history, setting the stage for the kind of intensity that might have happened in a Tyson-Ali match.

The four actors studied the speech patterns and memorable quips of Messrs. Tyson and Ali

*Please turn to page A17*

## What Might Have Been in the Ring

*Continued from page A13*

for about a month. Mr. Ali, for example, wore out his opponents with chatter, said actor Roger Casey. "He would talk to you, frustrate you. He was above you, the greatest of all time," he said. "That constant barrage of insults is hard to get around."

"Both Tyson and Ali were playing characters," Mr. Farrington said.

The actors also had to master the fighters' stances and movements. "Tyson's style was the peek-a-boo style. He was very compact," said Mr. Farrington. "Ali was a dancer. He would move around the ring gracefully."

Mr. Casey and fellow actors Femi Olagoke, Dennis A. Allen II and Jonathan Swain had different levels of stage-combat experience, but they all spent months training at Gleason's, a Brooklyn boxing gym where both Mr. Tyson and Mr. Ali once worked out.

"There is boxing fit, and there is regular fit. I thought I was fit until I boxed," said Mr. Casey. "Three minutes, with one minute to recover, is like running for an hour."

"Tyson vs. Ali" is a co-production of Performance Space 122—it is part of its COIL Festival this month—and the arts group 3-Legged Dog, which is also filming the show in 3-D.

"We try to find a way that this work can be produced so it exists on multiple platforms," said Kevin Cunningham, executive artistic director of 3-Legged Dog. That helps broaden the audience beyond its theatrical run,



Director Reid Farrington

since each performance seats only about 80.

A similar process led to the successful film project "Charlie

Victor Romeo," for which 3-Legged Dog was an executive producer. A chilling 1999 play that re-created dialogue retrieved from black-box recordings before six airplane crashes, it was filmed in 3-D and shown last year at the Sundance Film Festival and New York Film Festival.

Film Forum will screen it for two weeks, starting Jan. 29. "We are trying to create a catalog of New York experimental artists and get that work out to the public," said Mr. Cunningham.

"Tyson vs. Ali" will similarly become a movie, with footage taken from this month's live performances. The participants aren't giving away spoilers.

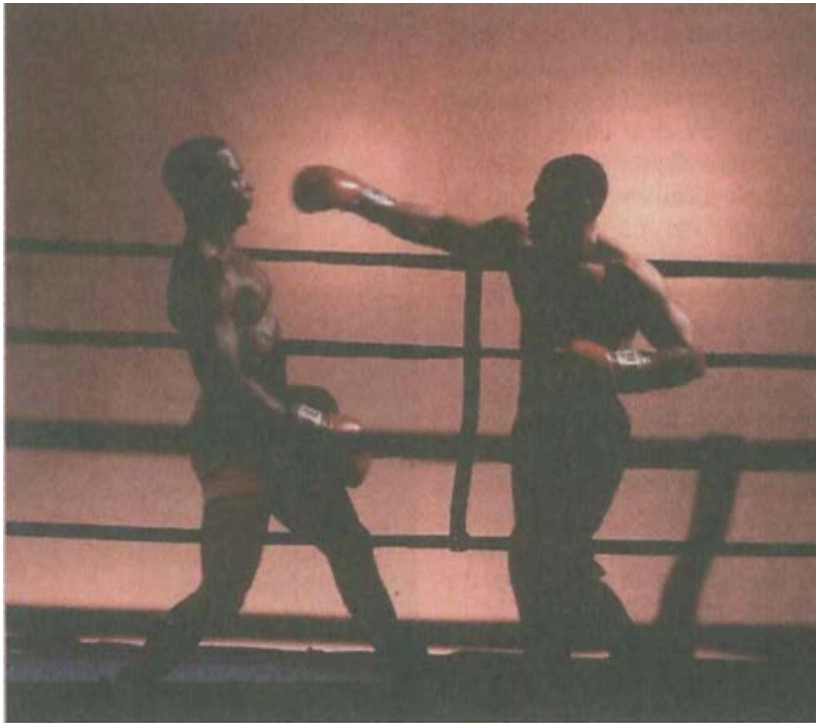
"They were both such skilled boxers," said Mr. Casey. "It would be just who slipped first."

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. HEARD & SCENE

December 31, 2013

ON STAGE | By Lizzie Simon

## Boxers, Farmers and Legends



Reid Farrington's 'TYSON vs. ALI' has its world premiere on Friday.

### 'TYSON vs. ALI'

◆ 3LD Art & Technology Center

80 Greenwich St.

(212) 352-3101

Opens Friday

PS122.org

In this world premiere production, director Reid Farrington mixes live performance and video in a distillation of the debate as to who would win if Mike Tyson fought Muhammad Ali.

The show is as much an exploration of two champions as it is a conversation about why men fight. Four actors, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke, Dennis A. Allen II and Jonathan Swain switch on and off playing both characters, and they've all been training at Gleason's Gym for over a year to prepare for the show. Mr.

Farrington cut his teeth working as a technical artist with the Wooster Group, and has a performance installation inspired by Michelangelo's "The Young Archer"

in the works for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "TYSON" was commissioned for PS122's 2014 Coil Festival, which begins on Friday.

# NEW YORK POST

January 9, 2014

pulse**theater**

## Boxer show's a KO

### THEATER REVIEW

#### TYSON VS. ALI



3LD Art & Technology Center,  
80 Greenwich St.; 212-352-  
3101. Running time: 60  
minutes, no intermission.  
Through Jan. 26.

By ELISABETH VINCENTELLI

**A** DOZEN years ago, we saw an explosion of music mashups — in which two different songs were combined to

create a catchy Frankenhit. The COIL festival's "Tyson vs. Ali" takes this approach to the stage, as multimedia whiz Reid Farrington imagines what would happen if Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali ever fought each other.

The encounter takes place in a life-size ring, plopped down in the middle of the theater. Four actors — Dennis A. Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke and Jonathan Swain — alternate as Tyson and Ali, taking turns trading blows that, at least to my un-

mens all, with eye-popping pecs and biceps, they trained at the famed Gleason's Gym to emulate the champions' fighting styles. And that's not all they imitate, as they utter lines straight from the heavyweights' repertoires.

"It's ludicrous for these mortals to even attempt to enter my realm," Tyson says in his jarringly childish voice. "Everybody's got a plan till they get hit in the mouth."

Ali has loftier ambitions: "I'm not just a winner in boxing or my stand on the draft. I'm a winner in the

create a catchy Frankenhit.

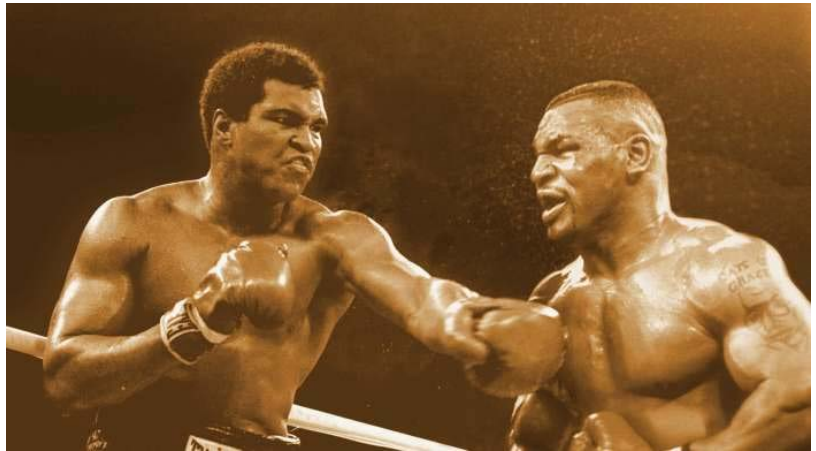
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The actors capture the fighters' moves and mannerisms.

# BOXING NEWS



## FEATURE

Monday, 13 January 2014

Muhammad Ali versus Mike Tyson

Jack Hirsch reviews the New York play that depicts the fantasy matchup

UNDERSTAND THIS, most hypothetical matches are generational and nothing more. Younger fans can't comprehend that the most hotly debated mythical matchup had been between former heavyweight champions Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis.

There is no one alive who saw Dempsey fight during his championship years (1919-1926) and the numbers have dwindled who witnessed Louis' exploits at the top (1937-1949). Only historians and the hardest of the hard core fans would now passionately discuss such an encounter.

Louis vs, Muhammad Ali had also generated substantial debate for many years. The consensus during Ali's prime was that he would not have beaten the "Brown Bomber", but public opinion changed dramatically once Ali retired and you can find very few Louis takers when the subject is brought up. Ali now has a new partner in the ring of public imagination, exit Louis enter Mike Tyson.

Because of the phenomenon of cable television and most notably You Tube, younger fans have more access to fight footage than those of past eras. As a result, the loquaciousness and charisma of Ali has never faded from public view. And Tyson's whole career continues to be one big highlight reel which has skyrocketed his popularity to where it arguably rivals Ali's. Because of this the great debate of the last 25 years or so remains, who would have won had they met?

New York, director Reid Farrington tries to recreate this fight of our imagination in a scintillating 60 minute play at the 3LD Art & Technology Center at 80 Greenwich Street, in Manhattan. The showings which run throughout the month of January, have attracted diverse crowds, no doubt all of them basking in a wave of nostalgia. And they get all that and more from the five actors, two who play Tyson at various intervals and two who do likewise for Ali. The referee serves as more than just a third man in the ring from where the play mostly emanates. He evokes some of the classic lines that we have heard before and doubles as a stage hand shifting the screens back and forth where we get to view fuzzy film footage.

At the end of the day we all exit the theater highly entertained and not really caring who would have won had they done it for real. Just as Rocky Marciano backers like to point to the computer fight as evidence that their man was superior to Ali, no one in their right mind should draw conclusions from this wonderful theatrical experience. Easier said than done, I must admit. The physical condition of the actors and their uncanny ability to invoke memories of both champions by reviewing their most famous moments and quotes is a trip down memory lane that should be savored.

My favorite part of the play was the respect it showed for boxing history, connecting the dots by giving kudos to heavyweight champions going all the way back to John L. Sullivan.

Throughout the evening we bond with Tyson and Ali the men, get to know them better for how they were outside the ring than in. For that all of us were the real winners.

[http://www.boxingnewsonline.net/latest/feature/muhammad-ali-versus-mike-tyson#\\_/term\\_](http://www.boxingnewsonline.net/latest/feature/muhammad-ali-versus-mike-tyson#_/term_)

# FINANCIAL TIMES

January 10, 2014



By Brendan Lemon

In a fight between Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali in their prime, who would have won? Anyone expecting a firm answer to that question from *Tyson vs. Ali*, the multimedia performance piece that has just opened in downtown Manhattan, will be disappointed. Reid Farrington, who conceived and directed this highly inventive 60-minute evening, which is a co-production of PS122 and arts group 3-Legged Dog, isn't interested in assembling a debate between boxing experts.

You will not discover a point-by-point analysis of each boxer's strengths: Ali's speed, Tyson's power; Ali's style, Tyson's grit; Ali's stamina, Tyson's defence. Nor will you encounter much linear biographical material: Ali's political stances in the 1960s; Tyson's love of pigeons in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead, Farrington and writer Frank Boudreaux evoke the feel of each fighter's personality through footage of the men and through snippets of their statements spoken by the four actors who get under the boxers' skin.

And skin is both literal and metaphorical here, as it is in all plays and movies about boxing. The four performers – Dennis A Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke, Jonathan Swain – spent months training at Gleason's gym in Brooklyn, where Tyson, who was born in that borough, and Ali, who was born Cassius Clay in Louisville, Kentucky, at times worked out. The actors who spring into the ring that serves as *Tyson vs. Ali*'s playing area (the audience sit on two sides of it) are supreme physical specimens.

Video clips are projected on to screens that resemble mini trampolines, which are wielded with martial-arts precision by Dave Shelley, who portrays the referee. Many of the sequences unfold to a clock ticking down the three-minute rounds of a boxing match.

As the performers are given no back-and-forth book scenes to act, they must engage us through intense sparring and through short speeches that they deliver ringside. Swain, who has professional boxing experience, channels Ali: "I'm young. I'm handsome. I'm fast. I'm pretty. And can't possibly be beat." Casey gives us Tyson: "I don't try to intimidate people at press conferences ... I intimidate people by hitting them."

Farrington's tech-heavy method – clever projections of edited boxing footage interact with other projections and the live performers – serves in this instance to distance theatregoers from the action. Since the method is so fragmentary, the audience, which is usually a kinetic, crucial part of a fight, is largely boxed out. Instead, we must content ourselves with the actors' movement – a sequence in which all four guys punch in unison is terrific – and the skill with which the video is arrayed.

January 10, 2014

## METRO in focus

# Tyson and Ali ...get ready for a big hit

**I**n the words of Rocky Balboa's great rival and mentor, Apollo Creed: 'Ding. Ding.' It's time for two of history's most famous heavyweight champions to step into the ring and slug it out to discover who really was 'the greatest'.

But this is no ordinary boxing bout. This is Muhammad Ali vs Mike Tyson – widely considered to be the sport's dream fight. Both



It is one of boxing's most enduring questions: who would have been victorious if Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson had ever faced each other in the ring? **ROSS MCGUINNESS** discovers a New York stage show might have the answer.

were undisputed heavyweight world champions but in different eras, so never met in the ring – until now.

Both fighters will be returned to their prime, in a bout that rewrites the hands of history, in New York

City later this month. It's a clash of two boxing greats that won't be played out at the famous Madison Square Garden – but in a 200-seat theatre where the sweat, combat and body blows might seem real

but the fight will be pure fantasy.

Iron Mike and the Louisville Lip will be played by actors in a stage show that combines boxing with dance and new media.

The production, Tyson vs Ali (one wonders what Ali would think about being second on the bill), will play out as part of the Coil Festival at the 3LD Art & Technology Center in Manhattan.

The show's makers say it will 'realise the greatest heavyweight boxing match that never happened' and stop pundits and fans from imagining what might have been.

While the 'People's Champion' Ali had long since retired from the sport by the time 'The Baddest Man On The Planet' Tyson took his first steps in the ring, every man to have ever entered a pub has at some point debated which one was boxing's ultimate fighter.

So the show will make the impossible happen and broadcast footage of the champions in action on ringside TV screens, while actors play the parts of Tyson and Ali.

The 60-minute play is structured in three-minute rounds, like a boxing match.

Each one explores a facet of the two fighters' skills, such as 'beauty and brutality' and 'the mindset'. After each round, there is an 'interval', in which

**12**  
rounds of  
fighting  
talk...

Who said it: Tyson or Ali?



**1**  
I'm the biggest fighter in the history of the sport. If you don't believe it, check the cash register

**4**  
At home I am a nice guy but I don't want the world to know

**2**  
I am the greatest – I said that even before I knew I was

**5**  
I'll match my wits with anyone on literature, science and the arts

**3**  
If you even dream of beating me you'd better wake up and apologise

**6**  
Machiavelli's the most sophisticated writer outside of Shakespeare. Way ahead of his time

Picture: John Hurley

**9**  
I just want to be humble at all times

**10**  
If you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything

**7**  
It's just a job. Grass grows, birds fly, waves pound the sand. I beat people up

**11**  
Being a champion opens lots of doors – I'd like to get a real estate licence, maybe sell insurance

**8**  
A lot of people don't like themselves and I happen to be totally in love with myself

**12**  
There are more pleasant things to do than beat up people

actors voice some of the words spoken by Ali and Tyson during their careers.

The actors spent two months in a boxing gym to learn how to replicate the styles of Tyson and Ali. They also had vocal coaching to imitate their mannerisms and speech patterns.

**T**HE show is directed by Reid Farrington, who said: 'I've been a fan of boxing since I met Jake LaMotta [a former world middleweight champion] when I was eight. My father would bring me to fight nights in New York City when I was a kid, and I remember going to the Holiday Inn in my neighbourhood in New Jersey to watch pay-per-view Tyson fights.'

His father was at Madison Square Gardens in 1971 to see the first of three fights between Ali and his great rival Joe Frazier – a match dubbed 'The Fight of the Century'.

'He always goes on about Ali's shoelaces,' said Farrington. 'How his laces had puff ball tassels and how, during the whole fight, he watched these tassels bounce around like they had a life of their own, until Frazier knocked Ali down. Then the tassels went still. He says it was stunning to see those tassels go still.'

Tyson vs Ali begins by showing both men knocking out opponents.

'This is where we begin our com-

parison of these two men's lives: in the ring,' said Farrington. 'We began to think of themes to riff on. Great speeches by the fighters seemed to fit, and in some cases, made the theme.'

Both men ruled the world at the peak of their powers.

Ali's golden era stretched from 1963 – when he defeated Sonny Liston to win the heavyweight title for the first time – until the mid 1970s.

But three years after quitting the ring in 1981, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Tyson became the youngest ever heavyweight world champion in 1986, at the age of 20.

His fall from grace was far steeper and darker than Ali's.

Forced to retire when jailed for three years for raping 18-year-old Desiree Washington in 1992, his subsequent comeback is chiefly remembered for him biting off Evander Holyfield's ear in their 1994 world title bout.

In his prime, in the late 1980s, Tyson was a more fearsome fighter, but could he have coped with the moves of the self-proclaimed greatest?

In Tyson vs. Ali, the question is briefly answered – albeit ambiguously – as the pair face off in a bout based loosely on the choreography of the Rumble in the Jungle, the 1974 fight between Ali and George Foreman.

If you know your boxing history, you may be able to predict the outcome.

Answers: Tyson: 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11. Ali: 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 12

January 8, 2014

## Tyson vs Ali, in scena la sfida impossibile



È l'incontro che non c'è mai stato, e non ci sarebbe mai potuto essere. Due leggende della boxe, Mike Tyson e Muhammed Ali, si incontrano virtualmente sul ring, nella performance elaborata dal regista Reid Farrington nel Centro di Arte e Tecnologia 3D di Manhattan, a New York. Un connubio di riprese video e recitazione teatrale per mettere in scena i round tra due giganti della storia del pugilato. Lo spettacolo, presentato al Festival artistico Coil, vede la partecipazione di quattro attori: Dennis A. Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke e Jonathan Swain che si alternano sul palco. Il regista ha trasformato la fisicità del match in un duello psicologico, indagando la forza mentale degli sfidanti, scegliendo testi tratti da interviste e conferenze stampa dei due atleti

# The Villager Newspaper THE VILLAGER

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## Just Do Art: Special COIL Edition

BY SCOTT STIFFLER



L-R: Femi Olagoke and Dennis A. Allen II, in "Tyson vs. Ali." PHOTO BY JOHN HURLEY

**TYSON vs. ALI** Like comic book fans geeking out to “what if” conflicts involving equally powerful superheroes, it doesn’t take much to get well-informed boxing fans into an argument about whose arm would be raised at the end of a fight between two greats of disparate eras. Eventually, they all fall down — but as made-in-heaven matchups go, it’s difficult to imagine a more dynamic pairing than “Iron” Mike Tyson and Muhammad “The Greatest” Ali.

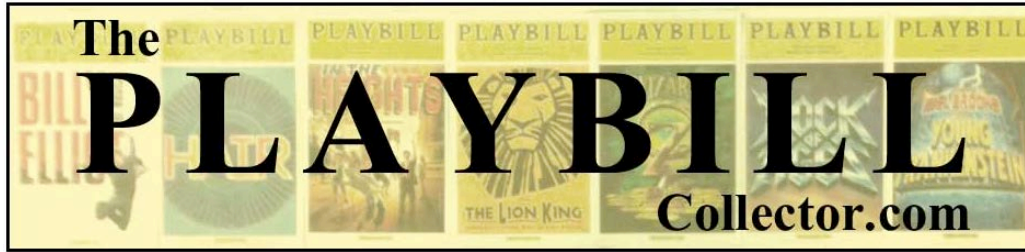
Co-presented by PS122 and 3-Legged Dog, this sensory overload

entry in the COIL contemporary performance festival takes the audience on a tight, well-conditioned, nine-round ride — during which the vastly different public personas and fighting styles of Tyson and Ali are examined alongside the emotional life and physical experiences of the aspiring boxers who play them. Dennis Allen, Femi Olagoke, Jon Swain (veteran of four pro boxing fights), Roger Casey and Dave Shelley alternate in the roles, each tasked with playing both legendary fighters at various points. Along the way, there are plenty of ringside shout-outs to the audience, forced separations from the ref and reconstructed moments from numerous Tyson and Ali bouts.

Jabbing, weaving, punching and pivoting their way around the ring while classic fight footage is played, the athlete/actors bring sweaty, aggressive life to the “greatest heavyweight boxing match that never happened.” Laura K. Nicoll’s kinetic choreography, combined with new media artist and theater director Reid Farrington’s use of large hanging screens and opaque scrims moved by the ref, provides the audience with more action to absorb than a comparatively static stand-alone boxing match. But the evening’s greatest impact comes (literally) from the live action: note-for-note recreations of devastating blows that are delivered with no sparring gear, and all of the wince-inducing, glove-to-flesh intensity you get from a real night at the fights.

*Jan. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17-19 at 7:30pm, Jan. 10, 16 at 10pm and Jan. 13 at 1pm. At 3LD Art & Technology Center (80 Greenwich St., at Rector St.). For tickets (\$20, \$15 for students/seniors), call 212-352-3101 or visit [ps122.org](http://ps122.org). Also visit [3ldnyc.org](http://3ldnyc.org).*

<http://thevillager.com/2013/12/31/just-do-art-special-coil-edition/>



January 11, 2014

## Tyson vs Ali

If you like boxing, TYSON VS ALI is a play which is true to the sport. We find ourselves in the role of spectators as we watch men wrestle in an actual boxing ring. Four actors take turns embodying both Tyson and Ali at different points in their careers.

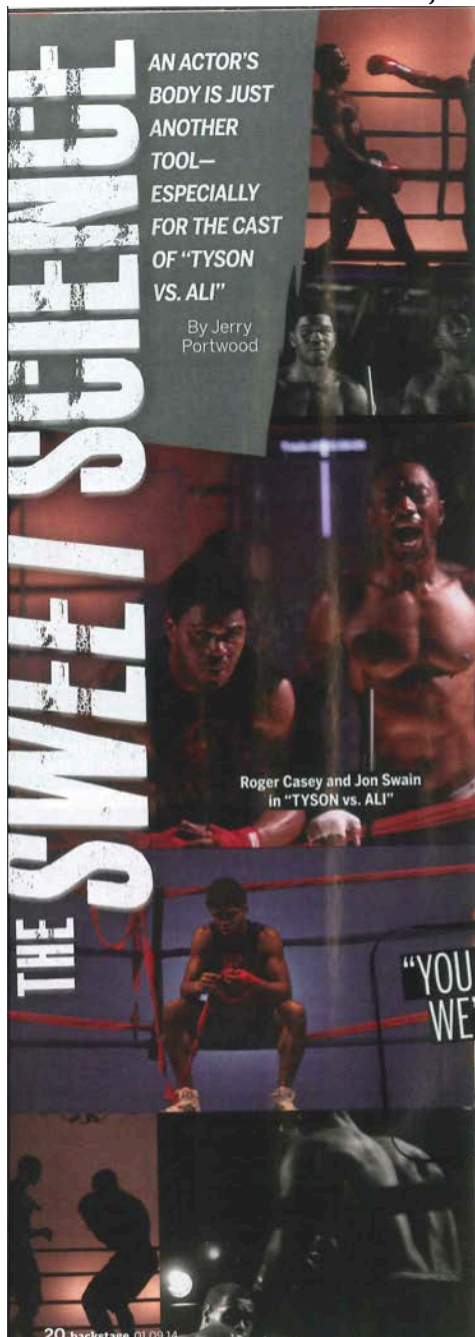
We also meet a ref who plays multiple parts throughout the show.

This fast-paced, sixty minute play, transitions by way of “rounds”. Each is categorized to signify what is happening. There are multiple screens which fight scenes are projected on in order to give us dates, times and events. I’m still not sure what the draw to this show was. There wasn’t enough history or story telling to be a solid play. There were funny lines sprinkled in here and there and the boxing seemed very genuine. However, the show itself seemed unfinished. There wasn’t much of a point. In short, not memorable.

<http://theplaybillcollector.com/play/tyson-vs-ali>

# backstage

January 9, 2014



AN ACTOR'S  
BODY IS JUST  
ANOTHER  
TOOL—  
ESPECIALLY  
FOR THE CAST  
OF "TYSON  
VS. ALI"

By Jerry  
Portwood

Roger Casey and Jon Swain  
in "TYSON vs. ALI"

"YOU CAN'T FAKE FIGHT.  
WE'RE TAKING BLOWS.  
GIVING BLOWS."  
—ROGER CASEY

## THE ACTORS IN THE RING JAB, WEAVE,

block, and punch. Then you hear it. *Smack!* Did he just hit that guy in the face? Yes. Yes, he did—and it looked like it hurt.

Unlike with most stage combat, in Reid Farrington's "TYSON vs. ALI"—which depicts an imaginary match between heavyweight champions Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali—the four actors have learned to take actual punches.

"It's a visceral experience," director Farrington explains about his immersive new media production combining dance, theater, and finely tuned video projections, which premiered this month as part of New York City's COIL festival. "We're trying to engage the audience in the actual sport and talk about the sport and build on top of it with an engaging dynamic experience."

Which meant that the actors didn't just learn stage combat; they trained to be boxers. "I told them, 'We're going to wear headgear,'" Farrington says. "And they said, 'What, is this going to be the greatest amateur match ever?' They've asked more of me. Because they are willing to go there, I'm here to support them."

Boxing is in the zeitgeist—at least onstage. Last year, Seth Numrich honed his skills for the Broadway revival of "Golden Boy." This spring, Andy Karl plays a version of Sylvester Stallone's Rocky Balboa when the musical adaptation of "Rocky" premieres on the Great White Way. According to Karl, he put on 12 pounds when he decided to reach an actual heavyweight's minimum weight. It's one thing to sculpt your muscles and practice a great uppercut; it's quite another to go eight or nine rounds as icons Iron Mike and The Greatest.

Of the four actors in "TYSON vs. ALI"—Dennis Allen, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke, and Jon Swain—only Swain had boxed before. In fact, he'd been an amateur fighter for close to eight years when an injury forced him to reconsider, and he decided to focus on acting. The other guys, who all have experience in martial arts, immediately noticed the difference after they began training with Martin Gonzalez at Brooklyn's famed Gleason's Gym last summer.

"There's 'in shape' and there's 'in fighting shape,'" says Allen, who has a black belt in Soo Bahk Do. "When you're up there, those three minutes become the longest three minutes of your life. Jon is conditioned in that way, so he would stay in all the rounds when we were training, and we would switch out. He'd have six rounds and we'd have two, and we'd be sucking wind."

Olagoke, a fitness model, dancer, and athlete, agrees. "I came already trained and conditioned but with boxing, you have to learn new ways of using your body, how to breathe properly, pace yourself," he explains. "You don't want to get too tired easily. If you're throwing all these hard punches, after the first minute, you're done. It's like running an 800-meter race. You're not gonna sprint the first 400, because you have to make the last stretch."

That stamina is essential, as 26-year-old Casey, a combat choreographer himself, knows, but it's also transformed them at a deeper acting level. "You can't

fake fight. We're taking blows, giving blows," Casey explains. "It also gives you humility. It's a pure confidence, but with an understanding of your limitations."

This is another reason such a deep camaraderie has been forged among the cast, which also includes Dave Shelley as a referee. They've been working together for seven months "building" the ensemble piece in grueling eight-hour days. "There's a lot of trust, and we know there's no bad intentions," Casey says, adding

that they've left their egos out of it.

The extreme preparation has also seeped into other aspects of their lives. The guys admit that dating is tough when all you want to do is eat, stretch, and sleep. "It's very method," Casey quips. And Shelley adds that there's not much socializing at bars after rehearsals. "It's the first group I've worked with that if I say, 'Hey, man, let's get a beer,' they just want a low-carb protein shake. Or they say, 'No, man, we're gonna go home and get some ice.'" ■



BACKSTAGE.COM

# New York Theatre Review

January 9, 2014

Ryan Hudak on *Tyson vs Ali* as presented by P.S.  
122's COIL festival



By Jody Christopherson

“Through the hands that have hit me, I trace a lineage. I trace a lineage of my fellow warriors,” shouts a chorus of Tysons towards the end of Reid Farrington’s historical mash-up *Tyson vs Ali*. That’s right, a chorus of Mike Tysons and Muhammad Alis shout these words at each other across the boxing ring, both of them looking back at the history they have made. It’s a powerful moment, fitting for a piece that puts two giants of the boxing world into one room and waits to see what will happen.

Tyson and Ali do fight eventually (and no, I will not spoil who wins), but the fight itself is not the point of the piece. *Tyson vs Ali* is not only a made-up match between these two legends, it’s also a character study of two men who dominated their sport but approached their careers in very different ways. For nine rounds, these men continue to battle each other. Each round has a title—“Why We Do This”, for example—which makes the bouts stand for something more than just who throws the hardest punch.

Simon Harding’s videos and set take us ringside. He projects footage from historic fights and interviews onto screens bordering the ring. Laura Mroczkowski and Nick Ryckert’s lighting design guides us from the public spheres of Ali and Tyson to the private ones,

<http://newyorktheatreview.blogspot.com/2014/01/ryan-hudak-on-tyson-vs-ali-as-presented.html>

# New York Theatre Review

January 9, 2014

providing harsh sporting-arena light for the matches and moody spotlights for many of the speeches.

The cast is made up of five actors: a ref/coach and four men who switch back and forth between Tyson and Ali. Dennis A. Allen II, Roger Casey, Femi Olagoke and Jonathan Swain show incredible power and humanity in portraying both of these men. Given the hard job of making the rounds convincing, they pull it off brilliantly. Partly it's their innate athleticism and partly it's Laura K. Nicoll's intense choreography and Martin Gonzales's fight training. Dave Shelley, portraying the coaches and refs who watched these two men's careers, gives us a great sense of how others perceived them. Shelley also has to be commended for his part in the projections, running across the stage to pull open a screen seconds before an image is splashed onto it.

*Tyson vs Ali* has great performances and moments that catch you by surprise, but that doesn't necessarily make for a cohesive whole. The piece comes alive when it's using the two men to look at the history of boxing and race in America, but it gets overwhelmed trying to depict so much of each career as well. Outside of the ring, director Reid Farrington's direction tends to not use the space to his advantage, staging most of the speeches from the same two platforms nearby. Even at sixty minutes, the show can feel disjointed and long.

But when *Tyson vs Ali* provides a striking moment, it stays with you. I still can't get one out of my head, a speech made by Tyson about how he is no longer afraid of being bullied or fought. As the speech continues, at the far end of the ring a trainer helps one of the players through a quick combination, the two of them lit in silhouette. The jabs are slow at first, as the boxer gets the hang of it, and then suddenly the moves are brutally fast. The combination repeats and repeats, becoming fluid and scary. Tyson says that his fear has ended because he knows that he can beat his bullies in the ring. He has transformed into a boxing legend, and that transformation happens right before your eyes.

Ryan Hudak is a NY based actor and playwright. He was most recently seen as an actor at Les Fêtes Internationales du Théâtre in Montreal with *Re-membering Antigone*, a Suzuki based production of Sophocles's *Antigone* directed by Maria Porter. His plays include *Goodbye Soldier*, *Grasp My Hand*, *We are the Women of Rome* and *Three Sisters Say Goodbye to Their Father*. He has worked on the administrative side of PlayPenn: New Play Development in Philadelphia and Keen Company in NYC. He is a graduate of C.W. Post, Long Island University with a B.F.A. in Acting.

<http://newyorktheatrereview.blogspot.com/2014/01/ryan-hudak-on-tyson-vs-ali-as-presented.html>



January 8, 2014

## TYSON VS. ALI - LOCATION, TICKETS, REVIEWS



The 2014 COIL Festival opens with a serious right hook. Tyson vs. Ali, a groundbreaking new multimedia play devised by innovative visual artist Reid Farrington, imagines what it would be like if the two greatest heavyweight boxers of all time – Muhammed Ali and Mike Tyson – met in the ring. On a life-size boxing ring that fills the stage at the 3-Legged Dog Arts & Technology Center, four actors take turns playing the two champs and various characters and opponents from each man's life.

The cast spars in ferocious, intricately choreographed live boxing sequences amidst a forest of mobile screens that stream Tyson and Ali's actual matches spliced with other archival footage. Along the way, there are meditations, recordings, and monologues about who Tyson and Ali were as athletes, celebrities, and men. For how could two seemingly polar opposite champions – one an American hero, the other a tabloid monster – find success and purpose in the same sport?

Maxamoo

COIL has marketed Tyson vs. Ali as the centerpiece of their festival, and it's easy to see why. The combination of intense live elements with expertly designed video and sound is as breathtaking as it is groundbreaking. Within a short 60 minute runtime, Farrington and his extraordinary cast of four actor/boxers (without question the hardest working men in show business right now) find new ways to portray Tyson and Ali, resulting in a dream-like unspooling of elegance, introspection, and violence.

The most startling thing about Tyson vs. Ali is that this looks like just the beginning. Farrington only barely scratches the surface of these two men, this sport, and his concept

<http://www.maxamoo.com/off-off-broadway-tyson-vs-ali/>



January 8, 2014

in this short COIL run. With some expansion, storytelling work (boxing history novices might feel lost at times), and a big league technology budget, this thing could become a serious knockout. See Tyson vs. Ali in its promising early form.

#### Public Opinion

So far, the public response has been warm. Word of mouth among the festival-savvy theater-goers was strong when COIL announced its lineup, and now it's being talked about as one of the hottest shows in town. In a rare move, COIL has added three performances to its short run, responding to heavy demand.

#### Critics Reviews

Just a few reviews so far but one is from the loudest kid in class, the New York Times. It's positive, so we expect Tyson vs. Ali will very soon be a tough ticket to find.

#### Exeunt Magazine

Tyson vs. Ali comes out swinging and rolls with the punches both real and figurative of professional boxing.

#### New York Times

A Dream Fight Made Real Onstage

#### New York Post

Legendary Heavyweights Meet At Last in 'Tyson vs. Ali'

# HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

January 10, 2014

## Using Theater and Media to Stage the Impossible



*Reid Farrington's "Tyson vs. Ali" (photo by Paula Court)*

By Jeremy M Baker

"The original idea," theater artist Phil Soltanoff told me over coffee, "was basically: take all the footage of Captain Kirk from Star Trek, cut it up, sample it, and use that to have him talk about art."

That is, indeed, a fair summation of his piece, *An Evening with William Shatner* which opens this week as part of Performance Space 122's COIL festival. I saw it at its premiere in Austin, at the Fusebox Festival in 2012, and was compelled to reach out to Soltanoff because — in the sort of coincidental synergy that comes up at contemporary theater festivals — another show at COIL this year also uses new media technology to manipulate existing materials to stage a "what if" event. Reid Farrington's *Tyson vs.*

<http://hyperallergic.com/102693/using-theater-and-media-to-stage-the-impossible/>

# HYPERALLERGIC

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Ali has a self-explanatory title: through video mash-up and elaborate fight choreography, Farrington has staged an eight-round bout between two of the most iconic boxers of all time, the ultimate fight that never happened.

It would be a mistake to see this as theater's late embrace of remix culture; outside of mainstream, conventional theater, experimental artists have been manipulating media for decades. Farrington himself spent a number of years working as a video artist with the Wooster Group, which has been creating media collage performances since the 1970s, and the Builders Association, a New York-based company, started staging large-scale video-based performances in the early 1990s. European directors like Frank Castorf, the long-time director of the Volksbühne in Berlin, pioneered the incorporation of live video, influencing several generations of directors in the US. Jay Scheib, for instance, has used the technique to tweak the model of National Theatre Live-style broadcasts with his production of *Platanov*, or the *Din* inherited (currently running at the Kitchen), which is structured so that an audience at the live performance sees a different show than those who watch it simulcast in movie theaters around the city.

In fact, what sets Farrington and Soltanoff apart isn't their incorporation of technology and media, but rather the limitations they place upon themselves in doing so. Whereas most artists use technology expansively — to incorporate a wider array of content and aesthetics than they'd be able to otherwise — these two have done the opposite, using the potential afforded by technology to stage something narrow and specific. And that limitation has led them back to something that, despite its tech-geeky appearance, is a rather conventional form of theater.

The process of creating William Shatner *Asterisk* was uniquely challenging for Phil Soltanoff, who's known mostly as an innovative site-specific performance maker. "I'm not a pop culture enthusiast," he told me. "I look at Captain Kirk as a kind of sign — something that culturally and iconically a lot of people have a starting point with." While he often spends a year or more developing a piece, normally the majority of that period is

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given over to constant fine-tuning. With William Shatner Asterisk, just getting a working version running took months.

The first task was to create a video sample of each word Shatner says in the original Star Trek television series, a library of some 5,000–6,000 tiny clips. From there, various utterances of the same word were catalogued for their delivery — intonation, intensity, and emotionality — so that Soltanoff could sample not just the word itself but its performance and delivery. A lexicon was produced for playwright Joe Diebes to draft Kirk's lecture, which in turn necessitated the development of new samples. (Ironically, although the topic of Kirk's monologue is "art," he never actually says that word in the entire Star Trek series; Soltanoff produced it by clipping "start.") Rob Ramirez then created software that combined the samples into a video track, which could be manipulated during live performances. That took several more months.

Once a usable video of Kirk — a spasmodic series of fraction-of-a-second-long clips delivering a retro-futuristic lecture on art, with subtitles — existed, the problem became how to put it on stage in a way that made it a performance, rather than just a presentation. The video is shown on a flat-screen monitor mounted on a rolling cart that's moved around the stage by performer Mari Akita; Soltanoff compared it to a puppet show, with Akita as the puppeteer and the monitor as the Kirk puppet. The movement is modeled on the stereotypical blocking for creating a dynamic one-man show: begin at center, slowly develop the space by moving straight towards and away from the audience, then side to side, and then in increasingly dynamic forms like diagonals.

Before *Tyson vs. Ali*, Reid Farrington's stock-in-trade was innovative video-based adaptations of films. In *Gin and "It"* (2010), he excavated the subtext of Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) by staging the director's technical experiment as a play. With *Rope*, Hitchcock famously sought to increase the emotional intensity of the film by reducing the number of cuts as much as possible and forcing the cinematography to conform to a fixed set (an apartment interior), rather than a more flexible sound-stage environment, in which walls could be removed for broad shots. On stage, Farrington

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replicated the dimensions of Hitchcock's original set, without the walls — an effect somewhat akin to a live version of Lars von Trier's *Dogville*. Stagehands retraced the original blocking, carrying screens onto which video of the actors from the film were projected.

Farrington used similar staging techniques (to less transgressive effect) in his version of *A Christmas Carol*, which was in 2011–12 a mainstay of seasonal downtown New York theater. But, as he said to me after I sat in on a rehearsal of *Tyson vs. Ali* a couple weeks ago, "I've taken what I can do on my own as far as I can go."

The new piece is a more collaborative effort. After arriving at the concept through an off-the-wall conversation informed by childhood memories of going with his dad to watch Mike Tyson Pay-Per-View fights at the local Holiday Inn, Farrington began working with four performers with backgrounds in mixed martial arts and stage combat. The fight choreography was culled by taking "the most interesting" parts of fights by both Tyson and Ali: the knock-outs. The fights in each of the show's eight rounds are directly modelled on specific exchanges of blows by Tyson or Ali that resulted in a knock-out or knock-down. The performers never fully inhabit either Tyson or Ali, though; instead they take turns, with two fighting while the other two deliver monologues based on interviews with the boxers. The "third man" (the ref, and the only performer who plays one character throughout) narrates and calls the fight. At the same time, he manipulates a complex set of standing and hand-held screens on which video of the original matches is projected.

But, as with Soltanoff's piece, the conceptual development didn't at first offer much in the way of a performance. Rather than belabor an analysis of which fighter might actually have won the match (if the two could have faced off in their primes), Farrington fell back on their famous real-life encounter in 1992 on the *Arsenio Hall Show*, in which Tyson averred that, clearly, Ali would have won. By the end of *Tyson vs. Ali*, the story shifts from the imagined match to recounting the interpersonal relationships between the performers. During their months practicing for the show in a local boxing gym, they had

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ample opportunity to observe the camaraderie that exists between boxers, many of whom come from the same humble circumstances as Ali and Tyson. Boxers, the play suggests, are all members of the same extended family, connected by a “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon”-like chain of who-sparred-with-whom. Like Soltanoff’s appropriation of Captain Kirk as a cultural signifier, the fictional Tyson vs. Ali match becomes, in Farrington’s piece, a space of shared imagination for a broader public.

For all the technological flashiness of their pieces, in the end, both artists arrive at very human stories. For Farrington, it’s the interior lives of boxers. “This has become an homage,” he said, “something that I want [my collaborators] to be proud of, other boxers to come [see].” For Soltanoff, it’s less about the technology itself than the interaction with it. Late in William Shatner Asterisk, Soltanoff flips the puppet-puppeteer dynamic between Kirk and Akita: Akita is forced to deliver a deadpan monologue dictated by the same subtitles that have been making Kirk’s disjointed speech comprehensible. The suggestion is that technology is transforming us as we use it, causing us to alter our behavior to accommodate what was originally conceived of as a liberating new tool.

“I’m not a person glorying in technological things,” he told me. “I’m taking it as, ‘I’m a normal guy, here’s this technological thing, how do I work with it?’ It’s part of my world, so how do I dance with it?”

An Evening With Williams Shatner Asterisk runs at the New Ohio Theatre (154 Christopher Street, West Village, Manhattan) through January 12. Tyson vs. Ali runs at 3LD Art & Technology Center (80 Greenwich Street, Financial District, Manhattan) through January 25.

<http://hyperallergic.com/102693/using-theater-and-media-to-stage-the-impossible/>

December 18, 2013

## THEATER

### ***TYSON vs. ALI: Reid Farrington Mashes It Up With Two Heavyweight Icons***

by Gary Winter



In *TYSON vs. ALI*, live performers in a real boxing ring will be combined with video clips of the boxers' matches. *The Brooklyn Rail* interviews Reid Farrington (director), Frank Boudreaux (script), Laura K. Nicoll (choreographer), and Dennis Allen (actor).

**Gary Winter (Rail):** Reid, talk about your process in creating *TYSON vs. ALI*.

**Reid Farrington:** In *TYSON vs. ALI*, there are multiple organizing principles at play. The first being that our scene structure follows the structure of a fight. Three minutes of action followed by a minute of rest. Each round has a theme and each transition has a theme. As far as perspectives go, we play on the “versus” idea. It’s not just versus in the ring, but it’s also on work and action. There is a call and response sort of thing, one idea from Tyson, then an answer to that from Ali. Also, in the design of our set. Our audience will be seated on two of the four sides of the boxing ring. Each side will certainly experience a very different show, like when seeing a boxing match. Then we have a structure of knockouts. In the first four rounds of our fight we highlight what I imagine to be the most exciting or devastating moment for a boxer in the ring, the knockout. We created video mash-ups,

<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2013/12/theater/tyson-vs-ali-reid-farrington-mashes-it-up-with-two-heavyweight-icons>

# **BROOKLYN RAIL**

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December 18, 2013

which became the landmarks that Laura used to organize our fight choreography, by compressing all the knockouts in these men's lives into the specific round and second of that round.

**Rail:** How do you use technology to tell the story you want to tell?

**Farrington:** Video mash-up has always been the beginning of every process. Getting the materials in the computer so I can manipulate them is how I best see the work before I can get people in a room to work. My dyslexia, or whatever, keeps me from reading the written word and seeing it come to life; I need to hear it. So, I construct time lines in Final Cut Pro that allow me to construct a script of sorts.

**Rail:** I'm curious about your research and editing process. Did you have the clips you wanted to use first, and then create the script? Or did you have an idea of the story you wanted to tell, and then find footage to tell that story? You must have gone through a ton of footage, no?

**Farrington:** Yes, yes, yes, a *ton* of footage. The first thing I did was order DVDs of every Tyson and Ali fight. It's there I began, then all the documentaries I could get my hands on, then books, then YouTube. We took all the fights and organized them by round using Final Cut Pro. I've worked very closely with Frank on this project. Like Laura, he's an essential collaborator and voice in this project. I rarely have an idea of a story before I embark on a project. It's a discovery process. As I discover my subjects through research and manipulation of media in the computer, the story reveals itself. It's important to have strong organizing principles that can generate content based on the structure. If I have that, then I can work from an emotional place versus an intellectual place, and respond to the material versus try to construct. It's also important to note that this is the same way I work in the room with performers. Dennis, Jon, Roger, and Femi have been essential in the development of our script and story. I'm always asking them what they are interested in.

I've really pushed the fighters to the front of this work. I spent two months with [the actors] going to Gleason's three days a week to train. I really became enamored with each of them, their personalities and their connection to the material.

**Rail:** Dennis, what is the training like?

**Dennis Allen:** Intense, painful, fun, and humbling. There's a big difference between being "in shape" and being in "fighting shape" and there is no faking it. Punching and trying not to get hit for three minutes is hard work; now try doing it for 12 rounds (Ali did it for 15) and you'll get an idea of how hard we needed to train. Both Tyson and Ali have stated that they hated training. Hated it. But in spite of that hate they persevered and endured it because they both were committed to the goal of being the greatest. That kind of

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tenacity is rare, admirable, inspiring, and damn intimidating.

**Rail:** Frank, I know it was a collaborative process, so tell me about the challenges of what it means to write a script in this way.

**Frank Boudreaux:** After our workshop rehearsal in August at Abrons Arts Center, it became clear that what we all needed (me, Reid, Laura, the actors, the video team, the sound team, etc.) was, what I call, an “expressive” script—that gives us the meaning and/or the feeling of the action. The writerly challenge of this project was to find the theatrically compelling through-line or journey inside the structure of a boxing match, and the comparison of these transcendent icons—theatrically compelling thematically, but also, *formally*—helping shape the forms that Reid and company have devised into a consistently surprising and revelatory experience. But what I have written is not the whole of our text. Reid has created a coordinate “video score,” round by round, with visuals that represent every screen and clip and stat, etc. Laura and Reid have drawn out the moves of the boxers, the ref., and the screens for catching the projections in every round, too.

**Rail:** The play explores issues of race and intelligence. Seeing the boxers juxtaposed in this way, I saw more similarities between them than I had been aware of.

**Allen:** In regards to Tyson, the effects of White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy is a bit more covert than when Ali was growing up, but no less relevant. When I think of the two I think about how Ali had support: support from both parents, support from friends and family, and eventually a support system from Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam. That kind of constant support system is essential when you grow up in a country that basically tells you that “You ain’t shit.” Tyson never had that support system, so the tragedy of his career was inevitable. Both men are self-educated, boxing historians, and possessed introspective minds that are off the charts staggering.

**Boudreaux:** Ali *played the role* for white America that Tyson actually *lived*. Tyson’s struggles always seem to be personal, even as he is acutely perceptive and reflective about his role/place in the public, racial narrative of America.

**Rail:** Tyson always gets the rap of being the dumb bruiser, while Ali is known for his witty banter and boxing smarts. I think the play gives a better insight into Tyson’s intelligence.

**Allen:** I think the humanization of an icon will always reveal tons of new information that gets lost once a person reaches iconic status. I also personally believe that another level of dehumanization occurs in the mind because of a stigma that comes with choosing boxing

<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2013/12/theater/tyson-vs-ali-reid-farrington-mashes-it-up-with-two-heavyweight-icons>

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as a profession, combined with the stigma that comes with being a black man in America.

**Boudreaux:** Tyson's boxing IQ is under-reported because most people don't know much about boxing. Tyson was a fabulous strategist—inside and outside of the ring.

**Rail:** Laura, I wanted to ask you about the challenges of choreographing this show.

**Laura K. Nicoll:** There are four big challenges that I face daily in my work on this project: First is the balance of translating to the performers what it's like to perform inside Reid's work, and giving them all the tools I can for them to do their jobs, while simultaneously keeping an eye on what the piece looks like from the outside. Second is that I'm very conscious of asking people to do something that I physically can't do and communicating about content that I have very little experience with. The third challenge is also about a balance. The precision and attention that is required of performers in Reid's work opens up this beautiful freedom. There can be hundreds of cues, timing has to be perfectly in sync with the intricate technical elements, and yet there's room to play. As the choreographer, I'm compelled by the idea that Jon, Roger, Dennis, Femi, and Dave are very much creators of the piece, tuning into those moments to play within the structure and making their own choices about what to do with them. The last big challenge that I'm facing is mediating between the speed and athleticism of boxing, and the reality of what we're making being a performance. Boxing, although it's a sport, is something one doesn't "play," and yet we need our performers to not get hurt so that they can do this show night after night. The audience is coming to see a "play" and I think that one of the best things we can do is present some perspectives that they might not have considered before by blurring a line of reality and playing in that space that is real and not real.



January 09, 2014

## RECAP: TYSON VS. ALI AT 3LD ART + TECHNOLOGY CENTER



By Kara Weisenstein

For everyone but the most die-hard theater fans, propositioning a night of “experimental multi-media performance” is downright terrifying. But in the case of TYSON vs. ALI, which just opened up PS 122’s monthlong COIL Festival off-Broadway, it’s not theaterfolk, but sports fans, who are most likely to geek out over director Reid Farrington’s imaginary matchup between boxing legends Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali.

Sure, sports fandom and theater aficionado(dom) are not mutually exclusive. TYSON vs. ALI is an artful combination of live action and audiovisual projection, weaving footage

<http://nyc.brightestyoungthings.com/articles/tyson-vs-ali-at-3ld-art-technology-center.htm>



January 09, 2014

of real matches with intricately choreographed fight sequences. The show is technically impressive, but unless you're a boxing superfan, you're likely to get a little lost.

The confusing factor here is the show's lack of clear narrative. TYSON vs. ALI doesn't hold your hand and guide you through a story about two boxing greats squaring off in the ring, and Farrington is upfront about the fact that the show is more of a "rumination" on the sport, meant to spark a bigger discussion about boxing (and greatness, and race, and corruption).

Structured like a fight with three rounds of sparring followed by one minute of rest, it's best to let the action and information wash over you without trying to identify every reference. Even if you know nothing about a) prizefighting b) Mike Tyson or c) Cassius Clay a.k.a. Muhammad Ali, you're still in for an invigorating 60-minute boxing match. There's a lot to see and hear (and smell).

The audience is seated on two sides of a real full-size boxing ring. Fluorescent lights are a nice gym-like touch. When the actors enter, they're immediately pumping iron; all four incredibly ripped fellas are throwing right hooks and jumping rope. (This is all prior to jumping into the ring to punch each other.) Within five minutes, the sour scent of sweat hangs over the theater, and we might as well be in Gleason's Gym, Mike Tyson's real-life training grounds and where the actors spent months getting into "boxing shape" for their roles.

When the bell rings, two of the guys step inside the ring and square off. Eventually they'll go nine rounds of fighting, with each round assigned a theme – i.e. "Why We Fight" and "Beauty and Brutality." You never quite forget that the punches thrown are choreographed, but they're hard punches, with sweat and spit flying everywhere.

The most impressive part of the production is definitely the video projection, the fusion of technology and art that Farrington and 3LD Art & Technology Center is known for.

The most arresting moments happen when famous Tyson or Ali matches are projected on translucent screens in front of actors churning out the exact same moves. Another wow-moment features footage from Tyson and Ali matches spliced and manipulated on the walls behind the ring, so it looks like the heavyweight champions are throwing punches at each other.

<http://nyc.brightestyoungthings.com/articles/tyson-vs-ali-at-3ld-art-technology-center.htm>



## Reid Farrington's TYSON vs. ALI Extends Through 1/25 at COIL



By BWB News Desk

In response to popular demand, Performance Space 122 and 3-Legged Dog announce an extension of the world premiere of Reid Farrington's TYSON vs. ALI to January 25. Harrowing and unpredictable, TYSON vs. ALI realizes the greatest heavyweight-boxing match that never happened, placing two giants of boxing, Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali, into the ring in a way no one thought possible.

Using a volatile combination of dance, theater and new-media stagecraft, artist and director Reid Farrington examines the emotional life and physical experiences of aspiring boxers through the larger-than-life personas of Iron Mike and The Greatest. TYSON vs. ALI explores how differently these two epic fighters reigned as champions and how their histories and personalities affected their community and the world at large. Performances of TYSON vs. ALI will now take place January 3-25 (see schedule above) at 3LD Art & Technology Center. Critics are welcome as of Saturday, January 4 for an official opening of Wednesday, January 8. The running time is 60 minutes with no intermission. 3LD Art & Technology Center is located at 80 Greenwich Street in Manhattan. Tickets, which are \$20 (\$15 students & seniors), are available online at [www.ps122.org/coil](http://www.ps122.org/coil) and by phone at 212-352-3101. With choreography by Laura K. Nicoll and text by Frank Boudreaux, TYSON vs. ALI places Farrington's signature combination of live-action and lifted-video footage into a

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/long-island/article/Reid-Farringtons-TYSON-vs-ALI-Extends-Through-125-at-COIL-20140103#>



January 3, 2014

real boxing ring for a 9 round fight. Using precise video editing and projection techniques, Farrington lifts each boxer out of their respective careers and private histories and engages them with one another. As the two jab, block and weave in video projection, live stunt performers silhouette their every move, landing real blows, creating a viscerally convincing version of the impossible: Ali and Tyson boxing and interacting as contemporaries.

TYSON vs. ALI is part of 3-Legged Dog's 3LD/3D+ program. The live production will be filmed in 2D and 3D for submission to international film festivals and eventual worldwide distribution by NHK Cosmomedia America. Farrington is a new media artist, theater director and stage designer. His most recent work Reid Farrington's A Christmas Carol, which mixed live performers with video projected characters from 35 different film version of the Dickens' classic tale, premiered at the Abrons Art Center in 2011 and was remounted in 2012. His directorial debut, THE PASSION PROJECT was based on the film The Passion of Joan of Arc and premiered at the PS/K2 festival in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2007. Gin & "It", his second work, was based on Alfred Hitchcock's Rope and premiered at the Wexner Center for the Arts in 2010. He is currently developing a performance installation for the Metropolitan Museum of Art based on "The Young Archer," a much-contested Michelangelo sculpture. From 2001 - 2008, Farrington was a technical artist for The Wooster Group where he designed video and created hardware and software systems for the integration of video and sound for six of the company's productions: To You, the Birdie!, Brace Up!, Poor Theater, House/Lights, WHO'S YOUR DADA?! and Hamlet. He has toured his work and five of The Wooster Group's productions to Copenhagen, Moscow, Paris, Berlin, Istanbul, Amsterdam, Melbourne, Brussels, Athens, Vancouver, and Columbus, OH. Farrington has held creative residencies at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Eyebeam Art and Technology Center, the 3LD Art & Technology Center and Abrons Art Center. Please visit [reidfarrington.com](http://www.reidfarrington.com), for more information.

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/long-island/article/Reid-Farringtons-TYSON-vs-ALI-Extends-Through-125-at-COIL-20140103#>

# The New York Times

September 26, 2013

## Theater

### Following a High-Tech Survival Script

3LD Has Used Its Technology to Create a Revenue Stream



Todd Heisler/The New York Times

**A Troupe Thrives, After Disasters:** 3-Legged Dog is outrunning adversity thanks to its innovations in technology.

By ROB WEINERT-KENDT

When Ben Gassman's play "The Downtown Loop" opens at 3LD Art & Technology Center on Oct. 15, audiences will climb aboard a decommissioned double-decker tour bus parked inside the theater, while immersive videos of a gritty, non-idealized tour of New York City are projected around them and actors interact live with a video feed of offstage performers.

It's the sort of state-of-the-art multimedia hybrid that 3LD has become known for since opening its doors in the financial district in 2006. But it's not mere high-tech foolery, explained Meghan Finn, the show's director. It's about the way "the hustle that defines New York City both builds it and destroys it," she said.

3-Legged Dog, the company that runs 3LD, knows both sides of that coin as well as any troupe in town. Over the years it has had spaces knocked down, flooded (by Hurricane

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/theater/3ld-has-used-its-technology-to-create-a-revenue-stream.html?pagewanted=2&r=0>

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Sandy), and it has been threatened with eviction, while foundation and government support has fluctuated wildly. But the company has seemed to emerge stronger after each crisis.

“Sometimes I think about changing the name of the company to Job,” Kevin Cunningham, 3-Legged Dog’s executive artistic director, said in a recent interview in his sunlit ground-floor office facing Greenwich Street, a few blocks south of the former World Trade Center site. (As to the company’s peculiar name, more later.) This proximity to ground zero is a hint of 3-Legged Dog’s outsized misfortunes: The collapse of the 47-story 7 World Trade Center tower on Sept. 11, 2001, destroyed the company’s former home in nearby Fiterman Hall.

Then, after navigating the politics of post-Sept. 11 relief funding and securing its current 12,500-square-foot site in a corner of the massive Battery Parking Garage, the company faced a battle with its new landlord, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, over unpaid rent, which Mr. Cunningham claimed was offset by costly, unanticipated space renovations the M.T.A. should have paid for. Eviction was only forestalled by the intervention of State Senator Daniel Squadron, who brokered a deal with the M.T.A. in which 3LD’s lease was renewed through 2023.

That lease deal, though, offered little help with 3-Legged Dog’s biggest problem: a precipitous drop in philanthropic and public support. Mr. Cunningham said that in a single fiscal year, from 2009 to 2010, foundation support for the company dipped by 92 percent and government financing by 67 percent.

Compounding the challenge is that 3LD is no mere storefront theater; its sophisticated video and computer hardware and software are expensive to maintain. Mr. Cunningham put the company’s annual budget at \$3.5 million and estimated his monthly operating costs to keep 3LD running at \$90,000 to \$125,000.

Theater companies that own their spaces can rent them to outside presenters to earn so-called “passive income,” and 3-Legged Dog has done its share of that. But rather than drown in the expense of keeping up all of its high-end technology, 3LD has turned its cameras, projectors and computers into its life raft.

In a studio next to Mr. Cunningham’s office after the interview, three young men were flitting among a bank of monitors while a holographic-looking image of a rotating globe hovered over a small stage area. This is 3LD’s “nerd nest,” and its more-or-less nonstop research-and-development regimen is a key to the company’s new business plan, which has managed to replace much of that lost donation income with revenue from outside projects. These have included creating video installations for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, for a Lady Gaga book launch, and for an event next spring in Shanghai to introduce Michael Kors’s fashion to the Chinese market.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/theater/3ld-has-used-its-technology-to-create-a-revenue-stream.html?pagewanted=2&r=0>

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Lest these sound like craven work-for-hire gigs, Mr. Cunningham was quick to insist that they're "right in our wheelhouse" and are consistent with the company's vision.

"Part of our mission is to create new tools and methods that help artists work across disciplines," said Mr. Cunningham, who in his company's early days financed development of the integrative live-video software, Isadora, that would become widely used in the industry. "Every project we've done so far stretches us aesthetically and technologically."

The Kors event, he added, would involve "one of the biggest curved video screens ever built."

Besides, his lawyers tell him, "As long as all the money goes back to the nonprofit, there shouldn't be a problem."

Aaron Louis, who served as 3-Legged Dog's producing director through the worst of the crisis, said he then viewed the company's move from philanthropic support to an earned-revenue model as "a potentially dangerous pivot." But he also noted: "All the artists we were working with were used to having to do commercial work to get their own art financed. We just expanded that to a company level."

The spike in earned revenue has had myriad benefits — a full-time staff of 11, a debt-refinancing plan — but its main purpose has been to finance an ambitious season of performances at 3LD. After "The Downtown Loop," in January Reid Farrington will stage "Tyson vs. Ali," with video from famous boxing matches projected on and among live boxers. In March, Untitled Theater Company #61 will stage Vaclav Havel's last play, the operetta-cum-banquet "The Pig," and in May, the Joyce Theater will offer two dance-performance pieces, zoeljuniper's "Beginagain" and James Scruggs's "Deepest Man."

The creators of all these productions, as per 3LD's usual policy, will have full access to the space for months to develop and rehearse their work. Not only is such an open-door deal vanishingly rare in New York theater, but the technology that 3LD has on-site, most of it subsidized by the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, would be prohibitively expensive to rent.

Time plus technology is crucial for work like "Spy Garbo," which Mr. Cunningham directed there in 2011, in a coproduction with the Affinity Company. He said the piece's extensive multimedia elements, which included rare World War II footage, couldn't have been integrated into the storytelling without those extra hours.

The company's ease with video tools as stage elements has led, perhaps inevitably, to another breakthrough, not to mention another possible revenue stream: Each of this season's shows will be filmed in 3-D, high-definition video for distribution as part of a

[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/theater/3ld-has-used-its-technology-to-create-a-revenue-stream.html?pagewanted=2&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/theater/3ld-has-used-its-technology-to-create-a-revenue-stream.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0)

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program called 3LD/3D+. The flight-recorder docudrama “Charlie Victor Romeo” was filmed at 3LD last year, and played this year at the Sundance Film Festival and the recent New York Film Festival. The film of another show, Jim Findlay’s “Botanica,” is slated for distribution next year via TenduTV, an international arts video distributor.

“We call it promiscuous partnering,” Mr. Cunningham said with a wry smile. “The idea is that a show is a show, whether it’s a guy in a boardroom giving a presentation or a big experimental multimedia spectacle. A human body has to be able to interact with technology fluidly; that’s the principle behind almost everything we create or design.”

Some of Mr. Cunningham’s partners have even been theaters. When Oskar Eustis, the Public Theater’s artistic director, read about 3LD’s problems with the M.T.A., he called Mr. Cunningham to offer help. He didn’t have money, he said, but he had a show that could use some video. The result was a coproduction by the Public and 3LD of “The Human Scale,” the reporter Lawrence Wright’s journo-theater piece about the Palestinian occupation, in 2010. Mr. Eustis said he was struck by 3LD’s “intriguing combination of high-tech and avant-garde.”

“It’s experimental in its ethos and attitude,” he said, “and very sleek in its execution.”

About that name? It was inspired by a pit bull, Sid, who would perch on a loading dock outside an arts space Mr. Cunningham once ran in Houston, and jump down to chase passing cars. The dog was not only undaunted when he lost a front leg playing this dangerous game; he actually got better at it.

“The fourth leg wasn’t in the way, so he actually could occasionally get a chomp on the sidewall,” Mr. Cunningham said. “He became a symbol of persistence of vision in the face of adversity.”

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

January 6, 2014

## New York Photos of the Week, Dec. 28 - Jan. 3



By Andrew Hinderaker

Actor Dennis A. Allen II is pictured during a rehearsal of 'Tyson vs. Ali' in Lower Manhattan. The multimedia performance asks one of boxing's most enduring questions: Who would win if Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson could face off?

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303370904579298870748609580#7>



January 2, 2014

## New Play Pits Mike Tyson Against Muhammad Ali



“Tyson vs. Ali,” a multimedia production, imagines a matchup between boxing greats Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali. Four actors share the two roles. WSJ's Pia Catton reports. Photo: Andrew Hinderaker for The Wall Street Journal.

<http://live.wsj.com/#!553F8EB9-F298-4231-8353-93955CFEDBA9>

BRONX BANTER PRESENTS  
**THE STACKS**

January 8, 2014

## Tyson Vs. Ali



By Alex Belth

A performance piece at PS122 reviewed in the Times and also featured in the Wall Street Journal.

<http://thestacks.deadspin.com/a-performance-piece-at-ps122-reviewed-in-the-times-and-1497373935>

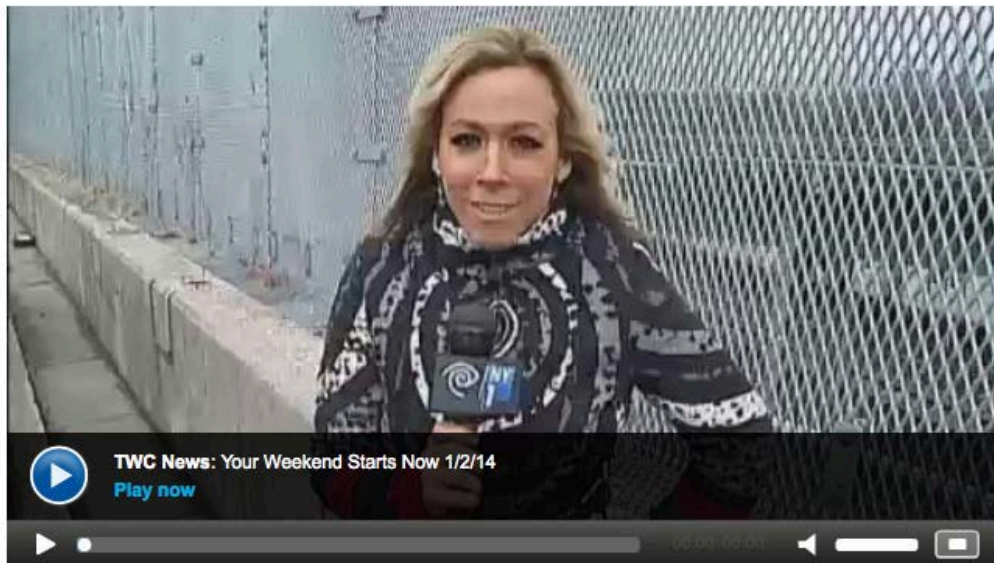


January 2, 2014

## Your Weekend Starts Now 1/2/14

By: Stephanie Simon Updated 01/02/2014 10:39 AM

Text size: + -    



*NY1's weekly segment "Your Weekend Starts Now" shows entertaining picks for great things to do this weekend all around the city. NY1's Stephanie Simon filed the following report.*

### **Tyson vs. Ali**

[www.ps122.org](http://www.ps122.org)

Performance Space 122 kicks off its winter performing arts festival with a multi-media work "Tyson vs. Ali," which puts Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson in the boxing ring together.

"Tyson vs. Ali" will be at 3LD Art & Technology Center at 80 Greenwich Street in Manhattan.

Tickets cost \$20.

The Coil festival includes several other great performances at venues around the city through the end of the month.

<http://www.ny1.com/content/lifestyles/arts/201256/your-weekend-starts-now-1-2-14>