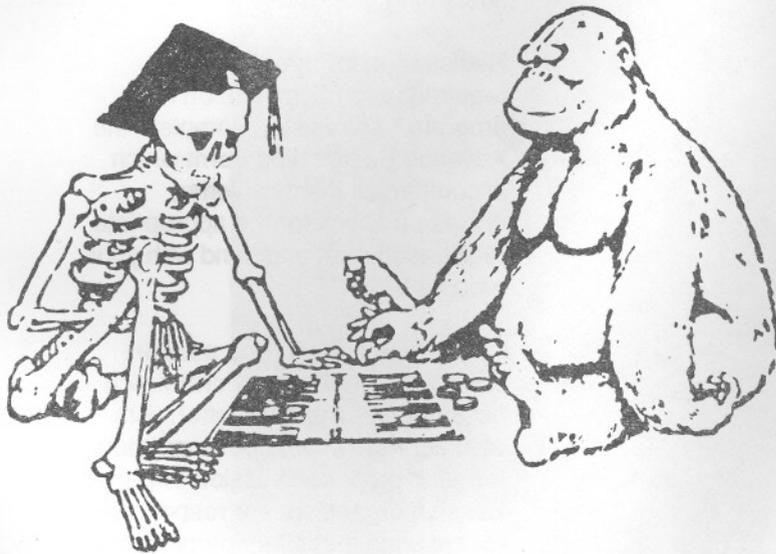


TASP NEWSLETTER

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF PLAY

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 3

FALL 1988



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Annual Meeting in Philadelphia

TASP will hold its annual conference in Philadelphia, February 22-25, 1989 in conjunction with the Ethnography in Education Forum. Sessions will be held at the Sheraton University City Hotel and at the College of Education at the University of Pennsylvania (about two blocks from the hotel). The considerable overlap of interests among TASP and Ethnography in Education Forum members should produce a number of rich sessions.

TASP local arrangements chairperson Linda Hughes has put together a number of special activities. On the evening of Wednesday, February 22, TASP will sponsor an **open house reception** in the presidential suite at the Sheraton. On Thursday, February 23, from approximately 11-2, there will be an arranged visit to the **Mummer's Museum**, which features exhibits on the history of the Philadelphia Mummer's Parade,

with costumes and videotapes of the parades. The trip costs \$20 and is limited to 45 participants on a first-come, first-served basis -- so make reservations early. The price of the trip includes transportation, admission, guided tour, buffet lunch, and a concert by the Hardly Able String Band (a group of retired string band musicians). Thursday evening will feature the **keynote address by Max Kaplan**, noted sociologist of leisure and presently Professor Emeritus at the University of South Florida.

On Friday, February 24, from 5-7 pm there will be a wine and cheese reception and "behind the scenes" tour of the **Please Touch Museum**. This fascinating hands-on children's museum includes an on-going contemporary toy collection project, a Child Life Center involved in historical and contemporary documentation of play in the Delaware Valley area, a permanent play exhibit, and an upcoming exhibit on children's folklore. TASP members Portia

Sperr (executive director) and Donna Horowitz (curator) have organized this event. Bernie Mergen serves on the acquisitions committee for the toy collection, and Brian Sutton-Smith has served as consultant for the folklore exhibit. There is no cost for the program, but participants should register in advance.

The **annual business meeting** will be held at 3:30 pm on Saturday, February 25, to be followed immediately by the **presidential address** by Ann Marie Guilmette. (Considering the kind of introduction Ann Marie gave Jay Mechling last year, one would hope that Andy Miracle will "give her the business," for she will certainly give it to all of us.) As if this is not enough, a **bus trip to Atlantic City** will be available for Saturday evening. The cost of the trip is \$18, and you can expect to receive about \$12 back in chips and other perks from one of the casinos. More details on this trip will appear in the January newsletter.

The Sheraton University City Hotel will serve as the conference center. Room rates are listed on the reservation form enclosed in the newsletter. Those seeking less expensive accommodations should consider the Divine-Tracy Hotel, 20 South 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 382-4310. Located very near the Sheraton, its rates range from \$15-22 per night depending upon single/double room with private/shared bath. A \$10 deposit is required with reservations. Payment by cash or traveler's check is preferred; VISA, MasterCard, and American Express accepted, but no personal checks. This hotel is operated by the Peace Mission Movement (Father Divine) and imposes the following restrictions based upon its religious code: no smoking, drinking, or cursing; separate floors for men and women; no visiting in rooms; women must wear dresses (i.e., no slacks or shorts) and stockings or socks.

Program Participation Guidelines

Program chair Andy Miracle solicits proposals for volunteered papers or for complete sessions; he asks that prospective program participants follow the following guidelines in submitting proposals.

Registration for the meeting is required for participation on the program. To register, complete the Advance Registration Form which accompanies the newsletter, enclose a check for the appropriate registration rate, and send with your proposal.

To propose a paper or a session, complete the Abstract Form which accompanies the newsletter. An abstract form should be completed for each proposed session or paper. Session organizers are responsible for ensuring that every participant in the session is registered and for assembling and submitting an abstract describing the session and an abstract for each paper in that session.

Abstracts and proposals for sessions will be evaluated and authors and session organizers will be contacted by the program committee after the deadline for submissions. The Program Committee reserves the right to insert volunteered papers into organized sessions where appropriate.

The ability of TASP to provide audiovisual equipment is limited; please do not request equipment that is not essential. There will be a \$50 fee charged for video equipment rental. Please note audiovisual equipment needs on the Abstract Form and appropriate arrangements will be made for your session.

The deadline for receipt of abstracts and advance registration fees is December 15, 1988. Submit to: Andrew W. Miracle, 1989 TASP Program Chair, Department of Sociology, Texas Christian

University, Fort Worth, TX 76129,
U.S.A.

Andy also reminds us of the student paper competition. Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to submit entries for the best student paper on play. The winner will receive a cash award to enable her or him to attend the Philadelphia meeting and deliver the prize-winning paper. The TASP journal *Play & Culture* reserves the right of first refusal for publishing the winning essay. Papers should be submitted in triplicate to Ann Marie Guilmette, TASP President, Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, CANADA L2S 3A1 by December 15, 1988.

Playfully Yours

By Brian Sutton-Smith

Prior reports have been focused on Stockholm, Sweden; Suhl, East Germany and Loudon County, Virginia. None of the prior content, about the IPA, the ICCP, and about playgrounds, toys and recess, has been very playful and nor has my manner, unless we count irony as play which possibly we can, since they both involve the paradox that what you see is not what it seems, at least to the non aficionado. Unfortunately, I am not certain that what I communicated in those columns did not have also a measure of the sardonic, the sarcastic, the cynical and the bemused. Nor do I know whether such a play of tropes could be called playful play. Perhaps the heedlessness with which I engaged in that tripe might be a playful enough measure for me. Let me get out of this with another trope by saying that what I am engaged upon here is not bright and colorful play, not red, nor green, just a mild form of gray play.

In the same vein let me now report my latest conference at Wheelock College in Boston in July of 1988. The major purpose of the Conference was quite portentous, to "analyse from both an historical and a present day perspective the reasons why dramatic and sociodramatic play have not been included in the curricula as a requirement for all children in early childhood programs in the USA and Israel." (sic) The conference was funded by the Binational Science Foundation of these two countries and the outstanding event was the reappearance of Sara Smilansky who virtually invented this notion with her much publicized book *The Effects of Sociodramatic Play on Disadvantaged Preschool Children* of 1968, and by her appearance at an NAEYC, University of Pittsburgh Conference in 1971. She repeated her contention of that time that there are disadvantaged children who do not know how to play imaginatively and that this is a serious handicap to their acquisition of literacy. Further she contended that her interventional research in shifting children from solitary motor play to social pretence play as well as that of Marshall, Freyberg, Feitelson, Rosen, Saltz, Johnson, Smith, Golomb, Brainerd, Dansky, Udwin and associates has established that it is possible to intervene with positive results on such variables as: language use, concentration, curiosity, perspective taking, empathy, skills, conservation and creativity. Unfortunately, from her point of view, no one out there appears to be listening. A questionnaire to kindergarten teachers in the USA and Israel on which she reported established that although most schools have house keeping play centres and children are permitted to play in them when they wish to (according to 60% of the teachers), no teachers saw any relationship between this play and school success (100%); no teachers had ever had a teacher training course in play (100%); and they all saw play as having to do with personality, fun, joy and happiness and were reluctant to intrude.

With some sorrow for Sara, I was nevertheless pleased by these teacher attitudes. Our major motive in this century has surely been to reverse the negative view of children's play emerging from the reformation and the work ethic of prior centuries. It seems that we have won at least a truce, though an endangered one, as my prior column on the fate of recess in Virginia and other states makes clear. Dare we let loose on children a new generation of teachers who really think they know what children's play is all about and how it can be used? In another prior column also I have shuddered at those well meaning advocates who wish to interfere with boys' play fighting by guiding and directing it. Although I am much more sympathetic to Sara Smilansky's intentions, is the principle any different? Either children's play is their area of freedom as adult recreation is our area of freedom, or we are treating the children as a lower caste, idealizing play while we manipulate it to fit our preconceived purposes. Paradoxically the very same people who would find the intrusions of organizing adults into children's sports as obnoxious might well be the ones ready to foster their own intrusions at the preschool level. In that then they would be no different from and no better than anyone else in our civilization from Locke onwards who has sought to influence children's play through toys, games, sports, or sociodrama or whatever.

In general the conference continued badly for the Smilansky proposal. The rather desperate shape of preschool education or preschool daycare throughout America certainly seemed to mitigate against sophisticated proposals of this kind. Addresses by Sharon Kagan (Yale), Barbara Bowman (Chicago) and Betty Caldwell (Arkansas) plunged a listener into depression about such matters even if they made clearer the current political slogans of both parties.

Nearer at hand, a Conference review of the role of play in cognitive development by James Johnson (Penn State), though cast in a positive tone and covering an immensity of research, reminded one of Brainerd's early strictures on this body of post Smilansky research as inconsistent in methodology, unreliable in measurement and minimal in achieved variance. And indeed Johnson, whose recent longitudinal finding seems to suggest that cognition anticipates play more than play anticipates cognition, completed his paper by stating rather helplessly that in our search for connections between play and cognition we should not give up the traditional rationales and values of play. "These long standing convictions and their rationales must not get lost in the shuffle as we attempt to ground our views on an empirical research base," he said.

In a sense then one might read this whole Smilansky effort as impressive more as Enlightenment Ideology than as serious science, and as a further attempt to rationalize and control children's play, than as an effort to fully comprehend it. For some of us, on the other hand, Bakhtin and Freud are still the more useful interpreters and we would not want to take from children such small social carnival as still exists. Even if our own play be on the gray side we would like to continue to allow them to color theirs red.

The 42nd Street River to River Festival: Creating a Performance Environment in New York City

By Kay Wylie Jacob

Editor's Note: The study of festival and related activities has long been integral to the study of play; recently, such activities have frequently been studied as public performances. In this paper, Jacob considers how public spaces are temporarily transformed into performance spaces. Address all correspondence to Kay Wylie Jacob, #21M, 484 W. 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036.

The second annual 42nd Street River to River Festival was held on September 28, 1986. The theme was the "Dancing Feet of 42nd Street," although tours of historical landmarks, art galleries and exhibits were also available. The publicity for the Festival stated that there would be performances by a variety of dance companies. As a dancer, I was particularly interested in how 42nd Street would be transformed into performance spaces for various kinds of dance.

But my dance background accounts for only part of my interest in this festival. As a resident of Manhattan Plaza, I have a view which includes 42nd Street between Seventh Avenue and the Hudson River. I enjoy watching the traffic and pedestrian patterns which are constantly changing along the street. It was strange to look out my window on September 28 and see very little activity. At 9:00 a.m. the police began partitioning the street to accommodate traffic, pedestrians, and the special trolleys used for carrying people from river to river. The outer lanes -- sometimes two, sometimes four -- were closed to traffic, to be used by pedestrians and trolleys. But the trolleys traveled with the traffic rather than pedestrians and chose to stay on the inside lanes. In addition, the block between Ninth and Tenth

Avenues was closed to traffic with the exception of the trolleys.

My approach to examining the use of this space was twofold. First, how was the entire length of 42nd Street organized for the festival? Banners with large "42's" had appeared on alternate street lights several weeks before. This was the initial phase of what Brooks McNamara refers to as "a festival overlay on the ordinary functional architecture of the town." (1) In this case "the town" was 42nd Street. Second, how were specific performance spaces used in each block of the celebration? Of particular interest are the events which occurred at the hub, Bryant Park, just behind the New York Public Library at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. Although it was relatively easy to fit the performance spaces into categories, it was clear that the total environment created the performance. As in traditional folk and popular performances: "It is the environment itself which is the place of performance, not any of its components." (2)

The following questions arose during the early phase of my research. What drew the crowds to a particular area? What caused them to stay in one area or move to another one? What elements could be controlled by the organizers? What events were controlled by the crowds? What elements were totally uncontrollable? What effect would the weather have on the festival? (There was no rain date listed in the publicity.) Why were certain events held in particular blocks? How would these temporary transformations affect each block? How would the block used as a support space affect the temporary transformations? Would the festival represent all of 42nd Street with its pockets of intense individuality? Would I be able to fairly represent such a large festival with so many events? Would I be able to paint an accurate portrait of such a large festival?

My initial stroll, traveling east along 42nd Street, revealed that a number

of restaurants had moved out onto the sidewalks for the day. Vendors set up shop, approximately ten per block, but seemed more prevalent in the blocks between Fifth and Lexington Avenues. (3) The block between Seventh and Eighth Avenues remained virtually unchanged this year. Last year the Brandt Theatre Organization put out red carpets and ran the movie "42nd Street" all day long. (4)

(Forty-second Street's reputation is marred by this block in particular. Forty-second Street E.T.C. [Education, Theatre, Cultural], which sponsors the Festival, was formed in 1981. Their objective is to focus positive attention on 42nd Street, placing emphasis on the architectural landmarks, educational institutions, museums, theatres, parks and corporations.) (5)

In examining how specific performance spaces were used for this festival, it became clear that they could be divided into three main categories. The first is those previously existing areas which naturally lend themselves to performance sites with only slight alterations. At the east end of Bryant Park, behind the Main Library, for example, "the steps" (as the area is called) was the site for the opening ceremonies. The 42nd Street entrance to the Library was the site of Storybook Theatre, including their own version of the New York Public Library Lions which, as advertised, came alive for the day. The Fifth Avenue entrance to the Library was the site of TAP JAM, as the brochure states, the "World's Largest and Best Tap Dancing Extravaganza." (6)

In the second category includes performance areas which consisted of temporary stages brought in and constructed for the day. Even though these stages were portable and thus could have been placed anywhere, interesting backdrops were created by the architecture and environment of 42nd Street. The northeast corner of The Port Authority, for instance, provided a backdrop and a ceiling for a simple

trestle stage. (A trestle stage is a platform which allows the performers to be placed higher than the level of the audience.)

In the block closed to traffic, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, was an example of a truck-bed stage. The side doors of a truck were pulled open, creating an enclosed stage for a Salsa Band. A religious "revival to save Times Square" was held on 42nd Street between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. (7) The gospel groups (including Sister Sadie and the Famous Biblettes, The Wearyland Singers, the Skywaves and No Name Singers) were on a simple trestle stage, with the newly reopened Times Square Zipper as a backdrop. Other facades nearby created an interesting architectural environment, including the Knickerbocker Hotel and a partially completed ad for Jeff Hamilton.

Other examples of buildings creating backdrops for trestle stages include the Pfizer Building, the 130-foot high "greenhouse" of the Ford Foundation Building, and The Godfather Pizza Restaurant. This is definitely not an architectural landmark, but the owners contributed \$10,000.00 to the festival so the stage was placed where they wanted it. The Bell Plaza west of the New York Telephone Company Building was a natural enclave for another portable stage. The small park is a concession to the zoning laws that require a specific amount of open space in proportion to a structure's height. (8)

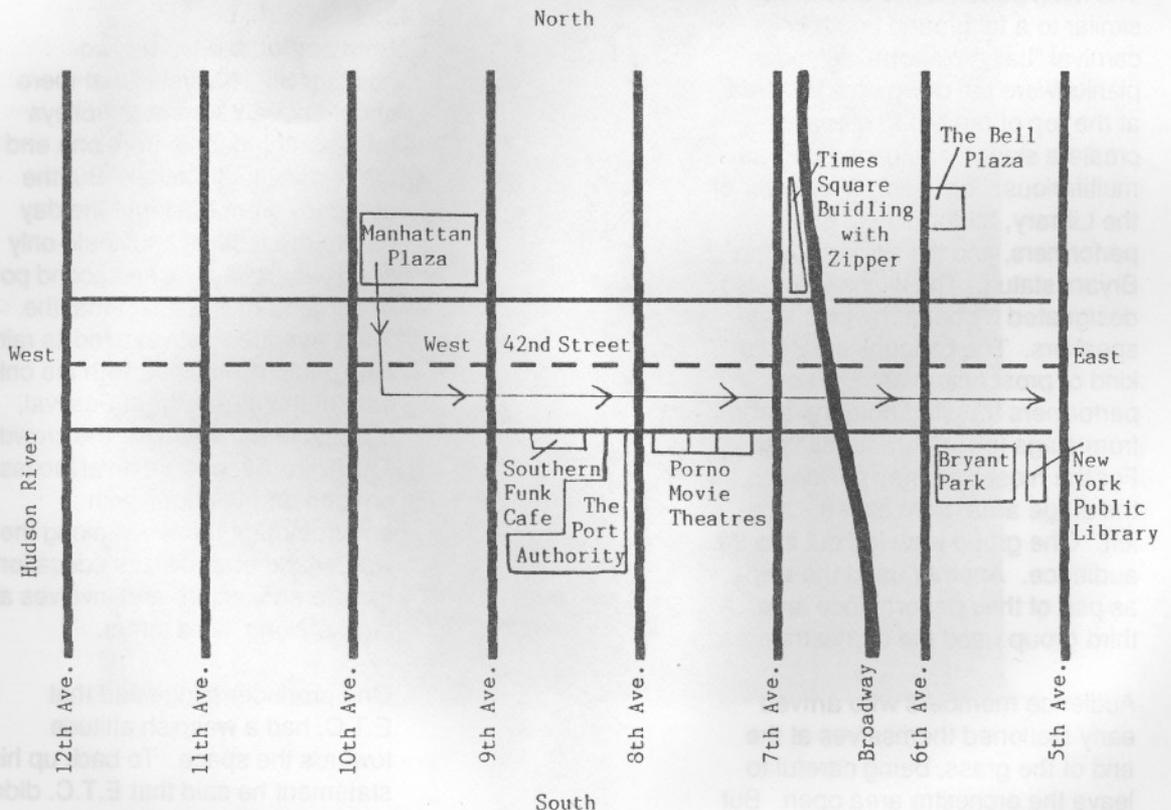
The examples from the previous two categories listed above fit into a formal theatre structure in which "the actor is removed, architecturally and scenically, from his audience." (9) The third category of performance spaces is quite different. It includes those spaces which were temporarily carved out of the existing environment by the performers and the audience. This third category is a clear example of the "environmental" tradition, in which: "The boundaries between

actor and spectator are informal or indefinitely drawn, and there is not only close contact but often an intermingling of the two groups."(10) Performing experience outside traditional dance theatres and loft spaces has made me very aware of how easily audiences can be distracted by movements which are not part of the choreography. As a choreographer, my objective is for the audience to focus on what I have placed before them. However, in street festival performances, there are many uncontrollable variables which can affect the performance and what the audience will actually see. "Sparks," a slow motion robotic dancer, found a place on the south side of 42nd Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Some of his audience were on the balcony above him. This can be somewhat disadvantageous to the performer because he is not necessarily the single focal point. But the balcony audience can see other simultaneous events and activities.

A troubadour found a somewhat unfocused area for his performance. The audience could pass by on either side of him. He established his frontal (or downstage) focus in the same way as the vendors surrounding him, but the vendors had part of their stalls in the blocked-off street behind them or had created stalls in the round. The troubadour had not allowed an area for his audience to gather.

The African dancers used the entrance to the Xerox Building as a performance area. Their positioning of the drummers and dancers, as well as their costumes, helped define their performance area. Several younger drummers from the group did not wear the traditional costumes and an audience member standing in the back remarked, "Are they part of the show?"(11) A comedian used the closed block to his advantage. The audience formed a large circle around him.

The Angels used "unrestricted wandering" from river to river as their



method of traversing the performance space. Their costumes drew attention to them and they stopped only long enough to hand out religious literature. (In "unrestricted wanderings", performers can travel anywhere they like within the environment. Their performance space is where they happen to stop at any given time.) A band used a "procession and station" approach as they marched from Bryant Park to the Fifth Avenue entrance of the Library. As they reach the front steps, Brenda Buffalino's American Tap Orchestra had already begun to perform. The band drowned out the tapping feet and Ms. Buffalino graciously stopped her performance and focussed the audience's attention on the band, which played one number, bowed and marched on. (In "procession and station", an organized performance group, such as a band, will travel and stop, in formation, at certain intervals. They may or may not play during the traveling and stopping.)

Of special interest was the performance area used for the opening ceremonies in Bryant Park. The main performance area was similar to a fairground booth or carnival "bally" platform. Wooden planks were put down on a flat area at the top of ten broad steps to create a stage. The backdrop was multifarious, consisting of the rear of the Library, banners held by performers, and the William Cullen Bryant statue. The wings were also designated by banners, plus large speakers. The balloons created a kind of proscenium arch. The performers traveled onto the stage from stage left in parade fashion. For the most part they performed on the stage area, then exited stage left. One group traveled out into the audience. Another used the steps as part of their performance area. A third group used the orchestra area.

Audience members who arrived early stationed themselves at the end of the grass, being careful to leave the orchestra area open. But as soon as the ceremonies

commenced, crowds began pushing in from the sides to get a closer look at Ginger Rogers receiving the first annual George M. Cohan Award presented by Mayor Koch. Even the crowd control team in the candy-striped jackets could not hold them back, much to the chagrin of those who had waited patiently back on the grass.

After the successive performances of each group, from the Boom Box Parade to the Ziegfeld Girls, the crowd was sent on its way by Joe Papp, the master of ceremonies. Bryant Park, once filled to the brim with audience and performers, was soon almost empty. This typifies the use of space by the audience: periods of intensity, where large numbers of people were actively involved with the performers, and times when only a small group was gathered around a performer while others meandered by. There were many reasons for the ebb and flow of the crowds. The 42nd Street E.T.C. sponsors and the paid producers differed greatly as to how to approach the organization of the space. One of the sponsors stated quite frankly, "It's a mother to control."⁽¹²⁾

Both parties agreed on two points.⁽¹³⁾ The first is that there should have been more trolleys transporting people from one end of the festival to the other. But the company went bankrupt the day before the festival and could only send two trolleys. The second point of agreement is the fact that the Third Avenue Festival used its rain date, which coincided with the only date of the 42nd Street Festival, causing competition for the crowds. The Third Avenue Festival focusses on food and vendors, with entertainment thrown in along the way. 42nd emphasizes education, theatre and culture and involves all blocks along 42nd street.

One producer suggested that E.T.C. had a waspish attitude towards the space. To back up his statement he said that E.T.C. didn't want any sausage sold on the street.

He claimed that many people come to street festivals for the food and that lots of food keeps the crowds moving along, munching contently.(14) This producer also felt that a special event is needed to fill up the space with an audience. That is why he invented the George M. Cohan award. It was originally offered to five big names. Frank Sinatra said, "No." Ginger Rogers said "Yes," on the condition that she would be the only celebrity on stage.(15) Evidently, Ginger didn't want to share the space with anyone. And in fact the presentation of the award did draw a large crowd. Police estimates were 90,000 to 100,000. This estimate is based upon an average of three square feet per person.(16)

The problem was really one of maintaining the intensity of the crowds. After receiving her award, the plan, from E.T.C.'s point of view, was to take Ginger down to 42nd Street to start lining up for the World's Longest Chorus Line. However, one of the producers grabbed Ginger and took her over to the front of the Library for the Tap Jam. The crowd followed Ginger, leaving the chorus line flat.(17)

In several instances the producers were blamed for not following through on an event and thus leaving an area of the block empty. No matter who was responsible, the empty spaces did not encourage the crowds to move along 42nd Street. Several festival goers remarked, "There's nobody here, let's go over to Third Avenue. I hear it's really crowded over there."(18)

But filling the space for the entire six hours was not the primary objective of E.T.C. Their approach to the space was best exemplified by Brendan Gill:

"...this short, broad, vehement cross-street is surely the most intense of the innumerable urban experiences that confront and seduce us daily in the greatest of cities..... upon it stand in the unself-conscious disarray of the many

different eras and styles in which they were built, structures that would suffice to serve as the beginning and ending of any ordinary city: a public library, a railroad station, theatres, hotels, restaurants, newspaper offices, honky-tonk curio shops a galleria roofed only by the sky, pale over the icy architectural decorum of the United Nations, rainbow-colored over the neon paradise of Time Square. Pulsing with energy by day and by night, outwitting time and fatigue, the street hugs us to it and seems to promise us, whoever we are, that it will never let us go."(19)

Notes

- (1) Brooks McNamara. "The Environmental Tradition," in McNamara, Brooks; Rojo, Jerry; and Schechner, Richard, *Theatres, Spaces and Environments: Eighteen Projects*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1975, p. 3.
- (2) McNamara, p. 3.
- (3) Mort Berkowitz. Mort and Ray Productions. Taped interview, October 13, 1986.
- (4) Marjorie W. Longley. Chairman 42nd Street E.T.C. Taped interview, November 26, 1986.
- (5) Gerard R. Wolfe. *42nd Street River to River*. New York: 42nd Street E.T.C., 1984, p. 3.
- (6) *42nd Street River to River Festival Guide*. Sunday, September 28, 1986.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Wolfe, p. 15.
- (9) McNamara, p. 3.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Tape of festival crowd, September 28, 1986.
- (12) Longley.

(13)Ibid.; also, Berkowitz.

(14)Berkowitz.

(15)Ibid.

(16)Ibid.

(17)Longley

(18)Tape of festival crowd.

(19)Wolfe, p. 1.

PLAY PRINT: Books and Materials for Play Scholars

New Books

Another new book by Judith Lynne Hanna of the University of Maryland is **Disruptive School Behavior: Class, Race and Culture**, published by Holmes & Meier. The book deals with play and play-aggression inside and outside the classroom, approaching the topic from historical, sociological, and ethnographic perspectives. (The editor apologizes to Judith and readers for not completing the review of Judith's earlier book on dance and gender for this issue of the newsletter. I hope to have that book reviewed for the next issue.)

Jay Mandle (Temple U.) and Joan Mandle (Penn State) have produced a small book based on their ethnographic studies of basketball in the Carribean, **Grass Roots Commitment: Basketball in Trinidad and Tobago**; the book is available from Carribean Books, P.O. Box H, Parkersburg, IA 50665 USA.

New Journals

HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research, published quarterly by Mouton de Gruyter, 200 Saw Mill River Road, Hawthorne, NY 10532 USA, Victor Raskin of Purdue University, Editor-in-Chief.

Frank Manning serves on the editorial board of the **Annals of Tourism Research**, published by Pergamon Press. He encourages TASP members whose research is related to tourism to submit their work. Articles and inquiries should be sent to the editor-in-chief: Jafar Jafari, Dept. of Habitational Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751 USA. Frank adds that a forthcoming special issue "Sex and Tourism" "promises to hold particular interest for our current president."

PLAY THINGS: Professional Activities in Play Study

Meetings Calendar

North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, November 9-12, 1988, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Society for Applied Anthropology (meeting jointly with the **American Ethnological Society**), April 5-9, 1989, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

World Humor and Irony Movement, April 18-22, 1989 on the campus of BYU-Hawaii, Laie, Hawaii.

Australian Folklore Diploma

The graduate diploma in Australian children's folklore offered at the Melbourne College of Advanced Education will enroll its second cohort of students in 1989. The course is run over a two year period, with lectures offered two evenings per week. The course has been approved by the Victorian Ministry of Education for study and upgrading purposes for primary and post-primary teachers; however, non-teachers may also find the course worthwhile.

Enquiries should be directed to Melbourne CAE Information Office, Tel. (03) 341 8624, or write June Factor, Institute of Early Childhood Development, 4 Madden Grove, Kew, Victoria 3101 Australia.