

Chronology **Saul Landau** and the SFMT.

Written - September, 2013 by R.G.Davis

Saul Landau (1936-2013) from Chronology of *San Francisco Mime Troupe: First Ten Years*. R.G.Davis. Ramparts 1975, plus additions.

Before Nina Serrano and **Saul Landau** arrive in San Francisco.

1959. The Landau's at University of Wisconsin, Madison: Saul earns B.A. and M.A. in history. Nina Serrano a bit later as student meanwhile goes to China with student group, Saul spends four months in Cuba met and helped C.Wright Mills *Listen Yankee!* Later became researcher for Mills. Madison becomes a center for New Left (Marxist) education due to a coalescence of professors Harvey Goldberg, William A. Williams, Hans Gerth, George Mosse plus young grad students ready to ride the waves. Four grad students founded *Studies on the Left*: Martin Sklar, **Saul Landau**, Ellie Hakim, and David Eakins, ten others soon join board. Landau remains one of the editors from 1959 through 1964.

Fair Play for Cuba Committee organized by Robert Tabor in 1959. **Landau** joins in by 1960-61 gives talks and organizes a student "Christmas Tour to Cuba-- It will be fun." The Fidelista guerrilleros were only a little older than the American grad students who joined the festivities.

1959-63 Meanwhile in San Francisco, a warm up before the Landaus arrived. The R.G.Davis Mime Troupe within the SF Actors' Workshop. "Mime and Words, "11th Hour Mime Show" Sunday nights at the Encore Theatre 1960-61. Beckett Mime II. Event I, Nov 1961. Commedia dell'arte performance; "The Dowry," at Actors Workshop Encore, then on to The Spaghetti Factory. June 1962, first out door shows: Washington Square Park and Golden Gate Meadow, with permit from Rec. and Park. Jan. 63 Davis leaves the SF Actors Workshop; Event II at Tape Music Center. In the parks with *The Root* adapted from Machiavelli's play by Milt Savage, five performances. August 1963 *Ruzzante's Manuevers*, anti war play by Savage.

Nina and **Saul Landau** arrive in San Francisco circa 1962, Saul enrolls in PhD program at Stanford, meets Alvin Duskin of Emerson College, leaves Stanford, later both agree to close the free swinging college. The Landau's rent a large house on Dolores Street SF. Nina Serrano invites Davis to read a part of Arnold Westker's *Chicken Soup and Barley*, not to his taste but the Landau's become friends and Davis finds another New Yorker with a sense of humor who is politically sophisticated. Our children go to the same Presidio Hill Day School.

1963. December *Ubu King*, Opens Capp St Studio and Theatre, **Saul Landau** text improvement; William T. Wiley, costumes & set; Robert Nelson film; Steve Reich music; R.G Davis direction.
1964. Event III at Capp St. Theatre, avant guard event with Lee Romero liquid projections, Fumi Spencer dancer, Steve Reich music, reading of *Monthly Review* article on US military interventions in South America during the avant guard piece. Additional one act play *Along Came a Spider* play by Kenneth Lash.
- 1964 - 1965 (Not in the book Chronology) The San Francisco New School, organized by Alvin Duskin and **Saul Landau** with Davis helping, first meetings at Presidio Day School.

The SF New School a creation that brought together New Leftists, i.e. non party Marxists, Socialists, Communists, Trotskyists and Fidelistas no Maoists yet. The once a week individual classes taught by economists and political science teachers/writers such as Jim O'Connor, Bob Scheer, **Saul Landau**, R.G. Davis and Todd Gitlin the non-Marxist. Participants or 'students' such as Mike Miller, Frank and Nancy Bardacke, Ann Weils, and many others in the antiwar movement, early feminists, civil rights and avant guard work in those days. Lecture session of note was Robert Scheer back from North Vietnam who gave a talk that seared my brain and later I asked him to be the "Second Act" after a Brecht's short play *Exception and the Rule*.

Another memorable session of the SF New School at the SFMT Capp Street theatre 1965, introduced by Jim O'Connor, Paul A. Baran (1909 – 1964) an American Marxist economist. In 1951 Baran was full professor was the only tenured Marxian economist in the United States until his death in 1964, author of *The Political Economy of Growth* in 1957 and co-authored *Monopoly Capital* with Paul Sweezy. Memory: **Landau**, Davis, Marc (Abdullah) Schliefer and Steve Reich at this event begin all night conversation on their future exploits.

1964. *Tartuffe* April adapted by Richard Sassoon. **Landau** wrote two songs. The first half of the show previewed for the members of the SF New School. Co-directed by R.G.Davis and Nina Serrano Landau. Costumes and set designed by Richard Beggs married to painter Beryl Landau. Saul and I worked on projects at Begg's sound studio for KPFA in 1964, before during and after the strike in that period.

Landau encourages editor of *Studies* to publish an article written by Davis "Radical, Independent, Chaotic, Anarchic Theatre vs. Institutional, University, Little Commercial, Ford and Stock Theatres." Vol. 4, no. 2 1964: (28-38). "The Literature Issue" with cover picture of Victoria Hochberg as lovely Mere Ubu. Article is precursor to Guerrilla Theatre Essay in TDR 1965.

- 1964-5 (Not in book Chronology.) Underground Movies at Capp St. Theatre:
 Curated by Robert Nelson and **Saul Landau**, the latter operates the weekly Saturday Night Movies. Each showing started with music and song by Jeanne Brechan at the piano, followed by an episode of Captain Marvel, and two or three American underground films such as: Jack Smith, *Blond Cobra*, *Flaming Creatures*; Bruce Baillie, Ron Rice, Bruce Conner, Stan Brakage, Scott Bartlett, Robert Nelson, Stan Vanderbeek and other filmmakers from the late 50s early 60s. Joe Lomuto of the SFMT projectionist. See article by **Saul Landau**, "On Arresting Movies in San Francisco" *Studiess on the Left*. Vol. no. 1 1965:100-105. Article discusses arrest and ACLU law suits of Genet's *Chant d'Amour* after first Capp Street Mime Troupe showing and police seizure, followed by a Sheraton Palace exhibition and later other venues. **Landau** plans to show in Berkeley receives warning from Berkeley Police they would arrest leading to ACLU suit for prior censorship, Marshall Krauss takes the case up to the Supreme Court. Trial is lost. Krauss said: "The Supreme Court didn't like masturbation."
- 1964 *Chorizos*. May 14-July 25 in SF parks **Saul Landau's** scenario adapted by Tom Lopez for commedia dell arte, directed by Tom Purvis. Permit for 8 performances, stopped after 4 performances, unfortunate mess on stage.
- 1964-5. *Tartuffe* adapted by Richard Sassoon directed by R.G. Davis and Nina Serrano Landau. Lyrics by **Saul Landau** music by Steve Reich, set and costumes by Richard Beggs married Landau's sister Beryl Landau [See Richard Beggs sound Engineer of Coppola films in the 70s plus 27 others.] Beggs also helped **Landau** and Davis make programs for KPFA radio, at his basement sound studio. In conversation Beggs said he did lettering for the Griffin logo: "Engagement, Commitment, Fresh Air."
1964. SFMT Casting for Minstrel Show begins.
 The idea for a Minstrel Show arises from discussions with Nina Serrano and Saul as to what might be done for a major project. Audition, research and exploratory rehearsals continue for eight months before preview of show.
1965. May 7, "Bill Graham presents" [mistaken claim-- just the business manager] Brecht's *Exception and the Rule*, with Robert Scheer as the second act speaking: "The US War in Vietnam." Nina Serrano begins directing *Exception* later replaced by Davis. Serrano and Landau fade from the SFMT.

1965. June 17. *Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel*, premiers at Commedia Theatre Palo Alto. Text by **Saul Landau** and R.G. Davis, Music Steve Reich, Film "Oh Dem Watermelons" ended the first act of the spectacle. Script of film by **Landau**, performers of minstrel show including Davis on a 3 wheeler motorcycle in the 14 minute film. Original cast: Kai Spiegel, George Mathews, John Broderick, Julio Martinez, Jason Marc-Alexander, Willie Heart, Robert Slattery, Interlocutor; Costumes, sky blue tails, by Connie Spiegel; banjos, Chuck Wiley, Carl Granich; Directed by R.G. Davis.

Minstrel Show runs for two years in California, North West, Mid-West, NY Town Hall, across Canada, April 1966 stopped in Olympia Washington; September 1966 arrested in Denver Colorado. Court case won, and Mrch 1967 arrested in Calgary Canada. Three cast members arrested, bail arranged by (my older brother) Robert C. Davis, all exit Canada. **The most memorable and meaningful production produced and performed by the SFMT in the radical New Left 1960s.**

Saul Landau was on the Board of the SFMT as of 1964 till 1970, when the radical Board was replaced by liberals. As of 1968, he was hired by KQED, makes numerous films, joins International Policy Institute, Wash. D.C. Landau in Cuba, Alvin Duskin raises funds and becomes sound man, for film *Fidel* 1969. Landau onto Chile to make two films *Que Hacer* and an *Interview of Salvador Allende*. Sandra Archer from the SFMT actress in his film, Elizabeth Farmsworth from KQED acted as well, Joe McDonald music. Nina Serrano and Chilian director co-directed. Subsequently his association with Paul Jacobs and others levitates him to national and international importance. Landau makes 22 independent films, co-authors and writes 14 books, hundreds of essays and articles, radio programs, international connections with Cuba, Chile, Venezuela, Zapatistas, most recently supporter of The Cuban Five. See Family Memorial websight and **Saul Landau's Blog**.

Footnote- Research: Buhle, Paul, *History of the New left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950-1970*. Philadelphia: Temple. 1990. Goss, van *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the making of the New Left*. London: Verso. 1993. C.Wright Mills *Listen, Yankee: The Revolution I Cuba* New York: Ballantine. 1960. *Studies on the Left* issues 1960-1967. Jacobs, Paul and Landau Saul *To Serve the Devil*. New York: Vintage, Vol. I & 2, 1971. Landau, Saul. *My Dad was Not Hamlet: Poems*. Washington, D.C. IPS. 2009. (and other writings books by Landau).