

DIVA DIVAN

by
Cult 12

Cast: Kay Belle Gravis (pronounced Gravy)
Lucky the Loser
Rex Rime
Luna Paradise

Set: Pentagon arrangement of five refrigerators. Four refrigerators installed with the art that each of the divas represent. Fifth refrigerator installed as quintessence of FridgeFest past and present.

Movement: Derived from Butoh fu. Butoh fu is the silent narrative which divas respond and dance to without words:

In the dark, each diva walks behind their respective refrigerators.

Recorded – in dark, except for light of one slightly open refrigerator door casting light:

Incidentally, one of man's greatest creations is definitely the refrigerator. I've made it a habit to rush into the kitchen every time anyone shows any inclination for a cool beverage. It gives me a great excuse to stand in front of the refrigerator for a couple of moments and let the cool-albeit slightly odorous-refrigerated air surround me. When we have some generator electricity, we keep the refrigerator working. At night, the refrigerator not only provides chilled air, and cold water, but it offers that pale yellow light which falls like a beacon of hope across the darkened kitchen. -- Baghdad Burning, Girl Blog From Iraq - by Riverbend

Divas begin to hum from behind fridges. Starts out medium then high then low in volume. Ends with sound of rag hitting against floor. Divas materialize one by one, beginning with Kay Belle, as lights come up.

*Divas wash floor rhythmically with a white dishrag in each hand. After a while, Luna stands up in center of one dishcloth and speaks text while stroking other dishcloth. (**Butoh fu.** Text is delivered as "god-eye": Your eyes are on the side of your head like a bird's or a squirrel's eyes. Your blind spots are then behind you and in front of you. Behind you are your ancestors, your blood relatives that have brought you to the present. In front of you is your future to the 7th generation. You are speaking to both, and if you turn your head ever so slightly back and forth you can catch glimpses of both.)*

Luna:

do people ever think about the environment when they manufacture things. i was plastering my wall sanding the surface smooth doing some paint... later, when sweeping up the joint compound and the plaster flakes i thought this will be buried in dirt, in the soil. what if an animal came by. it could eat it and die. one night i could not sleep because i thought we'd run out of oil in the next five or ten years. furthermore, i thought, what purpose does oil serve in its natural state inside the earth. gardening is impossible now. in the garden i think of dirt. i like to rub a white cloth on a white floor.

Divas freeze at "floor" as Luna pulls cloth at two ends with tension at eye level, elbows pulling in opposite directions. Other divas slowly bring cloth to eye level. Then Luna repeats last line. Cloth slips out of hand slowly as divas grow into deeply rooted tree which 'outgrows' the cloth. Music begins.

Butoh fu:

Roots go as deep as branches go skyward.

Contrast between roots digging into earth, branches going into sunlight.

Early in growth, tree can't differentiate between branches and roots.

Trunk is being pulled in two directions at same time and moves as it decides if it wants to be branches or roots.

As tree matures, so does differentiation between branches and roots. It becomes a perfect exchange and at a certain point all growth stops and the tree is what it is; it is comfortable with itself – tall, majestic, grounded, strong.

As tree ages, everything gets called back to its trunk. Tree withers until there are barely any roots holding it in the ground nor branches in the air.

A slight wind blows and rocks the dry, immobile trunk until it finally collapses.

Tree divas collapse one by one in a diva faint – back of right hand to forehead, spiraling down, landing flat on their backs on the floor. Music ends. After a few moments, the following is spoken with upper class British accents.

Lucky: Are you getting up?

Kay Belle: Me?

Luna: You. Can you get me something from the fridge?

Rex: I wasn't getting up.

Lucky: Oh. Pause Well, when you do, will you bring me the eggs?

Kay Belle: I'm not getting up.

After a moment, Rex gets up slinks to fridge.

Long pause then Luna on floor leans up on one elbow:

Luna: You're sleeping with Ted, aren't you?

Rex at his fridge gets two trays of eggs – a dozen total – to deliver to other three divas. All four divas try to find their families (3 eggs each) in the bunch. As music begins, divas start on journey to deliver their families to a place of safety just outside the perimeter. Then come back into playing space, still walking same way as if eggs were still with them, and find a place to die with their lover under a tree.

Butoh fu:

They walk with small birds under their feet they can't crush.

Birds carry feet along as the birds try to escape thru light coming from toes.

Lift toes off ground first to give birds direction. Don't lift heels or birds will escape.

Incense rising out of top of head. Follow incense in minds eye and keep it rising in thin stream, uninterrupted by erratic or harsh movement.

A tender person is holding you around the waist. Tender person is the one you want to leave with, but the responsibility to your family is greater. You've never had anything but the responsibility to your family.

Tender person is always patiently accompanying you, waiting for you to come with them.

Eventually you find place of safety for your family.

Time to leave your family behind and go with the tender person.

You find a tree under which you can die together.

Some time during this Butoh fu:

Rex:

It's been a year since Father died. When Mother died, I was only seven and three quarters but I had to become the mother to you both as well as your older sister. Did I do right by you? I tried, you know.

I had to learn how to be a woman from television. "One Life to Live," "Days of Our Lives," "All My Children," "General Hospital," "Daylight Menagerie," "Passionate Embrace," "Dallas" and the magazines of course. I skipped Seventeen and went straight to Mademoiselle, Ms., Playgirl, Good Housekeeping, Home and Garden, House and Kitchen, Modern Woman, Lady of Leisure. I stayed home like a mother would and studied, catalogued every gesture and practiced to be an adult so that you didn't have to. Then when you came home I would show you what I had learned and you would smile. Because I had kept you from the pain and from the responsibility of being a woman.

Music ends. Divas are by now beneath a big tree with tender person, absorbed into roots of tree. Lucky speaks as a child seated on floor as divas are slowly born again as children.

Lucky:

I remember being tickled when I was little. I didn't like it. Even if I liked the person doing it to me, I really didn't like being tickled. Maybe I did. Or maybe I liked the person tickling me so much that I wanted to like being tickled by them. I often wanted the person tickling me to stop. STOP! STOP! PLEASE STOP! I would say. Sometimes I would start crying and then maybe they would stop. Maybe that's what the person tickling wanted of me all along. To cry. I'm almost crying now remembering that person I can't remember who tickled me when I didn't want to be tickled until I cried. Maybe I didn't cry. Maybe I was laughing. Maybe I really liked the person tickling me. Why do I feel like crying when I try to remember the person who was tickling me when I was so little and didn't want to be tickled?

Butoh fu:

Child lying on its back trying to get up, crying for its mother, very hungry, very uncomfortable. Wants to get up. Wants someone to hold it. Any kind of nourishment, any kind of attention but no sounds are coming out.

Lucky repeats portions of monologue as puppet mother, making cootchie coo sounds. Last line: "Why do I feel like crying when I try to remember."

During Lucky's second time through, divas are one-year old child sitting up, writing on ground, trying to stand up. Eventually mother will help them up one by one. But mother becomes thousands of marionette strings that help it stand and walk.

Encouraging marionette strings teaching it to walk, to defy gravity.

Two gods act upon divas: marionette strings from somewhere above, and gravity.

Fairly quickly they grow into adult marionettes, repeating two chosen slice-of-life gestures (possibilities: drinking, smoking, scratching, hand on hip...)

Adult is much more comfortable and in control of puppet strings until age disintegrates certain strings and divas become old and lie on floor.

Now Lucky is on top of her fridge with her accordion, making it 'breathe' into microphone (push/pulling it apart and together without hitting any notes):

Other 3 divas perform Framam Butoh fu:

Framan has been on same mat for 25 years.

Disgraced, he's lying on the street. People walk by in disgust.

Foul smell of fish from market nearby.

Framan has his sex castrated from him, just an oozing wound where sex should be.

Flies are all over him.

Framan has to pee but he can't get up; can't stand; can't leave his mat.

"Get up Framan." But he can't get up. He must get up. He can't.

Worms come up from earth into his feet. Behind his head, a small nest of birds. Birds fly out of back of his head. He hears a spoon klink on sidewalk.

He has to pee; has to get up. "Framan, get up!" He can't get up.

His hands are his feet; his feet are his hands. His groin becomes his head; his head his groin.

He can't stand up; can't find his feet from his hands. "Stand up, Framan!" He can't.

His right hand jumps from his body and writes something strange in the dirt. He stares at the strange sign in the dirt. "Stand up, Framan! Stand up! Let your flesh stand up along your bones; let the worms climb up your bones. Stand, Framan! Let your feet become your hands. It does not matter. Let your groin become your head. Stand! Feel your flesh crawl up your bones..."

Framan, eventually invents a new way to stand.

Framan stands as a burnt corpse staring out at a new world.

Lucky on top of fridge with accordion now sings "Dirty Old Egg-Sucking Dog" by Johnny Cash as Framan divas 'dance' and howl or grunt during refrain.

**"Well, he's not very handsome to look at
Aw! he's shaggy and eats like a hog**

And he's always killin' my chickens
That dirty Egg-Suckin' Dog.

Egg-Suckin' Dog
I'm gonna stomp your head in the ground
If you don't stay out of my hen house
You dirty Egg-Suckin' hound.

Now if he don't stop eatin' my eggs up
Though I'm not a real bad guy
I'm goin' to get my rifle and send him
To that great chicken house in the sky.

Egg-Suckin' Dog
You're always a-hangin around
But you'd better stay out of my hen house
You dirty Egg-Suckin' Dog hound.

By now, divas have found one art object in their respective fridges. Lucky comes down from fridge and finds one as well. Music begins.

Butoh fu:

*You are carrying a fragile book in your hands (the art object). Book is a thousand years old. You've been carrying it for 1000 years.
Vulture sits on your left shoulder; you hold a turtle shell between your knees as you walk along, 6 inches from the perimeter.
The book you carry is precious, made of clay, as you are made of clay. You are both crumbling.
The air around you, keeps book from crumbling and crumbles it.
You at times become the particles in the air around you.
You become the ghost of those particles.
You change back and forth from ghost to man of clay. Capture the timing in which each character – mudman and ghost - appears.*

*Eventually, the utterly lost ghost disappears into a wall.
He comes back with a certain look on his face.*

*Set the art object down on the ground next to you with that certain look on your face.
Stand next to it.
Now you are a doll. The little girl who owns you told you all her secrets.
The doll stares at the art object which is now a blood stain on the floor. Is it the little girl's blood? Where did she go? You are a doll; you are human, no, a doll.
Doll turns away from the blood stains.
Suddenly doll's feet catch fire.
It becomes a ghost.*

*Repeat mudman to ghost through coming back with certain look on his face, but now text will be spoken. One diva at a time breaks into text, delivering it to "god-eye." After text is spoken, diva does **Butoh fu** "signature walk": turtle between knees, egg trays in each hand with left arm up by head, peach pit under right arm. After each step taken they sign their names onto the floor with their tail, take a step, then look back over right shoulder to look at their mark in the world.*

Music ends as Kay Belle speaks.

Kay Belle:

Last time I saw the moll and her twin they were taking down the Bowery with a Gatling gun and a hundred gallons of pure grain alcohol. Everyone was egging them on until the spray picked up a priest, a priest on the only Gotham thoroughfare without a church. Ministering to the poor prostitutes. Low life indeed, we thought we'd ice him, all of them, but they just trickled by. Everyone hold still and let the heat go for now? The barrel cools in the naked, sliding sunlight,

shaking like a stutterer's lower lip. Bust out of this racket, tear off the door. The kids can't hold still.

Rex:

The train of showgirl eggheads dancing through the fridge . . .stopping off at frozen emotions . . . meat, stopping off at contained explosions . . . chocolate cheese cake, stopping off at excesses blocked by time . . . dollop of dripped sour cream browned at its edges, stopping off at good intentions . . . mom's ambrosia salad*, stopping off at pretensions . . .capers for ice burg lettuce . . dancing on out of the fridge for what really matters . . . fame's piazza.

Lucky:

lately, i've found i can look inside of things.
all kinds of things. live things and dead things.
i stare and stare. suddenly, the surface rips off.
it's like xray vision only stronger and in color.

stare stare stare. your father's a chair. your mother's a bear.
stare stare stare. go look in the mirror sometime.
look in a mirror and stare at yourself, stare at yourself
for a whole minute. that'll make you crazy.

Luna:

How many brothers divided by two in this burg, lovely brotherhood left to its own vices. We got landlocked here, parchment paving the streets and the empty sound of a shell cracked through by the echo of the birth of a nation. All men created half-habilified maybe, dudes reaching for the new suit, a whole shitload of talk in the shady lane, a dream of new appliances and alliances and resounding truth.

After all lines are delivered, music starts and divas go into their signature dance together, walking forward in a straight line. After a while, Kay Belle on outside of line breaks away to go to fridge. Music ends.

Critic segment:

Kay Belle begins introducing her art. This makes the other divas attentive, aggressive, jealous. Who is this creature? Sniff her, her fridge. Microphone is introduced. Voice of the critic. Divas physically attempt to either find microphone to speak or make their art from their respective fridges speak.

Kay Belle: My name is Kay Belle Gravis and I am the host of a half-hour DIY program called "The Well-Made Weapon." Right now I don't have a regular time slot but I am in conversations with QPTV and others so I am really hoping to share my work with lots and lots of viewers, who (like me) love to make decorative, non-functional weaponry from materials easily found around the home.

My show blends a little bit of history with a pinch of resourcefulness and a whole lot of excitement about weapons and how they can be used as beautiful and creative additions to any home. Today I found a butter mold that allows you to remove the carved portion. It means that I (along with my viewers) can carve a new bottom piece so that one's butter will have the impression of whatever you want--a landmine, a machine gun, the H-bomb, whatever! The possibilities are endless!

Ben Trovato alteration:

(Ben Trovato is on cell phone.)

"Hi Kay Belle, Ben Trovato here. I think your Well-Made Weapon show will fit nicely into our fall lineup of The Homely Household. My idea for the Well-Made Weapon is that we introduce a new "recipe" for a decorative weapon in each half-hour television segment. The show blends a little bit of history with a pinch of resourcefulness and a whole lot of excitement about weapons and how they can be used as beautiful and creative additions to any home. Anyway, blah, blah, blah, I'll get back to you on this."

Rex has mic and speaks as critic.

Rex (as critic):

In some ways DIVA DIVAN ostensibly appears unevenly slanted toward the visual artists. Sofa, fridge, and the art as the given. And these site-specific materials do permit the set design a certain type of fascist control over the production.

But back to Moses, which came first, the written words or the stone, or the articulated performance of the burning bush?

Kay Belle:

Thank you so much for your interest Mr. Critic. The thing that is most important to remember when making the Cheese Container Tommy Gun is to actually REMOVE the cheese before using the container. Not only will it begin to rot and create an unpleasant smell but it adds a certain amount of weight that throws off the sense of proportion that is so essential when you are working on this piece. (pause) Does that answer your question?

Luna takes mic, wanting to speak grandiosely now about her own fridge art. Instead, Lucky speaks:

Lucky:

i would like to make a plexiglas sheet - i sometimes work with thin plex, trace comics and insert found text into the thought bubbles -- so i was going to make a large sheet -- a see-through comicstrip -- and crack it-smash it , then place it in the fridge - like cracked shards of thin ice with cartoons on it. the words i would like to take from someone's writing -- a selected writer so i can riff off of their writing.

Luna (as critic):

what is the difference between onion and garlic?

what is the difference between analog and digital?

Lucky gives that certain look and squeak. Kay Belle takes mic and suddenly Rex begins to speak about his/her art.:

Rex:

Rex Rime here proposing to put a good face on all my eggs in one basket, a tisket a tasket. I would also propose, for the extra symbolic edge, that there be a wise old pigeon scaring owl on top of the talking face on the fridge. I wouldn't want the wisdom of yo mama to escape anyone.

Kay Belle (as critic):

My first reaction to the white box is always, "I hate the white box!" I want to negate it, force it back into something that is real, livable. I like the idea of playing with that reaction along with the fridge's position as the center of domestic life. I have been thinking about kitchen habits and routines that center around the fridge. It all seems related to the way what used to be considered old fashioned or oppressive to women now seems on the cutting edge of feminism or so we are led to believe, and maybe I do believe?

Rex:

Dude, she's got l'eggs!

Lucky takes mic and now Luna speaks about her art.

Luna:

The Moon and its cold, endless whiteness... it wasn't always like this. Because the Sun and the Moon were sisters. Are sisters. Or possibly brothers.

Lucky (as critic):

(1. she said)

: tension

: expression

: terrible

: isolation

: oh my

(2. i guess)
: transparency
: it's amazing
: communal life

(0. liberation)
: she gave up

Luna:
Did you know that a pearl is really tumor?

Suddenly, divas look at each other like they were just asked to critique a friend's art and said something stupid they wish they could take back. They retreat slowly back to their own fridges.

Microphone starts to hum (recorded hum). Lights fade. Hum fades into live hum of divas on stage. That hum fades.

Curtain call:

Lights up. Strike a vogue diva pose. Lights down
Lights up. Opera diva bow with god eye. Lights down.

END