



Cashing in on the Greed Issue



CARNIVOROUS PLEASURES

Rae C. Wright's animal instincts. BY TOM MURRIN

STAGE PICKS

In a warm, sensual voice, Rae C. Wright whispers, "I love food. Food makes me hot. Food is everything. There's nothing you can't do with your food. Cucumber love. I like French food. Everybody knows that French food is always made with cream. The French...eat the flesh of their horses."

These are the opening lines of Wright's latest wet towel in the face, *Animal Instincts*. In her trademark manner, she seduces her audience with rhythm and sex, reason and humor, and then throws in a zinger to make sure everyone's paying attention. Wright is the performance artist as conscience, philosopher and detective; she often calls her shows "investigations." "There's a dynamic between our gross and our spiritual instincts, which I find fascinating," she says. By examining humans—starting with herself—in all their beauty, brutality, hope and denial, Wright confronts these dichotomies head-on, while shedding light with laughter. "I can't help it, that's my style," she says. "I pull up everyone's dress."

Interviewed in the cafeteria at NYU, where she teaches "Actor's

Craft" to film-school undergraduates, Wright is a lively and passionate talker. With a pretty face that alternates between smiling and contorted concentration, she marks the division within herself that controls her way of looking at

"kills us and others," Wright draws a clear line between the acts we commit between ourselves and the acts we commit with animals—our pals, our dinner.

Wright moved to Manhattan in the early '70's. She spent the next 16 years with the New York Street Theater Caravan, a traveling activist troupe that performed throughout North and South America and Eastern and Western Europe, staging classical plays and political theater for audiences that ranged from people in picket lines to prisoners. In the past 10 years, she has presented performance-art pieces in downtown theater spaces, appeared in 17 independent movies, directed productions at the Public Theater and Theater for the New City and collaborated with other performers, both on- and offstage.



Rae C. Wright chickens out

PATRICIA SULLIVAN

things: "I'm one of the happiest depressed people in the world."

Animal Instincts grew out of an article Wright was writing about edible mushrooms. She quickly "sank her teeth" into the material with metaphoric flair. Moving from mushroom "flesh" to meat, from the killing of cows to the killing of people, from the betrayal of trust when one "kills" a friendship to the "unattended-to denial" that she feels

As for her own work, Wright says, "I want my shows to go to Broadway, but off-Broadway would do, as long as they run for several years. I want a huge audience, because I think I have so much to say. Therein lies our confusion, our ego, our arrogance."

Animal Instincts at Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, 219-3088. Apr. 4-19, Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m. \$10. ★

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