



A LIVING
MEMORIAL
TO THE
HOLOCAUST

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Actor Steve Cuiffo Introduces a New Generation to Lenny Bruce

in a performance at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

New York, NY – On **Wednesday, May 6 at 7 p.m.**, the **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust** presents **Steve Cuiffo is Lenny Bruce** with a post-performance Q&A with **Professor Mark Crispin Miller**, New York University. Actor **Steve Cuiffo** channels controversial comedian Lenny Bruce, performing a selection of the legend's most biting satires — verbatim — in this critically acclaimed one-man show last seen at Joe's Pub. The performance, which the *New York Press* calls "the essence of Lenny Bruce," is also hailed by *New York Magazine* as "masterful, eerily accurate... giving contemporary audiences a sense of [Bruce's] anarchic presence."

This program contains strong language and content; audience discretion is advised. Tickets are \$15 general, \$12 students/seniors, \$10 members and are available online at www.mjhnyc.org or by calling the Museum box office at 646.437.4202. Produced in association with Bisno Productions.

Steve Cuiffo first decided to work with Lenny Bruce's material after receiving the Bruce boxed set, *Let the Buyer Beware*. Inspired by the scathing criticisms of social norms, patriotism, law, and politics, Cuiffo decided to write a two minute sketch depicting Bruce commenting on the war on terror in his 2006 production *Major Bang or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Dirty Bomb*. Those two minutes led to Cuiffo's contact with the Bruce estate who encouraged Steve to continue the act, granting him access to the comic's notes and life.

Cuiffo's unprecedented permission to explore Bruce's personal files grants Cuiffo an unparalleled insight to the mind of this American legend. Many of the train-of-thought rants that questioned the status quo in the 1950s and 60s remain relevant in 2009. "Lenny Bruce's material expresses a raw honesty that exists in all great works of art," says Cuiffo. "His thoughts and manner of expression could be compared to the work of Charlie Parker or William Shakespeare. His point of view is unique. His ideas are timeless. I've studied the bulk of his recorded material and present portions that most people would never have a chance to hear. It has been exciting for me to bring this material to a modern audience - most people are blown away by the relevance of his satire."

Born Leonard Schneider in 1925, Lenny Bruce is best known for blending social commentary with stand-up comedy, breaching taboo issues such as racism, politics, religion, and his own Jewishness. Bruce's casual use of Yiddish slang contributed to normalizing cultural Judaism in the American mainstream. Contemporary critics were often split on their opinions of Bruce; he was called a fad, unfunny, a rebel with a cause, and genius. Bruce's career spanned from television, to screenplays, to stage, and magazines. He wrote his autobiography, which was serialized in *Playboy* and was later compiled into the book *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People*.

In 1961, Bruce was arrested for the first time on an obscenity charge in San Francisco. In spite of his acquittal, Bruce had marked himself as a firebrand. Police officers often went to his shows undercover to make arrests and he was blacklisted from many clubs across the country by owners who feared prosecution. These difficulties and the comedian's disdain for the denial of his First Amendment rights often made their way into Bruce's material. In 1964, he was arrested twice in Greenwich Village's Café Au Go Go for obscenity. He was found guilty in November of that year and sentenced to four months in a workhouse, but never served time. He died in 1966 while the case was still in the appeals process. In 2003, Governor George Pataki granted Bruce a posthumous pardon: the first in New York history.

About the Speakers

Steve Cuiffo is an actor and magician who creates solo shows and works collaboratively with a range of artists. A co-founder of the collaborative Rainpan 43, his original works include *Steve Cuiffo Is Lenny Bruce* and *The Amazing Russello Magic Hour*. His performing credits include Radiohole's *Fluke*, The Foundry Theatre's *Major Bang* and *The Roaring Girle*, Donald Byrd's *Byrdlesque*, and Tea Alegic's *The Filament Cycle*.

Professor Mark Crispin Miller is professor of Media Ecology at New York University where he researches modern propaganda, history and tactics of advertising, American film, and media ownership. He is the author of several books, including *Fooled Again, How the Right Stole the 2004 Elections*; *Mad Scientists: The Secret History of Modern Propaganda*; *Spectacle: Operation Desert Storm and the Triumph of Illusion*; and *The Bush Dyslexicon*. His newest book is *Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order*.

About the Museum

The Museum's three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Special exhibitions include *Woman of Letters: Irène Némirovsky and Suite Française*, extended through August 30, and *Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges*, opening May 1. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*, as well as James Carpenter's *Reflection Passage*, Gift of The Gruss Lipper Foundation. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and is a founding member of the *Museums of Lower Manhattan*.

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