

★ Show listings: plays 1984

THEATRE

[Bank Street](#)

OPENED

April 10, 2003

CLOSES

April 27, 2003

PERFORMANCES

Wed - Sat at 8pm; Sun
at 4pm

RUNNING TIME

2 hours

TICKETS \$15

www.ticketweb.com

1-866-468-7619

CAST

Natily Blair, Melanie Boland, Mary Holmstrom, David Marantz, Thea McCartan, Gregg Mozgala, Daniel Rappaport, Dirk Smile, Jennifer Stokes

AUTHOR

Robert Owens, Wilton E. Hall, Jr., William A. Miles, Jr.

DIRECTOR

Stephanie Barton-Farcas

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Damon Law

SETS

Michael F. Kurtz

LIGHTING

Natalie Robin

COSTUMES/PROPS

Stephanie Barton-Farcas

SOUND

Sarah Gromko

STAGE MANAGER



Nicu's Spoon presents the New York premiere of *1984*, a stage adaptation of the famous novel by George Orwell. This description comes from the press release:

"Imagine a society where the ruling party has perfected the use of high technology to monitor the lives of its populace, and to insure unswerving loyalty through surveillance, propaganda, and brainwashing. You live in fear, you are watchful and afraid. The only

thing you are sure of is that:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

Can the individual survive this?"

Shown above is Daniel Rappaport in a scene from *1984*.

nytheatre.com review

by Martin Denton · April 17, 2003

Thanks to director Stephanie Barton-Farcas and her dedicated collaborators at Nicu's Spoon, we are getting another look at this important work of literature. And if the dramatization of *1984* by Robert Owens, Wilton E. Hall, Jr., and William A. Miles, Jr. feels creaky in some places, it is nevertheless a riveting work of theatre, giving us a raw, very personal experience of Orwell's cautionary tale.

The protagonist of the piece is Winston Smith, a low-level member of the ruling Party of Big Brother's repressive regime, whose job is to erase references to Nonpersons (i.e., people who have been vaporized by the government) in newspapers and the like. Winston's unease with his work and his way of life is apparent the first time we meet him, but it takes the presence of Julia, a new staffer in his office, to galvanize his feelings. He and Julia soon recognize one another as kindred spirits; they begin to meet in secret and then make plans to marry (which is prohibited) and to try to join the elusive Brotherhood that is said to be plotting the overthrow of Big Brother.

Howard S. Goldberg
**PRODUCING
COMPANY**
Nicu's Spoon

They find brief happiness in the freedom their new life brings them: they move to an apartment in the section of the city occupied by the "Proles," workers whose daily movements are not monitored by Big Brother's telescreens. Julia buys coffee and sugar and even a dress on the black market; Winston, in league with a Party insider named O'Brien, gets a copy of the counterrevolutionary texts of Big Brother's arch-enemy Goldstein.

Things do not go as planned, though, which should not surprise you whether you've read Orwell's novel or not. I will assume you haven't and let you discover what happens next for yourself. I will say this: it isn't pretty. It's scary.

In fact, Barton-Farcas finds very theatrical ways to make some of it—like a prolonged scene set in the torture chamber known as Room 101—intensely terrifying. An image of Big Brother on the rear wall of the set—a big eye, mostly—is pretty unsettling, as well.

She can't do much with the script's limitations, though, which mostly have to do with Julia's very dated characterization as dutiful, subservient spouse; we want her to be Winston's equal, but she's written very much as June Cleaver to Winston's Ward. Natily Blair's often explosive performance in the role likewise can't overcome this trouble.

But Daniel Rappaport's everyman portrayal of Winston anchors the play beautifully, with strong support provided by David Marantz as the cagey O'Brien, Gregg Mozgala as Winston's steady co-worker Syme, and especially Mary Holmstrom as the loyal Party drone Parsons, who turned in her own uncle to the Thought Police and finds herself less and less able to trust anyone she knows as a result. Holmstrom maps Parsons' transition from confidence to paranoia in her eyes, which resemble nothing so much as a deer's in a set of bright headlights by the end of the play.

I remember as a young man the sort of generalized relief I felt when 1984 came and Orwell's prophecy seemed, fundamentally, not to have been fulfilled. In 2003, in a world where a used car is called a "certified, pre-owned Mercedes" and purveyors of news on TV, Internet, and in print are run by faceless corporate monolith conglomerates, can we still think of *1984* as science fiction?

Shows marked with a ★ are considered to be noteworthy or of special interest by NYTE's editor.