

Mother, daughter, Molière.

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Theater

Honoring Mother (And Molière)

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part and died of a tubercular hemorrhage just after the fourth performance.)

Now the actress Marylouise Burke ("Ripcord") has taken on the roles Ms. Maleczek once played, and many details of Ms. Maleczek's illness and death have made it into the script. It is a play about how and why people make art and how they go on making it despite failure and loss.

At an afternoon rehearsal just before the New Year, Ms. Galilee, 46, was rushing between her director's chair and the stage, where she plays several roles, including a saucy maid. With her round cheeks and pert nose, she can look very like her mother from certain angles, which is slightly disconcerting. It was almost as if Ms. Maleczek were still there in the room. This is very much what Ms. Galilee feels. "I talk to my mom all the time," she said. "Like, literally."

She didn't want to make this new version "manipulative or maudlin," she said in a conversation following rehearsal, but she couldn't continue work on the piece without involving her mother somehow.

In this sense, "Imagining the Imaginary Invalid" continues an artistic collaboration that began more than 40 years ago, even as it also marks Ms. Galilee's attempt to define herself as an artist on her own terms. She is the daughter of Ms. Maleczek and Lee Breuer, another Mabou Mines founder, and her earliest memory is of assisting her mother before a performance of the company's first show, "The Red Horse Animation."

"I remember helping Ruth put dye on her feet," Ms. Galilee said. "She dyed her feet red with henna for the show." Ms. Galilee tends to call her parents by their first names, a practice they instilled. "They wanted us to see them as people, as friends," she said. Her own name, Clove, derives from a character in a Samuel Beckett play. Galilee is a stage name her parents assigned her at the age of 5, a reference to the sea Jesus walked on and a pun on her parentage — "Gal-a-Lee" or "Lee's gal" — as she explained in an email.

She also has another memory of her mother from that show, a more frightening one. "She had to bite her arm as the horse, and I never forgot it," she said. "I was so worried about her biting her arm onstage."

But barks and bites didn't scare Ms. Galilee away. At 5, she was performing with Mabou Mines in "The Saint and the Football Players" and kept artistic company with her parents through childhood and adolescence, often falling asleep under the table during post-show revels at Lady Astor's, a restaurant across the street from the Public Theater.

She went on to study dance and theater at Brown University, and some years later, when she and Ms. Rogers moved to San Francisco, they founded Trick Saddle.

For Ms. Galilee, "Imagining the Imagi-



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Clove Galilee, left, with Marylouise Burke, who stars in "Imagining the Imaginary Invalid."

nary Invalid" is an attempt to fuse her parents' way of working with the distinct style that she and Ms. Rogers have developed in their own projects.

As in many other Mabou Mines shows, a classical text anchors the piece. The tangents that then unfurl, like the decision to explore Molière's company, are another Mabou Mines hallmark.

But this is also a Trick Saddle show. There are more dances and more attention to dance than in a typical Mabou Mines work, and the cast and crew are composed of Ms. Galilee's friends and colleagues.

And sometimes it's difficult to untangle the sources and stimuli. "Obviously I'm influenced by how I grew up and what I learned and what I saw," Ms. Galilee said. "It informs me as an artist, and it always will."

She can trace similarities between the way Molière's company worked in the 1670s, the way Mabou Mines worked in the 1970s and the way her own company works now. "They cooked, and they lived together, and they traveled together, and they made the plays, and they had the babies, and they got sick, and they got well," she said.

Still, it has not always been easy to continue the project in Ms. Maleczek's absence. Joe Tapper, an actor who has been with the play from the beginning, said that performing it without Ms. Maleczek "is very different and very hard."

But both he and Brian McManamon, another actor who signed on in 2012, agreed that they were happy to have continued on, particularly with the addition of Ms. Burke, whose performance is in no way an impersonation of Ms. Maleczek, but inevitably serves as a homage.

"It feels very much like a way to honor her," Mr. McManamon said.

Ms. Galilee added, "The play is about her loss, her absence, as much as it's about Molière."



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Marylouise Burke (seated) in rehearsal for "Imagining the Imaginary Invalid," coming to La MaMa.

Honoring Mother (And Molière) in Spirit

At La MaMa, Clove Galilee pays tribute to two dynamos.

BY ALEXIS SOLOSKI

In 2012, the actress Ruth Maleczek, who was soon to receive a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer, underwent an operation on her leg that left her temporarily bedridden.

"My mom was not one to sit around," said Clove Galilee, Ms. Maleczek's daughter. Ms. Galilee began searching for a play that she and her mother, a founding member of the venerable experimental theater company Mabou Mines, could work on from a hospital bed.

They settled on "The Imaginary Invalid," a 1673 Molière comedy about Argan, a miserly, sedentary hypochondriac. After her mother left the hospital, Ms. Galilee staged a workshop production later in 2012. On video, you can see Ms. Maleczek playing Argan, the playwright and herself. Still imperious, she strides around the set in a loosefitting blue tunic, her trademark red hair pulled back from her face as she moans and rages and grins.

They performed another workshop in July 2013. Ms. Maleczek died two months

later.

Now Ms. Galilee has returned to the piece. "Imagining the Imaginary Invalid" begins performances at La MaMa on Jan. 21, a production of Mabou Mines and Ms. Galilee's own company, Trick Saddle.

Like the earlier incarnations, the show is set at a rehearsal, as actors and crew members mill about, assembling scenery and fiddling with costumes. The text, originally prepared by Valeria Vasilevski and then adapted by Ms. Galilee's co-artistic director and spouse, Jenny Rogers, combines Molière's script with gossip about the workings of his own troupe, the Illustrious Theater Company, and contemporary backstage chatter. Frederick Wiseman's 1996 documentary "La Comédie-Française" is another influence. The styles of acting range from intentionally overdramatic to entirely nondramatic. There are ballet sequences, too.

In 2012, a lot of the interest in the piece came from a tension that almost no one but Ms. Maleczek and Ms. Galilee were aware of: that Ms. Maleczek was playing the stage's most eminent hypochondriac while suffering from a terminal illness. (The same also applied to Molière, who originated the

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