Blind Cinema steps outside conventional ways of storytelling, relying on senses

Explores relationship between language, experience

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pitch-black. Assured they cannot see anything, producers lead the children in, one by one, to sit behind the crowd. They pick up their

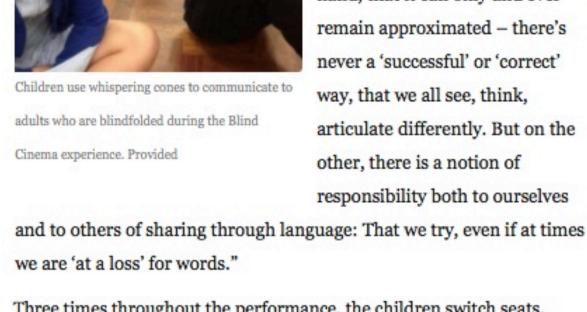
the adults in front of them – and they start to watch the screen.

The theater is already dark, but with the aid of the blindfolds, it's now

whispering devices – small cones that allow them to communicate with

What follows is Blind Cinema, where children watch a film that has music - but no dialogue. The children are then responsible for whispering what is happening to the blindfolded adults. Sometimes they succeed, while other times, the children struggle to describe what they're seeing.

"The piece hopefully touches upon the struggle or paradox at the heart of this relationship between language and experience," said Blind Cinema creator Britt Hatzius. "On the one



hand, that it can only and ever remain approximated - there's never a 'successful' or 'correct' way, that we all see, think, articulate differently. But on the other, there is a notion of responsibility both to ourselves Three times throughout the performance, the children switch seats, which ensures that audience members receive three different experiences. It becomes what the organizers call a "shared investment." With each audience member and child using his or her imagination,

each gets a different story. Co-presented with Mini Microcinema, performances will be held at The

Carnegie's Otto M Budig Theater in Covington starting Sept. 28, and

Hatzius will work with students from four area elementary schools to

prepare them for the experience. One of those schools is The New

Contemporary Arts Center to participate in Blind Cinema.

School Montessori on Burton Woods Lane. "The New School Montessori has fostered a community and culture of innovation and progressive ideas for over 45 years," said Jeff Groh, director of the school. "A recent example is a partnership with the

"Britt Hatzius will conduct a two-hour workshop with 9- to 12-year-old

students from The New School Montessori to prepare them for an

interactive performance that shifts the power balance between adults

and children while honoring imagination and descriptive language over

images." Groh said he knew the project would parallel The New School's ideals. "The New School's progressive community of parents, students, alumni and staff continue to deepen the role that education, arts and children

play in our society," Groh said.

knowing what to expect."

from a desire to strip everything away from what she calls our "visually dominated culture of media overload." "Partly out of a frustration with (that) and the desire to strip everything back to a minimum," Hatzius said. "It's based on the practice of audio

description for the blind. The children watch the movie for the first

time, finding themselves in a similar position as the audience, not

Hatzius, who hails from London, said the idea for Blind Cinema came

Hatzius, who has a background in visual arts, said she has always enjoyed working with different media. But over her career she's become particularly interested in the live aspect of her work. "I'm above all interested in exploring ideas around language,

interpretation and the potential for discrepancies, ruptures, deviations

and miscommunication when confronted with experiences, visual or

otherwise," Hatzius said. "In Blind Cinema the audience is asked to imagine a movie based on the children's fragmentary descriptions." The performance has earned rave reviews in Europe. "I utterly enjoyed working together with Britt Hatzius," said Hannes

very natural, calm and patient way of communicating with the kids that put them at ease and gave them the confidence to eventually perform. "Simultaneously she never lost sight of the bigger picture, had eye for even the smallest details and stayed true to her concept. That combination resulted in an amazing performance during which I felt

very vulnerable, but also very focused."

enjoyed the experience."

Van Wynendaele, a teacher at Belgium's Freinetschool De Harp school.

"Throughout several well-constructed workshops she demonstrated a

Van Wynendaele said the overall process was surprising. "In the process of putting together the fragmented pieces of information I received, I was surprised by how used I was to a conventional way of storytelling and was confronted with the limitations of my own imagination," Van Wynendaele said. "At the same time I was amazed by the differences between children when it comes to describing an image, stressing the uniqueness of every person. Afterwards, both the spectators and the performers really