

O P E N B O O K

The High-rise Ecotopia

Metropolis: What the City Can Teach the Country about True Sustainability (Riverhead, \$25.95) explains. From chapter one:

My wife and I got married right out of college, in 1978. We were young and naïve and unashamedly idealistic, and we decided to make our first home in a utopian environmentalist community in New York State. For seven years we lived quite contentedly in circumstances that would strike most

the United States. The most devastating damage that humans have done to the environment has arisen from the burning of fossil fuels, a category in which New Yorkers are practically prehistoric by comparison with other Americans, including people who live in rural areas or in such putatively eco-friendly cities as

Portland, Oregon, and Boulder, Colorado. The average Manhattanite consumes gasoline at a rate that the country as a whole hasn't matched since the mid 1920s, when the most widely owned car in the United States was the Ford Model T. Thanks to New York City, the average resident of New York uses less gasoline than the average resident of any other state, and uses less than half as much as the average

Though dense and paved, Manhattan is exemplary in energy use and greenhouse-gas emissions.

resident of Wyoming. Eighty-two percent of employed Manhattan residents travel to work by public transit, by bicycle, or on foot. That's 10 times the rate for Americans in general, and eight times the rate for workers in Los Angeles County... The average New Yorker (if we take into consideration all five boroughs of the city) annually generates 7.1 metric tons of greenhouse gases, a lower rate than that of residents of any other American city, and less than 30 percent of the national average, which is 24.5 metric tons; Manhattanites generate even less.

Americans as austere in the extreme: our living space measured just 700 square feet, and we didn't have a lawn, a clothes dryer, or a car. We did our grocery shopping on foot, and when we needed to travel longer distances we used public transportation. Because space at home was scarce, we seldom acquired new possessions of significant size. Our electric bill worked out to about a dollar a day.

The utopian community was Manhattan. Most Americans... think of New York City as an ecological nightmare, a wasteland of concrete and garbage and diesel fumes and traffic jams, but in comparison with the rest of America it's a model of environmental responsibility. In fact, by the most significant measures, New York is the greenest community in



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A Midsummer Night's Dream. (The renaming of Zero Arrow, reportedly, is permanent.) The audience throngs into the nightclub (yes, adult beverages are available) and dances for the first half-hour amid a cast, in costume and in character, that mingles and dances with them. Four Fairies—chiseled young men wearing little more than glorified loincloths and eyeliner—gyrate atop cubes on the dance floor and invite theatergoers to gyrate with them. The play unfolds in blackout sketches that pop up in spotlights all over the room, played at times almost literally in audience members' laps. Not a single word of Shakespeare's dialogue is uttered, but the action is true to his characters and their relationships, and moves ahead via disco anthems like "I Love the Nightlife," "We Are Family," and "Last Dance."

The Donkey Show, which premiered in 1998 in New York and has since run in Edinburgh, London, Madrid, and Evian, France, is the first of Paulus's "Exploding Shakespeare" triptych, the trio of productions that open her first season. For October, she booked the innovative British theater company Punchdrunk to stage—*install* might be a better word—*Sleep No More*, "an immersive production inspired by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, told through the lens of a Hitchcock thriller" at the Old Lincoln School near Brookline Village, Massachusetts. In late November, *The Best of Both Worlds* will tell *The Winter's Tale* with the musical sounds of R&B and gospel. (An unexploded *Winter's Tale*, performed by the ART's Institute for Advanced Theater Training class of 2010, was also on the Loeb theater docket for early October.)

"I am serious about the mission of ART—to expand the boundaries of theater," Paulus says. "I am very passionate about theater not being defined as an 'elite' art form. I want to see it return to a vibrant, vital place, not only as a center of culture, but at the center of our society. In fifth-century B.C. Athens, theater was at the center of social and religious life; Aeschylus was competing with Sophocles amid the birth of democracy. The theatrical experience should not be confined to rituals of what we *think* theater is—to sit in chairs bolted to the floor: that's *one* kind of theater. Look at Indian culture or medieval Europe—*theater* hasn't only been about realism and naturalism.

"[Richard] Wagner said to turn the