

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner? The Dresden Dolls' Amanda Palmer Hosts A Soiree.



story by Selene Angier

It's a play on the age-old parlor game. The one you've probably bandied in an overstuffed booth at your local bar or just as the after-party is starting to ramp. Who would you invite to dinner? Who are your idols? Who have you always wanted to sit down and have a chat with? What would you ask and why?

The Dresden Dolls' pianotrix Amanda Palmer kicks off our series. With an all-encompassing dedication to art - music, theatre and the visual - the Boston band was an easy mark for this imaginative task.

*In April, the punk-cabaret duo, rounded out by drummer Brian Viglione, released the Paul Kolderie-helmed *Yes, Virginia...* (Roadrunner) to wide acclaim. The sophomore offering's title is taken from a New York Sun editorial, of all places. About Santa Claus, of all things. In an 1897 inquiry, eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon asked "Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?" ([link](#)) Francis P. Church, in an everyman's existential response, assured her, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus."*

But it's the less famous lines that point to the Dresdens' guiding maxims. "Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world. ... Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond."

Usually people rattle off their 10 invites with a few quick explanatory sentences but Palmer, as would be expected, ups the creative ante setting the scene completely with her, as she put it, "director/musician salon."

So, who did she invite?

Push aside that curtain and find out, as Amanda explains her dinner in detail (and in her own words).

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Everyone is Invited.

Directors have been called in to collaborate with musicians, and we have given each director a large hall to work with.

Unlimited budget. The location: Outskirts of Zagreb, in an abandoned factory. Sunrise. Please check coats and minds at door.

Starring:

Robert Wilson & Philip Glass

For old time's sake I've asked them to re-create the original *Einstein On The Beach*. It very specifically states in the program that, though this room is the only seated space, you are not expected to sit for the duration of the performance. I spend my time trying to make it in there during the *Knee Plays* and instead am enticed into the hall of...

Peter Greenaway & Michael Nyman

where Peter has created a giant cathedral-like space lit from every direction like a kaleidoscope of doom. The floor is made of small children and flowers, none of which get harmed when you step on them.

Michael plays solo works for the gigantic pipe organ. Peter Greenaway finds me and admits that he wishes he'd said yes when I begged to follow him back to England to be his intern back in 2000.

Julie Taymor & Jeff Magnum and Neutral Milk Hotel

Julie has spent the last few weeks locked up in a cellar listening to In the Aeroplane Over The Sea and has emerged to create her meisterwerk. Jeff & The Band play on a high giant wooden scaffolding that surrounds us in a gallows circle and underneath all of his lyrics come to life in a giant performance collage of girls in tiaras and hearts and tears and hidden rooms and gas chambers and time machines and many many many bottles with many things in them. Everything spins. Jeff then announces that he (and the band) will start making music again, but on another planet. Anyone can come, but lawyers, managers, promoters, girlfriends, and music critics will combust immediately upon entry into the atmosphere. Next door is...

Jim Henson & Beck

Beck has found his True Spiritual Home. All of the muppets dressed join in for a rousing chorus of "Loser," each one of them taking a solo and rapping about how their particular muppet-flaws have made them pariahs. Special feature here is the ability to dive into a pile of muppets (painless, empty muppets) and fall through the other side, into a pool of tacks, where Beck greets you in his underwear and laughs bloody ironically.

David Lynch & Regina Spektor

David somehow manages to make Regina free-floating, and we all get odd box seats (sort of like that intergalactic senate in Star Wars I). The sky is painted silver and every constellation is in motion, revealing the secrets behind good chord progressions. Each box is filled with a character specifically chosen to accompany you on your Regina-listening journey, from Ezra Pound to Mozart to Thoreau to Sid Vicious. You can also buy a "massage" from your musical/literary box-mate (happy ending: \$50).

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