

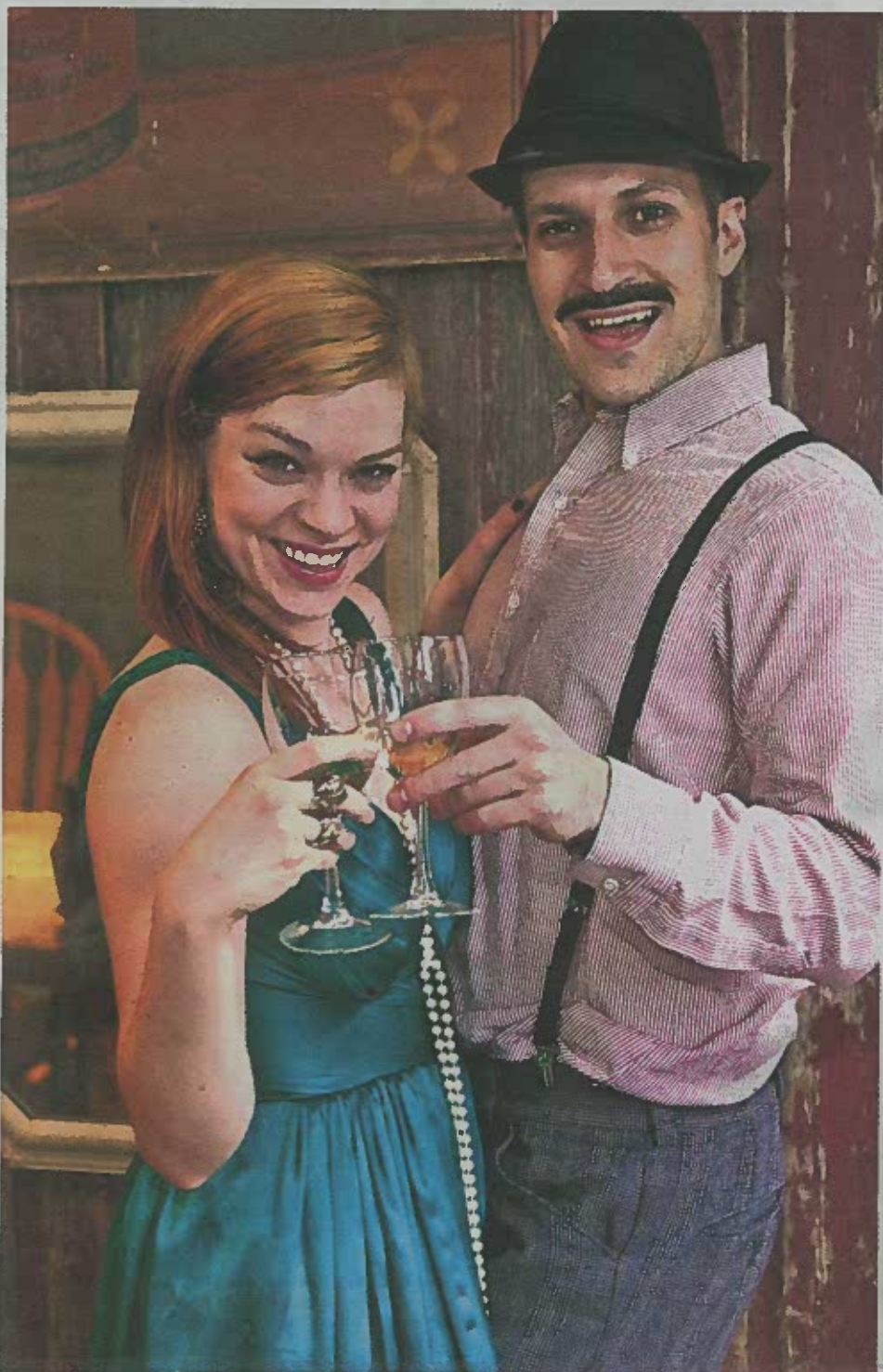
a new twist on

# dinner theater

Performance artists promise to spice up your dining experience



PEARL GABEL



CDREY SIPKIN/DAILY NEWS

**F**or most dinner parties, a simple RSVP will do. But if you want a seat at Vicky and Lysander's table, you need a reservation.

For the past month, Damon Cardasis and Shannon Walker have been hosting interactive BYOB dinner parties on the lower East Side pretending to be a fake socialite couple named "Vicky" and "Lysander."

Call it downtown dinner theater.

At first glance, their dinner parties seem pretty standard: A large rustic wooden table is set for 12, family-style platters of crispy fried chicken from Mama's Food Shop on E. Third St. line the table, and guests enjoy booze from large red plastic cups.

But then Walker (aka Vicky) appears to get a little tipsy and belts out "Maybe This Time" from "Cabaret" while dancing down the top of the dinner table.

It's the most awkward dinner party you've ever been to — and it's hilarious.

Cardasis and Walker came up with their characters in a sketch-comedy class while undergrads at NYU. Cardasis describes "Vicky and Lysander" as "the worst of New York." Imagine a less inhibited version of Paris Hilton.

Their dining room is a convertible space at Norfolk and Rivington called Grand Opening that has in the past functioned as a wedding chapel and a table tennis club. The couple hosts two dinner parties a night, each lasting an hour and a half, Thursday through Sunday,

with tickets available online ([www.grandopening.org](http://www.grandopening.org)) at \$40 a pop.

Guests are subjected to a cringe-inducing slide show of Vicky and Lysander's vacations over dessert (cupcakes from the nabe's Sugar Sweet Sunshine bakery), but beyond that, there's no structure to the dinner party/performance and anything goes. The hosts are over the top, in your face, and politically incorrect.

"We're up for anything," says Walker, 25. "Hecklers or people who will get offended and may get confrontational — we expect anything and everything."

So far, Cardasis and Walker haven't been disappointed.

"People have told total strangers about losing their virginity at 14 years old, about how much they hate their job, about their family situation, their divorce, and which random celebrity they've had sex with," says Cardasis, 27.

"We've been really surprised how candid people have been, but in some ways, it's almost cathartic."

If you're thinking about sitting down at Vicky and Lysander's dinner table, don't worry — they might give you a hard time, but they won't force you to open up.

"You can interact as much as you want to," says former guest Caroline Wooldridge, 27, who lives in the East Village. "But you don't have to interact in order to enjoy it."

For reservations, call (646) 875-8078 or visit [grandopening.org](http://grandopening.org).

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At left, Shannon Walker and Damon Cardasis; top photo, Vicky and Lysander's dinner party at Grand Opening.