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Best of Cincinnati for July 10, 2006 June 22, 2006

### On the Edge

*2006 Cincinnati Fringe Festival will take you places you've never been*

**Edited By Rick Pender**

It's time for Cincinnati to return to life on the Fringe -- that would be the 2006 Fringe Festival, the third annual celebration of Cincinnati's underground, revolutionary arts.

Starting Thursday, you can take in shows at seven venues: downtown at the Contemporary Arts Center and the Aronoff's Fifth Third Bank Theater and in Over-the-Rhine at Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati (1127 Vine St.), Know Theatre (1120 Jackson St.), Mr. Pitiful's (1323 Main St.), InkTank (1311 Main St.) and Kaldi's (1204 Main St.). There are also several site-specific locations, chosen because they're ideal for one particular work.

Eleven shows open Thursday, with six new ones on Friday (plus quite a few from the day before) and another five on Saturday. Performances continue daily through June 10. On June 11, a "Best of Fringe" presentation restages works selected by audiences, critics and the Fringe organizers.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's a Visual Fringe with works at a dozen galleries; a Celluloid Fringe on Monday and Tuesday evenings with films shown at The Greenwich, (2442 Gilbert Ave.), Walnut Hills; and a Fringe Festival Bar Series with music nightly at venues up and down Main Street and elsewhere.

It's not easy to select which shows you'll take in on a given evening, because there's a bit of everything -- from *Ante, Christ!* and *godspay* to *The Gospel According to Tammy Faye*. So *CityBeat* has recruited a crew of 11 writers and reviewers to talk with Fringe performers and provide their own take on what will be presented: Alexandra August, Jessica Canterbury, Jane Durrell, Paul Kreft, C.A. MacConnell, Tom McElfresh, Christine Mersch, Julie Mullins, Rodger Pille, Kathy Valin and myself.

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By Woodrow J. Hinton

#### Hot Issue 2006

### Also This Issue

**Building Desdemona**  
It's not easy, but Nick Spencer thinks a cutting-edge music festival on the riverfront is well worth the hoop-jumping

**Just Go With the Even Flow**  
A fan's retrospective of growing up in Pearl Jam's footsteps

**Heavy Petting**  
Barely out of high school, Be Your Own Pet looks to be the summer's buzz band

**Lying Down on the Job**  
'Dead Body Guy' was dying to do local short film

**The Big Pictures**  
A month-by-month preview of the summer's most anticipated movies

**Opera, With Mud**  
Local pubs offer a month-long home away from home for soccer's World Cup

**Water, Water Everywhere**  
Take a dip and relax all summer long

**Hot Topics**  
Public office (and other vices) are up to voters as

Their inside scoops are offered in alphabetical order, because it's silly to try to plug these shows into categories. (Here's one tip, however: All dance programs will be found at the Fifth Third Bank Theater.)

Check out the full schedule in *CityBeat's* calendar listings on page 43 of this week's regular issue to find out when and where various performances happen, and check the official Web site ([www.cincyfringe.com](http://www.cincyfringe.com)) for last-minute changes. Beginning Friday, go to [citybeat.com](http://citybeat.com) to read our writers' comprehensive analyses of what they've seen; we'll present highlights of their reviews in next week's *CityBeat*. It will be Cincinnati's best and most timely coverage of the 2006 Fringe Festival.

**The Absurdity of Writing Poetry.**

Not creating art has to be just as easy, if not easier, than creating art, you say. Matt Slaybaugh, Columbus-based writer-performer of this one-man show, would disagree. The founder and former artistic director of the 2005 Pick of the Fringe-winning BlueForms Theatre Group stars in his own piece about a writer who gives up the craft and the challenges that ensue. "Not making art is difficult, because the guy finds that making art is how he connects to the world," he says. "When he stops, he finds himself disconnected and isolated." Expect a philosophical look into these notions, along with some Hip Hop and poetry. (JC)

**All.**

The newly-formed dance duo Living Breath breathes life into edgy contemporary forms with their triptych, *All*. Experimenting with some aerial dance, a sub-genre that's been generating buzz and garnering new fans, Living Breath presents work that's ethereal, elemental and exciting. For Fringe, founding collaborators Holly Price and Rebecca Parker will offer *Samadhi*, a duet emphasizing weight sharing, breath work and yoga-inspired moves plus their brand-new *Opening*, a surreal work involving oppositional forces that was influenced by a dream Price had and Parker helped interpret. The pair has assembled a mixed cast of movers to perform *Totem*, a light, playful look at evolving animal life. (JM)



Photo By Courtesy of Fringe

**Matt Slaybaugh tries not to make art in *The Absurdity of Writing Poetry*.**

**All We Can Handle.**

Andrew Dainoff's one-man play had two readings in New York last year; one starred Raul Esparza, who recently wowed Cincinnati Playhouse audiences in *Company*. The monologue is about David, a guitarist who moves to New York for a woman he barely knows. Shortly after arriving, his world is changed by 9/11. CCM senior Adam Standley plays 10 different characters involved in David's journey of loss and self-realization. Dainoff graduated from Wyoming High and Miami University; New Stage Collective latched onto his play last summer, and now the brash young group is making its first entry into the Fringe with this production at the CAC. (RPe)

**Ante, Christ!.**

Co-author/comedian Brian Nichols and his Houston troupe of eight are Fringe newbies, and their show had only one tryout performance before premiering here. George W. Bush is a character. Dick Cheney hovers in the background, manipulating things. But Nichols says it's all religious satire, with caricatures of L. Ron "Scientology" Hubbard and a Jesus who's the comic sum of many Christ stereotypes. "Our jumping off place," Nichols said, "is that religion is something you're allowed to laugh at." *Ante, Christ!* is hard-scripted, but Nichols and other cast members are seasoned improvisers, working regularly at Comedy Sportz, a Houston improv venue. (TM)

**An Arizona Story.**

"Private thoughts with universal intentions" would be a great tagline for this one-woman show. This soliloquy is intermixed with original music created and performed by Lindsay Caron. Written during the past year, the show follows Caron's journey to self-discovery against the backdrop of the Arizona desert. She addresses issues of drug use, poverty and sexual identity, making this a

video, are up to voters as campaigns heat up this summer

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Your best bets for summer events



very personal play. But it simultaneously tells a story we should all be pretty familiar with: the self, lost and found. (AA)

### **Catholic Girl's Guide to Losing Your Virginity.**

Cincinnati native Annie Hendy earned her theater degree from CCM, then found herself in Los Angeles going nowhere. So she wrote a show about Lizzy, a 24-year-old who's still a virgin and trying to change things before she turns 25. CCM theater professor Richard Hess helped her put it together, and another CCM grad, David Zelina, performs with her in all the men's roles. They had an L.A. production early in 2006. Outside her stage door on opening night she found Nia Vardalos, whose *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* was her inspiration. "I sent her an invite and she came," Hendy says. Turns out Vardalos' show ran in the very same theater. After a 10-week extended run in California, Hendy brings her comedy home to Cincinnati. (RPe)

### **Color Me Naked Vol. 2: Big Black and Sassy.**

Inspired by an episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Les Kurkendaal explores racism, homophobia and stereotyping in his autobiographical monologue. He describes his one-man show as a conversation, chatting with the audience. He sees himself as a storyteller with a style comparable to performers such as Kathy Griffin or Margaret Cho. *Big Black and Sassy*, as the title suggests, contains nudity and some adult themes. Returning for his second Cincinnati Fringe Festival, this Hollywood-based performer continues the thread he presented last year in *A Comment from the Peanut Gallery*. (PK)



Photo By Matheu Brooks

**Les Kurkendaal struts his naked self.**

### **Eenie Meanie.**

Don't think for a minute that racism is metaphorically black and white. Teresa Willis' autobiographical one-person piece shows one white woman's conflicted, touching and comedic experience with "conditioned racism within the well-meaning heart." A native Kentuckian who now lives and performs in Southern California, Willis explores 40 years of American culture by covering the L.A. riots, interracial romance and a biracial Cincinnati graduation, as well as her own polarized family. *Eenie Meanie* combines her skills as writer and versatile performer. (JD)

### **Exhale Dance Tribe.**

Who says classic Broadway musicals are out of fashion? The husband-and-wife team of Missy Lay Zimmer and Andrew Hubbard presents a collage of pieces comprising an evening of "experiential dance" in a cabaret-style revue, featuring their trademark snazzy, jazzy-flavored choreography. Hubbard performs a high-energy contemporary solo, jam-packed with an endless supply of movement variations and possibilities. Look for a couple of musical theater numbers from the likes of *Cabaret* and *Chicago*, flanked by expressive new works crossing boundaries of Hip Hop, Jazz, modern and more. Zimmer points to a common thread: "It's sexy and sassy, and it works!" (JM)

### **godspay.**

This piece from the Performance Gallery should be relevant to anyone who's watched religion and politics intermingle recently in a highly volatile way. The show addresses where society is heading, with politicians increasingly using religion as a tool. If that incendiary prospect doesn't whet your palate, the creative process might. Not based on a set script, *godspay* was born out of the ideas and experimentation of all involved during improvisational rehearsal sessions over the past month. With that avant-garde approach and the involvement of movement artist Jon Ferguson, the show promises to be both visually stimulating and thought-provoking. (AA)

### **The Gospel According to Tammy Faye.**

This full-length musical and world premiere is about the life of



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erstwhile televangelist Tammy Faye. There's not much more Fringe organizers could do to pique your curiosity, is there? OK, fine: There's a scene in it filled with drag queens getting ready for a Tammy Faye look-alike contest. Satisfied? But lest you think that the show is one pointed joke at the heavily made-up and usually tearful personality, co-writer and producer Fernando Dovalina says, "This musical doesn't laugh at Tammy. It laughs with her. And she loves to laugh. She's the greatest giggler I've ever met." The show is essentially based on a long-form interview Tammy granted the writers, detailing her wild life. (RPi)



Photo By Courtesy of Fringe

**Jeffrey Barnes struggles to Remember Who Made You.**

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### **Inauguration.**

That seems a fitting title for the recent Philadelphia-to-Morehead, Ky. transplant Ashley Lecille Suttler's (premier dance performances in the area). Alongside a video presentation of one of her recent ensemble pieces, the ambitious dancer/choreographer will perform a triad of thought-provoking works that are anything but mindless entertainment: Think such cerebral-sounding themes as the complexities of gender and racial identities, obsessive-compulsive disorder and altering perceptions. Serotonin, considered her signature piece, examines power imbalances and how the subconscious speaks through movement. (JM)

### **Indy Prov.**

Each performance begins with a clean slate and ends up a reflection of the audience's experiences and ideas, explains Jennifer Elliott, project manager for Indy Prov, the improvisational and likely hilarious theatrical experiment for this year's Fringe. Theatrical improv isn't a new concept, but placing an experienced troupe in the already-progressive world of the Fringe bodes well. As you might guess, the group comes from Indianapolis and has gained a solid reputation there. Elliot says it's because the cast is addicted to danger; we think she just made that up. (RPi)

### **Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown.**

One actor, Juan Carlos Diaz. One 12-year-old Guillermo Reyes script given hot-ticket topicality by today's immigration debate. Six gay characters suffering transcultural shock, all striving to assimilate out of poverty into a United States that deems them dispensable. Diaz is a 2001 CCM musical theater grad who came back to Ohio from New York to appear in six Human Race shows in Dayton and, this season, in Tick, Tick ... Boom! with Know Theatre Tribe. He's known and wanted to play Reyes' survivors for years; the Fringe Fest supplies the right setting. (TM)

### **A Midsummer Night's Dream.**

Six (performers) plus 16 (masks) plus four (puppets) add up to a full cast for a raucous and wacky production of a raucous and wacky Shakespearean play. See man become donkey as Bottom wears an ass' head. See every actor take a turn as Puck. See what happens when comedic techniques from silent cinema, vaudeville and commedia dell'arte mix it up with the Bard, who knew a thing or three about comedy himself. Louisville-based Le Petomane Theatre Ensemble created this production in October and has performed it to acclaim. What does Le Petomane mean? Ask them. (JD)

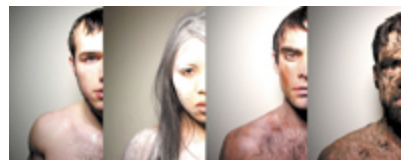


Photo By Courtesy of Fringe

**CCM students create an (Un)Natural Disaster.**

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### **Pre-Show Warm Up.**

Choreographer and dancer Paige Cunningham has impressive credentials. This 28-year-old SCPA grad joined the esteemed Merce Cunningham Dance Company, touring nationally and internationally. Now she's creating her own works, combining her interest in media with her love of dance. Based on the idea that dancers are just as good as their overpaid counterparts in the professional sports world, she's arranged to project contrasting footage of football and soccer players back to back with images of dancers performing similar movements. After that, she'll solo live. (KV)

**Prison Ketchup.**

Lauren Scallon is a docent in the gallery of her life in her one-woman show that melds stand-up comedy with pure theater and the visual arts. She provides a tour of her own art works, which reflect her life -- as art works tend to do. The piece has previously been seen in workshop format as Scallon's senior project at Northern Kentucky University, but this is its premiere for a general audience. Producer Liz Vosmeier saw the workshop, then titled *Art Out Loud*, and with her husband as director shepherded the piece into its Fringe form. (JD)

**Remember Who Made You.**

From Indianapolis, author/actor Jeffrey Barnes is a first-time Cincinnati Fringer. His piece is a dramatic exploration of what it's like to be gay and a Christian in 21st-century America, with just a bit of humor to lighten things up from time to time. Portraying multiple male characters of varying ages -- some gay, some straight and one who is male-to-female transgender -- he doesn't pretend to have answers for all the questions. He points out a variety of the struggles and differences of opinions that people of all sexual orientations encounter with this subject. (PK)

**Running My Ass Off ... and Getting Nowhere!.**

Stacey Morrison wrote this piece about 228-pound Elizabeth (Courtney Seiberling), whose boyfriend (Ben Dobson) vows to marry her if she drops significant weight. Partnering with the third character, a treadmill, Elizabeth accepts the challenge. But as scale numbers sink, their relationship unravels. Running becomes a metaphor for "the pursuit of love," according to Morrison, who's also "one of those crazy-ass type" of runners. After an injury, Morrison was forced to spend a lot of time on a treadmill -- the play's genesis and an inspiration to tell "the raw truth that's hard to write and, at times, hard to watch." (CAM)

**So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz.**

Amy Salloway is coming back to town for another Fringe, and hallelujahs are in order. Her superior mono-comedy, *Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?*, played to sell-out audiences and earned an extra Best of the Fest performance a year ago. Her new 70-minute solo show tells a single, funny, bittersweet tale of "adolescent angst and mortification," she sags. "The two un-coolest 15-year-olds in the world meet at a religious camp, Camp L'Chaim" and help each other stumble toward adulthood as they fumble toward a relationship. It's sorta biographical with serious "fact adjustment" and has appeared successfully at Fringes in Atlanta and Halifax. (TM)



Photo By Courtesy of Fringe

**Jen Spillane's VIRTUE is figuring out what it means to be a woman in today's society.**

**Stories from Behind the Wheel.**

InkTank Director Jeff Syrone says, "The Metro is one of the few places you get a number of unlike people in the same space. There's something powerful about that." Set on an actual moving bus, this dramatic piece, composed by InkTank writers, shows a Cincinnati perspective through stories from drivers and riders. Passengers board at InkTank. Next stop, the first actor appears, beginning a 50-minute journey. Inspired by InkTank's *Art on the Bus Project*, Syrone's idea grew upon meeting Jason Bruffy, the Fringe's producing director. The two have worked together ever since. Get on the bus, but be timely. This was a sold-out run last year. (CAM)

**String Theory.**

Since 2004, Colleen McCarty's Moving Art Dance Company has brought a breath of fresh air to Cincinnati and the Fringe. This time it's four dancers (including the agile McCarty, Moving Art's artistic director), two musicians, a puppet and a puppeteer. McCarty's playful and subversive imagination has combined a model of fundamental physics that postulates a theory of the universe based on one-dimensional extended objects (whew!) with a marionette known on the set as Frank. Seems like she's asking, "Who's really pulling the strings?" This company's track record is impressive. You might actually go home understanding the constituents of reality. (KV)

**Thanks for the Scabies, Jerkface!**

Dan Bernitt returns in his dry, dark and sometimes humorous semi-autobiographical journey through the minefield that's college life for a gay man. His performance at last year's Fringe featured incredibly sharp writing marked by insight and wit. This time around his first roommate in college turns out to be homophobic, while the entire checkout aisle at Wal-Mart finds out he has scabies. After leaving his parents, how will this gay college kid grow to find a home? Thanks for the Scabies, Jerkface! is being performed in the intimate setting of Kaldi's, a perfect venue for this bright young talent. (PK)

**(UN)Natural Disaster.**

What is a disaster, and how do we respond? CCM drama chair Richard Hess answers those questions with a piece using 13 of his student actors, creating a work he says will be messy -- "heavy use of the four natural creative elements: wind, water, earth and fire." They'll perform in an old Over-the-Rhine storefront at 1322 Main St., a place where the show can live in "ironic bliss," as Hess calls it. The show, he says, is drawn from the words of survivors of hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, blizzards and more. He adds, "We will sing. We will dance. There will be laughter." And audiences will be fascinated by this cry for order amid chaos. (RPe)

**VIRTUE: did she fall or was she pushed?.**

Attraction. Vulnerability. Motherhood. All are elements of modern "virtue," and all strike a chord with playwright and actor Jen Spillane. Between the barrage of headlines and media imagery and first-hand experiences, she wondered aloud one day, "What does it mean to be a woman in today's society?" This world premiere work -- her fourth solo piece but her first in the Fringe -- allows her a chance to pull together traditional monologues, language examinations, poetry and news excerpts to "fully look at all women, how we live, how we love, how our sexuality affects who we are," she says. "I don't have any answers. That's why I'm here." Sounds like great Fringe. (RPi)

**When the Lights Fade.**

Directed by George Potter, this work combines personal narratives with multimedia elements. Potter says he wanted to explore personal relationships in a technological age and describes his show as "The Breakfast Club on acid." Four actors each describe at least three experiences with communication, including serious and light-hearted events such as scarification, drug addiction, finding Jesus and getting engaged. Some narratives include audio or video clips; some clips match the stories while some provide ironic juxtaposition. Potter says his show is perfect for the Fringe. "The presentation of real stories opens up a lot of dialogue," he observes. "It becomes a place where people can talk about issues." (CM)

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**The 2006 CINCINNATI FRINGE FESTIVAL runs through June 11 at various downtown and Over-the-Rhine venues. Check out the official Web site at [www.cincyfringe.com](http://www.cincyfringe.com) and look for reviews of all performances at [citybeat.com](http://citybeat.com).**

**E-mail [Rick Pender](mailto:Rick.Pender@citybeat.com)**

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