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THE Arts

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2010

The New York Times

Amid Fringe Festival Upstarts, an Oscar Nominee

By DAVID ROONEY

He could probably dine out for months on Mel Gibson stories. But the cinematographer Caleb Deschanel, who earned two of his five Oscar nominations for shooting "The Patriot" and "The Passion of the Christ" (one starring Mr. Gibson, the other directed by him), instead is spending his filmmaking downtime with the New York International Fringe Festival.

The recipient this year of a lifetime achievement award from the American Society of Cinematographers, Mr. Deschanel, 65, has directed features, television, documentaries and commercials. But the one-person play "Burning in China" is his first job directing for the stage.

"I don't have enough things to terrify me, so I decided to get involved in this play," he said in an interview at the TriBeCa Grand Hotel a few days before his

DANCE IN THE FRINGE

Alastair Macaulay reviews the Indian work "Swaha: Rituals of Union," at Dixon Place. Page 5.

Fringe bow. "But it's more personal than that, because Gary Moore, who wrote it, is someone I've known since college at Johns Hopkins. He was editor of the newspaper, and then I was the editor the year after that."

The show, which has three remaining Fringe performances from Thursday through next Saturday at the Fourth Street Theater in the East Village, chronicles the experience of Mr. Moore, played by Jeff LeBeau, teaching Chinese students in Shanghai in 1988 and 1989 amid the rumblings of national unrest that led to the Tiananmen Square demonstrations. The breakthrough in his struggle to open a dialogue with his buttoned-up students came

with the New Year's Eve staging of a bilingual rap opera, "The Great Emancipator Meets the Monkey King."

"The play goes deep into the desire for freedom and expression, which is both political and cultural," Mr. Deschanel said. "The Chinese are brought up to believe that you should be silent in class. The teacher speaks, and you just listen and absorb what

Continued on Page 5



FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Caleb Deschanel on his Fringe experience: "It's kind of fun."

Amid All Those Fringe Festival Upstarts, a Multiple-Oscar Nominee

From First Arts Page

they say. It's not the process that we're used to in school, where you have a lot of interaction with your teachers."

"It's a strange evolution of Gary going from these frustrating relationships with the students to finally bringing them out, putting on the play and introducing them to music," he continued. "He gets to the point where they have this wonderful relationship, and then the classes are shut down by the uprisings."

Along with storytelling skills and a visual sense honed while working with some of the great craftsmen of American movies, including Francis Ford Coppola, Hal Ashby and his cinematographer mentors Haskell Wexler and Gordon Willis, Mr. Deschanel has brought along physical material from his day job to "Burning in China." The show opens and closes with footage he shot on a low-resolution video camera while visiting Mr. Moore in early 1989. (He was in Guangzhou directing a television commercial for Craftsman tools at the time.)

Lean, lanky and elegantly bookish with his silver hair, horn-rimmed glasses and crisp seersucker jacket, Mr. Deschanel looks nothing like the stereotype of the rugged cinematographer, lugging camera equipment around far-flung locations. He says Mr. Moore e-mailed him about entering "Burning in China" in the Fringe while he was in Toronto shooting "Dream House," a forthcoming thriller directed by Jim Sheridan and starring Daniel Craig, Naomi Watts and Rachel Weisz.

"I'm working the usual 12-to-14-hour days and not paying much attention and saying, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah,'" he recalled. "And then a couple of months ago he told me we'd been accepted. So now we have to do it. I had no idea when Gary said we were in the Fringe what it was like, but it's kind of fun. I'm probably twice the age of everybody else who's involved in it."

He confessed that the most difficult adjustment had been focusing his storytelling instincts to fit an intimate stage and a single actor and adapting his technical standards to the rough-and-ready aesthetic of the Fringe.

ONLINE: FROM THE FRINGE

More coverage of the New York International Fringe Festival: nytimes.com/artsbeat

"You have two and a half hours to set up lighting and prepare for everything onstage," he said. "It's an unbelievable nightmare, but if you're in the movie business, you get trained to just make things happen, no matter what."

While Mr. Moore, in a phone conversation, called his old friend a "genius visual artist," as they worked on the play over many years, he said, he came to appreciate him as "a really powerful dramatic thinker."

"He knows what works and doesn't work in a story," Mr. Moore added. "He's had a heck of a lot to do with the changes that I think have made it a more successful dramatic piece."

Asked whether "Burning in China" would lead to further theater work, Mr. Deschanel was doubtful, refusing even to entertain the hypothetical notion of

directing his daughter Zoëy Deschanel, the actress and singer, in a musical. (His other daughter is Emily Deschanel of the television series "Bones.")

"Zoëy would be tough," he said with a laugh. "I haven't won an argument with Zoëy since she was 3 years old, so now that she's grown up, there's no chance. I think with the terror I'm feeling right now, this is a one-time-only experience."

As for those Mel Gibson stories, Mr. Deschanel swears he got through the two features without witnessing a single tirade.

"No matter what I do, everybody asks questions about Mel," he said. "Obviously he's in a really bad place, but when I worked with him, it was very professional. You're always reading about somebody doing something crazy or awful, and they talk to the next-door neighbors, who say, 'He was a nice guy; he came over and mowed my lawn.' It just goes to show you that you don't know everything about people. But it's sad because I think he's an enormously talented person."



SAM MORRIS

Jeff LeBeau in Gary Moore's "Burning in China," directed by the cinematographer Caleb Deschanel.

The New York Times

Tuesday August 24th, 2010

A Fringe Too Tame? Too Bad

Does it matter that New York has a drearily mediocre Fringe Festival?

I have long thought not, since the annual August assembly line of toothless political parodies, dumb musicals, navel-gazing solo shows and occasional gems always seemed harmless. It gave hundreds of young artists a chance to shine and filled a niche for the press during the dead quiet of summer. As I have visited much more audience-friendly Fringes in Edinburgh and Philadelphia, however, the New York International Fringe Festival now appears needlessly bland and poorly organized. It also does no favors for the reputation of downtown theater. We deserve better.

Of course, complaining about the Fringe, run by the artistic director Elena Holy, is part of its tradition. Before the first festival even opened, it was attacked for using a jury to pick shows, which, the argument went, violated the spirit of the movement, started by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the middle of the last century.

As someone who has covered almost every Fringe Festival since it began in 1997, the real problem now is that for the average theatergoer it remains too hard to find a good or interesting show. The reasons for this have as much to do with a lack of vision on the part of the producers as the talent level of the artists.

The first mistake was the gradual spreading out across lower Manhattan. Running from one theater to another is a challenge and there are fewer crowds of spectators milling around together. Consequently, you are much less likely to bump into audience members and trade tips. You could spend all day downtown and have no clue that the Fringe even exists.

THEATER

JASON ZINOMAN

Some Fringe festivals are easier to navigate because they are smaller. Edinburgh is much larger, but by decentralizing the curating, allowing individual theaters to create their own programming, the aesthetic has an eccentricity entirely lacking in New York. The Fringe here makes it difficult to find the kinds of shows you want to see. And if you arrive one minute late, the no-latecomer policy is strictly enforced (which I discovered the hard way racing to a show).

This year I did my usual routine of scouring reviews, listening carefully for buzz. What I have discovered so far (the festival runs through Sunday) are a heartfelt, but flawed solo drama; a charming two-person genre piece; and a bunch of forgettable shows. When you present 200 productions that are quickly put together, there will be bad work. I may have had poor luck this go-round, but over the years, the kind of bad shows at the Fringe has changed. They are now usually failures of ambition and imagination as much as craft.

Gary Moore's "Burning in China" also shows off artists who don't seem to consider the challenges of the form. A sincere multimedia rap opera, I am sorry to report, is probably not going to work in a cheap Fringe show. To be fair, this wrong-headed effort is not, strictly speaking, a rap opera, so much as Mr. Moore acting out by himself a rap opera that he directed when he taught English in China in the late '80s. And the multimedia, to be clear, was limited to a video of street life that was obscured by lights hung too low. The director Caleb Deschanel, an Oscar-nominated cinematographer, probably never had to worry about sight lines in Hollywood.

In this deeply sentimental inspirational-teacher story, Mr. Moore crams his experiences into the familiar formula of an exuberant outsider inspiring his difficult charges. This time, it's in the shadow of the Tiananmen Square protests. Mr. Moore urges his shy students to open up through the rap opera, which includes a cross-cultural relationship between the Monkey King, a legendary character from Chinese folklore, and Abraham Lincoln.

Donning a top hat, our 16th president rhymes with a sing-songy, old-school flow:

*I'm the Great Emancipator, I'm
the man from Illinois
I can free your slaves, I can
bring you joy
But I can't do nothing for
anyone
If you're the kind of people
don't know how to have fun.*



SAM MORRIS

Jeff LeBeau in "Burning in China," written by Gary Moore and directed by Caleb Deschanel.

The New York Times

Friday September 17th, 2010

SPARE Times

Sept. 17-23

For Children

B.Y.O.K. (Sunday) Once people become parents, they often leave their B.Y.O.B. days behind. Now 92YTriBeCa, the satellite of the 92nd Street Y, is offering the perfect substitute: B.Y.O.K., or Bring Your Own Kid. As the title implies, this series is devoted to cross-generational fun, and so on Sunday it will present Princess Katie and Racer Steve, rockers and pop artists known to toss soccer balls or Mylar streamers to fans. Here they'll celebrate their new CD, "Tiny Cool." At 11 a.m., 200 Hudson Street, at Canal Street, (212) 601-1000, 92ytribeca.org/BYOK; \$15; free for under 2.

'FAMILY TIME WITH ZIGGY MARLEY' (Sunday) Yes, he's Bob Marley's son. But don't worry that your kids will be singing rousing choruses of "I Shot the Sheriff" after seeing him. Ziggy Marley's third solo album, "Family Time," which features guest artists like Paul Simon and Laurie Berkner, is all about reggae for young listeners. (It also won the 2010 Grammy for best musical album for children.) His concert here will inaugurate this season's Big Red Chair Family Series at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts at New York University. At 3 p.m., 566 La Guardia Place, at Washington Square South, Greenwich Village, (212) 352-3101, skirballcenter.nyu.edu; \$22 to \$30.

'HANSEL & GRETEL' (Friday through Sunday) Sparrowtree Theater Company's musical adaptation of the Grimm fairy tale begins where most versions end: with Hansel and Gretel's return home, and all the questions their reappearance raises. Created by a team of married writers, Carly Howard (music and lyrics) and Chad Howard (book), the show, recommended for those 12 and older, uses three large projection screens to tell the siblings' tale in multimedia flashbacks. (Through Sept. 25.) At 8 p.m., 17 Frost, 17 Frost Street, at Union Avenue, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, hauntedandhunted.com; brownpapertickets.com; \$15.

'NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE' (Sunday) In other words, get out and play. But not all children are natural athletes. This event in and around the Staten Island Children's Museum introduces a wide variety of alternative activities that mix fitness with fun: yoga, fencing, tae kwan do, zumba (a workout built around Latin dance), even pitching horseshoes. Children can also decorate water bottles for themselves and design pennants. From 1 to 4 p.m., 1000 Richmond Terrace, Livingston, (718) 273-2060, statenislandkids.org; free with museum admission; \$6; free for under 1.

OPEN HOUSE AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER IN MANHATTAN (Sunday) Little ones and parents will each have their own reasons to mingle and move at this introduction to the center's fall offerings. Highlights include a 10 a.m. concert with the band Music for Aardvarks and the educational program Rock-a-Baby; a taste of "Movin' Mamas," a shape-up program for new mothers (babies included) at 10:30 a.m.; and a Kids' Sports Expo, in which children can meet the center's coaches and learn about athletics, at 11 a.m. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 344 Amsterdam Avenue, at 76th Street, (646) 505-5708, jccmanhattan.org; free.

SCANDINAVIAN SINGALONG (Saturday) Sick of "Frère Jacques" and "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"? Add some Danish tunes to your repertoire of children's songs at this event from Scandinavia House: The Nordic Center in America. The Danish musicians Anne Mette Iversen and Vibe Normann will perform in English, leading young visitors — the recommended ages are 1 to 7 — in song, dance and musical games. At 1 p.m., 58 Park Avenue, at 38th Street, (212) 847-9740, scandinaviahouse.org; \$10; \$7 for members of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. Reservations requested via phone or an e-mail to event_reservation@amscan.org.

NEW YORK POST

Wednesday, October 6th, 2010

Are these tuners poised to be the next 'Boyz'?

By FRANK SCHECK

IT'S no Fringe Festival — and that's a good thing. Now in its seventh season, the New York Musical Theatre Festival offers a level of polish and talent that puts its summertime counterpart to shame. Here — from the launching pad of "Next to Normal," "Altar Boyz," "[title of show]" and "Yank!" — are a few shows that might one day make it off-Broadway or on.

■ "WITHOUT YOU"

Anthony Rapp, who's made a cottage industry of being one of the original stars of "Rent," wrote and stars in this one-man musical. Like the memoir on which it's based, it tells how he coped with the deaths of two important people in his life: Jonathan Larson, the "Rent" composer who died just before his show's opening night, and Rapp's mother, who succumbed to cancer soon after.

Though not terribly deep, the show has an emotional sincerity and intimate observations of the show that changed his life. Along the way, Rapp delivers virtuoso renditions of "La Vie Boheme" and other songs from "Rent," plus a few original tunes of his own that inevitably suffer by comparison.

TBG Theater, 312 W. 36th St.; 212-352-3101. Through Saturday.

■ "I GOT FIRED"

Keith Varney, who stars in and wrote the book, music and lyrics for this "semi-autobiographical, sort-of-true revenge musical," clearly has an ax to grind. And he does so in this piece, about a temp who runs afoul of a new

and ambitious co-worker.

Featuring a bouncy pop/rock score with a memorable title tune, the show is less interested in office politics than it is in depicting Keith's nemesis, the sexy blonde Jenny (Kelly Karbacz), as the bitch from hell. It's also studded with stereotypes, from the Trekkie geek (Collin Leydon) to a spitfire Latina (Robyn Corujo). Even so, it's clever and tuneful enough to resonate with any employee who's gotten the short end of the stick.

TBG Theater, 312 W. 36th St.; 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 14.

■ "TESS, A NEW ROCK OPERA"

Thomas Hardy's classic novel "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" has been turned into an ambitious, "Les Miz"-styled musical. Featuring a cast of 16 and no fewer than 40 songs, it's obviously a labor of love for Long Island sisters Annie and Jenna Pasqua, who, respectively, lead the band and star.

They tend to rush through some plot points, like Tess' victimization at the hands of her cousin (Chris Gleim), to concentrate on the juicy romance between her and the moralistic Angel (Nick Cartell). Still, the sung-through score has some memorable numbers, including a terrific first-act closer, "Promise Me." And while there are a few too many rustic dance numbers and some tired shtick from gossipy female villagers, "Tess" has enough promise to merit further development.

Theater at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St.; 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 12.

NEW YORK POST

Thursday, August 12th, 2010

Fringe in low places

Fest offers 197 shows hoping for mainstream glory

By BARBARA HOFFMAN

HOW does a drama about the massacre in Mumbai and **"Hip Hop High: The Musical"** sell out without ad campaigns or a single premiere?

When they play the Fringe, folks.

The 14th annual New York International Fringe Festival kicks off tomorrow with 197 shows — a few of which have already commanded enough word-of-mouth to make them instant hits.

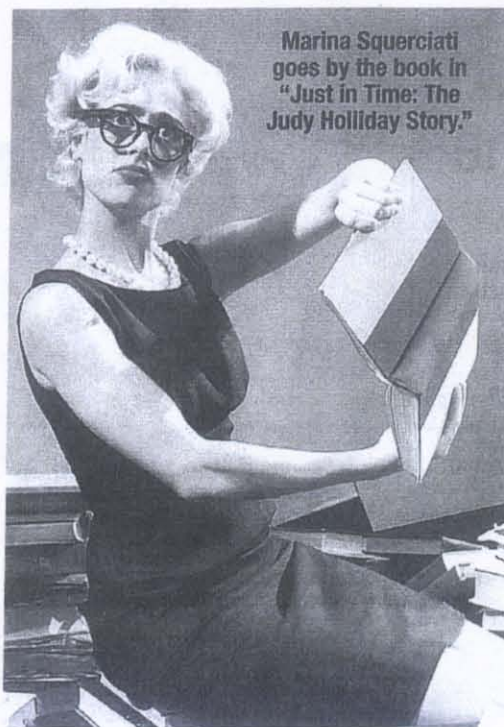
"It's the only show from India this year, and they reached out to the Indian community, which really responded," says Fringe artistic director Elana K. Holy of that hot ticket, **"A Personal War: Stories of the Mumbai Terror Attacks."**

As far as **"Hip Hop High"** is concerned, she credits its cast of energetic teenagers, "tweeting and Facebooking," with getting the word out.

With tweets or without, there's always the hope of another **"Urine-town,"** the only Fringe show so far to make it all the way to Broadway.

This year's fest, running through Aug. 29, offers the usual: a sprinkling of Shakespeare (a streamlined **"As You Like It,"** the teen-friendly **"Hamlettes"**); oodles of camp (**"Friends of Dorothy: An Oz Cabaret"**) and titles that might have come from Max Bialystock

Marina Squerciati goes by the book in **"Just in Time: The Judy Holliday Story."**



Ellen M. Nickles

for the Oscars, the Tonys and the Emmys, is no quitter. He's retooled his 1978 flop musical **"Platinum,"** about a comeback-hungry Hollywood climber named Lila Halliday, and cast it with Broadway stalwarts Liz Larsen (**"Hairspray"**) and Sarah Litzsinger (**"Beauty and the Beast"**).

► A real Hollywood cutie's the centerpiece of **"Just in Time: The Judy Holliday Story."** Billed as "a fast-paced romp through the life of the Original Dumb Blonde," it's full of songs and the starry crew Holliday hung with: Orson Welles, Katharine Hepburn and Jimmy Durante among them.

► Ah, Michelle Dessler: "24" diehards still mourn her passing. So it's nice to discover the woman who played her, Reiko Aylesworth, in **"Lost and Found,"** one of the fest's few dramas, this one about a cop's dysfunctional family. Another familiar face: Geraldine Librandi, who played Patty Leotardo in **"The Sopranos."**

► Cinephiles should turn out in force for **"Burning in China,"** directed as it is by Caleb Deschanel, the cinematographer better known these days as the dad of Zooey and Emily Deschanel. Gary Moore's show is about an American professor in China who follows his students into that pre-Twitter show-down at Tiananmen Square.

Can the Fringe be serious? This year, it just might.

himself — take **"Jew Wish"** and **"Invader? I Hardly Know Her!"** Please.

New this year: posh digs for Fringe Central, where you can buy tix and see trailers (1 E. Eighth St., off Fifth Avenue, across the street from Otto), plus a show-finding app you can download for free from iTunes.

With \$15 tickets and all the free A/C you can soak up, it's worth a gamble. Here are a few of the more promising contenders:

► Bruce Vilanch, who's written

NEW YORK POST

Saturday, June 12th, 2010

Great Shakes

The play's (really!) the thing this summer

By ELISABETH VINCENTELLI

SINCE the Public Theater's first Shakespeare in the Park production 56 years ago, summers in New York have turned into an informal Bardfest. This year, the Public is offering a rotating bill of "The Winter's Tale" and "The Merchant of Venice" at the Delacorte Theater through Aug. 1. Most of the cast does both shows, though Al Pacino sticks to "Merchant." (For more info, see shakespeareinthePark.org.) But that's hardly the only Shakespeare in town! Here's what else is playing — times vary, so don't forget to call ahead for scheduling and weather information.



"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

The plot: This summer perennial takes place in a forest, plus it's bawdy, funny, romantic and just plain weird — a magic potion that makes a fairy fall in love with a donkey is the least of it.

The players: They're in modern dress — or is that undress? Expect vaguely futuristic leather-and-bustiers action (see above).

The place: The exotic reaches of Baruch College, just north of Gramercy Park. Thursday-Sunday through June 19, \$25. Bernie West Theatre, 17 Lexington Ave.; 212-352-3101.

Sam Morris

NEW YORK POST

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 19th, 2009

Intriguing ideas falter in rough execution



Mel Johnson as Frederick Douglass at the Fringe Fest.

THEATER REVIEW

VICTORIA & FREDERICK FOR PRESIDENT

★★ 1/2

New School for Drama Theater,
151 Bank St.; 866-468-7619.
Through Saturday.

LIVE BROADCAST

★★

New School for Drama Theater,
151 Bank St.; 866-468-7619.
Through Sunday.

By FRANK SCHECK

TWO provocative premises get less than compelling executions at the New York International Fringe Festival, home to "Victoria & Frederick for President" and "Live Broadcast."

The first — Jonathan L. Davidson's play about the 1872 presidential campaign of Victoria Woodhull and Frederick Douglass — starts as a Suzan-Lori Parks-style, time-tripping fantasia, depicting an "Oprah"-style talk show led by a black host (Devin Haqq). But the action soon shifts to the 19th century, and the play becomes a standard historical drama featuring such figures as Susan B. Anthony (Liza Vann) and Ulysses S. Grant (Edward Hyland).

Nothing wrong with that, except

that the writing lacks the juice to bring its characters to life. Scenes dutifully depict Woodhull's success at a Wall Street brokerage firm, her espousal of free love and open marriage, and her rift with Anthony, her sister suffragist.

Despite fine performances by Antoinette Lavecchia and Mel Johnson Jr. in the leads, the results too often feel like dutiful historical pageant rather than fleshed-out drama. Having Woodhull's husband (Ariel Shafir) coo such lines as "Who's my little president?" doesn't help.

The fact that Adrian Grenier ("Entourage") is one of the producers may explain why "Victoria" is attracting a young female crowd.

Another fascinating premise — that of an ultra-conservative Hollywood star opening up on a talk show — un-

derlies "Live Broadcast." Here, a handsome, Tom Cruise-like action movie star (John William Schiffbauer, who not only wrote the play but did the sound design) agrees to a live televised debate with a liberal Vermont congresswoman (Andrea Day), much to the consternation of his agent (Amanda Brooke Lerner).

But little about the proceedings rings true, from the sexy politico's clandestine relationship with the untutored talk show host (Kyle Knauf) to the unconvincing denouement.

Like a David Mamet minus the urgency, "Live Broadcast" plods along, with a second act consisting almost entirely of a lengthy, overly familiar debate over abortion and gun control. At one point, the movie star declares, "Bring it on!"

Seems we've heard that before.

NEW YORK POST

TUESDAY AUGUST 18th, 2009

Sorrow with a Fringe

ILLNESS, loss and death permeate "Look After You" and "Afterlight," now playing the New York International Fringe Festival. These tales, respectively, of a young woman

THEATER REVIEW



Frank
Scheck

LOOK AFTER YOU

★★ 1/2

Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St.;
866-468-7619, through Aug.
29.

AFTERLIGHT

★★★

Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St.;
866-468-7619, through Aug. 25.

recovering from a brain aneurysm and a community coming to grips with a sudden death are sensitively rendered, offering a respite from the campy fare that makes up much of this fest.

"Look After You" depicts a photographer, Han-



Christopher Davis

Davi Santos and Allyson Morgan play a teenage couple in the throes of first love in the admirable play "Afterlight."

nah (played by author Louise Flory), coming to terms with a brain injury that's erased much of her memory.

Among the many things she's forgotten is the marriage proposal from her longtime boyfriend, Jake (Jason Altman), who finds himself strangely reluctant to remind her.

While Flory refrains from playing up the pathos of Hannah's condition, her focus on the boyfriend's commitment problem seems reductive: Is this re-

ally the most important issue for someone struggling to regain essential mental functions?

Still, the play largely works, thanks to some amusing dialogue and the appealing performances, particularly by Lowell Byers as Jake's plain-speaking (is there any other kind?) bartender friend.

Monica Flory's "Afterlight" is more ambitious. It depicts the interactions of several small-town characters after a school-bus

driver has been killed in a mysterious accident. They include a 60-something childless couple (Angus Hepburn, Kim Carlson); a single mother (Kimberly Prentice) who's pregnant by her new boyfriend (Frank Mihelich); and a teenage couple (Allyson Morgan, Davi Santos) in the throes of first love.

The play's mystical, allegorical elements alternately fascinate and exasperate. The teen girl thinks her long-missing father may have returned as the wolf prowling the local graveyard. The young boy keeps sighting what he describes as "albino" butterflies. And the old man hears mysterious animal sounds under his kitchen floorboards, which he promptly tears up.

Director Misti B. Wills accentuates the play's otherworldly aspects with portentous music and lighting effects, although the production values are too modest to be fully effective.

Still, there's much here to admire — especially the beautifully drawn characters, superbly played by the fine ensemble. With a sharpened focus and a better physical production, "Afterlight" could well have a successful afterlife.

WEDNESDAY JULY 21st, 2010

DAILY VARIETY

LEGIT

FRINGE 'BURNING' UP

H'w'd lenser to helm play about China

By GORDON COX

Among the slew of stage shows descending on Gotham next month for the New York Intl. Fringe Fest, one of them — scribe Gary Moore's "Burning in China" — arrives with a Hollywood profile, thanks to its helmer, veteran cinematographer Caleb Deschanel.

Jeff LeBeau stars in "Burning," about the playwright's visit to China in the months prior to the violence that erupted in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Production will incorporate footage shot in China in 1988 by Deschanel, the d.p. of pics including "The Right Stuff," "The Natural," "National Treasure" and the upcoming "Dream House."



Deschanel

"Burning" recounts the events of Moore's teaching stint at a Shanghai university in 1988, including the performance of a bilingual rap opera Moore wrote, helmed and performed with his students.

Production, which runs Aug. 17-28 at Gotham's Fourth Street Theater, joins a Fringe lineup that includes a Macbeth-themed take of the latenight wars, "Mac-Chin: The Lamentable Tragedie of Jay Leno" and "Jurassic Parq: The Broadway Musical," a comic retelling of the blockbuster's tale from the point of view of the dinosaurs.

Fest, now in its 14th year, will present productions from some 200 companies during its 16-day run, kicking off Aug. 13.

DAILY VARIETY
and business information

FRIDAY JULY 24, 2009

Legit Bits

By DAVID ROONEY and SAM THIELMAN

"Entourage" thesp Adrian Grenier will present New York Fringe Festival entrant "Victoria and Frederick" at the 2009 event, where it is skedded to run Aug. 15-22 at the New School for Drama. Playwright Jonathan L. Davidson produced Grenier's HBO docu "Shot in the Dark."

Script follows the presidential campaign of stockbroker Victoria Woodhull and her VP candidate, Frederick Douglass, in 1872. The production will feature original music by Roy Wilfred "Future Man" Wooten, percussionist for jazz quartet Bela Fleck and the Flecktones.

**Adrian Grenier**John Shearer/WireImage.com

The Hollywood Reporter

Friday August 20th, 2010

REVIEWS

FILM/THEATER

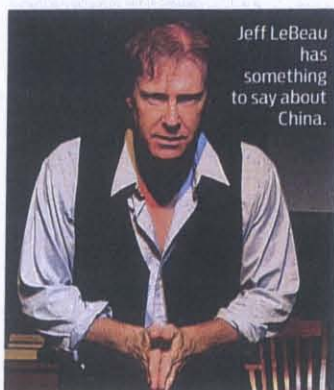
'Burning in China'

By Frank Scheck

NEW YORK — Five-time Oscar-nominated cinematographer Caleb Deschanel ("The Right Stuff," "The Passion of the Christ") makes his stage directorial debut with this one-man show written by Gary Moore and starring Jeff LeBeau.

Being presented as part of the New York International Fringe Festival, "Burning in China" revolves around Moore's true-life experiences as a visiting professor in China just before the student uprisings that led to the events at Tiananmen Square.

Deschanel, who has optioned the



piece for the big screen, clearly has an affinity for the subject matter; the show incorporates film footage he shot in China that same year.

Moore, who arrived in Shanghai in 1988, found that his students were eager to escape the repressive nature of the Chinese government.

A key element of his brief tenure was his staging of a student production of a bilingual "rap opera" titled "The Great Emancipator Meets the Monkey King," which depicted an encounter between Abraham Lincoln and the Chinese folklore hero.

The 90-minute monologue is filled with colorful details concerning the author's cultural dislocation as he deals with exoticisms like the endless profusion of bicycles thronging the city and culinary delicacies like a whole chicken head in his soup.

Unfortunately, the profusion of cutesy elements overwhelms the deeper components of the overly dense piece, which sacrifices thematic coherence in favor of anecdotes, like when the married Moore was offered an introduction

to a Chinese woman who was eager to have sex with a Westerner.

LeBeau delivers a vibrant, engaging performance, not to mention demonstrating a talent for prodigious memorization, but his efforts are defeated by the sheer talkiness of the proceedings. The material seems far better suited for cinematic treatment, which its director certainly is in a position to facilitate.

BOTTOM LINE This overly dense theatrical monologue about an American professor's experiences in China is better suited to the big screen. **VENUE:** 4th Street Theatre, New York (Through Aug. 28). **CAST:** Jeff LeBeau. **PLAYWRIGHT:** Gary Moore. **DIRECTOR:** Caleb Deschanel. **GRAPHIC DESIGNER:** Serena Fox. **LIGHTING SUPERVISOR:** Josh Iacovelli.

amNew York

Friday August 27th, 2010

WEEKEND

Ruling this
'Town'

Our Town



BY MATT WINDMAN
amNewYork theater critic

At first it sounded like just another boring production of "Our Town," Thornton Wilder's classic play about everyday life in Grover's Corners that's been performed in virtually every high school in America at some point.

But David Cromer, who has become one of the hottest directors in the entire country in the year and a half since his revival premiered off-Broadway, had other plans.

Not only did Cromer

opt to take on the role of stage manager (i.e., narrator) himself, he removed the folksy sentimentality and nostalgia that is now associated with the play and replaced it with uncompromising reality.

The staging, which will finally shutter on Sept. 10, now stands as the longest-running staging of "Our Town" in theater history. This week Cromer returned to the role of the stage manager, which has also been played by Helen Hunt and Michael McKean.

Cromer gutted the Barrow Street Theater so that the audience surrounds the actors in a church basement style,

IF YOU GO

"Our Town"

- At the Barrow Street Theater through Sept. 10
- 27 Barrow St., 212-868-4444 ourtownoffbroadway.com

adding intimacy and immediacy. The cast wears street clothes and the house lights are used.

Cromer portrays the stage manager in a low-key, casual style. The rest of the ensemble cast is similarly focused, allowing the play to resonate in a truly fresh manner.

BEHIND the
CURTAIN

BY MATT WINDMAN
amNewYork theater critic

ALSO PLAYING

If It Only Even Runs a Minute 3:

This fun concert series goes beyond offering songs from flop musicals. It's meticulously designed as an evening of stories, memories and moments from musicals that could but didn't. (Le) Poisson Rouge, 158 Bleecker St., lepoissonrouge.com, Sun., 9:30 p.m.



(MW)

Burning in China:

On the whole, Gary Moore's one-man show about his experience as an American professor teaching in China around the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre is nicely told and well-acted by Jeff LeBeau (pictured). (MW) 4th Street Theatre, 83 E. Fourth St., 866-468-7619, fringenyc.org. Fri., 7 p.m.; Sat., 5:30 p.m.

am New York

Friday September 10th, 2010

WEEKEND

Clothes keep stories of heart

**Love, Loss, and
What I Wore**

★★★★

BY MATT WINDMAN

amNewYork theater critic

In time for Fashion Week, let's take another look at "Love, Loss, and What I Wore," a unique crossbreed of "The Vagina Monologues" and fashion reality shows.

Loosely adapted from Ilene Beckerman's book of the same title about the relationship between everyday moments

in our lives and pieces of everyday clothing, Nora and Delia Ephron's engaging show is that rarest of all things in contemporary New York theater: a commercially successful off-Broadway show. It has now played at the Westside Theatre for a full year.

A quintet of women dressed in black sits at the edge of the stage. In a free-flowing style, they recall memories and recite short anecdotes. The stories they share are humorous, heartfelt and seamlessly integrated into a free-flowing nonlinear narrative.

Most impressive of all is how

someone with no familiarity whatsoever with women's fashion (i.e., a typical guy such as myself) can still find the show pretty damn enjoyable.

As no memorization is required (the actresses read from scripts on music stands), the cast switches on a monthly basis. Jamie-Lynn Sigler, Stacy London, Victoria Clark, Nancy Giles and Helen Carey are currently on stage.

Playwrights Nora
and Delia Ephron



IF YOU GO

**'Love, Loss, and
What I Wore'**

- At the Westside Theatre, open run
- 407 W. 43rd St., 212-239-6200, telecharge.com



'When Last We Flew': Just as Tony Kushner's epic drama "Angels in America" is about to receive its first New York revival, along comes Harrison David Rivers' ambitious play about a gay teen whose life

ALSO
PLAYING

is changed by reading it. It's a rough but promising and poetic piece of theater. (MW)

Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St., 866-486-7619, fringenyc-

encoreseries.com. Through Thurs.

'Coco': The York Theatre Company's popular Musicals in Mufti series kicks off with a concert production of "Coco," a long-lost 1969 musical about Coco

Chanel's return to the fashion world in the 1950s that originally starred Katharine Hepburn. (MW)

York Theatre Company, 619 Lexington Ave., 212-935-5820, yorktheatre.org. Through Sun.

amNew York
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2008



with
Cady Huffman

By Matt Windman
amNewYork Theater Critic

One of the more intriguing offerings of the 5th annual New York Musical Theater Festival is "Wood," a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." We spoke with leading lady Cady Huffman, a Tony Award-winner for "The Producers."

How did you get involved with "Wood"?

Out of nowhere, I was asked to do it. I didn't know anyone involved in the project. And I'm really reluctant to do something if I don't already know someone. It's hard to know who's who or what's what. But they were persistent. I read it and liked it. So why not jump in?

What's attracted you to your role?

I'm getting a chance to sing some soprano and pop ballad stuff that people don't necessarily think of me as performing. They usually think of me singing big Broadway character numbers.

How does "Wood" relate to "Midsummer"?

Most of the "Midsummer" stuff comes from the young lovers that are falling for the wrong people.

TBG Theater, 312 West 36th St., 212-352-3101, \$20. Wed, Fri 8pm, Sat 1pm, Sun 4pm. Thru Sept. 28.



Cady Huffman

NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN CONNECTION

WWW.NYDAILYNEWS.COM

DAILY NEWS

FRIDAY JULY 23rd, 2010**'Love,' 'War' & more at theater fest****Joe Dziemianowicz**

At the 11th annual Midtown International Theatre Festival, running now through Aug. 1, diversity and fresh voices are the name of the game.

This year, the subject of love looms large in the 31 full-length shows being presented in venues in the West 30s and West 40s.

Consider: "Love Humiliation Karaoke," "Love Me Tinder" and "Lovers" — respectively a one-man rant, a bittersweet drama set on Valentine's Day and a punk-pop-rock-jazz musical about the "darker side of a relationship."

And while "love" doesn't appear in the title of "Never Norman Rockwell," it's all over this screwball bromance.

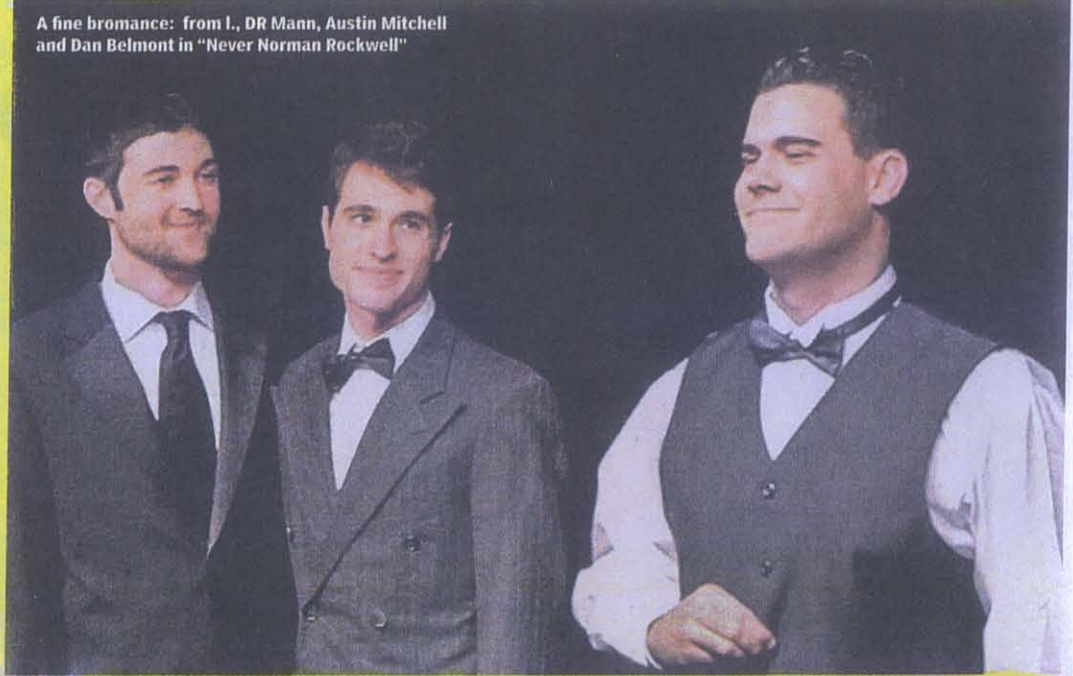
"It's a love story between men — one's gay, one's not," says New York playwright Kyle Baxter. "The idea behind it is that not all love stories are romantic."

"Layla and Harley, Together Again" offers a different tone altogether. The spooky comedy is set in a Brooklyn pub.

Meantime, "The Gospel According to Josh" is Joshua Rivedal's solo show in which he plays over two dozen characters, ranging from his dad to Elvis. It follows his comic adventures as a young actor, including a TV stint on "Jerry Springer."

Another intriguing production is "Civil War Voices," a play with period music that tells four separate stories: A

A fine bromance: from l., DR Mann, Austin Mitchell and Dan Belmont in "Never Norman Rockwell"



slave who became Mary Todd Lincoln's confidante, a Southern couple separated by war, a Yankee professor-turned-military hero and a plantation owner with a conflicted conscience.

Writer James R. Harris, a Nebraska-based lawyer, says his show was "inspired by a diary kept by my great-great uncle" — landowner Joe Harris. "That diary

inspired me to look for other true stories from the war."

He found one story of Elizabeth Keckly at an exhibit at the Museum of the City of New York. "She was born a slave, bought her freedom, moved to D.C., worked for Jefferson Davis and then for Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln in the White House."

He discovered the tale of Theo and Harriet Perry, a Texas couple separated by war the new old-fashioned way, he says. "On Google."

MITF tickets are \$18.

Go to midtownfestival.org for a complete show list and performance schedule.

jdziemianowicz@nydailynews.com

Time Out New York

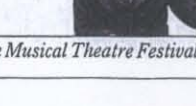
SEPTEMBER 18-24, 2008

Theater

Edited by David Cote
theater@timeoutny.com

The secrets of NYMF

Did you notice how star-free the Fringe Festival was this year? That's because the stars, hoping to attach themselves to the next breakout hit, have moved to a new corner of the show-tune sky: the New York Musical Theatre Festival. Here's a quick guide to the brightest twinklers. By **Adam Feldman** and **David Cote**

WHO THEY ARE	CLAIM TO FAME	WHAT'S THE SHOW?	REASON TO GO
 Jim J. Bullock	The <i>Hollywood Squares</i> regular, who once cohosted a talk show with Tammy Faye Bakker, recently appeared in Broadway's <i>Hairspray</i> .	<i>The Fancy Boys Follies</i> , a naughty night of gay burlesque with a libretto by David Pevsner, one of the creators of <i>Naked Boys Singing!</i>	If you've ever dreamed of seeing Jim J. Bullock strip onstage—and who can honestly say they haven't?—here's your big chance.
 Kevin Cahoon	Under tons of makeup, he was the Childcatcher in <i>Chitty Chitty Bang Bang</i> ; in '80s drag, he went retrocamp in <i>The Wedding Singer</i> .	<i>Bonnie & Clyde: A Folk Tale</i> , which probably won't end happily. The score is by <i>Newsical</i> 's Rick Crom; actor Hunter Foster wrote the book.	When he's not fronting his glam-punk band Ghetto Cowboy, Cahoon is good for musical comic relief; here, he plays a gun-toting sidekick.
 Donna Lynne Champlin	Playing a Italian barber, Champlin wielded a silly accent and a mean accordion in the John Doyle revival of <i>Sweeney Todd</i> .	<i>Love Jerry</i> , in which Megan Gogerty sets two brothers' painful memories of child abuse to song. Doesn't sound commercial, but who knows?	Champlin is a smart, sensitive performer who can give this sort of adults-only material both musical and emotional weight.
 Chuck Cooper	Cooper's seductive menace has served him well as a pimp in <i>The Life</i> , a lawyer in <i>Chicago</i> and a satanic clothes dryer in <i>Caroline, or Change</i> .	<i>Twilight in Manhego</i> , by Matt Gould, in which an elementary-school teacher must shepherd his kids through the aftershocks of a local crisis.	Yes, Cooper is playing the school principal—he's a formidable-looking black man, after all—but you can bet he'll bring his own spin to the role.
 Mary Faber	This up-and-coming button-cute ingenue was one of the best things about Playwrights Horizons' <i>Saved</i> ; she's also appeared in <i>Avenue Q</i> .	<i>Pasek and Paul in Concert</i> , a revue of songs by the composer-lyricist team of Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, who won the 2007 Jonathan Larson Award.	Faber is absolutely adorable, and she can belt with the best of 'em. Here, she'll show off her chops with tunes about being young and urban.
 Cady Huffman	This knockout blond originated Ulla in <i>The Producers</i> , then had a guest stint as herself on <i>Curb Your Enthusiasm</i> .	<i>Wood</i> , an allegorical musical (by Dan Collins and by Julianne Wick Davis) about normalcy and diversity in a small town.	As a sexually frustrated housewife, Huffman cross-dresses and sings an 11 o'clock power ballad about whether or not to leave her hubby.
 Ramona Keller	The iron-voiced Keller left her <i>Caroline, or Change</i> Radio days behind to make her mark as Paradise in the otherwise forgettable <i>Brooklyn</i> .	<i>Idaho!</i> , a wacky spoof by Buddy Sheffield and Keith Thompson, in which a mail-order bride winds up falling for the wrong male.	Keller plays the comic-sidekick part of a black woman disguised as a Native American maid. Expect at least one big-singing blowout.
 Brian Charles Rooney	Dressed as a girl and singing the part, Rooney shone in the Roundabout's otherwise dim <i>Threepenny Opera</i> .	<i>Bedbugs!!!</i> , Paul Leschen and Fred Sauter's retrofuturist rock-out, in which a mad exterminator mutates bedbugs into hair-metal killers.	Rooney in drag is always a hoot, and here he'll be playing a demented French-Canadian chanteuse named Dionne Salon.
 Josh Strickland	<i>Tarzan</i> may have withered on the vines, but its swinging young star proved that he's more than just another pretty loincloth.	<i>Play It Cool</i> , a team effort set in an underground gay bar in 1950s Hollywood, where rising stars could stay on the down-low.	Strickland's strong voice and sensitive-matinée-idol looks should hang just right in a show about the Tinseltown closet.
 Barbara Walsh	A Tony nominee for 1992's <i>Falsettos</i> , Walsh recently showed audiences her etchings as the acidic Joanne in the revival of <i>Company</i> .	<i>About Face</i> , which resets Shakespeare's <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> amid the war of the sexes at a 1950s college.	As <i>Company</i> proved, Walsh can deliver withering zingers with the best of them—a perfect trait for the Bard's tart-tongued Beatrice.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JON MARCUS (CAHOON, COOPER, FABER, KELLER, STRICKLAND); PAUL VOLK (CHAMPLIN, HUFFMAN, WALSH); BRYAN KATYAN (ROONEY)

The New York Musical Theatre Festival runs at various locations through Oct 5. See Off-Off Broadway.

Theater

Newsday

FRIDAY AUGUST 14, 2009

nycpicks



Patrick Murphy, Lou Barlow and J Mascis make up Dinosaur Jr.

music

DINOSAUR JR

WHAT Spinal Tap has nothing on J Mascis and his band — the volume of Dinosaur Jr.'s guitars has always gone to "12." The guys may be older, but they aren't quieting down. With *The Walkmen and Saviours*.

WHEN | WHERE Sunday at 3 p.m. Central Park SummerStage, off Fifth Avenue at 69th Street.
INFO Free, 212-360-2777, summerstage.org

— KEVIN AMORIM



Clockwise from above: Scene from Blair Fell's "Bargains & Blood," Michael Schlitt in "Jesus Ride," and Jonathan L. Davidson's "Victoria & Frederick for President"

food

BIA GARDEN

WHAT Cold Asian beers (Tsingtao, 33, Kingfisher), spicy Vietnamese street food (crab spring rolls, seared cuttlefish) and airy outdoor seating. Sounds like summer to us.

WHERE 154 Orchard St. (between Rivington and Stanton streets)
INFO 212-780-0010

nightlife

CIRCUS SATURDAYS

WHAT Circus Saturdays takes place on all four of Webster Hall's floors, with six dance floors, go-go girls, a flying trapeze, snake charmers and fire breathers. Wow. They had us at go-go girls.

WHEN | WHERE Tomorrow at 10 p.m. Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St.
INFO \$15 advance, \$30 at the door, 212-353-1600, websterhall.com

— KEVIN AMORIM

Hanging on the Fringe

You may already think New York is a year-round fringe festival. Understandable. But, really, the 13th annual New York International Fringe Festival — the biggest multi-arts festival in the nation — begins tonight and runs through Aug. 30 at more than 20 (mostly) downtown venues.

Tickets are \$15, but you can see five shows for \$70, 10 for \$120 — or all you want for \$500 on a Lunatic Pass.

Here are just a few possible highlights; see complete schedule at fringenyc.org

1 'BARGAINS & BLOOD (HOW TO SUCCEED IN HOME SHOPPING!)

WHAT The title may well say it all in this "tragic-camp" comedy by Blair Fell.
WHEN | WHERE Tonight at 9:45, also Aug. 17, 22, 27 and 30. Dixon Place, 161A Chrystie St.

2 'VICTORIA & FREDERICK FOR PRESIDENT'

WHAT Adrian Grenier (the



Dan Domingues, Peter Goldfarb and Michael Busillo in "His Greatness"

cutie-star of "Entourage") is the producer of Jonathan L. Davidson's play about the election of 1872, when Victoria Woodhull, the first female stockbroker, ran for president, with abolitionist Frederick Douglass as her veep.

WHEN | WHERE Tomorrow at 1:45 p.m., also Aug. 17, 19, 21 and 22. New School for Drama, 151 Bank St.

3 'HIS GREATNESS'

WHAT Daniel MacIvor imagines two days in the last year of Tennessee Williams' life.

WHEN | WHERE Aug. 17, 22, 24, 27 and 29 at Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St.

4 'JESUS RIDE'

WHAT Mike Schlitt, who won Outstanding Solo Show at the 2006 Fringe, returns with this multimedia solo about Jesus, from the Word to the silver screen.

WHEN | WHERE Sunday at 7:45 p.m., also Aug. 20, 22, 25 and 29. HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave.

5 'AND SOPHIE COMES TOO'

WHAT Three Jewish sisters and their mother are on journeys in this comedy by Meryl Cohn, raised on Long Island.

WHEN | WHERE Tomorrow at 4:30 p.m., also Aug. 18, 19, 24, 29. Cherry Pit Theatre, 155 Bank St.

— LINDA WINER

The Record

Sunday, September 26th, 2010

Zany life of the Marx Brothers

Musical re-creates radio program

By IAN SPELLING

SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

Erik Liberman is talking a mile a minute, and that's appropriate. After all, the stage actor is on the phone from his Hoboken home to chat up "The Most Ridiculous Thing You Ever Hoid," a new musical about the Marx Brothers, comedy's fast-talking funnymen. And, just as appropriately, the show casts Liberman as the most verbally nimble sibling, Groucho.

"It's such an honor to play Groucho," says Liberman, who portrayed the cigar-flicking, ever-slouching Groucho in another production, "Minnie's Boys," a couple of years ago. "As an actor, you can't think about living up to the stature of this legend, because no one will ever touch Groucho. But what we do look at is what made him who he was, how he spoke in his asides, the wit that was always brewing and the anger, too. There was anger beneath the bon mots.

"It's all there in the movies and the radio shows they did. It's intelligent humor and it still holds up. I think my generation, we've been a little bit dumbed down to because we've gotten so fancy with visual effects and we don't listen anymore. The Marx Brothers, they certainly had their share of visual gags and things going on, but you had to listen to them, truly listen.

"Even now, having seen so many of the movies so many times, I still hear new things," Liberman continues.

Premiering on Thursday at Urban Stages as part of the 2010 New York Musical Theater Festival, "The Most Ridiculous Thing ..." was originally produced by the Bergen County Players last summer. It's based on a 1930s live radio series called "Flywheel, Shyster and

Flywheel," with Andy Seiler, Fred Wemyss and The Record's Jim Beckerman collaborating on the book and Beckerman also penning the music and lyrics. Essentially, the Marx Brothers unleash their comic fury on an unsuspecting radio station and that station's regular listeners.

"The writers have added a lot of modern flavor and, of course, a bunch of songs that feel like they're originally from that time," Liberman says. "So they've spruced up this little-known property into something which is fun and bouncy and will not only bring back memories of the best of the Marx Brothers, but will introduce a new generation of fans to their unique brand of comedy."

Liberman - who recently toured with "Fiddler on the Roof," playing Motel opposite Topol, Harvey Fierstein and Theodore Bikel - says that "The Most Ridiculous Thing ..." squeezes two or three shows' worth



Erik Liberman plays comic legend Groucho Marx.

of dialogue and action into one. In other words, the actors zip around the stage and the jokes fly one after another. It's a welcome challenge for him and for his co-stars, including Jared Miller (Chico) and Jonathan Randell Silver (Harpo).

"It's a great brew," Liberman enthuses. "This is where the fine-twitch muscles get activated. There's so much rhythmic precision and so much musicality involved, and there's so much give and take with the comedy."

The show is scheduled to finish its run on Oct. 12. Liberman hopes the Theater Festival exposure will lead to it being "Hoid" again in the near future.

NEW PLAY GETS HIGH 'MARX'

'Most Ridiculous Thing You Ever Hoid' heads for theater fest

By **KELLY-JANE COTTER**
STAFF WRITER

The cigar-chomping, mustachioed wise guy will be familiar to any fan of classic cinema.

It's Groucho Marx!

But what is he doing on a New York stage in the 21st century?

The humor of the Marx Brothers transcends time. Add some effervescent new music and contemporary silliness to the mix, and you've got yourself a potential Broadway smash.

"The Most Ridiculous Thing You Ever Hoid," which premiered in 2009 in Bergen County, is one of 12 plays featured in the New York Musical Theatre Festival. As such, the original musical will be produced at Urban Stages in midtown Manhattan from Sept. 30 through Oct. 12, under the direction of Donald Brenner.

Two of the show's three creators can be considered the Journalistic Jersey Boys of Comedy and Song: Jim Beckerman of South Amboy, a staff writer at the (Bergen) Record and formerly of the Home News and News Tribune, wrote the music and co-wrote lyrics and book. Princeton native Andy Seiler, a former staffer at USA Today, the Home News and the Courier News, who now lives in Washington, D.C., co-wrote lyrics and book.

The show was conceived by Seiler, who in 2004 was disabled by a serious illness; Beckerman and Fred Wemyss completed the project.

Seiler and Beckerman have written songs together for 30 years. Beckerman has been a solo

THE MOST RIDICULOUS THING YOU EVER HOID

- Sept. 30 through Oct. 9
- Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St., Manhattan
- \$20
- www.ridiculousthingthemusical.com or www.nymf.org

artist and a member of the local bands The VooDUDES, The Hammers, The Noisy Neighbors and Nine Below Zero.

Wemyss, who co-wrote the book, lives in Huntington, N.Y., and has no Jersey credentials, which must make him very sad.

"Andy and I have been writing songs together ever since we met in high school — mostly for bands," Beckerman, formerly of Princeton, said. "We kept talking about writing a show, but it's only now that we've gotten it together."

"The Most Ridiculous Thing You Ever Hoid" is based on a Marx Brothers radio series, "Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel," by Nat Perrin, Arthur Sheekman, George Oppenheimer and Tom McKnight.

The plot centers on the chaos unleashed upon a radio station when Groucho, Harpo and Chico pay a visit.

"We took this old Marx Brothers radio show that not many people know about, and tried to turn it into the greatest movie the Marx Brothers *never* made," Beckerman said. "We think of it as a kind of 'Night at the Radio Studio,' with the three brothers wreaking havoc during a broad-

cast. Given that we have three terrific actors (Erik Liberman, Jared Miller and Jonathan Randell Silver) riffing and improvising all through the show, there's also plenty of havoc that we *didn't* put there."

The music for "Hoid" is giddy and boisterous, gilded with zany humor. "You Are The Man For Me" is an un-romantic duet between a woman in love and a man NOT in love. Contradictory couplets include "You're adorable/You're deplorable" and "You're so kissable/You're dismissable."

"Oy-Yull" mixes Marx-style humor with sly irony, as three ladies with New Yawk accents sing a radio commercial supporting drilling for more and more oil as the best possible energy source. Or, as a smooth-voiced announcer puts it, "Clean, plentiful, inexpensive oil."

Performances are scheduled for 8 p.m. Sept. 30, Oct. 3, 6, 9, and 12, and at 1 p.m. Oct. 1 and 2.

The New York Musical Theatre Festival was founded in 2004 as a way to nurture new original musicals. Visit www.nymf.org.

For more information about the play, visit ridiculousthingthemusical.com.

THEATER



From left: Jonathan Randell Silver, Jared Miller and Erik Liberman in "The Most Ridiculous Thing You Ever Hoid," making its debut at the New York Musical Theatre Festival.



FILE PHOTOS

"The Most Ridiculous Thing You Ever Hoid" (caricatured above), was inspired by the Marx Brothers' radio series "Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel." The musical is the co-creation of longtime New Jersey entertainment journalists Andy Seiler and Jim Beckerman, both formerly of Princeton.

WILLIAMSBURG *Courier*September 9th-15th, 2010WHERE TO GO
WHAT TO DO
24
SEVEN**BEST BETS****Grimm tale**

This is musical theater for people who don't like musical theater.

In a new production based on the classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel," the German siblings get a modern American retelling, with an indie rock score and Lynchian film and dance.

**Starting
9/16**

"Neither one of us likes musical theater that much," said Carly Howard, who runs Sparrowtree Theatre Company with her husband, Chad.

"It's different musical theater — there's dance in it, the film sections are more scary, and influenced by David Lynch and Tim Burton."

The production, which opens Sept. 16, follows Hansel and Gretel years after they've left childhood and are coping with their unusual childhood. (For those of you who are a little foggy on your fairy tales, the two titular siblings are abandoned by their stepmother in the woods during a famine, only to be "rescued" by a cannibalistic witch before escaping, returning to their father and living "happily ever after.")



Just desserts: What happened to Hansel and Gretel after the "happily ever after"?

Things aren't so happily ever after in the Howards' reimagining, which begins with the siblings returning home for their father's funeral and having to confront their past.

"They had a really traumatic childhood if you really think about what happened to them," said Carly, who stars as Gretel. "We're seeing how they're still haunted by this witch figure that was in their lives."

Carly also wrote the music for the production.

"My favorite singer songwriter is Beirut, I was really inspired by the instruments he uses in his songs," said Carly, who's recruited a band comprised of a glockenspiel, tambourine, accordion, cello and guitar to play her music. "That's the feeling I really wanted for this show — a traveling, Eastern European feel."

Revisiting the fairy tale as grown-ups themselves, the husband-wife pair also look to delve deeper into the story's themes.

"One of the biggest themes is the difference between what you want to come true and what actually does come true," said Chad, who's directing. "As kids, you have the whole world imagined, that everything's going to turn out for the best."

Here, though, things are decidedly more Grimm. As they should be.

"Hansel & Gretel" at 17 Frost (17 Frost St. at Union Avenue in Williamsburg, no phone), Sept. 16-25, Thursday-Sunday at 8 pm. Tickets \$15. For info, visit www.hauntedandhunted.com.

— Meredith Deliso

QUEENS EXAMINER

(718) 426-7200

March 25th, 2010

Building a musical in Flushing

BY HOLLY TSANG

htsang@queensledger.com

Considering most elementary school-aged children have never even been to a Broadway show, young participants of Inside Broadway's theater programs are fortunate to have the big stage coming to their schools.

On Friday, students of P.S. 164, a pre-K through 8th grade school of the arts in Flushing, took their classmates for a ride through the 20th century with a musical revue called "Everything Old Is New Again."

"Theater is a collaborative art form," said Inside Broadway Founder/Executive Director Michael Presser, "so all of the different elements of theater come together to make a show, and the arts programs give children an opportunity to work together on developing a production."

Presser said the students were part of a program called "Build a Musical." Over the course of nine weeks, professional teachers worked with the children to put together an original production. The program is part of the City Council's CASA (Cultural After School Adventures) initiative.

Councilman James Gennaro, who secured the funds for bringing Inside Broadway to P.S. 164, joked



that 137th Street, where the school's main entrance is located, should be renamed Broadway. He said he felt sorry for everyone in Queens who didn't get to see the show in person.

"We need that kind of enrichment because without arts programs like this, education is just cookie-cutter and by-the-numbers," said Gennaro. He added that despite limited financial resources, "We have to continue arts funding, no matter what."

Principal Anne Alfonso pointed out that the students performed wonderfully in the show, but it came as no surprise because they are

exposed to the arts from kindergarten. They are actively engaged in music, dance, visual arts, and video technology programs.

"It gives students another vantage point of looking at disciplines and schools. They see their classes in a different way," said Alfonso.

She beamed with pride when she mentioned that P.S. 164 has four semifinalists in visual arts entered in the PS Art 2010 Citywide Competition.

"The arts program is really a fabric of the school. We want to keep it going as long as possible," said Alfonso.

BRONX Times Reporter

Mar. 25-31, 2010

Your Neighborhood - Your News

75 cents

Inside Broadway brings musical and theater lessons to P.S. 108

The lights were bright and the stage was set at P.S. 108 where students watched a live musical, preparing for their own performance.

In partnership with Inside Broadway, a theatrical group for young audiences, the 2nd and 3rd grade students enjoyed the lively songs and exciting dances of *Sophisticated Ladies* on Wednesday, March 10.

"The idea is to get the younger kids excited and give them the opportunity to see a live performance in school," principal Charles Sperrazza said. "They will continue to build on this experience as they move up in school."

After the performance actors Gabrielle Porter, Lexi Rhoads and Jason Sparks sat down and took questions from the curious children wondering where they were from, how they got into acting, how they change costumes so fast, what their favorite song is, how they memorize the lines and lyrics

and a variety of other questions.

The Inside Broadway *Sophisticated Ladies* production will be touring throughout the five boroughs for the next few weeks to schools participating in the program.

According to Nicholas Delgado, 8, the show was "fantastic," his favorite part being the numerous tap dance numbers.

Students received an information packet from Inside Broadway about the musical and teachers will be incorporating the performance into the art and music curriculum.

"We give them follow-up activities and tie it into what they are learning," said Sperrazza.

As part of the Inside Broadway partnership, 3rd grade students at P.S. 108 have been practicing twice a week after school with Inside Broadway teaching artists, for a total of 16 sessions,

to put on their own musical production, featuring some of their favorite Broadway songs.

According to Nick Sala, company manager, the teaching artists come into the school with a lesson plan and schedule, but students are encouraged to come up with their own theme, choose songs, and create their own backdrop and props.

The Inside Broadway performance and program at P.S. 108 was sponsored through Councilman Jimmy Vacca.

"I'm very pleased to have been able to bring professional Broadway shows to many of our schools over the past four years," Vacca said. "Too often, the arts take a backseat when it comes to education funding, but through Inside Broadway I have been able to offer local children a front-row seat to the highest level of performance, and the response has been wonderful."



Inside Broadway delivered a live performance of the musical *Sophisticated Ladies* to P.S. 108 on Wednesday, March 10.

(top, l-r) Principal Charles Sperrazza, Gabrielle Porter, Jason Sparks, Lexi Rhoads
(bottom, l-r) Nicholas Delgado, 8, Jake Garfirth, 8, James Lee, 7, Yefirah Viera, 9, Giulia Capozzoli, 7.

NEXT

MAGAZINE

OCTOBER, 2008

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THEATER

NEXT

★★★★★ ABOUT FACE
★★★★★ WOOD
★★★★★ WIG OUT!

BY DAVID HURST

A charming adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* set at a northeastern college circa 1955, Jeffrey Lodin (music) and David Arthur's (book and lyrics) *About Face* was a delightful surprise this year at NYMF. Starring an incandescent Barbara Walsh as an English Lit professor at odds with the football coach, cantankerously played by Mark Zimmerman, the story follows Shakespeare's play closely. The show is unabashedly old-fashioned in structure and writing, and the score is filled with wonderful songs, especially act two, which is even stronger than act one. Playing Walsh's friend was the irrepressible Pam Myers, who originated the part of Marta in *Company* ("Another Hundred People"), and Lodin and Arthur made sure to give her plenty of opportunities to display her still-spectacular brassy belt. *About Face* seems a sure bet for an Off-Broadway run.

Less sure of a transfer but still chock-full of talent was *Wood*, Julianne Wick Davis (music) and Dan Collins' (book and lyrics) NYMF musical that explored young boys in love, cruising in public parks and the joys of glory hole sex. The terrific cast features Jason Michael Snow as Herman, a gay high schooler exploring his sexuality and Tony-winner Cady Huffman as his sexually frustrated but well-meaning mom. *Wood*'s score displays considerable accomplishment, with intricate melodies and sur-



Wig Out!



WIG OUT! PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG; WOOD PHOTO: LUKE REDMOND

prising choral harmonies; however, much of the show's execution was a mess with too-busy choreography for *The Fairies* (who function as a Greek chorus, in every sense of the word), inane lyrics and crude humor. Set in "Normal, Anywhere" (yes, we get it), Collins' writing sounds like he's either got a lot of issues to work out or an assignment to complete. Still, *Wood* was unforgettable and a chance to see the fabulous Huffman and the always-dependable Kate Weatherhead (as a love-sick color guard geek) strut their stuff.

No one is strutting harder these days than the cast of *Wig Out!*, the fabulous new play about two competing drag houses by Tarell Alvin McCraney. Terrifically staged by Tina Landau at The Vineyard, *Wig Out!* is a

fascinating look into the lives of the gay African-American men who have created their own families within the "house ball scene" first seen in Jennie Livingston's incredible 1991 documentary *Paris is Burning*. Part musical, thanks to the spectacular Rebecca Naomi Jones, Angela Grovey and McKenzie Frye who work their collective ass off; part dance showcase thanks to Sean Patrick Doyle and Joshua Cruz; part eye candy thanks to Erik King, Glenn Davis and Andre Holland; and part drag show thanks to the truly fierce Nathan Lee Graham, Clifton Oliver and Daniel Booth (a.k.a. Sweetie), *Wig Out!* is theater that thrills, provokes, surprises and shatters. **N**

Wig Out! plays through November 2 at Vineyard (108 E 15th St, 212-353-0303).

NEXT

MAGAZINE
SEPTEMBER, 2009

NEXT **NEXT**WEEK

HI, COOL MUSICALS!

THE NEW YORK MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL TAKES THE BIG APPLE BY STORM

NOW IN ITS FIFTH YEAR, The New York Musical Theatre Festival sees full production, concerts and readings staged from Sep 28–Oct 18. Not surprisingly, many have queer content or a high camp factor.

ENCORE: A demanding choreographer puts a troupe of dancers through their paces. (Oct 1–3 at the Manhattan Movement and Arts Center.)



THE CURE (above): In Mark Weiser's rock fable, a pair of friends stumble across the last surviving vampires, who just happen to be gay. (Various dates at the American Theatre of Actors)

FAT CAMP: Sex, S'mores and self-image collide at Camp Overton, where a pudgy rebel battles his Navy Seal father, two suspiciously cheery camp counselors, and a 12-foot barbed-wire fence. (Various dates at the Acorn Theatre.)

GAY BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN: Will the girl get the girl in this Sapphic spin on Scooby Doo? (Various dates at TBG Theater)

HURRICANE: Out composer Michael Holland crafted this musical about a young meteorologist whose prediction of disaster go unheeded. (Various times at The Theater at St. Clements. See p.62 for more info.)

THE LAST SMOKER IN AMERICA: Will Pam kick the habit in this prescient tale of a world where smoking has been outlawed. (Various dates at 45th St Theatre)

MEL AND EL: GAY MARRIED: As they ready for the Equality March, the girls ponder fashion faux faux, having George Michael as a neighbor and the likelihood of gay marriage. (Oct 8 at 7:30pm at Comix)

MOISTY THE SNOWMAN SAVES CHRISTMAS: Bradford Scobie (alias nightlife's Dr. Donut) stars in this naughty fairy tale featuring a flamboyant snowman, a homeboy elf, a lesbian ragdoll and the Baby Jesus, who fight to save the holiday from the mean old Mayor. (Oct 8–10 at 10pm at the 45th Street Theater)

R.R.R.E.D.: A SECRET MUSICAL: In this gay allegory, redheads fight oppression and extinction. (Oct 1–3 at various times at the 45th St Theater.)

For a complete schedule, visit NYMF.org



Gay City NEWS

August 5th, 2010

The Queer Fringe

A meatier mix on the 2010 menu

BY DAVID KENNERLEY

Could it be that, in its 14th year, the New York Fringe Festival is starting to come of age? According to Ron Lasko, one of FringeNYC's longtime organizers, in 2010 you can expect more mature, thoughtful fare.

"This year, the festival has a much more serious, dramatic bent overall," he said. "That trend is reflected in the gay plays as well. Much less camp and a lot more earnest exploration of history, politics, and social issues. Of course, we still have plenty of summer fun, too."

As in previous years, the scrappy downtown festival, which runs August 13 through 29 and is produced by the Present Company, offers nearly 200 shows created by 5,000 artists in 16 days. And a whopping one-quarter of the offerings have clear LGBT themes.

So how to separate the sensational from the skippable? There are no guaranteed winners, and, besides, taking a gamble is half the fun. After perusing FringeNYC.org and weighing the plots and pedigrees, here are our picks of the 12 most promising plays with a decidedly gay accent.

WHEN LAST WE FLEW: At an early age, playwright Harrison David Rivers was a library junkie and found solace from the Drama shelves. So he wrote a play about a misfit teen living in a dull Kansas town (insert "Wizard of Oz" comparison here) who steals a copy of Tony Kushner's "Angels in America" from his library and devours it, opening up a wondrous world of possibilities.

As producer Anthony Francavilla explains: "I think that there's some innocence and hope within youth, and part of the human experience is to retain that as you get older and life chips away at you."

The lofty drama, which boasts a highly accomplished, multi-cultural cast, is billed as a meditation on family, race, love, sexuality, and personal revelation. Pretty heavy stuff for the Fringe, right?

Lucille Lortel Theatre; 121 Christopher St., btwn. Bleecker & Hudson Sts.; Aug. 19 at 4:45 p.m.; Aug. 24 at 2 p.m.; Aug. 25 at 8 p.m.; Aug. 27 at 9:45 p.m.; Aug. 29 at 2:30 p.m.

DEAR HARVEY: Got a craving for more Milk? Then this intimate bio-play, from the Diversions Theatre in San Diego about the pioneering San Francisco gay leader and elected official Harvey Milk, is for you.

The play is based on more than 30 interviews with many of the plucky crusader's friends and cohorts, including a drag queen, a state senator, an international gay rights activist, the AIDS quilt founder, and a 19-year-old composer. You'll learn just how courageous — and quirky — Milk really was in championing gay rights before the city supervisor and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone were savagely gunned down in 1978. You won't find this in the history books.

SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St., btwn. Sixth Ave. & Varick St.; Aug. 20 at 4:15 p.m.; Aug. 22 at 4:30 p.m. (with a Fringe "talkback" afterward); Aug. 24 at 5:45 p.m.; Aug. 26 at 10 p.m.; Aug. 28 at 8:15 p.m.