

S.F. Fringe Fest turns a wild 25

Quirky to profound, with 161 stagings at 5 venues over 15 days



Beep & Bop
Sept. 16, 17, 22, 23 PianoFight Second Stage



Heart in the Hood
Sept. 24 Exit Studio



Awaiting the Podiatrist
Sept. 9, 11, 21, 24 Exit Stage Left



Mysterium Show
Sept. 10, 11, 14, 23 Exit Theatre



Blonde Poison
Sept. 10, 16, 17, 22 Exit Studio



Science, Love and Revolution
Sept. 15, 17, 18, 23 Exit Studio



Queer Heartache
Sept. 10, 16, 22, 24 PianoFight Theatre

\$30,000 to strengthen neighborhoods

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And Treasure Island YMCA will install security lighting in its parking lot and around its building to deter auto break-ins.

Another human trafficking education project is being mounted by Chinatown's Gum Moon Women's Residence/Asian Women's Resource Center with help from the Justice Fund grant. Bilingual education classes for the center's immigrant population, with the public invited, will draw attention to the dangers of this modern twist on the ancient evil of buying and selling human beings.

Bayview students moving from elementary to middle school will get extra help with that difficult transition, thanks to the grant to Urban Ed Academy. Counselors in the Junior Mentor Leadership Academy are developing a program targeted to these students' needs.

Other neighborhood projects strengthen their communities with

public events: Bayview/Ingleside Boys and Girls Club is sponsoring a 5K "Fun Run" at John McLaren Park followed by a health fair for neighborhood residents. In the Mission, the Second Chance Youth Program of the Central American Resource Center will teach at-risk Latino youth the rudiments of drum therapy to reduce aggressive behavior and connect with affirming cultural activities.

And Community Grows, in the Western Addition, will complete 10 patio and community garden projects at Plaza East Apartments on Eddy Street with all food produced shared among families living nearby.

The district attorney's office, which awards the Neighborhood Justice Fund grants annually, received 34 proposals for 2016. Next year's grant cycle begins March 2017. More info: Jackson Gee, director of Neighborhood Courts, Jackson.Gee@sfgov.org. ■

Duryodhana - The Unconquerable
Sept. 15, 17, 18, 23 Exit Theatre

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"If you go to five or six Fringe shows, especially if you use any intelligence, you're gonna see one that really knocks your socks off, two that are good, two that are OK and one that's not so good. But every year, there's something really unique, to make you think, 'I never thought I'd see THAT onstage.'"

Starting Sept. 9, the 38 productions of this year's festival each will be performed multiple times on five Tenderloin stages before the closing party on the 24th. By then, the total number of shows should reach 161, according to the schedule.

Three of those five stages are at EXIT on Eddy, the other two, around the corner at PianoFight, formerly Original Joe's restaurant, at 144 Taylor St., are new to the festival this year.

"I have always loved magic," Keith Boudreau said of his and Erica Valen's show "Mysterium." "The suspension of disbelief, to take in the mystery of life and feel how little I know ..." "Mysterium" won the Audience Favorite award at last year's San Diego Fringe, and was named Best Of at that festival by San Diego Reader. "Mysterium" is targeting an audience of age 16 or older for this show.

In "Abracadabra," co-producers Linda Ayres-Frederick and Nancy Cooper Frank, who in 2014 won a Best of Fringe award, describe poignantly and humorously how their Eastern European immigrant forebears' dreams of "streets paved in gold" in America came true, in the form of bounties of oranges displayed for sale — a rare delicacy in their homeland. It's one of three stories that comprise "Abracadabra."

Bill Hyatt's "It Came From Fukushima" is among the bigger productions of the festival. Built around a theme reminiscent of a "Godzilla" creation myth, "we just imagined what would happen if a monster was created and went to San Francisco," Hyatt told The Extra. Hyatt left the radioactive monster's arrival part of the story. The Extra assumes, for one of its full productions, Sept. 10, 16, 17 or 22.

"Heart in the Hood" transports the audience to West Oakland, where Michael Sommers plays more than a dozen of the colorful characters he met there after buying a house eight years ago in gentrifying Dogtown. Sommers narrates and plays harmonica. His credits include playing Chopin as a stand-in for Jeremy Irons in New York and an ongoing role, Bug in Netflix's show, "Sense8." For "Heart in the Hood" playing only on Sept. 24, the door charge is a mere \$5.

Closing out the Sneak Peek was Terry Baum's moxie-laden "Awaiting the Podiatrist." The dilemma at hand in this one is whether to pull the plug on Pop, or face clipping his toenails. Baum's foil in the preview was Scrumbley Koldewyn, an original member of The Cockettes, seated at an onstage piano. Not for those younger than 12, the program guides says. New to the festival this year is an



A sentence is inside itself ...
Sept. 10, 18, 21, 24 Exit Studio

"The Fringe promotes small, independent theater. That's almost impossible to find — some of the best, some of the worst theater you'll ever see. And that's life."

Ryan Wilkes,
LONGTIME FRINGE FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER

app to help track the many shows and when and where they're playing. Tickets are cash-only and get there on time, because once the show starts, no one else is getting in.

Besides the smattering of shows excerpted at the Sneak Peek, there's "A Sentence Is Inside Itself" celebrating Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett. "All That Jazz," by San Francisco's Musical Improvisation Theater Troupe promises 60 minutes of improvisation, each time out, to an audience suggestion but set in "the swinging 1940s ... the heyday of the Jazz Era."

A gunshot in "Blonde Poison" seems to have earned it an "over 15" audience age restriction, also applied to "The Man Who Shot Romero," a study of the Archbishop Oscar Romero's government-sponsored assassination in El Salvador in the 1980s, by Harry Cronin of Oakland's Coyote Productions.

2011's Best of SF Fringe winner Lorraine Olsen's solo, "Figuratively Speaking" is restricted to those over 16. There's nudity. There's plenty of other shows deemed "mature content" in the program: LaDonna Allison's "Loving, Sex: Unleashed," which also warns of nudity,

Randy Ross' "The Chronic Single's Handbook," Randall Norr's "Random EXITs," Joyful Raven's "Tales of a Sexual Tomboy," "Science, Love and Revolution" by London's David Lee Morgan and more.

Sometimes the age recommendation is set at 12, sometimes, 14, 15 or 16 or "Not for Children." Margery Kreitman's "Kicking Facebook" and Steve Budd's "What They Said About Love" are so described. Those recommendations come from the individual shows' creators, and are not hard-and-fast, Aguello told The Extra.

The festival program lists musicals, comedy, drama and commedia dell'arte. Many are solo shows, others described as devised theater, slam poetry, sci-fi comedy, virtual reality comedy, musical theater and more.

"It's the best thing I do all year," said Ryan Wilkes, who's been volunteering at Fringe for a decade. There are hundreds of people who help out that way, and it's one way to save on the cost of tickets.

"The Fringe promotes small, independent theater. That's almost impossible to find," Wilkes said. It offers "some of the best, some of the worst theater you'll ever see. And that's life." ■



Abracadabra
Sept. 9, 11, 20, 24 Exit Theatre

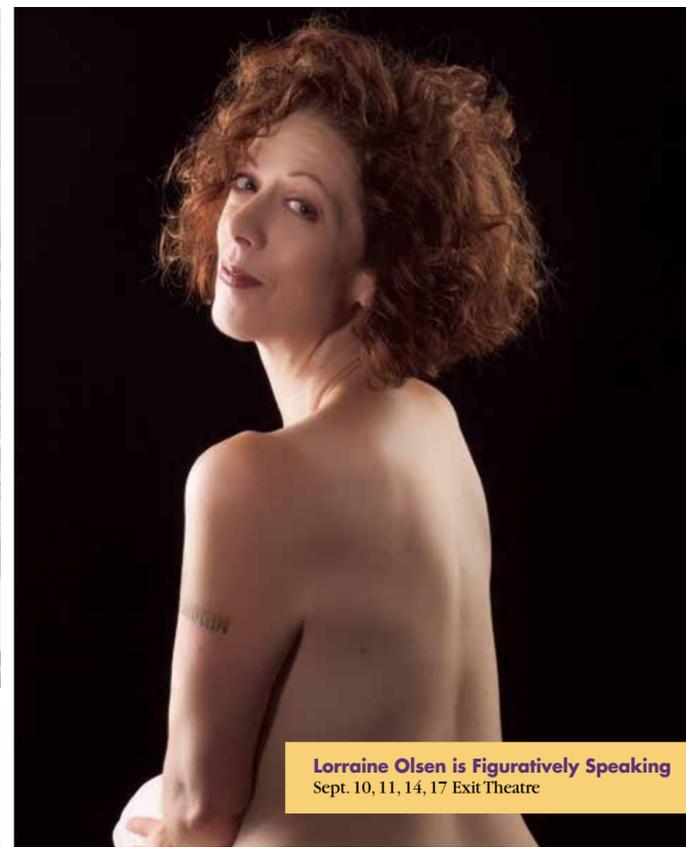
Fringe Fest: the app

Here in tech's ground zero, there's an app for everything but solving displacement and homelessness. As the maturing S.F. Fringe Festival turns 25, it has one, too.

It's free; EXIT Theatre's Rich Livingston put it together, and you can find it at the usual app places: Apple's App Store for the Apple platform, Google Play for Android devotees. Just search for "San Francisco Fringe Fest."

On it, you'll find synopses of the 38 productions featured at Fringe this year, a pathway to purchasing tickets, the schedule of the 161 total stagings, a place to submit your own reviews or read other audience members' opinions, plus a map, directions and contact info for the festival.

Tickets can also be purchased online at sffringe.com or at the door. ■



Lorraine Olsen is Figuratively Speaking
Sept. 10, 11, 14, 17 Exit Theatre

David Kleinberg: Native son goes to 'Nam and back again



Fringe-goers scored when EXIT Theatre staff drew "Hey, Hey, LBJ!" out of the hat holding all 140 applicants to this year's milestone festival. The festival and Exit itself, intent on developing new talent, give everyone an equal shot at becoming one of the productions scheduled. This show has already proven itself.

Longtime Chronicle Pink section editor David Kleinberg has taken this show about his Vietnam experiences from Washington, D.C., to Ho Chi Minh City — which he knew as Saigon. It's also been staged at fringe festivals in Boulder, Colo., and New Orleans, at the Marsh Theater on Valencia Street and at the San Francisco International Arts Festival in May.

But playing in Ho Chi Minh City on April 30th this year, on the 41st anniversary of the fall of Saigon, "was an incredible experience," Kleinberg said. "My Vietnamese buddies, wife and daughter thought I was going to get arrested."

He put on the show at a private home, to 25 ex-pats "mostly of my generation," he said. "They were pretty much overwhelmed, crying, the clapping went on forever!"

Typically, Kleinberg says, he's closed his shows with an acknowledgment of "My three buddies who died in the bunker" and the other 52,000-some U.S. troops killed in the war. In Ho Chi Minh City, he said, for the first time, he added in the "estimated two million Vietnamese who died in this tragic conflict."

"It was an amazing sin of omission," Kleinberg said. When he was staging "Hey, Hey, LBJ" in Washington, D.C., he spent three days at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall, handing out cards advertising the show.

Kleinberg had left a part-time job at the Chronicle to travel to Israel when his mom called in 1964 to tell him he'd been drafted.

"I figured 'we'll kick their butts and be just fine,'" he says now.

When he got to Vietnam, he was assigned to write for Stars and Stripes and other military publications. "For the first time," he says, "the Army actually put the right man in the right place." For now, "I'm knee-deep in writing the sequel, 'Return to the Scene of the Crime!'"

— Mark Hedin