

Arts + Entertainment

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Fringe Foursome



Love in a Time of Rinderpest

Miss last year's Fringe? See its most popular shows at the Guthrie.

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By Jaime Kleiman

The Minnesota Fringe Festival and the Guthrie Theater have joined forces to present the first Fringe Encore at the Guthrie, featuring performances of the top four 2006 Fringe shows, as determined by factors such as audience attendance. Says Dowling Studio Theater programming director Michael Bigelow Dixon, “[Joe] Dowling made a commitment from the beginning to share the Studio with the community, and it became my job to invite those who wanted to use it.” The Studio’s “carpe diem mentality,” says Dixon, works well with the DIY freneticism of the Fringe. The following is a rundown of these must-see productions.

Love in a Time of Rinderpest

The Impossible Theater Group, a ragtag team of performers, rocked the Fringe with this action-packed, absurdist comedy. “It’s funny, bizarre, and way over the top,” says writer/director/producer Josef Evans, “in short, the kind of show you could only do at the Fringe.” The plot revolves around a group of ungainly kids who want to win the Twin Cities Metro Theater Derby. Along the way, they encounter folk-singing cardboard, deranged acting coaches, and Bruce Springsteen, among other bewildering characters, and unearth the semitransformative power of romance. But, adds Evans, “it’s not a kids’ show, that’s for sure.” **Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.; Feb. 3, 5:30 p.m.; & Feb. 4, 1 p.m.**

African Roads, American Streets

Universal Dance Destiny’s family-friendly fare is a celebration of multiculturalism, hip-hop, and African dance. The virtuosic performers drum, beatbox, pop-and-lock, break dance, and use spoken word to tell the somewhat autobiographical story of a Liberian princess’s journey from Africa to America. Company founder, producer, and choreographer Edna Stevens Talton came to the United States via Liberia in 1981 and moved here in 2002. As an artist relatively new to the Cities, the chance to perform at the Guthrie is the “ultimate” opportunity. “I have no words to describe my excitement,” she says, “which is why we’re going to spice up the show a bit.” **Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m.; Feb. 3, 1 p.m.; & Feb. 4, 3 p.m.**

Wonderland

La Vie Theatre’s flamboyant pop musical re-imagines Alice in Wonderland for the twenty-first century. All of Lewis Carroll’s beloved characters are still here, albeit in campy form: Alex, née Alice, follows DJ Rabbit into a hole, which happens to be the hottest nightclub in town, where he encounters the Drag Queen of Hearts and participates in an imperial dance-off. There is, however, a sweet moral message hidden behind the leather chaps. “Wonderland is [about] acceptance and coming to terms with who you are,” says director Jason Schommer. “The people who live on the fringe of society are the norm at Wonderland. It’s an interesting shift in dynamics, to say the least. Plus, it’s a hell of a lot of fun.” **Feb. 1, 9:30 p.m.; Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.; & Feb. 4, 5:30 p.m.**

Google: The Musical

Director Drew Hammond took a “brave new world” approach when creating this darkly comic electronic musical. The show was inspired by Google’s 2004 announcement that it intended to digitize and upload every single book to make them searchable online. Google’s intentions may be honorable, but Hammond saw the potential for chaos. “The goal is to first entertain, then encourage conversation about the role the Internet plays in our lives,” he says. Google: The Musical features a chorus of diaper-clad zombies, the last two Luddites on Earth, and dystopic visions of a future sans the Internet, tied together with music by Hammond’s brother, Charlie. The moral of the story? Don’t believe everything you download. **Feb. 2, 9:30 p.m.; Feb. 3, 3 p.m.; & Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m.**

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