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Toronto.com Music **10 Freakiest Shows of the 2011 Toronto Fringe Festival**

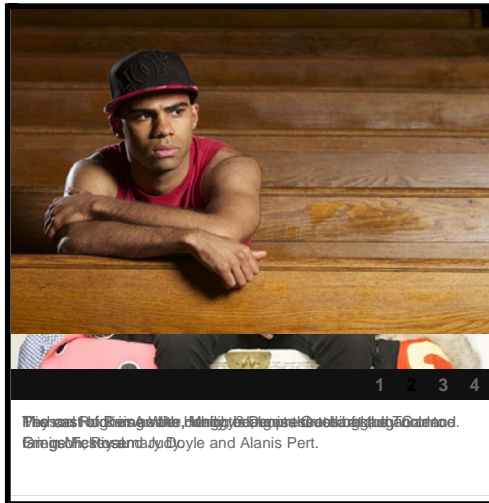


By Richard Ouzounian
Theatre Critic



10 Freakiest Shows of the 2011 Toronto Fringe Festival

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Jul 02, 2011

I guess you could argue that anyone who does a show at a Fringe Festival is a freak of one sort or another. They're walking the road less travelled, marching to a different drummer, insert your non-conformist cliché here.

But this year's Toronto Fringe Festival, which runs in a variety of venues from July 6 to 17, seems to be having a higher freak quotient than usual, and I mean that in the nicest possible way.

Lots of people are putting their butts on the line, artistically and personally, in a variety of projects that all have the sound of excitement attached to them.

They may not become the next Drowsy Chaperone or My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding, but that's fine with me.

Who decided that the Fringe's major purpose was to generate commercial musical hits? If it does, great, I'll be the first to cheer. But I think these 10 shows sound a lot more interesting.

AWAKE by Laura Mullin and Chris Tolley, Factory Studio Theatre (125 Bathurst St.). Starts July 6 @ 8 p.m.

The team that created the amazing Romeo and Juliet Remixed several years ago are back with this "funeral for those who have died at the hand of gang violence." They mix dancehall, hip hop and theatre, and base the script on interviews with gang members, cops and mothers who have lost sons to this plague.



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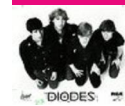
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Tolley says, "For more than eight years we have been working closely with people from Jamestown/Rexdale. Hearing their powerful and heartbreaking stories of loss — loss of opportunity, loss of hope, and all too often, the loss of life — provided compelling motivation to create this play."

CANCER CAN'T DANCE LIKE THIS by Daniel Stolfi, Tarragon Theatre Mainspace (30 Bridgman Ave.). Starts July 8 @ 1:15 p.m.

Stolfi had to pull out of the Fringe a few years ago when he was diagnosed with cancer. Now he's back with a comedy of how he suffered, learned and survived.

In Stolfi's words, "I believe you can find humour in anything, even cancer. I wanted to create a show that would invite people to laugh in the face of adversity and provide hope to those who are fighting. If cancer did win, at least I would have left something behind that made people smile."

LIVING WITH HENRY by Christopher Wilson, George Ignatieff Theatre (15 Devonshire Pl.). Starts July 7 @ 8:15 p.m.

This musical drama is about the perils, fears and frustrations of living with AIDS today. Michael, the leading character with the disease, comes to realize his problem is not so much his sickness but the sickness of the society he lives in.

Wilson tells us, "*Living With Henry* is autobiographical and was created to musically explore HIV/AIDS as something very human, negotiable and emotionally manageable. The piece frames the virus as a chronic illness, not a death sentence, and tackles tough social and emotional issues that continue to confront and challenge the gay community today."

MICKEY & JUDY by Michael Hughes, Tarragon Theatre Extra Space. Starts July 8 @ 5:45 p.m.

A young boy named Michael Hughes is obsessed with cross-dressing like Judy Garland. Many years later, the therapist who treated him wants to revisit it all again. Laughter, tears and enough Garland songs to make any Friend of Dorothy truly happy.

In Hughes' own words, "I knew that I had found my next project after I read the charts from my childhood therapy sessions. I ... ended up discovering so much about myself and about the little boy who wanted to grow up to be Judy Garland but settled for Michael Hughes instead."

REMEMBER, MAGGY? By Carol Anne Murray, Matt Murray, Tarragon Theatre Extra Space. Starts July 6 @ 6:30 p.m.

Take two sisters, one a sober housewife, one an alcoholic, pill-popping thespian. Add a lifelong rivalry and stir in a mother with Alzheimer's. Wait for the flying furniture.

"My mother wrote the play *Remember, Maggy?* as a one-act play 20 years ago and then literally put it away in a drawer," Matt says. "I knew with some reworking/ rewriting and fantastic casting, it could be the dynamic play it has now become!"

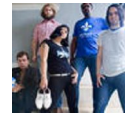
SO I MARRIED A MUSLIM by Sandra Pascuzzi, Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace (16 Ryerson Ave.). Starts July 6 @ 8:15 p.m.

Pascuzzi trained at Second City in her native Australia, so when she had to break the news to her family that the man she was going to marry was not Australian, not Italian, not even Catholic, but a Muslim, it took all her comic training to keep everyone on keel.

Sandra says, "I wanted to tell our story — about an interfaith, intercultural relationship — because at its heart, it's about love prevailing against the odds. It was also a chance to tell a story with a Muslim connection but not make it 'about' being Muslim."

THE GIANT'S GARDEN by Peter Fenton and Scott White, George Ignatieff Theatre. Starts July 6 @ 10:30 p.m.

The wonderfully quixotic Scott White has believed in this musical version of an Oscar Wilde story for years. He's finally getting it on in Toronto with a cast of 13 impressive talents, all sharing his vision for this fairy tale for all ages.



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"In a world where so much importance is put on material things, it seemed appropriate to reimagine Oscar Wilde's tale *The Selfish Giant*, which explores the consequences of selfishness and the value of friendship and love in a self-centred world," White says.. "This is a musical filled with laughter, heart and most importantly ... imagination."

THE GODOT CYCLE by Samuel Beckett, Honest Ed's Underground Parking Lot (581 Bloor St. W., enter off Lennox). July 8 @ 6 p.m. for 30 hours. July 15 @ 6 p.m. for 54 hours.

Could there be any concept more perfect than a production of *Waiting for Godot* that never ends? Creator Caden Douglas and actors David Christo and Eric Craig are presenting two non-stop versions of the play, one lasting 30 hours and the other going for 54. All eating, drinking and elimination must be worked into the action. Don't sit in the first row.

Craig admits, "It all began when I began to think about what it would be like to do the same play over and over again. And then I wondered what it would be like if that play was *Waiting for Godot*, where the existential agony of repetition would be even greater."

THE LOVE OCTAGON by Chris Craddock and Ron Pederson, Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace. Starts July 7 @ 8:15 p.m.

Two of the great improvisational talents of this country decide to tackle the topic of love. One is gay, one's straight, both are crazy. The end result is bound to be hilarious.

Craddock shares that, "Ron Pederson and I built our friendship on improv. Life separated us for a time, but when I started coming to Toronto and guesting with the National Theatre of the World, we met on our new levels. This is an artistic reunion for us and we are thrilled. We chose a subject that, sadly, we know all too much about: complicated love lives."

THE SOAPS: THE LIVE IMPROVISED SOAP OPERA by the National Theatre of the World, Bathurst Street Theatre (736 Bathurst St.). Starts July 8 @ 3:30 p.m.

Each night, a cast of Toronto's best improvisers will create a new episode of an ongoing story packed with drama, romance, intrigue, twists and betrayal. It's set at the fictional Shaw-ford Theatre Festival and that makes it funny already.

Matt Baram, one of the creators, tells us that, "The National Theatre of The World has connections with the greatest comedic minds in Canada. We called them in for this show. Having read about the funding fiasco with Summerworks we were inspired to set our story backstage at the fictional Shaw-ford Festival that has also had their funding yanked."

For more information about these 10 shows and the other 115 at the Fringe, go to fringetoronto.com

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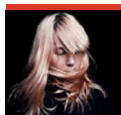
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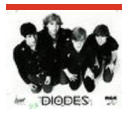
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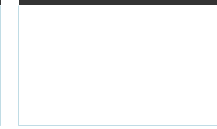
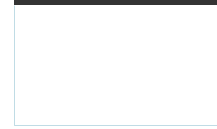
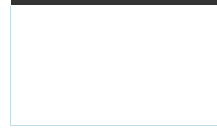
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