



Japanese performance artist Yahomi makes her first Fringe appearance this year as she presents *SHOSHINZ*.

THE 12 DAYS OF FRINGE

By Sandra Carr

The 19th Annual Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival Brings Recession-Proof Theater, Art, Dance and Madness to Loch Haven Park.

Working with less is one thing the Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival is accustomed to during this economic downturn. “The Fringe’s” early roots began when uninvited theatrical troupes took to the streets after being turned away from performing during the Edinburgh International Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, more than 60 years ago.

Getting back to basics wasn’t a problem for organizers when planning the 19th Annual Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival, which runs from May 20-31.

“Our theme this year is recession-proof entertainment,” explains Producing Artistic Director Beth Marshall. “Stepping back a notch is kind of easy for us because we started on the street and we know where we came from. I think its easier maybe for us than other art non-profits just because of the nature of what Fringe is, because we can pull back toward simplicity and become frugal and smart during this economy.”

The Orlando Fringe—the oldest in the U.S.—has seen fewer individual donations and corporate sponsorships this year but has exceeded its fundraising goals by raising more than \$6,400 during its “Fab Fringe” event in March.

The organization is a part of the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals (CAFF), which holds more than 80 Fringes worldwide from mid-May through the end of September. The festivals are uncensored, nonjuried

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and accessible to the general public and 100 percent of ticket sales are given to the artists.

The Fringe Festival's applications come from local Central Florida talent (50 percent), as well as national (25 percent) and international (25 percent) acts. More than 100 applications were received for this year's fete, reaching its capacity in all three categories, with a waiting list of more than 40 artists. Seventy-five performances were selected to take the stage in ten color-coded venues throughout Loch Haven Park's Orlando Shakespeare Theater and the Orlando Repertory Theatre.

The free opening-night gala will be held May 20 at 5 p.m. in Loch Haven Park and includes a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a beer garden, entertainment and concessions.

The festival is centered on the community.

"The Festival is a place where people of all walks of life come together for uncensored and unjuried art, as well as a platform for the artists to make

money doing the art that they really want to do," says Marshall. "That's our mission and we pretty much keep it going the same way every year."

New this May are Japanese and Israeli acts performing for the first time. Tokyo's zany SHOSHINZ, which means shy, timid people in Japanese,

his performance *FRUITCAKE: 10 Commandments from the Psych Ward*, which is based on his experiences as a psychiatric nurse in England, Scotland and Australia.

The literary journey continues with the Fringe Poetry Smack Down IV, a traditional poetry slam with local celebrity

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—Beth Marshall, Fringe Producing Artistic Director

presents *A Day in the Life of Miss Hiccup*. This comedic tale turns into a crazy adventure for a woman who lives alone and is tormented by harsh sounds and music.

Tel Aviv troupe Nephesh Theatre brings Isaac Bashevis Singer's classic Yiddish story *Gimpel the Fool* to life on stage. The play mixes klezmer music and surrealism and showcases lead character Gimpel's acceptance and firm beliefs in God.

U.K. poet Rob Gee makes his first appearance at the Orlando Fringe with

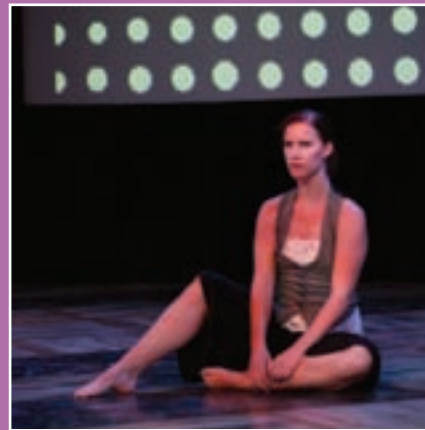
"American Idol"-style judges on both Saturdays of the Festival, beginning at 10 p.m. The poets are also participating in the Poetry Vending Machine, which is a booth where patrons provide the writers with material to create a personalized poem for a donation. All of the monies raised benefit the Fringe.

Returning performance artist Brian Feldman takes six audience members on a 17-hour, primitive camping adventure in the Wekiwa Springs State Park in Apopka during his Fringe of Nature. The event will be the longest and



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WAYBURN SASSY and Didi Panache from *The Screw You Revue: Up Your Wazoo*.



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HEATHER ROSE of Voci Dance performs at the 2009 Fringe Festival.



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JACKIE MARTINEZ won the Mary Lou Rucker Volunteer Excellence Fabby in 2009.



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PEPE performs at the 2009 Fringe Festival.



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FRINGE FABBY AWARDS spotlight die-hard Fringe attendees, performers and volunteers.



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ROB GEE brings *FRUITCAKE: Ten Commandments from the Psych Ward* to this year's festival.



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KIDS FRINGE takes place on weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



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FRINGEZILLA delights kids of all ages.

first out-of-town Fringe event in the history of the Festival.

Other veteran performers include former Patron's Pick award winners Tod

Excellence Award, which is in honor of a volunteer Fringe coordinator who passed away. The Spirit of the Fringe Award goes to anyone involved with the

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Kimbro in an electro-cabaret performance titled *Robots Stole My Piano* and Dewey Chaffee Comedy Enterprises' *The Screw You Revue: Up Your Wazoo* with homophobic and bigoted entertainment legend Wayburn Sassy.

Canadian TJ Dawe of Big Sandwich Productions, who's renowned for his past Fringe performances of *The One Man Star Wars Trilogy* and *One Man Lord of the Rings* returns with a monologue about reaching out called *Lucky 9*.

Patrons will also experience dance, dance and more dance during the 12-day festival. Dance troupes that will be performing include Patron's Pick award winner VarieteASE, Casting Shadows and Yow Dance. Voci Dance celebrates its ninth year with weekend lawn performances of *Lumineux*, which incorporates installation artist Doug Rhodehamel's paper bag mushrooms, fairies, illuminations and magical movements.

Child's play is also a part of the festivities with Kids' Fringe, which takes place on weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event caters to pre-K through fifth graders and includes shows and programs on the outdoor stage, as well as workshops about theater, improv, puppetry and mask-making.

The Visual Fringe returns for its seventh year and features more than 100 works by local artists, including ceramics, drawings, paintings, photography, metal, mixed-media and sculpture in the Patron's Room of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. Like the theatrical events, the free exhibition is unjuried and the artists receive monies from works that are sold.

Die-hard Fringe attendees and performers are spotlighted during the Fabby Awards on May 31 at 10:30 p.m. in Loch Haven Park. The patron who sees the most Fringe shows will receive the Adrienne Blattner Patron's Award and the volunteer who went over and above is given the Marylou Rucker Volunteer

festival—artists, patrons, volunteers, the board, staff—or anyone who embodies a complete Fringe spirit throughout the year by promoting and going "over and beyond" for the Fringe. The Patron's Pick Awards are also announced during the free awards ceremony. Those awards go to the group that has sold the most tickets in each venue, as well as overall for the year.

Marshall says that the Fringe keeps attendees on their toes. "It's always unexpected and just when you think you have Fringe figured out, you don't, because something else new and exciting is going to come about since we're truly the most cultural, eclectic festival and event that happens in Orlando."

For more information and a guide to Fringe shows, call 407.648.0077 or visit www.orlandofringe.org. **oam**

Sandra Carr freelances for publications including Us Weekly, Citysearch.com, Destination Hyatt, Orlando Sentinel, ScooterWorld magazine, Time Out Chicago, Venus Zine and Zagat Survey.



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A PERFORMANCE of VarieteASE's Lullaby in 2009.

FRINGE FREEBIES

The Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival is seeking help for its 19th season. Volunteers will be awarded with one Fringe “bux” for each hour worked and four bux will get you into any show that hasn’t been sold out. For more information, email volunteer coordinator Jackie Martinez at volunteer@orlandofringe.org.

TEL AVIV troupe Nephesh Theatre brings Isaac Bashevis Singer’s classic Yiddish story *Gimpel the Fool* to the stage.



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TICKET TIME

All patrons must have a Fringe button (cost is \$8) to attend any performance. Programs are complimentary but extra ones are \$1 each. Individual performers set the price of their shows, which range from free to \$10. Tickets go on sale May 1 at www.orlandofringe.org. Tickets can be purchased May 20-31 at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater from 4 p.m. to midnight on weekdays and 10 a.m. to midnight on weekends. Admission to both the Kids’ Fringe and Visual Fringe is free.