



Urban Times

ARCHIVES

This document contains these stories from past issues of Urban Times:

☐ FROM: OCTOBER 2006

Page 2: Visiting Fringe performers give good reviews to the festival, and to Mass Ave



Mikangelo and Undine Francesca charmed audiences with their defies-definition performance of "The Honeymoon Suite." They call it "cabaret noir."

From October 2006:

Fringers give Mass Ave & Indy their seal of theatrical approval

TURNS OUT, MIKELANGELO LOVES the place. Sitting at the Chatterbox patio the final night of the second annual IndyFringe, the resident of Tasmania praised not only the festival but its host neighborhood.

“I love this place. I would like to move here, you know,” he added, without any hint of sarcasm. “I have got my eye on a few nice little houses around on Broadway Street.”

Half of the team of Mikangelo and Undine Francesca, with an Eastern European accent that hints strongly of his Croatian roots, Mikangelo gave his strong endorsement of Downtown Indianapolis.

“It rocks,” said the entertainer who describes himself as singer, songwriter and impresario. “We might come here and settle down and make beautiful shows,” he said not long after the couple’s fifth and final show within the catacombs of the Murat Center.

“We start in the basement of the Murat and work up, and within 10 years we’re doing the two-thousand seater.”

Such was the mood at the cast’s closing party on Sunday, Sept. 3. There was good reason for warm feelings: the second annual Indianapolis Theatre Fringe Festival had ended its 10-day run along Mass Ave by



**BABBLIN'
BROOKS**

*Musings from the editor
about life downtown
(or just about anything else
he wants to write about.)*

By Bill Brooks

FIRST OF TWO PARTS

Next: Looking ahead at next year’s Fringe, plus a deeper look into what could be improved.

doubling the previous year’s attendance and nearly doubling the box-office revenues.

Organizers had hoped for attendance of 8,000; they got 9,677 (compared to last year’s 4,755.) IndyFringe 2006 raked in \$76,000 from ticket sales – all of which goes directly to the performers. That was nearly double the \$38,310 paid last year, although there were fewer productions last year as well.

Festival expenses are paid for by the \$3 audience members pay – once only – to get a Fringe button. That doesn’t cover it all, of course; most of the tab is picked up by grants from local businesses, the arts and municipal entities.

Like many of the other out-of-town performers,

The fan favorites

The top 10 shows of the second annual Indianapolis Theatre Fringe Festival, by attendance (each production was presented five times):

- “An Adult Evening of Shel Silverstein, by Ganas Theatre of Indianapolis. Total attendance for five shows: 772.
 - “Fresh Meat: A Second Serving,” by Fresh Meat of New York City. 653.
 - “Cleopatrik,” by Sound & Fury of Los Angeles. 375.
 - “Sex Acts,” by Arden Theatre Company of Indianapolis. 365.
 - “Jaws: The Musical!” by Mime Rifle Productions of Minneapolis. 315.
 - “The Redheads,” Off the Shelf Productions of Indianapolis. 261.
 - “Remember Who Made You,” Jeffrey Barnes of Indianapolis. 220.
 - “Son of the Glamorous Andrea Merylyn,” Taylor Martin of Indianapolis. 218.
 - “Cool Table,” Thirteen Pocket Productions of Chicago. 206.
 - “Am Dilemma (A Minor Dilemma), Justin Sane Entertainment, Melbourne, Australia. 205. ■
-

Mikangelo and Undine are veterans of more established, larger fringe festivals. He said IndyFringe stacks up well.

“This is a great one,” he said. “It’s incredible the energy here of the people, the teamwork, the volunteers. The vibe is really great.”

Mikangelo had reason to be in a good mood. His show, “The Honeymoon Suite,” enjoyed moderately good attendance – but had also proven to be one of the sleeper hits. Many of those who saw it counted it among their favorite – if not the best.

Mikangelo and Undine had just played the granddaddy of all fringes, in Edinborough, Scotland, which he said is, of course, fantastic. “But coming here is really refreshing, because there’s real excitement about making things happen.”

Another strength, he said, is the fact that each of the five venues is within easy walking distance along Mass Ave. “You literally can get to every show. It’s on a really human level.”

Other Fringe veterans expressed similar thoughts.

“Everything’s on Mass Avenue,” said Tony Figueroa, a resident of Los Angeles who teamed with his wife, Donna Allen-Figueroa, to perform “Guess Who’s Coming To...”

“You can’t beat that,” Figueroa said. “You treat the out-of-towners very nicely, and you give them a little bit of an upper hand.”

Also like Mikangelo, Figueroa was charmed by the local ambiance. “Don’t tell the people in Kansas city or Minneapolis, but this is my favorite,” he said.

“First and foremost,” Figueroa continued, “you are having art for the sake of art. Coming from California, and since we live in Hollywood, so much is done in a way to fit into a certain box – and this is very out-of-the-box thinking.”

It’s not surprising that Figueroa should focus on another IndyFringe plus – it’s diversity. He’s of Swedish-Puerto Rican extract, while Donna is “an African-American Jane Pauley sound-alike shopaholic.”

“We love the fact there’s a very diverse group of artists,” Figueroa said, listing story-tellers such as he and his wife, magicians and mentalists, dancers, and Indy’s own cross-dressing magician “Andrea Merylyn,” who has become one of the official faces of the festival.

Figueroa was also impressed by FringeNext, the new element of the festival that attracted 12 troupes of teen-aged performers to ComedySportz.

“You have what I hope some of the other fringes would pick up on – fringe for the younger people,” he

said. “I think that’s brilliant. that demographic really needs arts emphasized on them.

“There’s a lot of guys who don’t go out for the football team,” Figueroa said. “As a former drama geek, I wish there was something like this when I was that age.”

If IndyFringe received the approval of festival veterans, so too did it impress the rookies.

Brent McCoy, who charmed audiences with his comedic juggling in the show, Blunder Construction, is not only new to fringes but to stage performing as well.

“I got to run five shows and really learn a lot,” the Vermont resident said. “And I got to pay myself to do it. It has been a really neat thing.”

For the past three years, McCoy had made his living teaching and performing for a Vermont circus company. Now he is moving into theaters and street performing – and when he wasn’t doing one of his five shows was often found on the street “busking.”

“This has been a real catalyst for me to be able to take my work to another level,” he said. “To be able to repeat five times and do it for a totally new audience is really cool.”

Justin McGinley, another Australian who charmed not only his audiences but anyone else he ran into along Mass Ave, said it was easier to succeed, both professionally and financially, at the Indianapolis Fringe.

“One of the things I love about this festival is they give one hundred percent of the door to the performers, which is really good for us,” he said. “Back home in Melbourne, there are too many shows for the amount of people to see shows. If you’re not really successful it’s hard to break even.”

McGinley, who performed “Am Dilemma (A Minor Dilemma), also enjoyed his time in Indianapolis – and in front of American audiences. “I didn’t notice any cultural differences between Canada, here and Australia,” he said. “It’s all pretty well equal.”

Christian Painter, who lives in Franklin Township with his wife, the other half of Christian and Katalina, had a completely different reason to appreciate the couple’s first-ever fringe experience.

“What makes this great from our perspective,” he said, “was not only a chance to perform – but that this is like a convention, meeting other performers, exchanging ideas. making contacts. We found out about new artists, new ideas,” Christian continued. “It’s unbelievable.” ■