

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Kathryn Raines

It's a Moose!

by Megan Bridge

South Philly. Saturday night, first weekend of the FringeArts festival. First, I hop off my bike, lock it up, locate that handy fringe sandwich board, and confirm my ticket at the door. Next, I slip on to a comfy couch, pick up my program, and learn that "This building has been a 7UP bottling plant, Rocky's boxing gym and a Vietnamese cultural center. Now it is home to the Torrent Collective, self-described as 'a group of multidisciplinary/action-minded/creative professionals that possesses an inner drive to make a change for the better in the world.' The building is slated for demolition immediately following our show's closing night. Enjoy!"

Wow. No surprise for Philly during the Fringe. Artists are often finding out-of-the-way places to perform...one of my favorite parts of the festival is happening upon a venue I didn't know about. I wish this wasn't the first time I had encountered Torrent Collective. I wonder if, and where they'll relocate. Tonight Torrent Collective hosts The Groundswell Players' *Go Long Big Softie*.

The lights change, everyone quiets. Derek, played by Scott Sheppard, first pounds on, then enters through the glass store-front door. He's looking for the "mytho-poetic men's workshop." He sees no one, so he sounds a gong, plays a drum, and starts creeping around the place. It looks like an artist's studio, with a shrine in the corner that's decorated with a plastic skull, bronze giraffe, and many fake plants. The shrine even belches fog periodically. Enter the atelier's sole inhabitant, played by Mason Rosenthal, a majestic little curmudgeon who reminds me of a combination between [Miracle Max](#) and [Vizzini](#) in the Princess Bride.

Derek, the geeky bumbler with a hipster moustache, high-waisted pleated pants, and short curly hair, seeks out the guidance of the old guru. At first he's turned away, told "I don't do that anymore" by the balding trickster, whose acrobatic entrance (climbing down a silk suspended from the balcony, then cartwheeling and handspringing across the space to attack his intruder) already gave him away. After pushing the right buttons and passing some tests, including a hilarious circumcision-by-paint for which he is pants-less, Derek gains an apprenticeship. Quickly: what follows is that Derek is looking for his power animal. There are various dances which are usually comical, but often athletic, embodied, earnest, and endearing, and sometimes all at once! There is a lot of full-on nudity, and a hilariously uncomfortable scene where the master cleans the initiate's pubic regions and genitals...very thoroughly. Derek finds his power animal.

It's a moose.

Go Long Big Softie, The Groundswell Players, Sept 7th, 2pm & 7:30pm, Sept 13th & 14th, 8pm, Sept 15th, 2pm & 7:30pm, Sept 20th & 21st, 8pm, Torrent Collective, Philadelphia Fringe Festival. www.fringearts.com

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