



FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT THEATRES • At the Bath House Cultural Center
521 E. Lawther Dr. Dallas, Texas 75218 • www.festivalofindependenttheatres.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Many Happy Returns for Festival's Nineteenth Year

Dallas, TX - Intrepid theatergoers know the place to get their fix of summertime art is the Bath House Cultural Center and the annual Festival of Independent Theatres, presented each summer against the beautiful shores of White Rock Lake. The community spirit and creative risk taking that exemplify the festival are the reason artists and audiences alike come back year after year to participate in the cultural event of the summer. This year proves to be no different as two festival founders join two recently revived organizations, two recent festival participants and two newcomers in a unique celebration of theatre, visual art and live music, highlighted by an anniversary remounting of a long-time festival favorite.

The Festival of Independent Theatres has nurtured a number of hits over the years, none more popular than our 2007 offering of Matt Lyle's *The Boxer*. This silent film made for the stage marks the highly anticipated return of Bootstraps Comedy Theater, who have not produced in Dallas since 2007. The company moved briefly (along with its artistic directors Matt and Kim Lyle) to Chicago shortly after *The Boxer's* premiere), but now they're back with a tenth anniversary production of their delightful, family-friendly romp featuring most of the original cast. This quirky case of boy meets girl is physical storytelling at its best, as mistaken identities and a hapless hero help to drive this wordless, yet masterful comedy. *The Boxer* opens this year's festival on July 14th, 2017 alongside another local company making their long-awaited return after a substantial hiatus. The award winning Risk Theater Initiative presents Sherry Jo Ward's heartfelt narrative *Stiff*, in which Ms. Ward uses humor and her own, often sardonic charm to enlighten audiences to Stiff Person Syndrome, a one in a million disease from which Ms. Ward herself suffers.

The balance of the festival's first week will be populated by two long-standing companies who together have more FIT experience than all of our other companies combined. Jeff Swearingen and Kim Lyle in *The Boxer*. Photo courtesy of Bootstraps Comedy Theatre. Joining us for their nineteenth consecutive appearance is festival founding member WingSpan Theatre, Co. presenting Edward Albee's *Finding the Sun*, as fellow founder Echo Theatre marks their seventeenth appearance with *Trace of Arc* by Ali Smith. Finding the Sun will be the inaugural production in WingSpan's year-long tribute to the recently deceased Mr. Albee, a playwright who's work has been a favorite of WingSpan Artistic Director Susan Sargeant over the years. *Trace of Arc* by Scottish playwright Ali Smith explores the ideas of social justice through the framework of a modern day parable.

The festival's second weekend brings two more returning companies alongside two groups hoping to set up many future returns with their FIT debuts. Previous festival participant Audacity Theatre Lab premieres an intriguing modern adaptation of Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* next to Jeff Swearingen's *The Caveman Play*, presented by Fun House Theatre and Film's teenage offshoot The Basement. The festival's final pairing will see L.I.P. Service Productions, responsible for last year's hit *The Good Thief*, present Van Quattro's haunting paean to adolescence *Tommy Cain*, paired with the clown focused and folklore inspired *Fiddler's Cave* presented by Dustin Curry and Company.

The Festival of Independent Theatres was founded in 1998 in an effort to aid local theater companies without a permanent performance space. The eight shows are all one-act plays, paired in two-show blocks and will continue in rotating repertory through August 5th.

In addition to the eight main stage productions, the festival also includes a variety of visual art and live music, including for the fourth time, the galley sessions of jazz musician Caleb Veazey, presented weekend afternoons in the Bath House art gallery and FIT Underground, live music and light refreshments available weekend evenings in the Bath House's shore level performance space.

Festival passes range from \$60-\$70. Individual tickets are \$18. Handling charges will apply. The festival runs from July 14-August 5, 2017 at the Bath House Cultural Center. Tickets and passes will go on sale in late June and can be procured by calling 1-800-617-6904 or at www.festivalofindependenttheatres.org

The FIT festival is generously supported by the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs and the Texas Commission on the Arts. A complete list of this year's line-up, along with a brief synopsis of each play and a performance schedule appear below.

2017 FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT THEATRES PERFORMANCES

Audacity Theatre Lab

The Great Dictator by Charles Chaplin, adapted by Jaymes Gregory

A fresh and engaging update of Charlie Chaplin's preeminent work, *The Great Dictator* explores the timeless themes of resistance to tyranny and the foibles of the human condition, as a meek yet principled Jewish barber crosses paths with the fascist dictator to whom he bears a striking resemblance.

The Basement

The Caveman Play by Jeff Swearingen

Local funnyman Jeff Swearingen takes aim at modern society by dissecting history's least modern archetype, the caveman. A cunning blend of subversive humor and physical comedy highlight this anachronistic, yet pertinent tale of society's reluctance to change and the often too slow development of human empathy.

Bootstraps Comedy Theater

The Boxer by Matt Lyle

The 10th anniversary production of this uproarious, yet silent comedy is a heartfelt homage to the glory days of American moviemaking. Featuring all of the elements of classic cinema, including training montages, high speed chases, a dream ballet and a live music score, *The Boxer* is a much celebrated and unforgettable romp that's fun for the whole family.

Dustin Curry and Company

Fiddler's Cave by Dustin Curry

A world premiere comedy inspired by Ozark Mountain folklore, *Fiddler's Cave* tells the tale of a lonely fiddle player who finds himself lost and abandoned deep in a cave, with no memory of how he arrived there. Through wordless storytelling, clowning and a bit of theatrical magic, the Fiddler must search his past for answers in order to find a way home to the life he knew before.

Echo Theatre

Trace of Arc by Ali Smith

When Mrs. Lord opens a lovely English corner shop in the heart of America, she insists that her two "shop girls" play the part, complete with English accents. It seems silly at the time, but is preferable to working for the industrial plant that is otherwise ruining their town. Faced with the prospect of living pretend lives, will conscience inspire them to address the looming problems in their own backyard?

L.I.P. Service Productions

Tommy Cain by Van Quattro

At turns haunting and heartbreaking, poignant and provocative, this searing monologue tells the tale of young Tommy Cain, a disillusioned youth struggling through his adolescence and desperately navigating the tumultuous relationship he shares with both of his parents.

Risk Theater Initiative

Stiff by Sherry Jo Ward

Local actress Sherry Jo Ward chronicles her struggle with Stiff Person Syndrome, an incredibly rare disease which impairs her mobility and causes her unexplained pain. Part stand up comedy, part PowerPoint presentation, *Stiff* is a unique and engaging first person account of what it means to re-assess one's own goals and ambition when confronted with a life altering diagnosis.

WingSpan Theatre, Co

Edward Albee's Finding the Sun

The themes of life, love, marriage and mortality are masterfully illuminated, as in all of Albee's work, in this poignant one-act which finds eight characters enjoying a day at the beach. In true Albee fashion, tensions mount, personal discoveries abound and no relationship is quite what it seems.