



[Home](#) • [Arts](#) • [Theater](#) • PortFringe packs a punch

## PORTFRINGE PACKS A PUNCH

June 12, 2016    Written by [Megan Grumbling](#)    Published in [Theater](#)

---



Karen Ball photo by Ann Tracy Karen Ball

Happy fifth birthday to PortFringe, Portland's ballsy and exuberant festival of new, edgy, experimental, and otherwise weird work! Running from June 18-26, PF-16 presents 50-plus productions, staged at Geno's Rock Club, Empire, and Portland Stage's Mainstage, Studio, and Store Front theaters.

#### PF-16 Vitals:

Entry to all shows works on a Passholder system (punch passes, rather than

tickets to specific shows),

Seating is All-Rush (first come, first served at the door)

Passes can be purchased at each venue and Coffee By Design *with cash only*, either individually (\$10) or in books of 3 (\$28), 9 (\$75), or unlimited (\$125).

And now, a show roundup:

### Improv and Clowning

The ever-popular **Improvvised Puppet Project** pares down to the two-woman show **ArmanDUO**. Armed with “a roast Butterball,” the **Turkey Club** presents a “Lovecraftian amalgamation” of improv comics. Finally, hear pop classics real and invented-on-the-spot in **Written and Unwritten: Greatest Hits**, a collaboration of **Jetpack Superheroes** and the **Self IMPROVment**. For clowning, Celebration Barn veterans **Michael Menes** and **Leland Faulkner** bring on the slapstick and juggling in **SNAFU!**; while the two-woman team of **601 Theatre Company** stirs Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors* into a whirl of Nerf guns and original raps, in **15 Villainous Fools**.

### More Riffs on Will and Other Classics

PortFringe is primetime for playing with the Bard. **Beached, An Island Tragedy** is Mainland Productions’ adaptation of *King Lear*, set on a Downeast island and riddled with sea shanties. In **Dark Rooms**, a **Naked Shakespeare** performance, Carmen-maria Mandley interweaves texts from several Shakespeare shows to explore where shadows live. And Southern Maine’s **Young Shakespeare Company** uses its modernized **Hamletto** take on sexual violence and gender discrimination.

Beyond the Bard, **Molly Hunt** limns the ancient Greek myth in **Leda & her Letters**; while *Moby Dick* gets punk-rock treatment in **whales**, by **Hit The Lights Theatre Company**. Henry Beston’s *The Outermost House* provides the landscape for **Tandem Theatre Collective’s Outermost**, by **Georgia Williamina Zildjian**, with original score by **Tristan Wasley**. And **Andrew Ostrow** upends traditional fairy tales in **Anti-Hero**.

## War and Revolution

The Spanish Civil War is the setting of two short plays, ***Grand Via and Road to Castellon***, by **Harlan Baker**; and **Khalil LeSaldo** tells of a journey through Egypt before the Arab Spring, in ***Death, and Other Drugs***. In ***Rendez-Vous at Moscou***, Falmouth historian **Jean-Claude Redonnet** pays homage to family history on opposite sides of the Great War. And **Cast Aside Productions** presents ***Sarajevo's Child***, an adaptation of Nadja Halilbegovich's memoir about her journey from war-torn Bosnia.

## Parenting and Growing Up

Motherhood is often up for pondering lately, and **Debbie From** offers monologues in ***Mamalogs***. Parenting holds an extra challenge in ***Not Always Happy***, **Kari Wagner-Peck's** real-life tale of raising a child with Down syndrome, directed by **Bess Welden**. And **Constructive Outrage Productions** offers an "up-close comic examination of what it means to grown up with Penis," in **Joshua James's *The Penis Papers***.

## Adults and "Adulthood"

Being a grown-up is hard. In ***Acnestis***, by **Eric Darrow Worthley**, four adults contend with romantic failure and embezzlement. **Patricia Mew and Hal Cohen** present ***Caution: Adults at Play***, two one-acts about the hazards of adult "recreation"; and in ***The Open Door*** by **Alfred Sutro**, **She Smiled Productions** gives us a story of forbidden love between aristocrats. Finally, ***I Thought I Had This Figured Out***, by **Reckless Carnage** under the direction of **Steph Ross**, offers monologues by **Jennifer Reck and Anna Cranage Conathan** about the "act of adulthood."

## Drama, Disorder, and the Deathmatch Defeats

In ***The Kimball-Cohen Project***, playwrights **Hal J Cohen** and **Michael Kimball** each take a leg of the decades-long story between two outcasts; and a traveling preacher isn't all he seems in **Joe R. Lansdale's *By Bizarre Hands***, presented by **Drive-in Theater**. In **Megan Bandelt's *Garbage***, "M" tells of trauma and perfectly-stacked pill bottles. And the **Crowbait Club** presents four scripts that did not win its infamous Deathmatches but that lived to tell their tales, in

## ***Attempted Murders: Four Plays from The Crowbait Club.***

### **Dance, Movement, and Aerials**

**Apparatus Dance Theater** and **Anomalous Co.** use trapezes to conjure ***La Rev d'Augustine***, a dream of a hysteric showgirl and experimentee in an 18<sup>th</sup>-century asylum; while ***The Way We Move***, by **The Spark Artists' Collective**, explores stories of how bodies move best. A teacher and girl battle demons and swimming in ***Plunge***, a solo performance with aerial silks by **Genevieve Simon** and **Breathe Theatre Company**. And **Vivid Motion** tweaks the season in presenting ***Selections From Nutcracker Burlesque***.

### **More Christmas in June**

Yuletide foibles abound in stand-up comic **Aharon Willows' *A Very Special Christmas Special***, a musical feast of Jesus and ham-salad finger rolls; and **Les Kurkendaal's *Christmas in Bakersfield*** chronicles what happens when Mike (white) brings Les (black) home to his right-wing family.

### **Histories (True and Not)**

**Karen Ball** performs the imagined memoir of Madeleine Gide, the gay writer Andre Gide's wife, in ***Madeleine Remains: In Memory, A Wife of Genius***; and playwright **Carolyn Gage** performs in her own ***Lace Curtain Irish***, about Lizzie Borden's maid. Paul Lynde, who played Uncle Arthur on *Bewitched* and the "Center Square" on *Hollywood Squares*, gets an homage in ***God Save The Queen***, from **Lisa Boucher Hartman's and Gene Dante's Zany Hijinx Productions**. Two shows explore (and/or embellish) the origin myths of films: In ***Summer of '74, S74 Portland*** relates the swinging beginnings of *Star Wars*; and **Gypsy Lew Theater Company's *Matt & Ben*** tells of a screenplay called *Good Will Hunting* mysteriously falling through Ben's ceiling. Finally, **MTWTFSS** offers a farce about JFK and Jackie slipping off to a ski lodge, in ***Redacted***; and another President leaves office with an evening of show tunes, in **Mark Magee's *Nixon Sings!***

## One-Handers

The solo shows span hazards from schizophrenia to summer camp. In **Pie Man Theatre Company's *My Brother's Keeper***, Josh Brassard plays multiple family members affected by mental illness; while **Riva Rubenoff's *Piece of That Cake*** is a one-woman stand-up jaunt about street harassment. **Marianne Pillsbury** mashes up celebrities and music in ***Strong Female Character***; and in ***Camp Smile Power: Curing Anger One Smile at a Time***, Amanda Erin Miller plays fifteen-year-old Kevin, while a broom puppet plays Camp director Joanne.

## Category-Defiers

***Pity Party***, by **Wolpertinger Battalion**, offers “a wall-flower ballet and pathos-filled party games”; and **Mal Cherifi's *The Distance Project: Pockets, Knapsacks, Hearts and Heads*** is an exploration of “an amount of space between two points, two people and two realities.” Finally, **Christine Marshall and Mad Horse Theatre Company** presents a “debate” called ***How Dare You, Sir: A Gentlemen's Panel of Rock Release Point Something Something***.

*PortFringe-16*, at Geno's Rock Club, Portland Empire, and Portland Stage's Mainstage, Studio, and Storefront theaters, June 18-26. Buy Show Passes at Coffee By Design, PSC's Fringe Central, or the door of any venue prior to curtain. Visit [www.portfringe.com](http://www.portfringe.com).

*Last modified on Tuesday, 14 June 2016 16:28*



MEGAN GRUMLING

## LATEST FROM MEGAN GRUMLING