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Cirque de Vol Studios' *The Fringe Dwellers* at Burning Coal Is Elegant But Verbose

Posted by [Dustin K. Britt+](#) • June 18th, 2016 • [Printer-friendly](#)



The third production to launch as part of [Burning Coal Theatre Company's "Wait Til You See This"](#) Summer 2016 second-stage series, [Cirque de Vol Studios' *The Fringe Dwellers: Time as a Symptom*](#) is presented in repertory with [Koffee Dance Company's *Insomnia*](#) and [Exit Through Eden's *Émilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*](#).

Cirque de Vol ("flying circus") is a Raleigh-based circus-arts studio, specializing in aerial fitness and performance. This is not the studio's first foray into the realm of theater; in 2013, they collaborated with [Bare Theatre](#) in a thrilling production of Shakespeare's [The Comedy of Errors](#). Nor is this Burning Coal's first foray into acrobatics; in 2011, they joined forces with New York-based Fight or Flight Entertainment to produce a widely acclaimed adaptation of Shakespeare's [Henry V](#)

(on Trapeze). If nothing else, we know the ceiling of the **Murphey School Auditorium** won't cave in.

The Fringe Dwellers is multimedia dance-centered piece that seeks to bring the audience into the universe of **Cirque de Vol Studios**. Upon entering the theater, audience members are instructed to remain silent and as still as possible once seated. No chit chat here.

The work of the cast and crew began before the doors were opened. A combination of projection, stage lighting, music, and experimental sound effects greets you as you enter the auditorium. On the stage are three large white circles (projection spaces) around which dancers are slowly moving. This is not to present any narrative or inform the audience of what is about to *happen*. Rather, its intention is to inform the audience of where they *are*. The program encourages the audience to relax, remain present, and experience the performance.



Cirque de Vol Studios' *The Fringe Dwellers: Time as a Symptom* stars Toni Craige

Boisterous praise is due (and was, indeed, given on Friday night) to the outstanding performers and co-choreographers: **Anna Renee Ohe, Toni Craige, Adam Dipert, Paige Lawall, Carlie Huberman, Jeff Kochuk, Meghan Natifa Kerr, Grayson Hampson, Dustin Hubel, Silvia Sheffield, Nina Spering, and Mari Kearns.**

Additional notice must be paid to the outstanding visual design of the production, which was conceptualized and directed by **Sara Phoenix**, with projections by **Tim Lemuel**, sound by Lemuel and **Brian Shaw**, and aerial rigging by **Todd Spiering**.

The piece's loose structure can be summarized thusly: a professor/spiritual guide presents the audience with a series of perceptual or philosophical contexts. A circus "act" then reacts to that presented idea or works in tandem with it. Basically, dude says some trippy stuff about the universe; and then we get to watch the show.





Jeff Brochuk and Carlie Huberman star in *The Fringe Dwellers*

An outstanding troupe of artists has been gathered to perform great feats of physical dexterity and acrobatics. These “acts” are engaging, entertaining, and thought-provoking. Combining projections, music, sound effects, and complex lighting adds to a truly immersive and transportive experience.

However, these acts are so immersive and so engaging on their own that the addition of a narrator and some lengthy diatribes on the nature of time, space, and human existence are wholly unnecessary and distract the audience from the task at hand: really cool acrobatics. About one-third of the show felt like filler. Mind you, the actor himself is a strong presenter and does his job well. It is the verbosity of the writing that makes him hard to handle.

Don't get me wrong. I am a fan of art that challenges the mind of the audience — that begs us to ask new questions and throw out old answers. I am also a fan of being allowed to take in abstract material and interpret it without interference or didactic explanation from the artists.





Stars include (from top) Paige LaWall, Meka La Creme, and Timothy Lemuel

The Fringe Dwellers presents outstanding design, stellar choreography, and masterful physical artistry. The presumed need to preach to the audience about the every meaning and nuance of a dance piece takes away the audience's agency and disarms the performers. It's as if someone stopped a production of ***Waiting for Godot*** mid-scene, came to center stage and declared, "This play is about **Jungian archetypal personalities!**" Well, I guess it is now.

Despite a few hiccups with cues and scene changes, the production flowed nicely and was overall enjoyable. Unique pieces such as a blindfolded dance, which also makes use of audience participation, make the show worth seeing for fans of dance performance.

The show contains no particularly controversial or adult material, so I suggest it is **suitable for all ages**.





Cirque de Vol Studios' *The Fringe Dwellers: Time as a Symptom* also stars Anna Renee Ohe

SECOND OPINION: June 8th Durham, NC Indy Week mini-preview by **Byron Woods:**

<http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/insomnia-the-fringe-dwellers-emilie/Event?oid=5039525>.

Burning Coal Theatre Company and **Cirque de Vol Studios** present **THE FRINGE DWELLERS: TIME AS A SYMPTOM** at 2 p.m. June 18, 7:30 p.m. June 23, and 2 p.m. June 25 in **Murphey School Auditorium**, 224 Polk St., Raleigh, North Carolina 27604, near the **Historic Oakwood Section**, presented as part of Burning Coal's "**Wait Til You See This**" second-stage series.

TICKETS: \$10.

BOX OFFICE: 919-834-4001 or <http://www.etix.com/>.

SHOW: <http://burningcoal.org/the-fringe-dwellers-2/>, <http://www.cirquedevol.com/shop/fringe-dwellers/>, <https://www.facebook.com/events/300115726986218/>, and <https://www.facebook.com/events/577511622421646/>.

VIDEO PREVIEW: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBdNqTTPrOA>.

PRESENTERS:

Burning Coal Theatre Company: <http://www.burningcoal.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/Burning.Coal.Theatre>, and <https://twitter.com/burningcoaltc>.

Cirque De Vol Studios: <http://www.cirquedevol.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/Cirque-De-Vol-Studios-274872625863989/>, <https://twitter.com/cirquedevol>, and <https://www.youtube.com/user/cirquedevol>.

VENUE/DIRECTIONS: <http://burningcoal.org/murphey-school-auditorium/>.

OTHER LINKS:

Sara Phoenix (Raleigh, NC director and movement artist/owner/director at Cirque De Vol Studios): <https://www.facebook.com/sara.phoenix> (Facebook page).

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dustin K. Britt is a Triangle native, holds a master's degree in special education from East Carolina University, and teaches locally. He can be spotted all over the Triangle area either painting scenery or chewing on it. He has received local theater award nominations for doing both. He is a devoted cinephile and author of **Hold the Popcorn**, a movie blog on Facebook. Click **here** to read his reviews for **Triangle Review** and **Triangle Arts and Entertainment**.

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