

REVIEW OF ENCORE IN ROCHESTER, NY DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE

This review was published on the front page of the Arts Section in the *Democrat & Chronicle* on Sunday, September 23, 2018 by Jack Garner, longtime arts critic for the Rochester, NY daily paper .

Jack Garner's Review of Encore/Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company (excerpt)

"We also found a new delight — the Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company, through their wonderful program-long piece, *Encore*. It's a highly theatrical staging of dance, making the audience feel they're watching a company rehearsal, as the performers work their informal but precise way to a WOW finish! (It's a bit like a modern dance variation of *A Chorus Line*.) There's lots of artful and energetic dance, choreographed by Gwartzman. He's a Rochester native who once worked with Garth Fagan's company before heading to Manhattan. Check out his work if you ever get the chance, in New York or another Fringe, or wherever. It's fabulous."

This is the photograph of Daniel/the Company printed on page 5C of the paper by Marc De George.



Jack's Full Review of The KeyBank Rochester Fringe Festival: Garth Fagan

As the 2018 KeyBank Rochester Fringe Festival ends, it's time to look back. If you didn't find something to enjoy over the 11 days, you just weren't trying. Or, perhaps understandably, you may have been intimidated by the avalanche of more than 500 shows in a score of local venues. In future years, make a point to sit down early with the admittedly thick program and your calendar, and plot your path.

Nobody can do it all, of course, and I had to cut my Fringe short this year because of the night at Kodak Center with John Cusack, and a few days out of town. Still, I saw plenty to make the Fringe Fest memorable. I love the way the festival shines the spotlight on local theatre, dance, songs and comedy on a par with major national acts.

Great dance

For me, Fringe '18 was especially a festival of great dance. One of the biggest joys annually is the presentation of Garth Fagan Dance. Typically, the world-famous (but locally based) company includes parts of a new piece, a work-in-progress, being prepared for the troupe's December showcase at Nazareth. The new work is (already) stunning — *The North Star* — Fagan's tribute to Frederick Douglass. It promises to be an important centerpiece of this bicentennial year of honor for the legendary abolitionist and orator and Rochester resident.

The choreography includes deeply evocative pieces, danced beautifully by Fagan's stars, P.J. Pennewell, Vitolio Jeune, and the seemingly ageless, 66-year-old Steve Humphrey. If you saw the preview last week, you know you must see the completed work at Nazareth Arts Center, Dec. 5-9. As for the rest of you, just know *The North Star* has all the indications of being a masterpiece.

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Music and song

In recent years, Fringe introduced me to The TLC Trio of WNY -- three women with Buffalo and Rochester ties who sing with lovely harmonies and play supportive guitars and keyboards.



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This year, Theresa Quinn, Leah Zicari and Cathy Carfagna performed music of the Beatles in fine style, even mastering the challenging "A Day in the Life," (the greatest Beatle song, by the way). A special nod to Zicari's versatile on-themark guitar playing, an essential in this particular program.

Comedy

Of course, it wouldn't be Fringe without sharing laughs with Estrofest, the quintet of very funny women in a company, now in its 20th year. With sketches and videos and wacky nonsense, they put forth an often-hilarious satirical take on male-female relationships and the state of the world today.

Though Dresden Engle, Andrea and Norma Holland, Allison Roberts and Freyda Schneider were center stage, a few men add to the merriment, including Rick Staropoli in a few live bits, and especially Danny Hoskins in some of the ever-popular videos. He was fabulous in his portrayals of the World's Greatest Jerk.

Spiegeltent

And, it also wouldn't be Fringe without the annual trip into the Spiegeltent (which is more like a Wild West saloon.) The show there — the *Cirque Du Fringe SideShow* — is the latest creation of the zany clowns, tumblers and rope dangles, spinners and jugglers who have visited every of the more recent years. And the new show is a winner.

Those performances were my personal cream of the crop, though they can't honestly be labeled the best of the Fringe, because, who knows? I barely scrapped the surface of the 500 shows.

I loved being introduced to the longstanding Off-Monroe Gilbert & Sullivan Players (who reminded me how much I love G& S), and I laughed vigorously with the standup comedy of Rochester native Ralph Tetta's at his 30th anniversary show.

But perhaps watching Victoria Visiko's brave play, *Whispering Inhibitions*, was the best example of what Fringe is supposed to do. The festival present challenging, offbeat, roughhewn, locally produced projects. They may be works in progress (or abbreviated for the Fringe's hour-long time limit), but it's an opportunity for artists to introduce plays or dances or songs or comedy to an audience, so they can see how it plays, with hopes of going onward and upward.

Indeed, life on the Fringe is pretty special.