THEATER

San Diego's Fringe Festival returns Thursday for 11-day run

The San Diego International Fringe Festival is headquartered this year at the Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater in Balboa Park. (Michael Prine)

This year's fest return to Balboa Park with 19 shows by local and international artists

BY PAM KRAGEN

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San Diego International Fringe Festival turns 10 years old this week, with a scaled-down version of the annual indie theater event taking place for the fourth time in Balboa Park, May 18-28.

Launched in downtown San Diego in 2013, San Diego's Fringe fest was inspired by the famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which has spawned offshoots all over the globe since its founding in 1947.

Fringe was born when eight theatrical groups showed up uninvited to the Scottish city's famous Edinburgh International Festival and were forced to find random places to perform — basements, stores and alleys — on the fringes of the main festival. Today, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the largest event of its kind in the world, with more than 500 acts performing during a five-week period each summer.

Munich-born comedian Paco Erhard performs at the 2022 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Prine Photography)

In its early years, San Diego's Fringe festival grew to include up to 90 different acts performing in downtown venues centered around the Spreckels Theatre and Horton Plaza. But in 2019, the festival was forced to find a new home due to construction at

Horton Plaza and the impending sale of the Spreckels Theatre.

That year the festival relocated to Balboa Park and its list of performers was pared to about two dozen acts. Fringe took 2020 off due to the pandemic, but returned to Balboa Park in 2021 and 2022 with limited lineups.

This year's festival has 19 shows. All but one of them are taking place at two park locations: the Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater near the House of Pacific Relations International Cottages, and the Centro Cultural de la Raza on Park Boulevard. There will also be one off-site Fringe show for adult audiences at Les Girls nightclub in the Midway District.

Fringe fest founder and CEO Kevin Charles Patterson said the 19 shows being presented this year will offer a combined 100 performances. Many of the acts this year are returnees from past years, but they will be presenting all-new material.

This year's festival will not have any free or outdoor performances. Because the content of the shows ranges from family-friendly to adults-only, each show has a rating from G to NC-17. All shows are 60 minutes or less and cost $10 each.

The 2019 San Diego International Fringe Festival is headquartered this year at Starlight Bowl in Balboa Park. (Courtesy of Margarito G. Perez)

As in the past, some of the performers at this year's Fringe are international artists. This year's visiting acts are from England and Australia.

Patterson said he's excited about many of the shows this year, including one from the newly formed Loud Fridge Theatre Group of San Diego.

“San Diego’s Loud Fridge is doing a new show, ‘Normal Heights,’ which should be a lot of fun. There’s also a new musical called ‘1996’ that pivots on the songs of blink-182,” Patterson said. “‘Arson 101: A Choose Your Own Adventure’ sounds fun, right? But as you know, we do not curate any of the content. I haven’t seen any of the shows, so it’s always a great adventure,” Patterson said.

Here’s a look at this year’s Fringe lineup:

A promotional poster for “Arson 101: A Choose Your Own

Adventure" show at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘Arson 101: A Choose Your Own Adventure’

Levani Korganashvili and Kaylin Saur present the world-premiere play where the audience will act as confidants with the actors offering advice on how to handle the challenges of a romantic relationship from start to finish. The actors will improvise on the advice with skills that include acting, dancing, singing, acrobatics, drag and circus skills. 40 min. Rated PG-13. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 7:30 p.m. Thursday; 1 p.m. Saturday; 2:30 p.m. May 21; 6 p.m. May 25; 9 p.m. May 27.*

Golden Corpse Productions presents “Censored Heart” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Manuel Rotenberg)

‘Censored Heart’

Golden Corpse Productions presents this theater piece described as “a heaven or hell implosion about social injustice in the

1950s." The show mixes jazz music, modern dance and art-burlesque. Rated R. *Les Girls Theater, 3970 Riley St., San Diego. 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 3 p.m. May 21; 7 p.m. May 26-27.*

'Choice Words'

Playwright and former KUSI reporter Sasha Foo and director Terry Ross present a staged reading of this collection of monologues about the fight to save women's reproductive rights, inspired by the one-year anniversary of the Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade on June 24. 60 min. Rated PG-13. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 7:30 p.m. Friday; 9*

p.m. May 20.

Asian Story Theater and San Diego Black Ensemble Theatre present “The Coffee Plays” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

‘The Coffee Plays’

Asian Story Theater and San Diego Black Ensemble Theatre presents this new theater piece featuring multiple coffee-related stories from the hills of Ethiopia to celebrity coffee fans from history to the notorious kope luwac coffee made with civet-excreted coffee beans. Each story will be served with a coffee sample for audience members. 50 min. Rated PG. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 4 p.m. Thursday; 6 p.m. Saturday; 1 p.m. May 21; 9 p.m. May 23; 6 p.m. May 26.*

Cellist and comedian Karen Hall will perform “Delusions and Grandeur” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘Delusions and Grandeur’

Classically trained cellist and improv comedian Karen Hall presents this one-woman show where she presents this comic, clowning-infused music recital. 55 min. Rated PG. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. 9 p.m. Friday 6 p.m. May 21; 9 p.m. May 22; 6 p.m. May 27; 2:30 p.m. May 28.*

Miyo Yamauchi performs “How to Be Japanese: Your Normal is Not My Normal” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘How to be Japanese: Your Normal is Not My Normal’

Japanese storyteller Miyo Yamauchi presents this one-woman play directed by Jane Morris about her efforts to conform to a different culture and learn how to live as an outsider. 60 min. Rated G. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. 6 p.m. Friday; 4 p.m. Saturday; 2:30 p.m. May 21 and 27; 4 p.m. May 28.*

Australian stand-up comedian Matt Harvey will present “I Got Bit by a Monkey Once.” (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘I Got Bit By a Monkey Once’

Australian stand-up comedian Matt Harvey, a veteran of fringe fests in

Australia, New Zealand and Scotland, will present this comedic show featuring four true stories from his life about a monkey bite, a long bus trip, an arrest and a mugging. 55 min. Rated R. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. 9 p.m. Thursday; 2:30 p.m. Saturday; 4 p.m. May 21; 9 p.m. May 25; 4 p.m. May 27.*

Fizz & Chips Productions from England presents “Juno & the Jetpacks” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘Juno and the Jetpacks’

Fizz & Chips Productions from England presents this one-woman play about Juno writing her second album, a long-overdue breakup album that forces her to reckon with her bisexuality. 50 min. Rated PG-13. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 9 p.m. May 22; 7:30 p.m. May 24; 4 p.m. May 26; 7:30 p.m. May 27; 1 p.m. May 28.*

‘Kiddables Anonymous’

San Diego Balboa Park Puppet Guild presents this all-new puppetry theater production for all ages. 60 min. Rated G. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. 7:30 p.m. Friday; 9 p.m. Saturday; 7:30 p.m. May 23; 9 p.m. May 24; 7:30 p.m. May 25.*

Poway's Mojalet Dance Company presents "Love American Style" at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

'Love American Style'

The Core Group Co. of Poway's Mojalet Dance Company will present a wacky, playful look at American culture and the use and abuse of the word "love." The program includes dance, text, video and an exploration of culture on dating, clubbing and materialism. 55 min. Rated G. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 9 p.m. Thursday and*

Friday 7:30 p.m. May 21 and 23; 11:30 a.m. May 28.

Writer-director Mark Vigeant stars in “Mark Pleases You” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘Mark Pleases You’

Writer-director Mark Vigeant stars in this one-man show which he first presented at New York’s Upright Citizen’s Brigade Theatre. It’s the story of a man who dies in a freak accident onstage and goes to Hell, where he tries to convince his 11-year-old self not to be such a selfless people-pleaser. 60 min. Rated PG-13. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. PG-13. 6 p.m. Thursday; 4 p.m. Friday; 7:30 p.m. May 21 and 24; 9 p.m. May 26.*

A marketing poster for “1996: A blink-182 Musical” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

‘1996: A blink-182 Musical’

This original musical by Daniel Durston, set to the music of Poway-born band blink-182, is the fictional story of Flyswatter, a Los Angeles pop-punk trio trying to find its way and record its first album in 1996. 60 min. Rated PG-13. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 7:30 p.m. Saturday; 4 p.m. May 21; 9 p.m. May 26; 6 p.m. May 27; 4 p.m. May 28.*

San Diego's Loud Fridge Theater Group presents "Normal Heights" at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

'Normal Heights'

San Diego's Loud Fridge Theater Group presents this new play by local playwright

Christian St. Croix set in the local community of Normal Heights. In a seemingly quiet neighborhood, several neighbors gather to tell stories of sci-fi, fantasy and horror occurring in their community. 50 min. Rated PG-13. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. 7:30 p.m. Thursday; 6 p.m. Saturday; 7:30 p.m. May 22; 9 p.m. May 23; 6 p.m. May 27.*

Andrew Spinks presents “On Earth as It Is in Hell” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Noel Klich)

‘On Earth As It Is In Hell’

Andrew Spinks stars in this new solo show

about a man protecting his daughter, losing his faith and navigating family conflict, in a story that combines comedy, storytelling and history to explore out beliefs about the afterlife. 50 min. Rated PG-13. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 4 p.m. May 23; 9 p.m May 24; 7:30 p.m. May 25; 2:30 p.m. May 27; 6 p.m. May 28.*

‘105 Miles From Home’

Written and directed by San Diego native Alexis Hernandez, this play is inspired by the real-life Pedro Pan flights during the early 1960s that brought 14,000 Cuban children to the U.S. In this story, a young Cuban girl flees Communism and discovers love and hardships in her new life in America. 45 min. Rated PG. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 6 p.m. Thursday; 4 p.m. Saturday; 6 p.m. May 22 and 24; 1 p.m. May 27.*

Writer-actor Flora Le stars in “Sadec 1965: A Love Story” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

‘Sadec 1965: A Love Story’

Writer-actor Flora Le stars in her one-woman play that she describes as “Motorcycle Diaries” meets “Eat, Pray Love” set in Vietnam. In late 2013, Le rode a motorcycle across Vietnam for six weeks solo, in an attempt to better understand her difficult father who left Vietnam in the mid-1960s to study in Canada and never spoke about his native country. 65 min. Rated PG-13. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. 4 p.m. Thursday; 7:30 p.m. Saturday; 9 p.m. May 21; 7:30 p.m. May 26; 1 p.m. May 28.*

A marketing poster for “79 Ways to Die” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

‘79 Ways to Die’

For fans of Shakespearean carnage, this new comedy play by Veronica Rosas condenses all of Shakespeare's most famous plays to just the five best death scenes. 50 min. PG-13. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 6 p.m. Friday; 2:30 p.m. Saturday; 9 p.m. May 21; 8 p.m. May 26; 11:30 a.m. May 27.*

Teatro Obscura presents three bilingual plays at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

‘Teatro Obscura’

Latinx playwrights Javier Martinez Cabrera and Rocio Sullivan present three short bilingual plays on subjects that include angels of the night and tales of flesh, blood and desire. 60 min. PG-13. *Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater*. *6 p.m. May 26; 1 p.m. May 27; 9 p.m. May 27; 6 p.m. May 28.*

Solo artist Steve Budd presents “What They Said About Sex” at the 2023 San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Noel Klich)

‘What They Said About Sex’

Solo artist Steve Budd presents this multi-character documentary-style solo play about his efforts to discover what other people know about sex that he didn't, including a gay man, a tantric sex practitioner, a trans man and sex-positive octogenarian. 60 min. Rated NC-17. *Centro Cultural de la Raza. 4 p.m. Friday; 7:30 p.m. May 22; 9 p.m. May 25; 4 p.m. May 27; 2:30 p.m. May 28.*

San Diego International Fringe Festival

When: Thursday through May 28

Where: Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater, 2130 Pan American Road San Diego; Centro Cultural de la Raza, 2004 Park

Blvd., San Diego; Les Girls Theater, 3970 Riley St., San Diego.

Tickets: $10 per show. $5 onetime badge fee

Online: sdfringe.org

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Review: Moxie’s ‘Chronicles of Kalki’ an imaginative comic book-style look inside teen girls’ angst

The play’s title character is a mysterious incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu

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San Diego Ballet dances to Sue Palmer and swing music in an upcoming production, ‘Eight to the Barre’

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At New Village Arts, a ‘Singin’ in the Rain’ that honors the past

Cast members credit the creative team for helping them translate such a beloved movie to the stage, to honor the film while crafting something original to this production

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THEATER

Moxie’s ‘The Chronicles of Kalki’ a tale cloaked in self-empowerment

Aditi Brennan Kapil’s play, opening today, is directed by Desireé Clarke, the newly named executive artistic director of the company

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Review: Moonlight opens summer season with smart, well-sung 'Jesus Christ Superstar'

The production merges 1970s glam, hippie costumes and squealing guitars with modern projections and special effects

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