



Soup's On!

SLASH COLEMAN DISHES OUT IRREVERENCE AND INSIGHT WITH HIS LATEST PLAY

Playwright / performer Slashtipher Coleman's latest project, *Matzo Balls*, explores growing up in the "Jewish Closet" in the wake of his family's Holocaust experience. *Matzo Balls* played the DC Fringe Festival. Its author talked to URGE about how the play came about and where it—and he—are headed.



URGE: What inspired this play?

Coleman: My family's Holocaust experience and their desire to keep us in the "Jewish closet" inspired the script. I reached a point in my life where I was sick of keeping my family's secrets.

URGE: Where do all the unusual characters come from?

Coleman: The characters...are just a small part of a much larger invisible entourage that follow me around wherever I go. [They] grew out of my need to both escape from the Jewish closet I spent so much time in and placate myself while I was in it.

URGE: Tell us about a surprise or two while you were writing this play.

Coleman: A month before opening night, my family's Holocaust money

arrived. I gave away \$10 to 10 audience members. I figured I'd do this during each performance until all the money was gone, but people freaked out.

URGE: You do not have formal training in theatre. How has that fact shaped your process?

Coleman: It gives me a distinct advantage...When we are committed to our craft and disciplined, we grow and learn things related to our craft that are universal—it doesn't matter if that comes through formal training or time spent alone on the stage. [The stage is] a place where I feel extremely confident and alive and I think that translates.

URGE: Why do you think theatre and comedy have traditionally played such a strong role in Jewish culture?

Coleman: I think it's because we're burdened with 614 commandments while the rest of the world only has to deal with 10. I think that's a lot of math and numbers discombobulating the brain structure.

URGE: What's next?

Coleman: I've got another show in the works which is extremely controversial, which will, if all goes according to plan, land me in the courtroom with a really good lawyer defending me and my stance on free speech. And I've got the First Annual Jewish Theater Festival that I'm producing in Richmond 🍷

Sycamore Rouge Brings Standards & New Works to Old Towne

SYCAMORE ROUGE, A THEATER, CABARET, AND MUSIC VENUE IN OLD TOWNE PETERSBURG, CONTINUES TO BUILD AUDIENCES AND FOSTER NEW THEATER WITH A ROBUST SCHEDULE OF CLASSICS AND NEW PLAYS.

Shannon Polly's *Like Mother*, a one-woman musical about the highs and lows of planning a large wedding, had a summer workshop performance at Sycamore Rouge. In the words of writer/performer Polly, the play is "one bride's musical journey through six showers, three receptions, and one cheese sculpture of the Empire State Building."

In the workshop, pianist Roddy Barnes accompanied an energetic performance that featured Polly's singing, dancing, and comic skills. A triple-threat-who-can-also-write, Polly is particularly adept at dance and physical comedy. This talent is showcased most effectively in the funniest part of the show, a New York theme wedding that takes place in the Midwest.

After the performance, Polly and director Tommy Schoffler had a talk-back session in which audience members gave responses to the play to aid in rewrites before *Like Mother's* fall tour.

Schoffler directed Sycamore Rouge's summer production of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The play starred Terry Menefee Gau as washed-up Southern belle Blanche DuBois, Angela Shipley as Blanche's sister Stella, and Bill Brock as Stella's sexually-menacing force-of-nature husband Stanley Kowalski.

Sycamore Rouge's fall fare is also a mix of old and new. The season begins with *Ready for Right*, the final installation in Sycamore Rouge's Petersburg Stories Trilogy about the city's first civil rights. *Ready for Right* is written by Sycamore Rouge's Producing Artistic Director kb saine and runs October 17 – November 1.

Daniel Sullivan's 1992 spoof *Inspecting Carol* presents a satirical look at traditional theatrical productions of the Christmas classic, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. *Inspecting Carol* runs December 4 – 20. 🍷



Schoffler and Polly