

Fringe Theatre
Adventures &
Transitions
present

CIRQUE du FRINGE

the 19th annual Edmonton
Fringe Festival

\$5
includes
GS

Step right up to
experience a 30-ring
circus of uninjured,
unlicensed indoor and
outdoor performances.
Shows - and this program - may contain
adult-oriented material, unsettling
ideas and the far-out weird.
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Park and Ride • Use me to get to the Fringe (details pg 22)

August 17-27, 2000

Advance Tickets on sale August 10-26
Tickets by phone (August 11-17 only) 437-9361

Send in flaming fools and the clowns



JASON SCOTT, THE JOURNAL

Tim Furst, stage name Fyodor Karamazov, whirls flaming meteors.

Cirque de Flambé (••••)

The performers warn audience members: "If you catch fire, stay where you are," and you cower in terror. The *Cirque de Flambé* is your typical audience-rousing show with fire and an extensive fire fighting force waiting for the grass to ignite. Clowns perform various sketches and stunts, a dynamite clown duel, an incendiary fashion show and the Monzilla 2001 robot, as well as an interesting lawn mower trick. The live band adds a funky soundtrack to the action.

Jon Dunbar

Seattle firebugs a pyro's delight with 'fire cyclone'

You throw a big theatre bash (uncensored, unjuried). You christen it *Cirque du Fringe*. And, lo and behold, three circuses show up (not to mention at least half a dozen clown productions and a couple of freak shows).

Fringe producer David Cheoros is bemused. "A bizarre, happy coincidence," he shrugs. Not only that, but the poster icon you launch is a jester who's exhaling a huge blast of fire.

Cheoros talks about "stretching expectations" at the Fringe.

But surely it's expecting a little bit too much in the way a thematic continuity that an entire circus specializing in blasts of fire would show up. Everything about Seattle's *Cirque de Flambé* is, well, highly flammable. The biggest company (28 plus "volunteer fire technicians") in the biggest space (500 seats in End of Steel Park on 103rd Street north of the Yardsbird Suite) sets everything in their act on fire.

This is not clowns playing with matches. The fire circus, assembled at the Burning Man Festival in the Nevada desert two years ago, is a pyro's delight, a 20 act vaudeville of ignition. There are "fire puppeteers." There's "paint by fire." There are "fire vixens" and "flaming meteors." There are characters with names like Cinders, PetrolNella. There's a blazing robot. Musical director Rick Powell divides the spectacle into three kinds of conflagrations:

The "hand-fire" stuff includes spinning burning chairs, for example, staff twirling, "meteor balls."

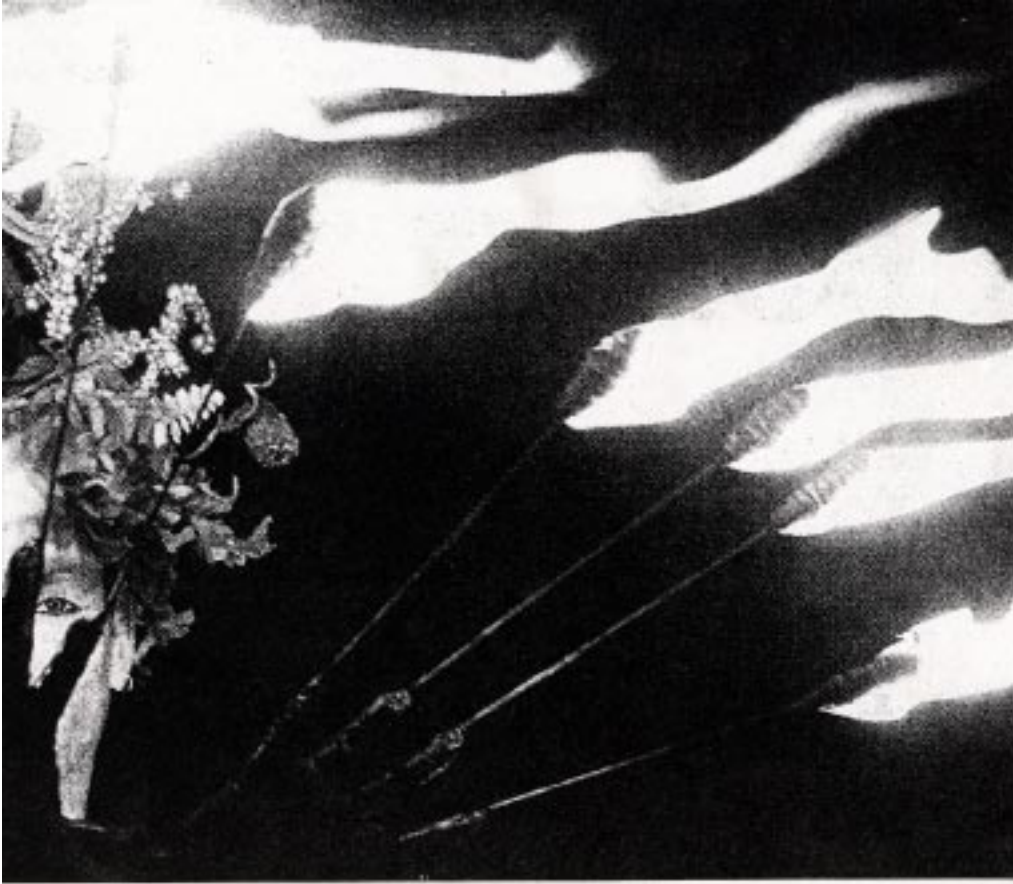
The pyrotechnic department includes Pyro Boy (Wally Glenn), who "straps fireworks onto himself and blows himself up." It will not surprise you to know that he has his own category in Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

The "large fire acts" include a "fire cyclone".

The show travels with a \$2 million (US) insurance policy.

Playing with fire

a natural for Cirque de Flambé



Elenna Hope, a fire artist with Cirque de Flambé, shows off her fiery fingers.

JASON SCOTT, THE

Fringe performers vow they're doing it for the fun of it

SUSAN HAGAN
Journal Staff Writer
EDMONTON

Run away and join the circus, the message of this year's Fringe, lures unsuspecting suburban dwellers out of backyards and into a parallel universe where theatre people offer a world different from our own.

Canis, the Human Comet knows both worlds intimately, having abandoned a career as a surgical nurse and given

name three years ago to play with fire.

He gave up regular paycheques and a predictable life to run away with the Seattle-based circus, Cirque de Flambé.

Canis found out just before he left his job that he has cancer. Most of his 25-plus performance team don't even know.

"I intend to survive," he says. "With surgery, I was doing everything pinpoint perfect. There is no book for this."

"This" involves setting a fire comet into the air high enough to clear trees, increase surrounding temperatures by

20 degrees and light the sky so it switches off automatic street lights—definitely different from surgery, but it requires as delicate approach, with each segment, each step, carefully tested and passed by fire marshalls.

Artistic Director Maque daVis pulled Canis into the fold when the flaming circus was merely a concept.

Canis altered his normal appearance to reflect changes within himself and now sports flaming red hair, a shaggy beard, tattoos and pierced nipples.

"More and more this alternate personality emerged," he says in a quiet voice. "My life was totally out

of control. I felt bound in chains....(Now) I have the power to harness a comet of fire.

"It has allowed me to be that big, bad, wild, crazy man I could never allow myself to be before."

The groups travelled to Edmonton on a \$37,000 budget and expects to lose about \$3,000 without individuals being paid. Everyone of the 17 members who came on the trip did it because it's an ever-evolving passion. They support their art habit through day jobs.

Canis has been appointed mediator and counsellor for the team. "The only way we can feel comfortable is if we won't be punished for revealing our feelings. If we were left to our own devices, we wouldn't work it out. This has given me a tremendous sense of purpose...."

Fire invokes intrigue, especially when the performers appear to be doing something dangerous.

"I'm recovering from western civilization," says Ricky Gene Powell, appointed media liaison and musical director.

"You have to live at a lower income level to pursue what you want to do. You take away joy from the process."

Before things can turn too serious, Peter Toms, another member, interjects with a simpler interpretation.

"I just like to light things on fire," he says. "We all like to see big fireballs. It's great fun."

Canis sums up his life choice this way: "Sometimes I think, 'What the hell am I doing in a circus? What is this fun stuff worth?'"