

Emerging theatre comes from all age brackets

By Liz Nicholls, edmontonjournal.com June 7, 2012



Charles Bourassa and Elizabeth Reid in Improv comedy at the Creative Age Festival. Photograph by: Ian Jackson, Epic Photography, edmontonjournal.com

EDMONTON - This is a week when theatre in this stagestruck town demonstrates, once again, that “emerging artists” come in every stripe — and age.

At Nextfest, for example, you can hang with emerging artists in the under-30 bracket as they smudge and tease the boundaries between theatre, dance, music and film. One of its venues, the Living Room Playhouse, is signed over entirely to new work by high school artists.

Sprouts, Concrete Theatre’s 11th annual “new play festival for kids” — as young as three — returns this weekend to plant and cultivate the seeds of a new, multicultural repertoire from unexpected, emerging playwrights. Four new plays for kids, an antidote to the blandifying white-bread trends in children’s

entertainment, will première at Sprouts as live staged readings Saturday and Sunday at the Stanley A. Milner Library Theatre downtown.

Lobby activities begin at 1 p.m. each day; the four 15-minute plays begin at 2 p.m. Tickets: [Tix on the Square](http://tixonthesquare.ca) (780-420-1757, tixonthesquare.ca) or cash at the door.

The playwrights are an ethnically diverse gathering of actors, improvisers, and in one case a composer, turning their hand to writing for the younger crowd: Nadien Chu, Joel Crichton and Richard Lee Hsi, Joshua Dalledonne, and Carmela Sison.

Meanwhile, the fourth annual Creative Age Festival, Friday through Sunday at the Timms Centre and its Second Playing Space, proves that you're never too old to "emerge." The brainchild of artistic director David Barnet, a University of Alberta drama professor, Creative Age is all about galvanizing creativity through the arts. An expert in collective theatre creation, Barnet, just back from a creative age festival in Ireland, has assembled a multi-disciplinary variety of performances and workshops for the 55-plus crowd.

Friday's activities include workshops in acting (with Dawn Sadoway) and rock music (with Paul Morgan Donald). And the evening variety show includes storyteller Robert Lang, magician John Darke ("Edmonton's gentleman musician"), and writer Joyce Harries who, says Barnet, "expresses perfectly in words the aging experience." Her latest? *How I Want To Celebrate My 105th Birthday If Expense Is No Object*. And there's music.

Saturday, Rapid Fire Theatre artistic director Amy Shostak and improviser Joleen Ballendine lead an improv comedy workshop. And choreographer Marie Nychka coaches creative movement, an art form Barnet is convinced is perfect for self-expression by seniors. Saturday evening is devoted to original plays produced by a variety of seniors groups, including Barnet's own theatre troupe The GeriActors. Tommy Banks, musician/ composer/ former senator, addresses the participants Saturday evening.

Sunday's Arts Cafe showcases seniors performing standup, music and theatrical scenes. In all things pertaining to creative aging, experience is optional; the spirit

of adventure is all. Check out the schedule and lineup at CAFestival.ca.
Registration: [Tix on the Square](#).

lnicholls@edmontonjournal.com

twitter.com/lizonstage

[Read Liz Nicholls's blog Stagestruck at edmontonjournal.com/blogs](#)

© Copyright (c) The Edmonton Journal