



"GRRLL!" presented by Heidi Arneson at Augsburg Mainstage. Photo: Kelly Crandall.

2009 annual report



Carl Scott in *A Dream Play* presented by Tenth Muse at the Southern Theater. Photo: Jeff D. Larson.

# From the Executive Director



Dear Fringe fan,

2009 was a fantastic year for Minnesota Fringe. We've put the highlights in this annual report, but there's only so much we can do in a two-dimensional format to capture the very three-dimensional experience that is Fringe.

The 2009 Minnesota Fringe was record-breaking in many ways:

843 performances of 162 shows, highlighting the work of 1,052 artists

46,217 tickets (a record-breaking 13 percent increase) distributed to an estimated 15,267 individuals from Minneapolis-St. Paul, greater Minnesota and across the country

\$215,600 in box office revenue paid to our producing companies—an 11 percent jump over 2008. The average payout was \$1,331.

We operated smartly in the difficult financial times. Our ticket prices haven't gone up since 2004: Our top ticket price is still just \$12 (plus a one-time purchase of a \$4 admission button), with discounts available for students, seniors and multiple-ticket buyers. Volunteering remained a great way for people to see a free show for every shift they work, and over 400 people took us up on that offer to work nearly 3,000 shifts and, more importantly, play a key role in the life of the festival.

We added a financial incentive for the artists to market their work widely: Every Fringe producer is guaranteed a payout of 65 percent of their gross box office revenue but, if they could fill half or more of their available seats, we promised to increase the payout to 70 percent. Of the 162 companies in this year's festival, 57 met this challenge, and we all benefited from the additional audiences they drew.

We made the Fringe accessible for the artists in other ways as well: The \$400 production fee makes us an incredibly affordable way to get their work onstage and, for twelve companies unable to invest that much money up front, we offered fee deferments, allowing them to postpone payment until they received their box office payout.

Fringe came to St. Paul for the first time ever by including Gremlin Theatre in our roster of high-quality professional theater venues, chosen to provide excellent experiences for both performers and audiences. It was an excellent move for us, and to celebrate our presence on both cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul declared the first day of our festival Minnesota Fringe Day.

For the first time, our staff traveled to greater Minnesota to spread the Fringe word. We set down the groundwork to strengthen our regional services by traveling to and meeting artists from Duluth, Fargo-Moorhead, Bemidji, St. Cloud and Fergus Falls.

We created a new year-round event called Fringe Speakeasy, a monthly social gathering for Fringe artists and audiences. Everyone's welcome to join their extended Fringe family at Bedlam Theatre (home of Fringe Central during the festival) every third Wednesday of the month.

Fringe is a safe harbor where artists have an increasingly rare chance to create challenging and experimental work without a lot of financial strain. Fringe is the best opportunity Minnesota theater artists have to put stretching their audiences and themselves ahead of strictly commercial considerations. We're incredibly proud of the work we do that enables the work our producers do, and I'm delighted to be able to share the results with you.

Sincerely,

*Robin C. Gillette*  
*Executive Director*

# How it's done



Monica Rodero in *Holding Patterns* at the Southern Theater. Photo: Jeff D. Larson.

Minnesota Fringe is an uncensored, nonjuried festival. No member of the staff or board reviews scripts, selects producers or otherwise tells our artists what they can and cannot do. As long as they obey the laws of the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul—and the laws of physics—the sky is the limit.

The lineup is selected by a lottery held in February. Each show is assigned a number and each number is written on a ping-pong ball. We draw every single ping-pong ball, determining who has a slot in the festival and who is placed on a waiting list. If a producer who won a slot drops out, we call the first person on the waiting list.

The scheduling of the festival is just as blind. After assigning venues based on artists' requests, the staff creates the festival schedule using only anonymous show numbers, sticky notes and schedule grids. The grids are color coded to represent the historical attendance figures for each time slot. (Stop by the office to see what they look like; we keep them up all year long.) Every show is given five performance times, one each in five strata: excellent, good, fair, could be better and “meh.” This gives every producer a statistically level playing field to attract audiences.

## Fringe communications

Fringe's website, [fringefestival.org](http://fringefestival.org), becomes one of the most heavily trafficked sites in Minnesota the six weeks surrounding the festival. When the schedule goes live on July 1, traffic spikes. By the time the festival closed, the site served 4.6 million pages to over 51,000 visitors. Our site's registered users submitted 3,251 reviews of this year's shows—every show in the festival was reviewed by the audience at least once.

Fringe is also featured prominently in the local media, garnering front-page coverage in St. Paul's *Pioneer Press*, *vita.mn* and *City Pages*. Our full festival schedule was run in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* and our artists were interviewed on Minnesota Public Radio, KFAI, WCCO, *Lavender Magazine*, *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine* and *Minnesota Monthly*.

## What our artists get

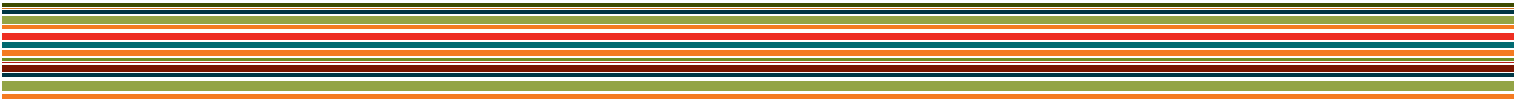
The producers' application fee of \$400 gets:

- 65 percent of gross box office revenue. In 2009, top artist payout was \$5,258 (average was \$1,331)
- Five performances in a fully-equipped professional theater
- Technician/lighting designer
- Front-of-house staff and box office services
- Customizable show page on [fringefestival.org](http://fringefestival.org)
- Liability insurance
- Up to four artist passes and admission buttons
- Producer handbook and staff support
- Producer workshops and one-on-one sessions for marketing, technical and promotional support (and, for those who can't make it, podcasts of our training events)
- Invitation letters and complimentary tickets to local and regional theaters and presenters to encourage them to scout talent at Fringe



Comedy of Errors presented by Bedlam Theatre at the Bedlam Theatre parking lot. Photo: Eric G. Y. Petersen.

# How it gets put together



## THE FRINGE YEAR

### October

Staff attends United States Association of Fringe Festivals conference.

### November

Application released. Visual identity for the next festival developed.

### December

End-of-year fund raising. Application workshops held statewide.

### January

Applications due from the artists. Finalize festival venues.

### February

Lottery. Press release announces the preliminary lineup.

### March

Develop website and collateral including tickets, passes and signs.

### April

Assign venues and schedule the festival.  
Hold a kick-off meeting with our producers.

### May

Press kits go out. Our annual "Five-Fifths of..." fundraiser is held—five companies are each given one-fifth of a script and perform the pieces as one big show.

### June

Recruit volunteers. Producers' workshops are held.  
One-on-one marketing workshops. Program written and designed.

### July

Website goes live and tickets go on sale on July 1. Showcases; Fringe-for-All, the largest showcase, features two nights of up to 30 Fringe acts each giving their best three-minute excerpt of their shows.

### August

The festival!

### September

Post-festival numbers and data are crunched.  
Prep for the next year starts.

Minnesota Fringe is many things—and one of the most important aspects of our festival is the parties. Sure, they're fun and they give very hard-working artists, volunteers and staff a chance to unwind. But more than that, the parties provide a forum for connection. People talk about the shows they've seen. Audience members meet the artists they've seen. And artists collaborate on the spot—and make plans for shows throughout the year.

Fringe Central at Bedlam Theatre presented by Summit Brewing was our central hang-out. For ten nights, hundreds of people came to Bedlam Theatre in Minneapolis' West Bank neighborhood to kick back, have a drink, eat dinner and participate in special events. From an opening-weekend dance party to a kids' ice-cream social, every Fringer was welcome. (Our pub-style, Fringe-themed trivia night was a particularly big hit.) And on the festival's final day, the Guthrie Theater hosted our closing-night party.

“The quality and quantity of the performances was overwhelming and astonishing. The world needs to know about the amazing theatre culture in the Twin Cities. It is good for the city, good for art, and good for the world in general. This is a major civic and artistic asset.”

—FROM AN AUDIENCE SURVEY

# Who we serve



Top: Allegra Lingo performs *Crescendo* at the University of Minnesota's Rattig Center. Photo: Tony Webster.  
Bottom: Black Storytellers Alliance's *Anansi, Brer Rabbit and Other Why Characters*. Photo: Marija Majerle.

“[Fringe] is a doggedly successful festival that is its own unique, formidable landmark on the Twin Cities art scene. The Fringe abets, co-conspires, and in some cases enables. What it doesn't do is judge. The result is explosive and rarely less than fun.”

— QUINTON SKINNER / CITY PAGES “THE FRINGE MUST GO ON,” AUGUST 8, 2007

#### GENDER

Male	41.2%
Female	58.1%

#### AGE

Under 18	3.3%
18-20	4.9%
21-24	6.4%
25-34	24.3%
35-44	14.8%
45-54	18.4%
55-65	19.6%
Over 65	8.2%

#### ETHNICITY/RACE

White/European	94.8%
Asian/Pacific	3.1%
Native American	<1%
African American/African	<1%
Arab American/Middle Eastern	<1%
Hispanic/Latino	1.2%

#### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Straight	83.9%
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	16.1%

#### EDUCATION

Less than high school graduate	3.1%
High school graduate	4.5%
Some college	15.3%
College graduate	37.8%
Some graduate school	7.4%
Graduate degree	32.0%

#### GEOGRAPHY

Minneapolis	45.2%
St. Paul	11.1%
Suburban Minneapolis	19.7%
Suburban St. Paul	10.1%
Greater Minnesota	4.9%
National/international	9.0%

#### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Less than \$25,000	18.0%
\$25,000 - 49,999	23.3%
\$50,000 - 74,999	20.5%
\$75,000 - 99,999	13.3%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	14.2%
\$150,000 or more	10.7%

#### YEARS ATTENDING FRINGE

AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS IN ATTENDANCE: 5.7

This is my first year	33.3%
Multiple years	66.8%



Top: *The Traveling Musicians* presented by 3 Sticks Theatre Company at the Nomad World Pub. Photo: Peter Verrant.  
Bottom: *Thank You and Have A Nice Day* presented by Ruth Glaeser and Co. at Southern Theater. Photo: Jeff D. Larson.

## Year-round staff

Robin C. Gillette . . . . . Executive Director  
Matthew Foster . . . . . Communications Director  
Mark Franko . . . . . Office Manager  
Jeff D. Larson . . . . . Production and Sponsorship Director  
Allegra J. Lingo . . . . . Audience and Volunteer Services Director  
Craig VanDerSchaeagen . . . . . Online Services Director

## Festival staff

### ADMINISTRATION

Zoe Benston . . . . . Out-of-Towner and Deputy Audience Services  
Jane DiLeo . . . . . Box Office Accountant  
Kate Elise . . . . . Deputy Volunteer Services  
Gunther Gullickson . . . . . Box Office Central  
Jillian Perkins . . . . . Graphic Design  
Caitlin Sheaffer . . . . . Box Office Central  
Don Sommers . . . . . Grant Writer  
Ann B. Erickson . . . . . Communications Intern  
Kelsye Gould . . . . . Communications Intern  
Angie Janas . . . . . Volunteer Services Intern  
Hutch Pimentel . . . . . Audience Services Intern  
Tony Stoeri . . . . . Production Intern

### FRONT-OF-HOUSE STAFF

Scott Artley, Sharon Baker, June Berg, Spencer Bondhus,  
Christine Brandt, Keith Carl, Gus Connelly, Debbie Constantine,  
Kate Garlock, Katherine Glover, Seth Goodspeed, Emilie Hanson,  
Robyn Hendrix, Jenna Johnson, Amanda Keillor, Megan Krogh,  
Courtney McLean, Mathilde Mouw, Ashley Nelson,  
Andrew Northrop, Cari O'Brien, Andrea Retterath, Adam Robbins,  
Candace Stimpson, Sophie Vranian

### VENUE TECHNICIANS

Emily Bloudek, Ursula Bowden, Bill Cassidy, Ryan Connealy,  
Diana Domínguez, Christian Gaylord, Wu Chen Khoo,  
Jon Kirchofer, Glenn Klapperich, Kristin Larsen, Mark Larson,  
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Sean Tonko, Nancy Waldoch, Michael Wangen

### ACCESSIBILITY STAFF

Jon Skaalen . . . . . Access Coordinator  
Rick Jacobson . . . . . Audio Description Coordinator  
Alan Farnham . . . . . ASL Interpretation Coordinator

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*Note: Affiliations are listed for reference only*

“[C]onversations with some of [the out-of-town] artists indicate the Minnesota Fringe is an oasis of calm organization in what can be a roiling sea of logistical uncertainties.”

—DOMINIC PAPTOLA, PIONEER PRESS

# Who supports us

Without the people, foundations and corporations that commit their support to our endeavors, Minnesota Fringe would be a mere shadow of itself. We thank the following contributors who are as bold as we are and willing to put their money where their mouths are.

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\*This list represents gifts made between 10/1/08 and 12/31/09. If you have been omitted or listed incorrectly, please contact Robin Gillette at [robin@fringefestival.org](mailto:robin@fringefestival.org) so we can make the correction.

# The numbers



June of Arc presented by Sandbox Theatre. Photo: Alex Wehlhuetter.

# FY09: October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009

<b>REVENUE</b>		
	<b>Support revenue</b>	
	Individuals/events	\$60,700
	Corporate sponsorships	\$26,900
	Grants	\$75,085
	<b>Non-support revenue</b>	
	Application fees	\$72,150
	Box office sales	\$325,463
	Other Fringe-related income	\$69,823
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>		<b>\$630,122</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
	<b>Production expense</b>	
	Production contract services	\$75,474
	Venue rent/equipment rental	\$47,969
	Artist payout	\$215,576
	Miscellaneous expense	\$5,337
	<b>Administrative expense</b>	
	Salaries and benefits	\$203,148
	Administrative overhead	\$40,664
	<b>Development expense</b>	\$8,779
	<b>Marketing expense</b>	\$12,794
	<b>Other expense</b>	\$19,598
	Payment toward cash reserve	\$784
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>		<b>\$630,122</b>



**Minnesota Fringe Festival**

[fringefestival.org](http://fringefestival.org)

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Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

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Fax (866) 596-3224

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