

December 11, 2005

Section: Sunday Arts (A&E)

Edition: Tarrant

Page: D5

Companies stretch with bold lineups

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Zoologically speaking, **amphibians** and butterflies don't mix — unless it's a frog munching down on the winged insect. But in theater terms, it's a good week for all creatures.

Two of Fort Worth's independent groups have announced their 2006 seasons: **Amphibian Productions**, which saw tremendous growth in 2005; and the Butterfly Connection, which is still emerging from its chrysalis.

Perhaps the butts-in-seats story of the year belongs to **Amphibian**. The group mounted two solid main-stage shows, A Buyer's Market and Matt & Ben. But what's amazing is that it consistently drew nice crowds to a type of performance that doesn't often accomplish that task: staged readings.

Its most recent, Becky Mode's Fully Committed, performed last week, drew an SRO house to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth's 250-seat auditorium. That's a phenomenal turn-out for any staged reading, much less one with a \$10 admission. Perhaps word is out that **Amphibian** always delivers. Its staged readings are well-rehearsed and -performed, with top-notch talent from New York and Fort Worth.

The 2006 "Phibs at the Modern" lineup is: Credeaux Canvas by Keith Bunin (Feb. 13); Eye of God by Tim Blake Nelson (April 4); Just Because You're Paranoid Doesn't Mean They're Not Out To Get You by **Amphibian** co-founder and artistic director Kathleen Culebro (Oct. 9); and Nicholas Wright's Vincent in Brixton (Dec. 5). All readings are at 7 p.m. and cost \$10.

The 'Phibs will fully produce two titles at TCU in the summer, beginning with one that was given a staged reading in October: Richard Dresser's corporate black comedy Below the Belt (July 6-16). That's followed by the area premiere of Edwin Sanchez's Icarus (Aug. 10-20), about the relationship between a disfigured woman

and a mysterious man. These shows are \$20 each. Call (817) 923-3102 or see www.amphibianproductions.org.

The group will also continue to produce in New York, with two readings and an ensemble-created piece based on the works of Pablo Neruda.

Meanwhile, the Butterfly Connection has its first full season planned, with an obvious summertime hole to accommodate Hip Pocket Theatre, with whom many of the 'Flies perform and from whom they receive much of their inspiration. TBC's season features locally generated new works and adaptations, many steeped in puppetry, movement and other physical theater techniques.

It begins with Happy, written and directed by co-founder Adam Dietrich. Using video, dance and original music, the work focuses on the evolution of two humanistic creatures in a mythical forest (Jan. 6-22).

Next up is Rice: The Songs of Damien Rice (Feb. 3-19). The rising Irish singer-songwriter has given the group permission to explore his story-songs onstage. Then comes the mystery Paloma by Rob Bosquez (April 28-May 14).

After Hip Pocket's season, TBC resumes with Anson F. Norwood's Charlie's Album, inspired by a man's photo album (Nov. 3-19); and Dietrich's adaptation of Dr. Seuss' The Facts of Life: Or How Should I Tell My Child(Dec. 1-17).

Butterfly shows are free and performed at various venues around town. Call (817) 238-6783. A Web site, www.thebutterflyconnection.org, is coming soon.

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Butterfly Connection will explore the songs of rising Irish singer Damien Rice.

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