

Wincing the Night Away: Venus Envy, May 3 at the Bucktown Center for the Arts

Written by Administrator
Wednesday, 30 April 2008 02:14

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Since the Quad Cities version of Venus Envy began in 2005, it has celebrated women's artistic expression in the visual and performing arts.

Now it aims to let them embarrass themselves.

A new element in the fourth installment of the festival - which is scheduled to be held from 6 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, May 3, at the Bucktown Center for the Arts in downtown Davenport - is an open-mic reading called "Wince."

Held in a fourth-floor private residence in Bucktown, Wince will allow women to read from

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their adolescent writings - journals, poetry, fiction.

Modeled after the "Cringe" readings (<http://www.queserasera.org/cringe.html>) that got their start in Brooklyn in 2005, Wince will be MC-ed by local author Leslie Thompson - who will publish her third novel under the name Leslie Langtry in September. (See <http://leslielangtry.com> for more information.)



"It's meant to be kind of a cathartic event," said Venus Envy Chair Rachael Mullins.

Or, as the Cringe founder writes, reading from "teenage diaries, journals, notes, letters, poems, abandoned rock operas, and other general representations of the crushing misery of their humiliating adolescence ... [is] better and cheaper than therapy."

"When you're a teenager, you take things so seriously," Thompson said.

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She added that the value of the readings is not to humble but to recognize how far one has come. "Somewhere along the way I grew up," Thompson said. But, she added, "I don't think I've grown up too much."

Thompson will be participating, too, having excavated some prose from her youth. "I'm doing it for the sake of the group," she said. "It's pretty bad. I'd hidden it away in a dark place where nobody would find it. ... I'll probably regret it Saturday night."

Wince is an example of the encompassing nature of Venus Envy. The visual-arts element of the event is juried, yet Wince invites all women to participate. (And although it's a women's arts festival, men are welcomed.)



Mullins said Venus Envy has grown from 900 attendees its first year to 1,100 in 2006 and an estimated 2,500 last year, although she admits that the layout of the event has made it impossible to get hard numbers. (Admission to Venus Envy is free, and its \$12,000 budget is covered by donations at the event and grants.)

By focusing performance energies on the outdoor Hera stage this year, Mullins said, organizers are emphasizing a festival atmosphere, including an expanded open-air marketplace. She added that Venus Envy is trying to position itself as the first festival of the season.

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The visual-arts exhibit associated with Venus Envy has also expanded. Featuring more than 40 artists, the show will be on display through May 30 at Bucktown and at the Figge Art Museum's Arts Café.

Performance Schedule

Hera Stage, Pershing Avenue

6 p.m.: Hersong (a cappella women's chorus)

6:30 p.m.: Ballet Quad Cities (professional ballet)

7 p.m.: Ancient Rhythms Dancers/Troupe Rakset al-Nehri/Luna Bonita (bellydancing)

7:45 p.m.: The Sass! Trio (original folk music)

8:30 p.m.: Zloti Village chorus (songs from eastern and northern Europe)

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9 p.m.: Mona (original songs and poems accompanied by djembe drum)

9:30 p.m.:

Two Girls & an Audience (original piece called "Skim Helpless Informed Buzz Dead Dead Dead")

10 p.m.: Olenka with Otro Mundo (flamenco)

10:30 p.m.: Tribal Attitude (bellydancing)

Sophia Stage, Bucktown Center for the Arts fourth floor

Lindsey Heiden, *Creator/Woman* (personal performance)

Laura Hopkins-Hiles, *Bound & Determined* ("A living exhibit, the artist's body is showcased in a picture box")

Wince (open-mic readings)