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## The Queer Fringe

A meatier mix on the 2010 menu

BY DAVID KENNERLEY

Could it be that, in its 14th year, the New York Fringe Festival is starting to come of age? According to Ron Lasko, one of FringeNYC's longtime organizers, in 2010 you can expect more mature, thoughtful fare.

"This year, the festival has a much more serious, dramatic bent overall," he said. "That trend is reflected in the gay plays as well. Much less camp and a lot more earnest exploration of history, politics, and social issues. Of course, we still have plenty of summer fun, too."

As in previous years, the scrappy downtown festival, which runs August 13 through 29 and is produced by the Present Company, offers nearly 200 shows created by 5,000 artists in 16 days. And a whopping one-quarter of the offerings have clear LGBT themes.

So how to separate the sensational from the skippable? There are no guaranteed winners, and, besides, taking a gamble is half the fun. After perusing FringeNYC.org and weighing the plots and pedigrees, here are our picks of the 12 most promising plays with a decidedly gay accent.

**OPEN HEART:** Director Joe Salvatore is fascinated with the explosive space where monogamy and infidelity collide. A couple of years ago at the Fringe, he won the Overall Excellence Award for Outstanding Play for "III," an account of a real life three-way relationship.

Now he's back with an "interview theater project" using verbatim excerpts from interviews — "Laramie Project"-style — with gay male couples involved in open relationships. Five actors portray 15 characters in a multi-media exploration that will challenge your notions of fidelity and the perfect partnership. See it with your boyfriend — if you dare!

*The First Floor Theatre at La Mama, 74A East Fourth St. btwn. Second Ave. & Bowery; Aug. 19 at 4 p.m.; Aug. 22 at 8:15 p.m.; Aug. 26 at 8 p.m.; Aug. 28 at 7 p.m.; Aug. 29 at noon.*