

BLOG

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LALA Festival brings New York performing artists to Minneapolis

By **aliciaeler** | JULY 27, 2017 — 5:29PM



Above: *Adrienne Truscott*

Unless you're singing tunes at the top of your lungs, LALA sounds like a song. But this weekend in Minneapolis, it's a festival, and LALA stands for 'Live Art / Live Artfully.'

Founded by New York-to-Minneapolis transplants Chantal Pavageaux and Billy Noble felt inspired by festivals they saw across the country, and wondered about how they could bring these creative acts to the Twin Cities. The answer came in the form of LALA, a three-day festival that runs this Friday, July 28 through Sunday, July 30 at RedEye Theater (15 W 14th St, Minneapolis, MN 55403), with a focus on artists who are women, POC or LGBTQ and have a desire to create useful, critical dialogue about artworks.

Highlights include Minneapolis' own performance collaboration troupe SuperGroup, NY-based choreographer/comedian Adrienne Truscott, whose show "Asking For It: A One-Lady Rape About Comedy ..." and Mtume Gant, an NYC-based artist and performer who was recently a cast member in the HBO show "Oz." Other artists such as Nick Vaughan and Jake Margolin (SPIRITUS), LaJune McMillian (AESTHER), Jess Barbagallo (ANALOG INTIMACY), Jessica Almasy (A WOMAN DESTROYED OR HOW (NOT) TO GET PUNCHED IN THE FACE), and LALA CABARET members Paige Collette, Maggie Ryan Sandford, Hector Edwardo Chavarria, Ifrah Mansour, Jason Gaarder, Billy Noble and Brian Bose will also be on board.

Tickets range from the crazy affordable \$60 for an entire weekend pass, with individual evening and matinee shows ranging from \$15-\$25. They're available for sale here: <https://lalafestival.com/tickets/>

We caught up with Pavageaux and Noble to learn more about the festival and what to expect. Their answers have been lightly edited for clarity.

ALICIA ELER: How did the festival come about? I know you were talking about the importance of giving and receiving criticism in light of recent events, such as the 'Scaffold' controversy at the Walker and the verdict of the Jeronimo Yanez trial in the shooting of Philando Castile.

Chantal Pavageaux: This is something I've been wanting to do for a number of years. I've been to a lot of national festivals, such as Under the Radar (<https://www.publictheater.org/Programs-Events/Under-the-Radar-Festival/>) in New York at the Public Theater, Time-Based Art Festival (<http://pica.org/programs/tba-festival/tba17/>) in Portland, for example. There are a lot of festivals that happen in New York in January such as COIL Festival at PS122 (<https://www.ps122.org/coil-2017/>), the Special Effects Festival (<http://sfxfestival.com/>), which all happen at this time because that's when the Global Performing Arts Conference and Marketplace (<https://10times.com/global-performing>) is in New York. People were like, 'Hey these experimental things are happening under the radar', which is why one of the festivals is called Under the Radar at the Public Theater.

AE: So is that what the New York-Minneapolis connection is about?

CP: We moved here from New York, we have a lot of friends who have moved here who lived in New York. It seems like a NY-Minneapolis connection is very strong in many ways but it doesn't seem – the opportunities for people here to have their work seen by other people is limited, especially the opportunity for things to come here from NY or other places. If one or two people don't think your work is worth bringing then you are not going to come to the Twin Cities. And then the cool weird stuff, there isn't opportunity for it to jump out.

AE: You had also mentioned an interest in questioning why curators are gatekeepers, and the idea of shifting that cultural responsibility to artists. Is that possible though, to make artists the gatekeepers?

Billy Noble: The thing we have been talking about a lot is this question of curation. So at the time Chantal was seeing work she was really excited about and wishing she could share things she saw in NY with people in Minneapolis, and wishing she could share stuff she saw in Mpls with people in NY and other places, I had attended a number of conferences where there were a lot of curators talking. And I kept hearing people say, 'oh well when we discovered DARK MATTER (<http://darkmatterrage.com/about/>),' [an NYC-based trans south Asian performance art duo made up of Alok Vaid-Menon and Janani Balasubramanian]. So these curators who put together things for the MOMA or other shows in New York, they were like 'oh we discovered DARK MATTER and we want to get them to MOMA' and I was like, 'you didn't, DARK MATTER isn't like a country you discovered and colonized, DARK MATTER is a group that's making work and they have their own organic following, and other artists and other queer people are aware of what they are doing even if they haven't trickled up to the MOMA.' In this instance, other people have been interested in DARK MATTER for a long time, but it wasn't until a critical point – when they performed for Under the Radar – and that's when they were no longer under the radar.

I think in terms of the LALA Festival and artists being able to bring people – inform other artists and people who can see things that are interesting to them – I am interested in being part of an actual dialogue or conversation instead of these people have gotten to a point in their career where they can sell out an opera house or something and make money off of them.



What are you most excited about?

BN: I'm most excited about "White Face" with Mtume Gant. I knew him from when I was a teaching artist in NYC. He's probably one of most intelligent people I know, but also one of the most gracious and kind, but he makes these scathing political satires. He writes holds-no-barred

sort of satires, and they are super smart and I am excited to get to watch in its entirety and him there in the theater. And his mom lives in town. His mom will also be in the audience

CP: I mean, generally the overall kind of emergent thing that is going to happen after the whole of all of these artists and convos. Performance wise I am interested in seeing what Adrienne Truscott is going to do, because I saw her one woman show about rape that she did here a few years ago and in these January shows in NYC. She is making a piano out of cardboard and duct tape. It's a DIY dream for me.

AE: Since it's a weekend long festival, I was thinking about the format of film festivals and that as opposed to just going to one event. What would be the advantage of going to the whole festival?

CP: It's all in conversation with each other in the way it's built and grows and changes. It's our first year and we're learning a lot, and I see that maybe it would be best suited for another time because everyone likes to be outside. But come and hang out with these people for three days. If you're an artist you can come and think about your work. If you're not an artist, hear about how people are making things and what they are making

BN: During the day, artists are going to give artist talks about their work for about 10 minutes. The talks about making work are directly related to a group discussion that happens afterward. For example, on Friday night you can see Adrienne Truscott's play and then Saturday afternoon she is going to talk about her history of critics and responding to critics with her work, and then there's a group discussion about criticism and critique.



SUPERGROUP performance collaboration
