A behind-the-scenes look at the people & programs you support.
Compagnie Hervé Koubi makes its Flynn premiere with its wildly acclaimed show, “Ce Que le Jour Doit à la Nuit (What the Day Owes the Night).” 

Choreographer Hervé Koubi grew up in France and learned of his Algerian heritage well into his adulthood. He addressed it by forming this company, which features 12 dancers from Algeria and Burkina Faso. The movement itself embraces capoeira, martial arts, contemporary dance, traditional North African dances, and hip-hop. The result is astonishingly physical, yet deeply moving.

Two years ago I saw Compagnie Hervé Koubi perform the piece at the annual Arts Presenters conference in New York. In an after-show reception, the dancers served tea to the audience members. This small welcoming act created an eager anticipation for the performance to the audience members. This small welcoming act created an eager anticipation for the performance on the Flynn stage this season.

The piece has earned great reviews around the world. The Washington Post called it, “A stunning fusion of acrobatics, gymnastics, b-boying, modern dance, and ballet. Add traditional Sufi music, haze and atmospheric lighting, and what Koubi has created looks deceptively like an ancient desert ritual.”

As performance artist/comedian Adrienne Truscott explains, “I put as much information in the title and subtitle so that nobody who comes to my show is totally unaware of what they’re going to get.” Truscott’s provocative and popular show is called Asking For It: A One-Lady Rape About Comedy Starring Her P***y and Little Else.

The show tackles the difficult subject of rape jokes and the larger subject of the rape culture that embraces them, particularly as told by male comedians who seek to mine easy laughs. Her set features framed photographs of several prominent comedians who’ve made rape jokes.

“A lot of comedians think (rape jokes) make them edgy, like a bad boy of comedy,” Truscott explained in a phone conversation. “In their weird algebra of what makes them edgy, they feel comfortable making a certain large portion of their audience uncomfortable. But what they don’t seem to get is, if everyone’s doing rape jokes, then you’re not edgy.”

Not that Truscott minds making her audience uncomfortable. Her character in Asking For It essentially manifests the butt of a misogynist rape joke: a tequila-shooting woman in a long blonde wig, platform heels, a hot pink bra… and nothing else (yes, she’s naked from the waist down). She is, in other words—and in the misguided perception of some comedians—asking for it.

The results are subversive, hilarious, and highly disconcerting. Some of the jokes are brutal, others are excruciating, but they’re all on point, the point being that at the center of every rape joke is a rape. Obviously, the show walks a tightrope, but the wonder is how beautifully Truscott staggers across that tightrope in her platform shoes. It’s definitely a “message” show and it will make you uneasy pretty much from start to finish, but it’s also incredibly hilarious.

This marks Truscott’s first show as a stand-up comedian, following a decade as a performance artist, most notably as half of the hilarious Was Wax Sisters with Tanya Gagne. Truscott conceived Asking For It after hearing a particularly vile rape joke by Daniel Tosh (look it up; it will not be repeated here). Asking For It took the Edinburgh Fringe Festival by storm in 2013, winning the Comedy Award and multiple rave reviews.

The Scotsman called it, “Brutal, brilliant and brave… if you miss it you will miss the moment in the history of stand-up comedy wherein a woman actually took the genre and did something with it that no man could do.” In London, The Guardian said, “It’s so exhilarating to see the ugliness of rape discourse blown on, and basted, not with humorlessness or censoriousness, but with firecracker wit, sophistication, and luminous humanity.” Since then, the show has toured internationally and Truscott has some loose plans to perform it in all 50 states. This show, her Vermont debut, allows her to cross us off her list. But the fact that the show is still around, and still necessary, is a mixed blessing for her.

“My hope was that, if I did it correctly, it would hit a nerve and hopefully open peoples’ ears up to hearing another take on this topic. And if it hits that nerve, I’ll be a bit priggish-y and I’ll tour it for six months or a year, and then people will forget about it.” Since the rape jokes never stop coming—recent nationally televised sets by Dave Chappelle and Louis C.K., to name but two, featured long riffs on rape—the show changes with the times. “The ongoing joke is that, much to my delight as a performer, it’s still touring, and much to my horror as a woman, it’s still touring. And relevant.”

Requisite Discomfort: Adrienne Truscott at the Flynn
A Spirited Farewell

Carol Goodrum Steps Away After 30 Years at the Flynn

When Carol Goodrum began at the Flynn full-time, in 1992, everyone was a part of the performance.

“The thought was that every single person that worked here should be involved in show night. If there was an IT guy, he should be the one ordering beer for concessions.” That explains the wide-ranging job responsibilities Carol absorbed and has maintained ever since: Spirit manager, and overseer of all things front of house, HR and payroll, and finance. “It’s the little things she does—always with a smile—that mean so much to the patrons and Spirits,” said longtime Spirit Dorothy Bultura.

One of Carol’s largest responsibilities in her time at the Flynn has been managing the Flynn Spirits, also known as the ushers you meet, clad in white shirt and black pants or skirt every time you visit the theater. Spirits welcome you to the Flynn, help you find your seat, and deal with an unbelievable array of issues during every performance, ranging from clogged sinks to accommodating audience members who showed up on the wrong evening for the wrong show. “I don’t know how Carol keeps her sanity while managing the more than 300 volunteer Flynn Spirits, the team of house managers, and all the other things she does in support of the Flynn’s theatrical mission,” said House Manager Julie Cohen Sloma. “The shows just couldn’t go on without her.”

Carol didn’t know anything about the Flynn before she started working part-time as a house manager, in 1986. She took to it immediately and soon found herself hobnobbing with the likes of Jay Leno, Marcel Marceau, Gregory Hines, Mikhail Baryshnikov (“I still have a shirt he left behind in his dressing room”). In 1992, Carol moved to Rhode Island and found a good full-time job, but wasn’t entirely satisfied. “I thought to myself one day, ‘If the Flynn called up and offered me a job, I’d move back to Vermont in a second.’” She returned home that evening to discover a message from the Flynn asking if she would like to be the new volunteer coordinator.

The group of 235 volunteers she inherited had grown from a small handful that staffed the first performance at the Flynn: the Vienna Boys Choir, in 1982. (Incredibly, some of the volunteers from that performance are still Flynn Spirits today.) The group has grown to nearly 400 individuals, most of whom Carol knows by name. She has been in daily contact with many of her Spirits for nearly 25 years and keeps tabs on everyone—who’s having a grandchild, who has a family member that passed away, whose kid is graduating high school, who has a birthday that coincides with show night. “She has kept all of us well informed,” said House Manager Anna Deller. “Despite my many questions, she has a positive attitude with a smile and cheery hello.”

The personal relationships she’s forged at the Flynn have been the most rewarding aspect of Carol’s time here, including the one with her husband, recently retired Director of Production Gary Lemieux. “But I’m taking him with me,” she says.

Burlington Town Center/Devonwood: Everybody Belongs Arts Access Initiative

By GINA HADDOCK, Development Director

Don Sinex of Burlington Town Center immediately responded to the Flynn’s mantra of “everybody belongs.” Because he shares that vision of access to the arts for all, Sinex recently reached out to the Flynn. What started off as a desire to make the arts more accessible became a new education arts access program. Everybody Belongs Arts Access will provide support for area children and teens to more fully participate in all that the Flynn has to offer for our youth. Children who need scholarship support will have opportunities to participate in the many year-round camps, classes, and performance programs that foster the creative spirit, cultivate solid artistic skills, and make the performing arts an integral part of community life.

Burlington Town Center/Devonwood will help us to continue to assure participation in the arts all year with subsidy support for the Flynn’s 2018 Student Matinee Series. Over 38,000 children from all over the state come to the matinee program and over 7,000 of these children need financial support to attend. As Executive Director John Killacky said when accepting this gift, “Don Sinex and Burlington Town Center are such great community partners offering access for children and students to our classes, workshops, and performances. Together, we will continue to work to eliminate financial barriers for youth participation, making sure that everyone belongs at the Flynn. We are so grateful.”

Phish in The North Country Exhibition

October 7–December 31 (+ special events to be announced soon)

Phish and the Flynn Center celebrate the 20th anniversary of the WaterWheel Foundation, the charitable partnership between Phish and their fan community, with a display of posters and show flyers in a special exhibit at the Flynn’s Amy E. Tarrant Gallery. Phish in The North Country looks at the Vermont bands 30-plus-year history, starting in the bars and nightclubs within blocks of the exhibit and growing through Nectar’s, Hurls, The Front, the Flynn, Boston, Albany, Saratoga, Springs, and throughout the world. This exhibit focuses on “local” shows—those within striking distance for Vermonters—spanning the band’s career. In honor of #WaterWheel20, Phish in The North Country includes special edition posters that have accompanied the bands various charitable events. Many of the bands’ signatures and lesser known artists will be featured on works as varied as Xerox flyers for telephone poles to highly collectible fine art pieces.
Staging Fun Home

An interview with Vermont Stage Directors Cristina Alicea and Robin Fawcett

Recently Vermont Stage learned it would be a big day for Fun Home, the Tony-Winning musical based off Vermont Cartoonist Laurene Alison Bechdel’s graphic novel of the same title. The musical, which tells the story of Bechdel’s coming out and her father’s struggle facing his own sexuality, is a significant undertaking for Vermont Stage. Directors Cristina Alicea and Robin Fawcett answered questions via email about the production.

What drew you to Fun Home in the first place? Cristina: I think, like many Vermonters, I had been watching Fun Home’s trajectory in awe since it first premiered at the Public Theater. The fact that Fun Home was based on a fellow Vermonters’ work immediately drew my attention, especially since that work happened to be Alison Bechdel’s popular graphic novel of the same name. From the outset, Fun Home came across as the "little show that could." so when it became a hit that transferred to Broadway and then won the Tony for Best New Musical, it was such a wonderful surprise. It definitely got me fantasizing about doing Broadway and then winning the Tony for Best Musical. I can’t wait for her to see it.

In producing Fun Home different from producing a typical Vermont Stage play? How? Cristina: Absolutely. The logistics of producing a musical is the major challenge. This is the biggest show we’ve ever produced. We have to hire an orchestra and a music director and many other additional staff members to just get the show off the ground. However, with that challenge comes so much more room for collaboration, which is exciting and rewarding. Certainly the pride we will feel once we see the audiences’ reactions to the show will have been worth all of the extra time, resources, and energy.

What’s the casting process like? Robin: The usual prerequisites for casting a musical include seeking actors who can impressively fulfill the acting-singing-movement demands of each role, believably play the characters and relationships, and support a directorial vision. In addition to this, Fun Home provides several unique challenges for casting its nine roles: finding one actor who can deftly play four distinct characters, the actors who can believably play a family with biologically related children ages six, eleven, and nine; and two additional actors who are to appear in grown-up versions of the nine-year-old Olaf and Gabe.

Due to the play’s size, had Vermont Stage consider moving to the Flynn MainStage? Cristina: We did talk and think about this a lot before deciding to do the show in FlynnSpace. Ultimately, we felt that FlynnSpace is a better fit for the show. Fun Home was produced in the round on Broadway at Circle in the Square, which is a relatively intimate theater. The show benefits from that intimacy, given that it’s such a personal story set primarily in Bechdel’s childhood home. We also pride ourselves on the impact that our plays have on our audiences, due, in part, to the immediacy and intimacy that producing plays in a small venue can breed. We didn’t want Fun Home’s potency to get diluted by the vastness of the MainStage.

Why do you think Fun Home, which includes some pretty dark intimacy that producing plays in a small venue can breed. We didn’t want Fun Home’s potency to get diluted by the vastness of the MainStage.

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SUMMER at the Flynn

FlynnArts camps

Exhibitionists music series

Flynn Garden Tour

Amy E. Tarrant Luncheon

Garden Tour Photos: Stephen Mease

Over the Edge Photos: Stephen Mease

Burlington Discover Jazz Festival

Over the Edge Reception

All Garden Tour Photos: Steve Mease

Kevin Titterton
By JESSICA HANDRIK, King Street Community Center’s Church Street lemonade stand.

September, October, November

MARQUEE

Reaching Out: The Flynn’s Off-Site Partnerships

What can we do together that we can’t do alone?

This is the key question that catalyzes our conversations with our community partners. While our Education Department has a long history of applying our resources off-site in area classrooms and partnering with local organizations to remove financial barriers to the performing arts, we are newly committed to creating customized programming in collaboration with and on location at community-based organizations.

Over the last year, and with the support of key funders who share our commitment to equity and access to the arts, we have engaged in planning conversations with the dedicated and creative staff of local organizations including King Street Community Center, the Boys & Girls Club, and the Vermont Adult Learning Center. We bring our arts-based knowledge to the collaboration while our partners bring their expertise in, for example, literacy or youth development.

Together we identify a gap in their program offerings that the Flynn can help address by custom designing an arts program that is relevant and meaningful to their participants. We have learned that presenting programming in collaboration with and on location at community-based organizations is one way the Flynn can help address by custom designing an arts program that is relevant and meaningful to their participants.

Before hosting King Street’s Job Club for a career-based tour of the Flynn, we visited one of their sessions at King Street. We got to know the curriculum and the students in order to customize their engagement at the Flynn. Another example of this approach is our emerging partnership with Vermont Adult Learners. VLA’s Beverly Keim says the history of the theater, learned on a recent backstage tour given to the organization’s teachers, has “built excitement among our students to see shows for which the Flynn offers discounted tickets.”

In keeping with the Education Department’s mission to keep the arts integral to school and community life, our off-site programming and community relationship building includes adults and the aging. We now offer our impactful Dance for Parkinson’s classes at Cathedral Square, having identified transportation as a barrier to participation in the class held at the Flynn. So what can we do together that we can’t do alone? We can meet people where they are. We can ask people what they’re interested in and where their arts gaps are. From there we can create innovative performing arts classes and workshops that engage folks of all ages in the joy of the arts, as a community.
Flynn Calendar

September

FS 16 TURNmusic
21 John Cleese Presents
   Monty Python and the Holy Grail
PP 21 National Theatre Live: Yerma
23 Seu Jorge: The Life Aquatic,
   A Tribute to David Bowie
24 Vermont Youth Orchestra:
   Celebrating Creativity
28 Russian Grand Ballet Presents:
   Swan Lake

October

FS 4-29: Vermont Stage: Fun Home
3 Jersey Boys
6 Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra
SMS 8 Compagnie Hervé Koubi:
   Ce Que Le Jour Doit à La Nuit
   (What the day Owe to the Night)
11 Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood Live!
14 The King Returns
20 Sean Dorsey Dance:
   The Missing Generation: Voices
   from the Early AIDS Epidemic
21 Vermont Symphony Orchestra:
   Masterworks Featuring Jinjoo Cho
22 Chicago Children’s Theatre:
   Red Kite Treasure Adventure
30 Alton Brown Live

November

2 Yo-Yo Ma & Kathryn Stott
FS 2-3 Adrienne Truscott:
   Asking For It
FS 4-5 Soovin Kim & Gloria Chien
9-12 Lyric Theatre: A Christmas Story
FS 10-11 Hinterlands:
   The Radicalization Process
FS SMS 14 Vermont Abenaki Artists Association
14 Joe Bonamassa
PP 16 National Theatre Live: Follies
17 Postmodern Jukebox
21 Stunt Nite
25-26 The Nutcracker

FS: FLYNNSpace   PP: Palace 9 Cinema, St. Burlington
SMS: Includes additional Student Matinee Series performance