



For Immediate Release

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Sacré Bleu

Josephine & André  Botany

Philly Fringe Features the Empress and the Explorer In “A Paper Garden”

Philadelphia, PA, August 9, 2011... She was a hostess *extraordinaire*, fashionista, political advisor to her husband the Emperor Napoleon and *patronne* of a world-class collection of rare and exotic plants in the greenhouses on her private estate, Malmaison. He was an arborist, adventurer, and pal of Thomas Jefferson who traveled to America in search of trees to re-forest France. They had nothing in common but their love for botany. They were Josephine Bonaparte and André Michaux, two stars of the exhibition, *Of Elephants and Roses: Encounters with French Natural History 1790-1830* currently on view at the American Philosophical Society Museum.

Did they ever meet?

Probably not.

In Philadelphia?

No way.

But that hasn't stopped Aaron Cromie, Mary Tuomanen and Genevieve Perrier from creating a richly imaginative, witty, and utterly distinctive new play for the 2011 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. “A Paper Garden: An Idiosyncratic and Indefatigable Account of Empress Josephine and André Michaux’s Love of Botany” puts our hero and heroine in a real garden at Fifth and Chestnut Streets. Inside and outside a futuristic greenhouse, origami flowers grow and the story unfolds. Audiences can join Perrier as the charming Josephine, and cross-dressing Tuomanen as the intrepid André as their friendship blooms in magical story and silly song

“A Paper Garden,” commissioned by the American Philosophical Society (APS) Museum, premieres on Friday, September 2, 2011 at the 2011 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. The play is one of five large-scale public programs presented by the Museum this fall under the title *The Greenhouse Projects: Five Takes on an Exhibition*. Supported by a generous grant from the Heritage Philadelphia Program, a program of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, each *Greenhouse* project interprets the historical themes and objects in the exhibition *Of Elephants & Roses* and connects them to contemporary issues.

Aaron Cromie is a Philadelphia-based, multidisciplinary theatre artist who has collaborated as performer, designer, director, writer and musician with several companies including the Arden Theatre Company, the Folger Shakespeare Theatre, the Walnut Street Theatre, Mum Puppettheatre, the Studio Theatre, Wilma Theater, Lantern Theater, and Shakespeare Theatre, among others. Cromie has been nominated for several Barrymore Awards, winning in 2007 for Outstanding Direction of a Musical (with Mat Wright) for "The Fantasticks" at Mum. He has toured nationally with "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story" and is a graduate of the College of New Jersey and the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.

Mary Tuomanen recently played the title role in Hamlet with the Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre, and has performed and/or collaborated with InterAct Theatre Company, Shakespeare in Clark Park, Applied Mechanics, Gas & Electric Arts, Actors Theatre of Louisville, New Dramatists, NYC, and created her own solo show through the Community Education Center in West Philadelphia as well as performed in Paris, France.

Genevieve Perrier is a first generation American from a family who emigrated from France. She received her MFA from Temple University. Perrier is a multiple Barrymore Award nominee, winning for Outstanding Leading Actress in "Skylight" at Lantern Theatre. She has also worked with Arden, Azuka, Theatre Exile, Headlong Dance Theatre, Pig Iron Theatre and Mum Puppettheatre among others. She recently launched the inaugural season of Temple Repertory Theatre as Irina in "The Three Sisters" and Isabella in "Measure for Measure."

Information

A Paper Garden: An Idiosyncratic and Indefatigable Account of Empress Josephine and Andre Michaux's Love of Botany [In French and English].

Presented in the APS's Jefferson Garden (on the east side of 5th Street between Chestnut and Walnut Streets).

Performance Dates and Times

Fri. Sept. 2 -- noon & 6pm

Sat. Sept. 3 -- 1 and 3pm

Sun. Sept. 4 -- 1 and 3pm

Fri. Sept. 9 -- noon & 6pm

Sat. Sept. 10 -- 1 and 3pm

Sun. Sept. 11 -- 1 and 3pm

Fri. Sept. 16 -- noon & 6pm

Sat. Sept. 17 -- 1 and 3pm

Tickets are free but reservations are required. To reserve tickets please contact:

<http://www.livearts-fringe.org/box-office-ticket-info.cfm> or phone 215-413-1318.

Of Elephants and Roses: Encounters with French Natural History 1790-1830

On view at the APS Museum through December 31, 2011

104 S, Fifth Street

Hours: Thursday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Exhibition Admission: \$1 Requested Donation

In the golden age of French science, explorers brought the wondrous flora and fauna of the new world home to Paris, musicians arranged a concert for elephants at the Museum of Natural History, artists turn botanical studies into exquisite drawings on paper and porcelain, a giraffe walked 800 kilometers across France to pay a call on the King, scientists shared their newfound knowledge with their colleagues across the Atlantic at the American Philosophical Society, and Empress Josephine kept two Australian black swans on her estate at Malmaison. See it all in this new exhibition featuring rare books, scientific specimens, documents and letters as well as artwork including watercolors, hand-painted porcelain, and popular everyday objects decorated with exotic flora and fauna that represent Parisian encounters with the natural world at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

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American Philosophical Society (APS) Museum

When Benjamin Franklin decided, in 1743 to establish America's first "learned society," he called it the American Philosophical Society (APS) because he and his friends practiced the objective study of nature and called themselves natural philosophers. Now we'd call them scientists. But the word "philosophical" stuck. In the first half-century of the republic, APS served as a national library, museum, and academy of science.

Today the APS Museum presents ambitious exhibitions that explore the intersections of history, science and art and that present the Society's treasure trove of important documents, scientific specimens, maps, 300,000 books, 8 million manuscripts, art works, and objects that trace American history from the Founding Fathers to the computer age in new and thought-provoking ways.

Philadelphia Live Arts and Philly Fringe

The 15th Annual Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe will take place September 2-17, 2011. Tickets prices range from free to \$55, and can be purchased online at www.livearts-fringe.org or by calling [215.413.1318](tel:215.413.1318). The Festival Guide will be available the first week of August, and can be either downloaded as a PDF or picked up in hard copy at any Festival venue as well as at key "Hot Spots" (to be announced online in July) throughout the city.

The Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe were originally founded in 1997 as the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Today, the Live Arts Festival is a curated festival of the world's most cutting-edge, high-quality performing arts groups who are invited by the Festival's Producing Artistic Director. The Live Arts Festival is often the only opportunity the region's audiences will have to see these works without traveling internationally. In 2011, 16 Live Arts shows will be presented.

The Philly Fringe is an unfiltered festival, where a platform is provided for new and established artists to present their work free of a selection process. For some it's a once-a-year, or once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a show; for professional companies, it can be an opportunity to try something new. The Philly Fringe seeks create a cityscape filled with theater, dance, music, and everything in between for audiences to enjoy; encourage artists to give expression to and develop their talents and artistic visions in total artistic freedom without any curatorial barriers in bringing that work to an audience; to help artists become successful independent producers; and ensure the growth and continued health of the local and regional performing arts community. In 2011, over 200 Philly Fringe shows will be self-produced by thousands of artists from throughout the region.



Photo credit: Cherie B. Tay