

“Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?”
in articles and stories...

City Pages, Minneapolis, MN, August 2004:

<http://www.citypages.com/2004-08-11/news/once-more-with-feeling/>

No, It Makes You Look Phat

Storyteller-Performer Amy Salloway Turns Self-Esteem into High Art

Last year, when Amy Salloway was preparing to debut her self-directed one-woman show *Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?* for the Minnesota Fringe Festival, the 35-year-old performer had an oppressive case of the jitters. "I was so horrified--I used every single healing art I could think of," she says over coffee at Dunn Bros. She tried acupuncture, herbs, hypnotism, massage, chiropractic, tarot readings. Nothing worked. After all, the punch-in-the-gut solo piece rested on her struggles with poor body image and rotten self-esteem. Naturally, she feared audiences would hate her.

Instead, they laughed. The show launched her career as a humorist and gave her a much-needed boost in confidence. Soon Salloway was taking time off work to jet across Canada, spreading gut-busting, self-deprecating anecdotes to audiences in Thunder Bay, Vancouver, and Halifax. Call it irony, but the work that stripped naked her loneliness became the very thing connecting her to loads of new, if short-term, friends. After a show in Thunder Bay, a burly lumberjack approached Salloway and kindly asked for a hug. Later, while Google-stalking herself, she found a blogger relating to "the Hamburger Moment," a summary moment during which Salloway comes clean about hating her life.

Accolades for the show surprise Salloway. "I don't ever trust that people will like my show," she explains. "I often assume that people will say, 'Oh my God, what an over-disclosing freak!'" But for Salloway, disclosure was just the thing. The show is filled with accounts of true-life incidents, like the time she tested her boyfriend's love by hypothetically asking for his kidney. He declined, and that relationship quickly crumbled. In another tragicomic episode from the show, Salloway retreats to a body-image workshop, only to stumble into her first same-sex affair.

Salloway bites her lower lip, leans forward and confesses, "I'm so shocked that I turned into somebody who does pieces about sex." But amidst this unease, she maintains an affable presence that invites audiences to laugh at her suffering. One wonders if she'll ever let the show's success soak in a little. "I've lived with low self-esteem for so long; it's just ingrained," she says. So, rather than gloat over her newfound acceptance, Salloway is busy procrastinating on making the changes she has in mind for the show's reprise at this year's Fringe. It's "a tremendous, huge, burning goal" yet to be fulfilled. This fuels her current bout of self-loathing: "I'm undecided and stuck about the changes I want to make," she sighs. "It's possible they won't happen."

--Christy DeSmith

The Coast (Halifax, Nova Scotia) – Chasing Amy

<http://www.coastclassic.ca/issues/020904/thearts.html>

*Through her one-woman show, Amy Salloway explores the underlying loneliness in us. **Andrea Methot** tells you why it's OK to laugh.*

Amy Salloway was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was educated in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She grew her theatre (or is that “theater”?) career in Seattle, Washington. She returned to live and work in Minneapolis. And besides her current hometown, she has performed her one-woman show, *Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?* in Thunder Bay, Victoria, now Halifax, and soon Vancouver.

Salloway is here for the Atlantic Fringe Festival, a third stop on a sort of unofficial fringe tour of Canada.

“I love, love, love fringes,” she says from her apartment in Minneapolis, just a few short, frantic days before she leaves for Halifax. “I love the idea of taking my show on the road, of getting to see other performers at work, to see the way the place influences their work. But Canada actually has a much better fringe circuit than the US.”

The first fringe theatre festival was held in Edinburgh in 1947. Fifty-seven years later it has grown to be the largest arts festival in the world. Canada now offers 22 fringes, while the US has only four—in Orlando, San Francisco, Minneapolis and Cincinnati. (Other cities like New York, Salloway explains, have things they call fringe festivals, but they don't adhere to the general standards of a fringe. For instance, the NYC festival is juried, technically a no-no.)

“I really wanted to create a show that I could tour with,” she says, and a solo show seemed the way to do it. The last major show Salloway created, *Size of Discontent*, involved seven women. “There was some talk of touring with that one,” she says, laughing, “but a tour with seven women was just not going to happen.”

Salloway says she also wanted to create a show that she could “jump out of bed and perform. That sounds strange, but that's what I wanted. No fancy sets or costumes. I like theatre that's portable. I wanted to be able to walk into somebody's kitchen and do my show.”

It's that love of portable theatre that is bringing Salloway to Halifax, where she will be the only American to perform in the Atlantic Fringe. “I also think I'll be, just because of the scheduling, and the distance,” she adds, “the only person in both the Halifax and the Vancouver Fringe.”

Because of that scheduling, Salloway will only be performing for the first half of the festival, in the Neptune Imperial Theatre. The space is one of the smaller Fringe venues, but it will suit Salloway's style.

“The kind of theatre I'm the most interested in is theatre that's intimate, that breaks the fourth wall, the kind where you can really connect with the audience,” she says.

And *Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?* does just that. It's seven separate stories

about food, sex, love and the search for belonging.

“It’s about the underlying loneliness that most people feel,” she says, choosing her words thoughtfully. “It’s about what you’re willing to settle for and what you aren’t. It’s about what you do at the end of the day when all you have is yourself. And I still struggle with those issues, every one of them, every day.”

Does This Monologue came about in 2003 after Salloway made a proposal to the Minneapolis Fringe for another piece, was accepted, but fell behind on her writing schedule. Setting the other show aside, she decided (with some urging from a friend who happened to be a storytelling coach) to go through some of her old writing to see what could be made into a full-length production. The resulting show has been garnering Salloway great reviews across Canada, as well as in Minneapolis.

“I sort of still can’t believe that people want to come and see this show,” she says. “Sometimes I just can’t believe that people want to come and look at my face, and listen to my chipmunk voice. Sometimes I wonder why someone hasn’t just pushed me off the stage yet.”

But if the show is anything like Salloway herself (or, even, if the reviews she’s been getting are to be believed), the show will be sometimes warm, sometimes funny, and always brutally honest, totally charming, and terrifically clever.

Cincinnati Enquirer Tempo article, June 1, 2005:

So, Stop Feeling Bad About Your Body

By C.E. Hanifin

Enquirer staff writer

Amy Salloway says there are a lot of voices out there - in the media, in the medical community, in the gym - telling people to feel bad about their less-than-perfect bodies.

"I think we should at least have an option about how we feel about ourselves, and the world right now makes that very hard," she says.

In her semi-autobiographical solo show, "*Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?*," Salloway, 35, raises her own voice to examine how her body image has shaped her life.

Within the collage of seven stories, Salloway admits her frustration with regularly being cast as an animal instead of a leading lady and spills the details about the weekend she gave lesbianism a less-than-successful try.

Salloway says her show, which she is performing at the Cincinnati Fringe Festival for the first time this year, is "about food, sex, love and body image, and how all of those interconnect. Underneath that, it's about loneliness, and how you learn

to live with yourself when you realize that, at the end of the day, you're all that you really have."

Sounds like serious stuff. But Salloway, who has performed the monologue at Fringe Festivals across the United States and Canada, says she doesn't want to whap people over the head with sedulous themes. Her show has elicited praise from reviewers and audiences for its wit and humor, as well as its gutsy candor, from her home base, Minneapolis, to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Just as Salloway feels that her body doesn't fit into the norm, she says her show doesn't quite conform to the mainstream theater world.

"*"Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?"* would look odd sitting alone in some reputable theater in the middle of their season," she says. "It needs some sort of context around it of rawness and intimacy, whether it's a Fringe Festival or a series of solo performances."

In addition to the Cincinnati event, Salloway will perform at four more Fringe Festivals this year.

"I love the energy of Fringe Festivals," she says. "It's seriously summer theater camp for grownups."

For this year's Minneapolis Fringe Festival, Salloway is writing a piece about her adolescent stint as an outsider at an observant Jewish summer camp, and she's also working on a show juxtaposing her experiences in grade school gym class with her regular visits to the gym as an adult.

Her LiveJournal blog, titled "Scaling Vast New Heights of Overdisclosure" hones in on her recurrent themes of body image and loneliness, as well.

Salloway says she is inspired by the growing number of artists, including Neil LaBute, Camryn Manheim and Marilyn Wann, who are looking at body image in new and empowering ways.

"These small voices are what fights back," she says.

Cincinnati Enquirer, June 7, 2005:

'Fat' show good enough for Acclaim

*By Jackie Demaline
Enquirer staff writer*

The Fringe Festival's SRO hit "*Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?*" has won the first Enquirer Acclaim Award, recognizing excellence in Cincinnati theater.

Amy Salloway's funny and emotionally satisfying one-woman show flits from uterus worship to "The Mary Tyler Moore Show."

The Acclaims are voted on by a panel of experts and will applaud work on stage throughout the season, culminating in an announcement of winners in categories in June. Acclaim panelist bios and winners throughout the season can be found at Cincinnati.Com, keyword: Acclaim.

Salloway makes her final scheduled Fringe performance at 9 p.m. tonight at Memorial Hall. Tickets \$12, \$10 with a Fringe button. Reservations (513) 621-2787.

If anyone out there would like to contribute some frequent flier miles to bring Salloway back for Sunday's Pick of the Fringe, festival organizers would love to hear from you.

"She's the clear front-runner" with audiences and critics, says Fringe organizer Jeff Syrone, but Salloway has a day job in Minneapolis. "They've been very understanding," she says, but a job is a job.

Salloway fans are invited to call Syrone at (513) 542-0195 to help her return for Sunday's finale.

Curve Magazine, December 2006 -- 2006 Lesbian Theater Awards:

#4 on the list of 10 awards...

DOES THIS MONOLOGUE MAKE ME LOOK FAT?

Minneapolis playwright and actor Amy Salloway's utterly fearless, absolutely hysterical confessional goes through seven intersecting stories -- covering everything from her rebel uterus to a surrealist lesbian adventure -- about one woman finding self-acceptance. It won Columbus's award for Best Comedy Solo Show, which was of little surprise.