

“So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!”
in newspaper, magazine and web coverage...

Cincinnati CityBeat, May 2006:

2006 Cincinnati Fringe Festival will take you places you've never been

Edited By Rick Pender

It's time for Cincinnati to return to life on the Fringe -- that would be the 2006 Fringe Festival, the third annual celebration of Cincinnati's underground, revolutionary arts.

It's not easy to select which shows you'll take in on a given evening...so CityBeat has recruited a crew of 11 writers and reviewers to talk with Fringe performers and provide their own take on what will be presented...

So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz.

Amy Salloway is coming back to town for another Fringe, and hallelujahs are in order. Her superior mono-comedy, **Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?**, played to sell-out audiences and earned an extra Best of the Fest performance a year ago. Her new 70-minute solo show tells a single, funny, bittersweet tale of "adolescent angst and mortification," she says. "The two un-coolest 15-year-olds in the world meet at a religious camp, Camp L'Chaim" and help each other stumble toward adulthood as they fumble toward a relationship. It's sorta biographical with serious "fact adjustment" and has appeared successfully at Fringes in Fresno and Halifax. (TM)

The Rake, March 2006 (Twin Cities):

Amy Salloway fills The Loring Playhouse

Edited by Christy DeSmith

There sure are a lot of theater houses in town (many of which sit vacant while a cash-strapped bureaucracy figures what to do with it). One of our favorite theater spaces in all the land is the Loring Playhouse, an airy, second-floor stage with giant windows and a distinctly bohemian feel. Thankfully, the Playhouse's governing organization, Theatre Latte Da, has been feeling a little generous these days. They're making a special effort to offer its space to emerging theater artists. Act I: Our favorite self-loathing performer/writer from the Minnesota Fringe Festival is back for another helping of self-humiliation. Amy Salloway may be riddled with insecurity, but her writing is loaded with so much skill and good humor that her pain winds up being our pleasure. **“So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!”** harks back to the days when she and Gertz--the two un-coolest kids in all of Camp L'Chaim--hooked-up.

Ottawa Citizen, June 15, 2006:

Take Your Chances -- See These at the Fringe

By Catherine Lawson

There are no guarantees at the Fringe. That being said, here are a few suggestions....

The show: **So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!**

Awkward Moment Productions, Minneapolis

See it because: Amy Salloway is one of the hottest performers on the Fringe circuit.

The Nashua Telegraph, October 26, 2006:

Play smells like teen spiritualism

By Stacy Milbouer, Telegraph Staff

OK, OK. So, it's a one-woman show about a 15-year-old girl who gets shipped off to a "freakishly Jewish Camp L'Chaim" where "even the mosquitoes wear yarmulkes." But you don't have to be Jewish to laugh and perhaps even cry at Amy Salloway's "So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!" which will be staged at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Nashua at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 27.

Speaking after a recent performance at the University of New Hampshire, Salloway explained that the 70-minute monologue, which debuted at the 2005 Minnesota Fringe Festival, is really a story about feeling like the outsider even amongst those people with which you should have the most common ground. She likes the way one reviewer synopsisized the play, "Amy has a plan for her 15th summer: Transform from total dorkwad to Material Girl. Build this city on rock and roll. And pine for Ross Buckman until he sees her 'True Colors' shining through. Instead, Salloway's parents ship her off against her will to . . . Camp L'Chaim."

The Minneapolis-based Salloway said her parents did send her to several Jewish day and sleepover camps, but Camp L'Chaim (a fictitious name) was based on a longer, more intense and religiously observant sleep-away camp, but "many details have been changed to protect the camp, and to protect me from any kind of Jewish Camp Defamation laws."

The 30-something, who lists David Sedaris and Spalding Gray among her biggest influences, said while the camp was very religious and her family was very religious, she didn't feel the connection that the others felt. "The entire show is really about feeling out of place, like a misfit, even in an environment where you'd think you'd get a respite from feeling like a misfit."

At Camp L'Chaim, where activities included "A Nature Walk with Moses" and "The Ancient Biblical Art of Macrame," as in Salloway's real-life camp experience, most of her fellow L'Chaimers were regulars who had been to the camp year after

year.

“Everyone had known each other for 1,300 years. They were from the same suburbs. They had their own rituals, catch phrases, knew the right things to bring, the right bras to wear,” said Salloway. “They also felt a sense of spiritualism and Judaism I never felt. Those conflicts and questions resonated with me – and I remembered that summer as a microcosm of all of those feelings. I mean, here I was, immersed totally in the Jewish tradition with which I was supposed to feel a deep connection – it was supposed to give me inner strength, direction and solace. But instead, I felt miles away from the rituals and faith that comprised all of camp life. And I kept looking around at the other kids, wondering, ‘What are they feeling? What does being Jewish mean to them? Do they feel God here? And if so, why can’t I feel that? What’s wrong with me?’ ”

That’s a subject Salloway feels is universal no matter what religion you are.

“People have told me that the show has a strong emotional range from very funny to sad. It’s the range of emotion that any teen feels in a social pressure-cooker situation. You don’t have to be Jewish to get that. In fact, one of the first places to book the play was a Lutheran College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. They flipped out over it.” “So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!” has also been performed at The Jewish Museum of Maryland and theater festivals in Canada. Its next stop is a synagogue in Rhode Island and then on to Winnipeg.

Salloway seems to have found her niche in this particular kind of theater, which she sees as “one person’s voice, one person’s story connecting to people.” She said when she saw this kind of performance for the first time, it touched her in a way that big-budget productions with elaborate sets and costumes never had.

Salloway uses no props or sets.

“Just a chair and a bench and someone who does the lights and music.” She doesn’t even require a microphone. Salloway said that makes things “simple and much easier to book and tour.”

Touring with her monologue shows has pretty much been Salloway’s life since her first solo play, “Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?” debuted in 2003 at the Minnesota Fringe Festival and then throughout Canada and the U.S. That show “is largely about love, sex, relationships and body image,” she said. The author/actress is in the process of writing another one-woman show.

So was there really ever a Herschel Gertz and did Salloway ever get to kiss him? Salloway wasn’t telling.

“People will have to come to the show if they want the answer to that.”

Ottawa Express, June 2006:

Jest of the Fest -- A small sampling of a few comedic treats at this year's Ottawa Fringe Festival

By Dianna Graham

...Next, at the Arts Court Library, Minnesotan Amy Salloway brings a cast of characters to the stage in her one-woman hit show **So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!**, a funny/tragic tale of "a pork chop in an all-kosher world." "It's a mostly true story about the summer when I was 15 and was sent to a very religious Jewish summer camp," says Salloway. "It's the alienation of being a misfit at home and then of being even more of a misfit in an environment that, theoretically, should have been really compassionate and wonderful."

With her background in issue-oriented and educational theatre, Salloway uses humour to explore issues such as body image, alienation and love, but avoids making it an after-school special.

"There isn't necessarily a happy ending and these characters are not necessarily all likeable or fixable in some ways that you might hope," she adds.

Baltimore Jewish Times, October 13, 2006:

One-Woman Show At JMM

Anath Hartmann Editorial Intern

Last December, Ilene Dackman-Alon was "doing some Googling" when she came across Amy Salloway's name. After contacting the playwright and viewing a copy of her award-winning solo performance of "*So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!*" Mrs. Dackman-Alon, program director for the Jewish Museum of Maryland, knew she had to get Ms. Salloway to the museum.

"What really caught my attention was the title of her play," recalled Mrs. Dackman-Alon. "I think every teenager goes through this rite of passage -- going away to summer camp, being on your own, having a romance looming. We thought it would be a great opportunity for kids to view the museum's exhibits, and then have a great time with Amy. We've been waiting a good 10 months to bring her in because she was booked in the spring, and then we wanted to wait until after the chagim [High Holidays]."

Next Thursday, Oct. 19, at 7 p.m., the museum will finally host Ms. Salloway and "*So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!*" -- the play that last July won "Best of the Fest" at the Winnipeg Fringe, a theater festival. The Creative Alliance at The Patterson, a non-profit organization in Baltimore that aims to promote myriad artistic projects, will be showing the play the following two nights at 8 p.m. According to Ms. Salloway, the genre in which she performs is difficult for many to understand.

"I have a feeling people don't know how to classify comic monologues," said Ms. Salloway, a 30-something brunette, in a recent phone interview with the Baltimore Jewish Times. "Most people I meet say, 'So you're a stand-up comic.' And I say, 'Well, no ...' What I do is a combination of storytelling and comedy. I call my work solo theater or comic monologue or comedic storytelling. I try to not have people lump me in with stand-up, because they'll be disappointed when I come to the spots in my show that aren't funny – that are sad, or maybe poignant."

Indeed. Some of the themes in Ms. Salloway's solo works, which include the hilariously-titled, "*Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?*" and "*Circumference*," a piece-in-progress, are -- despite their titles -- rather serious. "*Does This Monologue Make Me Look Fat?*" which won Lavender Magazine's "Best Solo Performance of 2003," involves a body-image-workshop attendee who has to learn to accept herself as she is.

"*Circumference*" is, as Ms. Salloway put it, "about childhood gym classes and the search to become one with your physical self. "*So Kiss Me*" shows a fictionalized 15-year-old Ms. Salloway grappling with religious identity and the line dividing friendly affection and romantic love.

"What I get out of this work is the satisfaction of knowing that if I take the risk of putting these awkward, dorky, painfully human feelings and moments onstage, other people can know they're not alone," Ms. Salloway said. "We may feel embarrassed and ashamed and like we're misfits, but if we realize there's someone out there who can empathize. ...The comments that always make it worth it to me are people coming up to me after a show and saying, 'That was me up there!' or 'I identify with you're saying so much.'"

In her spare time, Ms. Salloway, who lives in Minneapolis but was born in Boston and raised in Milwaukee, volunteers her acting, playwriting and improv skills to disabled adult actors at the Interact Center for the Arts in Minneapolis.