

Dance

Blue to Western. Bus: 49, X49, 56, 73. 8pm, \$10. You say you like xylophones? Joe Kwaczala and *Impress These Apes* runner-up Chelsea Devantez present this two-person comedic exploration of music.

FREE Gutter Mouth Open Mike: Wingin' it! Seven Ten Lounge Lincoln Park, 2747 N Lincoln Ave (773-549-2695). El: Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Diversey. Bus: 11, 76. 9pm. Chomp down on 25-cent wings while working up the courage to take center stage at this open-mike night hosted by local funny guy Bill Cruz.

FREE Jokes at Jakes Jake Melnick's *Corner Tap*, 41 E Superior St (312-266-0400). El: Red to Chicago. Bus: 3, X4, 10, 26, 36, 66, 125, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151. 9:30pm. Alex Orozco hosts an open mike at this River North brew-ha-ha.

* **The Reckoning** iO Del Close Theater, 3541 N Clark St (773-880-0199). El: Red to Addison. Bus: 22, 152. 10:30pm, \$5. It's a pleasure watching this seasoned Harold team work its mojo. No doubt, there are low points among the highs, but they're few and far between.

FREE Sketch Test Fizz, 3220 N Lincoln Ave (773-348-6000). Bus: 9, 11, 77. 8pm. Sketch jesters Jablonski run this open mike of sorts for sketch comedians.

Taming of the Flu 8pm. See Thu 31. **Patti Vasquez Zanies**, 1548 N Wells St (312-337-4027). El: Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Sedgwick. Bus: 11, 22, 36, 72, 156. 8:30pm, \$23 plus two-item minimum. Chicago's own Irish-Mexican-American diva comic makes her first Zanies appearance of the new decade.

Wednesday 6

FREE Cole's (Miner's Daughter) **Open Mike** Cole's, 2338 N Milwaukee Ave (773-276-5802). Bus: 56, 74. 8:30pm. The very funny Cameron Esposito and Adam Burke hosts this weekly open-mike night.

Comedy Accident Apollo Theater Studio, 2540 N Lincoln Ave (773-935-6100). El: Red, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Fullerton. Bus: 8, 11, 74. 8pm; \$10, with student ID \$7. Are you ready for sketch, stand-up, musical comedy and magic? That's what *Comedy Accident* aims to bring you in this new show.

FREE Comedy Showcase Bucktown Pub, 1658 W Cortland Ave (773-394-9898). Bus: 9, 73. 9:30pm. A corner taproom gets a new night of jokes. Casey Brown curates.

* **Comedy Upstairs Fizz**, 3220 N Lincoln Ave (773-348-6000). Bus: 9, 11, 77. 9pm, \$5. The Pub Theater (*Bye Bye Lwer*) presents this weekly stand-up showcase.

* **Felt iO Del Close Theater**, 3541 N Clark St (773-880-0199). El: Red to Addison. Bus: 22, 152. 8pm, \$5. Nine Hensonlike puppets perform the same old improv we've seen a million times before, but the difference is skin-deep.

* **Mark and Laura's Couples Advice Christmas Show** Gorilla Tango Theatre Chicago, 1919 N Milwaukee Ave (773-598-4549). El: Blue to Western. Bus: 49, X49, 56, 73. 8pm, \$10. Mark and Laura dispense sage (and not so sage) advice in this new show, which takes aim at the Dr. Phils of the world.

* **ONK! The Playground Theater**, 3209 N Halsted St (773-871-3793). El: Red, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Belmont. Bus: 8, 77. 10pm, \$10. The comic piggies at ONK! blend stand-up, sketch, improv and music with generally funny results.

* **Razzmatazz Cafe Wha Who?**, 228 W Chicago Ave (312-475-1820). El: Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Chicago. Bus: 11, 66, 156. 8:30pm, \$5. Dave Odd gathers an octet of local joke throwers for this new night of downtown laughter.

Taming of the Flu 8pm. See Thu 31. * **TJ & Dave iO Cabaret**, 3541 N Clark St (773-880-0199). El: Red to Addison. Bus: 22, 152. 11pm, \$5. This two-man show puts master improvisers TJ Jagodowski and Dave Pasquesi together for an hour of long-form. **Patti Vasquez** See Tue 5.

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LEAPS AND BOUNDS
Batsheva Dance Company flies through *Three*.

The sights that stuck

Remembering why dance had the best year ever.
By Zachary Whittenburg

In terms of both quantity and quality, 2009 was one of the strongest years yet for Chicago's dance scene. Even its lowest points seemed to fare better than they might with a tailwind of excitement, brought about by performances that felt risky, smart, and aware. In no particular order, here are five ways we'll justify our hyperbole:

- 1 Brilliantly barely there**
For three days in February, Tokyo performance group chelitsch brought *Five Days in March* to the MCA. Set in 2003, playwright/director Toshiki Okada's threadbare tale never broke into more than a trot. Dabbed onto the stage like tiny florets from a pastry tube, seven hipsters spoke in heavy slang, supertitled, in run-on sentences about their sex-obsessed lives while rolling a wrist and shifting from one foot to another. Making its way into the conversation only tangentially, and all but ignored, was news that Japan was entering Iraq, its first military engagement since World War II. *Five Days'* atmosphere of lives in idle apathy was quiet, nuanced and exploding with implications.

Ginger Krebs's *Rehearsals for Becoming Gods*. Erin Carlisle Norton took us on a trip with *Stops on the Line* and then somewhere completely different with *The New*. Jonathan Meyer set off the alarm in *The Waking Room*. Julie Mayo showed us *Feed the Guest*, *Fever Drift* and *whoa man*—and we loved all of them. Five artists we knew barely—if at all—made works that surprised, challenged and inspired with fully realized worlds and confident, brave choices. Unsurprisingly, they're keen to work with the city's most complex and fascinating young movers: We met a few of those as well.

- 3 The old was made new again**
Legitimizing our high standards, Miami City Ballet brought four works that generate behemoth expectations and nailed almost every one (we're still a little salty about Mary Carmen Catoya's underwhelming *Odile*). George Balanchine's Stravinsky masterpiece, *Symphony in Three Movements*, was almost too good to be true: clean but not anal, the company threw itself at the 1972 piece's complexity (which would be absurd if it weren't so damned perfect). Even Twyla Tharp's *In The Upper Room* kept us on the edge of our seat—and that dance is about twice as long as it should be.

Hudson River; in almost all 15 cities it was greeted by anti-Israeli protesters, despite the fact that choreographer Ohad Naharin's work isn't overtly (or even obliquely) political. Still, we don't think entering the Auditorium through a metal detector had much to do with our deeply emotional reaction. Each moment of *Deca Dance* was simultaneously a gut-wrenching

We finally felt that giddy gluttony.

description of the pain of existence and a celebration of the power and capabilities of the body. An excerpt from *George & Zalman*, in which five women constantly restart their union dance to Charles Bukowski's poem "making it" over Arvo Pärt's "Für Alina," was of weapons-grade transcendence; by the end of Naharin's *Three*, we were in tears.

- 5 All we could eat**
The Chicago Dancing Festival's third year was a win on volume alone: The multi-venue, free 'paloosa induced, for dance fans, the giddy, gluttonous feeling music junkies enjoy during Lolla and Pitchfork. In one week, Wendy Whelan ruled in Wheeldon, Azure Barton got us all hot and bothered, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet showed how Forsy the should be done, and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company poured its heart out, breaking ours.