



The Big Oops – Press Kit

For Immediate Release: June 10, 2010

"Aren't we lucky that this little performer landed in Winnipeg this summer? With the slightest movement, a raised eyebrow or a shift of the hand, Cara Yeates goes from impressionable to confident to smarmy to elegant as a host of colourful characters." – Uptown Magazine

"Brendan McLeod is one of the most prolific artists in Vancouver...A charmingly silly creature who also strives for deeper meaning" – Georgia Straight

"TJ Dawe is a phenomenon" – Robert Enright, Globe and Mail

The Big Oops at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival

You're a children's entertainer. You're pregnant. By accident. Oops.

Written by Brendan McLeod (www.brendanmcleod.ca), Starring Cara Yeates (www.carayeates.com),

Directed by TJ Dawe (www.tjdawe.com), Music by Brendan McLeod

The Story

The Big Oops is an original one woman/one act play centred on an up and coming children's entertainer, Sammi Sam, who lives to please and inspire everyone around her: the children she entertains, her long-term boyfriend Ben, and his affluent parents. When she gets pregnant by accident, she and Ben must choose whether or not to have the child. Part naïve children's show, part interpersonal drama, *The Big Oops* takes on contemporary social mores with abnormal humour and pathos.

There are singalongs about the importance of contraception, interactive audience discussions about abortion, and weighty interpersonal drama between Sam and her boyfriend (who is represented by a sock puppet). The play combines the nostalgic feel of a low budget Canadian television show with the honesty of a deeply personal drama.

The Story Behind the Story

The play arose from a set of happy coincidences. At the same time as former national Slam poetry champion Brendan McLeod was named a Curator in Residence at the prestigious Vancouver East Cultural Centre, actor Cara Yeates (*Bye Bye Bombay*, *Knee Deep in Muck*) won the inaugural Joanna Maratta Award for her contribution to the Vancouver theatre community. The prize: a mentorship under Fringe legend TJ Dawe (*The Slipknot*, *Maxim & Cosmo*). The result teamed three of Vancouver's most prominent emerging artists on a collaboration that sold out its Vancouver debut, tours the Winnipeg and Edmonton fringes this summer, and will go on to tour festivals outside the fringe afterward.

TJ Dawe lends the show the same directorial vision he brought to the *The One Man Star Wars Trilogy*, and Brendan McLeod (a member of the spoken word/folk fusion group *The Fugitives* – also performing in this year's fringe) composed the quirky live score based on 1980's children's songs. Yet at the heart of the play is Samantha's transformation from a gregarious entertainer and doting girlfriend to an independent woman who must make a difficult choice on her own. Cara Yeates lends comedic and emotional credibility to this journey by voicing four characters, acting out props, voicing sound effects, interacting with an unpredictable live audience, singing, dancing, and performing a sock puppet.

The Big Oops @ the Winnipeg Fringe Festival

Venue 3, The Playhouse Studio (180 Market Ave.)

Thu, July 15 1:15 PM Fri, July 16 7:00 PM

Sat, July 17 12:00 PM Sun, July 18 9:45 PM

Wed, July 21 3:45 PM Thu, July 22 7:15 PM, Fri, July 23 5:45 PM

Tickets: \$8-10 (942-6537) www.winnipegfringe.com

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5 Reasons to Write about 'The Big Oops'

We know you're inundated with material, so here are five quick reasons The Big Oops would make a compelling story.

1. The show's got an uber unique hook!

It's about a children's entertainer who gets pregnant. The show unravels as a children's show, but instead of learning about numbers you learn about contraception. Writing about this show will allow you to say 'sock puppet', 'condom', and 'ultrasound' all in the same sentence. Weird? Yes. Awesome? Yes.

2. The show's got an uber unique combination of talents!

TJ Dawe's the director. He's a fringe legend both as a solo performer (The Slipknot & Maxim and Cosmo) and director (The One Man Star Wars Trilogy), but he's never worked on anything like this before - a solo one woman show starring Joanna Maratta Award winner Cara Yeates ('Bye Bye Bombay') and written by Canadian SLAM poetry champion Brendan McLeod. Ask them what it was like to work together. They will give you juicy gossip on their relationship.

3. We take the themes in the play seriously and have compelling things to say about them!

Despite its central position in contemporary ethical debates and its prevalence in the experiences of contemporary men and women, there is little literature centred on Canadian reproductive politics or abortion. Any examples that do come to mind spend little time on the pragmatics of such a procedure (exactly what happens) or the nuts and bolts of the decision making process (where to have it and what kind to have). Children's shows tackle issues with a naive straight forward approach. By utilizing this artifice the play is able to examine the ethics around abortion without euphemistically skirting issues, thereby doing justice to the complexity of the issue and ironically giving the topic the more realistic portrayal it deserves.

4. Cara Yeates does everything in this play - it's crazy!

As the protagonist Sammi Sam, Cara voices four characters, acts out props, voices sound effects, interacts with an unpredictable live audience, sings, dances, and performs as a sock puppet. At the end of the show, she cooks the audience a casserole from scratch. Just kidding. But that would be sweet. You can talk to her about the challenges of this role; she has good stories for you.

5. The show's got killer music!

Brendan McLeod writes songs for The Fugitives, a band most recently nominated for a Canadian Folk Music Award. But he also writes songs for Awesome Face - a kid's group for adults. Somewhere in the middle of these influences, Brendan came up with the dozen tracks on synthesizer and drum machines as an ode to the 1980's children's shows we all know and love. Ask him about mimicking (and meeting) children's entertainers like Fred Penner and Raffi.

The Big Oops : Artist Biographies

Playwright, Music Composer: Brendan McLeod

Brendan McLeod is a professional writer, musician, and performer based out of Vancouver. He is a former Vancouver and Canadian SLAM poetry champion and finished second in the world at the 2005 World SLAM poetry championships. His first novel, 'The Convictions of Leonard McKinley' (Arsenal Pulp) was nominated for the 2008 Re: Lit award, one of Canada's top prizes for independent presses. He is a touring member of The Fugitives (nominated for a 2008 Canadian Folk Music Award) and Awesome Face, which plays children's music for adults. He has an MA in Philosophy from the University of Waterloo. He was recently named the inaugural curator in residence at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre for 2010.

Director: TJ Dawe

TJ Dawe is a full time writer, director, performer and dramaturg, based in Vancouver. He earned a BFA with distinction for Theatre Acting and Performance from the University of Victoria in 1997, and was writing and performing forty-five minute monologues before graduating. He has since written and performed eleven solo shows, earning lavish praise from critics, a steady following across Canada and numerous awards, including a Jessie Richardson Award for Best New Play or Musical in 1998 for Tired Cliches. He's a member of Canadian Actors' Equity Association and ACTRA. He has participated in such festivals as Piccolo Spoleto in Charleston, SC, Just For Laughs in Montreal and the Adelaide Fringe Festival in Australia. His play A Canadian Bartender at Butlin's was broadcast nationally on Bravo Television and on CBC Radio One. He was named Touring Artist of the Year by the BC and Alberta Touring Council in 2004 for performances of his play The Slip-Knot.

Performer: Cara Yeates

A graduate of Dalhousie University's Theatre Department, Cara's written and performed two successful solo shows, Knee Deep in Muck and Bye Bye Bombay. She toured these works across Canada, as well as to San Miguel (Mexico) and New York City. Each show received 'Pick of the Fringe' reviews and played to sold out houses. In the spring of 2009, Cara starred in the North American premiere of Leah Bailly's solo work, Some Reckless Abandon. The show toured to Los Angeles, Las Vegas and it was featured at UNO Festival, as well as being a part of the Summerworks National Series. Cara's career has also included numerous film projects including Bollywood features in India, as well as TV series and independent films. She is currently hosting segments for City Lights on Novus Television.

The Big Oops : Artist Quotes



Cara Yeates / Performer :

“Aren't we lucky that this little performer landed in Winnipeg this summer? With the slightest movement, a raised eyebrow or a shift of the hand, Cara Yeates goes from impressionable to confident to smarmy to elegant as a host of colourful characters.”

– Uptown Magazine

“Cara Yeates gave a tour-de-force performance....Yeates is a revelation from the beginning to the end. Yeates shows her versatility as a dramatic, as well as comic actor...Yeates physicality is amazing.” - CBC

“Yeates is a treat to watch.”- Blog TO

“Yeates’ performance is right on.” - The Winnipeg Free Press

The Big Oops : Artist Quotes

Brendan McLeod / Playwright :

"Brendan McLeod is a hot young disciple of authenticity and imagination. His voice is the voice of now and trips on the present social issues with innovation and song."
- Sheri-D Wilson, author of Sweet Taste of Lightning

"McLeod's observational sentiment is spot on" – Uptown Magazine (Winnipeg)

"One of the most intelligent and dynamic performance poets on the globe."
- Chair, Spoken Word Canada

"Brendan McLeod is one of the most exciting and promising young writers on the Canadian landscape. His eloquence and brilliance allow his words to jump off of the page, bringing his stories to life in a way that few can."
- Dwayne Morgan, Founder and Director of Up From the Roots

"There are few writers with both talent and performance skills, and Brendan McLeod displays both. His stories go beyond the classic definition of spoken word and create a new genre entirely." - David Silverberg, Director, 2006 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word

"Brendan McLeod is one of the most impressive voices to emerge in recent years. Whenever you hear him tell a tale you are instantly mesmerized by his word skills."
- Randy Jacobs, President, Vancouver Poetry House

TJ Dawe / Director :

"Dawe sets the bar extremely high" – The Hour, Montreal

"The dramatic equivalent of a high-speed food processor, attach the chopping blade and hit 'on; for 90 minutes." - Vancouver Courier

"Once he's onstage, chances are you will not take your eyes or mind away from him. His is the kind of one-person show that comes to the Fringe every so often and restores some faith in that oft-abused genre. " – Eye Weekly, Toronto

"Hilarious one-man show... the script is fast and flawless." - Winnipeg Free Press

The Big Oops : Press Photos



*** All photos available in high resolution.
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