



HOT
THE SPIAN
ACTION

BACK IN
BLACK



July 11th, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

After 2 Years of Touring, Local Comedy Act Returns for the Winnipeg Fringe

WINNIPEG, CANADA – After a hiatus from Winnipeg that saw them travel as far and wide as San Francisco and Chicago, local sketch comedy troupe Hot Thespian Action is returning home to appear at the Winnipeg Fringe.

The troupe, which has been performing at the Winnipeg Fringe to great acclaim since 2006, has curated an hour of brand new comedy sketches in their show entitled “Hot Thespian Action: Back in Black” which will be performed nightly at 7:00PM at the Gas Station Arts Centre, from July 15th-26th.

The title is a reference to the group’s trademark “minimalist” style which foregoes props, sets and costumes in favour of mime and neutral black clothes. This distinctive style has brought them notoriety among the North American comedy scene. They have been nominated for a Canadian Comedy Award three times as “Best Sketch Comedy Troupe.” In 2013 and 2014 Hot Thespian Action was invited to perform in locations such as San Francisco, Vancouver, Seattle, Chicago, Edmonton, Saskatoon and Toronto.

“It’s been a crazy two years performing away from Winnipeg, and attending comedy festivals,” says troupe member Shannon Guile. “We’ve had a great time seeing other troupes and what they do, and then showing them how we do things. It’s been an amazing learning experience.”

“An exhausting, amazing learning experience,” adds Garth Merkeley, another member. “So we’re happy to be back to plant some roots for a bit. We’ve spread the gospel of Hot Thespian Action. Now we can come back to the audience that made us who we are.”

The troupe, which was a fivesome, has recently become a foursome, due to the departure of member Jacqueline Loewen to pursue her own solo career in acting, directing and fight choreography.

“We’ve had the same lineup for 7 years, so it’s been an adjustment period to work without Jacquie. But it’s actually just forcing us to be more creative,” says Merkeley. “We’ve always reveled in restrictions and limitations, with our lack of props and sets. So one less actor on stage is just an extension of that. It’ll have a slightly new feel this year. I think the audiences will be surprised and delighted with where we’re going.”

After Fringe, Hot Thespian Action will resume work on their sitcom concept which is in development with Emmy and Golden Globe winning producer Kim Todd and her partner Nick Hirst of Original Pictures.

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For hi-res photos visit www.hotthespianaction.com/press-kit/

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MEDIA RELEASE

Brief Company Bio:

With accomplishments ranging from being nominated for three Canadian Comedy Awards, to appearing yearly at the Winnipeg Comedy Festival, to 5 star reviews and completely sold out runs at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, to developing a sitcom concept, to touring to the largest sketch comedy festivals in North America, Hot Thespian Action continues to entertain audiences with their unique brand of often physical, sometimes musical, always stripped down sketch comedy.

Here's what people are saying about Hot Thespian Action:

"As rising comedy stars go, there were none brighter at this year's [Winnipeg Comedy] fest than local sketch troupe Hot Thespian Action. [...] If what they accomplished at this year's fest doesn't make them huge Canadian stars, there's something not at all funny going on in this country's comedy biz." - Brad Oswald, Winnipeg Free Press

"This is about as good as comedy gets, at the Fringe or anywhere else: writing that's accessible without sacrificing any of its edge, performers whose variety of skills is just as impressive as the depth of their talents, and a pace that never lags. HTA bring laugh after laugh until the show ends, leaving you wanting more." - CBC

"Their uproarious physical comedy, flawless timing and cleverly written subject matter are utterly bang-on, and the laughs come just as easily as does the craving to see their shows again and again." - Uptown Magazine

"The performances across the board are virtually pitch-perfect, and the troupe's sense of sketch comedy structure and pacing is extremely strong. It's almost depressing how good they are so young." – Dean Jenkinson, Writer: This Hour Has 22 Minutes, CBC.

"[HTA] unfailingly produces wildly entertaining sketch comedy that gives the genre a good name. It's not just the uniformly adroit performances — beautifully timed, with a physicality that can be graceful or goofy as required — but the bizarre, brilliant territory this troupe's fevered collective brain explores.... Somebody give these folks a TV show. - Jill Wilson, Winnipeg Free Press.

"...Every thoughtfully penned sketch keeps the laughs flowing so consistently throughout the hour that it's a shame it has to end." - Lindsay Ward, Winnipeg Sun.

Hot Thespian Action

Hot Thespian Action began in 2006 when the three female members of the group (Shannon Guile, Jacqueline Loewen and Jane Testar) took a special studies class in Advanced Mime and Improv at the University of Winnipeg under the tutelage of Rick Skene. Over time, the class changed to fit the interests and aptitudes of the learners, and broadened from just mime to comedy writing.

By the end, the ladies had an in-depth knowledge of physicality and comedy, as well as a catalog of hilarious sketches. With the addition of fellow U of W students Garth Merkeley and Ryan Miller, the group rounded itself out and began to work on its 2006 Fringe show Hands On. The show featured a stripped down minimalist esthetic, inspired by the group's mime roots, along with a penchant for the physical and witty.



The critically celebrated sold out show gave way to 2008's massive hit Hands Off which garnered Hot Thespian Action five stars from the Winnipeg Free Press and an interest from many parties, including the CBC, and the Winnipeg Comedy Festival.

HTA has performed yearly at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival since, garnering 5 star reviews, packed houses and "Best of Fest" designations every time.

The Winnipeg Comedy Fest has invited HTA to their festival every year since 2009. Highlights have included performances alongside a cast of Canadian comedy icons like Andrea Martin and Cathy Jones and Alan Thicke.

In 2011, 2012 and 2014, HTA was nominated for the Canadian Comedy Awards in the Category of "Best Sketch Comedy Troupe."

HTA has written a TV pilot script for a half hour comedy series. Working with Emmy and Golden Globe winning producer Kim Todd and her partner Nick Hirst at Original Pictures, HTA travelled to Toronto in December of 2012 with Original Pictures to pitch the concept and pilot script to broadcasters. HTA is now in the long unpredictable process of getting the project up and running.



HTA spent 2013 and 2014 touring, being invited to perform in such cities as Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver and Seattle.

The Troupe:

Shannon Guile



Shannon Guile is a comedian/writer/actor/stunt performer/cool person. She is best known for her work with 3-time CCA nominated sketch troupe Hot Thespian Action but has also hit the stage in such theatrical delights as *Death of a Salesman* (WJT) and *The Miser of Middlegate* (TPM/Zone41). Shannon's love for physical comedy carries into her work as a stunt performer, where you can watch her getting punched in the face in such TV shows as *Todd and the Book of Pure Evil* (Space Network) or bracing the fall of Christmas trees as seen in *Home Alone 5* (Fox Television Studio). Over the past few years, Shannon has focused her spare time on teaching mime/physical theatre to the Deaf community and has been mentoring them in creating their own troupe 100 Decibels.

Garth Merkeley



With a baby face like that, it may be hard to believe that Garth has been acting for over 20 years, but it's true. Apart from his involvement with Hot Thespian Action, Garth's work has included such diverse endeavours as TV acting (*The Pinkertons*, *CHCH*, *Taken in Broad Daylight*, *Lifetime Network*, *Don Cherry 2*, *CBC*), film acting (*Borealis*, *Strings*, *Full Of It*), and stunt work (*The Haunting in Connecticut*, *Lionsgate*, *Todd and the Book of Pure Evil*, *Space Network*). If you're looking for a REAL laugh, track down a movie called *The Plague* and watch James Vanderbeek shoot Garth in the face. Garth is also a founding member of Foolish Wit Productions which created bilingual children's plays and DVDs to teach children about our French heritage in Canada.

Ryan Miller

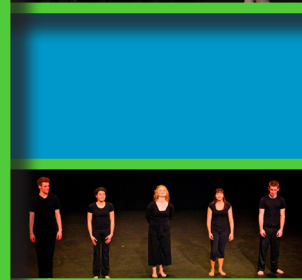
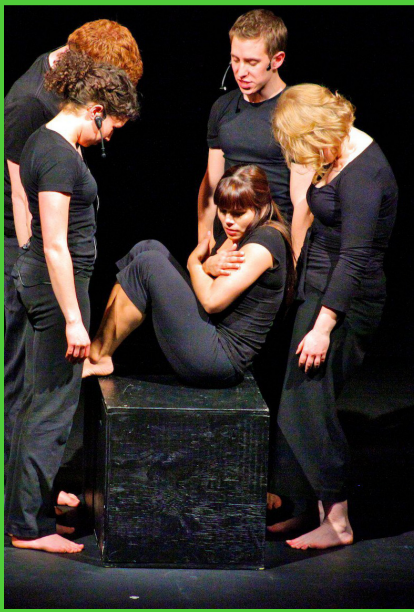


It is clear Ryan has the ability to make people laugh, having appeared in comedies *Beethoven Saves Christmas* (Universal) and *My Awkward Sexual Adventure*, alongside his work with Hot Thespian Action. But Ryan's solo stage career has taken a more dramatic turn. Ryan's stage credits include *The Glass Menagerie*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily*, and *Gone with the Wind* (RMTC), *Julius Caesar* (SIR), and the critically acclaimed production of *Angels in America: Parts 1 and 2* (WJT) in the role of Prior.

Jane Testar



Jane is a multidisciplinary comedian, regularly performing both improv (with *Outside Joke*) and sketch comedy with Hot Thespian Action. Jane is also a member of the theatre ensemble Foolish Wit, who perform *Commedia Dell'arte* and have created and toured two original, bilingual children's shows for Canadian Parents for French. She has appeared in productions with *Prairie Theatre Exchange* (*Little Munsch on the Prairie*) and *Théâtre du Grand Cercle* (*De Bouche à Oreille*) and Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday In the Park With George* as part of the MTC Master Playwright Festival. Jane has also served as a CBC Radio One personality with her etiquette advice column, *Miss Conduct*, in radio sketches for CBC's *Comedy Factory*, and as the host for the *CBC Comedy Factory Podcast*.



Hi-res versions available on request.