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28 JUNE 2024

Gil Kofman - Leni's Last Lament Edinburgh Fringe Review

As part as our [Edinburgh Fringe](#) 2024 coverage we are running a series of interviews with artists and creatives that are taking part in the festival.

In this interview we speak to **Gil Kofman** about his show **Leni's Last Lament**.

Where did your arts career begin?

My first grade teacher wrote "Gil is a hothead, and is inclined to drama." Then she broke a ruler over my hand not because I was loud, but because my voice was so distinctive. This was in a British school in Kenya, where I barely spoke English and was alienated from my surroundings, which I'm sure only honed and enhanced my sensibilities at a time when the ego was raw and unformed. Ok, maybe that's too psychological, too Dickensian, so let me backtrack. For the longest time I was interested in math and physics, and studied that at university, still am. But theater/writing has always held sway over me. The simplicity of it was seductive - the abstraction intoxicating. I've written and directed some films in Los Angeles as well as China, and published a novel in Berlin - before concluding that theater is my unabashed passion. And so here I am.



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the whole family and reading everything I could find by Tennessee Williams. I realized then that it was going to be a life long adventure.”

Richard Caliban (Director) -

“When I was 8 years old I would put on plays for my parents in our living room — Cinderella, Wind in the Willows, Peter Rabbit — whatever stories my mother was reading to me at the time. And I would play aaaaaaaaall the parts. ”

Raymond Gaspard (Producer) -

“As a high school student in Los Angeles, I attended a summer program at Occidental College where there was a summer repertory theatre and the work they did and what I saw affects me still.”

What can you tell me about your show?

Leni's Last Lament - is a historical satire, comedy, cabaret that explores the life of Leni Riefenstahl, who was Hitler's notorious filmmaker. Gifted with incredible talent that was only outmatched by her ego and ambition, Leni was willing to overlook the Nazi ethos so long as she could make her films. Sadly, she helped brand and popularize the nascent Nazi regime with her infamous 'Triumph of the Will' documentary still studied at film school today. Leni lived to be 101 years old, and her life was replete with adventures and experiments, but never any apologies. She insisted she was blithely making art, and not responsible for the Fascism it supported. Her ostentatious denials are continually subverted by her ego throughout the play, as she keeps putting her foot in her mouth, saying absurd things like - "You would have loved Hitler in his day...before the power got to his head." Equally absurd as it is trenchant the play offers a fabulous portrait of one of the greatest and earliest female filmmakers. Sadly, the Fascism of the past is making incursions on the present, and I thought this play would address that in a comical but trenchant manner.

How would you describe the style of the show?

The show is at once bawdy and intellectual. Packed with with song and cabaret elements, it is built around a rigorous emotional and psychological and historical conceit. It's there to entertain, but also surprise the audience and make them think.

Moreover, it's a simple show with grand visual elements, promoting the unadorned magic of theatre, where transformation and magic are happening right before the eyes rather than concealed by a sleight of hand.

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How have you approached developing the piece?

I had collaborated with Richard Caliban (Director) and actress (Jodie Markell) before, and wanted to join forces with them again. The play – about someone deploying self-delusion to excuse and further their unapologetic ambition – is super timely in an age when falsehoods are paving over truth to shape their own reality. That said, we have workshopped the play extensively, expanding and contracting inside the current political cauldron and, like a sculptor molding clay, kept trying out new bits, discarding others. Ultimately it's been a super open and collaborative process, listening to each other and the audience.

How do/will you prepare yourself for a run at the Fringe?

Sleep and not too many sweets if possible. Also, learning to enjoy the whole ordeal and immerse myself wholeheartedly in it, no matter how it falls. This time around I'd like to welcome something called "Joy" that I often forget. I'm sure there'll be a million technical surprises, many outside my ken or even beyond furthest expectation – but I'm here to embrace it all and celebrate the Fringe spirit. Already I can feel myself infect thousands of miles away and over two months out.

Other than the show, what's something you're looking forward to doing in Edinburgh this year?

Attending an eclectic collection of shows. Followed by famous fish & chips with vinegar, then hiking up the richly verdant hills framing Edinburgh Castle to shed that lovely meal as I breath the rarified Scottish air and contemplate the theatre I've just seen. A bit circular but almost perfect simply because of that.



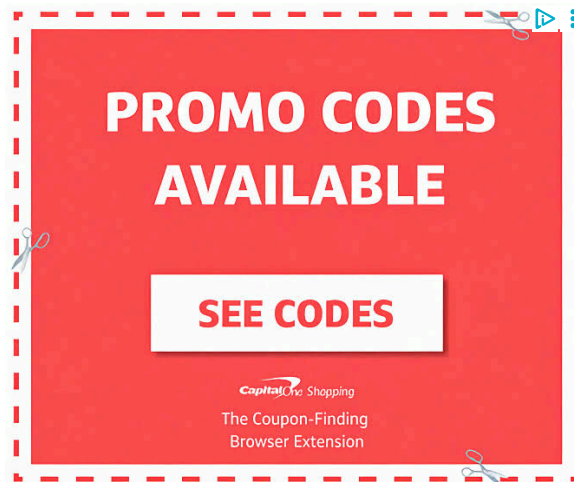
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What keeps you inspired?

Inspiration is akin to appetite. Hopefully it continues as long as I'm here. I've always been attracted to anything that triggers the mind to question what's been previously taken for granted – whether it's color, sound, or something more abstract like a word or skein of thought or some canonized historical tenet – there's always fresh wonder in the more carefully examined song of life, the small acts of attention that surround us, to be in time and outside it.



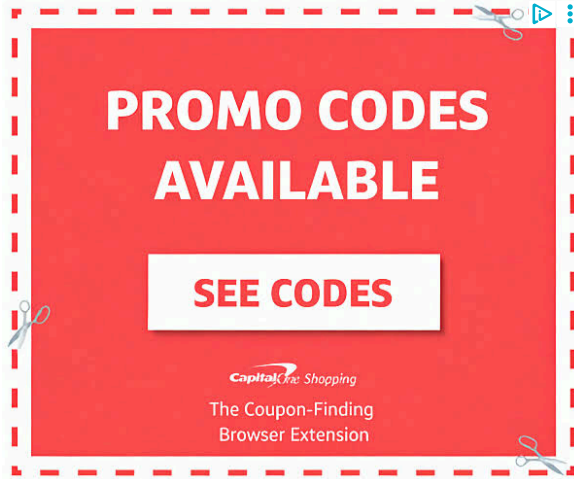
What do you hope an audience takes away from seeing the show?

Leni's Last Lament is as much a character study, as it is an historical piece. The melding of the two is what makes the show singular and memorable. I'd love for audiences to recognize glimmers of themselves in it, and reflect on how those elements are active and alive today. The show is not only about Leni Diefenbach's

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You can follow the show on X (Twitter) <https://twitter.com/LastLeni2024> and on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/lenislastlament/>



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