



BY RICK PENDER

It's coming back — bigger than ever. About to launch its third incarnation the **CINCINNATI FRINGE FESTIVAL**, which begins on May 31 for a 12-day run, has just announced the 25 productions it will present. During the 2006 Fringe you'll have the chance to see more than 150 performances. "In our third year," says Producing Director **JASON**

BRUFFY, "we've made the festival even more walkable than past years, expanded our breadth in programming and honed the Fringe Bar and Visual Series." The number of performance venues will be increased from five to seven, spread across three hubs. The Aronoff's Fifth Third Bank Theater and the below-street black box theater at the Contemporary Arts Center downtown will be the Backstage Hub. Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati (1127 Vine St., Over-the-Rhine) and Know Theatre's new home, near ETC at 1120 Jackson St., are the Gateway Hub.

And a Main Street Hub will use Kaldi's Coffeehouse, Mr. Pitiful's and Harry's Bar and Pizza. Artists will come from across the United States, including Los Angeles and Houston, to participate in the festival. Likely highlights will be several site-specific works in found spaces. *Stories from Behind the Wheel* is a solo show about bus experiences, derived from contributions by writers involved in InkTank, the writer's collaborative; it's being staged on a moving bus by CEA hall of famer **MICHAEL BURNHAM**. *Prison Ketchup* is presented as a gallery tour, a docent wandering through pictures of her life as the audience walks along. **RICHARD HESS**, drama chair at UC's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), will use an old building to stage *(UN)Natural Disaster*, which asks, "What is a disaster? How do we respond?" Hess (who put together last year's CEA winner from the Fringe, *Don't Look Down*) also staged another Fringe entry, the comedy

The Catholic Girl's Guide to Losing Your Virginity by Cincinnati native and CCM grad **ANNIE HENDY**, which had an extended run in Los Angeles earlier this year. For information about tickets and additional productions: www.cincyfringe.com ... I was in Louisville for the Humana Festival when **N*GGER WETBAC*K CH*NK**, the "Race Play," was presented recently at the Aronoff Center. I wish I could have been in two places at once, given the rave reviews I've heard about the explosive



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIAMI UNIVERSITY

The cast of N*W*C continues its exploration of racial epithets at Miami University on Thursday.

comedy by three guys (a black, a Latino and an Asian) who trace the origins of the derogatory terms and the corrosive effect of race in America. They do it without anger and angst in an effort to "de-power" the words. You (and I) have another opportunity to see it on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Miami University's Hall Auditorium. Tickets: 513-529-3200. ... Some of the best community theater musicals you can see locally are presented by **CINCINNATI MUSIC THEATRE**. (They'll present *Chess* at the Aronoff Center's Jarson-Kaplan Theater on May 5-13.) For its 2006-2007 two-show season CMT has announced two shows by Jerry Herman, *La Cage aux Folles* (Nov. 3-11) and *Hello, Dolly!* (May 11-19, 2007). Info: cincinnati.musictheatre.org

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