

Art Hounds recommend shows that celebrate glamorous, artistic lives

Emily Bright November 11, 2021 4:00 AM



Performers from the University of Minnesota Theatre Arts & Dance department prepare for the debut of "She Kills Monsters" by Qui Nguyen. 📸 Photo by Dan Norman



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The 22nd [Sound Unseen Film + Music Festival](#) in Minneapolis wraps up Saturday, with its annual focus on films and documentaries about music. Independent film critic [Nick Kouhi](#) recommends the final film of the event, "Being Bebe" about Minneapolis drag performer Bebe Zahara Benet.

Originally from Cameroon, Benet gained national attention as the first winner of RuPaul's Drag Race in 2009. The film draws upon approximately 15 years of archival footage shot by director Emily Branham, interspersed with commentary by a wryly witty Benet. It's an intimate, contemplative film that is "also a really powerful testament to art and the value of art and how art can express oneself," Kouhi said.

"Being Bebe" screens in-person at the [Walker Art Center](#) in Minneapolis on Saturday at 7 p.m. There will be an onstage Q&A with Benet and Branham following the screening. Tickets are currently sold out, with an in-person, night-of waitlist starting an hour before the screening. The Walker Cinema requires masks and proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours.

Minneapolis actor and playwright [Eric "Pogi" Sumangil](#) is a fan of [Qui Nguyen](#)'s plays, and he's happy to see that the University of Minnesota Theatre Arts & Dance department is kicking off its in-person season with [Nguyen's show "She Kills Monsters."](#)

It's a comedy about being an outsider and finding your chosen family. The 10-year-old play, follows a young woman, Agnes, who is mourning the death of her younger sister. When Agnes finds her sister's Dungeons and Dragons notebook, she decides to go on a D&D campaign in order to get to know her sister better.

The play is co-directed by Doug Scholz-Carlson and Annie Enneking, who Pogi says "are two really great fight choreographers and directors, so they're going to bring their brand of action and entertainment and adventure to a play that really supports that well."

Nguyen lived for a time in the Twin Cities, and he's known nationally for writing such works as "Vietgone" and Disney's "Raya and the Last Dragon." His "geek theater...blends theater with hip hop and martial arts and creates these worlds that are very grounded and fantastical at the same time," Pogi said.

"[She Kills Monsters](#)" runs Thursday through Nov. 21 at the Rarig Center / Stoll Thrust Theatre on the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus.



[Michael Whistler](#) is a playwright and teaching artist at Interact Center for the Arts who sees as much theater as he can. Before the pandemic, he recalls being blown away by [Mistress Ginger](#)'s cabaret of Kurt Weill's music. During the pandemic, the drag performer staged mini cabarets from her home that also featured vegan recipes.

Now Whistler is thrilled to see her back on stage this weekend to perform "[Hollywood Blondes](#)."

The show features

stories of actresses including Mae West and Marilyn Monroe, with music. Jazz musician Rick Carlson is on piano.

"Mistress Ginger is a cabaret singer who brings warmth and depth to a lyric, and always lets the song shine through," Whistler said "She moves easily from the steam of a torch song to the campy wink of a double entendre- always while holding up the classic composers and lyricists she loves."

"Hollywood Blondes" is at [Bryant Lake Bowl Theater](#) in Minneapolis Saturday and Sunday at 7 p.m. both nights.

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Mistress Ginger will perform "Hollywood Blondes" at Bryant Lake Bowl Theater. 📸 Photo by Amy Jeanchaiyaphum



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