

The Orlando Sentinel

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The best newspaper in Florida

Orange

Out on the Fringe

By Jennifer Greenhill-Taylor

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

'Love, Art and Catfish'

Bob E. Thomas of Boston mixes storytelling with dance in his charming, evocative one-man show, *Love, Art and Catfish*. Thomas uses a variety of skillful dance styles, from ballet to ballroom to tap, to separate the stories. Just when you think Thomas might have lost the thread of a story, he weaves back to the original subject with deceptive ease.

In *Love*, Thomas chats about his courtship and marriage, culminating in a beautifully executed and unexpected punch line. In *Art*, he discusses his love of dance and has an audience member come up on stage so he can demonstrate his skill as a ballroom dance teacher. In *Catfish*, the subject is Thomas' relationship with his father and how he learned the important philosophy of fishing.



Bob E. Thomas tackles various subjects in 'Love, Art and Catfish.'

Calendar April 19-25, 1996

Do Lunch APRIL 16 1996 **TUESDAY**
NEWS
 DOWNTOWN'S DAILY SOURCE FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION

DLN's Fringe Pickins



Love, Art and Catfish ***1/2
 by Bob Thomas
 Monologue/Dance \$7, 60min, red

Scraping the Surface ****
 by Lyle Victor Albert
 Biographical Humor \$7, 75min, green

AAAA-*The Big Finish* ***1/2
 by SAK Theatre
 Comedy Improv Musical \$6, 45min, red

Love, Art and Catfish
 This is a touching and humorous story of one man's process of self discovery as a husband, an artist, and as the son of a fisherman. Significances sneak up on you in this philosophical soft shoe which is interspersed with some snappy fox trot, ballet, modern and gold ole dancing. Bob Thomas' show is similar to Spalding Gray's work of *Swimming to Cambodia* fame, but less neurotic. Thomas is every man, someone we can all relate to and his stories are the simple ones we all share in. His midwestern deadpan monologue nicely complements the dance scenes, one of which he draws an audience member into. All in all, it's one hour that will make you laugh, cry and think how universal and fundamental everyone's story of growing up really is.

Inspirational Bob keeps you watching

EcCeNTRiCiTY
(Stage 10 — Yardbird Suite)
★★★★ of five

Boston's Bob E. Thomas finds a warmly entertaining off-the-wall energy somewhere between Mr. Rogers and Robin Williams in this one-man dance and storytelling memoir. His body seems to be made of rubber as he tries out early jazz, disco, industrial and rock tunes in a loose, free-flowing fashion and the stories in between are well-written and well-paced.

You'll hear about his childhood fears, growing up in a religious Pennsylvania family (at least Lutherans allowed dancing), his discovery of masturbation (ultimately a mathematical problem), and how his father's work in a factory pushed him to look for a more interesting career (first music, then business, then just



File photo

Bob E. Thomas gets a natural high in EcCeNTRiCiTY on Stage 10

performing like he is now).

Thomas gets his audience involved too, clapping out his dance rhythms and playing the various parts of a brass ensemble so that he can play his part—tuba.

Still, it's his fluid movement

(reflecting mime experience) and convincing ability for acting out the visual imagery of an encounter that keeps you watching. As to how Thomas found his calling, it's an inspirational closer to this fine Fringe fare.

FRINGE PICKS OF THE DAY



- Pith! — Liz Nicho
- Bad Boy — Alan Kello
- An Angel Cried a Tear Last Night — Richard He
- Rashomon — Marc Hort
- EcCeNTRiCiTY — Roger Levesq

Every Thursday • Issue #99 • August 21 - August 27, 1997

InterVUE: <http://vue.ab.ca>

GUITARISTS DUEL IN SPRUCE GROVE • CHECK OUT PA

VUE

WEEKLY

ECCENTRICITY! by Matt Kowalchuk

I remember when I was young and three feet tall watching a cartoon called Plastic Man. He was a super-hero with a plastic band body. Bob Thomas moves in much the same way, his body flowing in a thousand different directions at once. A marvelous dancer and mime, he is also a brilliant storyteller.

Thomas begins his show by admitting that unlike most performers who walk on stage filled with confidence, he is not merely lacking in that area, he is "raving, pathetic terrified." Whatever it is, it sure works for him. There are many similarities to Steve Martin: his voice is the most obvious, but the tale is his own and he brings the audience with him on the journey.

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The best newspaper in Florida

ON THE FRINGE

From Eccentricity! to Daybreak

By Elizabeth Maupin

REVIEWS

SENTINEL THEATER CRITIC

Don't look now, but I don't think Bob Thomas' head and neck are connected to the rest of his body.

In Thomas' show *Eccentricity!* his arms, legs and trunk may be doing a wavy motion (think of a caterpillar on its hind legs), but his neck and chin are jutting out this way and that as if they just flew in from the palace of King Tut.

Thomas' act is a kind of mind-body separation of its own—one part engaging monologue, one part slightly surreal dances. If *Eccentricity!* is not a classic Orlando International Fringe Festival act, I don't know what is.

An appealing storyteller whose dance skills recall the early days of Steve Martin the Massachusetts based Thomas uses *Eccentricity!* to tell "the entire story of my life until today"—a nice small-town life given an absurdist spin. Then the performer spins it further with his dances.

Dancing was considered evil where he grew up, he says, unless there was a minister present—so he dons a minister's long, black robe, and he can dance all he wants.

The Spirit of Thomas show—the spirit that says "let go, and trust"—is the spirit of the Fringe



BOB THOMAS PRODUCTIONS
Gotta dance! In 'Eccentricity!' Bob Thomas shares the story of his life.

BEST BETS

Theater critic Elizabeth Maupin recommends these Fringe shows she has reviewed:

■ *A ... My Name is Alice*, a joyous musical look at the merry faces of woman. Next performance: 9:20 p.m. Wednesday at green venue.

■ *Eccentricity!*, a slightly surreal collection of monologues and dances about one man's life (reviewed today). Next performance: 7:15 tonight at yellow venue.

■ *Daybreak*, a comic riff on censorship, freedom of speech and rock 'n' roll (reviewed today). Its next performance: 8:15 p.m. Wednesday at red venue.

FRINGE TIP

Once you have bought your \$3 Fringe button, don't forget to wear it each day. It's required to buy tickets and to get into the venues.

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The Boston Globe

LIMITED DRIVE I

Today: Sunny but
Tomorrow: Warming
High tide: 2:37 a.m.
Full report: Pt

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1996

THE BOSTON GLOBE • SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1996

Hilberman, Thomas dance their troubles away

By Debra Cash
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WHITE JEW BLUES

By Josh Hilberman with Paul Arslanian, piano
LOVE, ART AND CATFISH

By Bob E. Thomas

At: Dance Complex last night (through tomorrow)

In "Love, Art and Catfish" Bob Thomas is wide-eyed and abashed confiding that he went into his marriage, into art and even into fishing with his dad for all the wrong reasons; but as luck would have, they turned out to be all the right reasons. The stories have an aw-shucks quality.

Thomas specializes in jazz and vaudeville numbers from the 30's and 40's. When

he knocks his legs together, he resembles a mass of egg noodles churning in a boiling soup pot. In "Love, Art and Catfish" he, too, comes to appreciate dancing as a gift that is passed person to person, as a tradition one can join and honor.



The dancers Josh Hilberman and Bob Thomas.



Our reviewers pick their **Best Bets** for the final weekend of **The Fringe**



**Roger
 Levesque**
 At The Fringe

Of the three one-person efforts I saw, only Bob Thomas' *Ec-centricity* really hit the funny bone with an ironic story and wacky dance moves to match.



EcCeNTRiCiTy!

Bob E. Thomas takes his audience through the story of his life. It goes to a place that is so honest and true only someone with a heart of stone couldn't be moved. There is no glitz or schtick in this show, and it builds its own momentum and intimacy.

--Maureen Fenniak

BOB THOMAS' THE KAMIKAZE JITTERBUGS

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Boston Sunday Globe

BAL:
Today: P
Tomorrow
Detail

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1997

BOOKS: David Brudnoy on Katharine Graham's autobiography, N19.

ARTS ETC.

views, Helena
Carter's new
and director
ron's journey
liberia to
ood, N11.

THE BOSTON GLOBE • SUNDAY FEBRUARY 2, 1997

Jitterbugs shake the dust off the steps of the past

By Debra Cash
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

KAMIKAZE JITTERBUGS
and GREENGLASS DANCE
At: the Dance Complex, Cambridge,
Saturday night

No art is without its history, but in contemporary dance there is a strong tendency among artists and even, sometimes, their audiences, to imagine that every idea is unprecedented.

What a nice change, then, when a young company decides to specialize in the dance of the past. The Kamikaze Jitterbugs have been showing off dances of the early decades of this century in schools across New England for almost 10 years. The program they shared this past weekend has the humor and accessibility that makes for G-rated family entertainment.

Take, for instance, their jitterbug to "Great Balls of Fire." Between the poodle skirts and the air of sheer fun the dancers embody, you'd have to squint to wonder why this would have scandalized anyone, ever. There's a Fred-and-Ginger style number, with ballroom dips and the mirrored steps that have mostly been relegated to pairs skating in our time. "Snap Tap," a kind of "Stomp" for beginners, includes a melodyless "name that tune" that I'd wager was "Tea for Two." Darin Maguire rocks out in the behop of "You've Got Rhythm," and Lisa Simon managed to charm despite an injury.

It's Bob Thomas, the company's

founder, who offers the most dance value for the buck. Oddly enough, his talents are served best when the dance wavers from the purely historic into more idiosyncratic waters

He looks like a befuddled turtle poking his rubbery neck out in the vaudeville novelty "DiggaCentric Do." The greatest pleasure of the acrobatic "Leap Frog" he dances with hip perky wife, Idy Codington, comes from the easy serenity he demonstrates in somersaulting her over his shoulder.

A Review of "Attack of The Kamikaze Jitterbugs!"

The Kamikaze Jitterbugs

Lindy Hop, Charleston,
Tap, Early Jazz,
Fred&Ginger, Vaudeville

Contact:

Bob Thomas Productions
43 Houston Avenue
Milton MA 02186
(617) 696-5463

The Patriot Ledger

WEEKEND



Milton artist pairs dance, talk in unusual show — 37

Saturday/Sunday

Nov. 9/10, 1996

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

The Patriot Ledger, Sat./Sun., Nov. 9/

Pair give new life to an old art in 'Hoof and Mouth'

Bob Thomas of Milton and Josh Hilberman of Somerville give new life to an old art in "Hoof and Mouth: An Evening of Monologue and Dance."

Accomplished tap dancers who have separate careers as performers and teachers, the two have joined forces to create an unusual theater piece that they'll present Friday through Sunday at the Dance Complex, 536 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge.

Both men combine dance and talk in their performances. Thomas delivers three monologues about his life as a disaffected tuba player, failed ballet dancer, disco king, clueless spouse and disinterested fisherman, a litany punctuated with one-and-a-half

Scene and heard



Constance Gorfinkle
Patriot Ledger staff



Bob Thomas of Milton, above, and Josh Hilberman, not shown, punctuate their monologues in 'Hoof and Mouth' with tap dance sequences. Their show will be at the Dance Complex, Cambridge, next weekend.

minute dance sequences.

Tap has enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in recent years. It's a dance form that is especially satisfying for the performer because "you're a musician as well as a dancer," Thomas says.

There is a connection between the two acts in each performer's reference to Joe Stirling, "an old vaudeville tap dancer." It was through Stirling, with whom both studied, that Thomas and Hilberman met in the mid-'80s.

BOSTON HERALD



50 cents

★★★

Tuesday November 19, 1996

WEATHER: Scattered rain showers, high 47. Page 50 LOTTERIES: Page 73

Tap dancer's 'Blues' looks beyond mere toes and heels

Dance

REVIEW/by Karen Campbell

Josh Hilberman and Bob Thomas in "Hoof and Mouth" at the Dance Complex, Cambridge, Sunday.

Bob Thomas' "Love, Art and Catfish" was the other half of the concert of dance and monologue, titled "Hoof and Mouth." His routine was more intimate

and straightforward, alternating tap with stories from his life that were sweet and funny in a low-key way.



Bradley Mutchler, 7
Clouey, High 23, Weather/DG

The Journal Edmonton

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

www.edmontonjournal.com

Meet an honest man — or a darn good faker

Economies of Life showcases candor of Bob Thomas

Economies of Life
(Stage 2, Acacia Hall)
★★★½ of five

Bob Thomas has a really unique kind of energy that might leave you wondering afterwards: If it was all so simple, then how come I was so into it? Even at the one point in this hour-long one-man show when he forgot his script, the man was totally unruffled — only to make a quick recovery. And Thomas is so slick at jumping into the characters in his stories for a line or two that you won't even notice until he's back.

On this return visit to the Fringe, Thomas goes back to the same subject area he's covered in previous shows — namely the story of his life, family, career and so on. But the material is new and the manner he tells it in is so disarmingly honest (or he's awfully good at faking it).

We suspect Bob was a precocious kid. He apparently believed he was either the son of God or a genius and even went so far as to spare striking down his enemies at choir practice out of his own benevolent wisdom. Music seemed like a good career direction but much later when he was a dance instructor Bob would realize his natural ability for selling things.

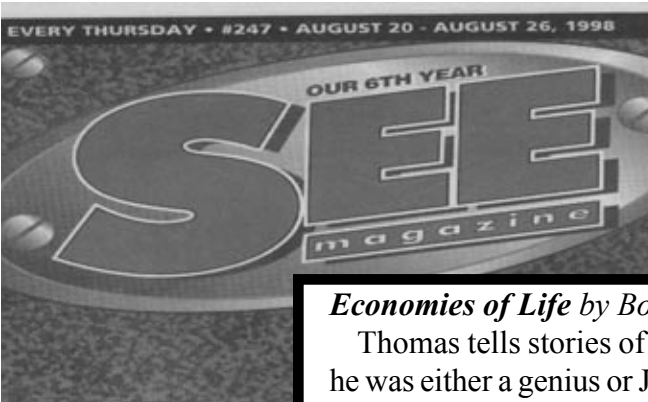
His family experiences seem the saddest part of the show and left me wondering how it all connects up. But to balance that out, there's this nutty element of costumed dance that crops up throughout the show, something about the "cosmic cow" (aka "universal bovine") complete with udders. Odd, but all the more memorable for Thomas' matter of fact presentation.

— Roger Levesque



Candace Elliott, *The Journal*

Economies of Life: Bob Thomas is pretty slick when it comes to characters



Economies of Life by Bob E. Thomas

Thomas tells stories of growing up, of himself as a young boy who believed he was either a genius or Jesus, as an Arthur Murray dance instructor, as a circus tuba player, and as a human being in pain.

This is one of the most moving performances I have ever witnessed.
Ever.

--Mark Kozub