



Twelve Shows to Catch at This Year's Great Salt Lake Fringe

Description

Salt Lake City, Utah—The Great Salt Lake Fringe kicks off its 12th edition this week, and this year's slate is the biggest yet — 32 shows across four venues, a third more than last year. The festival has grown from a scrappy Westminster University side project in 2015 into one of the most reliable incubators for new Utah theatre, and the shows below offer a solid cross-section of what makes Fringe worth the trip: world premieres, hometown comebacks, and a few shows that don't fit into any tidy category at all.



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Hereâ??s a look at twelve shows on my docket this year, spread across MadKingâ??s Fellowship Theater, the Alliance Theatre, and the festivalâ??s newest venue, Lighttree Studios.

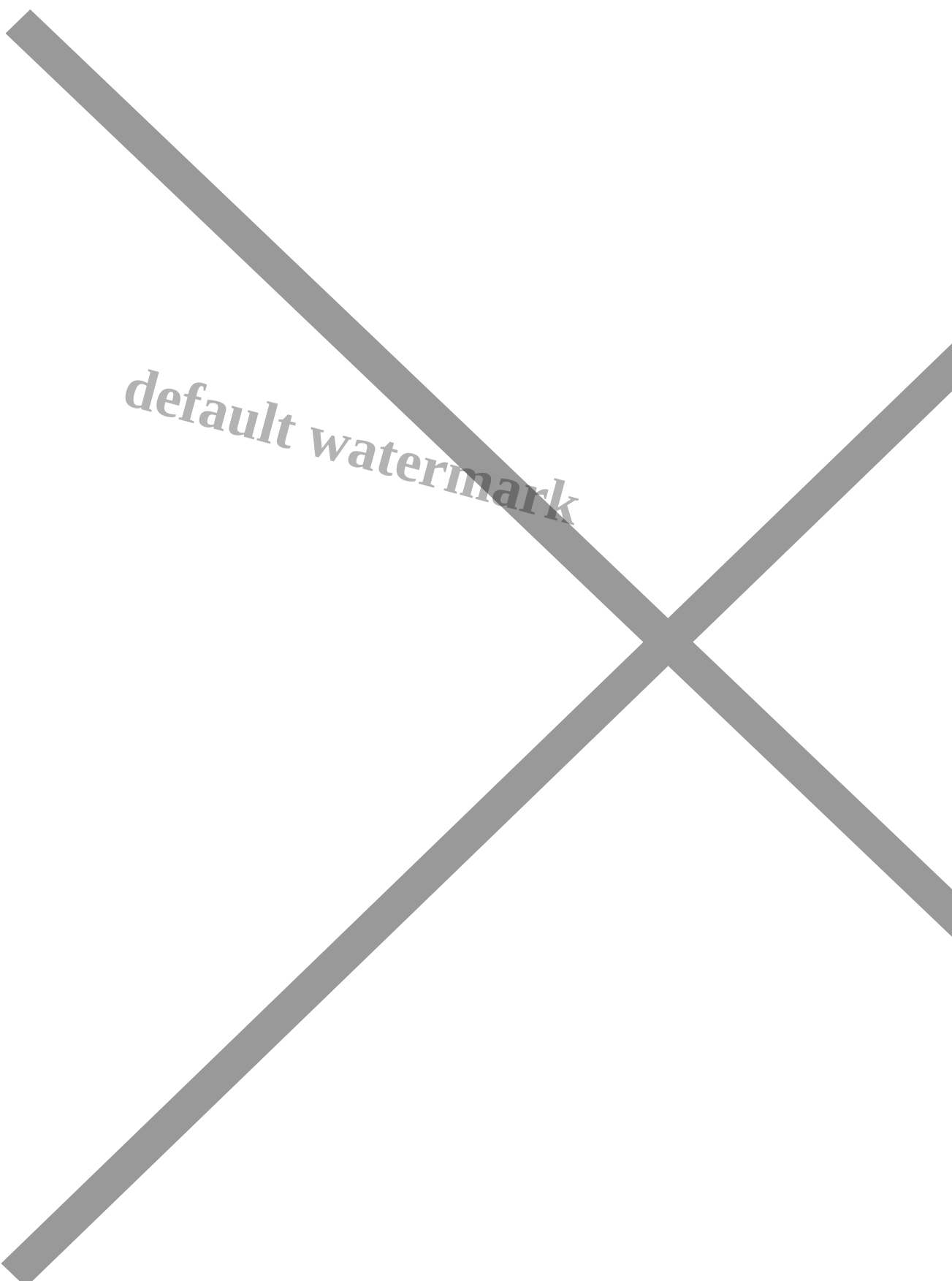
A quick note on how Iâ??m covering this: rather than committing to reviews in advance, Iâ??m seeing all twelve shows first and deciding afterward which ones merit a full write-up. Itâ??s the same approach I used covering Sundance: for world premieres like this, you really donâ??t know what youâ??re walking into, itâ??s hard to decide if a show merits a deep analysis until after Iâ??ve actually sat through them, and so Iâ??ve decided to change up my coverage this year. Picking beforehand tends to do everyone a disservice. Expect a handful of in-depth reviews out of this batch, plus shorter takes on the rest.

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This is Jane & MadKing's Fellowship Theater

Opera Contempo hasn't performed at Fringe since 2022, and it returns with something ambitious: three scenes from a new opera built around the Jane Collective, the underground network that helped thousands of women access safe abortions in the years before Roe v. Wade. Grounded in historical record rather than invention, it's a rare instance of Fringe hosting something closer to art song than avant-garde theater, and worth catching for that alone.

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THE HISS â?? MadKingâ??s Fellowship Theater

Lark & Loonâ??s contribution is a grunge-soaked ensemble drama set at a New Yearâ??s Eve house party in 1999, where four aspiring Kurt Cobains circle each other and something happens that nobody at the party wants to talk about afterward. Told through music, movement, and spoken word rather than straightforward dialogue, it leans into atmosphere as much as plot.

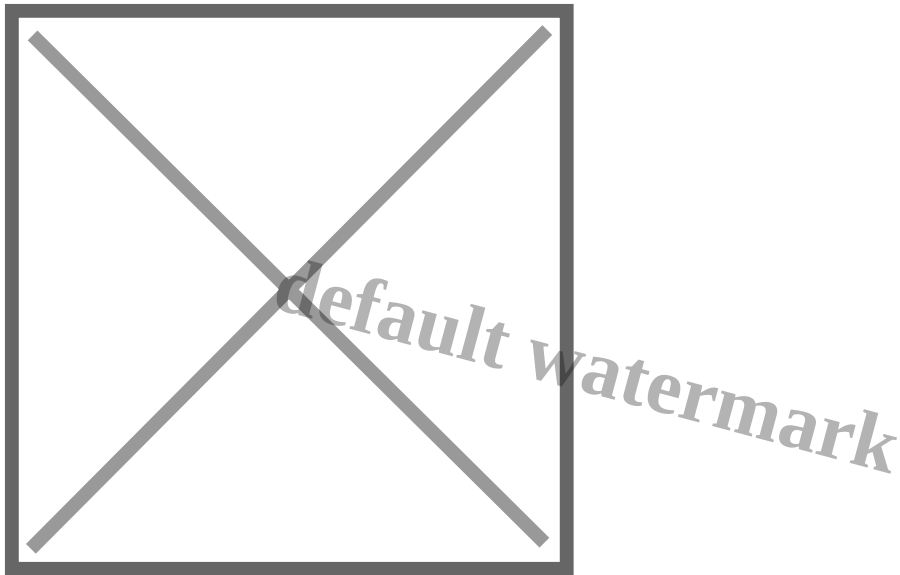
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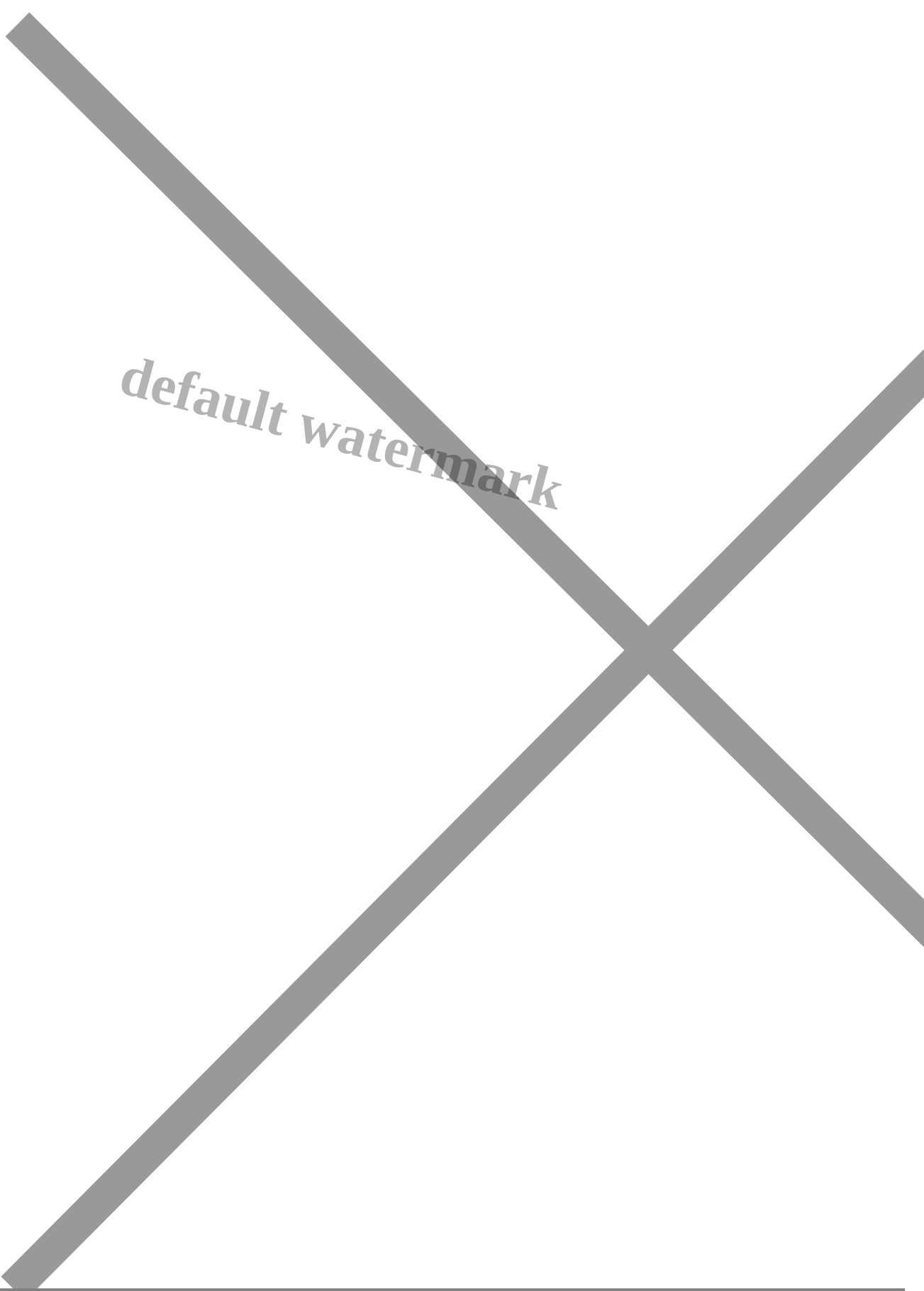
The Variants ?? Alliance Theatre, Main Hall

Randall Huskinson has been shepherding this one for five years, and it shows. A mother keeps up with her three adult grown children through the tidy distance of routine Zoom calls, until a long-awaited in-person reunion breaks the polite arrangement wide open. The cast includes some of the city's more recognizable theater names, and the pandemic-era Zoom framing gives it a specificity that should land with almost anyone who lived through those years of remote-only family contact.

Polaroids from the Apocalypse ?? Alliance Theatre, Main Hall



PYGmalion Productions stages Sara Alanis Morales's family drama set in 2095, as an unnamed cataclysm bears down on a household held together mostly by a mother's compulsive Polaroid-taking. It's an unusual pairing of domestic realism and dystopian dread, and the script was selected out of hundreds of submissions for a playwright retreat last year, so there's reason to expect it's more polished than the average Fringe premiere.



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Cache Dexter's 2,045,148,705th Most Interesting Person in the World ?? Alliance Theatre, Blackbox

Dexter won a Fringe Pick award last year for a monologue show, and returns with a comic bit built on a fittingly absurd premise: he's ranked one spot behind a person of mysterious and possibly demonic origin on some universal scale of interestingness, and this hour is his attempt to close the gap.

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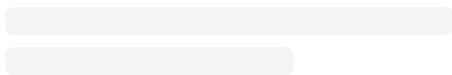
in my room â?? Lighttree Studios

Laura Elise Chapman is a Fringe regular at this point, and this cabaret-style solo show sounds like a victory lap: a loose, funny, occasionally tender tour through years of bedroom moments, set to music. Chapmanâ??s past Fringe work has leaned into sharp, personal material about growing up in a particular kind of Utah household, and this one is billed as lighter, but past form suggests thereâ??s more going on under the charm.



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Happy Birthday Mr. President â?? Lighttree Studios

Cameron Parkeâ??s play turns an ordinary office birthday party into something stranger, using the setup to needle at friendship, mortality, and what it means to actually spend an hour of your life rather than just pass it. Billed partly as a cautionary tale, itâ??s a smaller, quieter entry than some of the

weekendâ??s bigger swings.

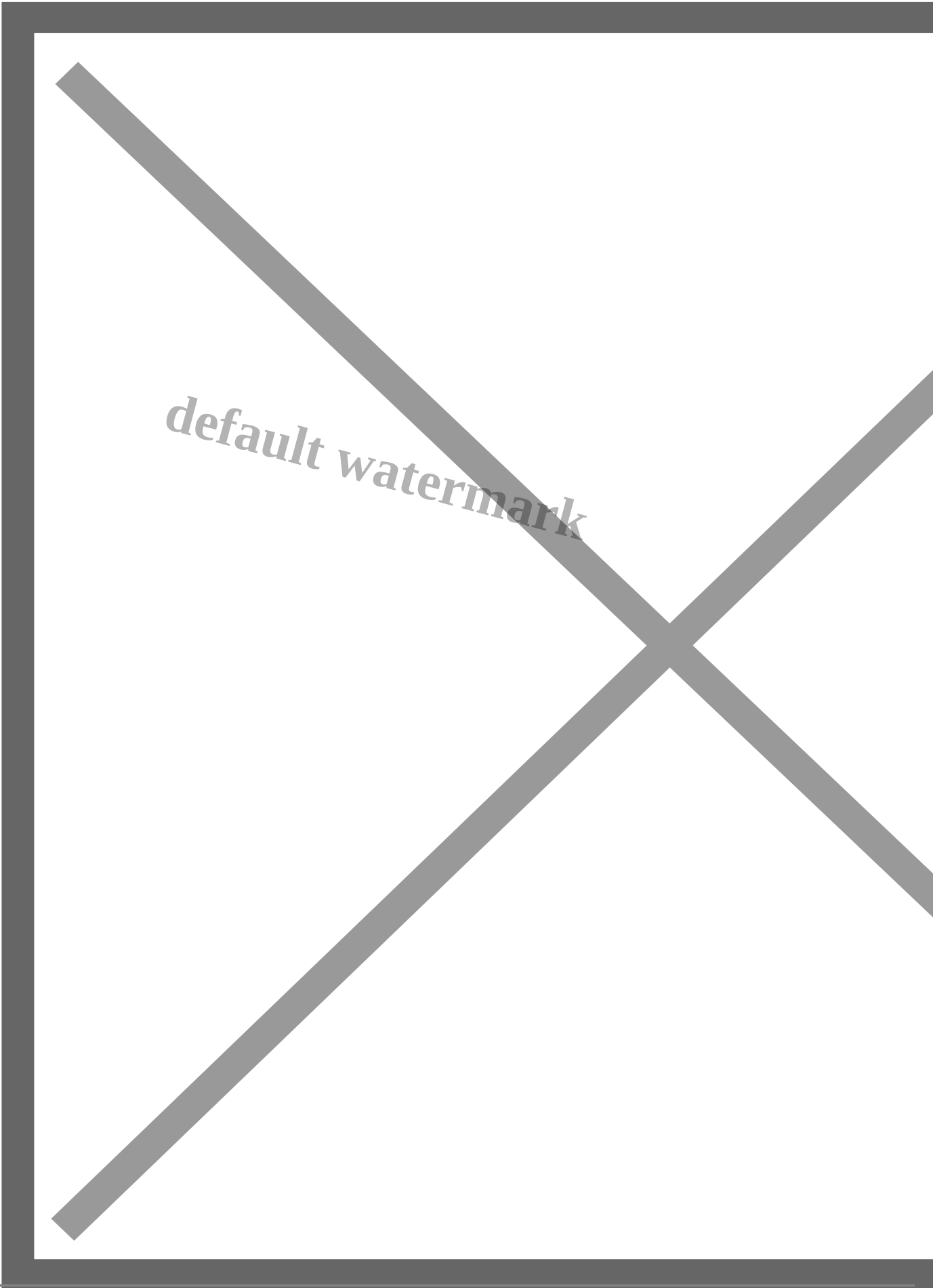
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The Unanswered Questions of a Post Religious Girl in Her 20s ?? Lighttree Studios

Tabitha Whittekiendâ??s solo show follows a woman navigating life after leaving Utahâ??s religious culture behind, working through it via journal entries and a string of pointed, funny, occasionally uncomfortable questions about identity, sex, and selfhood. Given the setting, this is a premise Salt Lake audiences in particular are likely to recognize.

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Shakespeare's King John A Solo Performance Lighttree Studios

Actor Matthew Windham takes on the entire cast of Shakespeare's King John alone, under the direction of Macedonian director Damjan Dimovski. The play itself is one of Shakespeare's sharper, less-produced critiques of unchecked political ambition, and a one-person staging of it is exactly the kind of swing-for-the-fences experiment Fringe exists for.

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Dramapocalypse â?? MadKingâ??s Fellowship Theater

Arthur Thomasâ??s comedy leans into theater superstition: after someone utters the cursed word backstage, the ghost of William Shakespeare traps a dysfunctional high school drama board inside their own auditorium, vowing to kill only the guilty party: if the group can figure out who that is.

Produced by a company of college students, itâ??s a broad, self-aware theater-kid comedy.

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Thereâ??s Only Two Left â?? Lighttree Studios

Method: Theatre Company builds an entirely improvised show around a grim premise: two members of an acting trio, preparing for their debut, discover the third member dead. What follows is different every night, with the cast working out the groupâ??s hidden histories and motives live, unscripted, in front of the audience.

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REPLACEMENTS at Alliance Theatre, Blackbox

Salt Monster Theatre Co. follows up last year's well-received Park Bench Royalty with a dark absurdist one-act about two workers in a system that demands total obedience and explains nothing. It's a tighter, more philosophical entry than most of the comedy-heavy slate; worth catching if bleakly funny workplace allegory is your thing.

Tickets are available individually or in three- and ten-packs at greatsaltlakefringe.org. Shows run a tight hour each, so it's entirely possible to catch three or four of these in a single day which, given how different they all are from each other, might be the whole point of Fringe.

[tickets](#)

Category

1. Reviews

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