



PHOTO PROVIDED

SLASH COLEMAN

Hometown: Richmond, Va.; currently resides in New York City

Occupation: Professional Storyteller

Background: Born into a family of artists, Slash searched for his preferred medium at a young age, settling on writing and jazz piano. He studied both at Columbia College in Chicago before launching his own solo show in the mid-'90s. Since becoming a storyteller, his most notable work is "Neon Man and Me," an off-Broadway play that won the 2005 Groucho Award for Best One-Man Play, given by the Comedy Sports Improv Theater in Richmond, Va.

At Fringe: Slash and his partner Becca "Bee" Coleman will be performing three shows at 316 N. Market St. on Thu., Sept. 22 at 6:15 p.m., Fri., Sept. 23 at 7:45 p.m. and Sat., Sept. 24 at 7 p.m. Log on to www.fringewilmingtonde.com for tickets.

A fringe regular comes to Delaware

FRINGE WILMINGTON STARTS WEDNESDAY NIGHT (SEE YOU THERE!), AND THIS ACCOMPLISHED FRINGE ARTIST HELPS KICK IT OFF WITH TALES OF "THE LAST AMERICAN GLADIATOR"

Q: Your performance is called "The Last American Gladiator," but instead of bodybuilders in spandex and an obstacle course, we get the white-man perm and Evel Knievel. Can you talk about the title a bit, how it relates to the show, and how does Evel Knievel factor in?

A: The show fits into the storytelling genre, which is a very different medium, in that I'm speaking to the audience without a script, but it's not improv. The audience can definitely expect some interaction and a very personal performance, since all the stories are my own. "Last American Gladiator" is a coming-of-age piece about growing up with artists in the '70s, my obsession with Evel at 8 years old, when he attempted to jump the shark tank in '77, and my further obsession with getting a broken bone so I could win the affections of my 3rd grade teacher. The white man perm? My Dad had one. Then my Mom got one. Then everyone had them. The show covers what it was like to live in that period.

Q: This upcoming show at Fringe Wilmington is only the second performance of "The Last American Gladiator." Are you nervous about the reception, and what are your expectations?

A: Yes, other than a couple of shows (Sept. 9-10) at the Long Island Fringe Festival, the Wilmington performance will be a premiere of sorts. If people are educated and get what I'm doing, it'll be fine. The show mixes theater and stand-up with storytelling, but it doesn't feature the traditional script or punch lines, so it might be a little confusing. It's a test run to see what works, so I'm interested to see the reception. The bigger part of this mission is to see where the storytelling boundaries are overall.

Q: Speaking of Becca, or "Bee," she helps with this collaborative storytelling, as a physical comedian and clown, correct?

A: She's kind of like a Lucille Ball character. She's clumsy and tries to sabotage what I'm doing. She's brought on to sing the Star Spangled banner, but she has her own way of doing it, mixes

things up, and thinks she's been hired to be part of the show. I try and push her off stage, but then my character sees how much she adds to the show and invites her to stay. She brings a lot of dance and choreography. I'm telling the story but she helps act out the characters and becomes her own character as a result.

Q: Have you performed at Fringe festivals in the past?

A: Yeah, basically I do between one and four Fringe festivals a year and I run one of most popular fringe blogs under the name Mr. Fringey at fringeordie.blogspot.com. The site is used to review the hundreds of Fringe festivals that take place throughout the year. I get performers to review the festivals, post about how much money they made, how they got to the site and what kind of transportation issues there might have been, what the atmosphere is like, etc.

Q: Cool. So it's kind of like a Fringe guide, primarily for artists who want to know what to expect before they go. What is it about the Fringe atmosphere that attracts an artist like yourself?

A: The spirit of Fringe is very much rooted in the spirit of the bohemian artist. As an artist, you don't have to write a letter to the Kennedy Center and get rejected and not get your work out there. Fringe is welcoming, 100 percent uncensored and unjuried, and a majority of the profits go to the artist. For me, it's a way to connect with tribal members of a creative community, all of whom are passionate about their work.

Q: OK, last question, totally random. Is your name really Slash?

A: It is. I'm named after my grandfather, Slashtipher, who was originally from Switzerland. He and my grandmother were real bohemians who joined the French resistance during World War II. I think he had maybe 15 or 16 different names in his lifetime before he died, at which time he went by Slashtipher.