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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Dancing Tree presents the 4th annual

SINS INVALID

An Unshamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility

2009 Guest Artists: Mat Fraser (from the U.K.), Aurora Levins Morales, Nomy Lamm, Ralph Dickinson, Antoine-DeVinci Hunter, Maria R. Palacios, seeley quest, Leroy F. Moore Jr., Leah Lakshmi, Cara Page, John Benson, and Patty Berne (Director of Sins Invalid)

October 2, 3, and 4, 2009 at Brava Theatre* (2789 24th Street, San Francisco)

*Wheelchair accessible, ASL interpreted

(San Francisco, CA – September 1, 2009) **SINS INVALID: An Unshamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility** is a groundbreaking performance event that celebrates the sacred nature of fierce desire and claims all bodies as beautiful. Co-founded by Patty Berne and Leroy Moore in 2006, **SINS INVALID is the only event of its kind in the United States.** It is a singular experience: at once visually arresting, provocative, and dramatically moving. For the past four years, SINS INVALID has performed for sold-out houses, inspiring audiences and redefining the conversation about sexuality and disability. The artistic success and popular acclaim of the annual performance event has led to national recognition and year-round speaking engagements at conferences dealing with issues of social justice and identity, plus demand as ongoing engagements as cultural consultants to the National Sexual Resource Center and other organizations.

In years past, the SINS INVALID program has been rooted in the politics of sexuality. This year, SINS INVALID celebrates the experience of sexuality in a ‘non-normative’ body. Patty Berne, co-founder and director of SINS INVALID comments that *“the theme of this year’s show is the magic of embodiment, to reflect the magic of all life and the spirit incarnate as a human being. Non-normative bodies reflect that in particular way, though all people are magical.”* To reinforce the idea of magical possibilities, the artists of SINS INVALID possess disabilities that range from apparent physical disabilities, to disabilities that aren’t immediately apparent, such as deafness and environmental illness and injuries. Each of these artists is in non-normative bodies, and each is a miraculous, sexual being.

On October 2 - 4, SINS INVALID returns to BRAVA! Theatre with an outstanding line-up of performers who strip sexuality and disability of its taboos with their distinctive spoken word, theatrical and vocal performances, dance, and multi-media performances.

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The cabaret-style performance features 12 artists whose works range from sexually-provocative, adult performance pieces to gentle, spoken word pieces about internal landscapes.

Aside from the theme, the dramatic underpinning of the evening is provided by **Cara Page**, who is returning for her second year as the show's MC. Ms. Page will guide the audience through the evening's electrifying and thought-provocative performances with interludes of brief, spoken word monologues that move the action from the elements of fire to earth to water.

SINS INVALID is particularly excited to present one of the United Kingdom's best-known disabled performers. **Mat Fraser** is a very well-known British performer whose work includes creating televised documentaries such as "Born Freak," his study of freak shows and disabled performers in history, "Happy Birthday Thalidomide," and "Unarmed and Dangerous." Fraser will present two pieces: the first is piece "No Retreat, No Surrender" that confronts taboos about showing a naked non-normative body without apology. The piece is rooted in the extreme athletic work of the martial arts (of which Fraser is a skilled practitioner).

Fraser's second piece, "Beautiful Freak," closes the show with a tender work as his battered and bruised body is captured in the symbolic gesture of a cleansing ritual.

Antoine-DeVinci Hunter is an accomplished deaf choreographer/dancer. In RISK (premiere), Hunter asks the audience to share his element of risk with the roll of a dice – each side corresponding to a different sound score. The audience and artist are brought into unknown territory by introducing the unpredictable element of sound. Hunter's second piece of the evening is a solo improvisation that takes place in silence.

THE SCENE is an adult and sexually provocative collaboration by **Leroy Moore**, **seeley quest**, **Ralph Dickinson**, and **Patty Berne** (director) about a dominatrix who conducts an erotic medical procedure on her subject. The entire procedure is captured on a live video feed that is integrated with surreal images.

Nomy Lamm premieres two solos in rock-opera style. In the first piece, Lamm sings to 'the divine universe' in a high-energy rock opera. She is transformed into a visually-stunning hybrid creature (part human, part vulture) with an elaborate costume. As the curtains part on the second half of SINS INVALID, the audience will see a large nest of legs woven into a nest – the legs are all of the prosthetic legs that Lamm has had since she was a child, combined with stuffed stockings. Sitting in the midst of this, Lamm will sing a beautiful, melodic song that is joyful and melancholy; and filled with yearning.

On the gentler side of the evening, spoken word monologues will be delivered by several artists. **Leah Lakshmi** premieres **DIRTY RIVER GIRL**, which addresses industrial poisoning and its affect on our culture, our bodies, and our beings. **Maria R. Palacios** offers **THE HUNGER** and **VAGINA MANIFESTO**. And the acclaimed veteran author, **Aurora Levins Morales** will premiere two recorded monologues - "My body is an exo-skeleton" and a poetic piece about her bodies' changes and the aging process in which she exclaims "...I am a sea anemone exquisitely anchored..."

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SINS INVALID was founded in 2006 by **Patty Berne** and **Leroy Moore**, both Bay Area activists with disabilities. Berne and Moore were frustrated with the dominant view that people with disabilities must be asexual or deviant. And, as Berne says, they wanted to address the “disconnect between what we know to be true about our beauty and what the world seems to believe – that we are ‘less than’, undesirable and pitiable.” Berne and Moore formed a partnership with **The Dancing Tree**, a non-profit alliance of visual and performing artists seeking to facilitate, develop, perform, document and publish the stories of underrepresented people around the world, and launched a revolutionary series.

Each year **SINS INVALID** is met with tremendous acclaim and this ground-breaking, erotic event is performed before sold-out houses. PLEASE NOTE: This show contains explicit content.

ABOUT THE FEATURED ARTISTS

Patty Berne (Co-founder and Director SINS INVALID, Director, THE SCENE) is a contributing writer for many *Sins Invalid* shows. Berne's background includes advocacy for immigrants who seek asylum due to war and torture; community organizing within the Haitian diaspora; international support work for the Guatemalan democratic movement; work with incarcerated youth toward alternatives to the criminal legal system; advocating for LGBTQI community and disability rights perspectives within the field of reproductive and genetic technologies; offering mental health support to survivors of violence; and cultural activism to centralize marginalized voices, particularly those of people with disabilities. She has facilitated writing workshops for multiple communities, including youth, writers of mixed racial descent and survivors of sexual violence. Her participation in film projects includes the films *Haiti: Harvest of Hope* (1998), *System Failure: Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the California Youth Authority* (2004), *I Cannot Speak Without Shaking* (2007) and *SINS* (working title, in post-production). She is pursuing a Psy.D., focusing on trauma and healing for survivors of interpersonal and state-sponsored violence. In 2008, she had a chapter published in the Routledge Press book, *Telling Stories to Change the World*, on the work and history of *Sins Invalid*. She currently chairs the Board of Directors at [San Francisco Women Against Rape](#) and is the 2009 recipient of the Empress I Jose Sarria Award for Uncommon Leadership in the field of LGBTQI and disability rights by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Leroy F. Moore Jr. (Co-founder SINS INVALID, performer, THE SCENE) is a contributing writer and performer for many *Sins Invalid* shows. He is a Black disabled writer, poet, community activist, and feminist. Leroy is the author of a spoken word CD and chapbook entitled *Black Disabled Man with a Big Mouth & a High IQ*, and his poems and articles have appeared in numerous publications. His film-based collaboration with Todd Herman on disability and sexuality resulted in the internationally award-winning work *Forbidden Acts*. Leroy lectures regularly on the intersection of race and disability and is the founder of the Krip-Hop Project, which produces hip-hop mix tapes featuring disabled hip-hop artists from around the world.

Mat Fraser (Special Guest Artist) is recognized as one of the United Kingdom's best-known disabled performers. His work includes creating televised documentaries such as *Born Freak*, his study of freak shows and disabled performers in history, *Happy Birthday Thalidomide*, and *Unarmed and Dangerous*. His acting work includes his leading role in the BBC's feature *Every Time You Look At Me* (2004), his role as Calchas the Seer in US TV's *Helen Of Troy* (2004), and the title role in a new cult action film, *Kung Fu Flid*. His written work includes his award-winning one-man play *Sealboy: Freak* (2001 and 02), his nationally touring show *Thalidomide!! A Musical* (2006 and 07) and his numerous cabarets, notably his popular series of shows *Mat Fraser's Sex Variety Cabarets*. Mat is the title holder of the Erotic Award (U.K.) for Best Male Striptease artist 2007.

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Cara Page (MC) is a Black Queer Feminist multimedia performance artist, playwright, poet, healing arts practitioner & organizer based in Atlanta, GA. Her communal work has included mixed media fiber arts installations to transform public spaces for, by and about women and youth of color. Her work focuses on uses of writing, performance, images and cloth to create multimedia workshops, retreats and exhibitions for individual and communal transformation. She is a recipient of the Rockefeller Next Generation Leadership Fellowship (2000-2002). Cara was a co-founder of the West End Arts Institute, a neighborhood arts and economic justice project in Durham, NC. She has written several plays, and poem narratives, and appeared with *Sins Invalid* in 2008. Her recent work on the storytelling project, 'Depo Diaries,' has been featured in the recent anthology: *Telling Stories to Change the World*, co-edited by Rickie Solinger.

Antoine-DeVinci Hunter (Guest Artist) is a deaf African American choreographer, dancer and writer. He is the founder and director of Urban Jazz Dance Company and Iron Triangle Urban Ballet. Antoine has performed with well-known artists and companies, including Reginald Ray-Savage and Zafra Miriam-Savage Jazz Dance Company, Robert Moses' Kin Dance Company, among others. He performed in London with the Sign Dance Collective, where he performed with Mat Fraser. He tours with his own company and with others, and teaches children and adults throughout the Bay Area.

Nomy Lamm (Guest Artist) is a writer, musician, and activist whose work has been featured in magazines (*Ms.*, *Punk Planet*, *Make/Shift*), anthologies (*Listen Up*, *Body Outlaws*, and most recently *Word Warriors and Working Sex*, all from Seal Press), and onstage across the U.S. She has toured with Sister Spit, the Sex Workers Art Show, and the cabaret showcase Dr. Frockrocket's Menagerie and Medicine Show. She has released two solo albums (*Anthem*, 1999, and *Effigy*, 2002) and co-wrote, co-produced and performed in *The Transfused*, a 2000 post-apocalyptic rock opera. She teaches voice lessons, and is currently working on her first novel, *The Best Part Comes After the End*.

Aurora Levins Morales (Contributing Writer/Vocal Performer) is a nationally known writer whose work has been widely anthologized and taught. She was a contributor to the groundbreaking 1981 collection *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Her fiction has appeared in *Ms.* and *The American Voice* and four collections of Latina/o writing. She is also a frequent contributor to the Jewish feminist journal *Bridges*. Her first book, *Getting Home Alive*, written with her mother, Rosario Morales, was hailed as "a landmark in Puerto Rican literature," and "the most important book to come out of the diaspora in a generation." Her most recent books are *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas*, and *Medicine Stories*, a collection of essays. Her 9/11 poem *Shema* was broadcast on radio stations, distributed online and read at anti-war events and religious services across the country in the wake of September 11, 2001. Her poetry commentaries on the news are aired regularly on Pacific Radio's *Flashpoints* news magazine. She is currently working on a novel.

Maria R. Palacios (Spoken Word Artist) is a feminist writer, poet, author, spoken word performer, polio survivor and disability activist. In addition to two self-published books, Maria's work has been featured in various anthologies, articles, audio interviews and other multi-media publications. Her work embraces self-acceptance, empowerment and social justice surrounding women with disabilities, gender and sexuality and a wide spectrum of issues as they relate to diversity. Maria R. Palacios is currently involved in the production of two spoken word CD collections, a series of women empowerment workshops, and presently serves on the Advisory Board for CROWD - Center for Research on Women with Disabilities in Houston, Texas.

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Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (Spoken Word Artist) is an Oakland-based queer Sri Lankan writer, performer and teacher. She is the 2009-10 Artist-in-Residence at U.C. Berkeley's June Jordan's Poetry for the People and the co-founder and co-artistic director of Mangos With Chili, North America's only touring cabaret of queer and trans people of color performing artists. Her one woman show, *Grown Woman Show*, has toured nationally. The author of *Consensual Genocide*, her writing has appeared in *Yes Means Yes*, *Visible: A Femmethology*, and many other publications. She is finishing her second book of poetry, *Love Cake*, and her memoir, *Dirty River*, and co-edited, with Ching-In Chen and Jai Dulani, the forthcoming *The Revolution Starts At Home: Confronting Partner Abuse in Activist Communities*. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Mills College, focusing on creative nonfiction and community-based teaching by writers of color.

seeley quest (Collaborating Performer, THE SCENE) has been featured at the 2002 First international Queerness and Disability Conference; the 2003 national True Spirit Conference; Some Kind of Queer; the 2003Trannyfest; the 2002 and 2004 Bay Area Ladyfests; the '05, '06, and '08 SF Anarchist Cafes; the 2007 SF Sex Worker Film and Arts Festival; *Sins Invalid* 2007 and 2008; SF Bay Guardian 'Best of the Bay' event "Writers With Drinks"; 848 Community Space and Counterpulse; in residency at the Jon Sims Center; in the *Trans As Fuck* shows she also co-instigated; the 2008 National Queer Arts Festival in *TAF* and *Marginal Bodies*; L.A.'s Trans/Giving; on tour with the 2005 and 2006 Tranny Roadshows and elsewhere.

Ralph Dickinson (Collaborating Performer, THE SCENE) is a videographer and a new performer for *Sins Invalid* shows. He is a queer actor and video producer and a long-time Bay Area resident. His video work has appeared on the Online News Hour with Jim Lehrer and has been on tour with Artists' Television Access. As an actor, he has appeared in Bennett Miller's (Capote) music video for Scarlett Johansson and Investigation Discovery's *Extreme Forensics*. He has taught video production at the Bay Area Video Coalition, San Francisco State University, Academy of Art University and Washington Primary School, to name a few.

John Benson, Kinetic Sculptor, has worked extensively in community-based non-profits specializing in low-income housing, local arts and music, and various services for disability communities. He has toured extensively throughout the U.S. and Europe and released three albums with his band, *A Minor Forest*. John also created an alternative show space simply called "The Bus." Subject of many print and web articles, two film documentaries and three radio interviews, the bus is a mobile music and art venue that has done two U.S. tours and about two hundred shows. John is also a co-founder of Pink, Inc., a non-profit organization committed to community based low income housing.

CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: **SINS INVALID: An Unshamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility**

Guest Artists: Mat Fraser (from the U.K.), Aurora Levins Morales, Nomy Lamm, Antoine-DeVinci Hunter, Maria R. Palacios, seeley quest, Leroy F. Moore Jr., Leah Lakshmi, John Benson, Ralph Dickinson, Cara Page, and Patty Berne.

PLEASE NOTE: This show contains explicit content.

WHEN: October 2, 3, 4, 2009
TIME: Friday and Saturday @ 8:00PM, Sunday @ 7:00pm
WHERE: Brava Theatre* (2789 24th Street@ York, SF)**wheelchair accessible, ASL interpreted*
TICKETS: \$15-\$25 sliding scale (no one turned away for lack of funds)
BOX OFFICE: brownpapertickets.com or at the door
PUBLIC INFORMATION: (510) 689-7198 or sinsinvalid.org

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