

[https://www.montgomerynews.com/entertainment/ampersand-swings-at-philly-fringe/article\\_0d9df9e6-476e-5e5d-84f3-0052912f96dc.html](https://www.montgomerynews.com/entertainment/ampersand-swings-at-philly-fringe/article_0d9df9e6-476e-5e5d-84f3-0052912f96dc.html)

## 'Ampersand' swings at Philly Fringe

By Nathan Lerner  
Correspondent  
Aug 30, 2011



Chestnut Hill's Tangle will perform "Ampersand" at the Philly Fringe Festival on Sept. 8 and 9 at Philadelphia Soundstages/Invincible Pictures.

For 16 days, the upcoming Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe will dominate the local culture scene with an uninterrupted smörgåsbord of avant-garde dance, theater, music and interdisciplinary work. Now in its 15th year, the ambitious convocation will encompass a mind-boggling 2,000 artists appearing in more than 1,200 performances at venues throughout the region.

The event was founded in 1997 as the Philly Fringe Festival. Today, it has morphed into a dimorphic entity. The Philadelphia Live Arts Festival is curated and includes some of the world's leading performing artists. In many instances, it affords the only opportunity that Philadelphia audiences will have to see shows that are traveling internationally.

This is complemented by the Philly Fringe, an unfiltered platform for performing artists who are unfettered by the curatorial process and enjoy total artistic freedom. For some aspiring performers, it provides their first chance to take the stage and appear in a public venue. For more experienced performers, it constitutes an invaluable incubator for further honing their skills and obtaining audience feedback.

Chestnut Hill native Lauren Rile Smith will be producing her new show, imaginatively titled "Ampersand," as part of the Philly Fringe. The 24-year-old Smith is the founder of the performance group Tangle. Her innovative piece involves an amalgam of traditional circus arts, such as trapeze, acrobatics and aerial rope, with narrative concerning the themes of memory and belonging in an urban milieu.

Smith graduated from Swarthmore College with a degree in English literature and philosophy. After graduating, she made a somewhat unlikely transition and enrolled at the Philadelphia School of Circus Arts.

Smith recalled, "When I started training, I was inspired by the blend of athleticism, narrative and physical artistry in contemporary circus arts." Smith subsequently undertook further training at LAVA and Ruby Streak Trapeze Studio, both of which are circus schools located in Brooklyn.

Currently, Smith works at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Pennsylvania.

According to her, "It allows me to switch gears between the head-centered world of books and libraries and the body-centered world of training circus arts."

Smith recalled, "I chose the name 'Tangle' for our acrobatic performance company because we are all about the possibilities that arise when things get complicated." She continued, "Tangle also evokes the shapes of bodies you might see onstage when we perform."

Smith reflected, "We devised the show together as a company over a long, collaborative process. We've been rehearsing and collaborating on Ampersand since March. 'Ampersand' is our first full-length show, and our first performance at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, so we've put a lot of love and sweat into it."

She clarified, "We named the show 'Ampersand' after the typesetter's symbol for 'and.' We're inspired by stories of unusual connection and intersection." Smith described the show as being "all about melding performance disciplines, using music and found text to create new concepts, bringing bodies together in movement, building structures from which we can take flight."

In presenting "Ampersand," Smith will be joined by her 17-year-old sister, Pascale. The latter will be performing on aerial hoop and collaborating on a trapeze piece. Augmenting the Smith siblings, Kate Aid, Tasha Connolly, Maura Kirk, Lee Ane Pompilio, Sarah Nicolazzo and Deena Weisberg will be performing at the show.

Smith is looking forward to presenting "Ampersand" at the Philly Fringe. She said, "I'm excited to bring this show to the festival because I think it's very special — not quite like any other dance, theater or even circus-arts show, but sharing elements of many different styles of performance."

— *Nathan Lerner, the director of Davenport Communications, is actively involved in civic and cultural affairs. He welcomes feedback at [culturevulture1@aol.com](mailto:culturevulture1@aol.com).*

Philadelphia

Live Arts Festival

and Philly Fringe

will take place

from Friday, Sept. 2

to Saturday, Sept. 17.

For tickets, call 215-413-1318

or visit [www.livearts-fringe.org](http://www.livearts-fringe.org).

"Ampersand"

will be performed

at Philadelphia Soundstages/

Invincible Pictures,

1600 N. 5th St.,

Philadelphia, PA 19122,

Thursday, Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m.

& Friday, Sept. 9, (6:30 & 9 p.m.)

Info: [www.tangle-arts.com](http://www.tangle-arts.com).