

March Madness

Send in the Girls goes beyond burlesque

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The burgeoning burlesque revival of the past few years is starting to prove itself sustainable: alongside our more established acts, new troupes keep popping up within the city limits like so many sequins on a costume bra, and most of them seem to be sticking around.

That's all well and good in its own right, but with that sustainability, we're starting to see groups focused less on simply preserving the art form and more on developing shows that aim beyond mere titillation: groups like Send in the Girls Burlesque are starting to use the act of stripping to their skivvies as a way to approach something a bit more traditionally theatrical.

"I think we're about the story," explains Ellen Chorley, co-founder of Send in the Girls. "This is our first revue show ... you're going to get little music videos, or monologues almost, burlesque pieces, where it's not really about the striptease as much as it is about telling a little story, or a big long story like Tudor Queens."

If you paid much attention in the beer tents of last year's Fringe, you probably heard buzz about Tudor Queens, which saw the six ghostly wives of King Henry VIII put on a come-hither-kiss-off pageant for their dead husband. It was a sleeper hit, selling out most nights and earning, in one instance, a kijiji hunt for tickets. Something about the way the show blurred the line between burlesque and more traditional theatre clicked, it seemed, which was perhaps most surprising to Chorley herself.

"We knew it was kind of a risk," she notes with a laugh. That blend of script and skin probably stems from the troupe's grounding in more traditional theatrical training—the four in this particular show (Tudor had six) all sport acting degrees from the various institutions around town.

Chorley's busy penning the script for their next full-length Fringe production (about the Brontë Sisters) but March Madness, the group's inaugural short-form show, looks to mix a scattering of previous pieces in with a couple of brand new ones, all hosted by local musician Lindsay Walker, and including what Chorley dubs "gorelesque," previously developed for a halloween fundraiser and mixing the removal of clothing with some bloody reveals—not

exactly traditional burlesque but, as Chorley reiterates, tradition isn't what they're aiming for.

"I think that's the angle that we're taking," Chorley confirms. "We want taking off our clothes to mean something."