

AFTERLIFE

A midwife who would kill for a family.
A homemaker in search of her true nature.
A successful executive hanging by a thread.
What do these three women have in common?

Nothing... and everything.



"Clever, charming, sassy and smart." – Winnipeg Sun



"Superbly performed. An absolute must see show."
– Monday Magazine



"one remains in awe of this finely cut, polished gem of a production"
– Toronto Eye Weekly



AfterLife

AfterLife is a one woman play written by Chris Van Strander and Candy Simmons, performed by Candy Simmons and directed by Virginia Scott. This show is the third collaboration between Ms. Simmons and Mr. Van Strander. Ms. Simmons previously performed in two theatrical pieces written by Mr. Van Strander, *Breuckelen*, an ensemble theatre piece produced at Collective Unconscious Theatre (NYC) and *The Mothering Instinct*, a one-woman, one act drama performed at Makor Theatre and Emerging Artists Theatre (NYC). *AfterLife* marks their first collaboration as authors.

AfterLife is a mesmerizing exploration of women's changing roles throughout the 20th century told through a karmic lens. The story is told by dropping in on a significant day in the life of three different women in three very different eras of time. Ruth, a 1928 Appalachian midwife, would kill for a family. Marion, a 1950's homemaker, wants to discover her true yogic nature. And Karma, a slowly unraveling film producer, would settle for a bit of sanity. What do these three seemingly disconnected women have in common? Nothing...and *everything*.

As we move through these three vastly different incarnations, it becomes apparent that we are not only on a journey through one soul's search for ultimate happiness, but through a brief journey of all women. It begs us to question just how many of Ruth, Marion, and Karma's choices are dictated by their own free will and prejudices? How much of their lives are haunted by pre-existing karmic baggage? And what portion of these decisions are decided by societal constraints imposed on them as women during their time period? It's 2008. Do you know where your Karma's been?

****Something to keep in mind:** The video is of good quality, but the one thing that isn't clearly communicated is the use of projected images during the play. At the top of the show, as well as when we transition from one character to the next there is a brief slide show of projected images on the back wall. This serves to introduce the audience to the new time period and setting. Refer to the script for a more detailed description, and if desired a copy of the slide show can also be provided upon request. Also, please note that if the theatre does not come equipped with a projector we can easily provide one.

AfterLife Company Bios

Candy Simmons – Actor and Co-Writer



Candy Simmons is an actor and writer based out of Brooklyn, NY. A proud member of the New York City theatre community for the last eleven years, she has performed at such venues as Primary Stages, The 92nd Street Y's Makor/Steinhardt Center, Emerging Artists Theater and Collective: Unconscious Theatre, among others. Candy also spent two seasons with the Carolinian Shakespeare Festival in New Bern, NC.

Candy founded Brooklyn-based theatre company SunsetGun Productions in late 2007. SunsetGun's first production, *AfterLife*, is a full-length one-woman show co-written and performed by Candy. The show received a workshop production at the Red Room in NYC in April 2008 and has since toured across the United States and Canada earning her critical acclaim, including a Best Female Performer award in the 2008 Victoria Fringe Festival. She is also a regular contributor to blogging site ultimish.com. Candy holds a BA in Theatre from Florida State University.

Chris Van Strander – Co-Writer



Chris Van Strander is a playwright, screenwriter, and actor. He's been a finalist/semifinalist for The O'Neill Playwrights' Conference, The Playwrights Center's PlayLabs, the Ensemble Studio Theatre Marathon, and Page 73's Playwriting Fellowship, among others. He was recently awarded a 2008 NoMAA Individual Artist grant.

His plays include *AfterLife* (co-written with Candy Simmons; Vancouver Fringe Festival and Victoria Fringe Festival, nominated for Best Drama); *O Captain My Captain* (Bloomington Playwrights Project); *Breuckelen* (Collective:Unconscious); *Terrible Infant* (NY International Fringe Festival); *The Mothering Instinct* (Emerging Artists Theatre, 92nd Street Y, Theater Catalyst), and *Daniel Pelican* (CRUX Productions).

Chris' plays have also been produced, workshopped, developed, and read with: Circle East Theater Company (formerly the Circle Repertory Lab), The Rogue Valley 10 Minute Plays Festival (Ashland, OR), Riverside Theatre (Iowa City, IO), The Asylum Theatre (Las Vegas, NV), Battle Hill Press, Inversions Theatre, The Director's Company, The Management, The Neighborhood Playhouse, The Uptown Arts Stroll, The Night and Day Playwrights' Series, Wild Child Presents, Word of Mouth Productions, New York University, The Red Room, The American Theatre of Actors, and The Producer's Club, among others.

His other recent projects include *Emily, inc.*, an original Web series, and *25*, a feature screenplay.

Chris is a member of the Dramatists Guild and Circle East Theater Company. He also helps run *The Loop*, an online playwrights' magazine. As an actor Chris has appeared in film, TV, regionally, off-off-, and on Broadway.

Chris graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and studied with Irene Fornes and Mac Wellman in the Flea Theater's 'Pataphysics Workshops.

Chris is interested in exploring onstage how the past—of a person, or of an entire culture—both affects, and is altered by, individuals in the present. He's also dedicated to creating work for nontraditional or site-specific spaces: he's staged plays everywhere from boats to bars to the rooftop pool of a Holiday Inn.

AfterLife Company Bios

Virginia Scott – Director



Virginia Scott specializes in working with companies and individuals to develop, create and stage new theatrical works, focusing on solo performance and physical theatre. Directing and development credits include *The Orange Girl* (US Comedy Arts Festival at Aspen), *Great White American Teeth* (The Irish Repertory Theatre), *Planet Banana* (Ars Nova), *Pentecostal Wisconsin* (59E59, Ars Nova), *The Guided Balloon* at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Canadian Fringe Tour, Best Solo Show Winner at the Ottawa Fringe Festival, *Wild Side Festival* in Montreal, *the Theatre at Monmouth* in Maine), *Dad 2.0* Starring Tom Schillue (Ars Nova), *Happy Hour* in *It Takes 3* (Ars Nova, The Comedy Central Theatre in LA, *The Guided Balloon* at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, *The Barrow Group Theatre*), *Tramp: A Clown Show* (Touring: Maine, New York, California), *How to Be a Man* (Chashama's Palace of Variety), *Thought Prints* Starring Mentalist and Magician Bobby Torkova (the NY Fringe Festival), *I'm Down* (UCB LA), *Neal Medlyn Loves You For Real* (Ars Nova), *The Amazing Ted Show* (Grahamstown International Festival in South Africa, International Clown Festival in Brooklyn, Ars Nova).

A long-time assistant to master clown and director, Christopher Bayes, Virginia is working with him on a new book detailing his approach to clown. She also assistant directed his production of *Ruzzante* (NYU's Graduate Acting Program) and *Clowns* (developed by The Glass Contraption and presented at the Public Theatre and the NY International Clown Theatre Festival).

Virginia works closely with the NYC-based clown theatre company, The Glass Contraption, where she leads their company clown labs, directs shows and teaches clown workshops for the public. Her teaching credits also include The Actor's Center and co-creating and leading the New York City Clown Lab.

What the Critics Have to Say About *AfterLife*

Edmonton Journal

AfterLife is a wonderful one-woman show that follows the struggles of three distinct, yet somehow linked, women through different points in time, distilling some of the complex issues facing North American women at particular moments in history.

The acting is spot-on, the characters are richly developed and nuanced, and the connection between the stories is smart and not forced. Bits of information are revealed at precisely the right moments, and the experience of watching these women cope with the boundaries of their society's expectations and norms is both sad and captivating.

If you really think about it, the play is depressing as hell from a women-in-history standpoint, but it's sugar-coated with a gentle sort of humour that's both funny and cutting.

5 STARS (out of 5), Iain Ilich, August 19, 2009

Edmonton Sun

There are three people living inside the diminutive Candy Simmons and all are falling apart.

Blend them together, though, and the result is a darkly funny, gripping yarn tracing the evolution of women through the past century.

AfterLife features three women struggling to find happiness in different eras and sets of circumstances.

Simmons, a New York-based writer and actor, plays each with the kind of depth and conviction most seasoned thespians would struggle to match.

One moment, Simmons has the audience in stitches. The next, she drags it into the dark, hopeless headspace of women trapped in complacent, wretched circumstances.

She easily transforms from one character to the next, switching accents and personas as effortlessly as she changes costumes.

Each woman comes from a different era, and represents the various ways in which women struggled, and struggle, to find inner peace and happiness in a world chock-full of challenges and disappointments.

Few happy endings will be found in this hour-long play. However, the stories are honest, pure, and compelling.

And the real star here isn't just the play, but the woman who brings it to life.

5 STARS (out of 5), Michelle Thompson, August 18, 2009

Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN

Candy Simmons' wryly funny one-woman show spans decades of feminine aspiration and a litany of womanly yearning. Her rough-hewn Appalachian midwife's hunger for her own baby leads to a thriving sideline in assisted suicide; her Betty Draper-style 1960s housewife seeks escape through yoga and carrot-nut loaf, and her tightly wound New York businesswoman of the present tries to "empower" her way to intimacy. Simmons' deftly delineated alter egos, each a reincarnation of the last, reveal that maybe we haven't come such a long way, baby

Cynthia Dickison, July 31, 2009

What the Critics Have to Say About *AfterLife*

City Pages, Minneapolis

The script, by Chris Van Strander and Simmons, is concise and dynamic, with all manner of internal crosscurrents, and Simmons's performance is chilling, a bit heartbreaking, and rarely less than fascinating.

Quinton Skinner, August 5, 2009

Winnipeg Sun

To whom do you relate the most — a murdering 1928 Appalachian midwife, a 1950s trophy wife, or a power-hungry modern-day executive on the edge of insanity? Whatever your answer, Candy Simmons will likely make you see yourself in all three of her skillfully crafted characters.

Slowly exposing each character's flaws, dreams and fears, Simmons' monologues are conversational, raw and real, fooling you into believing you are catching up with an old friend. Even in front of a sold-out crowd, she seemed to make a connection with every audience member, never faltering in her accents or her flawless delivery.

*Clever, charming, sassy and smart, *AfterLife* explores societal pressures and the need to fit into the ever-evolving 20th-century mould. Candy more than deserved her standing ovation — neither her first nor her last at the Fringe, we suspect.*

5 STARS (out of 5), Rheanne Marcoux, July 21, 2009

Toronto Eye Weekly

One-woman wonder Candy Simmons delivers a mesmerizing performance that spans three characters over eight decades and three regions; in a shawl, then an apron, then her bra, her virtuoso display of facial expressions and accents induces laughter and heartache in equal measures. The script by Simmons and Chris Von Strander is spare, crisp and often surprising in its exploration of the suffocating desperation of the dilemmas of womanhood through the ages...one remains in awe of this finely cut, polished gem of a production and especially a performance that ranks among the best of any Fringe festival.

5 STARS (out of 5), Edward Keenan, July 2, 2009

Montreal Gazette

Candy Simmons Superb in *AfterLife*

*Every once in a while at the Montreal Fringe Festival, you experience a theatrical moment that takes your breathe away. *AfterLife*, by Chris Van Strander and Candy Simmons, presented by SunsetGun Productions of Brooklyn, has that effect.*

In this beautifully written solo work, Simmons portrays three women. Simmons' realistic acting style is reminiscent of that of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre company, which produced the likes of Gary Sinese.

Ranked #1 Must See Show at Montreal Fringe Festival

Pat Donnelly, June 18, 2009

What the Critics Have to Say About *AfterLife*

Plankmagazine.com, Vancouver

AfterLife: if you see only one play this fringe...

*A word of warning: it seems every year I review one play that turns into less a review and more of a fanboy gush. Last year it was the Jonno Katz comedy *The Spy*. This year it's going to be *AfterLife*, a flat-out superb piece of theatre.*

First off, Candy Simmons is simply a great actor. Watching her work solo for 70 minutes is an acting class in a box. It's a rare treat to watch a performer this poised, present and confident at the Fringe level. The play presents us with three distinct American women from different eras and regions – an Appalachian midwife, a 1950's homemaker and a take-no-prisoners New York film producer – then subtly links them all together in the third act. Simmons' dialect work is effortless, mercifully, as that's usually the thing that can most easily take me out of this type of play. But she literally lives within this writing, testament to the sheer amount of work she's put into it.

**AfterLife* is actually returning here after a well-received but under-seen engagement in Studio 16 at last year's Fringe (where it also received a glowing review from Plank). In the interim the script has been tweaked and tightened, with a full 10 minutes being excised from where it was at a year ago. Co-written by Simmons and New York Playwright Chris Van Strander, it's a superb woman's work, economical and unsentimental, constantly surprising and funny as hell when you least expect it. It's easily ready for publication, and deserves to be an acting class staple. It's the type of monologue writing the women actors I know in town are always lamenting they can never find.*

*There's only a couple more chances to catch *AfterLife* in this run, but it's already well on it's way to nabbing Pick of the Fringe, which it absolutely deserves. See it while you can.*

Simon Ogden, September 16, 2009

Afterlife: the 2nd time around

This is Candy Simmons 2nd time here with the same show. Seems a lot of folks didn't make it out last year as she was at an off island venue. Currently residing at the PTC, she's at the centre of the action and anyone walking by SHOULD pop in and check out this little gem. However, at 70 minutes there's nothing 'little' about this piece considering what the reviewers and audiences have been saying from across the continent.

I could tell you all about the 3 distinctly different yet connected women she portrays in succession. I could go on about the subtleties and humour that seamlessly flows from her polished delivery. I could extol the virtues of the script put together by Ms Simmons and Chris Van Strander that was directed by fellow New Yorker Virginia Scott. I could even break out the thesaurus and begin waxing intellectual about the themes, ideas and morals surreptitiously wending their way throughout the piece, but... I would prefer if you just went and saw the show.

I believe this is the last leg of her North American tour and there are only two shows left. If you can: go see this show. Heck, vote her pick of the fringe so you can take someone else who can't make it this weekend. If you can't make it, tell your friends to go so they can vote for it so you can see it when it gets picked.

The only reason not to go see this show: you don't like good theatre (and if that's true, why are you reading this?)

S. Tyson, September 15, 2009

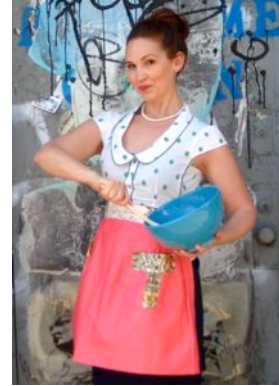
AfterLife Publicity Photos



AfterLife 4

Featuring Candy Simmons as Marion,
one of the three women of *AfterLife*

Photo Credit: Matthew Wells



AfterLife 7

Featuring Candy Simmons as Marion,
one of the three women of *AfterLife*

Photo Credit: Matthew Wells



AfterLife 8

Featuring Candy Simmons as Marion,
one of the three women of *AfterLife*

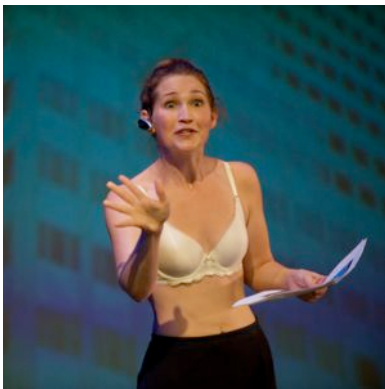
Photo Credit: Matthew Wells



AfterLife 10

Featuring Candy Simmons as Marion,
one of the three women of *AfterLife*

Photo Credit: Matthew Wells



AfterLife 11

Featuring Candy Simmons as Karma,
one of the three women of *AfterLife*

Photo Credit: Meredith Westin



AfterLife 12

Featuring Candy Simmons as Ruth,
one of the three women of *AfterLife*

Photo Credit: Meredith Westin