



EXPIRATION DATE

photo by: Aaron Fenster

EXPIRATION DATE

EXPIRATION DATE, a one-woman play created and performed by award-winning performance artist Candy Simmons, investigates the attitudes and fears that come with death and dying in America. Through a multi-character performance, layering traditional monologue and movement elements, we experience the story of Lucille, a young woman struggling through the realities of a terminal diagnosis. Lucille's journey offers an unsentimental, raw, irreverent, and darkly-comedic peek into one woman's journey into the great unknown. The creation of this work is a blend of fiction and personal experiences woven together with the aide of stories Ms. Simmons has collected via video and audio interviews around the subject.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Dying is messy, it's uncomfortable, it's incredibly final, and for these reasons I believe the topic of death has almost become taboo in our sterile society. We don't want to talk about it; we don't want to think about it. We like options. We like things to be clearly explained, to be tied up in nice little packages. The problem is, that when the unthinkable becomes reality we are so unprepared that life then becomes the obstacle. Our inability to discuss end-of-life, the abject fear of verbalizing the event at all, cheats us out of some absolutely beautiful opportunities along the way, as well as leads to a host of medical conundrums our loved ones are left to solve.

My intention in creating **EXPIRATION DATE** was for it to be a conversation starter, and in many ways it already has. An important part of the process in creating this piece has been conducting interviews with the community regarding their experiences with death and end-of-life decisions, as well as health care professionals. These video and audio interviews offered beautiful source material as the work was created, informing character studies and scenes. The process of conducting these interviews figures into the larger scope of the project for me also, allowing the impact to be felt outside of traditional theatre walls.

EXPIRATION DATE premiered to Minneapolis, MN audiences in March 2012 at the Old Arizona Theater, this initial production was supported in part by a MN State Arts Board Artists Initiative Grant. The response to the piece was overwhelmingly positive and I immediately began receiving requests for touring engagements. The piece was created with touring in mind, with limited technical needs we can easily adapt **EXPIRATION DATE** to a traditional theater space or small community room within your small organization. Relevant workshops and talkbacks work well post-performance. For instance, during the Minneapolis run, as well as a performance at an elder community in St Paul we offered Health Care Directive workshops free to the community, made possible through a partnership with [Honoring Choices Minnesota](#), an effort of the Twin Cities Medical Society and its Foundation to encourage families and communities to have discussions regarding end-of-life care choices. The piece has also been performed in conjunction with Hamline University's School of Law Annual Legal Medical Conference, as well as the MN Metro Area Hospice Volunteers Annual Gathering.



If I can offer any further information on **EXPIRATION DATE** please feel free to contact me directly. I'd love to hear from you!

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What the Critics Have to Say..

PRESS REVIEWS:

CBC Manitoba

"It has been a long time since I was held so deftly and excruciatingly on the brink of tears. [Simmons] reminds us all that the best grief is fraught with moments of indescribable beauty."

ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS

...a vivid cast of characters takes you through one woman's experience with figuring out how to say goodbye to life. In both writing and acting, Simmons displays an impeccable ear, and the simple staging helps it feel disarmingly candid.

STAR TRIBUNE

...a wry, moving, poignant and funny experience. For a gifted actor such as Simmons, this is a showcase of strength and talent.

MINNEAPOLIS CITY PAGES

...funny, haunting, and breathtakingly honest.

VOICEPLACES.COM

Drawn from real-world testimonials, EXPIRATION DATE looks beyond fear and despair to discover a serene comfort in the great unknown.

AUDIENCE REVIEWS:

Candy's performance tugged at my heart and memories in a most realistic and personal way.
– End-of-life Educator and Hospice Nurse

I left speechless and damp around the eyes. There are not enough stars or adjectives to do this show justice. The delicate, sensitive and, at times, humorous weaving of one woman's story is wonderfully crafted and performed. Facing our own mortality is a harrowing experience however "Expiration Date" might be a timely reminder for many of us to remember to live. – Chelley M.

Evocative. Plucking heart-strings. Subtle. Profound. The artist is gentle yet strong to convey how anticipating death strengthens life. Before the show, I had never heard of Candy Simmons, but I won't forget her now. – Bruce R.

This show was exceptionally well written and stunningly performed. The diversity of characters, the richness of the emotional journey that is taken over the course of only an hour! Highly recommend seeing this show. – Sarah V.

What the Critics Have to Say..

Interview with Minneapolis CITY PAGES Arts Editor, Ed Huyck:

Expiration Date' looks at end of life issues

By Ed Huyck, Mar. 28 2012

In *Expiration Date*, playwright and performer Candy Simmons explores terminal illness, a topic that, as she puts it, is often dealt with in "hushed tones" and is impolite to bring up in general conversation. In her one-woman piece, Simmons tells the story of Lucille, as we follow her from diagnosis to the end of her life. With it, Simmons hopes to generate talk about the topics.

Drawing attention to end-of-life issues is an important part of the piece. Following the 3 p.m. performance on Sunday, April 1, *Honoring Choices* will offer a free health-care directive workshop for people interested in further exploring the issues of the play, and who want to make plans for this important moment that everyone has to face.

City Pages: Was there an event in your own life that made you want to explore these issues?

Candy Simmons: In 2007, I lost one of my best friends of 15 years to leukemia, and within a year I said goodbye to another dear friend. They were both in their early 30s. When I got onto the other side of such an unfathomable loss, what I was most struck by wasn't just the hole that was left from their physical absence, but by my complete lack of a toolkit to deal with the situation when it was happening.

Of course, there's no way to completely prepare for such a blow, but there are conversations that you look back on with a clearer perspective and you think, 'Man, that was a huge opportunity missed. She/he wanted to talk about the fact that they were dying. And I denied them that, I changed the subject, not because it upset them, but because it upset me.' I think so many of us are guilty of cowering in the corner or going into complete denial when faced with death because we're terrified.

What has the process been in developing the piece? Did you ever feel like you were getting in too deep, and if so what helped to bring you back out again?

I wanted to explore this topic through a solo work, but I didn't have any interest in doing a straightforward autobiographical piece. Of course, I drew on my life experience in creating the play, but it was important for me to research and gather stories of others who have either faced a terminal diagnosis or have been alongside someone who had in order to broaden my perspective.

That was the overwhelming part. At one point I found myself looking around my office at the piles of books and essays and blog entries and audio and video interviews I conducted surrounding me and thought, 'What the hell am I doing? I've chosen an enormous, unwieldy topic, there is no way I can share all of these beautiful, funny and tragic moments I've collected.'

Once I came in off the ledge and gave myself permission to just tell one woman's journey, it became much easier. So that's what this show is: Lucille's journey. Some of it she handles gracefully and some of it she completely screws up, and hopefully we learn something from that. I've also found ways for other characters in the show to have a voice in her story, as well using some of my documented interviews to show a differing perspective.

Why do you think end-of-life issues carry such a taboo in our culture, especially in the face of all the death and dying that is part of our entertainment?

It doesn't make any sense, does it? We are biologically built to go through this experience. We're born, we die. When did we as a society completely lose these coping skills? On one hand, we're completely inundated with violence and TV medical shows, but it's all so sanitized. When someone becomes ill, you hand yourself or your family member over to the medical professionals to deal with, then we die and we hand the corpse over to the funeral home to manage. The intimacy of this time in our lives is being lost.

When someone has been diagnosed with a terminal illness we speak in hushed tones; it's disrespectful to discuss or bring up in polite conversation. What I found most interesting in talking about the piece to folks is that 85 percent of the time I mentioned the topic I was offered an unsolicited anecdote in return. People really do want to talk about death, about the experiences they've had, what they want for themselves and their loved ones. Starting the conversation just seems insurmountable socially, so we don't talk about it and then we're in crisis and it's that much harder.

What do you hope audiences take out of the experience?

Although we are exposed to Lucille's medical experience, her journey is more an exploration of her emotional roadblocks and the sheer logistics of navigating this journey we all have to face at some point. By following this woman's journey, audiences are offered a safe way to laugh and be present with someone going through the death process. When I verbalize fears in my own life, they seem to lose a bit of power over me. This show is about starting that conversation, confronting that experience together.

EXPIRATION DATE Publicity Photos

High-res photos available by request or download here: www.sunsetgunproductions.com
All photos by: Aaron Fenster



Expiration Date promo 1



Expiration promo 3



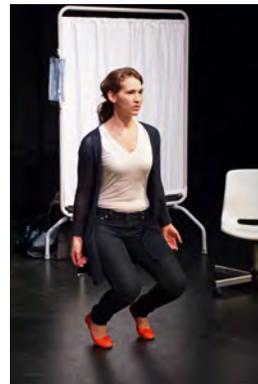
Expiration Date 48



Expiration Date 71



Expiration Date 114



Expiration Date 22

EXPIRATION DATE Artist Bios

Candy Simmons – Creator & Performer, EXPIRATION DATE



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“Simmons's performance is chilling, a bit heartbreaking, and rarely less than fascinating.” CITY PAGES

Candy Simmons is a professional Twin Cities-based theater artist with an 18-year performance career. As lead performer and Artistic Director of Minneapolis-based theater company SunsetGun Productions she has spent the last 8 years performing, producing, and touring original works across North America. Candy was awarded Best Female Performer Award at the Victoria Fringe Festival, and she and SunsetGun have been the grateful recipients of multiple arts funding awards, including three Metropolitan Regional Arts Council awards (MN) and a 2011 Artists Initiative Grant from the MN State Arts Board, which supported the development of one-woman play EXPIRATION DATE. Her most recent work, an ensemble circus-theater-dance work, IN/DURING HER ABSENCE premiered to Minneapolis audiences September 2018 at Twin Cities Trapeze Center.

Lauded for her emotionally evocative performances and strong character work, Candy seeks to create theatrical works that are highly tour-able, enabling work to move with ease into a variety of community settings and venues. She believes that by providing a platform for audience and artist to engage we encourage all participants to see themselves a bit more clearly. She believes people are funny, ridiculous and fascinating, and that everyone has a story to tell if given the opportunity. Outside of her work with SunsetGun, Candy is an accomplished actress and has worked with theater companies such as: The 92nd Street Y (NYC), Emerging Artists Theatre (NYC), Abingdon Theater Co. (NYC), Carolinian Shakespeare Festival (NC), Red Eye Theater (MN), Alan Berks & Co. (MN), Gremlin Theatre (MN). Candy received her BA in Theatre from Florida State University.

Tyler Olsen – Director, EXPIRATION DATE



Tyler Olsen (director) is a playwright, director, actor, and theater maker in the Twin Cities. Currently, he is the artistic vision behind HAPPY MINNESOTA, an initiative to bring original theatrical productions to University Ave. in St. Paul. He also serves as "Major Artsy Fartsy" for [Dangerous Productions](#), a Saint Paul based arts & performance company, serves as executive director for Rosetown Playhouse Community Theater, is collaborating with Live Action Set of Minneapolis on a Bastille Day project in Minneapolis, organizing the first ADVENTURE THEATER FESTIVAL in Plainview, MN, and serves on the board of directors for the Twin Cities Horror Festival, and is part of a community of people attempting to revive the long-dormant Victoria Theater in Saint Paul.

EXPIRATION DATE Artist Bios

Laura McGinley Holway – Lead Movement Director/Choreographer, EXPIRATION DATE



Laura McGinley Holway (choreographer) is a Twin Cities-based choreographer, director, and arts educator. She makes original performance works that combine movement, video, and text to explore people - their rituals, desires, and connections. Laura's work has been a part of the Minnesota Fringe Festival, Artery 24 at the Soap Factory, the Twin Cities Dance Film Project, Dances Made to Order, 9 x 22 Dance Laboratory, and the Rabbit Show. Her evening-length work I LIKE YOU was produced by the Red Eye Theater's New Works: 4 Weeks festival. Laura has been a visiting artist at St. Olaf College, Coon Rapids High School, Zenon Dance School, and St. Paul Academy and Summit School, and teaches arts residencies throughout Minnesota for Steppingstone Theatre.

Tamara Ober – Additional Movement Direction, EXPIRATION DATE



"charmingly rambunctious" — STAR TRIBUNE

Tamara Ober (choreographer) has been a company member with the Minneapolis modern dance group, Zenon Dance Company, since 2002. She received a BFA in Dance and BA in Sociology from the University of Minnesota in 2001. Tamara has consulted in the development of programs for the Northrop Auditorium, ICLA masters program in Austria, and Perpich Center for Arts Education in collaboration with the Walker Art Center's Out There series.

In 2009 Ober created the critically acclaimed multidisciplinary solo show PIPA which toured throughout the United States and Canada, as well as Budapest, and was awarded Montreal Fringe Festival's Runner up for Best English Language Production. Tamara is also the recipient of a 2009 SAGE Award for outstanding performer, a City Pages 2009 Artist of the Year, and Metro Magazine's 2011 Keeper Award and the recent recipient of a 2013 McKnight Dancer Fellowship.