

# FRINGE ARTS



**PHILA** Sept 7–24

**20  
23** **DELPHIA**

**FRINGE**

**FESTIVAL**



**BOWIE IN BERLIN: SOUND & VISION**

Paul Green Rock Academy

Guest Starring

Red 40

Johnny Showcase

Jess Conda

& Lex Thammavong

September 7 + 8, 2023

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In the mid 70s, on his own (self described) road to becoming a rock-and-roll casualty, David Bowie moved back to Europe to escape the carnival of debauchery (ie cocaine) that was LA at the time. When he settled in Berlin, he found a city that was a metaphor for his own life at the time...rebuilt from the ashes, cut off from the rest of the world, with a wall down the middle, cutting itself in half.

He also found a robust art and music scene rising from this tension and he quickly fell in love with what he heard from the Krautrock movement, the ambient sounds of Brian Eno (his primary collaborator on these albums), and the music performance art of Klaus Nomi.

It was from these influences, the sparks in the Berlin air, and his battle with his personal demons that the Berlin Trilogy emerged: *Low*, *Lodger*, and *Heroes*. While not his most popular or hit-filled albums, Bowie has described them as his "DNA." They are dark, personal, and disjointed. Full of optimism and dread, often in the same song.

They are also unbelievably influential. You don't have to squint too hard to see new wave and post punk, goth and Talking Heads in these albums. Bowie also produced Iggy Pop's *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life* during this period. So there isn't much music that came after that doesn't owe a little something to Bowie's time in Berlin.

One quick aside: yes, I know that "Stay" and "Ashes to Ashes" aren't on those records, but they are definitely Berlin-adjacent (on the albums immediately preceding and following, respectively) and they sure seem to belong here, at least to my ears.

Finally, what these albums did, for me, as much as anything, is make prog rock cool, at least a little bit. I know the work of Adrian Belew and Robert Fripp (from King Crimson and the lead guitarists on *Lodger* and *Heroes*, respectively) very well, and they were never cooler than when they were with Bowie. —**Paul Green**

# PROGRAM

Tonight's performance will consist of music from Bowie's Berlin Trilogy, followed by an encore of some of his beloved classics.

# STUDENT PERFORMERS

**Asher Blum:** Drums, begrudging percussion, Ash v Drums

**Olivia Carolan:** Drums, neutral percussion, just thrown right into the fire

**Luke Francek:** Saxophone, tour hijinks, they grow up so fast

**Ben Fritch:** Drums, enthusiastic percussion, might be my son

**Christian Gallucci:** Bass, guitar and drums but not in this show, likes getting dressed up for the shows now

**Isabelle Gottfried:** Vocals, a little keys, more guitar soon, likes singing in front of the lights

**Tyson Gottfried:** Vocals, Drums, Guitar, might be the savior of us all

**Ryan Gregory:** Guitar, excellent taste in metal, growing up so nicely

**Aidan Hammel:** Guitar, Bass, Drums, still don't know enough about him to make a joke here

**Nate Hong:** Sax, rapping, amazing dancer but won't dance for free

**Ezra Menegaux:** Guitar, Bass, sparkly blue eyes, will probably be wearing some amazing bell bottoms

**Luke Nicastro:** Bass, Guitar, Vocals, actually dresses like that every day, like at school and stuff, which is awesome

**Jeff Nissman:** Keys, Sax, normally very personable and funny but occasionally gets mad and you can't tell which is which.

**Sylas Polston:** Guitar, security, just a really good and quiet kid I think, can't really know because he is so quiet

**Cole Reed:** Bass, Guitar, Keys (I think), also thrown right in the fire...good luck!

**Kylan Rode:** Guitar, music theory fan and expert, might be sociopath but in a good way

**Drew Viola:** Guitar, Bass, Drums, NOT Keys, looks amazing 24/7 and knows it

**Mia Wagner:** Vocals, Keys, Bass soon

which is where she belongs, came off the bench to hit the big home run on tour **Mae Weaver**: Vocals, Keys, Guitar (should be more guitar), Sax (should be less sax), seems to have it all figured out which is awesome and very helpful

## GUEST STARS

**Red 40**, aka your toxic ex-boyfriend's worst nightmare, is returning to her home stage of FringeArts where she led the house band for two years. Named a "local legend" by Philadelphia Magazine, her feminist agenda and powerhouse pipes have been featured on NPR's Sound Opinions, at Ars Nova's ANT Fest, and on many a sold-out stage. Billy Penn named her a young creator of the "new Philadelphia sound."

**Johnny Showcase** is a sweaty, charismatic showman from Rhode Island who is equal parts Andy Kaufman and Prince. Carrying the torch of funk-rock pioneers like Funkadelic and Frank Zappa, he and his band the Mystic Ticket have gained a massive following and propelled Johnny to something of a funky Philly folk hero legend. He is more famous in the 4-9 year old market as his kid-centric act, Johnny Shortcake, and to the rest of the world from his confounding stint on *America's Got Talent* in 2021.

**Jess Conda** is a Philadelphia based performer, producer, teaching artist and cultural connector. Regional Theater: Wilma, Arden, Pig Iron, Shakespeare in Clark Park, Brat Productions. Cabaret: Martha Graham Cracker Cabaret, The Peek A Boo Revue, Bearded Ladies (Associate Artist/ Host Cohort, Late Night Snacks). Touring backing vocals: Peter Matthew Bauer, opener for The War on Drugs and Delta Spirit. Jess is currently working as Director of Education and Community Practices at the Wilma Theater. She is celebrating her 20th Philly Fringe Festival!

**Lexi Thammavong** (they/she) is an actor, singer, and playwright based in Philly. They obtained their BFA in Musical Theatre with a minor in Creative Writing from The University of the Arts. Recent

credits include playing "Pamela" in *Head Over Heels* at Theatre Horizon and "Mimi" in *Rent* at the Media Theatre. Whether exploring characters like "Ariel" in *The Tempest* at Delaware Shakespeare Company or "Helen" in PAC's adaption of *Jane Eyre*, Lex strives to find new ways to explore, revitalize, and decolonize the classics. She is also experienced with writing and devising brand new work.

## THE PAUL GREEN ROCK ACADEMY (PGRA)

The Paul Green Rock Academy (PGRA) is the latest music school from School of Rock founder Paul Green, along with his partner Loren Teolis. PGRA is an audition only program for serious minded young musicians looking to make a career of it, or at least wanting to learn the lessons from an intensive arts program and apply them other places in life. This summer we toured Europe as the backing band for Jon Anderson, playing 9 sold out theater shows and two festivals, including an audience of 10,000 in Bug Herzberg Germany, and along the way we played one off shows with guest stars including Steve Hackett, Chris Difford (Squeeze), Robert Martin (Zappa), and Bill Bruford.

**PGRA Special Thanks:** The Fringe Festival, FringeArts and all of their amazing staff, David Bowie and all of the the musicians who played this sublime music, all of our students who work so hard, all of the parents of our students who work even harder, Tracy Fox, Amy Francek, Michelle Gottfried, Rebecca Strutz, Brian Bricklin, and everyone else who I forgot to thank... thank you!

# THE PAUL GREEN ROCK ACADEMY

The Paul Green Rock Academy is the music school for serious young musicians. Our students play professional shows and tours, backup amazing established artists, and get into the best music colleges in the country. Now accepting auditions for guitar, bass, vocals, keyboards, drums, and all band instruments.

[PaulGreenRock.com](http://PaulGreenRock.com)



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## FRINGEARTS

FringeArts is Philadelphia's home for contemporary performance, presenting progressive, world-class art that expands the imagination and boldly defies expectation. Our programming exposes audiences to genre-defying dance, theater, and music performances by accomplished and emerging innovators who push the boundaries of art-making and redefine the artistic landscape worldwide.

[FringeArts.com](http://FringeArts.com)

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## SEE YOU AGAIN SOON?

Tonight's Guest Stars **Red 40** & **Johnny Showcase** are back on **Saturday 9/9** with a one-night only cabaret act dedicated to their favorite duets.



The 2023 Philly Fringe Festival features more than 300 shows! Check out the lineup and come back for more through September 24th!

