

Fringe fest gets big turnout

By [Vanessa Miller](#) ([Contact](#))

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Photo by Joshua Lawton

Fashion designer Kimberly Robertson, of Denver, right, talks with Zenah Blair, of Ashland, Ore., about her products and company, Potential Fashions. Robertson was one of the many artists who attended an opening-night party Thursday for the third annual Boulder International Fringe Festival. Hundreds of members of the public also packed The Dairy Center for the Arts for the evening soiree.

Actors, singers, painters, even jugglers — clad in everything from pink hats to hot pants — mingled over trays of edamame, animal crackers and wine Thursday night to open the third annual Boulder International Fringe Festival.

What started 60 years ago in Scotland as a festival for lesser-known performers pushed to the "fringe" of premier events is gaining a growing center-stage presence in Boulder.

More than half of the 70 artist groups who'll put on a total of 350 shows, displays or events during the 11-day festival that runs through Aug. 26 were represented at the opening party at Boulder's Dairy Center for the Arts.

"This is my first time being exposed to this," said Brandi Shigley, 32, a clothes designer who's co-directing a fashion variety show for the festival.

"I've met the most amazing people in the first 27 minutes of being here," she said. Sophie Nimmannit, 27, flew in from Brooklyn, N.Y., with members of her theater company for Boulder's event — choosing it over dozens of other fringe festivals hosted by cities worldwide.

"The exciting thing about this one is it's so young," Nimmannit said. "The city is new to it, and we're part of helping it build."

The first fringe festival erupted spontaneously in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1947 when certain artists weren't allowed to perform in a popular festival there. The idea caught on globally, and Boulder joined the list of host cities three years ago.

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www.boulderfringe.com

The festival is not only uncensored, but — in the spirit of its Scottish pioneers — it's unjuried. That means no selection group or board of directors chooses who can perform and who cannot. Instead, artist applications are thrown into a hat and selected at random.

Artists are challenged to do their own promotion for their festival performances, and they're allowed to keep 100 percent of the money they bring in through ticket, product or CD sales.

"We cultivate individual artists," said Alana Eve Burman, Boulder's festival director. "And because we don't judge them, the public gets the chance to be the first testing ground."

Artists during Thursday's party got their first opportunity to lure members of the public to festival shows — several hundred people attended. Performers were given one minute of microphone time to advertise their "goods."

Nimmannit said Boulder's fringe fest provides a stellar chance for startup artists to grab the spotlight.

"In New York, often all you get is friends and family members to your show," she said. "It's a real cat-and-dog fight to get anyone else. So it's exciting to get to produce your work and have people come see it."

Even children were getting in on the act Thursday, performing Shel Silverstein poems.

"Oh, I'm being eaten by a boa constrictor, a boa constrictor, a boa constrictor," Peter Himot, 8, chanted in a sing-song tone.

Behind him, his brother Isaac Himot, 6, and Tara Spies, 8, slipped slowly into sleeping bags.

"It's up to my middle, oh heck, it's up to my neck," Peter rhymed, until the children zipped themselves completely.

"Oh dread," Peter said. "It's upmmmmmmfffff."

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