

THEATER

Journey into Christopher Walken's mind

By: [Robert Sokol](#) | 08/30/12 4:00 AM

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COURTESY PHOTO

Fresh look: Catherine Tandy and Gabriel Grilli appear in "Stalking Christopher Walken," an S.F. Fringe Festival show that explores the death of Natalie Wood.

"What were they thinking?" It's a question we often ask ourselves when baffled by others' actions. Described as a "comic jaunt" into the mind of the actor, "Stalking Christopher Walken" dances — often literally — around what Walken was thinking during one of Hollywood's sadder unsolved mysteries, the death of Natalie Wood.

The hourlong play makes its Bay Area debut as part of Christina Augello's 21st annual San Francisco Fringe Festival. Presented at Exit Theatre in the Tenderloin, this year's Occupy Fringe Theatre 2012 includes 12 days of performances from 41 local and visiting companies beginning Wednesday.

Gabriel Grilli, artistic director of the newly founded collaborative theater ensemble BrickaBrack, is the director, playwright and embodiment of "Walken." His idea is to bring the audience on a journey into the dark corners

of Walken's dreams.

"I started working on this piece many, many years ago after I had worked with Chris in New York in 1995," Grilli says. "I had the idea and workshopped it in New York a long time ago. I was never really happy with that version."

Until recently, few people remembered that Walken was one of the four people on the yacht Splendour with Wood — along with her husband, Robert Wagner, and captain Dennis Davern — the night she drowned in 1981.

A 2009 book to which Davern contributed helped reopen the investigation, and just this month Wood's death certificate was amended from accidental drowning to "drowning and other undetermined factors."

"When all this news started to come out about Natalie Wood's death being re-examined, I just thought, we need to look at that Walken piece again," Grilli says. He changed the focus to Walken's relationship with Wood.

"The catalyst for this piece is the idea that he hasn't really dealt with what happened," Grilli explains. "Obviously, I don't know the reality of that, I don't know if he's haunted by this or not, but that served as the premise for our piece. That he's been sort of storing away his emotions about this for the past 30 years because the truth has never really been told about it."

The play also explores Walken's background and life outside of the movie industry. Grilli combines public statements by the iconic and oft-imitated actor with original writing.

"It will be interesting to see what the audience recognizes as coming from him and what we've manufactured," Grilli says. "There's a really thin line there sometimes."

IF YOU GO

Stalking Christopher Walken

Presented by BrickaBrack

Where: Exit Theatre, 156 Eddy St., S.F.

When: 7:30 p.m. Sept. 8-9, 10:30 p.m. Sept. 10 and Sept. 13, 7 p.m. Sept. 12, 6 p.m. Sept. 15

Tickets: \$10

Contact: (415) 673-3847, www.sffringe.org

Read more at the San Francisco

Examiner: <http://www.sfexaminer.com/entertainment/theater/2012/08/journey-christopher-walken-s-mind#ixzz25oOzAT6C>