

# 'Motha Has Lived: Almost a Memoir' writes its own narrative

By Gloria Rivera



PROVIDED PHOTO.

Zoe Walker-Itoh stars in 'Motha Has Lived: Almost a Memoir,' which plays September 20 - 23 at Geva Theatre Center.

Encapsulating one's youth into a memoir comes with the difficulty of choosing which details of that life are most important to include. During the Rochester Fringe Festival this year, performer Zoe Walker-Itoh will present **"Motha Has Lived: Almost a Memoir,"** a story that blends fact and fiction to tell a narrative about love, life, and the New York City disco era.

Walker-Itoh is a writer, actor, director, and educator who aims to take a stand in her work, and does not allow the way people perceive her, based on looks or preconceived notions, to determine her worth.

Her piece, which runs September 20 through 23 at Geva Theatre Center's Fielding Stage, is 'almost' a memoir – because although some of it may contain embellishments, all of it explores her true self in an era of risk-taking where she was able to be herself.

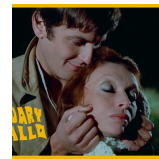
## UPCOMING EVENTS

Tue 16	Wed 17	Thu 18	Fri 19	Sat 20	Sun 21	Mon 22
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### Contra Dance in the South Wedge

@ CDR Rose Room  
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### The Strangler

@ Little Theatre  
An unconventional French giallo released before the sub-genre's popularity boom, The Strangler...



### Cruel Intentions (35mm)

@ Little Theatre  
So Fetch! CRUEL INTENTIONS Friday, January 19, 2023 | 7:30pm Little Theatre...

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“Motha Has Lived: Almost a Memoir” was born when Walker-Itoh and her daughter were cleaning out a closet and found photos from NYC in the 1980s. There were photos of people she had loved, people she did not remember, and moments that were filled with so much growth and joy. When Walker-Itoh sat down to write, she said the piece “flowed like water.” Then, when thinking through the best place to display this work, she thought of Fringe.

A Rochester resident, Walker-Itoh has attended many projects showcased by Fringe, but notes she has yet to see one similar to hers.

“I am not trying to be a church lady, somebody’s grandma, auntie to America,” she said. “I am not trying to be a storyteller sitting there in her African garb sitting on a stool spouting prophetic wisdom. I am all of those things, but that is not only who I am.”

Walker-Itoh describes the piece as poignant, but hopes it will also invoke joy and comedic relief in her viewers through a level of authenticity they may not be used to seeing. “There are no roles for me out here that allow me to fully express who I am,” she said, “and I said, ‘I will create my own opportunity to act, be, say, and do exactly what I see fit.’”

Fiona Kyle, Fringe venue manager at Geva Theatre, says the staff views this year’s festival as an opportunity to highlight local artists’ talent. Geva has worked with Walker-Itoh on other projects, and Kyle is excited to continue this partnership.

“What I hope [audiences] get out of her performance is what the love of theater can do to your life,” she said, “and how theater can change your life both artistically and personally – and the amount of joy that exists in the performing arts.”

*Gloria Rivera is a Goldring Arts Journalism and Communication graduate student at the Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University. The cohort previewed Fringe as part of a summer class.*



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