



arts

BARREL OF MONKEYS

When it comes to improv comedy, the reigning champion is the "Friday Night Improvs," where audiences have howled for 18 years (or, if you prefer, more than 600 performances). But improv comedy has some serious longevity in this town: For 10 years, the Amish Monkeys have plied their spontaneous trade, playing improv games, suffering improv pratfalls and bombarding their fans with gaffes, puns and double-entendres—all made up on the spot. Describing themselves as an

"improv invasion," the Amish Monkeys spin sketches and invent worlds using only a blank stage and a couple of fold-out chairs. And unlike many improvisers, these folks are diverse in age and PG-13 in tone, making their shows fairly family-friendly. This Saturday, Aug 8, come celebrate a decade of simian deviance with one of Pittsburgh's oldest comedy troupes.

(The Amish Monkeys perform at the Gemini Theater, 7501 Penn Ave., Point Breeze. 8 p.m., one night only. \$8. Tickets and info: 412/243-5201, amishmonkeys.com) —Robert Isenberg, PM Theater Editor

wine&dine

TOMORROW MAKE IT TAMARI

Anyone who says Pittsburgh is provincial should take a trip to Lawrenceville, which is anything but these days. As far as eating goes, I could keep myself busy for a while having breakfast, lunch or dinner, coffee or cocktails, at the many illuminated places springing up among all of the galleries, antiques shops and generally sophisticated destinations.

One step inside the brand-new Tamari, an Asian/Latin fusion and sushi house, and you know it is anything but ordinary. I take in a deep breath and for a moment feel as if I have been abducted into a foreign landscape. The long bar and extended sushi bar line the room in a way that actually defines the place; chefs in black caps work furiously behind towers of flame, adding visual interest to an already beautiful interior. Even the plates are gorgeous—white porcelain in lovely shapes, meant for mixing and sharing.

I already had been advised to try calamari on a skewer, which holds two tiny (this really is tapas; no Pittsburgh portions) extremely tasty creatures with three beautiful dipping sauces—ponzu butter, ginger and chimichurri, one better than the next. The entrees are all under \$18, but we opted for small plates, the grilled skewers, cebiche and maki. Fish tacos with pineapple, mango salsa and tempura jalapeño were just as good as our server had promised.

Desserts are equally unusual, if you can imagine a chocolate-ganache tart with cinnamon and cayenne pepper, which was both lush and hot.

Go early or go late to get a seat, and remember it's the city. There's no dress code, though there is an air of sophistication even with people in jeans.

We took coffee and dessert to the deck, where there's a view of the city, handsome and twinkling like a movie backdrop against the backs of the very long, brick buildings built during the old steel-boom days. Porches, decks and balconies lit with Christmas lights combined with exotic food and beautiful architecture make having an evening cocktail or dessert feel like a walk on the moon. Look for a longer review of Tamari in October's Pittsburgh Magazine. (Tamari, 3519 Butler St., Lawrenceville; 412/325-3435, tamari.pgh.com) —Deborah McDonald, PM Restaurant Critic

sports

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

The Pittsburgh Steelers spend less and less time in Latrobe each summer, which is kind of too bad for those sentimental traditionalists among us who like to believe that championship seasons are forged in the heat of Westmoreland County. It's also too bad for those fans who believe millionaire football players need to be humbled every once in a while by sleeping in a college dormitory for five or six weeks.

This year, the Steelers' stay at St. Vincent College is less than 21 days. But one tradition is staying the same: The Friday night scrimmage under the lights at Latrobe High School. The Steelers will be there beginning at 7 p.m. this Fri., Aug. 7. It's a session that breaks up the monotony of the two-a-day sessions at St. Vincent for the players, and the Steelers usually respond by giving the crowd a spirited exhibition. If you go, remember to bring a nonperishable food item that you can donate to Westmoreland County Food Bank.

If you miss the Friday appearance, you can always take in a weekday-afternoon session at St. Vincent beginning at 2:55 p.m. The campus opens at 1:30 p.m., and the UPMC Steelers Experience and the Coca-Cola Traveling Great Hall exhibit add to the atmosphere.

There's no admission, but there's also no guarantee you'll get close enough to your favorite Steeler to coax an autograph or even to get a good look at him. But it's August; it's a classic setting, and it's the Steelers. There are worse ways to spend summer afternoons.—Bill MODOONO, PM Sportswriter

foodflash

HISTORY, ART AND VEGETABLES AT THE FRICK

You can tour a historic home, visit an art museum, stroll the grounds and have lunch at a charming little café, among other attractions, but who ever thought of the Frick Art & Historical Center as a model of sustainable agriculture where you can buy your vegetables?

Cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes (red, cherry, heirloom varieties), peppers, squash, various types of onions, green beans, okra, lettuce, garlic, basil and a variety of culinary herbs—all grown on the estate—can be purchased at the gift shop during regular hours. Of course offerings vary from day to day depending on what is in season and what the harvests yield. Prices vary, but selections average from \$2 to \$5.

You can continue to do your shopping at the Frick through October. Word is the produce will be available again next year; sales typically begin in May.

By the way, if you enjoy dining at the Café at the Frick, you may already have enjoyed the estate-grown produce, which contributes to the selections on the menu.

Also, while you're there, don't miss the new show, "The Dutch Italianates: 17th-Century Masterpieces From Dulwich Picture Gallery, London," which continues through Sept. 20 at the Frick Art Museum. (Frick Art & Historical Center, 7227 Reynolds St., Point Breeze. Tues.-Sun., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Info: 412/371-0600, thefrickpittsburgh.org) —Mike May, PM Executive Editor

event

SUMMER FAMILY DAY

Join Manchester Craftsmen's Guild on Fri., Aug. 7, from 4 to 7 p.m. for Summer Family Day at 1815 Metropolitan St. on the North Shore. It's free and open to the public! This event will include fun studio activities for all ages, artist talks and refreshments.

Summer Family Day celebrates the conclusion of MCG Youth's Summer Intensive program for teens 13 to 18 years old. It's also held in conjunction with a reception for the "New Work of Diverse Pennsylvania Artists" exhibition, which will be on display at MGC through Aug. 21.

For more information, go to manchesterguild.org.

food find VIVA SANGRIA!

Hot evenings in Pittsburgh are a short-lived indulgence. Which is why we make the most of them by dining and socializing outdoors as late into the early fall as the balmy air allows. The best drink to sip while relaxing outdoors? A pitcher of old-fashioned sangria, traditionally made with Spanish red wine, chopped citrus fruit, sugar and spirits (usually brandy or cognac), served over ice with a splash of carbonated soda.

The drink comes to us from the Iberian Peninsula, where it was first created to mask the taste of inexpensive wine. But at local bars and restaurants, sangria is made from scratch with fine wines and seasonal fruits.

Try one or several of these spots for perfect pitchers: Mallorca, mallorcarestaurant.com; Ibiza Tapas and Wine Bar, ibizatapasrestaurant.com; Mad Mex, madmex.com; Kaya, bigburrito.com/kaya; El Campesino, elcampesino.net. —Liz Fetchin, PM Associate Editor