

Friday, July 11 - Sunday, July 13, 2008 • 24 hours

■ BURLESQUE FESTIVAL

Bras in the Ballroom

Tassels, G-strings and feather boas will be a popular choice of casual wear this weekend in what is promising to be one of the more titillating gatherings of the summer.

The inaugural Toronto Burlesque Festival kicks off tonight, uniting fans and students of the vintage form of sensual entertainment in the city.

While the audience takes delight in viewing what will often be an erotic display on stage, festival coordinator and performer Sauci Calla Horra said her fun comes when she's able to put on the flamboyant wigs and costumes to become what she describes as a larger-than-life cartoon character of her normal persona.

"When I was a little girl I always wanted to play dress up," she said. "Well, this is dress up for grown ups."

Designed to build and foster a community amongst performers and its fans, the festival becomes only the second of its kind in Canada, joining the popular event that has been held annually over the past few years in Vancouver.

Though burlesque events traditionally offer other forms of entertainment, such as comedy and

music performance, Calla Horra said it's the erotic dancers who are the staple attraction of the show.

The style of striptease had suffered through a drought in terms of popularity for decades, which Calla Horra attributes to boundaries constantly being pushed over what is permitted during a dancer's act, and what they were al-

lowed to display.

However, she feels that is also what helped rekindled interest in burlesque performances in recent years, as the overabundant use of sex in society has made people yearn for the more sensual display of the human body.

"You can see more sexually explicit images on a bus shelter ad," she said. "In terms of the sexuality, I think we're pretty PG-13; you keep your bits covered."

Performances will be held in three different venues (times and locations are available at www.torontoburlesquefestival.com) and there will be various workshops offered to the general public teaching the fine points of how to put on an erotic burlesque performance.

The festival will also be used to help raise money for breast cancer research, with a meet-and-greet planned for this evening at the Gladstone Hotel Ballroom on Queen Street West.

Aside from donations at the door, eight bras that will be worn by performers this weekend will be up for auction this evening, with all proceeds benefiting The Campbell Family Institute at The Princess Margaret Hospital.

— Jim MacDonald, for 24 hours



DANCER: Sauci Calla Horra performs at the Gladstone Hotel Ballroom.