



Bust

Written and Performed by Lauren Weedman

BUST is Lauren Weedman's semi-autobiographical work built around her experiences working as a volunteer advocate in a Southern California prison for women. With one foot in Hollywood and the other in jail, the former Daily Show correspondent careens wildly between the two worlds, taking us on a hilarious, poignant, and completely unforgettable ride.

"Lauren Weedman [is] the funniest woman alive."

- **The Stranger (Seattle)**

"brehtaking ... a female Robin Williams."

- **LA Weekly**

"Weedman ... has seemingly swallowed a cast of hundreds."

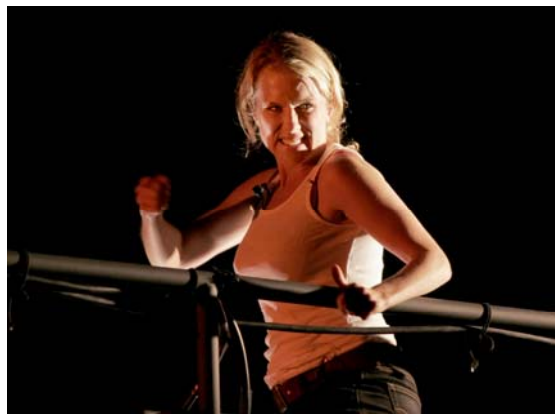
- **Seattle Weekly**

"... excels in its vivid prison segments and its soft-target but rib-tickling satirical snippets and is on track to be one of Weedman's best shows."

- **Seattle Times**

"Bust is very, very funny; some of it is poignant; and it whizzes by in a glimmer."

- **Talkin' Broadway**





Lauren Weedman made her television debut on Comedy Central's Emmy Award-winning *THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART* in 2001 as a featured Correspondent. It was at that same time that Lauren was a regular on NPR's national political satire show *REWIND*, and appeared in her solo show *HOMECOMING*, Off-Broadway at the Westside Theatre.

The New York Times said of Lauren and *HOMECOMING*, "Like Bob Newhart in his early stand-up routines, she's particularly good at making her points – and making us feel clever. Most important, she's just plain funny, physically and verbally." For two years, Lauren was also a cast member for the long-running local-turned-national comedy

show *ALMOST LIVE* for Comedy Central.

After studying, writing and performing in Amsterdam for five years, Lauren returned to the States with a bang. Her first play *HOMECOMING* began as a 15-minute performance art piece that grew into a full-length show, and ultimately toured with the Seattle Repertory Theatre.

Later that year, *HOMECOMING* was featured at HBO's U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen, Colorado, and later found its way to New York City. *HOMECOMING* earned Lauren the honor of being published in *Women Playwrights: The Best Plays of 2002*.

In the fall of 2002, The Empty Space Theatre in Seattle premiered her solo work *RASH*, directed by Trip Cullman with music by David Russell and produced by Arielle Tepper Productions. Later that year, *RASH* was recognized by *The Seattle Times*' Footlight Awards, with nods for both Best New Play and Best Solo Performance.

Both *RASH* and Lauren received tremendous reviews including "Weedman comes so very close to celebrating indulgence rather than just contemplating it that when she manages to do both things at once, it's dizzyingly brilliant: She ends up hitting all her targets – including herself" (*Seattle Weekly*); and "Since first turning up on Seattle stages in the early 1990s, Lauren Weedman has proved herself one terrifically funny gal. And more people know that since she moved to New York two years ago and earned some well-deserved breaks in TV and Off-Broadway." (*The Seattle Times*)

Lauren Weedman currently lives and performs in Los Angeles. Last year, Lauren was featured on multiple episodes of *RENO 911* for Comedy Central. In addition, Lauren's most recent work, *WRECKAGE*, was selected for The NOW Theatre Festival at the REDCAT Theatre at The Disney Music Hall after an acclaimed month-long run at the Theatre Babylon in Seattle. This year, Lauren appeared as a lead character along with Eddie Griffin in *PRYOR OFFENSES*, a half-hour pilot for Showtime based on Richard Pryor's life.

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THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW



OPRAH'S FAVORITE THINGS, GUESTS, AND NEWS

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2006

[Time as a jail volunteer is the key to comedian's new 'Bust'](#)

Lauren Weedman, bad girl of confessional comedy, goes to jail to do good and to do well. The volunteer work was arduous and rewarding. Now comes the struggle to do well with the jail tales mixed and matched with confessional comedy.

the Stranger

Seattle's Only Theater Section

Jul 6 - Jul 12, 2006

Bust

Empty Space Theatre

Through Aug 5.

Dress and Redress

Lauren Weedman Does It Solo

BY [BRENDAN KILEY](#)

Comedy is clearly one of Lauren Weedman's gifts – the other is specificity. For an autobiographical solo performer who portrays herself as a self-involved goofball who's constantly putting her foot in her mouth, she has a remarkable ability to empathize with a galaxy of characters, from twitchy meth addicts to piggish Hollywood directors.

Bust, directed by Allison Narver, is a study in such empathy. Weedman – an actor and former *Daily Show with Jon Stewart* correspondent who lives in Los Angeles – volunteers to be an inmates' advocate in a women's jail. She wants to help people, right some wrongs, and "do something that isn't about me." Her primary task is to listen, but talking is what she does best, sometimes with (brilliantly) disastrous results. While searching through the byzantine hallways of a social services building, looking for her prison orientation, she talks loudly on her cell phone about a recent incident involving "really, just the tiniest amount of cocaine" and making out with a stranger in a bathroom. Turns out she's blaring her sordid story into the open doorway of the orientation. "Um, you're talking to your *sponsor*?" the volunteer coordinator asks hopefully. Minutes later, Weedman jokes that she signed up "because a women's jail is the only place where I have a shot at being the prettiest girl in the room."

It's easy to forget that Weedman is a solo performer, evoking the conflicting moods of a roomful of people all by her lonesome. In two scenes, she enacts a string of inmates' friends and relatives, sitting along the bulletproof visitation wall, talking on the telephone receivers to the prisoners. She wheels herself from station to station in a rolling chair becoming, in seconds, an old woman praying, wanting to press her hands on the Plexiglas but disgusted with its grime, then a screaming woman with a screaming child, then a randy man insisting "lemme see that ass," then her slouching self. She leaps from one persona to the next, bounding across gaps of race, class, and gender like an acrobat. *Bust* could use a few tweaks but she remains one of the most entertaining and transfixing artists around.

SEATTLE WEEKLY

July 5, 2006

Hollywood or . . .

Lauren Weedman turns social work into autobiographical theater.

By [Suzanne Beal](#)

Bust makes witty use of a title that conflates feminine cleavage and legal arrest—perfectly suited for a play that contrasts making it big time in Los Angeles with doing time in a women's jail. Lauren Weedman is well-known in Seattle for solo performance pieces that mirror her own personal trials and tribulations. Semiautobiographical, *Bust* tracks Weedman's volunteer work with Friends Outside, providing emotional support to female inmates, while she maneuvers her way as an actress-writer through the superficiality of Hollyweird. The play also examines the meaning of freedom by perp-walking it into the limelight. Weedman, a petite blonde, has seemingly swallowed a cast of hundreds, all vividly evoked as she meets her fellow volunteers, penetrates the labyrinth of the jail system, confronts an editor at *Glamour*, and braves the banter of the women's sauna.

Directed by Allison Narver, *Bust* is also the inaugural production in the Empty Space Theatre's versatile new digs on Capitol Hill. The theater boasts mobile banks of seats as opposed to the fixed proscenium setup in the old Fremont space, and Weedman makes the most of her (relative) liberty. The main stage's wide-open layout melds beautifully with Narver's excellent direction and Carol Wolfe Clay's creative set design; her minimal sets magnify various modes of imprisonment, from editorial authority to being stuck with a God-given body (Weedman's ability to work out her glutes during the performance is impressive). Weedman is absolutely hilarious without detracting from the somber realities of life behind bars. Blame it on Friends Outside's stipulation that its volunteers keep personal information to a minimum; Weedman's formerly pent-up expression bursts forth like a well-oiled gun.



Friday, June 30, 2006 - 12:00 AM

EMPTY SPACE THEATRE

Theater Review

A horrific, hilarious journey into prison hell, L.A. fluff

By Misha Berson

Seattle Times theater critic

Trust Lauren Weedman to know this: When you try to do something for someone else, you reveal a lot about yourself.

Weedman's new solo piece "Bust" is rife with hilarity and home truths gleaned the hard way. The still-evolving stage memoir is partly about the admirable impulse to do good in the world (in this case, by volunteering as an advocate for indigent female prisoners), yet it smartly leaves sentimentality and self-congratulation out of the equation.

Such is typical of actor-performer Weedman, the Los Angeles-based self-portraitist who honed her impressive talent at Empty Space Theatre and returns on this occasion to inaugurate the company's first season in its new home, the Lee Center for the Arts.

For artistic director Allison Narver's mounting of "Bust," the stage is quite bare — apart from day-glo stripes on the floor like police markers at a crime scene, and striking slashes and squares of illumination in Jessica Trundy's fierce lighting design.

But Weedman fills the void with take-no-prisoners insights and colorful, confrontational characters. These range from hard-knocks women inmates and macho guards at the Los Angeles County Jail, to narcissistic gym buddies sharing diet tips and pet causes. (The latter include a dog-lover who, in a biting funny riff, shares her passion for rescuing abandoned dachshunds.)

As in previous solo outings ("Rash," "Amsterdam") Weedman portrays herself as a klutzy, insecure cut-up who charges into situations that quickly become overwhelming — and self-revealing.

She jests about volunteering with the prison-advocacy group Friends Outside to get "a shot at being the prettiest girl in the room," for once, in beauty-obsessed L.A. But the stark truths of incarceration are driven home during a scared-straight tour of the jail.

In a long, gripping sequence that veers from hilarious to harrowing, we hear and see what Weedman takes in: The clanging of cell doors. The warnings of guards not to "coddle" wily, hard-core prisoners. The spectacle of seven people crammed into cells built for four.

That scandalous vision is achieved entirely by the stunned look of horror on Weedman's mobile face. She does her own double takes superbly and is also a highly adroit vocal mimic, shifting between Latino and Valley Girl accents in a matter of split seconds.

The indigent inmates Weedman is assigned to are drawn in specific strokes. An illiterate, homeless prostitute and meth addict pathetically grateful to be offered help — but well beyond its reach. A drama queen whose urgent neediness pushes every one of Weedman's do-gooder, people-pleaser buttons. And a frightened young first-offender, lacking the legal or financial resources for a defense.

Weedman's intense depictions of, and responses to, these women are contrasted with a society of Hollywood wannabes obsessed with such weighty concerns as snagging a role in a soft-drink commercial.

"Bust" excels in its vivid prison segments and its soft-target but rib-tickling satirical snippets and is on track to be one of Weedman's best shows. And it's a fine opener for the new digs of Empty Space, a company long devoted to making us laugh, cringe and ponder.

Misha Berson: mberson@seattletimes.com

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THEATER/FINE ARTS

Tuesday, July 4, 2006

On Stage: Weedman covers all the genres with 'Bust'

By [JOE ADCOCK](#)
P-I THEATER CRITIC

The Empty Space Theatre is your one-stop shopping emporium just now, ready to meet nearly any theatrical entertainment need. Comedy? Tragedy? Satire? Pathos? Significant social comment? Daffy character vignettes? There's even a bit of music and dance. All this under one roof, and a spiffy roof it is, too, covering the new \$6.75 million Lee Center for the Arts at Seattle University.

Inaugurating the Space's tenure at the Lee Center is "Bust," a one-woman show. The woman is writer/performer Lauren Weedman. Those who have seen previous Weedman works -- including "Rash," "Amsterdam" and "Wreckage" -- know that this artist is a master of multiple portraiture. In "Bust" she must depict, caricature, sketch or suggest something like 50 characters, ranging from high-power media monsters to the lowest of low-status unfortunates.

At the same time Weedman has been making a career as a performing artist and writer in Los Angeles, she's been working a few hours a week as a volunteer advocate in a women's jail.

Adding emotional ambiguity to Weedman's tale is an intense awareness of her own dubious moral standing. She told a heinous lie when she was in college (recounted in "Wreckage"). And she found a way to profit by that experience, writing about it for a glossy national magazine. And then, when the article appeared (sensationalized by canny editors), Weedman became an object of nationwide loathing.

So there she is, trying to help a prostitute, a fraud perpetrator, an aggravated assailant and an inscrutable liar. And she's juggling her own conflicting feelings of unworthiness and righteous indignation.

To give dramatic depth and background to "Bust," Weedman supplies vivid sketches of jail personnel, fellow volunteers and casual acquaintances.

Taken as a whole, the 1 1/2 hours of "Bust" are entertaining and absorbing. The show represents a step forward for Weedman. She ridicules not only harmless nobodies but also really unsavory somebodies. And she evokes not just derision but also compassion.

Director Allison Narver balances hectic stretches with moments of reflection and contemplation. There are times when the audience can catch its breath between "Bust's" wild plunges through chaos and confusion.

Giving a sense of everywhere and anywhere is Carol Wolfe Clay's expansive steel and concrete setting. Lighting by Jessica Trundy and sound by Mark Nichols compartmentalize the stage into visiting room, chapel, health club, audition studio, editorial office and jail labyrinths.

"Bust" runs at the Lee Center, 901 12th Ave., through Aug. 5. Tickets are \$25 and \$30, with discounts for students, seniors and groups; 206-547-7500 or www.emptyspace.org.

SEATTLE

by David-Edward Hughes

***Bust* is a Smash at the Empty Space**

Empty Space (they've had at least four homes in the 15 years since this writer came to Seattle, and several before) has launched its first season in its new abode, the brand new Lee Center at Seattle University. Space favorite Lauren Weedman, star of such past solo shows as *Amsterdam* as well as a stellar player in the first incarnation of *Wuthering! Heights! The! Musical!* is positively incandescent in *Bust*, her one-woman exploration of her own work as a volunteer advocate in an L.A. women's jail.



Director Allison Narver has successfully aided the actress/writer in this tour-de-force. Much of *Bust* is very, very, funny; some of it is poignant; and it whizzes by in a glimmer. Weedman amazes with the ability to suggest in a limited space in time, the entire personas of the women (and a few men) she worked with in the jail. Her time spent with the prisoners is fairly seamlessly juxtaposed with her personal experiences, particularly a misfired attempt to reap financial rewards by recounting her college era moral transgression (documented in her solo show *Wreckage*) to a women's magazine, which results in a terrible backlash against her. But there is no self pity in this show, no more than she takes pity on the women in the prison. By presenting their plight with utmost simplicity, they become more real and less caricatured. Weedman's energy is unflagging and contagious, and her ability to cleanly jump back and forth between characters is most remarkable. She is not presented as a savior to those she works with, but she does sometimes make their lives, and perhaps her own, a bit better in the process.

Bust runs through August 5th at the Empty Space in Lee Center, 901 12th Avenue. Visit www.emptyspace.org online for more information.

<http://www.talkinbroadway.com/>

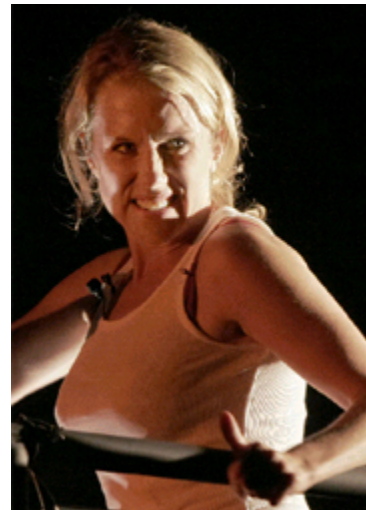


Curtain call: Bust

"That's it, dance for Pepsi, bitch."

By imaginary boy embracey

Comic self-portraitist Lauren Weedman came into my life with her short story (or is it a shameful non-fiction confession?) "Diary of a Journal Reader". It appeared in Dave Eggers' 2005 [Best American Nonrequired Reading](#), a nifty collection assembled by teens at non-profit San Fran writing lab [826 Valencia](#) -- and those kids know from funny, because I haven't laughed so hard at printed words since David Sedaris' *Naked*. One passage in particular, which has to do with a certain part of Lara Flynn Boyle's anatomy, *still* gives me the giggles. (Trust me. Read it. You'll die.)



I've since learned that Weedman is a former *Daily Show* correspondent, creator of several successful one-woman plays, and author of a book of short stories to be published later this year. So it was with big expectations that I entered Seattle University's new Lee Center for the Arts, the spankin'-new home of formerly Fremont-based [Empty Space Theatre](#), to see Weedman's latest solo piece, *Bust*.

I loved the show.

For *Bust*, the stage remains quite bare, apart from well-planned bits of illumination and CSI-ish tape on the floor. Powerhouse Weedman makes excellent use of this pleasantly non-natty canvas as she trots, climbs, and jumps around it, becoming a slew of 50+ characters (including a klutzily self-assured version of herself) that inhabited a recent chapter of her life. She decided to do volunteer work for a prison advocacy group, you see, selfishly hoping for "a shot at being the prettiest girl in the room," for a change, in ultra-plastic Los Angeles.



But -- and it's totally OK that you see this coming -- our Lauren doesn't exactly

get what she bargained for when those cell doors clink shut. We're talking hostile training sessions, boorish guards, and a generally unfavorable environment, plus the added bonuses of personal outside crises that arise as she pursues her acting career. Weedman gets the engrossing and very funny story across by marvelously shapeshifting into jail personnel, fellow volunteers, casual acquaintances, and assisted prisoners, alternating between vastly different character accents and physical movements on a dime. Right before your eyes, with what seems to be slightness and subtlety, she becomes everything from a high-power media whore to a low-status ne'er-do-well. It's brilliant to behold.

I could gush at further length about Weedman, but a good deal of credit goes to Empty Space Artistic Director Allison Narver, whose keen direction here helps convey the mishmashed tale with just the right amount of theatrical disbelief-suspension. Mark Nichols' and Jessica Trundy's sound and lighting designs, respectively, efficiently imbue this new empty space with setting and tone, from the fierce metal clangs of the LA County Jail to the ridiculous faux-euphoria of a soft drink commercial shoot.

It all makes *Bust* by turns reflective, hilarious, and compassionate. And a worthy addition to the company's daring and unconventional canon.

GO SEE BUST!

LAUREN WEEDMAN BRINGS HER ONE-WOMAN ACT TO THE EMPTY SPACE; HILARITY ENSUES

by **Melissa Santos**

Publish Date: 2006-07-05

One-person shows are by their very nature self-indulgent. Those who write and perform them have the audacity to think viewers care enough about what they think to listen to them for an hour and a half.

Usually, they are mistaken. Not so in the case of Lauren Weedman, whose solo show *Bust* is playing at the Empty Space Theatre through August 5.

The play is successful because it doesn't try to showcase Weedman's singular uniqueness, but rather that of people she met as an actress and a volunteer at a Los Angeles jail.

Weedman doesn't just sit on a stool and share her observations about the world expecting the audience to laugh. Rather, she dons a plethora of different characters to act out scenes from her life that she's found ironic, bizarre or poignant, knowing the audience will relate because they've encountered similar people and circumstances.

The play has a very coherent plot, following Weedman as she volunteers at a women's jail while pursuing her acting career. She constantly juxtaposes the superficiality of Hollywood with the desolation of life in jail, and manages to make the somewhat-tried theme seem fresh. Each of the inmates she visits as part of a program called "Beyond Bars" is quirky and believable, as are her actress friends who speak low and breathy as they perform yoga stretches in a steamroom.

As Weedman jumps amusingly from character to character, she makes audience members forget she is just one person. She's particularly impressive when she plays a misogynistic director of a Pepsi commercial and a tough-talking jail guard who assures her she will be killed during the course of her volunteer work.

Simple but effective lighting and music help the show, most notably the pink halo that surrounds Weedman when she plays the editor of *Glamour* magazine and the salsa track that accompanies her opening entrance. Her skilled characterizations make the show's 80 minutes go quickly, which is always a good thing when one is onstage alone.