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## Don't pass by inventive 'Wanderlust' at Cleveland Public Theatre

By **Tony Brown**, *The Plain Dealer*  
May 13, 2010, 5:37PM



Steve Wagner

Jonathan Ramos, left, Kevin Charnas, Adam Thatcher and Trae Hicks take a stroll through "Wanderlust: A History of Walking" at Cleveland Public Theatre.

#### REVIEW

#### Wanderlust: A History of Walking

**What:** Cleveland Public Theatre presents the world premiere of a play, adapted and directed by Matthew Earnest.

**When:** Through Saturday, May 29. Performances at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays. Special performances: 3 p.m. this Sunday and 7:30 p.m. Monday.

**Where:** CPT's Gordon Square Theatre, 6415 Detroit Ave.  
**Tickets:** \$10-\$21. Go to [cptonline.org](http://cptonline.org) or call 216-631-2727.

The mind of *Homo sapiens sapiens* evolved, over most of the 200,000 years since the emergence of the subspecies we call human, to collect and process data at about 3 mph.

That's the speed of walking -- you know, where you use your legs, feet and a little arm pumping to navigate from place to place.

In ancient times, some of our forebears began to be pulled in chariots by horses and others began riding the beasts, which today can gallop at up to 30 mph.

But it has been only in the past couple of centuries -- with the advent of the practical steam locomotive, the automobile and the airplane -- that we've demanded our brains catch up in a hurry to exponentially faster processing speeds as we go faster through the world.

This fascinating observation is but one of a multitude made in "Wanderlust: A History of Walking," which opened last weekend in Cleveland Public Theatre's Levin Theatre.

It's a work adapted by New York-based director Matthew Earnest, who's getting to be a regular around Cleveland. He's worked at Porthouse Theatre, the Beck Center for the Arts (where he will work again next season) and now Cleveland Public Theatre, where his visual, physical style is most at home.

In an unusual wrinkle, Earnest worked from a nonfiction book, **Rebecca Solnit's fascinating history of walking**. Although the book is a delightful

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read, putting such a scholarly tome on the stage runs the obvious risk of didacticism.

But in these inventive hands, it's a nonstop, highly choreographed dance-theater piece in which an indefatigable ensemble of seven walks this way, talks this way on a set (by Earnest and Curtis Young) consisting of a stage of dirt and a wall-size chalkboard on which history is writ.

From the bones of "Lucy" (a hominid who lived more than 3 million years ago and whose pelvis indicates she was bipedal) through Aristotle's Greece and the Middle Ages to modern-day Las Vegas, Earnest and crew set a perpetual human machine in motion for 100 minutes.

It's an impressive and extraordinarily entertaining education with every member of the cast pitching in: Kevin Charnas, Alexis Generette Floyd, Trae Hicks, Nicole Perrone, Jonathan Ramos, Pandora Robertson and Adam Thatcher.

Walk, don't drive, to the box office.

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