

By [John Townsend](#) July 5, 2019

Leaves of Grass—Illuminated. Photo by Mark Sauer

Leaves of Grass – Illuminated

July 12-14

Dowling Studio at Guthrie Theater, 818 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis

612-377-2224

www.guthrietheater.org

Patrick Scully's magnificent stage meditation on the heart, mind and life of the gay man who is regarded as the seminal figure of queer culture is back. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) looms also as an American who stands as a giant of world literature and his *Leaves of Grass* collection is a poetic masterwork. Scully has been selected to reprise his acclaimed piece at the Level 9 Series at the Guthrie Theater's Dowling Studio.

Scully shares, "Just as Walt Whitman continued to work and rework *Leaves of Grass* after its initial publication, I have developed and refined my Whitman show since its debut. The first performance of *Leaves of Grass – Uncut* was in July of 2014 in the Fresh Ink Series at Illusion Theater. As befits that series, the show was a work in progress, a delightful, sprawling concoction with 18 male dancers and two actors. Now, five years later, at the Guthrie, *Leaves of Grass – Illuminated*, this show will be recognizable, and yet quite different."

Over the past five years *Leaves of Grass – Illuminated* has played widely, including The Big Apple and was named Best Dramatic Actor of 2014 in *Lavender Spotlight*. Therefore it cannot help but to have evolved. As for what one can expect will reflect that, Scully points out, "Editing and some rewrites so that the show is shorter, tighter—more a gourmet meal, less a Thanksgiving feast. Whitman might say, less an opera and more a chamber work. The script is tighter, having had the benefit of input from several colleagues and collaborators, including Djola Branner, Joe Chvala, and Ben Kreilkamp."

He also says, "On a very practical level, there will be fewer dancers, only six this time (all from the original cast). And only one actor, me as Whitman."

As for what's new: "Video projections of the original dances will be layered into the new show, along with live dances, adding a poetic mystery to the dances and show. This was part of my original intention, to mount the big show at Illusion, while recording rehearsals and performances, to later reweave the recorded dances back into a live show. Videographer Nancy Mason Hauser was instrumental in this, as were projection artists Clemens Kowalski and Oscar Loeser."

"Perhaps most importantly, I have had the opportunity to perform this show nearly four score times over the last five years. I imagine I become a bit more Whitmanesque with each show. The title change, from *Uncut* to *Illuminated*, is an attempt to clarify the goal of the show, to illuminate. (Though Walt and I both miss the double entendre of the old name)."

<https://www.lavendermagazine.com/featured-home-page/arts-spotlight-629/>

Be warned: when you see *Leaves of Grass – Illuminated*, you can't help but be struck at how Scully becomes amazingly close to the pure essence of Walt Whitman in corporeal form. It's uncanny!