Fresh theater at the Market

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The Market Theater in Cambridge had the kind of crazy start that perhaps marks the beginning of many great ideas. Founder Greg Carr, blessed with more funds than theater experience, launched the theater a year ago with a director (Tom Cole) who had never spent a day as the artistic director of any theater.

That may sound like a formula for disaster. But as it prepares to celebrate its first birthday next month, the Market Theater has distinguished itself as perhaps the most daring theater in the Boston area, staging some of the most memorable plays of the year.

The theater very quickly positioned itself on the cutting edge. One of their first productions was “Swimming in March,” a new play from Kate Robin, who even as her show was being staged in Cambridge, was featured in a New Yorker magazine article because she was one of the staff writers on a daring new HBO show called “Six Feet Under,” now perhaps the hottest show on television, lauded for its smart and edgy writing. More recently, they brought in famed card magician Ricky Jay, whose stage show was directed by living theater legend David Mamet, and the show drew audiences not only from New York, but also from the South. And they’re currently staging perhaps their most ambitious project to date — in a collaboration with Harvard University, they commissioned acclaimed, OBIE-winning theater artist Ping Chong, who’s produced “Reason,” a theater piece built entirely on improvisation, like an aerialist working from Market Theater’s well-received production of “Sheil’s Shorts.”