

ThreeWeeks

EDINBURGH



ALSO INSIDE...



JULIANA CARNEIRO



LINN LORKIN

**The secret's out:
The only way is John Robins**



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THEATRE

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THEATRE

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News Bites

Edinburgh Fringe Society Chair steps down

The Chair of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, Elizabeth Smith, has announced she is standing down after seventeen years in the role, concluding – probably rightly – that now is the time for some “fresh thinking” at the head of the organisation’s board, she having overseen radical changes at the Society, especially in the last five years.

The Fringe Society represents and provides services to the wide-ranging and rather diverse ‘fringe community’, the collective of independent performers, producers and venue managers who make the world’s largest cultural festival happen each August.

The most tricky time for Smith as Chair of the Society’s board came in 2008 of course, when various failings within the organisation caused the official Fringe box office to collapse, causing chaos for venues, promoters, performers, reviewers and ticket-buyers alike. While staff members coped with the practical side of the crisis, the Society’s stakeholders looked to Smith and her board for strong leadership, and some of those most affected were very disappointed with the response, which exasperated wounds in the wider Fringe community that have taken a long time to heal.

That said, Smith did then oversee a radical overhaul of the Society, including the creation of a new management structure and constitution, which has, in the main, made the organisation much stronger, even if certain decisions, whether made by board or management, do annoy certain constituents from time to time (as they inevitably will with such a diverse constituency).

And arguably many of the issues of old, that blew up in 2008, are in the main resolved, meaning new challenges are now ahead, making this probably the right time for a new figurehead at the top.

After Smith announced she was standing down at the Fringe Society’s AGM last weekend, Vice-Chair Pip Utton told ThreeWeeks: “During Elizabeth’s time on the board, the Fringe Society has undergone one of the most important transformations in its history, with the Constitutional Review resulting in an entirely new constitution to ensure that the Society is best serving the participants, venues, audiences and other stakeholders who come to Edinburgh for this unique festival. I would like to thank her for her oversight and leadership during this process, and pay tribute for the way she has worked so hard for the good of the Fringe”.

Welcome to Week Four

While many of Edinburgh’s summer festivities reach their climax this weekend – with the end of the Fringe, Tattoo, Book and Politics Festivals – don’t forget there are Festival events right through to the end of the month.

The Edinburgh International Festival runs through to the grand Fireworks Concert in Princes Street Gardens on 2 Sep, the traditional finale to the wider Edinburgh Festival. This year the Scottish Chamber Orchestra will play music by Walton, Vaughan Williams and Prokofiev as the fireworks explode above the castle.

And also don’t forget the Edinburgh Mela on Leith Links the same weekend, a great way to round off the festival month. Check this year’s programme at www.edinburgh-mela.co.uk

And the winner is...

Now we are in the final week of the Fringe, the number of awards being dished out is reaching its peak, with performers and shows from most strands of the Festival being commended by one awards programme or another.

As we go to press, we are still awaiting the shortlist for the overall Edinburgh Comedy Award, which will be presented on Saturday (25 Aug), a day after the winners are announced for this year’s Malcolm Hardee Awards (more on which from the man in charge, John Fleming, on page 4).

AMUSED MOOSE AWARDS

The other big comedy awards at the Fringe are organised by Amused Moose, who have prizes for both brand new talent and more established acts who are yet to release their first DVD. The winner of the latter, the Amused Moose Laughter Awards, was chosen at The Bongo Club on Sunday, an industry panel having selected ten finalists last week, with panel and audience alike voting for the overall winner.

The finalists this year were Alistair Barrie, Asher Treleaven, Carl Hutchinson, DeAnne Smith, Gordon Southern, Helen Arney, Jim Campbell, Laurence Clark and Yianni, but the overall winner was the Fringe’s favourite Frenchman, Monsieur Marcel Lucont. He gets £5000 towards the development of his comedy career, a commercial-standard DVD recording of his show and, of course, a shiny moose trophy, as pictured above.

Commenting on this year’s final, Stuart Snaith, MD of DVD company Zentertain, which supports Amused Moose’s Fringe awards, told ThreeWeeks: “The energy and excitement that host Rob Beckett created in the Bongo Club, and the phenomenal performances by all the finalists, who Zentertain will be talking to over the next couple of months about possible DVD deals and support, was palpable. And the enthusiasm of the committed industry panel, from as far apart as Edinburgh, Melbourne and San Francisco, is to be commended and demonstrates the international respect that the Amused Moose Awards hold, and we are delighted to support these extremely thorough talent searches”.

FRINGE FIRSTS & HERALD ANGELS

Elsewhere, in Fringe-Awards-Ville, Scottish newspapers The Scotsman and The Herald both dished out a second helping of their respective Edinburgh Festival awards at the end of last week.

The Scotsman’s Fringe Firsts go to productions of new plays, and the second batch of winners include two Assembly shows – Macrobert, Utter and HighTide’s ‘Educating Ronnie’ and Baxter Theatre Centre and South

African State Theatre’s ‘Mies Julie’ – and one at Pleasance and Summerhall respectively, Richard Marsh and Katie Bonna’s ‘Dirty Great Love Story’ and Stellar Quines’s ‘The List’. The Traverse – customary winners of many of the Fringe First gongs – also took two in this second batch, with Daniel Kitson’s latest theatrical project and the very current political playwriting venture ‘Theatre Uncut’ both getting prizes.

The second batch of The Herald’s slightly more random Angel Awards also commended the Traverse’s ‘Theatre Uncut’ show and Stellar Quines’ ‘The List’, while other winners were LaN-T003 for ‘Jishin’ (Zoo Southside), Teatr Zar for ‘Caesarian Section – Essays On Suicide’ (Summerhall), Suzuki Company of Toga for ‘Waiting for Orestes: Electra’ (Edinburgh International Festival) and Ludus Baroque for their concerts at Canongate Kirk. The second Herald Archangel award of the Festival went to actor and director Andy Manley for the various shows he has presented over the years for younger audiences at the Fringe.

Both The Scotsman and The Herald will hand out one more set of gongs before the Festival is complete.

MUSICAL & ACTING GONGS

Finally in Festival Awards news for now, nominations were released late last week for both this year’s Musical Theatre Matters Awards and The Stage’s Acting Excellence At The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Awards, the former celebrating musicals staged at the Festival (obviously), and the latter commending professional acting talent appearing in the Fringe’s theatre and musical strands.

Although the theatre programmes of Pleasance, Assembly and the Traverse tend to dominate the Stage’s Awards (though not completely), the MTM Awards cover more bases, with C, Space, Gilded Balloon, Bedlam and Northern Stage shows also getting a look in. Some shows are shortlisted in both the musical and acting awards, including the Q Brothers for ‘Othello – The Remix’ and Comunicado for ‘Tam O’Shanter’.

Full shortlists are available at ThreeWeeks.co.uk/festivalawards. The MTM Awards will be presented on Wednesday 22 Aug, and The Stage Awards on Sunday 26 Aug.

MORE AWARDS NEWS

For updates on all the other awards still to come, keep an eye on ThreeWeeks.co.uk/festivalawards.

And don’t forget our ThreeWeeks Editors’ Awards. These go to the ten things that the ThreeWeeks editors believe made this year’s Edinburgh Festival extra special. Winners can be people, plays, productions, companies, venues or even whole festivals. This year’s Editors’ Awards will be presented at theSpace @ Symposium Hall on Saturday 25 Aug at 10.30am. More at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/awards.

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CARO WRITES...

Oh my goodness. It's the final week already.

Well, as I write this, it's not quite the final week, but it will be within a matter of hours. And yet it seems like ten minutes since I first opened my copy of the Fringe Programme, and sprained my wrist, because it was so very, very heavy. But you know that's always the way. At the start, you think: "Wow, a full month. I'm going to really get to know Edinburgh. See the sights. Go on an open top bus. Search out all the best restaurants". Yet literally (okay, not literally) ten seconds after you set foot in Edinburgh, it's pretty much all over and you've wasted all your time hanging out in venue bars and not visiting art galleries and the castle after all.

But never mind. You've still got a few more days, and if you've any sense, you'll make sure you enjoy them, whether it's by cramming in a load more shows, seeing the sights, sleeping, or, as I do, making sure you see every last Fringe friend in this final week, before it's too late. I have lots and lots of friends in this city in August and I am here, off and on, for a month. Yet often the first I see of them is just a few days before I leave. It's a consequence of the fact that we are all so busy of course, and makes this last week a whirlwind of trying to fit in as many engagements as possible around getting as many reviews up on the website as I can. It's fun, though, so I recommend it.

I can also recommend (yes, tenuous link) that you read the contents of this week's issue, because we have yet more brilliant stuff for you to enjoy. Regulars Lynn Ruth and John Fleming return with their final columns of the Festival, and we also have one from that lovely Catie Wilkins. We also have a plethora of interviews with a long list of brilliant and interesting people, including cover star John Robins, and his fellow comedians DeAnne Smith, Vikki Stone, Luke Toulson and Chris McCausland. On the more theatrical side, we speak to Peter Marino from 'Desperately Seeking The Exit' and Molly Naylor from 'My Robot Heart', as well as Juliana Carneiro from International Festival show 'Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir'. Also featured are Piano Bar Lady Linn Lorkin, and the folk behind quirky art installation Hunt And Darton Café. And, of course, we have lots of reviews.

This is the last ThreeWeeks Weekly Edition of 2012, so it's my duty to now extend thanks; to all our hard-working team members, to all the press offices and PRs who've dealt with our queries and requests, to our all important advertisers, and to anyone else who has enabled us in any way to do our best this year. You've all been great, and I look forward to seeing you in 2013.

Caro @ ThreeWeeks

Lynn's letter to Edinburgh: See the city and try a few new twists

SP COLUMN

A broken foot meant Lynn Ruth Miller didn't make it to the Fringe this year, but she has still been sharing her wisdom with performers via the pages of ThreeWeeks.

I have to say, the third week of the festival is my favourite. The hard work is over. Any reviews you get are gravy. You can use these last several days to have the best time ever with the most creative people in the world. This is the time to do a bit of sight seeing: check out the castle and do one of the wonderful ghost tours. You will discover all the tiny little streets that wind in and out of the major thoroughfares and relive a bit of Scottish history. And no visit to Scotland is complete for me without visiting the Botanical Gardens. They always have a lovely exhibit and a delightful tea room, but the gardens... ah, the gardens. There are none in the whole world more beautiful to me.

Then visit Dean Village, which is just off Princes Street and is a beautiful place to explore. And not far from there is the Scottish National Gallery Of Modern Art with its spectacular grounds. Of all the museums, this one is my favourite.

The collection is superb. My dear friend Richard Ireland works there, and if you tell him you know me, he will tell you about the art exhibition he gave me in his delightful gallery many years ago, and about the time I gave him a real American Thanksgiving dinner.

Speaking of art, do not miss the wonderful art galleries along Hanover Street down into Dundas Street. Although I love museum collections and marvel at their elegance, I believe the real art that is happening now is in these galleries. And when you are out for that walk, be sure to head up into Old Town and stop in at Greyfriars Art Shop. You might be inspired to try a bit of sketching for yourself.

This is also the time to reopen the big book of Fringe listings and check out the shows you might have missed in the flurry of promoting your own productions. Try to go to the tiny ones, the shows that don't have expensive ads and glitzy posters. Those are the Fringe's hidden treasures. Support those artists just as they have supported you, and marvel at the original presentations of the productions you will see. Last year, I remember a performance at C where we sat on pillows and actually entered Lewis Carroll's living room.

If you haven't gotten down to Queen's Hall yet, make it a point to attend the marvellous concerts there.



I find the team in the box office there will expertly help you navigate their programme.

Don't forget to gather the contact information of the unforgettable people you have met at the Festival this year. And don't neglect those special events the Fringe Society offer at Fringe Central. We didn't have a Fringe Central when I first began performing at the Festival eight years ago, but now we do and every event I have attended is informative and memorable, not just because of the panels, but because of the people who attend.

I hear this Festival might end on a wet note, but that is Edinburgh, and eventually you get used to sloshing through puddles to get to your venue, and draping soaking clothes over steaming radiators. You don't even mind that mouldy smell that

permeates the buildings, the furniture and even the people. It's all part of the fun. Trust me on that one.

I hope all of you had fantastic shows with hundreds of reviews and packed houses, but for the many of you who did not, this is the week to forget about the numbers. Grab this opportunity to give your show that final polish you knew it needed. Dare to try a few new twists to see if they work. Get out on every stage you can and give it your all. There is no high as exhilarating as the one you get when your performance goes well. There is nothing as exciting as knowing you have taken a show and given it thirty performances back-to-back making it better and better every day. Now... yes now, it has become the gem you thought it was when you first began.

Follow Lynn all year at lynnruthmiller.net

TW

Fleming's Fringe: Time for a rather late publicity push

SP COLUMN

Malcolm Hardee Comedy Awards organiser and prolific blogger John Fleming writes...

Debate always rages at the Fringe about whether people should use a professional publicist. Is forking out £2000-£3000 actually going to get you more coverage? As most performers are organisationally doolally, it may be worth the money.

I have never used a PR because I have a background in promotion and marketing and I am fairly organised and pro-active. But not this year. As I am only staging one show - the one-off, two-hour Malcolm Hardee Comedy Awards Show at the Counting House on Friday 24 Aug (always plug your listings!) I figured I would take a leaf out of the late Malcolm Hardee's own book... and just bumble along, do things late and see what happens.

As my awards show - the REAL Fringe Awards show - is on the final Friday in the final week of the Fringe, I think issuing press releases or even trying to get coverage at the start of the Festival would have been pointless. There is no point advertising products which are not immediately available on the shelf. People reading on 4 Aug a plug for a

single one-off show on 24 Aug would have forgotten by the time the show was imminent.

So I decided on a late publicity push. This had the added bonus that I could be lazy. It also meant that, to an extent, I might actually know what was in the bloody show by the time I got started. This has not necessarily proven to be true. All that is certain is that it is full of very bizarre acts. And the winners of the three annual awards will be announced.

At the start of the Fringe, I was not 100% certain that legendary cabaret act Miss Behave would compeere the show, despite the fact she is billed in the Fringe Programme. She managed to bugger her back in an accident immediately before the Festival started. (She was supposed

to compeere the show last year, too, but contracted near-fatal meningitis - perhaps she is trying to tell me something). But now she is fine. Better than fine. Bouncing with outrageousness. I had booked the brilliant Janey Godley as a back-up compeere and she will now be doing an 8-minute set and - I hope - joining in our Russian Egg Roulette contest.

Yes, not only are we having the late Malcolm Hardee's comedy troupe The Greatest Show On Legs perform their infamous Naked Balloon Dance, we are also having the international president of the World Egg Throwing Federation come to Edinburgh to supervise a Russian Egg Roulette contest. Two people face each other across a table. Six eggs in a box. Five are hard-boiled. One is raw. The

contestants smash an egg against their own forehead (as in Russian Roulette but with eggs) until one of them loses by smashing the raw egg onto their forehead. It is a knock-out contest. Possibly literally. One winner. Comedians Arthur Smith, Richard Herring and other un-nameable 'Names' have said they will take part.

And then, at 1.00am on Saturday morning, the show will not finish. It will blend imperceptibly, though presumably chaotically, into one of Arthur Smith's near legendary (even people who went on them could not quite believe they happened) night-time tours of Edinburgh. These used to end in nudity, drunken shouting, the arrival of the police and sometimes arrests. I think Simon Munnery was once mistakenly arrested by the Leith Police for being a German. But maybe things will have mellowed.

I could have put none of this in a press release at the start of the Fringe. Russian Egg Roulette appeared as a possibility two weeks ago. The link to Arthur Smith's tour only became a possibility last week. Which reminds me... the website still has last year's details on it! But not by the time you read this. Which you can check at www.malcolmhardee.co.uk/award

John Fleming writes a daily blog at blog.thejohnfleming.com



TW



Metro



The List



Three Weeks



Manchester Evening News



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Edinburgh Festival Magazine

JIM JEFFERIES

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NEWCASTLE Mill Volvo Tyne Theatre
08444 939 999

LAST FEW TICKETS

September 2nd 7:30pm
GLASGOW Kings Theatre
08448 717 648

TICKETS SELLING FAST

September 3rd 7.00pm
NANTWICH Civic Hall
01270 685 577

LAST FEW TICKETS

September 4th 7:30pm
MANCHESTER Opera House
08448 713 018

TICKETS SELLING FAST

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STOKE-ON-TRENT Victoria Hall
08448 717 649

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September 7th 8.00pm
MIDDLESBROUGH Town Hall
01642 729 729

TICKETS SELLING FAST

September 8th 8.00pm
LIVERPOOL Mountford Hall
01517 946 868

SOLD OUT

September 9th 9.00pm
LEEDS City Varieties
01132 430 808

TICKETS SELLING FAST

September 10th 7:30pm
YORK Grand Opera House
08448 472 322

TICKETS SELLING FAST

September 12th 8:00pm
WOLVERHAMPTON Civic Hall
08703 207 000

LAST FEW TICKETS

September 13th 7.00pm
BOURNEMOUTH O2 Academy
08444 772 000

LAST FEW TICKETS

September 15th 9.00pm
BERGEN, NORWAY Ricks Theatr
815 33 313

SOLD OUT

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0818 719390

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Photo: Stuart Armit

The sweet life with DeAnne Smith

Canadian-American comedian DeAnne Smith is back in Edinburgh promising her audience the “sweet life” treatment. And some songs. And some candy. What more could you possibly ask for? DeAnne spoke to ThreeWeeks about her show, her uke and her bus pass. Though not necessarily in that order.

TW: According to my in-depth research (well, Wikipedia), you started doing stand-up aged 25. What made you want to start to perform comedy in your mid-twenties?

DS: I was actually a smidge older than that, but I don't mind Wikipedia's misinformation in this case. I started comedy for the same reasons anyone starts comedy: because I have an insatiable need for attention and approval. Oh, and a desire to share joy with others. Yes, that's it. Mostly the joy thing.

TW: You're based in Montreal which, like Edinburgh, is closely associated with comedy because of its festival - what is the comedy scene like there year round?

DS: Because the English-speaking population of Montreal is so small, the comedy scene isn't too big when the festival isn't on, which means it's a really nice, tight-knit community. Everyone collaborates with each other and there are some fantastic little indie rooms. I run a few comedy shows when I'm in town: Stand Up / Strip Down (comedy and burlesque), Royal Riot and Freedom Nation. It's a nice place to spend the four or five months of the year I'm not touring.

TW: Tell us about your current show.
DS: One of my favourite things about my current show is that each time I choose one audience member to give some “sweet life” treatment to. It's fun, because it makes every show a bit different. I won't reveal what it entails, but I will say, you should sit in the front row! I never pick on my front row. But that second row better watch out.

TW: Where did the idea for the show come from?

DS: The title for the show grew out of a thought I had after buying a weekly bus pass. I've been trying to be more optimistic. After I bought the weekly pass, as I was thinking about how I now didn't have to count my rides and I could traverse the city willy-nilly for

a week, a little voice in my head said, “Weekly bus pass? Livin' the sweet life!” and I thought, “Really? I'm glad you're optimistic now, but let's aim a little higher, brain. Let's still have goals and ambitions. It's just a weekly bus pass”.

TW: How has it been going so far?
DS: It's been great! My tech even bought me a portable ukulele stand today, so my uke doesn't fall off the table during shows any more. Livin' the sweet life!

TW: You mentioned the touring. You seem to perform a lot in Australia - is that deliberate, and what is the audience like there?

DS: I started going to Australia to perform their festival circuit in 2008, and it's always so wonderful, I can't stop going back! In 2012, I played five festivals there and did five weeks of touring with the Melbourne Comedy Festival Road Show. The audience is like they are in Edinburgh: comedy-savvy and quick to laugh. Maybe Australians are a little more sunburnt and slightly less drunk.

TW: Have you managed to avoid the infamous Fringe Flu so far, and if so, what's your health regime when at the Festival?

Hot and messy: Vikki Stone

After a very successful Fringe debut in 2011, Vikki Stone is back wowing ticket-buyers and ThreeWeeks reviewers alike with her show 'Hot Mess'. ThreeWeeks caught up with Vikki to find out just how hot the mess really was...

TW: Last year was your Edinburgh debut, how did it go?

VS: I didn't really know how it was going to turn out, but it ended up being loads of fun, and the show got a great response. So I had a great time, and couldn't wait to return.

TW: Tell us about 'Hot Mess'.

'Hot Mess' is a musical comedy show with a grand piano and a lot of mayhem. The title is pretty accurate in terms of what the evening consists of. I get hot and sweaty, and by the end of the show both me and the stage are a bit of mess.

TW: How has the Festival been going so far?

VS: I couldn't have wished for a better time this year. The shows have pretty much sold out every night so far, but extra tickets are being released each day. I'm also doing some special late night extra shows on the weekend. So obviously I'm thrilled. The audiences have been amazing. They really enter into the slightly anarchic nature of the show from the start.

TW: You trained at The Royal Academy Of Music, did you originally intend to pursue a career in music, or did you always plan to combine music with comedy?

VS: I trained as a classical musician from the age of six, so grew up with music. I then got into theatre when I was a bit older, and then trained as an actor. I found that those two things helped me when I finally gave comedy a go, but it wasn't part of any master plan!

TW: The Sunday Herald called you “a Viz version of Kate Nash” and “Bette Midler for the Adele generation” - which of those do you prefer?

VS: Oh, without a doubt, the Bette Midler quote. I LOVE Bette. In fact 'Beaches' is my all time favourite film. It always gets me blubbing like a baby. Her live concerts are amazingly funny too.

TW: As you mentioned, you act as well. Can you see yourself doing some theatre at the Fringe one year?

VS: I've done a lot of theatre over the years, and I do want to bring up a theatre piece to the Fringe at some point, quite likely a musical. Not next year but maybe the year after!

TW: We remember The Flashbacks from last year's show. Will they be making an appearance during the Festival?

VS: The Flashbacks were the band



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DS: I have! As a gluten-free vegan (I feel like it's blasphemous to say that in this country - is someone going to threaten to deep fry and eat me?) my health regime is just my regular life. I've been running and going to yoga as well. And trying to keep the random number of chicks I make out with under 50, unlike last Fringe. (Okay, last Fringe it was zero. But I didn't want to sound too boring).

TW: You also mentioned the ukulele. it seems like we could hold a Uke Convention at the Fringe these days; why do you think the instrument has become so popular again?

DS: You could hold a Uke Convention at the Fringe! And Tricity Vogue kind of does just that, with her wonderful Ukulele Cabaret. Maybe the instrument is so popular because it's small and easy. Incidentally, that's also the reason Snooki is so popular.

TW: Your flyer also promises candy. Is it British candy, or did you bring it with you from home?

DS: You'll have to come to the show to find out! (It's much better to say that than that I got it at Sainsbury's.) Oh, the mystery!

SEE DEANNE'S SHOW:

DeAnne Smith: Livin' The Sweet Life, Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug, 7.30pm

LINKS: www.deannsmith.com

TW

that I had for my show last year, but I've gone solo this year! Though Matt the drummer can be seen in Loretta Maine's show this Festival.

TW: Have you had time to see any other shows this Festival? Are there any stand-outs?

VS: I saw Marcel Lucont the other night, which was very funny. Other recommendations would be Tania Edwards and Daniel Kitson. I really want to see Charlie Baker and Roisin Conaty, but I'm on at the same time as their shows unfortunately!

TW: What are your plans for the rest of the year?

VS: Well, straight after Edinburgh I'll be touring the show and doing festivals. I'm looking forward to Bestival in particular. I'm also filming a few bits for a new BBC1 show, and then the cycle starts again with developing material for next year's show!

TW: I'm pretty sure I've see you in some ads recently - is there a product you'd like to be the official celebrity ambassador of?

VS: Oh yes! I have done my fair share of embarrassing products. But if I had a choice I'd be the ambassador for Viennetta. They could just pay me in ice cream.

SEE VIKKI'S SHOW:

Vikki Stone: Hot Mess, Underbelly Bristol Square, 2-26 Aug, 8.10pm

LINKS: www.vikkistone.com

TW

Into the real comedy zone - John Robins



Photo: Kat Gollock

A 'TOWIE' star may have stopped him from getting his big TV break, but that's not stopped ThreeWeeks reviewers falling in love with John Robins' comedy, and again this year for new show 'Incredible Scenes'. Putting our "why's he not on the telly yet?" frustrations aside, we questioned Robins on his comedy, his Fringe so far, and high scoring Scabble words...

TW: So, let's start at the start - I think we first came across you when you were in the semi-final of So You Think You're Funny - how did you first get into stand-up?

JR: My most vivid memories of childhood are of laughter. Isn't properly getting the giggles the best feeling on earth?! At school my mind was just set to find the laugh. Nathan Waite once asked me if I "wanted a smack", I said "no, I'm not that kinky", he knocked me out but it was worth it. Twelve years later I was the one giving the smacks...laugh smacks!

TW: Your first big Fringe break, I think, was appearing in the Comedy Zone. What was that like - was it a good boot camp for the first full hour show at Edinburgh?

JR: Doing the Zone was a real coup, I was living in Bristol, totally unconnected to industry dudes, and there I was all of a sudden playing to 180 people with Donnelly, Wilkinson and Dodds: the big hitters! I MCed

most of them and always enjoyed the thrill of improvising with an audience. I wish I'd been a bit more industry savvy that year maybe, but there's nothing like being a young idiot.

TW: What was it like stepping up from a franchise like Comedy Zone - or the split-show you did with Carl Donnelly in 2008 - to do the full Fringe hour?

JR: The biggest challenge is that you have to create an atmosphere where people who have no idea who you are feel comfortable in a matter of seconds. Good hour shows are all about hitting the ground running, no MC, no crutch to lean on. So when it properly sparks it's an incredible feeling, to have something that only you are responsible for that makes people laugh for an hour.

TW: Tell us about this year's show.

JR: Earlier this year I got what I thought was my big break on a TV panel show. But then I was replaced by Amy Childs from 'The Only Way Is Essex' (a name I had to Google!) because she had a "better backstory". If I can't write an hour of stand-up about that then I have no business being here! Russell Howard has directed it too. It's been fascinating peeking into his brain as he's been tweaking with mine.

TW: How has it been going so far?

JR: The show has been a thrill to perform, but it's been a tough month for a lot of people, I think, numbers-wise. Plus I don't have an agent, so can't afford PR or marketing, which means you're up against the machines

of big companies. I'm not against that, if I could afford big posters I'm sure I'd use them, especially as I'm pretty useless at self-promotion. I rely on things like this interview, and it's much appreciated!

TW: Your reviews often comment on your storytelling ability as well as the great comedy - is that something you were aware was a particular skill before the critics started saying so?

JR: Weirdly for the first six months of doing stand-up I was very deadpan, but after I started compèring it was just a preposterous contrast. I would be all chatty and fun with the crowd and then suddenly become sullen to do a bit of material about death before the first act. Danny Buckler said to me at a gig "you're better when you smile", and I never looked back. Thanks Danny!

TW: Has Edinburgh become an important part of your year now?

JR: The. Most. Important. Part.

TW: Despite the best efforts of Amy Childs, you've done bits of TV and especially radio. Do you have specific ambitions in that domain?

JR: Well, I've done one bit of TV! I'd obviously love to do more, especially stand-up or something where I could create new stuff. I'd love to have done 'Show And Tell' - I have a DT folder decorated with Queen pictures that the world needs to see. I'd love to host a radio show with music (who wouldn't) but only if I could co-present with Elis James. Having chats and banter with him has been one of the

great pleasures of my life.

TW: What plans have you got post-Fringe?

JR: I have some very specific plans for straight after, but they are secret and not comedy related. After that I'm going to try and book my first tour from January-March 2013. Watch out for me if you live within 10-15 miles of a provincial arts centre! No sleep til Trowbridge! (That reminds me, I need to call The Arc Theatre in Trowbridge)

TW: I found your comedy CV online and it includes 'specialist rock knowledge' and 'scabble' as skills. Tell us your favourite bit of rock trivia.

JR: I love it when my heroes are fans of my other heroes. I found an interview with Captain Beefheart where he quoted my favourite Philip Larkin poem... incredible scenes! Also, Van Morrison recorded 'Astral Weeks' in three days when he was 24. That puts everything anyone has done in Edinburgh into perspective!

TW: And what's the highest scoring word you've ever played in Scabble?

JR: My records show it was 'DEBRIDES' for a whopping 167 points. I'm a nightmare to play at Scabble! I always have the following argument... Opponent "BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT WORD MEANS!" Me: "IT'S NOT A GAME OF WORD MEANINGS!"

SEE JOHN'S SHOW:

John Robins: Incredible Scenes!, Just The Tonic at The Caves, 1-26 Aug, 7.20pm.

LINKS: www.johnrobins.net

TW

Shattering expectations: Chris McCausland

INTERVIEW

Chris McCausland has a pretty good record of pleasing ThreeWeeks reviewers, so it seemed like it was time to throw some questions in his general direction...

TW: Let's start at the start, remind us how you changed careers from computing to comedy?

CM: I used to be a web site developer but my eyesight got worse and worse and the websites just got uglier and uglier. I decided that nobody wanted an ugly website and so made the decision to get out of IT completely. I ended up working in a call centre for a while just until I could figure out what I wanted to do with my life, and it was while I was there that I dared myself to give stand-up comedy a go... and here we are nine years later!

TW: This is your fourth consecutive year at the Fringe - what persuades you back each time?

CM: I get bored very easily, especially if I can't see progression with what I am doing and committing to do the Festival each year is a good way of pushing yourself professionally. Not only does it give you a deadline to work towards each year in terms of writing new material, but I think that the process also improves you as a comic.

TW: Tell us about 'Not Blind Enough'.

CM: The show is basically a response to the suggestion that for a comic who is blind, my comedy is not 'blind enough'. I have always avoided making my disability the focus of my comedy, instead favouring to make it a small detail that makes what I do

a little bit different. This show is also about how I got into comedy and my thoughts about how and why it works... or doesn't.

TW: Why focus more on your blindness now?

CM: On the back of three shows that only occasionally referenced my blindness, I thought that now would be a good time to do a show where it was the focus, but not in the way that people would expect. I wanted to do a show about why making my blindness the focus of my comedy would be an awfully boring, predictable and clichéd idea. Next year I'll probably be back with something totally random again.

TW: You also talk about the upcoming Paralympics - is that an issue you feel strongly about?

CM: Yes, I am not a fan of the Paralympics, if anything I would say that I am anti-Paralympics. I think that in today's society where people with disabilities are striving to compete in the mainstream in things they can do properly, the Paralympics actually sends out a very negative and harmful message that disabled people should be doing disabled things, and more often than not at a more substandard level to the norm. I think it lowers peoples expectations of those with disabilities and is well past it's sell-by-date, to be honest.

TW: You originally performed as part of the Free Festival - how is the Fringe experience different when you perform free shows versus performing at a venue like the Pleasance?

CM: Personally I prefer playing at the Pleasance and being part of the paying festival, but appreciate that the

free festival strands also have their place, it just wasn't for me. I prefer audiences to buy into the idea that I am selling as, with any comedy gig, I think it makes them more committed to the show.

TW: Do you share any of the concerns expressed by some comedians this year regarding the dominance of the more commercial venues at the Fringe?

CM: Yes, there are larger venues and also free alternatives taking thousands of punters off the streets each night. I think that the lesser known performers at paying venues are definitely suffering because of this. Something needs to be done to bring the cost of staging a show at the Festival down, so that these performers, like myself, can reduce the cost of our tickets during the week to make our shows a competitive option to the big names. Under its current model I think that the Festival is not sustainable.

TW: Some of our very young readers (well, more likely readers who own some little people) will recognise you from the CBeebies show 'Me Too'.

Would you consider doing a kids show the Festival?
CM: I don't think doing a kids show at the Festival is for me, really. I enjoyed making the TV show and would certainly consider something like that again in the future, but in terms of a live show, I think I'll just stick to my stand-up. Not sure if I'd trust myself enough not to swear!

Read about Chris's Fringe tips in the full interview at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/cm

SEE CHRIS'S SHOW:

Chris McCausland: Not Blind Enough, Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug, 4.30pm

LINKS: www.cmstandup.com

REVIEWS

Carl Donnelly: Different Gravy Avalon Promotions

Carl Donnelly takes us on a tour of Tooting Broadway in his autobiographical show 'Different Gravy'. We are greeted with the power ballad 'St Elmo's Fire' and a slide montage of Carl's childhood pics and comments. If you suspect indulgence is afoot, what prevails in the autobiography, in its loosest physical form, is a tongue-in-cheek diary based on the pseudo pretension that Carl will be famous one day and need to write one. Carl has a real connection with the audience and chuckles through his show with conversational confidence. This well-structured and pleasant set ambles along, noteworthy moments emerging from the pages with the deliberate naiveté of this Adrian Mole trying to emulate Howard Marks.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 8.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Mara Docherty]

Charlie Baker: Half Baked Off The Kerb Productions in association with Debi Allen Associates

Watching this show, I get the impression that the irrepressible Charlie Baker would perform even if no one was there to see it. What we do watch, however, is essentially comedy by numbers; there is nothing off-the-wall, dark, unsavoury or offensive about Baker. From Devon accent to fond recollections of adolescence, this is primetime TV-friendly funny, and there is something comforting in that. He delivers the laughs steadily with inclusive jokes that appeal to a wide range of audiences. A swing-style singing voice and tap dancing only enhance his set's solid, traditional stand-up tone. Amongst the modern vogue for being increasingly distasteful for laughs, Charlie Baker provides some good, honest fun, and does it well.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 7.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

Josh Widdicombe: The Further Adventures Of... Off the Kerb Productions

After his runaway success at last year's Festival, Fosters' Newcomer nominee Josh Widdicombe had a lot to live up to with his follow-up show. However, it's safe to say he easily surpasses these high expectations. Widdicombe's skill is that he takes the most mundane everyday things and turns them into hilarious stories. The audience are in stitches as they sympathise with his awkward experiences at cash machines and fancy restaurants and his interaction with that audience is also incredibly funny. Because he focuses on normal things that normal people do, anyone who sees this show can enjoy it. It also means that he doesn't rely on crassness or being

offensive to get people laughing. Classic observational stand up at its best.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 13, 23), 7.00pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Anna McDonald]

Ivo Graham and Liam Williams

Laughing Horse Free Festival

The gig started in a marvellous shambles. Ivo Graham took to the stage having already started the audience chuckling, whilst setting up entrance music, claiming that it was 11.38, so "still totally legitimate". Brilliantly neurotic, Graham presented "coming of age experiences" through graphs and elaborately constructed witticisms. Sharp banter with unsuspecting spectators made for a highly entertaining set. Liam Williams took to the stage with an equally witty, yet different approach. Making brilliant use of vocabulary, and a mix of one-liners and storytelling, he had the audience doubled-up with his tales of drug use and lower-middle class background. This may be a Free Festival show, but I would pay good money to see this awkwardly charming duo again.

Captain Taylors Coffee House, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 12.00pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Hurt And Anderson: Scenes Of A Vignette-ish Nature - Free Hurt and Anderson / Laughing Horse Free Festival

Ever wondered how Nick Clegg would express himself in song, or what would happen if Thomas the Tank Engine confessed his undying love for a fellow locomotive? Then look no further. This female duo presents an hour of songs and sketches, performed with great stage presence and creativity. Perhaps the wordy introduction is a little shaky, and the occasional descent into play fighting is too extended and not wacky enough to really be amusing, but the comic chemistry between the two is palpable and the rest of the show is written intelligently enough to gloss over any earlier problems. These girls could be the next Mitchell and Webb, except, like the best vignettes in life, they're free.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, 2-26 Aug (not 7, 16, 21), 9.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Jessamine McHugh]



Photo: Stuart Armitt

TW

1/5 Bad
2/5 Mediocre
3/5 Good
4/5 Very Good
5/5 Brilliant



Photo: Kat Gollock

Not getting argumentative: Luke Toulson

INTERVIEW

We've been fans of Luke Toulson ever since he first came to our attention as one half of comedy sketch duo Toulson & Harvey back in the day. We also enjoy his solo stand-up shows, so were glad to see him back in Edinburgh once again. With his new show called 'Luke Who's Talking', we got him, ahem, talking to ThreeWeeks.

TW: Welcome back to Edinburgh! What persuades you back to the Fringe each time?

LT: Thank you. Since I first came to the Fringe in 1996 as an audience member, ThreeWeeks has been one of the few constants! The driving motivation is always trying to be a better comedian. But I'm sure there's also an element of self-harm.

TW: Tell us about this year's show.

LT: In the past I have always written shows with a narrative arc. While I think they were good stories, at points they weren't funny enough. So this year I just wanted to bring up the funniest possible show. Thematically it's a bit of a jumble of love, fear, and trying to be a better person. It's probably the most honest show I've done, but it's definitely the funniest.

TW: Arguments with the women in your life seems to be a theme - have you any tips for winning an argument with the opposite sex?

LT: God no. I have a half Scottish/half French, actress girlfriend, which when

it comes to being mental is pretty much the perfect storm. And I have an eight-year old daughter from a previous relationship, who already operates at a psychological level far superior to anything I'll ever be capable of. I've never won an argument with either.

TW: Do you consider yourself an argumentative person?

LT: I hate arguments, but I just can't let it go when someone says something stupid.

TW: Is there anyone else at the Fringe you'd like to have a good argument with just now?

LT: I'm a big fan of passionate discussion, and there are some very passionate and intelligent comics at the Fringe. I don't really know Robin Ince or Josie Long, but I find their minds fascinating. I'd happily talk politics with Matt Forde, who's got a great show about politics this year, or talk 'direct action' with Chris Coltrane, who has an equally great show on the Free Fringe.

TW: It's five years since you won the Hackney Empire New Act Of The Year Award - how do you think your stand-up has developed over the years?

LT: Well, the simple answer is I've improved massively. The Hackney final was my 50th gig, and I'd only been going five months. I only had five minutes of material, and I knew nothing. I've been going almost six years now, and have done about 1200 gigs, including four solo shows. There is no short-cut to becoming a good stand-up. Time and effort are massive parts of it. In terms of specifics, when I first started, I wore a figurative mask of "I don't care about anything, the world

is shit", but as I've got better, I've been able to take off the mask, wear my heart on my sleeve, and just have a bit more fun with the audience.

TW: You also write for other comedians, how does writing for others compare with writing for yourself?

LT: It's great. You get paid much more and you don't have any of the responsibility of making the jokes actually work. I just meet up with them, they tell me what they need jokes on, whether it be material for a tour or jokes for a TV show, and I just try to make them laugh. Then I go home. They have to do all the honing. Writing for yourself is a constant process. You're always seeing the world in terms of stand-up routines. Then you take these half-baked ideas to a new material night and see which ones swim.

TW: I don't know how I didn't know you were once a geography teacher before researching these questions for you! Science-based comedy has been popular of late, have you ever considered doing the geography comedy show?

LT: I've never considered it before, but now you mention it, it sounds like a great idea. Geography is seen as a bit of a joke subject, but once you get beyond oxbow lakes, it's actually fascinating. If I do do it, I promise ThreeWeeks will be the first to know.

Will Luke return to sketch comedy?
Find out in the full interview at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2012LT

SEE LUKE'S SHOW:

Luke Toulson - Luke Who's Talking, Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug, 9:05pm.

5/5 AND FREE!*

Bogan Bingo

Bogan Bingo

Free. Australian. Bingo. Three things which when combined can only equal a gloriously good time. Led by the enthusiastically bawdy hosts, the rowdy audience is taken through a wild and lewd game of Bingo, strung with one-liners, banter, 80s sing-a-longs and a panda on a slide. Fantastically fun, joyfully silly and with funnier jokes than many full-blown comedy shows, there aren't many better ways to while away an evening at the Festival. Presenting a well-crafted spectacle, the duo have a great presence and chemistry, playing off their country's stereotypes in devastatingly hilarious fashion. If you love balls, the 80s, Australians and balls, then think of Bogan Bingo and mullet over - you won't regret it.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, 9-26 Aug, 9.35pm

tw rating 5/5 | [Joseph Trotter]

Ian Smith and Tom Toal

PBH Free Fringe

The joy and the curse of Free Fringe shows has to be enduring the worst ones until you find the best. Ian Smith and Tom Toal are definitely in the latter camp. They are not a double act, but two comedians with separate jokes, the only common factor being a shared flat. Smith is a loud, bearded Yorkshireman with who pulls humour from every aspect of his surroundings, while sipping a carton of Ribena. Toal, Double-T, or The T Dog contrasts with his flatmate, with a laid-back persona and calmly presented jokes. If beautiful, funny men are exactly what you're after this Fringe (and why wouldn't they be?), Ian Smith and Tom Toal are the perfect match.

Whistlebinkies, 4-25 Aug, 1.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Susan Ford]

*Though with shows this good - do try and be generous when the hat's passed round!



And Still Rarely Rong Gary Colman / PBH's Free Fringe

It's comedy like this which makes me so happy to have the free strands at the Fringe, to think that something of such an amazing quality is available to everyone. Gary Colman speaks of his gut-churning life as a father, living in London as a Geordie, ice-skating as a child, and constantly being mistaken for the actor from 'Different Strokes' who shared his name. Offering outstandingly impressive deadpan comedy, Colman can give a flawless mix of light-hearted humour, yet adds more sinister elements too. I can confidently predict that this show will have you in hysterics as Colman builds his set, and his rapport with the audience, perfectly and with sheer energy. Completely unpredictable, mad and vivacious, think of Ross Noble but with much less hair.

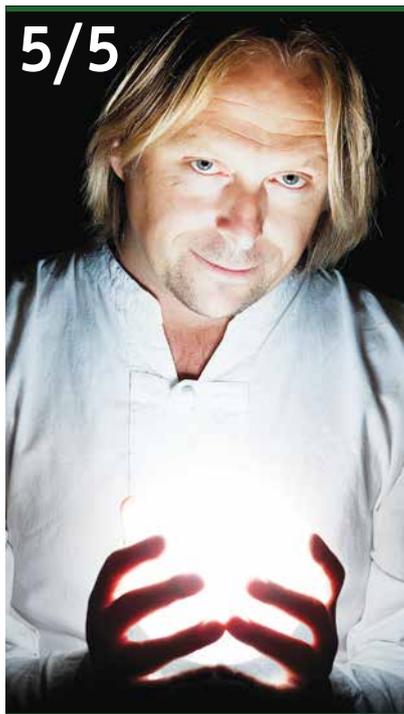
Whistlebinkies, Aug 4-25, 2.45pm. | tw rating 5/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

TW

COMEDY

Get daily comedy reviews from **ThreeWeeks**

Pick up the Daily Edition at key Fringe venues or check out www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/reviews



5/5

Ian D. Montfort - Unbelievable

Tom Binns / EdCom

An alter ego of character comic Tom Binns, Ian D. Montfort is a stunningly camp caricature of best loved spirit medium Psychic Sally. His act involves reaching over to the other side and connecting the audience with dead celebrities of their choosing. The jokes come thick and fast; the show is howlingly funny, and very often just brilliant. It goes beyond satire as Binns artfully manages to read members of the audience, revealing their deepest, darkest secrets and musing upon their past lives. I am still utterly confounded about it all, but best not to think too hard about how he works his tricks, just book yourself a seat and get ready to laugh like a loon.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug, 6.35pm
tw rating 5/5 | [Eloise Kohler]

3 Days Off Jesus

Laughing Horse Free Festival

David Burke may have the beard of Jesus, but the only similarity he claims is that his own birthday is three days off Jesus's - which explains the name of his show. Don't be fooled by the facial hair, Burke is quite literally the loveliest man you'll ever meet (and his performance in such a small room means everyone will meet him). Content spending his Saturday nights knitting, drinking tea, and finding links between movies, Burke's story-telling comedy is simply adorable. Don't get too comfortable however, he will battle a heckle with hilarious full force, showing off his feisty Irish upbringing. Burke is a gem in amongst the Free Festival acts.

The Free Sisters, 3-26 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 5.45pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Susan Ford]

Daniel Simonsen - Champions

The Mason Sisters @ PBJ

Fresh from supporting Simon Amstell

on tour, stand-up Daniel Simonsen is a worthy addition to the roster of neurotically funny, introverted young comedians of which Amstell is reigning king. Tripping about the stage like a beautifully awkward marionette, Simonsen deconstructs the artificial elements of British stand-up before going on to compare it with the comedy of his native Norway. There are stories about cats, dancing and giant teeth, all raised far above the level of your average anecdote by the comedian's offbeat worldview and idiosyncratic delivery. There were a couple of timing issues, but then this is Simonsen's first one hour show. Otherwise, it's an excellent debut from a stand-up who's sure to go far.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 7.00pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Holly Close]

Believe - Starring Shane Dundas From The Umbilical Brothers

Assembly and Marshall Cordell

Famous for being 50% of Australian mime and sound effect duo The

Umbilical Brothers, Shane Dundas now brings his solo show to the Fringe. Don't expect anything you've seen before however, as he is a tame, quiet and very polite comedian, very rarely slipping into his double act persona. Definitely a dark horse at the Fringe, his show is both hilarious and weird - a winning combination every time. Think early Bill Bailey meets Rhys Darby and you'll find a happy spot in your heart for Shane Dundas. His comedy is very surreal though: if you blink for a second you'll miss his train of thought and be off the joke wagon until he moves on to his next made-up, glorious anecdote.

Assembly George Square, 1-26 Aug, 10.10pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Susan Ford]

Cariad Lloyd - The Freewheelin' Cariad Lloyd

Mick Perrin For Just For Laughs Live

Cariad Lloyd has an incredible ability to keep an audience in fits of laughter, even when they don't get the reference. From her well delivered range of diverse and absurd characters, murder mystery detective Mama Moomin and the disturbing child-woman Jooey Bechamel are real favourites. A nice touch was the arrival of the Fringe Administrators, bursting in to demand that because the show is listed under comedy, her characters had to stop tugging at heartstrings. But, as Lloyd fiercely stated when breaking the fourth wall, she's determined to show off her acting skills. Lots of fun, if sometimes hard to keep up with.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 4.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

Chris Corcoran And Elis James - The Committee Meeting

Phil McIntyre Management

Lovingly spoofing the world of working men's clubs, Chris Corcoran and Elis James bring an engaging slice of Welsh chaos to Scotland. Performing as the affable club chairman Mr Chairman

and well-meaning centenarian caretaker Rex Jones respectively, Corcoran and James are a funny and surprisingly sweet pairing, working intuitively with each other. They really bounce off the audience, who are very much involved in the proceedings. Indeed, the show could live or die on the willingness of the audience to buy into the concept, but on this occasion the whole crowd were caught up in the excitement of minute taking; the intrigue of the mysterious garment and the glamour of Caretakers' Mastermind. Village-level bureaucracy has never been this much fun.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, 1-26 Aug (not 14), 1.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Holly Close]

Felicity Ward: The Hedgehog Dilemma Get Comedy

'The Hedgehog Dilemma', nominated for best show at the 2012 Melbourne Comedy Festival, is an extraordinarily uplifting hour about alcoholism and a last-minute wedding cancellation. Such brutally honest confessions could be self-indulgent and uncomfortable to watch when divulged by a lesser performer, but Felicity Ward, an ebullient Australian, radiated charm from the outset. She revealed her darkest secrets with a confident grin and tongue planted firmly in cheek, and the audience were mesmerised by her wry and sparkling commentaries. This thoroughly entertaining show has received glowing reviews from an array of publications, and deserves to be one of the runaway successes of the Fringe. Book your ticket sooner rather than later - this is cathartic comedy at its finest.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 10.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Joseph Fleming]

RH: Live

The RH Experience

Comedy sketch troupe The RH Experience - made up of Conor Jatter, Luke Spillane and Tom Webster - is having fun at the Fringe with their hour of improvised games. The amiable, flouro-hooded performers effortlessly

fill the stage with their whimsical, fast-paced improvisation. The crowd are warmly participatory, perhaps because of the intimacy of the space or the warm, unthreatening MC. Some suggestions were unceremoniously plonked into sketches never to return but better (often obscure) topics were skilfully handled, with the best material coming direct from the trio's surreal imaginations. RH's enthusiasm and laughter is infectious and, while the suggested use of Twitter felt gimmicky, their use of Wikipedia was perfect for this youthful update of traditional improv.

C Aquila, 12-27 Aug, 3.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Macartney]

LOlympics Live

Laughing Horse Free Festival

It's actually quite surprising that during a massive clash of events - the Edinburgh Fringe and the Olympics - there haven't been more shows combining the two. Embracing the theme entirely is 'LOlympics Live', hosted by two "laugh-letes" Marcus Ryan and Bronston Jones. The two comedians are armed with medals, ready to offer gold to the best jokes, and give every audience member the chance to participate. Also competing are three special guests, giving this variety show another string to its bow. Expect big comedy names, audience participation at a high, and two hyper hosts dressed in awful trackuits that will brighten up your afternoon. Get down early as this show fills up extremely fast.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 2-26 Aug, 3.30pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Susan Ford]

TW RATINGS

1/5 Bad

2/5 Mediocre

3/5 Good

4/5 Very Good

5/5 Brilliant

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Two venues. Two audiences. Two shows. Two cameras. Too many problems. Too little time.
seeing double
11:30am
Pleasance Courtyard
★★★★★ "A stunning production" - The New Current
★★★★★ "Absolutely hilarious" - Three Weeks
★★★★ "Brilliant...outstanding" - ScotsGay
★★★★ "Go and see them. Both." - Fringe Biscuit

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UTTER. THE PLAYERS' UNION
SCOTLAND

Badly named things with Catie Wilkins

© COLUMN

This year ThreeWeeks favourite Catie Joy Wilkins has a show all about the many things in the world that just fail to live up to the names they've been given. Starting with her own middle name. To get you in the mood, she sets out her manifesto for more accurate naming here in ThreeWeeks.

This year my show is called 'Joy Is My Middle Name'. Partly because Joy really is my middle name. I'm like Austin Danger Powers, except, I in no way live up to that part of my name. I'm kind of a negative person. My cup is half empty. I didn't get into comedy to cheer everyone's day along. More to ease a gaping hole in my own self-esteem. And because I worked out it's a slightly more legitimate way to get attention than faking a panic attack.

I'm not even specifically depressed. I can still totally enjoy the smell of a rose, or a baby's laugh, it's just that I also think it's important to beware of thorns with the former and faecal matter with the latter. So Joy isn't an inappropriate middle name for me, me being profoundly miserable.

Actually, I think it's more that I'm just so overly cautious, that I am in constant danger of sapping the fun

out of things. For example, I know that I will never spontaneously take my clothes off and run into the sea, like some kind of late-night Pepsi Max advert (at least, not unless I know I have a towel with me). And, really I'm fine with that. I'm not going to be the one bringing the fun times to the party. But I am always available to point out the fire exits. That's fine, I've made my peace with it. But my name misdirects people and gives me something to fail to live up to.

Despite this, I am not the most the most inappropriately named thing you will ever see. There are myriad badly monikered items floating around our crazy, workaday world, just waiting to mis-sell their wares to people. 'Secret Entrance To Bat Cave' is one of my all time favourite examples. A sign advertising and pointing to the whereabouts of the 'secret' entrance to the famous subterranean lair in the old 'Batman' TV series tickled me as a kid and still does now.

In fact, TV is a key offender in this field. There are a plethora of misnamed programmes just waiting to trick you into viewing something that doesn't do exactly what it says on the tin. 'Most Haunted' has not yet displayed one ghost on its show. Not one. Sure, it's showed plenty of clips of people freaking out about the dark, and we all enjoyed that episode where Paul Ross came running out of a building, screaming, only to reveal the cryptic

explanation, "one hand is warmer than the other, and I'm not wearing a glove!"

But if 'Most Haunted' was going to accurately reflect what it shows in its contents, it should be re-named 'Celebrities Shouting At Night', yet trading standards don't seem that keen to intervene in this matter. Which, when you consider that people are happy to write in and complain about TV if someone says the word 'boobies' before the watershed, it does surprise me that more people haven't written to OfCom about this breach.

Then there's 'Britain's Got Talent'. Which explicitly and repeatedly demonstrates the lack thereof. As an 80s child, I can still remember Barrymore's 'My Kind Of People' and still find it bizarre that what is a essentially a community or shopping centre talent show being televised is now big business.

I don't want to split hairs, but there is a whole cable channel called God TV. No one seems to mind that he never turns up for filming. What a diva. They have to put loads of filler on, like random crazy people talking about getting your money. And yet no one ever writes in to complain about God TV, pointing out there's no such thing. I mean, even McDonald's wheel out a Ronald McDonald now and again for their adverts, just to tick some boxes. I guess God TV must have the same demographic as 'Most Haunted'. Now I've mentioned McDonalds, what about



Photo: Paul Collins

'Happy Meal'. Happy? Oh, I could go on... 'blow job', 'Head Cheese', and 'The Best Of Britney Spears'.

But so what? The world is just a slightly more confusing place, no biggie, right? Well, I say yes, biggie. And I nominate myself to solve all these problems and re-name everything to be more accurate for

everyone. I'll start with 'Mothercare' - it's now called 'Tiger Mums.' You're welcome.

SEE CATIE'S SHOW:

Catie Wilkins: Joy Is My Middle Name, Underbelly Cowgate, 3-26 August, 7.45pm

LINKS: www.catiwilkins.com

TW



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Broadway Baby
The Scotsman

antonio forcione
Sketches of AFRICA

'...had members of the audience leaping to their feet to dance'
The Scotsman

ALI MCGREGOR
Alchemy

★★★★★
The New Current

★★★★★
The Daily Telegraph

★★★★★
The Arts Journal

★★★★★
Broadway Baby

'McGregor's voice is phenomenal... a delightful way to while away an August evening'
The Telegraph

f FACEBOOK/ASSEMBLYFESTIVAL

t TWITTER@ASSEMBLYFEST



Photo: Tommy Gar-Ker-Wain

The Static ThickSkin

All you really need to know is that this show is amazing. Really, really, amazing. The multimedia aspects are so clever its almost like watching wizardry. The actors' use of physicality prompts applause midway through the show. The writing is so wonderfully different, yet so heart wrenchingly real, trying to pick holes in it is like trying to lick your own elbow. This cast of four don't have a weakness between them, and as they tell the story of 15 year old Sparky, and the strange, kinetic things going on in his life, the audience are completely transfixed. 'The Static' manages to be brilliantly funny, and heart-warmingly uplifting, without ever being slushy. The closest thing to magical perfection I've ever seen.

Underbelly, Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 20), 2.40pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Alexandra Wilks]

TH REVIEWS

Panning for Gold - Free Thrice Three Muses / Laughing Horse Free Festival

Life is beautiful, suicide is poetic. And cruel and adventurous and stupid. In this marvellous performance, three stood-up brides are trying to come to grips with their experiences - and with the consequences they led to. After attempting suicide, they are committed to attending group therapy. Over the weeks, and with various techniques, the whole stories are brought to light, leading to partly hysterical outbreaks, despair as well as laughter and relief. The four actors manage to create a dense and believable atmosphere in a claustrophobic place, and have the possibility and the ability to impress, be it in role play, recreating Cleopatra's death by Shakespeare, or simply by pointing out how important and positive counselling can be.

Laughing Horse @ The Phoenix, 3-26 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 2.05pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

An Evening With Dementia Trevor T Smith

'Never use a name, even if you think you know it. Names can get you into hot water.' The show opens with an old man - who, coincidentally, remains nameless - divulging secret techniques on how to prevent people knowing you're a dementia sufferer. By turns

light-heartedly funny and bone-crushingly sad, Smith tells his audience what it feels like to lose your memory, to be taken home with your family for a bewildering Christmas Day, and to be forced into taking anti-depressants. Despite this, the audience are left to fill in gaps about Smith's character's personal relationships, which his mind fails to communicate to himself any more. Beautifully written, overflowing with subtle nuances, Smith is clearly a talented playwright and performer.

theSpace on The Mile, 3-25 Aug (not 5), 4.05pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

Built For Two Somebody's Theatre

'Built For Two' tells of the evening before Julie's birthday, when she is out for a night on the town with her flatmate, newly moved in boyfriend, and her childhood best friend who is always late. It's a fantastic comedy centred on a bathroom in a flat and the birthday celebration, covering everything from how to use mouthwash correctly, to a love triangle (that turns out to possibly be a love square instead), "shots before shoes", drunken kisses, regretted liaisons, and back story galore. The four actors work well together to make a cohesive performance and with angst, humor, and bathroom routines, the play really captures the lot of those who have recently graduated from student life.

theSpace @ The Mile, 3-25 Aug (not 5, 12, 19), 11.50am.
tw rating 3/5 | [Charlotte Mortimer-Talman]

Dirty Paki Lingerie Aizzah Fatima

Despite the provocative title, this one-woman show is insightful, honest and fundamentally, simple. Fatima plays six different roles interwoven with each other - all women, all Pakistani - and what could become a stereotypical theatrical farce actually works well. It is clear which character is on stage through exceptional dialogue, a well placed pashmina and Fatima's formidable acting talent; other than a few minor props, this is all Fatima uses to guide us through the loves, losses and pressures faced by American Muslim women. Occasionally we stray into secondary school drama territory with the 'relevant' subject matter, the miming of invisible props and endless soul searching soliloquies. But on the whole, this is an intriguing and strong portrayal of modern Muslim culture.

Assembly Hall, 2-27 Aug (not 13), 5.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

Me And Mr C Gary Kitching and The Empty Space

'Me and Mr C' sits in its own genre, somewhere between theatre, comedy and a conversation - all with a ventriloquist's dummy thrown in. The 'show' takes you by surprise as Gary Kitching appears on stage and begins talking easily to the audience; involving yourself in the performance is mandatory, but the uncomfortable associations of this are non-existent.

fringe "legend" **GUY MASTERSON** in
THE HALF
an hysterical COMEDY by **RICHARD DORMER** directed by **David Calvitto**

TO ACT or not TO ACT...
That is the question

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- ★★★★★ BROADWAY BABY
- ★★★★★ EDINBURGHGUIDE
- ★★★★★ ONE4REVIEW
- ★★★★★ THE SCOTSMAN
- ★★★★★ FRINGEREVIEW.COM
- ★★★★★ THREE WEEKS
- ★★★★★ EDINBURGH SPOTLIGHT

↩ **A SOLDIER'S SONG**
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- ★★★★★ FRINGEREVIEW.COM
- ★★★★★ THREE WEEKS
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Kitching takes the suggestions from the audience and improvises them into his show, to great comic effect. However darker undertones begin to emerge as the humour serves to reveal his tragic and lonely life. Kitching creates a piece which is disconcerting in the tension between its comedy and its sadness: engaging, different and thought provoking; 'Me and Mr C' is a unique piece of theatre and well worth watching.

Northern Stage at St Stephens, 4-25 Aug (not 13,21), 8.15pm. tw rating 4/5 | [India Doyle]

The Silencer - David Calvitto

Leo Lauer, Richard Jordan Productions And Broken Watch Theatre Company

An ostensibly confident, charismatic writer who is in fact unpublished and six years older than he claims, the protagonist of 'The Silencer' has an initial swagger which is gradually stripped away during this intense monologue. The story of the 51-year-old's love lost (or perhaps never had) is both darkly comic and painfully pathetic; and while the protagonist is an unpleasantly recognisable type, this story's detailed exposure of the male psyche is far from commonly seen. David Calvitto gives a strong but not entirely polished performance as the lead, which suggests the play's power - which sometimes faltered - could improve as its run continues. Either way, its exploration of transience and flawed character will strike an uncomfortable chord with many.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 14), 12.40pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

Pages From The Book Of... 50 Letters Theatre Company

Josef is searching for his dead father in the eerie Sanatorium. A place where the past can be returned to and relived, as such time becomes meaningless. This avant-garde piece of theatre, in the style of Tadeusz Kantor, confronts its audience with a spiral of uncertainty, forcing them to question reality, life and death. This air of confusion can be disconcerting, but the deeply compelling, visual and aural spectacle can still be enjoyed and admired. The Chorus of highly talented actors free themselves from natural inhibitions and use movement and sound to create a train, clucking hens and an eclectic carousel of mannequins. All movements and noises have clearly been studied, imitated and perfected, creating a unique piece of theatre.

Summerhall, 1-24 Aug, 3.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Alice Taylor]

TW RATINGS

1/5 Bad
2/5 Mediocre
3/5 Good
4/5 Very Good
5/5 Brilliant

Desperately seeking Peter

INTERVIEW

Peter Michael Marino is in Edinburgh to tell the painfully true tale of his musical 'Desperately Seeking Susan', which combined the plot of the Madonna-starring movie with the music of Blondie. As jukebox musicals go, it looked like it had all the potential, yet managed to flop spectacularly in London's West End. Fortunately, Marino's Fringe show is far from a flop, garnering 5/5 from a ThreeWeeks reviewer, and acclaim from other Festival critics too. Peter tells us more...

TW: Where did the idea for a 'Desperately Seeking Susan' musical featuring Blondie songs first come from?

PMM: It literally came from a boring NYC summer night in 2005, when I was smoking pot with a mate and discussing how Blondie's songs are all 'want' songs and how they would be great for a musical. And then the idea of the classic 80s film 'Desperately Seeking Susan' came up, and while watching it with the sound off and simultaneously blasting Blondie's greatest hits, the idea was hatched. It all seemed too easy and perfect.

I recreate that evening in the first seven minutes of my new show so that non-Blondie fans, or folks not familiar with the film, will understand why it seemed like such a perfect idea. At least, at the time!

TW: How did you get the show to stage - given you presumably needed the approval of both movie studio MGM and Debbie Harry - not to mention the cost and challenge of getting any production to the West End?

PMM: MGM and Blondie granted the rights to their properties after reading my 30-page treatment that detailed how the songs would be integrated into the story. We had lunch, and BOOM... the papers were signed.

As for the cost, that was not my area, since I was the conceiver and book writer. Producers on both sides of the pond jumped on board almost immediately, and before I knew it we were workshoping the show in London in preparation for an opening on the West End.

It then took over fifteen months to workshop and stage the show. I still wish we'd had another fifteen months to try the show out of town, which is the traditional way that most big-budget musicals get mounted. But the workshops we did went so well and a theatre opened up, so that was that.

TW: As 'jukebox musicals' go, yours seemed particularly inspired. So what went wrong?

PMM: The creative team was not on the same page, and there was no real leader. Many opinions and many differing opinions. The general public didn't seem too interested in the show from the start, as we only sold a handful of tickets after the press launch which members of Blondie appeared at. Ironically, Blondie had a sold-out concert that night and didn't mention their big musical that they had just promoted a few hours earlier! I thought that was odd. It was a perfect storm of clashing cultures and stylistic concepts that became a tornado. Or maybe a blizzard.

TW: At what point did you sense things were collapsing?

PMM: The first sign was when I wasn't allowed at rehearsals for the first three weeks, at the directors' request. The producers were also not allowed at rehearsals. I suspected that this was an unfortunate choice. Then when I finally saw a run-through of the show and no one on stage moved, I knew we were in some trouble. Then the choreographer and the director stopped talking, so I knew that would become problematic.

Theatre is a collaborative effort and if the team is not communicating ... well, that's not so hot. The theatre chat board people were all over the show, saying very negative things about it from the first preview on. I don't quite understand why people who work in and are inspired by the theatre arts take such glee in tearing other artists apart. Some previews were great, and others fell flat. We made so many changes every day that it was very challenging for the top-notch cast to really feel confident in their choices.

They worked very hard though, and I admire the heck out of each of them. Truthfully, I admire everyone involved in the show. Theatre is hard. We don't all do this for the money... especially at the Free Festival! Everyone was very passionate about the production, but somehow our 'family' fell apart.

TW: Why have you decided to turn this whole experience into a new show?

PMM: I told the story, or parts of the story, to so many people over the years and everyone was very intrigued by the smallest details. I also kept a very private blog about the whole experience from the first reading onward. I hadn't really looked at it since the show closed, because it was such a painful, soul-crushing experience.

But one rainy day, a year ago, I took a look and got drawn into my own story... the optimistic start, the thrill of moving to the West End, casting, rehearsals, previews, changes, closing, afterlife (which I won't give away so your lovely readers will come and see



Photo: Kat Gollock

my FREE show!). It seemed like the story would be intriguing, not only to 'theatre people', but to anyone who has ever had a dream. So far, the show has reached all sorts of people and the feedback has been incredible. We all have a story to tell. Sometimes we tell them at a pub, on the phone, in our journal. I wanted to get back on stage after a ten-year self-imposed hiatus and this was the way to do it.

My only big choice was to NOT make it a typical "I was born... blah, blah, blah..." one-man show; but rather a hybrid of storytelling, stand up, and improv. The show has played in bar basements, hotel lobbies, and theatres - and each venue gives the style and delivery of the show a different flavour. I am really glad that I decided to tell the tale. It has inspired people, and also given the musical itself some attention. Oddly, I've done more press for this tiny show than I ever did for that mega-budget show!

Plus, I'm a native New Yorker and I like to talk.

TW: Any ambitions to have another go yourself? Maybe a musical version of 'Videodrome' with Madonna songs?

PMM: Do you really think, after all I have said previously, that Madonna would be an ideal person to collaborate with... on a MUSICAL? I don't think so! I've been approached by several artists about working on their jukebox musicals and I have an awesome 80's punk/new wave environmental musical extravaganza ready to go. Any takers? See what this Fringe has done to me? I cannot help but sell, sell, sell 24/7! With 2700 other shows playing here, all we do is sell our shows. And more often than not, the shows we like.

Read Peter's tips for writing a jukebox musical in the full interview at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2012PMM

SEE PETER'S SHOW:

Desperately Seeking The Exit - Free, Laughing Horse @ Edinburgh City Football Club, 1-26 Aug, 6.00pm.

LINKS: www.seekingtheexit.com

Molly in the middle with a robot heart



TH INTERVIEW

Well, we thought 'My Robot Heart' - a collaboration between poet and writer Molly Naylor and indie-folk duo The Middle Ones - sounded like it would be good from the very start. Then our ThreeWeeks reviewer proved us right by giving the show a glowing write up. We sought out Molly to find out how the collaboration worked...

TW: Tell us about the premise for 'My Robot Heart'.

MN: It began as an exploration of fear. Then, over the course of its development, it became about love and fear, and the relationship between the two. It's semi-autobiographical like much of my work, but it also includes characters and narratives which are entirely fictional.

TW: How did the hook up with The Middle Ones come about?

MN: I used their music in recorded form in my last show. Our aesthetics and themes are pretty similar, so it made sense to work with them again. None of us can remember the actual conversation when we decided to try having them on stage with me, but it

must have happened because here we all are. Having a lovely time.

TW: How did the collaboration work - did they write music for a completed script, or did they get involved earlier than that?

MN: We all live in different cities and so, for a lot of the process, we weren't together. But we let each others' work inform our writing - I'd listen to them on the train while I was writing bits of the script and then I'd send them bits of writing for them to play around - so the process became more integrated and collaborative than we'd initially envisaged.

TW: How does performing a play like this compare to the poetry readings you also perform elsewhere?

MN: It's entirely different in many ways - in that the form is obviously different. Being aware of the relationship between form and content is something I think is really important in making longer works. The mode has to be right for the content. The brevity of a poem at a reading isn't something that translates to a whole hour - an hour-long show is a different thing altogether and asks more of the audience. It has an arch. The similarities lie in my delivery and style - in performing both poetry and whatever this is, I am trying to be myself on stage. We all are. We're not acting. We're telling, not showing - which is breaking one of the first

rules of theatre. But we're doing it on purpose. Also, this only applies to our delivery and not our themes. We hope they are less didactic.

TW: Is the Edinburgh Fringe a good place for showcasing work of this kind?

MN: I don't know. Maybe. It feels tough sometimes because the Fringe relies on strong categorisation in a way that you don't encounter when touring a show. If you do a show like this - which is not entirely one thing, in that it's not spoken word, 'straight theatre' or comedy, it's a hybrid form that we've made up because it suits the story we're telling - at a venue in Manchester or Barnstaple; I think people are much more likely to come along with open hearts and minds and just watch it for what it is.

TW: Your 2010 Fringe show 'Whenever I Get Blown Up I Think Of You' was a big success, what happened after its acclaimed run in Edinburgh?

MN: I made a book of it and then adapted it into a drama for Radio 4. It aired in July 2011.

TW: What was it like adapting the piece for radio - are there different challenges in creating a radio script?

MN: Yes, it's an entirely different skill. I come from a scriptwriting background though, so it's a technical skill that I had already learned. Scriptwriting for

radio and screen has lots in common with poetry though, I think - the sparcity of language and the rhythms on the page. It was a bit weird having someone else play me though. Good weird; Morvan Christie is a really good actress. Despite her being Glaswegian, many people thought it was actually me!

TW: The poetry and spoken word programme at the Fringe seems very strong these days. Are you planning any poetry performances here? If not, who else would you recommend?

MN: I've been focusing on writing poems for the page recently, and have just had my first poetry book published - it's called 'You Clown'. So that's been my main poetry thing of late, and I haven't been doing many live gigs. But shows by other spoken word/poetry/storytelling people I'd recommend are Ross Sutherland's 'Comedian Dies In The Middle Of Joke' and Rob Auton's 'The Yellow Show'.

TW: What are your post-Fringe plans?

MN: We're going to tour the show in Spring. In the Autumn I'm busy developing a TV comedy drama with my friend John Osborne (he of 'John Peel's Shed').

SEE MOLLY'S SHOW:

Molly Naylor and The Middle Ones: My Robot Heart, Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug, 3.25pm

LINKS: mollynaylor.com

5/5



A Donkey And A Parrot Sarah Hamilton

In telling the vast, adventurous story of her ancestors, Hamilton inhabits dozens of characters along the way, including the eponymous donkey and parrot. She does so with aplomb, making it wonderfully easy for the audience to follow every fast-paced narrative twist and turn. In one hour only we rocket from religious persecution, to kidnapping, slavery and of course, romance, without the narrator hesitating for one moment. Sharp and clean in delivery and aesthetic, even Hamilton's set is charismatic: at first it appears to be simply a hollow wooden barrel, but it continues to offer up all sorts of witty surprises right until the end of the show. This is a humorous, spell-binding story immaculately told, perfect for all ages.

Gilded Balloon at Third Door, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 2.00pm.

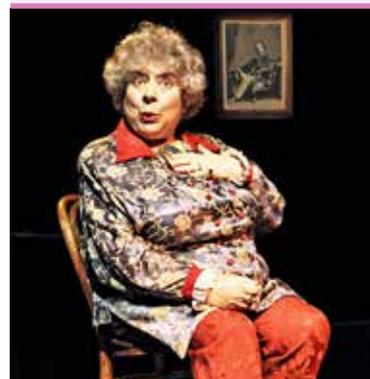
tw rating 5/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

Miriam Margoyles - Dickens' Women

Richard Jordan In Association
With Andrew McKinnon, PW
Productions, Pleasance

'Literature is not peripheral to life' - it is the very stuff of life. Dickens drew the traits of the women of his writing from those he encountered - and this is as much a play about Dickens as it is about his female characters. This is not the spark of raw talent that is to be found deep in the tangled coils of the Fringe; nominated for an Olivier award, Margoyles' solo performance returns to rapturous applause. On stage she is unruffled, and it is with naturalistic ease that she slips expertly into the skin of an array of male and female characters, incarnating the likes of Gamp, Havisham, Micawber - even little Nell. One for fans of Dickens and Margoyles alike.

Pleasance Courtyard, 8-25 Aug (not 14, 21), 2.30pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Colette M Talbot]



C the Festival



★★★★★
Fringe Review

Straylight Australia
**Shakespeare's Queens:
She-wolves and Serpents**
3-25 Aug 2.00pm C eca



Light in the Dark Storytellers
Forgotten Heroes

19-27 Aug 2.00pm C nova



'Daring... imaginative'
Stage, Must See

Kipper Tie Theatre with C theatre
Our Island

2-27 Aug 1.20pm C too



★★★★★
Scotsman

The Flanagan Collective #LittleFest
Beulah

2-27 Aug 5.15pm C nova



★★★★★
ThreeWeeks

C theatre
Giddy Goat

1-27 Aug 12.15pm C



★★★★★
EdinburghGuide.com

Dead Posh Productions
**Still Life (also known
as Brief Encounter)**
2-27 Aug 3.20pm C aquila



★★★★★
AYoungerTheatre.com

CW Productions with C theatre
**The Madness of
King Lear**
1-27 Aug 5.30pm C



★★★★★
Scotsman

Jaron and Slater
The Submarine Show

2-27 Aug 4.55pm C too



★★★★★
BroadwayBaby.com

Kipper Tie Theatre with C theatre
The Ugly Duckling

1-27 Aug 10.00am C



★★★★★
NewCurrent.com

C theatre
This is Soap

1-27 Aug 1.15pm C



★★★★★
Scotsman

Negative Capability
Excess

2-26 Aug 5.25pm C nova



'Beautifully imagined'
Fest

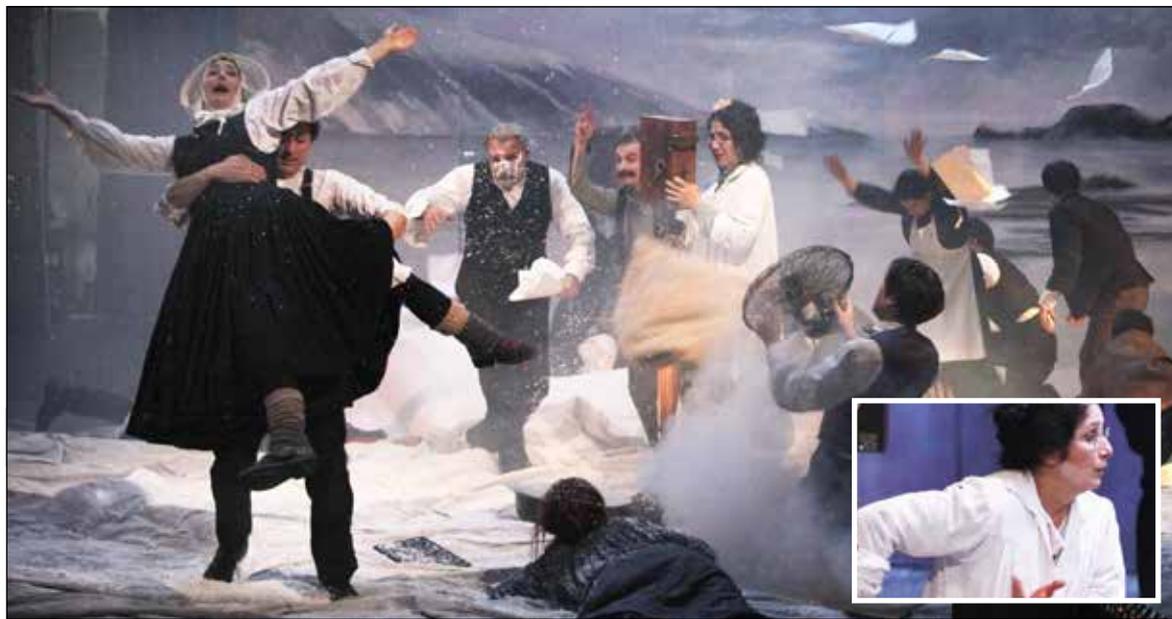
Backhand Theatre with C theatre
**Icarus: a Story
of Flight**
1-27 Aug 5.30pm C eca

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All aboard with the magnificent Théâtre du Soleil



PH INTERVIEW

Théâtre du Soleil's 'Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir' is a production on a massive scale, perfect for the Lowland Hall at the Royal Highland Centre that the Edinburgh International Festival has transformed into a theatre space this August.

"This production is loosely based on a Jules Verne story", explains Juliana Carneiro, one of the leads in the show, who has worked with the Paris-based Théâtre du Soleil and its co-founder, director Ariane Mnouchkine, for over

two decades. "It's a story about a group of people at the turn of the last Century who set sail from England to Australia to start a new life, but who never arrive, their ship being run aground on Cape Horn. Those who survive set about building a new society where they land, some motivated by socialist ideals, though other motives start to loom as well".

Though the Vernes-inspired story of survival and new society is actually just one strand of 'Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir', which has a play-within-a-play element to it too (well, technically a film-within-a-play). The story unfolds through the eyes of two aspiring early 20th Century film-makers who are trying to capture the Vernes tale on

an early motion picture camera. "It's a brother and sister who are making this film", Juliana adds, "and I play the sister. As that character I hold a camera throughout a lot of the proceedings!"

The sister is actually one of four characters Juliana portrays in the production, because, as is customary for Théâtre du Soleil shows, each actor has multiple parts. "We all play more than one character" Juliana says, "which can be demanding, though it is something we are all used to doing. Once each performance begins, it moves very fast, and a lot of energy is required, both on stage and off, as some high-speed costume changes occur. But in some ways the speed of it all is good for us - it actually reduces

the anxieties of performing, because you really don't have any time to think".

"It is an intense experience to perform in a production like this one", she continues, "but we rehearse for nearly a year when creating these shows, and that helps a lot; you really feel part of the character and the story by the time the piece finally opens on stage". The eleven months of rehearsals is also characteristic of the Théâtre du Soleil approach, where the whole company is involved in devising and developing any one piece.

How much is pre-prepared when the actors first enter Ariane's rehearsal room? "It depends. If it's an existing play, then we each read the script individually before we begin. But then, when we come together, we immediately start performing in rehearsals, script in hand, all of us inputting on how the production might develop. We don't sit around a table and read through the script, the performance element is there from the start, and Ariane encourages us to propose where we take the play, and to employ our imaginations throughout the creative process".

On a piece like 'Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir' there is even more freedom for the actors involved. "We had this little Jules Verne book as a starting point, and Ariane arrived with the film concept, of imagining what it would have been like at the start of the 20th Century, when the film industry was just emerging, for two people to embark on a film project like this, utilising the Vernes story. So we each read the story, and someone made a

prop camera, and we began to develop the piece from that basic idea".

These days the whole creative process that the Théâtre du Soleil team embark on is filmed throughout, with the director and her cast watching each stage back. "We can look at what we've done" Juliana explains, "and decide what elements we should keep and develop further. Only about a third of what we create in the rehearsal room probably makes it into the final piece, but that process adds so much more to the experience and the production you will see".

Théâtre du Soleil are renowned for creating very physical and visual works, and that is particularly true with 'Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir'. "We didn't set out to choreograph the piece", Juliana says, "but there are so many people on stage, and at times things move so fast, that it becomes necessary to consider and plan the movement that occurs within the piece, which sometimes almost feels like a dance. As I said, there is a lot of energy in this production".

This is Juliana's first time performing as part of the Edinburgh Festival. "We are so pleased to be here" she says, having arrived in the city less than 24 hours earlier, "we have heard so much, and have so much to see. It's a thrill to be at this festival". And with a production of this scale and ambition, I suspect Juliana's debut appearance in Edinburgh will be long remembered.

SEE JULIANA'S SHOW

Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores),
Lowland Hall, Royal Highland Centre, 23-28
Aug (not 26), 6.00pm

TW

5/5



Flamenco Flow Global Ricardo Garcia's Flamenco Flow (Spain)

It is definitely a feast for the eyes as well as the ears. I have to confess, I didn't know how stunning a mixture of flamenco, street dance, African drumming, tango and ballroom dance could be until this evening: this flamenco is cheerful and festive, there is Indian drumming by a Scot, funky African drumming and Scottish street dance accompanied by classical guitar. Every one of the female dancer's costumes is a visual celebration of global fashion, from Bollywood tube dresses to polka dots. She flows like air, she smiles like a ray of sunshine, she teases like a cat. Don't miss your final opportunity to take in this show.
C eca, 13, 14, 26 Aug, times vary. tw rating 5/5 | [Ting Guo]

PH REVIEWS

Hi-Kick

Seol and Company

Think the Sharks and the Jets fighting about who rules the astro-turf instead of the neighbourhood. Perfect for families with children who love football, or dance (or both!) this show is a spotless combination of narrative humour and action-packed entertainment. There is a chance to win several inflatable footballs or to get up on-stage and show your skills against some of the cast, but even if you want to stay in your seat Seol and Company won't fail to make you feel involved. The show even features an appearance from the England football team, with some left-footed kicking from Beckham (or, to be more precise, a performer in a well-preened blonde wig!) Watch out for Ronaldo too...

Assembly Hall, 2-27 Aug (not 6, 13, 20),
4.05pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

A Strange Wild Song

Rhum and Clay Theatre Co

The theatre was full of laughter; at the

end there was silence, and applause. The story reminds me of 'Le Petit Prince', how a man, left alone and kept away from his world, gets close to kids and dreams. An actually tragic story told in a comic way, the apparently grown-up actors tried very hard to demonstrate the naiveness of young boys, and despite the awkwardness, this effort deserves commendation. Evoking the sense of children's games, the show's use of toy planes and other tiny little props brought heartfelt smiles to the audience's faces, and made the entire play more moving - it wouldn't have had the same effect if it were told in an adult way. Plus, they have an amazingly talented musician who was able to improvise and mimic any sound you can and cannot imagine...

Bedlam Theatre, Aug 4-25 Aug, 9.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Ting Guo]

Sulle Labbra Tue Dolcissime (On Your Honey Lips),

Francesca Selva's Dance Company/Florence for Fringe

How apt that a performance in Edinburgh should begin with rain? During this video/dance performance, the inside and outside worlds collide around the theme of alienation. With a

rainbow of colours, the dancers paint the bleak stage with movement while behind them a screen flickers with images: a pigeon, a naked man in a bath. Movements become wilder, and the energy precipitates throughout the theatre until the dancers collapse and you feel your breath synchronising with theirs in a moment of total absorption. The unnatural appears innate in the bodies of these top class dancers. They caress and repel one another, there is anger, fear and sympathy. It is a piece which will leave you both perplexed and amazed.

Zoo Southside, 3-27 Aug (not 8, 20), 4.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Joanna Gill]

TW

1/5 Bad
2/5 Mediocre
3/5 Good
4/5 Very Good
5/5 Brilliant

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5/5

Tom Thum
Underbelly
Productions and
Strut & Fret

My jaw almost hit the floor. I actually couldn't believe my ears. I had mistaken the show I was seeing 'Tom Thum' for the well-known fairytale Tom Thumb. And I couldn't have been more wrong if I tried. What I was witnessing was this genius, a beat boxer live on stage; mere beat-boxing doesn't cover it though. This man was beat boxing, making music and singing. All at once. The Australian performer showed off his outstanding talent as a solo-act, almost hypnotising the audience in to a trance like state, leaving them fascinated; questioning "how does he do it?" From sounds such as the bagpipes to frog-noises Tom proved his spectrum of abilities. Even as they left, the audience was still in awe at the sheer genius of the show.

Underbelly Bristo Square,
1-27 Aug (not 9,13,20), 6.45pm
tw rating 5/5
[Rachel Campbell]

MU REVIEWS

Vocal Is Lekka Baxter Theatre
Centre and Assembly

Bursting with irrepressible joie-de-vivre, this a cappella (with a touch of percussion) ensemble from Cape Town succeeds in blending fluid harmonies with some very slick choreography. Their set might seem a little too shiny with commercial gloss for fans of more rough-and-ready folk music, but it is mesmerising nevertheless. Turning their bodies into finely-tuned musical instruments, 'Vocal Is Lekka' fuse wildly different genres with a finesse that makes it look easy. Their versions of songs by LMFAO and the Doobie Brothers in particular are skilfully assembled, but their inventiveness truly comes into play during harmonized interpretations of a tennis match and the Maori Haka (spelt, in the theme of the show, with a double 'k'). And they never stop smiling.

Assembly George Square, 2-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 4.55pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

Flanders And Swann

Tim FitzHigham and Pleasance
with Jeremy Meadows

Tim FitzHigham and Duncan Walsh-Atkins have, once again, reprised their roles as legendary comic duo, Flanders and Swann. FitzHigham almost becomes Michael Flanders, from his classic mannerisms to his unique

comic timing, providing a fitting tribute to the man who would have turned 90 this year. New life is breathed into old classics, with satirical lyrics involving figures such as Bob Diamond, without ever veering from the very proper Flanders and Swann style. If you're familiar with the duo then rollicking renditions of favourites such as 'The Hippopotamus Song' will have you singing to the rafters. If you've never heard of them, it isn't too late to appreciate their hilarious songs and acerbic wit, thanks to this sparkling show.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 15),
2.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Lewis Wade]

Scotland In Song Carolyn
Anona Scott and Jack Foster

If ever there was a genre that cynics could latch onto to use as a cash cow at The Fringe, it would be this type of show. Thankfully, Carolyn Anona Scott and Jack Foster's musical and literary jaunt through Scotland's history, from the mythical to the modern, exudes heart and a sincerity that is as endearing as it is refreshing. Featuring the works of Burns, Scott, and Henderson, the show offers a great way to revisit some of Scotland's defining moments through folk music and poetry recital for visitors and natives alike. 'Scotland In Song' inevitably omits periods in Scottish history due to time constraints but this is understandable. All in all, a braw show for ye loons n' quines.

The Royal Oak, 4-27 Aug, 4.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Christopher Rumbles]

The Sorries

The Sorries play a brand of folk music that is so deliciously infectious it's almost impossible not to get carried away. This duo bring traditional folk songs back to life through their clever contemporary humour (their 'Johnny Lad' makes reference to Alex Salmond and Usain Bolt, amongst others), top notch musicianship and perpetually smiling faces. Their comfortable on-stage rapport helps the show to become a sing-a-long with friends, adding to its authentic Scottish nature. From a heartfelt 'Auld Lang Syne', tweaked to become a ballad, to a raucously catchy 'Rattlin' Bog', the pace never falters. With an audience constantly singing, clapping or stomping along this show is riotous fun that affirms just how alive Scottish folk music is.

Quaker Meeting House, 1-25 Aug (not 12, 19),
4.30pm, 8.30pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Lewis Wade]



5/5

TW

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MO REVIEWS

Revolution! The Musical Revolution Arts

Set in the 1980s against the backdrop of Communist rule in the former Yugoslavia, this show is a fully charged socio-political show which premieres at this year's Fringe. The company, also Revolution by name and nature, make full use of the auditorium, breaking down the fourth wall to bring the audience right into the heart of the action. Young love blossoms and community thrives, but this is juxtaposed with the harsh brutality of innocent deaths, and these colliding moments highlight the actors' range with depth and artistic integrity. In places the raw energy is uncontrolled and the singing voices waver under the intensity of emotion, but amid an era of revolution, theatre has never been so poignant.

Paradise in Augustine's, 4-27 Aug, 8.25pm
tw Rating 4/5 | [Lucinda Al-Zoghbi]

Good Grief Gone Rogue

The amusing narrative unravels during a funeral and wake, telling the tale of three siblings coping with the death of their Father. It bears some resemblance to 'Death at a Funeral' for its whimsical take on the passing away of a relative, with accidental drug use, relationship breakdowns and the realisation of what is really important in life thrown into the mix. Many lyrics slightly lacked substance and the live band were occasionally a little off key, however the entire cast sang impeccably. Although not the most riveting storyline, it had the audience chuckling and even teary-eyed during the more sombre numbers. With a standout performance of 'Tilly', the irresponsible, free-spirited sibling, this was great British humour.

Ceca, 13-27 Aug (not 20), 12.15pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Newland M&T Productions

Newland is a rare thing- a Fringe musical with a ridiculous premise which more than delivers on its potential. This is a cowboy musical, a great cowboy musical. Adopting a wide variety of song styles, as well as confidently parodying and referring to the common tropes of musical theatre, it stays engrossing, funny and entertaining throughout. Part of this is because of the acting; it's larger than life, exaggerated, hilarious and perfect for this type of show. Plot wise there's nothing especially original, but that's the point, really: being able to predict the ending is half the fun of musicals, and that's yet another way this show works. It's also a pretty great western, so if you like either genre, go see it.

theSpace @ Surgeons Hall - Grand Theatre, Aug 3-25, 8.15pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Katherine Cunningham]



The Wolves Descend Little Room Productions

This operatic tale of werewolves; curses; romance and murderous guesthouse owners was more than absurd. The lack of dialogue meant concentrating was imperative, but the darkly comic twist gave the plot some amusing moments. The score was fabulously composed and played by a live orchestra, who were talented and tightly rehearsed. Reminiscent of 'Phantom Of The Opera', the score complemented some voices more than others and, although the acting was a little over dramatic, it fitted well with the plot. With fantastic performances by Laura Curry as Phoebe the Werewolf and Guy Withers as Croatian guesthouse owner Mr Goren, this is a solid piece of writing, well worth a look if you're interested in modern opera.

Paradise in Augustine's, 14-18, 22-25 Aug, 1.25pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

CappellaJuice: Beyond The Wardrobe Fiato Facile

Interwoven with light-hearted sketches, the "clothes-based musical revue", saw six talented singers harmonise their way through an hour's worth of pop and traditional classics. The concept was slightly confusing, and didn't lend itself amazingly well to the selected scenes which led into the series of mash-ups: with an occasional joke and some good character observation, the six worked their way through numbers from Busted to Bond. At times the singing was slightly off key - I suspected first night nerves - and some mash-up choices made the songs slightly disjointed. However, highlights came during the more traditional numbers, including the beautifully sung 'Bonnie Banks O' Loch Lomond' and on the whole, the six-piece sounded fantastic, performing well constructed a cappella numbers.

C, 12-27 Aug, 5.05pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Meet the Fringe's Piano Bar Lady

MO INTERVIEW

When Linn Lorkin brought her show about her time playing piano bars in the 1980s to last year's Fringe, it won the wholehearted approbation of our ThreeWeeks reviewer who called it "a treasure". She's back this year at SpaceCabaret @ 54 with the same show, and - soon after putting her on our 'to see' list - we also added Linn to our 'talk to' list. Here she is, telling us all about how the show came about...

TW: Let's start at the beginning - how did you originally find yourself playing the piano bars of New York in the 1980s?

LL: I went to the US after I'd done a wee season at London's Ronnie Scott's and I was actually on my way to LA, where I had in mind to look for work playing piano in a funk band, because that's what I'd been playing in New Zealand for the last several years. But as soon as I arrived in NY I got hooked on the city. One evening I played a piano that was just sitting in a restaurant and the owner said "Come back Saturday and play for the customers and I'll give you \$20 and a meal". And that's how I started! One piano bar led to another and I was never out of work from then on.

TW: And when and why did you decide to turn the stories of that time in your life into a stand-alone show?

LL: In 2010 I took in some cabaret shows at the Auckland Arts Festival (mostly with Australian artists performing) and I thought to myself I'd like to devise a show that I could do at festivals too. I have a huge number of original songs and many of them are derived from events in my own life, and upon reflection I realised I had rather a large body of songs about my time in New York, which is a totally inspiring, magical place. And in fact it's the place where I first started writing songs.

TW: Tell us how the show itself works.

LL: There are two realities in the show. One is the woman sitting playing in a piano-bar with a guy at the bar who keeps requesting songs, and that reality is expressed in the theme and title song of the show, which comes and goes. The other reality is me telling the whole story of my eight years in New York with various stand-up anecdotes which are enhanced by the songs that follow them. In a couple of places these realities coincide when I'm both the story-teller and the woman playing who has her enamoured bar-fly.



Photo: Kat Gollock

TW: Were the songs written specifically for the show, or are they a collection of songs written over the years?

LL: A number of the songs were written white-hot "at the time"; for example, 'I'm a Mole And I Live in a Hole' was written when I was having a terrible time living in a dark and dingy apartment and had just lost my bread and butter gig. Others were written specifically for the show when I went to New York for six months in 2010 to play a number of house-concerts and develop the show.

TW: Our reviewer last year noted how you "flawlessly recreated the 80s New York piano-bar scene". How do you go about doing that in an Edinburgh venue?

LL: The main thing is to have the "tip-jar" stuffed with American dollars clearly in view! And of course my cocktail style piano-playing also helps. In my venue last year (Hendersons) I had a real upright piano, and that felt so authentic to me because nobody played an electric piano in a piano-bar in NY in the 80s! However, with the electric piano I'm playing this time I feel I'm able to "sell" the songs much more easily because I'm facing out to the audience as I sing. Whereas last year I actually developed RSI in my neck from delivering songs over my right shoulder for 24 shows in a row!

TW: How has the Edinburgh crowd responded to the show - last year and this?

LL: I do feel that the people seeing the show this year are better able to connect to the words of the songs for the above reason. (The spoken stories have always gone down well). And I

did a cunning thing this time around: since research has shown that people generally have to hear a song two or three times before they appreciate a melody, I devised a 'middleture' for my 2012 show, an overture in the middle where the audience hears again all the hooks of the songs so far, and this new piece also advances the plot, so serves two purposes.

TW: What's your favourite memory from the era the show is about?

LL: Just sitting in my Wedgwood blue living-room in my floor-through apartment in a brown-stone on the Upper West Side, wearing my Marks & Sparks emerald green dressing gown and happily writing songs for hours, using those marvellous American yellow legal pads and my little Wurlitzer spinet. I think true creativity can be a state of bliss for any human.

TW: And what was the hardest audience you ever had to play for?

LL: I never had a hard audience in New York. When I played the piano-bar scene there, it was kind of an art form I'd say, because the regulars would expect to hear the pianist's very own interpretation of particular 'standards' and were truly appreciative. There's only a handful of piano-bars left in NY now and the pianists are often expected to accompany some customer singing the song he or she has brought in. So it's almost karaoke!

Read Linn's Fringe tips in the full interview at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2012LL

SEE LINN'S SHOW:

Hey, Piano Bar Lady!, SpaceCabaret @ 54, 3-25 Aug, 2.00pm.

ART, WORDS & EVENTS

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Discover what's on the menu: art in action at the Hunt & Darton Café

AE INTERVIEW

If you go down to St Mary's Street today - and that's basically the road that the Pleasance turns into before hitting the Royal Mile, newcomers - you may be in for a surprise. Especially if you stop for a drink at what you might think is a standard coffee shop, only to discover that there's a whole lot more going on, for The Hunt & Darton Café is a performance art installation. We put some questions to the duo behind it.

TW: Tell us about the concept behind the Hunt & Darton Café.

H&D: The Hunt & Darton Café is an interactive performance installation set up as a fully functional café where engagement, spontaneity and action meet great food and drink! We are creatively exposing the inner workings of the whole Café business, and presenting everything as art. We want to celebrate 'The Café' as an iconic and socially important hub for creative productivity and conversation. Food and drink is at the heart of the majority of social activity, and we love good food and drink and the social occasions that are created by this.

TW: What can we expect if we come along?

H&D: We'll be there to greet you, plus we have artist waiters who bring Martini readings, radio shows, extendable forks, relationship advice and the swivelympics. Large blackboards expose takings, profit and loss, complaints and covers. And dotted around the Café are various visual art commissions to discover as you experience the café.

TW: And what's on the menu? How did you decide what to serve?

H&D: Roast dinner sandwiches, beans on toast, toad on the hole, Battenberg, Tunnocks tea cakes, rice crispy cakes, sugar finger sandwiches and Coco Pops are served all day. All the items on the menu relate to our experience of home cooking, or the biscuit tins of our 80s childhoods!

TW: How did you go about finding a space for the installation in Edinburgh, and how did you decide how to fit it out?

H&D: We made several visits to Edinburgh to find a space. The strategy was to make a list of any empty shops we found and liked the look of, and to then start a conversation with the agent that was handling the property. Lengthy and risky, but we managed to find a space that surpassed all of our expectations, including wheelchair access, and secured it just three weeks

before we were due to open. Once we secure a shop, we take over and bring in carefully foraged equipment, plus install any toilets and kitchen sinks if they are not already in place. One very clear rule for us is that there can be no art that is explicitly art, such as a painting on the wall, only art that responds to Café infrastructure.

TW: How is the Edinburgh audience taking to the venture?

We have had a fantastic response here. One concern was that the subtlety of the project might get lost here, but really has not been the case. People come, get it and then come back again with more friends. We are half way through now and the café has a really buzzy vibe with people positively responding and interacting with all aspects of it. And we are now hosting this year's Total Theatre award ceremony and two Buzzcut evenings.

TW: You originally ran the cafe in Cambridge for four weeks - how has the project developed for Edinburgh?

H&D: Its much bigger here, part of an international festival and creating its own community which has a much more diverse mix of regulars than in Cambridge.

Find out more in the full interview at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2012HDC - and check www.huntanddarton.com for more info. The café is open until 26 Aug.



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Teatr Biuro Podrozy's 'Planet Lem' at Old College Quad
Photo Kat Gollock

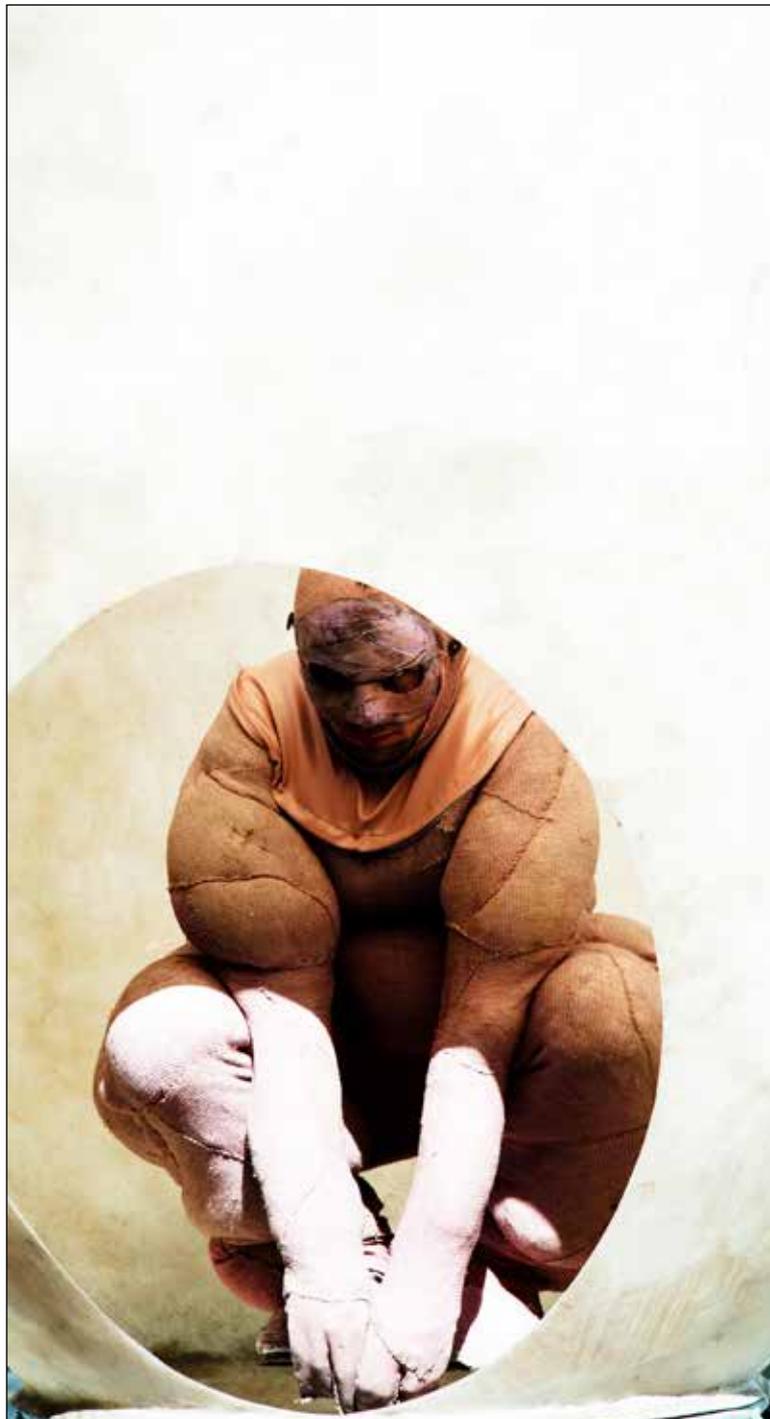
Lili la Scala's 'Another Fucking Variety Show' at Pleasance Dome Photo Paul Collins

Alison Thea-Skot's 'Miss Adventures' at Just The Tonic at The Caves Photo Kat Gollock

Radu Stanca National Theatre of Sibiu, Romania's 'Gullivers Travels' at the Edinburgh International Festival
Photo Paul Collins

Tricity Vogue (centre) and some of the guests from her 'Ukelele Cabaret' at The Counting House:
clockwise from top left Sarah-Louise Young ('Cabaret Whore'), Leela Bunce ('Waiting For Stanley'), Ben Jones, DeAnne Smith ('Livin' The Sweet Life'), Susan Harrison ('Folken Britain') and Ria Lina ('It's Not Easy Being Yellow'). Photo Paul Collins

Communicado's 'Tam O'Shanter' at Assembly Hall
Photo Ting Guo



CHILDREN'S SHOWS

For ThreeWeeks' coverage of children's shows and events at the Festival
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Another week, more small stuff



CS FEATURE

ThreeWeeks Co-Editor Caro Moses and our youngest reviewer Cecily take in some more shows designed for little people

Over the last week, Cecily and I decided to take in a few more shows, with the aim of recommending a solid programme of child-friendly events for the last few days of the Festival, and in particular the last weekend. Because we assume (though can't guarantee) that at least a few intrepid southerners will be making their way north en famille to spend their bank holiday weekend at the Fringe. So, the minute we got back to Edinburgh (we had to go back down south ourselves for a while, not least because it was Cecily's birthday and we had to have parties and presents) we set out on an intrepid show-watching trail.

One of the first shows we caught was 'Tiddler And Other Terrific Tales' at Underbelly Bristo Square. This one was always on the list of to-sees, because, like practically any child under five, Cecily is very accustomed to the work of children's author Julia Donaldson. Also, it was by Scamp Theatre, who did one of Cecily's bestest shows from last year, 'Stick Man'. As we (well, I) expected, the show was slick, well performed, and inventively staged; of the tales covered, Cecily liked 'Smartest Giant' the best, and I agree that I found it the most cohesive. It was quite pricey, though, especially if you are taking the whole family.

Next up was 'Our Island', a collaboration by Fringe veterans Kipper Tie and I Theatre of Singapore. Cecily was full of questions during this one, and I sort of wondered if she might be the wrong age for it; the show is delivered without recourse to the English language; three strangers, all speaking different types of gobbledygook find themselves on an island, and have to learn to communicate and live with one another. I thought this worked brilliantly for toddlers (the small child in front of us gurgled with laughter from the start) and for older children, who were clearly prepared to watch, and able to relate to the theme of learning to co-operate with others. That said, despite all the questions ("what are they saying, mummy?") Cecily clearly enjoyed it. Last night, at bed time, she said "please can we go and see 'Our Island' again next year?".

We've been spending a fair amount of time

these last couple of Fringes at the Pleasance Courtyard, because while I know that not all the good children's shows are on at the Pleasance, they do have a very useful corner in the children's area at The Green, where Cecily can play whilst I meet grown up friends for coffee. One day this week I ran into an old friend there, and he urged us to see a Pleasance show, 'The Golden Cowpat'. Now, I'm not a big fan of poo, but Cecily felt this was a show we ought to see, so I acquiesced. It was nicer than I expected, to be honest; I always assume that children's poo shows - yes, I consider them a genre - will be kind of gross. But this one was an almost-charming (well, come on, it's about poo) tale delivered by a sweetly funny duo, one on story-telling duty, the other on music. The story-teller is engaging, and slickly moves from one episode and character to the next, though this will require your child to concentrate a little in order to follow the storyline. Cecily managed that, but I don't think she would have last year. She is the kind of child who finds it hard to keep still.

If you are/own a child that won't sit still, then 'Flamenco For Kids' with the lovely Ricardo Garcia et al might be just the thing. Well, there's a little sitting at the start, but mine was easily drawn in by the display of music and dramatic dancing that began the show. The best thing, though, especially if you're keen and confident, is that you get to go up on stage and learn a flamenco dance; Cecily was initially slightly daunted by learning the different elements of this, but by the end, was starting to really get it and released her (not so) inner show-off. She also very much enjoyed putting on her little flamenco frock for the children's performance at the end. "My best bit was when we danced in our dresses", she says. "Mine was red, with black spots on it".

Over the weekend, we saw two great shows at theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall. First up was 'The Jabberwocky'. Cecily had been handed a flyer for this a couple of days previously, and was very excited to see it. Her anticipation was rewarded with a humorously delivered take on the classic poem, in which the bright and bushy cast threw themselves into being inanimate as well as animate objects (though to be fair, they were animated when being inanimate too) and offered a pleasing degree of interaction with the children. Cecily raced on stage when given the chance to participate, and, when encouraged to chuck props on stage too, shouted "this is so much fun. I LOVE This show!"

The second show at Surgeon's Hall was

'East Of The Sun, West Of The Moon' (pictured), and although this saw much less participation, it still managed to silence Cecily, and keep her almost sitting still until the end. The story is very much of the 'Beauty And The Beast' scheme, but don't even think about the Disney version. This is a well-conceived piece of physical theatre which ought to equally entertain the grown ups - indeed, some of the humour might go over the head of the younger children - and is fast-paced, witty, and is the absolute opposite of patronising; the cast assume that they can say some things to children that not everyone would say to children. Cecily was mostly transfixed. And it's not often she is mostly transfixed.

So, those are all the shows you should see this week. But this might leave you wondering what Cecily and I are going to be seeing this week, given that we've already seen that lot. Well, I'll tell you. Probably another Kipper Tie show, 'The Ugly Duckling', awarded 5/5 by our reviewer, plus, we are already booked in for 'The I Hate Children Children's Show' (5/5 last year as well as this), as well as a new show 'Superjohn', which has been developed at Great Ormond Street, and explores how to use creativity to help sick children and their siblings deal with serious illness. Cecily is also keen to see 'Greek Myths For Kids' (5/5 last year) and 'Giddy Goat' (4/5 this year), so who knows, you may see us there too. Unless mummy gets fed up and wants to go and see some grown up shows instead. Which is possible.

SEE THE SHOWS:

Tiddler and Other Terrific Tales, Underbelly Bristo Square, 2-27 Aug, 11.15am.

Our Island, C too, 2-27 Aug, 1.20pm

The Golden Cowpat, Pleasance Courtyard, 13-27 Aug, 10.45am and 11.50am.

Flamenco For Kids, C eca, 1-27 Aug, 1.15pm

The Jabberwocky, theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall, 3-25 Aug, 9.45am

East Of The Sun, West Of The Moon, theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall, 3-25 Aug, 12.10pm

The Ugly Duckling, C, 1-27 Aug, 10.00am

The I Hate Children Children's Show, Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 August, 12.15pm

Superjohn, Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug, 11.25am.

Greek Myths For Kids, C eca, 1-27 Aug, 2.15pm

Giddy Goat, C, 1-27 Aug, 12.15pm

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SHOWS GUIDE



THEATRE

SUPERHEROES Comic and Physical Theatre. The link between CHILDHOOD emotional TRAUMA and ADULT LOVE life explored by means of a comic analysis of superheroes' lives. (With the support of the Italian Institute of Culture Edinburgh). www.superheroes.org.uk theSpaceUK @ North Bridge (V36)



THEATRE

ALL TURN! - FREE Birmingham bred Actor Emily Summers brings her Grandfather and his memories to life in an original One Woman Show. Wit, warmth and remarkable optimism: Mr Albert North, born 1926, Oldham. 'The Stardust of Yesterday' Laughing Horse @ Free Sisters fpp255



MUSIC

CHANSONS FRANÇAISES The Phoenix/ Basement Bar. Edith Piaf, Jacques Brel, Charles Aznavour, Mireille Mathieu... and many other great names of La Chanson Française will be interpreted by Dr2 (AKA Zahida). August 20 to 25, 2012 at the Phoenix/Basement Bar, 12:00pm to 12:55pm FREE!



COMEDY

THE SOMENEWS LIVE SHOW - FREE Captain Taylor's Coffee House. Would you shoot a burglar? Which of Jedward would you eat first in a celebrity version of the film Alive? Find out the answers at the SomeNews Live Show. The lighter side of news addiction. See it for FREE. **** (LoveFringe) 5:30pm, Aug 4-26.



THEATRE

DRACULA SEX SUCKING & STARDOM Last Chance Saloon stage an irresistible revamp of Stoker's classic with liberal interpretations of pop songs, outrageous humour & a Lloyd Webber loving Count. 'Positively drips in knowing humour' (WhatsOnStage.com) 6th-27th Aug 8.40pm Paradise In The Vault fpp273



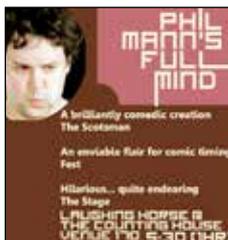
COMEDY

EAT A QUEER FETUS 4 JESUS - FREE Some people are born again...Richard Coughlan was miscarried TWICE! "Lord of Filth 5 STARS" 3 Weeks "The man is a killer" Reg D Hunter 1 of Stewart Lee's EDINBLUR tips 21:45pm - 22:45pm 2-26 August The Counting House (Lounge) 38 West Nicolson Street fpp72



THEATRE

HOUSE OF SHADOWS is a new interpretation of Hans Christian Andersen's tale "The Shadow." The Man, a storyteller, longs to join the mysterious Cult of Beauty, but when his Shadow breaks free it sparks a rivalry that threatens to destroy them both. theSpace @ Surgeons Hall fpp285



COMEDY

PHIL MANN'S FULL MIND Phil Mann honed his ability as an instant expert. Attend - get answers. 'A brilliantly comedic creation' (Scotsman) 'Delight & scruffy charm' (ThreeWeeks) 'Untamed mischief, rampantly chaotic' (Culture Wars) 'Hilarious - quite endearing' (The Stage) Laughing Horse @ The Counting House



MUSIC

JOHN MCNAMARA SOUL & BLUES SINGER Australian Soul singer - Taking cues from soul greats such as Otis Redding & Sam Cooke mixed with fiery blues & slick guitar playing. Daily intimate Acoustic shows at noon. Don't miss this powerful & emotive voice Live! www.johnmcnamarablues.com fpp215



COMEDY

MEN OF CHARACTER - FREE The Confused Moose bring their pan-American accents and broken dreams from Chicago to Edinburgh with their new two-man solo-sketch show. It's free and it's in a bar. So... it's got that going for it. 112 Hanover St. Daily @ 15:05 theconfusedmoose.com Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde fpp125



THEATRE

MR CARMEN 2-27 Aug. Cult vanguard group from St.-Petersburg ENGINEERING THEATRE AKHE is back to Fringe with powerful new version of their famous show "Mr.Carmen". "The extraordinary becomes believable" LA REPUBBLICA Tickets: 01316233047, assemblyfestival.com Assembly Roxy fpp302



THEATRE

YOU OBVIOUSLY KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT A joyous theatrical experience about those days when if anything can go wrong it will and inevitably at the worst possible moment. Funny. Poignant. Visually stunning. 'Highlights the frustrations of modern life wonderfully' (View From The Gods) Underbelly Cowgate fpp337



COMEDY

THE INTIMATE STRANGERS Silly and surreal sketch comedy. Featuring Anne Frank, a tiger and a musical that's definitely not about Scientology. There will be dancing. 3.15pm (1hr) **** 'Stark comic quality' (RemoteGoat) **** 'You simply have to see it' (OffScript) Just The Tonic at The Caves fpp98



THEATRE

PHOTOGRAPHING THE DEAD A city in ruins. A man in mourning. A woman, waiting for a train. A haunting and evocative journey through memory, set in a world recovering from tragedy. This is a poetic storytelling, a reminder of what it is to hope, to care and to be truly alive. Paradise In The Vault fpp308



THEATRE

CAPTAIN FERGUSON'S SCHOOL FOR BALLOON WARFARE Enlist with the Captain! Inspired by true events surrounding WWI, this solo performance chronicles the dauntless patriotism and misguided genius of US Army Capt. Thomas Ferguson. Funny, heartwarming: "at once triumphant and tragic" New York Post. Assembly Roxy

ThreeWeeks EDITORS' AWARDS

The ThreeWeeks editors honour the ten things that made Festival 2012 extra special

theSpace @ Symposium Hall | Saturday 25 August 10.30am
www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/awards



