

ThreeWeeks

EDINBURGH



it's the biggest festival ever,
and this is your guide to it

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL PREVIEW GUIDE

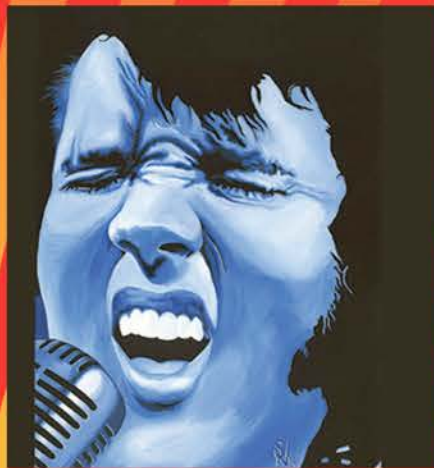
featuring Allen Barton | Apphia Campbell | Chris Turner | Dan Schreiber | Guy Retallack | Lucy Benson Brown | Nadia Brooks
Natasha Gilmore | Potted Sherlock | Ramin Grey | Sarah Campbell | Susan Calman | Zoe Lyons | and loads and loads of show tips

CtheFestival



C theatre
King Arthur

30 Jul–25 Aug 12.15pm C



Xanadu Productions
Et Tu Elvie

30 Jul–25 Aug 10.55pm C



Five Point One with C theatre
Notoriously Yours

31–25 Aug 8.00pm C south



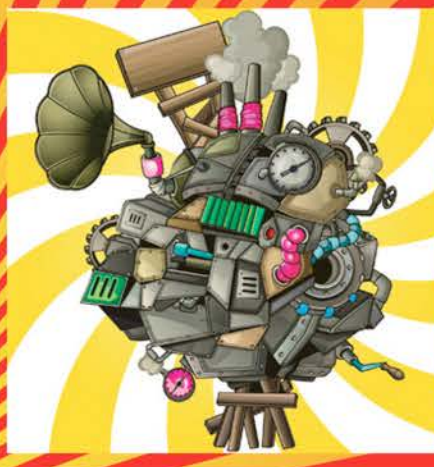
Jolt Sonic Arts
Brunchlandung & The Nis

1&2 Aug 5.00pm&7.30pm C south



English Cabaret with C theatre
Dreams of Peace and Freedom

31 Jul–25 Aug 7.45pm C south



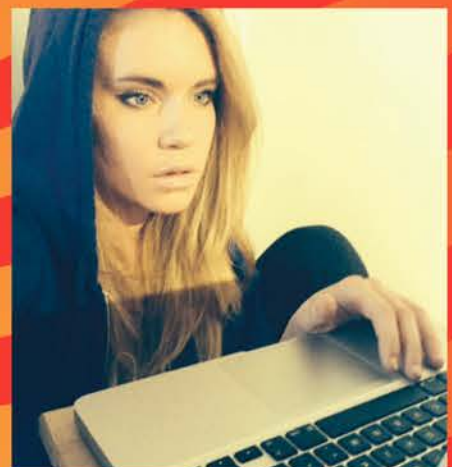
C theatre
The Adventure Machine

30 Jul–25 Aug 1.15pm C



C theatre
The Snow Queen

30 Jul–25 Aug 11.15am C



No Prophet Theatre Company
Chatroom

30 Jul–25 Aug 8.20pm C nova



Sally E Dean
Something's in the Living Room

6–25 Aug 3.00pm C cubed



English Cabaret with C theatre
The Happy Prince

31 Jul–25 Aug 12.00pm C south



C theatre
Shakespeare for Breakfast

30 Jul–25 Aug 10.00am C



C theatre
Shakespeare in the Garden: A Midsummer Night's Dream

31 Jul–25 Aug 6.00pm C south

With more than 200 shows and events across our venues in the heart of Edinburgh, we celebrate our 23rd Fringe with an inspiring international programme of cabaret, comedy, circus, dance, musicals, theatre and family shows. See it all with C venues.

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The A-Z of Edinburgh Festival 2014

Welcome to Edinburgh 2014, the biggest festival in the world. Actually, it's several festivals all happening at once. The programmed International Festival, the Book, Politics and Art festivals, the Tattoo, the Mela, and the massive unprogrammed 'everyone's welcome', Edinburgh Fringe. Here's a speedy guide to it all, from A to Z.

August

This is when it all happens, of course. With the Fringe kicking off right at the start of the month, and the International Festival keeping things going to the very end. Though for most people the core 'three weeks' of the Festival are from the 1st to the 25th of this month.

Biggest

The Edinburgh Festival is the biggest cultural festival on the planet, that's no secret. Indeed, just the Edinburgh Fringe on its own is the biggest. Add the International, Book, Art and Politics festivals, the Mela and the Tattoo, and blimey, big big. And this year is also the biggest ever Fringe, with 3193 shows in the programme. Which makes all this the biggest cultural extravaganza ever staged in human history. So yeah, biggest.

Comedy

Perhaps the genre most associated with the Edinburgh Festival these days, and the biggest strand of the Fringe. Indeed the Edinburgh Fringe's comedy section is itself the biggest comedy festival in the world. For any new comedian, certainly in the English speaking world, the Edinburgh Fringe is an annual benchmark for your career, as you move from open mic to shared-slot to free full-hour to

paid-for show to award winning glory to the biggest stages in the Festival. And then, if you have any credibility, a second show back in a dingy pub room in the Free Fringe, cos that's how you keep it real people.

Dance

Though don't be thinking it's just comedy at the Fringe, because there's so much more. Including a very impressive programme of dance. Look out for Tamsin Fitzgerald from ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winning company 2faced Dance with her tips for navigating the dance programme on page 23. And don't forget there are some grand dance and ballet productions in the International Festival too.

Exhibitions

Yes, you'll find lots of arty happenings in Edinburgh during August as well. Indeed there's a whole separate Edinburgh Art Festival programme to peruse. And even if visual arts aren't usually your thing, you can't beat a chilled morning absorbing some of the world's greatest artworks to refresh yourself after a night of Fringe excess.

Free

Doing the Edinburgh Festival need not break the bank, because of all the free shows on offer. There are now three free show strands to choose from - the Free Fringe, Free Festival and Freestival - and you'll find freebie shows outside of those programmes too. Though, as Sam Brady put in on the ThreeWeeks website, "remember that 'free shows' are only free to get in - you are expected to pay to get out". In that if you like what you see, you should throw a little something in the bucket on exiting. By which I mean money.

Games

I'm talking about the Commonwealth Games people. And while the Glasgow games may wrap up just at the Fringe begins, the Edinburgh International Festival has specifically invited performers from a number of Commonwealth countries as part of Scotland's wider celebrations this summer. And in amongst that you'll find a whole

strand of work celebrating the 20th anniversary of democracy in South Africa. And if you're inspired to be sporty by Glasgow 2014, book yourself tickets for a show at the Just The Tonic caves and then another at the Pleasance Courtyard with just a five minute gap, and enjoy running up that hill. Latecomers will not be admitted.

Holyrood

Pretty much every building becomes a venue during the Edinburgh Festival, including the Scottish Parliament, which hosts the Festival Of Politics from 15-17 Aug. It's a great event any year, but this year, needless to say, political debate should be higher on

the agenda of the average Festival-goer than normal.

International

Few festivals can be as international as this one. Obviously the International Festival is a global affair, otherwise that would be false advertising. But all of Edinburgh's festivals bring together people from the world over, with 47 other countries represented in the Fringe alone.

Juniors

Yep, there's plenty of shows for younger Festival goers too. The Fringe's childrens show strand is brimming with great choices for all the family, and the Book Festival has a brilliant programme for younger minds too.

Kabaret

What do you mean I'm starting to cheat here? So, yes, Kabaret. Such a vibrant strand of the Fringe, look out for some top cabaret tips from ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winner Sarah-Louise Young on page 25.

Literature

I'm talking about the Book Festival, of course, taking over Charlotte Square Gardens with two weeks of discussion, talks and debates. It's got a brilliant programme, plus if the sun shines, the Book Festival site is another excellent place to chill. Though take a book to read won't you? Oh, and also look out for the Book Fringe at Word Power Books on West Nicolson Street.

Music

Not always something you think about when you say "Edinburgh Festival", but there's so much music in the city over August I wouldn't know where to start telling you about it. Fortunately ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winner Daniel Cainer does it for me, on page 28, with his picks of the musical Fringe. Meanwhile for classical fans, the International Festival is over-flowing with concerts, and we'd also recommend the Fringe programme at the Royal Over-Seas League. **cont>**



TW

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CARO WRITES>

Aaaaand, we're back. And I am not just talking about ThreeWeeks, I'm talking about all you performers and Festival-going culture-lovers out there, all probably getting into a Festival mood just as I type these very words. Or if not, very soon after.

For that time is upon us, and we are girding our collective loins for the heady month-long melting pot of extraordinarily diverse culture and entertainment that is the Edinburgh Festival. ThreeWeeks celebrates all this by creating our magazine and online publications, of course, which together, we hope, adequately reflect the width and breadth of what's on offer here in August, and at the same time help you navigate this sprawling mass of shows and events. It is difficult, these days, to work your way through all the programmes with a highlighter pen, especially if one of those is the Fringe Programme, which gets thicker and thicker every year.

So this, our preview issue, is packed full of hints and tips, and we hope that they'll help you in the decision making process. As usual, I've trawled the programmes looking for shows that look interesting, shows that I know will be good, and shows that someone else has convinced me will be worth seeing, and I've written about them all in our 3 To See previews. Furthermore, four guest contributors - all former winners of ThreeWeeks Editors' Awards no less - have also been perusing the listings to provide some top five recommendations from their own genre specialisms: Richard Tyrone Jones recommends spoken word events, Daniel Cainer selects the music, Sarah-Louise Young offers you her cabaret picks, and Tamzin Fitzgerald gives you tips for the dance programme.

But that's not all, of course. Aside from all the tips and picks, we have loads of interviews and columns, all featuring acts and companies that we love. Some of them are Fringe stalwarts, others relative newcomers, and we have high hopes for them all. In this issue you'll find Q&As with stand-up types Susan Calman, Zoe Lyons and Dan Schreiber, as well as with the talented people behind a number of theatrical pieces: Apphia Campbell, star of 'Black Is The Color Of My Voice', Lucy Benson Brown from 'Cutting Off Kate Bush', and

'Blind Hamlet' director Ramin Grey. We also spoke to Natasha Gilmore, choreographer from linked physical shows 'Tiger' and 'Tiger Tail', Guy Retallack, director of the musical 'Thrill Me', the team behind family show 'Potted Sherlock', and spoken word performer Nadia Brooks.

And it doesn't end there; we've also ceded the floor to a number of guest columnists, who have written enlightening articles for us, and you, on a variety of subjects. Comedian Chris Turner tells us about his descent from archaeology to comedy, Allen Barton outlines the genesis of his play 'Years To The Day', and Sarah Campbell shares her top Fringe worries. Don't worry, though, it will all be okay.

And, once you've read them all, I bet you will be much better prepared to attack the Festival. Informed, armed, and with at least a few shows to aim for. However, I would urge you not to leave it all up to us. Or indeed, our fellow media. There are thousands of shows, and only a fraction of them get picked up by the press; only a small number feature in pre-festival preview picks, and not every show will get a review - from an established publication - in print or online.

So, when someone hands you a flyer, or when you are perusing the Fringe Programme and for some reason notice a particular show title, don't write it off because it has no "press quotes" in its blurb, or because you can't find a review of it online. It might be brilliant, it's just nobody knows it yet. And yes, you take a risk when you go to see a show like that - you might end up wasting your money and time on an hour of pap - but it might be a risk that pays off. You might make a huge discovery. You might sit in a near-deserted performance space and watch a show by a fantastic new talent, you might go out and tell your friends. You might start a word-of-mouth movement that ensures a trickle of custom to that show every day. By the end of the Festival, there might be a queue for it all down the Cowgate... wouldn't it be exciting to be a part of that?

Caro @ ThreeWeeks

PS: Look out for the main three issues of the ThreeWeeks magazine, out in all the venues on 6, 13 and 20 Aug. And make sure you sign up for the ThreeWeeks Daily email to get the latest news and reviews in your inbox each day. Sign up at ThreeWeeks.co.uk/signup

A-Z of the Edinburgh Festival

Night-Time

The Edinburgh Festival is very nearly a 24 hour affair, with plenty of late night/ early morning drinking haunts on offer. Though Edinburgh nights are not just about the booze. There's a plethora of late night shows to choose from, our favourites being those that bring together performers from across the Festival to perform a short 'spot'. Them hoping beyond hope that you're not yet so drunk that you'll forget how good they were. Their thinking is you might buy tickets for the full show in the morning. Sometimes it works.

Opera

The International Festival is the place to go if you're an opera fan, it's a really impressive programme of full productions and concerts. There's a little opera in the Fringe too, you'll find it in amongst the musicals strand, which also deserves a mention. If you like your musical theatre, you'll be well catered for here.

Physical Theatre

This is another less-talked about but impressive strand within the Fringe, though physical theatre shows are lumped in with the dance and circus productions in the programme. So this is where the 'secondary' genre listings the Fringe provides are very important. Don't say I didn't tell you.

Quality Not Guaranteed

The whole point of the Fringe is that anyone who can find a space to perform (and usually some money) is welcome to do so. This is how you stumble across magnificent performances that just wouldn't be booked at a programmed festival. Though it also means there are a few duds in there, usually ideas that had potential but didn't quite work out. But that's the point of the Fringe, take a gamble, don't play it safe, and see how it turns out. Maybe awful. Maybe the greatest night of your life.

Reviews

It's the erratic nature of the Fringe that makes the reviews so important. The ThreeWeeks review team check out shows across all the genres, big names and total newbies, and at venues large and small. A selection of reviews will be published in the ThreeWeeks magazine each week, though to see them all you should sign up for the free ThreeWeeks Daily by email at threeweeks.co.uk/signup.

Spoken Word

A recent addition to the Fringe's programme guide, though there's

been a great spoken word scene at the Festival for years. Take note, some of it can still be found hiding in the comedy and theatre programmes. ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winner Richard Tyrone Jones has the spoken word tips for you on page 32.

Theatre

How did I take so long to get to theatre? Oh yes, I remember, the alphabet. There are some grand theatrics in the International Festival, though it's the Fringe that is the real Mecca for theatre fans, with pretty much every flavour of the dramatic arts on offer, and plenty of brand new plays too. And with running times generally shorter here than elsewhere, it's particularly good for theatre lovers with short attention spans.

Union

As in between Scotland and England. With the big vote now very much on the horizon, there are a fair few shows dealing with the old union of kingdoms this year, and it'll be hard for any vaguely political comedian to not reference the referendum. More focused debates on Scotland's future, whatever way the Yes/No vote goes, can be found in both the Book and Politics festivals.

Venues

Oh yes, venues. I've already mentioned that pretty much every building in Edinburgh becomes a venue in August. In the Fringe each

venue is independently programmed and run, and many people navigate the Festival via each venue's specialisms and reputation. As always, there's some new venues this year, with a number of existing Fringe venue operators expanding into new spaces. Some useful venue info: The Assembly Rooms is not run by the same people as the other Assembly venues, and any venue with Laughing Horse in its name is Free Festival rather than Free Fringe.

Weird Stuff

Yep, there's plenty of weird stuff to enjoy this Festival. Half of it situated on the Royal Mile. Embrace it. Enjoy it. Be a bit weird yourself, why don't you? Though if you spot a local clearly in a rush to get somewhere important, probably best not to be weird in their face.

X-rated

It's a family affair this Festival, though some shows are a bit more 'grown ups only'. It used to be the aim of many a Fringe producer to create the show that generated enough outrage that a boycott would be launched, ensuring a sell-out run into September. People seem less prone to get outraged about X-rated performances these days. But they're still there to be enjoyed if that rocks your boat.

Yearly Institutions

If you're a Fringe regular you'll likely have some moments and events you look forward to each year. The buzz of Meet The Media at the start of the Fringe. The first night you go the whole hog and leave the Gilded Balloon as the sun rises. Plus there's the award shows, the charity galas, the big day off in the middle when everyone gets ill, and, for those still in town at the end of August, the International Festival's awe-inspiring firework finale.

Zzzzzzzzz

If you're not already feeling sleepy after reading about all this cultural exertion, you'll definitely need some recovery time come September. So please do schedule in a post-Festival lie in. Thank you.



Mills plots a conflicted finale at the EIF this August

It's Artistic Director Jonathan Mills' last time at the helm of the Edinburgh International Festival, and 2400 artists from 43 countries will join him for a magnificent swan song, which ticks the 'international' box if nothing else.

Theme wise the centenary of the outset of the First World War will have an impact, with the relationship between culture and conflict set to be explored. Says the EIF, this year's programme "looks at the work of artists who in difficult and uncertain circumstances can transcend their surroundings to create work of great beauty and optimism".

Meanwhile, with the Commonwealth Games taking place in Glasgow shortly before this year's Edinburgh Festival, Mills has also made sure to invite artists from some key Commonwealth countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Indeed there is a whole strand of work celebrating the 20th anniversary of democracy in the latter.

The stand out production in the EIF's theatre programme is 'The James Plays' (pictured), the first ever co-production between the National Theatres of Scotland and Great Britain, and the EIF. James McArdle, Blythe Duff, Andrew Rothney, Jamie Sives and Sofie Gråbøl will all star in the newly penned trilogy about James I, II and III of Scotland, written by Rona Munro and directed by NTS's Laurie Sansom. Audience members will be able to buy tickets to see each play over a three-day period, or if they are feeling adventurous see the whole trilogy in just one sitting.

In the opera strand another co-production stands out, a collaboration with Aldeburgh Music that will see the staging of a notable work by that



company's co-founder, Benjamin Britten's 'Owen Wingrave', a piece originally written for TV and first broadcast by the BBC in 1971. Playing to Mills' conflict theme, the piece tells the story of a young man's moral tussle with his family's military history and expectations.

Elsewhere in the EIF's programme of theatre, opera, dance, ballet and classical music festival-goers will find the likes of Stan Douglas, Luk Perceval, Heiner Goebbels, Nicola Benedetti, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Lemi Ponifasio, Tom Cairns, Ute Lemper, Brett Bailey, Blythe Duff, Mark Baldwin, Daniil Trifonov, Anne Sofie von Otter, Piotr Anderszewski, Oliver Knussen, Jordi Savall, the Kronos Quartet, Mariinsky Opera, Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, the Handspring Puppet Company, the Paco Peña Flamenco Company and the Czech Philharmonic. Which is quite a lot to be getting on with. And of course there'll be the customary opening concert and firework-filled finale.

Announcing his final programme earlier this year, Mills said: "In Festival 2014 we bring together cultures

from around the world to present an intense three weeks of intimate and epic theatre, dance, music and opera. We are working with a number of international co-producing partners to bring performances to the UK from around the world, from New Zealand to South Africa, ensuring the Festival retains its unique mix of artists and work which makes it an unmissable date in the global cultural calendar".

He went on: "We are delighted to be working with a range of funders and partners to share with you what we believe is a fantastic Festival programme. From our core public funders, Creative Scotland and City of Edinburgh Council, to the many trusts, foundations, international partners and individuals who generously donate sums large and small, the commitment and passion of so many for this Festival remains truly inspiring. I look forward to welcoming audiences from Scotland and around the world to Edinburgh this August to share in compelling stories from artists who are exploring and transcending conflict to create the most sublime and optimistic work".

More at www.elf.co.uk

Fringe Stats

With the Edinburgh Fringe bigger than ever this year, let's take a quick look at the numbers shall we? The big fat red programme you'll find all over the city lists 49,497 performances of 3193 shows in 299 venues, an 11% increase on last year's show count - and remember not every Fringe show pays to list itself in the official brochure.

In terms of the genres into which the programme is divided, the Dance & Physical Theatre section has been renamed Dance, Circus & Physical Theatre to acknowledge the growth in the number of circus shows at the Festival in recent years, making what was already a pretty eclectic section of the brochure even more so. Elsewhere the newish Spoken Word section has 88% more listings than last year, while the Children's Shows chapter has also grown in size pretty significantly, with 22% more productions listed.

Though overall comedy remains by far the biggest part of the proceedings, with over a third of the festival sitting in that genre. 28% of shows come from the theatre side,

while 13% are music, a lower profile but nevertheless significant strand of the Fringe (even if many of the shows in it have just one or a few performances, rather than full three week runs).

Launching the programme earlier this year, the boss of the Fringe Society, which publishes the programme on behalf of the Edinburgh Fringe community, Kath M Mainland, told reporters: "This programme is the culmination of the creativity and hard work of thousands of people. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is many things to many people and part of the success of the Fringe is that whatever you are looking for, and in whatever capacity you are looking, you can almost certainly be satisfied by what you find. This year the Fringe includes 3193 shows which is a record number of shows, but more importantly the programme offers the widest selection of international high quality arts and entertainment that you will find in any one place at any one time. A truly unique experience".

The Fringe officially runs from 1-25 Aug this year, though some venues kick off previews a couple of days earlier as usual on the 30 Jul.

More at www.edfringe.com



More festival news: www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/news

some News

"correction"

"When good news goes bad."

Dropkick Murphy's venue 289 5:15pm
Aug 4-23 (not Sun) FREE ENTRY
Plus SN: Extra, Espionage ven185 9pm

SYDNEY THEATRE SCHOOL AND ACTORS NOT FEELERS PRESENTS

OLEANNA

by **DAVID MAMET**

DIRECTED BY Jerome Pride
PERFORMED BY Grace O'Connell
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Mark Matthews

"Dazzling work... finely detailed performances."
- Sydney Arts Guide

Spotlites @ The Merchants' Hall
Venue 278, 22 Hanover St
www.spotlites.co.uk

3 - 9 Aug
11.55am (1 hour 30 mins)
£8.00 (£6.00)
0131 220 5911

Savvy Secrets of Successful Mistresses

"WILDLY FUNNY"
The Huffington Post

Paradise in Augustines (Venue 152)
Aug 2: 19:20
Aug 4-10: 22:15
Tickets £3-£10
0131 510 0022
gopg.mobi/1217

PARADISE
IN AUGUSTINES

Apphia Campbell

Inspired by the music and work of Nina Simone, and one particular event in the legendary singer’s life, Apphia Campbell conceived, wrote and performs ‘Black Is The Color Of My Voice’, a one woman show that combines music, history and an imagined recall of what Simone went through during a three-day ‘spiritual cleansing’

Campbell premiered the show in Shanghai, and later performed it in New York, but now brings the work to the Edinburgh Fringe for a full Festival run at the Gilded Balloon. Ahead of that we spoke to Campbell about the conception of the show, how Simone’s life inspired the piece, and her preparations for the Edinburgh run.

TW: The show is “inspired by the life of Nina Simone”. What does that mean?

AC: The protagonist in the play is called Mena Bordeaux. I invented a new character so I could explore the story in the way I wanted to without being disrespectful to Nina Simone, or confusing people into thinking this piece is a biography, which it isn’t. But the story arises from a time when Simone was in Liberia following her father’s death. She was going through a rough period, and she consulted a faith healer who instructed her to undertake a spiritual cleansing ritual that involved isolating herself for three days. That ritual is the setting of the play. It’s absolutely a fictional account of what happened, but the background of the character and where and who this character is comes from Simone’s life.

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

AC: At the point when I decided to write ‘Black Is The Color’, I had read Simone’s autobiography about four or five times, and I always came back to the one part about the ritual in

Liberia. I couldn’t stop thinking about it. I found that such a compelling part of her history. And I kept coming back to the same question: “What did this woman do while she was stuck in a room for three days?” The question kept turning in my head and finally I said, “Okay, I want to explore this”.

TW: How is Simone’s music used?

AC: The music is used to add narrative context to the character as a musician and a performer. She goes through quite a transformation, and music is the thematic element taking her from one stage of her life to the next. It’s not just jazz by a long shot. Simone was a piano prodigy, and was heavily involved in the church, so the play includes Bach recordings and gospel pieces. As the play continues and Bordeaux finds solace in jazz, I sing several pieces that Simone made famous, either as a part of the character’s performance history or to add to the mood of the story. What I love about Simone’s music is how affected you feel by the end of the song, so my first priority was to capture that feeling by incorporating the music we use.



TW: Had you been a fan of Simone before you first read the autobiography? Did you do any additional research about her life when writing the play?

AC: Absolutely. When I first began listening to her music about ten years ago, something struck me and I needed to know more. As I said, I pored over her autobiography several times. And then I found every book, article, YouTube video, and documentary I could find. It was about a three-year research process, and in turn, a personal discovery, for me.

TW: Simone’s music will always live on, but do you think it’s important people also hear about her involvement in the civil rights movement?

AC: Heck yes! You can’t tell a story inspired by Simone and not talk about it; the play addresses her activism as a major part of her personal and professional development. You can’t listen to a song like ‘Mississippi Goddamn’ and not be blown away by the mind who would write a song like that. She was so fearless and grounded, and I think so much of that developed with her civil rights work.

TW: What’s it like writing AND performing a one woman play?

AC: Well, the writing and performing go hand-in-hand pretty well. Performing a play you wrote for yourself is amazing – you don’t have to “day job it” until the perfect part comes along. You can create it yourself and you can write to your strengths as a performer. It’s performing AND producing the show that’s a problem. When you’re performing and handling the business end of the show at the same time, it can get messy because you get emotionally involved in both jobs, but you can’t let one affect the other or your show will suffer. In past runs, people have asked me, “Hey, we have this problem. What do we do?” and it’s my job as producer to fix those problems, but I’m also in character, so I’m yelling or snapping just so I won’t drop character. I’ve had to apologise quite a few times!

TW: You debuted the show in Shanghai. Are audiences in China aware of Simone’s music, and/or the history of civil rights in the USA?

AC: Many local audiences didn’t really know who she was. To raise money for the Edinburgh run, we did a revue of jazz standards that Nina Simone popularised, and the venue manager did and still calls me Nina. I think it’s pretty funny! I don’t try to impersonate her voice, I’m definitely me as a singer, even in the play. But in the end, it was really fulfilling to introduce Shanghai audiences to this music and give them a bit of background into Black American history.

TW: You also performed the piece in New York, how did audiences differ there?

AC: The audiences in New York were a lot smaller and, of course, more aware of the history. One person in particular came up to me and said, “I thought I would hate it, but I really liked it. I thought it was a different way to tell the story”. I just laughed and said, “Well, I’m an artist, I’m supposed to be creative”.

TW: You seem very keen to bring this show to the Edinburgh Fringe, why is that?

AC: The Edinburgh Fringe is the largest arts festival in the world! Of COURSE this is where I should bring my work! I want to reach a broader audience and this is certainly the place to do it.

TW: Has the show developed or changed since last year’s productions at all?

AC: For the Festival, we’ve had to shorten it due to time constraints. The original show ran at 1:20 and we have it down to an hour for Edinburgh, so we had to shorten it by a quarter. Editing for Edinburgh was brutal. I was talking to my Production Assistant, who’s a writing teacher by trade, about the cuts we needed to make, and she immediately responded with, “Oh, you need to cut this song and this part and this thing. They don’t move the story along. Murder your babies”. I was horrified. I kept saying, “Nooo! I really like that part! Can we put it back later?” I had to cut a lot of parts I really loved, but I’m finding that the editing process really made the play tighter. I’m looking forward to seeing how the edited version plays out during the Fringe, and if all goes well, I’ll be able to perform the full show to a larger audience after Edinburgh.

TW: What are your ambitions for the piece beyond Edinburgh?

AC: I would love to tour the show! I love London and would love the opportunity to put it up in a theatre there, or anywhere really. I’m not too picky. Telling this story wherever I can is my one priority.

TW: My favourite Nina Simone track is ‘Sinnerman’. What’s your favourite and why?

AC: Ah! I’m always asked this question and it stumps me every time. Last week I said ‘Plain Gold Ring’ but this week I’ve been listening to ‘Lil Liza Jane’ on repeat. It’s a folky tune and the rhythm sounds simple, but when I try to sing it I’m always thrown off. Yet, she sings it with such ease. It makes me happy; it really gets me dancing, and with all these Edinburgh Fringe nerves building up, I can really use all the excuses for stress-busting booty shaking I can get.

‘Black Is The Color Of My Voice’ is on at Gilded Balloon from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

Dan Schreiber is one of the ‘QI elves’ to which Stephen Fry often refers on the popular BBC panel show, helping dig up the trivia and misconceptions that form the heart of the show. But you might know that already if you’re a ‘QI’ fan, because Schreiber is one of the regulars on the show’s spin-off podcast that launched earlier this year, ‘No Such Thing As Fish’. He also works with QI creator John Lloyd on the radio show ‘The Museum Of Curiosity’, a programme he helped conceive and co-produces.

But away from the elving and curious museum producing, Schreiber also performs stand-up, and this year brings to the Fringe his first full hour show, ‘Cockblocked From Outer Space’. We caught up with the man himself to talk ‘QI’, the most amazing of facts, and what we can expect from his debut Fringe show.

TW: Let’s get the ‘QI’ questions out of the way first! How did you get to be one of the QI elves?

DS: I moved over to England after graduating from a hippy high school in Sydney without any qualifications. A chance meeting with the ‘QI’ bosses led to the job. Every elf has a title: History Elf, Science Elf and so on. I was Idiot Elf. I knew nothing. Surprisingly, knowing nothing is an advantage at ‘QI’.

TW: And what exactly does being a QI elf involve?

DS: Refusing to find anything dull. Reading that 3000 paged book on the history of popes, until you spot that one golden sentence that reads: “During his 27-year reign, Pope John Paul II took over 100 skiing vacations”.

TW: You’re also a regular on the ‘QI’ podcast ‘No Such Thing As A Fish’. Is it good to share your bits of trivia directly with the audience, rather than letting Stephen Fry take the glory of being the top trivia deliverer?

DS: The podcast is my favourite thing to do. It came about because too many facts in the ‘QI’ office kept

Dan Schreiber

going to waste. Like the time Chief Elf James Harkin looked up from his computer and said: "You know there are currently over 600 guys in the world with two dicks". We decided to gather round a microphone once a week and share our favourite facts we'd found that week. As we speak we're eighteen episodes in, are number three in the iTunes charts and have just hit our two millionth listen. It's done ridiculously well. None of us expected that.

TW: How did you come to co-create the radio show 'The Museum Of Curiosity' with QI chief John Lloyd?

DS: John, Richard Turner - the other co-creator/co-producer - and I wanted to make a show where we could meet our heroes. While trying to think up what that show could be, John Lloyd got offered the post of Professor Of Ignorance at the University of Buckingham. This got us thinking, what would a Prof Of Ignorance do? Probably run an infinitely large and impossible museum. And that's how we got our show.

TW: How does working on the radio show compare to 'QI' itself?

DS: It's completely different. 'QI' is all about the facts. 'Museum' is all about the people. Finding the

world's most interesting authors, explorers, potato experts, deep-sea divers, and getting them to sit with each other, just chatting about their favourite things.

TW: When did you make the move into stand-up?

DS: Four years ago. When my agent forced me to get on stage to do it. I didn't want to do it, because I had nothing to say. So, I got very drunk before going on. The gig worked. I realised that not only did I have nothing to say, but I had shitloads of nothing to say. I have over an hour of nothing to say now.

TW: What can people expect from your Fringe show? Will it be brimming with trivia?

DS: My blurb basically says it all: Yetis, astronauts, paranormal dating websites, the trouble with being hairy, the ancient wisdom of Chinese zoo keepers, the pubic lice hunter of Rotterdam and more. It's packed with facts and personal adventures into the world of dork.

TW: And why the title 'Cockblocked From Outer Space'?

DS: I once had a date ruined by a man from outer space. Literally while he was orbiting the planet in the International Space Station.

TW: You're also doing a live version of 'TMOC' with John this Festival. How will that compare to the radio show?

DS: Just like the radio show it's going to be packed with amazing guests, from academics like the head of Ancient Babylonian Cuneiform from the British Museum to comedians like Jimmy Carr. We're doing nine shows. Come.

TW: Do people constantly ask you for your favourite bit of QI trivia? Does that get irritating?

DS: Yes! But no, it's not irritating. Any conversation that begins with someone saying "did you know..." always ends up being an awesome one.

TW: What's your favourite bit of QI trivia?

DS: Did you know... In 1895, the only two cars in Ohio crashed into each other.

TW: You must know a lot of brainy and knowledgeable people. What's your dream pub quiz team?

DS: Easy. My 'No Such Thing As A Fish' co-hosts James Harkin, Anna Ptaszynski and Andy Murray.

'Dan Schreiber: Cockblocked From Outer Space' is on at Underbelly from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.



TW

KILIMANJARO AND LEE MARTIN FOR GAG REFLEX IN ASSOCIATION WITH PBJ MANAGEMENT PRESENTS

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The Gay UK

"HE'S VERY FUNNY,
VERY FUNNY"
Matthew Wright

"THIS BOY IS
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ME IN SLITCHES
FROM BEGINNING
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INTERVIEWS

NEWS & UPDATES VIA TWITTER @ThreeWeeks
REVIEW ALERTS VIA TWITTER @TWittique



Her neighbours may call her “the mad cat lady”, but round here Susan Calman is a ThreeWeeks favourite, back at the Fringe this year with a brand new show to share. And a ‘confession’ as well if the blurb to ‘Lady Like’ is to be believed.

Ahead of the new show we questioned the lady herself about her Radio 4 programme, recent TV appearances, that new show, and being rather candid on stage.

TW: Welcome back to the Fringe. Your show blurb says you have a ‘confession’ to make this year. Presumably it would ruin the show for you to tell us what it is, but have you got any other confessions you’d like to share before the Fringe begins?

SC: It’s not really a confession I suppose but I’m a huge fan of line dancing. I can’t line dance myself but enjoy watching others do it. Having said that, I’m now aware that it sounds a little pervy. I don’t mean it to. When I have the time in the future I’m going to learn

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Susan Calman

to do it so I can join in. It's not sounding any better is it?

TW: For a lot of comedians the Big Fringe Deadline is a cure for their chronic procrastination and helps them actually get a new show written. Is it like that for you, or were you ready to go in March?

SC: This year I knew I would be filming a TV show in July - called 'Don't Drop The Baton' about the Commonwealth Games in case you wondered - so I decided to do things slightly differently than I usually would. I embarked on a preview tour from the end of January through till March over 26 nights. It meant that the show was pretty much there at the start of April. Over the past few months I've been tweaking bits and pieces but I'm very organised. It's always difficult to get punters to show up at previews once the weather gets better so I found trying out my show in the depths of winter was better. Colder, slightly more miserable, but at least people turned up!

TW: You're also promising to make your audience "feel better" with the new show. How are you planning on doing that?

SC: It's a three stage approach. First, nice, air conditioned, accessible venue that doesn't smell of death. I've performed in many rooms that have a distinct smell of despair. Not this year.

Second, perform a good show where I clearly explain why I'm an idiot with lots of jokes, stories and the like. And third the audience leaves knowing that no matter how bad they think life is, I am clearly failing more spectacularly.

TW: For all your fellow performers setting out on a full Fringe run, have you got any tips for how they can "feel better" when they hit half-way hell?

SC: I've been performing at the Fringe in various shows for seven years now. It's taken me this long to really work out how to survive. This year I'm going to run every morning, I've given up smoking and I'm eating well. No really, I am. Every year at the Fringe I start to feel physically awful half way through which just adds to the general melancholy and self loathing. I'm hoping that treating myself better will lead to a less spectacular mid-August droop. General tips though would be: a) Don't get obsessed with reviews, you'll hate yourself and your fellow comics. b) Don't get involved in bitching, you might find yourself standing beside the wife/brother/agent of the comic you're talking about which will make the rest of the month very awkward. c) Find some nice people to talk to about things other than the Festival; go swimming, go to an art gallery, anything to get away from comedy. d) Remember, above everything else,

that the Fringe is the best opportunity to become a better performer; a bad gig can teach you as much, if not more, than a good one. e) Allow yourself one night to get very drunk, but make sure someone looks after you. And wander through Bristo Square at 3am laughing at the moon.

TW: I'm going to install a little honesty into my questioning here. I managed to totally miss your Radio 4 series earlier this year. What was it about? And please tell me their going to repeat it? Or should I go find it on one of those dodgy file-sharing websites?

SC: It was the second series. Did you miss both? I can come round to your house and talk you through each episode in immense detail if you want? Ha! I think you can buy them on iTunes to be honest but the last series covered appearance, children, DNA and intellectual snobbery. The two series I've written and performed for Radio 4 are probably the shows I'm most proud of. I'm currently pitching for series three so fingers crossed.

TW: Depression was one of the topics covered on the radio programme with the sensible message that that's something we all need to talk about more. How do you think we can make that happen? Does comedy have a role to play?

SC: Comedy has a big role to play because you can say things in a comedy show without terrifying everyone. I can talk about the fact that I've had depression and how I dealt with it. Intersperse it with a few jokes and no one worries that I'm about to lose it on stage. It's the same with the show I did on equal marriage, I know it challenged some of the audience's perceptions about that issue but because I made them laugh it didn't seem like a lecture. I hope!

TW: I did catch your guest appearances in 'Fresh Meat' as the reluctant student counsellor. How does the acting work compare to the comedy?

SC: That character in 'Fresh Meat' was clearly not equipped to help anyone. It was brilliant fun though. Some of the most enjoyable moments in my career have been acting in shows. In 'Dead Boss' I got to play a member of a prison gang. Who could ask for more? I love acting and I hope in the next year or so I can do more of it. It's slightly less pressure when you read out words that someone else has written!

TW: Now I'm thinking you're thinking I've only ever seen your five minutes of acting on 'Fresh Meat'. But we love all your stand-up and panel show work too. The dominance of male comedians on those there panel

shows still seems to be an issue, though various things have been said - at the BBC in particular - about addressing the problem. Do you think it will be?

SC: It will change, I have no doubt about that. It won't happen overnight though. To my mind the key is getting a panel show on the television with a woman as a host or as a regular. That's when things will really change. I firmly believe that will happen soon. Radio has already proven that audiences don't really care if a woman is hosting a panel show, television will get to the same point. It has to.

TW: With so many shows at the Fringe these days publicity is everything. Given the 'Mad Cat Lady' moniker your neighbours have famously given you, were you not tempted to promote the show with endless pictures of cats? I mean, you could be all over Facebook.

SC: Haven't you seen my Twitter feed? Seriously. It's all about the cats.

TW: Finally, you're known for being pretty frank and honest in your shows. Is there anything you've ever shared that you later regretted doing so?

SC: I think I'll find out this year.

'Susan Calman: Lady Like' is on at Underbelly from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

LINKS: www.susancalman.com

TW

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Chris Turner: Standing up, not digging down

Chris Turner's tutors at Oxford were never convinced he was really committed to Archaeology & Anthropology. They're perceptive these Archaeology types, given Turner was secretly busy fitting his studies in around the more time-consuming matter of launching a stand-up career. Though fortunately for him archaeologists are also pretty patient. Something he put the test. Turner takes up the story...

TW COLUMN

After three days of incessant mud-shovelling, hunched in a damp pit in Dorchester-on-Thames, I picked up a spade and slammed it into the top of my foot with enough pressure, I hoped, to break a bone or two whilst preserving my ancestors' hard-fought evolutionary battle for bipedalism. A fortnight before, four days after the death of Michael Jackson, I was scattering a tolerant audience with Swizzels Matlow sweets in a sparsely populated bar. I had just stepped on stage to tell jokes for the first time.

My first year studying Archaeology & Anthropology at Oxford University wasn't what it had promised to be. It was nothing like 'Time Team', 'Tomb Raider' or 'Indiana Jones'. No ruddy cheeked, flagrantly alcoholic, Cornish trowel-wielders waxing lyrical about Anglo Saxon hoards; no tank-topped aristocratic beauties shutting butlers in the freezer; and most disappointingly, no wise-cracking, nine-year-old Chinese sidekicks. Admittedly, none of this was in the prospectus, but who reads those?

The self-inflicted fracture during the Dorchester-on-Thames archaeology dig was effective. It saw me relegated to pot-washer, and I spent a week and a half scrubbing Roman pot shards with a frayed-bristle toothbrush, before receiving the most damning field report ever doled out by the department.

A "complete disregard for the subject" they said! I didn't care. I was in love with comedy, addicted to the lights, the laughter, the applause - admittedly at this point in my fledgling career, the last two were the merest of specks on the comedy horizon, but surely as time passed, jokes were written and stage time accrued, they would rise, twin Tatooine suns...

"If you don't start treating this like it's your degree, we shall have no choice but to rusticate you".

I hadn't been taking it seriously. I idolised Hugh Laurie, a fellow Arch

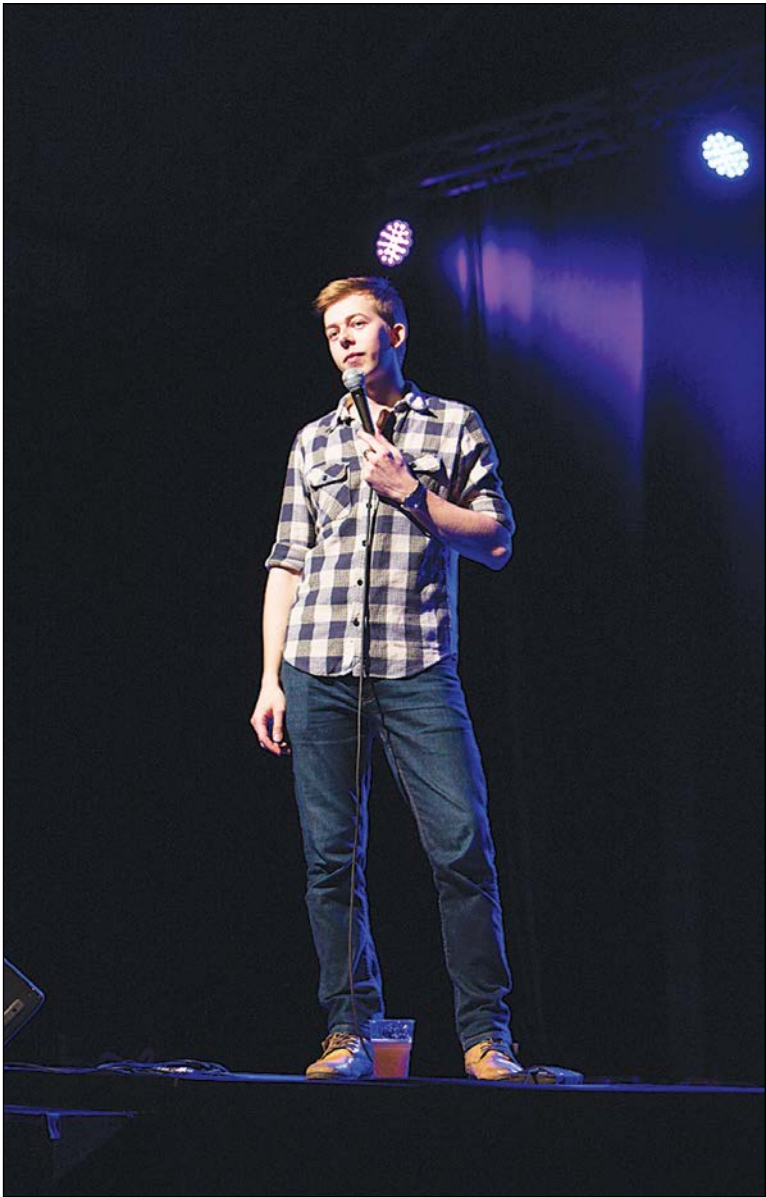
& Anth graduate who had achieved a 'gentleman's degree' (a third) at Cambridge. I had been gigging more and more, focusing on joke-writing and absorbing as much comedy as I could, all the while handing in essays strewn with factual inaccuracies that fell short of the word count. I was nothing if not committed, just not to

my degree: whilst my friends spent their summers studying primates in Sumatra, I was flyering tourists in Scottish rain.

It was a term before my final exams when the senior tutor told me to buck my ideas up, or be kicked out. I didn't want to be an archaeologist, but I didn't want to be the person who tried to be an archaeologist and failed. I cancelled the gigs I'd booked during my exams, hunkered down for some all-night library sessions, and a few months later had scraped myself a 2:1.

Three years on, and I'm making a living as a stand-up comedian. This Edinburgh, I'll be performing my debut solo show, and my time at Oxford makes an appearance as material. If the run goes well, that's what it will remain - a memory. If not, it's a back up plan - though I hope not. I'd be a rubbish archaeologist. I can't even grow a beard.

'Chris Turner: Pretty Fly' is on at Pleasance Courtyard from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.



TW 3 TO SEE



3 improv

Austentatious: An Improvised Jane Austen Novel



I'm an occasional indulger in both Austen novels and 'TV bonnet shows' (or costume drama, as people more usually call them), and, as you may have gathered, I quite like comedy, so this show attracted me from the first time I saw it in the programme in 2011. As you may expect from the title, the theme here is the 'lost' works of Jane Austen, and what you can expect from this talented troupe is a brand new, different and consistently funny story in every show. This is their third year at the Festival, and they've previously received two glowing reviews from us featuring the use of hyperbolic phrases such as "supremely talented", "blinding one-liners" and "nothing short of heroic". Yes, they are that good.

Pleasance Dome, from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

Oh boy! The Quantum Leap Show



When I saw the title of this next show I was almost ready to tell everyone to go home right away, because this lot have won the Fringe. But I do appreciate that these are the possibly slightly worrying sentiments of someone who was, as a younger person, ever so slightly (completely?) addicted to US TV import 'Quantum Leap'. If you've never heard of it (shame on you), it's a sci-fi-ish show about a very nice man who is forced to flit around in time, putting right what once went wrong. This show offers a new and improvised episode every day, and while the team behind this - The Maydays - may not

actually be Scott Bakula and Dean Stockwell, they are a well established and respected group of improvisers. Woooo!

Cowgatehead, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug.

Cariad & Paul: A Two Player Adventure (pictured above)

As well as liking their quality improv, ThreeWeeks reviewers are known to be very vocal in their praise of the very super (and also Edinburgh Comedy Award Newcomer nominated) character comedian Cariad Lloyd, and although we are less well acquainted with the live work of Paul Foxcroft, we are very much aware of just how brilliant this show was last year. These two are consummate skilled improvisers, by the sounds of it; to the point that certain viewers last year had trouble believing it was genuinely improvised. There are only a few shows, so be careful, don't miss it.

Pleasance Dome, from 18 Aug until 23 Aug.

3 musical comedy

David Elms: Nurture Boy



I believe this is David Elms' first full solo hour at the Edinburgh Fringe, so I don't have much in the way of a Festival record to cite. I can, however, confirm that one of our reviewers, when seeing him in one of those three-stand-ups-in-a-row shows a coupla three years back praised his "calm stage presence and toned down style". Judging by his publicity (and I'm not going to bother researching this too hard), lots of other reviewers had good things to say about him too, and this show promises songs, romance, a charming and inventive debut. So I'm going to give this one a go.

Pleasance Courtyard, from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

So many comedy shows to choose from, only so many hours in the Fringe day available for laughing, so where to start? Well, ThreeWeeks Co-Editor Caro Moses has ploughed through them all to present her latest batch of comedic 3 To See Edinburgh show recommendations.

**Jollyboat:
Five Stars, F*****ck Yeah!**



Well, okay, this was one where the title drew me in a little. But also the very clear memory of hearing good things about this show from my trusty writers, and one particularly trusted reviewer in particular, who claimed back in 2012 that these guys are a five star act, warning our readers to expect “expect awful puns, hilarious gags and note-perfect musical parodies”. They are still free at the moment, but surely not for long. Catch them before they’re on the telly.

Beat, from 2 Aug until 23 Aug.

**Jonny & The Baptists:
The Satiric Verses**



You might be a bit more aware of award-nominated musical comedy duo Jonny and The Baptists than you were this time last year, because of a somewhat public spat between them and UKIP deputy leader Paul Nuttall. “We traversed the UK and Scotland with our Stop UKIP Tour, massively pissing off a plethora of fruitcakes and racists”, they say, “and we appear to have learnt something. Well, learnt many things. Conveniently about an hour’s worth of things.” And ‘The Satiric Verses’, apparently, is that hour. Should be diverting.

Pleasance Dome, from 30 Jul until 24 Aug.

**3 ThreeWeeks
approved**

Late with Kate



Last year the ThreeWeeks editors (of which I am one) did what they should probably have done a long time ago and gave that brilliant Kate Smurthwaite one of their Editors’ Awards. You may have come across her on the radio or telly because she is on all the time in her capacity as a stand-up and a political activist/commenter (this year she was even on Question Time) but Kate is also a stalwart, hard-working and talented veteran of the Fringe, and she’s back for another busy August: Not only is she bringing back her annual tradition ‘The News At Kate’, she’ll be hosting a late night comedy showcase, and performing interactive comedy show ‘The Evolution Will Be Televised’. Tirelessly excellent.

The Evolution Will Be Televised, Ciao Roma, from 2 Aug until 23 Aug

Late With Kate, Canon’s Gait, from 2 Aug until 23 Aug; The News At Kate: Leftie Cock Womble, Viva Mexico, from 2 Aug until 23 Aug

The Colour Ham



The Colour Ham offer up an intriguing blend of sketch comedy, magic and mentalism (see, you’re interested already, aren’t you?) and they are clearly very good at it; ThreeWeeks have reviewed this trio twice already, in 2012 and 2013, and on both occasions our reviewer thought they rocked so flipping hard that they were worthy of a 5/5 review. And two 5/5 reviews, from two different writers, for two consecutive Fringe years, is not that common an occurrence, and is pretty much always indicative of an act that’s coming up with something highly consistent and quite, quite special. In short, I am pretty sure this show will be very good.

Just the Tonic at the Caves, from 31 July until 23 Aug.

Joel Dommett: Finding Emo



Joel Dommett is another act who has won consistent praise and general adoration from our roving team, who have in the past fallen hard for his energetically hilarious yet self-deprecating persona. In this year’s show he reveals that when he was a teenager, he was in an emo band that played just one gig. Will he find and reunite its members for the sake of his stand-up show narrative? Possibly, says the Fringe Programme.

Laughing Horse at the Counting House, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug.

**3 free acts you’ve
probably heard of**

**Nick Doody vs
The Debonair Assassin**



You see, some people think that the Free fringe festival strands are full of people who aren’t funny or first timers trying out duff material. Now, that absolutely isn’t true at all (and there are loads of free shows included in all my other comedy picks, too) but I just thought I would hammer that point home by telling you about the free shows out there from comedians like this one, Nick Doody, an Edinburgh veteran that you’ve probably heard of via all the TV and radio stuff he’s responsible for, and possibly through his appearance on C4’s ‘So You Think You’re Funny’

cont>

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TW 3 TO SEE

cont> contest back in 1997 (crikey, was it so long ago?). Anyway, he is very, very skilled, and this show is guaranteed to be good.

Canon's Gait, from 2 Aug until 24 Aug.

Brendon Burns

 Another Fringe veteran (or is it legend? Can never remember) headed for free Fringery this year is the inimitable Brendon Burns, who I am sure you will remember from appearances on the The 11 O'Clock Show (if you are old enough), and about eight million different festival posters. The programme doesn't offer much info about the show - "Warning! May contain material that will never be commissioned and an Arnold Schwarzenegger impression that goes on for possibly 15 to 20 minutes too long" - but I seriously doubt this show will be a waste of your time. Of course, if you are a wrestling fan (or not) with some cash, you might want to head over to his other show, which isn't free, but which will be very funny.

The Brendon Burns Show, The Liquid Room, from 2 Aug until 23 Aug.

Brendon Burns and Colt Cabana Sit in a 150 Seater at 10pm and Provide the Commentary to Bad Wrestling Matches, Stand in the Square, from 1 Aug until 25 Aug.

Michael Legge and Robin Ince Are Pointless Anger, Righteous Ire 3: Ooh Stick You, Your Mama Too... and Your Daddy

 What is it with these ridiculously long titles for shows? Anyway, moving on, not sure who you will be more familiar with, Michael Legge, or Robin Ince, but I feel certain you will have heard of one or both of them. Possibly Robin Ince is more recognisable, because everyone seems to know about the Infinite Monkey Cage show he does with Brian Cox. But they've both been around for a good long time, doing more shows than I can possibly afford to mention here, in Edinburgh, London, venues and festivals everywhere. Anyway, they are good, and this show will be good. Despite their "Not suitable for most people, probably" disclaimer.

Wee Red Bar, from 2 Aug until 12 Aug.

3 sketch

Clever Peter (pictured right)

Our team have always been fond of the antics of award-winning and critically acclaimed sketch team Clever Peter, who you may have heard on Radio 4. If you listen to Radio 4. If you don't listen to Radio 4 and are thus far unacquainted with this particular troupe, then you should seek this lot out. They're doing two shows, too, so you've got no excuse.



Ladies Live Longer: Volunteerology

 I have no scientific proof of this, but I feel as though sketch comedy is an area of entertainment irritatingly dominated by white male trios. So it's good to nominate a female duo (two out of three ain't bad, I suppose) to be one of your viewing choices this August. They came to my attention because certain members of a previous ThreeWeeks team became enamoured of them, then the reviewer we sent in adored their show and gave them a resoundingly glowing review and a 5/5 rating. So frankly, they must be good.

Just the Tonic at The Caves, from 6 Aug until 22 Aug.


3 comedy misery and death, yay!

Andrew Lawrence: Reasons to Kill Yourself

 As you'll know, because you can read, Andrew Lawrence's show this year is cheerfully entitled 'Reasons To Kill Yourself' and though this probably isn't really the sort of title to make you think mirthful thoughts, you have to remember that this is Andrew Lawrence we're talking about. A now seasoned veteran of the Fringe and comedy in general, with regular TV and Radio appearances under his belt, misanthropy and bitterness is kind of his thing. If he wants to talk about his disappointing life and how crappy the world is, he will. And, of course, it will be funny.

The Assembly Rooms, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

Comedy Death: Comics Talking About Their Worst Gigs

 I honestly don't know whether this will be funny or just horribly painful, but it's a show in which a range of comedians tell you about their most agonisingly soul-destroying moments as performers. There's a reason why we talk about dying on stage, of course. It's because it is utterly, utterly terrible when you go down like a lead balloon. Yet, come, come; this isn't people actually dying on stage, it's people talking about dying on stage. It might be informative for you, possibly even entertaining. And it might be cathartic for them. To live through that horror all over again. Maybe.

Cowgatehead, from 2 Aug until 24 Aug.

The Walking Dead

ThreeWeeks knows this show about zombies is good because we actually saw it last year - yes, it's a re-run, but

BRONSTON JONES

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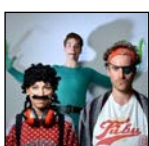
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The first, at the Pleasance, is called 'The Dream Factory', the second, 'Free For All!' is free (see what they did there?) and sounds like it's a mash-up of some old and some new material.

Clever Peter: Free for All!, Laughing Horse @ City Cafe, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

Clever Peter: The Dreams Factory, Pleasance Courtyard, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

The Grantees

 I've been aware of The Grantees for a long time, but never actually saw them until last year, when I ventured out in the late evening on my own (this has been quite a rare occurrence these last couple of years), watched their show, laughed and smiled, and wondered why I hadn't made the effort before. You can take a look at my review on the website for further proof of how funny and engaging they are. Or you can just trust me and go see one of the two shows they are doing this year (another with two shows... is this a thing with my favourite sketch comedy troupes this year...? Did they get together and organise it?)

The Grantees: BaBoom!m Underbelly, Cowgate, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

The Grantees: A Creepshow, Heroes @ The Hive, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.



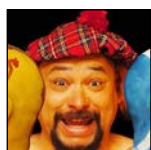
it's one that's definitely worth seeing, and that's a fact pretty much proven by sell out runs at the Adelaide Fringe and the Melbourne Comedy Festival.

"It is hard not to be engrossed by this natural and well seasoned comedian" said our reviewer. "He is incredibly comfortable and hilariously informal on stage. Even those who think they have no interest in fantasy or zombies should attend". Amen to that.

The Liquid Room, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug.

3 referendum

Bruce Fummey



I know there are plenty of people out there who don't care about the referendum, don't want to hear about the referendum and may even be sick of hearing about the referendum. I suspect there are also a lot of comedians out there who just don't want to get involved in the debate. Not so Bruce Fummey, evidently, who is doing two referendum themed shows, one, seemingly, about voting yes, and one about voting no. So possibly not really entering the debate, either. Anyway, the 'Afro-Celtic' comedian is no stranger to broaching Scottish themes, and has in the past impressed a number of ThreeWeeks reviewers with his amiable stage presence, educational material and spontaneous wit, and I think all that bodes well.

Aaah'm Votin YES, Scottish Comedy Festival @ The Beehive Inn, from 1 Aug until 23 Aug

Aaah'm Votin NO, Laughing Horse @ Espionage, from 1 Aug until 23 Aug

Erich McElroy: The British Referendum



Erich McElroy isn't sitting on the fence, he has some pretty strong opinions on the referendum, and he's not even a native. He's an American in possession of a British passport, in fact, who has taken his citizenship test, and everything. Now that he's become a fully paid up Brit, he's not very happy at the thought of losing the Scottish element, and I can kind of understand that. But whether you agree with him or not, this show is likely to be slick and funny because McElroy is a skilled, experienced comedian with an impressive comedy CV.

Just the Tonic at the Community Project, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

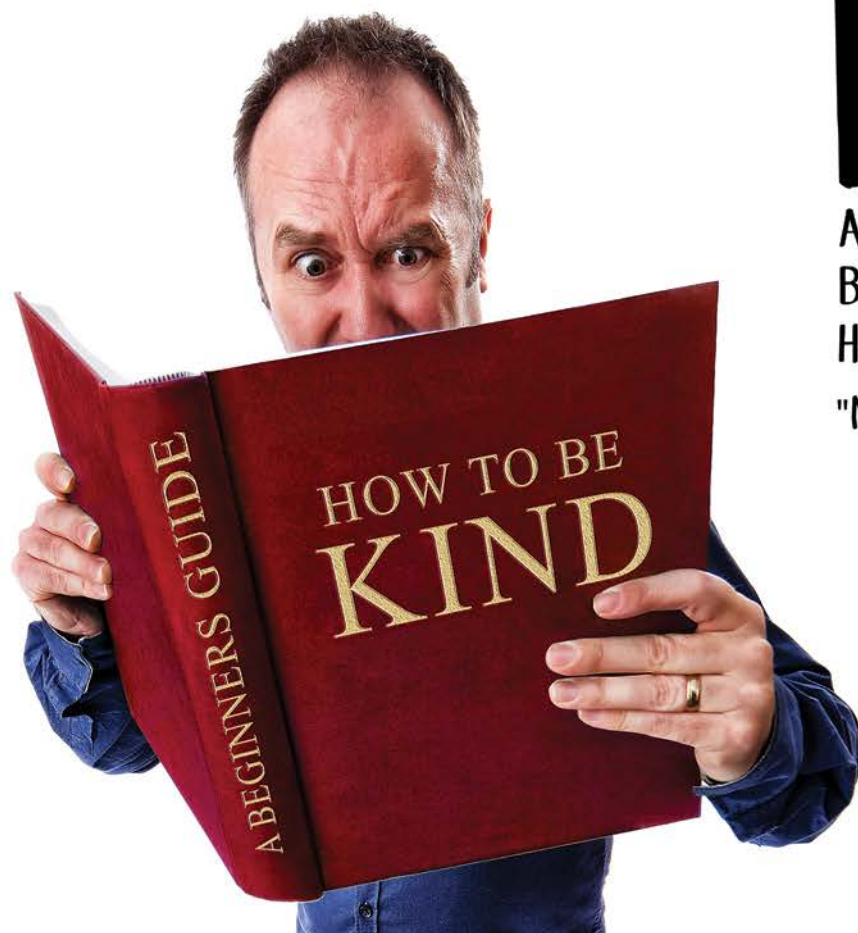
Aye Right? How No?: The Comedy Countdown to the Referendum with Vladimir McTavish & Keir McAllister (pictured right)

Another listing, another great big long title, and this time it's this 'Comedy Countdown' featuring a Scottish Fringe veteran of long standing, Vladimir McTavish, and two-time Scottish Comedian Of The Year finalist Keir McAllister, who will offer some "left field answers" to the big Scottish question, as well as hosting guests in the form of such well known comedy acts as Fred MacAulay and Des Clarke. According to the blurb on the venue website, this mixture of stand up and panel show comedy, poetry, political comment, music and spoken word might help you make up your mind... but then again, might not. Worth a look, I think, whichever way you are leaning.

The Assembly Rooms, from 30 Jul until 24 Aug.



TW



KINDNESS

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Zoe Lyons: Champion mustard cutter

Long-term ThreeWeeks favourite Zoe Lyons is back at the Fringe this year with a brand new show called 'Mustard Cutter', an hour of quality stand-up promising to cover everything "from pan pipes to the price of lobster". Meanwhile, elsewhere in the Gilded Balloon castle, you'll find her appearing in 'Outings', a new show inspired by the YouTube phenomenon that was Tom Daley's 'coming out' statement last year, exploring the real-life coming out stories of various other gay men and women.

TW INTERVIEW

TW: I just did a quick scan of your biography, and I think this might be your ninth or tenth full run at the Fringe? What keeps pulling you back to this madness?

ZL: Your maths is slightly out, don't feel bad, we are creative types, not numbers people! This will be my sixth solo show and I also did a couple of

years in sketch shows, so this is my eighth full Edinburgh. I am not entirely sure why I put myself through it. I think it might be that feeling that I will be missing out on something if I'm not at the Festival in August. Also, I really love chips and sauce and you gotta get your quality chips and sauce in Edinburgh.

TW: How has the Festival changed since your first time performing

here in 2002, both for you personally, and for comedians in general?

ZL: It has certainly grown over the last ten plus years. There seems to be more and more shows every year. Obviously we have had the advent of the Free Fringe, which has gone from strength to strength, and more recently produced some award winning shows. So there are now more options as to how you chose to 'do' the Fringe. Personally I'm far more relaxed these days with my approach to the Festival. Doing my first solo show felt very stressful but it has got easier over the years. My aims now are simple, do a good show and enjoy doing it.

TW: You mentioned the phenomenal rise of the Free Fringe and the other spin-off free show platforms. These seem to have made it easier for new comedians to perform in Edinburgh, though it's also greatly increased the competition. Do you think it's harder or easier starting out in comedy in 2014 compared to when you began?

ZL: I think it is probably harder. I also gather from newer acts that it's harder to get spots at open mic shows these days. When I started I could get a spot

most days of the week in London.

And yes, very occasionally you were performing to just the other acts, but mostly there was an audience of some kind. Though it's also true that while a lot of people will start out in stand-up, many will drop out along the way. I believe that comedy is more or less a meritocracy, so if you stick at it long enough and are good enough it will reward.

TW: Have you got any tips for people performing their first full hour shows at the Fringe this year?

ZL: Pace yourself folks, it is a long Festival so don't peak too soon. Have fun with your show. Be grateful for every bum on every seat. If there are three people in the audience give them a 100% performance. Realise that there will be ups and downs during the course of the month. We have all had those difficult shows... I once nearly faked a heart attack to get off stage, we have all been there. Don't read your reviews during the Festival, read them after if you must. Try and eat a vegetable once a week. And take it seriously but don't be consumed by it.

TW: Do you sit down and write a new hour show for each Fringe, or does your Edinburgh show bring

together routines you've been performing during the previous year?

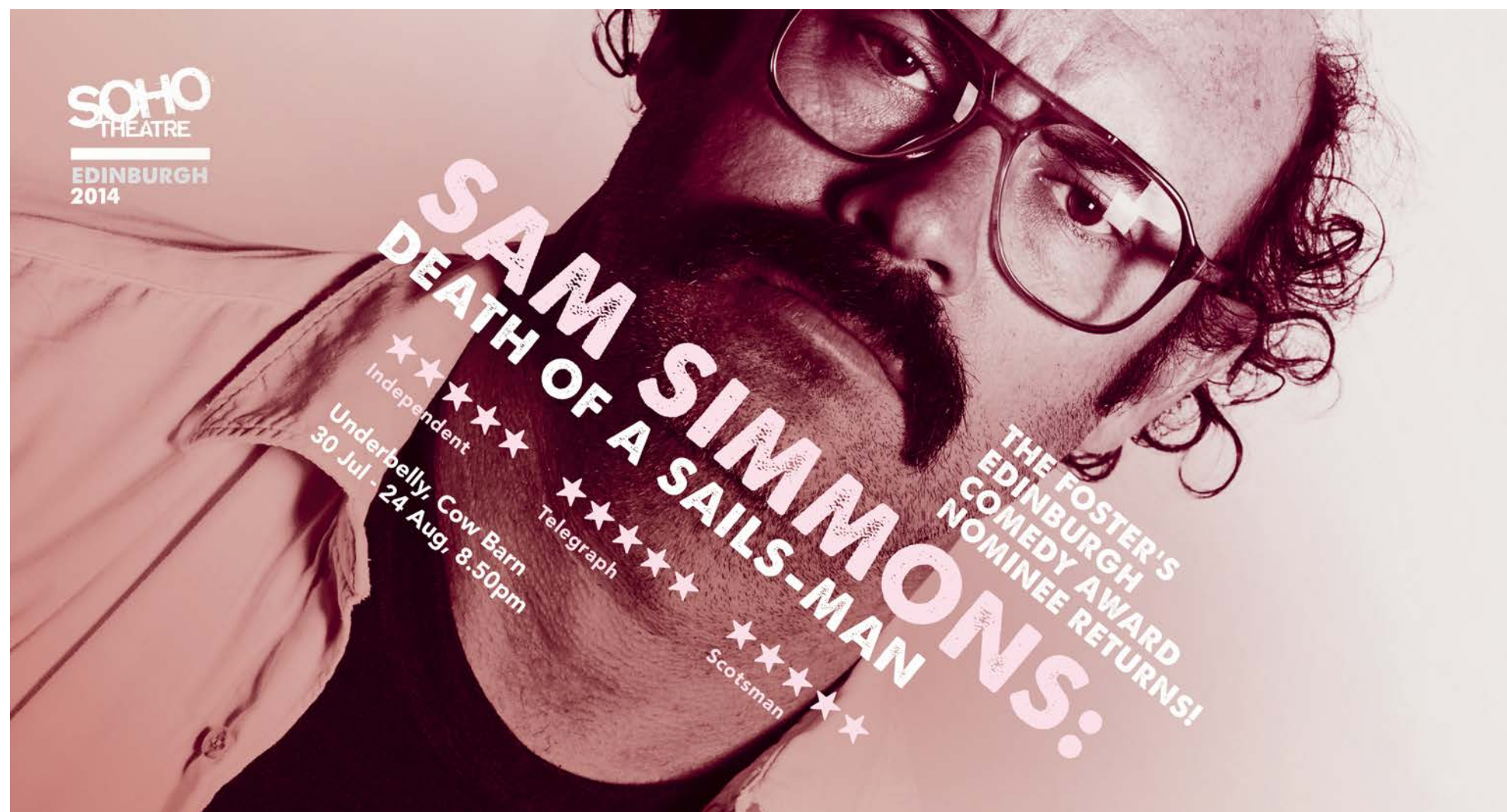
ZL: It's actually a bit of both. I will take my routines that I have worked on over the year and see if I can find a way of linking them together into a show. Then I'll need to do some writing to link those sections together. But I have never sat down and started a complete new hour from scratch, it's more patchwork than that.

TW: You're also involved in this interesting new show 'Outings' at the Fringe this year. What's that about?

ZL: The show was inspired by Tom Daley's coming out speech on YouTube, and is based on real people's coming out stories, which they have submitted to the production. It is a really interesting mix of stories and personalities.

TW: How did you get involved in this project?

ZL: I was asked to audition for the show and got cast. David Grindley, who is directing the show, was a friend of mine at university. He actually directed me in a show years ago that we brought to the Fringe when we were students.



TW: Is it exciting / challenging / terrifying to be involved in a theatrical production in addition to the stand up show?

ZL: I have really enjoyed being part of this production. I think doing the two shows actually helps me to concentrate my energies better, it focuses me. Being a stand up is quite a solitary endeavour, so being involved with the other cast and crew on 'Outings' has been a lovely change.

TW: Any tips for people navigating this year's stupidly big Fringe programme? Any acts to look out for, or tips for working out which shows to see?

ZL: Always have one randomly chosen show, flick through the book, stop and jab your finger somewhere on the page and where it lands.... that's where you are headed. And then make sure Sara Pascoe and Lucy Beaumont are on your definite 'to see list'.

TW: Oh, and I had a quick look at your official show blurb. What is it with the current price of lobster?

ZL: Lobster prices have dropped in recent years due to the swelling of their population. Some think global warming is the reason behind the lobster baby boom. Still expensive though.

'Zoe Lyons: Mustard Cutter' is on at Gilded Balloon from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

'Outings' is on at Gilded Balloon from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.



TW

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COURTYARD

Sarah Campbell's Top Fringe worries

This is the biggest cultural extravaganza on the planet bar none. For you ticket buyers that can result in the fear that the show in the room next to the one you're sitting is where the really big laughs, dramas and wonders are to be found. Meanwhile for the thousands of performers in town the main fear is that the show in the room next to the one you're performing in is where the really big laughs, dramas and wonders are to be found. Though for Fringe stand-ups, there are plenty of other worries to be dealing with too. As Sarah Campbell explains in her top five Edinburgh worries.

TW COLUMN

1. Fear of missing out

Due to Edinburgh's unique mobile data network, my phone generally receives all my text messages and voicemails in one go about three days after they were sent. And they say stuff like "Are you coming to the party? It's going to be amazing!"... "We're at the party, where are you???" It's amazing!"... "We're leaving the party now you miserable cow. It was amazing". If someone's phone goes off during my show I congratulate them, and ask them to text my mum to let her know I'm alive.

2. Catching diseases off microphones

Think about it - thousands of comedians all breathing and spitting into the same few bits of metal mesh all day and all night. It's probably the bacterial community's biggest arts festival too. Last year my chin went all red and crusty and I was convinced I had some kind of fungal infection eating at my face, but it turned out to be a metal allergy. I am the world's only microphone-intolerant stand-up. This year I'll be Vaselineing my chin pre-show. Arriving onstage at a gig and wiping the mic off with an anti-bac wipe hardly says "this person is a laugh-riot" does it?

3. Clothing option anxiety

Have I worn too many clothes for the day or too few? Is that sweat running down my back or is it drizzle?? Is this jacket really waterproof or is it just rustley? Oh God, maybe I should go back to the flat and change? But then with the extra journeys I'll be doubly sweaty! I'm going to have to meet that trendy TV producer dripping with rain water and stale booze sweat. She's going to be covered in run-off from my liver... In Edinburgh you are doomed never to achieve the perfect outfit choice. Well, technically the perfect outfit does exist. To be neither too hot nor rain-soaked you should wear just a plastic rain poncho and NOTHING underneath. Maybe it'd be worth the



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jail time to live one day as a lion, rather than three weeks as a mouldering, sweaty lamb.

4. I will get lost forever in this sudden and vast maze of Tattoo-punter buses

I've had a few panicky moments in the labyrinth of Tattoo coaches that appears on Chambers St each evening. It's always dark then too so you can't even use the height of the sun to guide you. Occasionally in there I happen upon groups of pensioners. And in that moment it's like a microcosm of the culture wars - they're like "who is this Fringe beatnik come to make us smoke heroin and play the bongos?" Also why are they all OAPs? It's sinister. Is it something that'll suddenly grip me at 65? A burning love of military competence?

5. Are all these street performers going to be okay when the Fringe is over?

What do they all do when they're not here? I mean I never see men up unicycles banging machetes together at any other time of the year... where do they go? Maybe it's really lucrative and they all winter in the Azores in a special resort with unicycle access, lighting cigars off their juggling torches and laughing at us suckers in the rat race. I always mean to ask these people about their lives away from the Festival but they terrify me. I have a recurring day-mare where we're chatting and then suddenly they've laid a rope around me on the street and they're shouting and I have to get in a box and be thrown off a unicycle and the whole thing takes much longer than necessary.

'Don't Worry Guys It's Sarah Campbell' is on at Cabaret Voltaire from 2 Aug until 23 Aug.

TW

TW

PODCAST

ThreeWeeks.co.uk/podcasts

Get online for the audio guide to the Fringe

Allen Barton: Years To The Day

TW COLUMN

Sitting in the Pleasance's theatre programme, 'Years To The Day' is an examination of the nature of friendship in an online age. Two friends come together for a face-to face coffee after years of interacting exclusively via social media, where, as everyone knows, few people really present themselves as they actually are. Can their friendship survive this real life encounter?

Inspired by actual events, this comedy drama explores topics such as marriage, films, politics and gay rights, as well as scrutinising social media. Author Allen Barton, an LA-based writer director, teacher and classical pianist, tells us how it all came about.

I'm the annoying friend who pesters other friends to get together in person. It's practically a secondary career for which I've developed strategies, persistence, long-term goals. Twenty-four years after college, I still miss the dining hall, where glorious hours could be spent blowing off ten-page papers to argue about politics, religion, or the latest film. I have a friend I've known since junior high school - she moved to California when I was 16, and we exchanged letters every month for quite a while. She has lived in Newport Beach, and I forty minutes north in Los Angeles, for over twenty years. We've seen each other once.

It requires Herculean effort and persistence to get together with friends these days, against an endless sea of quotidian conflicts. And why bother, when Facebook makes the substitute so easy? But occasionally, success! A couple years ago I secured a sitdown with my old friend Jeff. How long had it been? I searched

my online calendar for his name, and sure enough, there it was: four years ago, to the day. Too good.

We both shook our heads - how had the time for an entire university education flown by, while we had settled for commenting on each other's Facebook posts? Hey, a new baby! Click 'Like' and the celebration is done. A new job! Click 'Like' and the congratulations are over. I haven't received a personal letter in years. The form has become a relic. I teach acting at The Beverly Hills Playhouse, and try emphatically to encourage students to communicate with people in the business by hand-written cards, not by emails or text or Twitter or Facebook.

A fascinating ninety minutes passed with Jeff, where we rediscovered more than a bit about why we were friends, and how the casual social media banter can make it seem as if we're in touch and connected, when in fact we're not - not in the slightest. He had gone

through a divorce, my daughter had been born, we fought about politics as usual, but at moments it seemed as if we'd lost the easy humor with which we'd engaged before.

Why? Had our early forties "we're men now" maturity made us more certain of who we were, less in need of others' approval? Or were we just more calcified and inflexible to different points of view? Frankly, at times, the friendship seemed expired, and I know we both shared the unspoken question: "Is this the last time I'm going to see this person?" Over time, I have developed the ability to sense this depressing occasion in the moment.

I noted to Jeff that we had on our hands a decent dramatic premise: a single conversation between two old friends who hadn't seen each other in quite some time - rehashing history, divulging secrets. There would be the challenge of creating a single conversation that would be engaging for



80 minutes or so. Driving around LA these days, I've noticed I no longer can tell the difference between posters for movies, video games and amusement park rides, and here could be a small antidote to the ever-increasing hyper-adrenalisation of American storytelling: A conversation, and nothing more.

And thus, my play 'Years To The Day' was born. Jeff fortunately remains a good friend, and, as a first-rate

actor, ended up playing the role of the entirely fictionalized 'Jeff' in the play, which has now been performed in LA, Paris, New York, and is scheduled for Edinburgh, San Francisco and Athens still in 2014. These in-person get-togethers can yield some wondrous, unexpected results. They're worth the effort.

'Years To The Day' is on at Pleasance Courtyard, from 30 Jul until 24 Aug.

TW

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Lucy Benson-Brown: Cutting Off Kate Bush



“Cathy is having a crisis”, says the blurb. “And she’s venting on YouTube through the medium of Kate Bush”. Well you gotta check out that one, haven’t you? Lucy Benson-Brown has penned and performs in this new one-woman show ‘Cutting Off Kate Bush’, exploring how people commonly share private moments in the public domain in this here social media age.

She herself took to the net earlier this year to help fund the Edinburgh show, raising some of her budget through Kickstarter and having to record her own online video as part of the fund-raising campaign. We caught up with Benson-Brown ahead of the Festival to find out how the Kickstarting went, to get the heads up on the piece, and to find out exactly how Kate Bush fits into it all.

TW INTERVIEW

TW: So tell us the basic premise of the show.

LBB: It’s about a girl called Cathy who finds herself in her old family home and, whilst there, discovers a box of her mum’s old records. As she listens to them she begins to have these vivid memories of her childhood and her mother. In an impulsive moment, she decides to post her findings on YouTube and so, eventually, all her discoveries past and present are documented online. And with that, of course, comes consequences.

TW: It seems that you’re exploring the phenomenon of people in private spaces expressing themselves in a very public domain via social media. What interested you in this?

LBB: When I was growing up, all my discoveries and musings were written in a diary, if at all. It was a private thing that I could throw away if and when I wanted to, and no-one would be any the wiser. But now we are so obsessed with our social media presence, I thought it would be interesting to have a character discovering and re-discovering private things through a public medium. Social media can be comforting, sometimes dangerously so, but often it’s a real beast and it’ll stab you in the back if you’re not careful. That’s what I wanted to explore with this play.

TW: And why the music of Kate Bush?

LBB: Partly, I guess, because she is so theatrical. Her music lends itself well to storytelling and the stage; it’s just so visual. But the main reason was because Kate Bush’s music represents a very specific era from when I was growing up. And its flamboyance and style is just so fun to work with as a performer.

TW: What are the pros and cons to both writing and performing a new play?

LBB: It’s really hard to step back from the writing and be able to analyse it. Often in rehearsals my director would ask me why something was the way it was and all I could say was: “I don’t know... it just is”. But over the rehearsal period it’s been fun coming up with the answers, being able to step away and get my actor hat on. I don’t know, because it’s so personal, the challenge is to find out how Cathy and I are different, so I have something to play.

TW: You’re a graduate of the Royal Court in London’s Young Writers Programme. Do you feel that scheme impacted on you as a playwright?

LBB: I definitely don’t feel like I’m a proper playwright. No way. I just feel like an actor who wrote something. The YWP was such a great experience

for me, what I learnt there was absolutely crucial to this process and I kept going back to my notebook and reading notes on form and structure and all of the tips I was given. It was very helpful!

TW: Why was it important for you to bring this play to the Edinburgh Fringe?

LBB: I haven’t performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in nine years. I always wanted to come back and perform a solo-show, and one day I had this idea, and then before I knew it I had applied and here we are. I think as a performer and writer, bringing your work and sharing it in Edinburgh is an incredibly daunting experience but it is also an exhilarating one. It’s one of the best places in the world to perform. I’m so incredibly nervous but also, I just can’t wait!

TW: You raised some of your show budget via Kickstarter, which is something a few performers are now doing. What motivated you to go this route, and did it work?

LLB: Kickstarter is brilliant, because it allows you to engage an audience and if they believe in your idea, then they have the opportunity to pledge and you can offer them rewards, even if it’s simply tickets. In fact, because of Kickstarter, our previews are pretty much sold out, so it means that I get to share the play first with the people who helped to fund it, which is great support for those first few performances. I was absolutely amazed by the response from friends and family on Kickstarter, but a lot of people that pledged were not people that I knew, which was awesome.

TW: You had to make a video about the project to go on your Kickstarter campaign page. Did putting yourself on camera online help you get into character?

LLB: Yes I think so. I’m not very good with camera and self-tapes, I get so self-conscious. In the play, you never really see the videos played back, you only see her making them, but in rehearsals we recorded certain sections and played them back so I could see them... it definitely helped.

TW: What are your plans for ‘Cutting Off Kate Bush’ beyond the Fringe?

LLB: I’d like to take it back to London and play it there, but I’d also love to tour it. Who knows?

TW: I’d say ‘Babooshka’ closely followed by ‘Don’t Give Up’. What’s the best Kate Bush track and why?

LLB: ‘Hounds Of Love’. It’s incredible. I challenge you to find a better lyric in the whole history of British music. “Take my shoes off and throw them in the lake... and I’ll be two steps on the water”. Genius.

‘Cutting Off Kate Bush’ is on at Gilded Balloon from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

TW

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TW 3 TO SEE

3 new plays

Broke



The Paper Birds are the company behind this particular piece of new writing, and they are a company I always make a point of looking out for on account of the fact that they always tackle important themes and create quality theatre, which always generates appreciative comments from our review team. This is a new verbatim production, based on interviews carried out throughout the UK during 2014, exploring what it means to be broke, from perhaps just feeling the pinch a little to ending up completely and utterly without resources.

Pleasance Dome, from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

The Interview



This looks dark, but apparently it's comedic. Hard to believe that this sort of subject matter could be funny in any way, but you know, I believe they can make it work. It's about the extraordinary rendition of a US citizen, the use on him of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' - ie, torture - America's stupid gun laws, and the never ending cycle of man's inhumanity to man. It's been produced by a strong and experienced team, with a list of credits as long as three of my arms (they are very long arms, too), so I am expecting this to be quite an experience.

Underbelly, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

The Rose Of Jericho (pictured above right)

"Know what the difference is between a common criminal and a common soldier? The criminal gets to keep the DVD player. Private Nobody aids and abets the ransacking of a whole nation, and goes home empty handed". This new play, written by Alex Martinez and performed by Kevin Hely sees a former soldier looking back at his childhood and assessing its impact on the key events of his adult life. Martinez, a novelist, playwright and screenwriter, has won commissions from Channel 4 and the BBC, so I can't help thinking he's got the skills. So, yes. Looking forward to this.

theSpace at Surgeons Hall, from 1 Aug until 23 Aug.

3 Shakespearean twists

Seussification Of A Midsummer Night's Dream



Well, I wasn't going to see a title like that in the Fringe Programme and breezily thumb past it, was I? I have a child



who loves Dr Seuss, after all. And I love it when people irreverently muck around with things that everyone considers sacrosanct... so over to the show's Fringe blurb, which I really can't improve on: "As comedies go, Midsummer's the greatest! Except that the language Will used ain't the latest. Shaky used old words like: Thee, Thou and Thine. It's hard to process that much old at one time. So we ran the script through the Script Squash Two-Fifty. It's a machine that makes old scripts more nifty. It tightens the plot, which is kinda gigantic. The whole play rhymes now and is much less iambic!" Suitable for you and your kids. If they are 6 or above.

theSpace on North Bridge, from 1 Aug until 9 Aug.

MacBheatha



This sounds like it will be brilliant, and it's such an apt way to adapt this particular work; what better way to add a dimension

to The Scottish Play than to translate it into Gaelic? It's a two hander, focusing on the tense relationship between MacBheatha and his wife, and won praise from Scotsman critic Joyce McMillan when it was performed at Glasgow's Citizen's theatre late last year. "It offers a fierce insight into the relationship at the centre of one of the world's greatest plays", she wrote, "as well as a reminder that like any other language charged with history and poetry, Gaelic brings its own energy to this great text, along with a profound and thrilling sense of connection to the mediaeval Scotland in which this most famous of stories is set". Sounds good, huh? And it's suitable for non-Gaelic speakers too, so don't be put off, Sassenachs.

Summerhall, from 11 Aug until 24 Aug.

Hamlet Private Eye



Every year at the Fringe there's one particular Shakespeare play that has an especially high profile and this year it appears to be 'Hamlet'; there are loads of productions of it, and shows based

on it. I've seen quite a lot of Hamlets this lifetime, though, so I thought I'd go for something completely different, this one, which appears to take the concept and make it into an apparently humorous piece combining the trappings of film noir with, er, slapstick comedy. Looking forward to seeing if the concept works...

theSpace on North Bridge, from 4 Aug until 9 Aug.

3 ThreeWeeks endorsed theatre

Critical! (A Sociopath's Guide to Influencing Edinburgh Fringe Reviewers)

Well, a title like that is bound to attract a

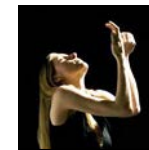


Fringe journalist, isn't it? Though they might not want to stay, given the premise of the show. "How far would you go to secure a

favourable Fringe review?" asks the blurb, "You bring the duct tape - we'll supply the reviewer". I may be shifting nervously in my seat right now, but I am also able to acknowledge that this company, Practical Magic, have never done a Fringe show that didn't get a glowing ThreeWeeks review. Which means that a) this will probably be as good as all their previous shows and b) I probably don't need to watch my back...

Spotlites @ The Merchants' Hall, from 2 Aug until 9 Aug.

Mary Stewart



This is the second Mary Queen Of Scots themed pick I've done for Fringe 2014 thus far, so I'd better 'reign' it in

after this one. Ahem. But seriously; this one has been selected because of the skill and dedication of the ThreeWeeks Award winning production company behind it. Theatre Alba have garnered plaudits from many of our reviewers over the years, and their shows aren't just excellently put together, they are also staged in one of the most super venues in Edinburgh, Duddingston Kirk Manse Gardens, in the shadow of Arthur's Seat. Robert McLellan's 1951 script, written in "light poetic Scots", is to be performed in this atmospheric location as dark falls. I suspect it will be a mesmerising experience.

Duddingston Kirk Manse Gardens, from 6 Aug until 24 Aug.

Sweater Curse: A Yarn About Love



Yes, I confess I was initially attracted to the title because, over the last year or so, I've learned to crochet and become

an unrepentant yarn addict with no plans to aim for recovery; and so, even though this appears to be more focused on knitting than on crochet (the difference, FYI, is huge - I am utterly terrible at knitting), it's

cont>

TW

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TW 3 TO SEE

cont> something I'd like to see. But then I searched through my brain, addled by nearly twenty years of trying to remember the names of many thousands of Fringe productions, and recalled that creator Elaine Liner brought this very piece to the Festival last year and it was well received by our reviewer, who considered it to be a "very sweet show". Sounds like the perfect post-lunch relaxer.

Sweet Grassmarket, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug.

3 war themed theatre picks

The Flood



I was immediately attracted to this show because it's by Badac Theatre, an excellent producing company who specialise in pieces exploring themes of human rights, violence and conflict. 'The Flood' is set against the backdrop of the bloody first world war and explores the slaughter of millions of soldiers, while a passionate parallel love story examines the psychological effects WW1 had on the women left at home. This sounds like it will be intense, emotional and draining, and definitely worth the effort.

Summerhall, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug.



Forever Young



This is another piece exploring the horror of the first world war, this time through personal testimonies, letters and diary extracts and popular songs from the period, in a show that brings to life the words of the likes of Wilfrid Owen and

Rupert Brooke to life, accompanied by music and movement. "Forever Young' is a celebration, a protest and a tribute to those who lived, loved, died and wrote through 1914-1918", says the programme blurb. "Only a dyed-in-the-wool cynic would not be moved" said the Stage. I can believe it.

theSpace at Symposium Hall, from 11 Aug until 23 Aug.

The Collector



Moving on to a different type of war now, for this one is set during the US occupation of Iraq, played out on the site of Saddam Hussein's most brutal prison camp. It's a "darkly humorous ghost story" from the rather brilliant mind of that there Henry Naylor, one half of well known double act Parsons and Naylor, and former lead writer for 'Spitting Image'. Naylor's previous Fringe plays have garnered much critical acclaim, and I feel very confident that this one will too.

Gilded Balloon, from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

3 theatre of death

Dead Letters



George discovers a 'Dead Letter office', a room full of lonely and abandoned letters that have been, and embarks on a mission to deliver them all to their intended recipients; on the way he is forced to delve into people's pasts; PropUp use physical and visual storytelling to explore the idea that the ensuing revelations won't always be easy to accept, and that some things are better left unsaid.

C cubed, from 31 Jul until 25 Aug.

Dead To Me



This is an apparently "disturbingly funny" story about a man who - presumably because of his belief in reason, logic and humanity - has a troubled relationship with a psychic and her spirit guide. The brains behind this peice is Gary Kitching, who was also responsible for

a play called 'Me And Mr C', that was on at the Fringe back in 2012, and got a very nice review from us. If that was a "unique piece of theatre and well worth watching" then I feel there's a fairly high chance that this one will be too.

Summerhall, from 6 Aug until 23 Aug.

Lippy (pictured left)

"Fourteen years ago four women made an extraordinary decision. They decided to die. We weren't there. This is not their story. We don't know what they said. We are only putting words in their mouths." 'Lippy' is based on a real life incident of 2000, when an elderly woman and her three nieces all starved themselves to death. This is a UK premiere, but it's already been performed in Dublin, and to broad critical acclaim.

Traverse Theatre, from 6 Aug until 24 Aug.

3 storytelling shows

Sophie Wu is Minging, She Looks Like She's Dead

Sophie Wu may be known to audiences of Channel 4's Fresh Meat and other film/TV appearances, but that's not the reason I selected this show for inclusion here. Nor was I attracted by the attention-seeking title of the show. I'd in fact, heard tell on the grape vine that she's pretty good at live performance. And, according to the Fringe programme she "rises magnanimously above taking petty revenge for her teenage humiliations, in her well-balanced, light and sane debut show". I like sane, I like light, I like well-balanced. Let's hope she makes good on the promise.

Wee Red Bar, from 2 Aug until 24 Aug.

Running Into Me

Selected for the inaugural A Series of One festival at La Mama in New York, this one woman show has already been called "Raw, intense and thought-provoking". Vickie Tanner tells the story of her upbringing in a poor urban US neighbourhood, surrounded by drug and prison culture, and her struggle to defy the odds, escape, and succeed. I get the sense that maybe there's a bit of a twist here, somehow - it was the words "it's the best kind of story: one you think you can predict, but can't" that did it. In any case, this looks good.

Underbelly, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

Talk About Something You Like

Byron Vincent is a poetry/spoken word/storytelling type, who you'll find appearing on Radio 4, Channel 4, BBC, and at various UK festivals, literary and otherwise. This is the unflinching and honest account of his own struggle with bi-polar disorder, in which he tells the story of a summer spent in a psychiatric unit, analyses psychiatric practice of the past and present, and challenges the authority of the medical establishment and pharmaceutical industry. Sounds clever, important, and intense.

Pleasance Courtyard, from 30 Jul until 24 Aug.

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Ramin Gray: Completing the Bard

TW INTERVIEW

“A writer reading ‘Hamlet’ for the first time is gradually losing his eyesight” says the show’s blurb. “As he realises he will never finish the play that he slept through when young, he calls on the audience to help”. Intrigued. What if I told you the dictaphone in the picture plays the key role in this play? That, and the audience.

After winning a Fringe First last year for ‘The Events’, the Actors Touring Company commissioned Nassim Soleimanpour, perhaps best known for his play ‘White Rabbit Red Rabbit’, to write ‘Blind Hamlet’, a collaboration that has resulted in what is set to be one of the most ground breaking shows at the Festival. We spoke to ATC’s Artistic Director Ramin Gray to find out more.

TW: People over use the word ‘innovative’, but this REALLY is an innovative production. Can you fill us in on the premise?

RG: The Actors Touring Company commissioned a play from Iranian writer Nassim Soleimanpour and what he delivered was in the form of recordings on a dictaphone. We’ve decided to play those recordings to the audience, to see if people will follow his instructions to help us create the event that was in his mind’s eye.

TW: How will the interactive elements of the production work? Do ticket-buyers need to be ready for some audience participation?

RG: My brother hates theatre, but he’s addicted to cinema, and for a very simple reason: he knows that even in a big West End theatre, at some level the act of theatre will involve him, and will only work if he participates. He prefers to sit back in the cinema and let it all roll by. Well, ‘Blind Hamlet’ is certainly not for him. But I’d say that it’s merely a souped-up version of the basic act of theatre: to get something out of it, you need to put something in. And, yes, Nassim will be asking audience members to join his disembodied voice onstage.

TW: How different can each night

be depending on how the audience reacts?

RG: Now I’ve told you about the dictaphone recordings, you’ll realise that ‘Blind Hamlet’ sets up a conflict between a very fixed, unchangeable thing, the recordings, and a live, unpredictable beast, the audience. But within those parameters, well, anything could happen.

TW: Should Fringe-goers come on multiple nights, to experience how a few differing reactions can change the show?

RG: I certainly hope we’ve packed in enough for the play to bear multiple viewings. And yes, the ending will be fresh and different every night, a bespoke finale for every audience.

TW: Are there any specific themes from ‘Hamlet’ explored in the play?

RG: Doubt. Perception. Action. Existence. Darkness.

TW: And would it help to brush up on your ‘Hamlet’ before coming along? Or maybe people should go and see one of the various productions of the play being performed at the Fringe this year first?

RG: Your Hamlet should always be kept well-brushed! It’s the play that contains all plays. But no, we made sure that no

prior knowledge is necessary. Better to think of this as an original new play by Nassim Soleimanpour.

TW: How did the collaboration with Soleimanpour come about?

RG: I saw ‘White Rabbit, Red Rabbit’ up here at the Fringe three years ago and contacted him. He gives his email out in the play! And we struck up a creative, exciting dialogue. Being half Iranian myself, I found it particularly thrilling to be back in contact with the country, especially in these politically interesting times.

TW: I hear the piece has developed hugely in the rehearsal room. How does your partnership with Soleimanpour work?

RG: Like any good collaboration, it’s fractious, challenging, frustrating, pleasurable, intoxicating and tough.

TW: Following all the acclaim and awards your production of David Greig’s ‘The Events’ won last year, do you feel under particular pressure this Fringe?

RG: Well, I honestly never expected any of the acclaim, it was an added bonus. I think most people who do what we’re doing, just try to make stuff. And some of it works, a lot of it fails. As Beckett says, Fail. Fail better.

TW: Nevertheless, the Fringe seems like the perfect place for a ground-breaking piece of theatre like ‘Blind Hamlet’. Would you agree? And if so why?

RG: Yes, the Fringe is perfect to try out something like ‘Blind Hamlet’. There’s a supportive curiosity, a critical mass that buoys you up. You know a great deal of the time, we make stuff in darkness, in blindness. And it’s the audiences that allow us to see what we’ve done.

‘Blind Hamlet’ is on at Assembly Roxy from 31 Jul until 25 Aug.



Navigating the physical Fringe



TW GUEST TIPS

In addition to the dance and ballet programmes of the Edinburgh International Festival, the Fringe boasts an impressive line up of dance shows, sitting in the programme alongside physical theatre and circus.

To help you pick out some highlights, we turned to Tamsin Fitzgerald of the ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winning 2faced Dance. Her company isn't fielding its own show this Festival (though do check them out next time, they continually impress), so she's kindly selected five other productions definitely worth your time.

SPIN



If you're the type who likes to see dance that really moves then 'SPIN' is the show for you. A fast-paced, highly energetic urban fusion show, demonstrating a multitude of tricks, acrobatics and tender moments to boot. With a fabulous cast that features dancers who have worked with Motionhouse and 2Faced Dance, 'SPIN' is one of those shows that you can't help but enjoy. It also includes a rather clever set that the dancers use to climb, slide and jump off. 'SPIN' is suitable for the whole family.

Zoo Southside, from 18 Aug until 25 Aug.

PSS PSS



I always like to pick a random show when in Edinburgh and I do love a bit of circus. Winners of the Cirque de Soliel Prize, Pss Pss feature a duo, some utterly charming crazy acrobatics, superb hand to hand and a lot of clowning around. This show looks sweet, witty and traditional with a twist of the modern and genuinely excellent. I highly recommend.

Zoo Southside, from 1 Aug until 25 Aug

Riders and La Loba



This year I am really looking forward to seeing two new works, 'Riders' and 'La Loba' from Lenka Vagnerová And Company. Lenka's work always challenges you as an audience member and these two works will be no exception. Containing beautiful, earthy and intelligent movement that

sits alongside great design and music, both works combine the theatrical with the physical exceptionally well. Expect heart in the mouth action, extreme emotions and stunning dancers.

Riders, Zoo Southside, from 1 Aug until 10 Aug.

La Loba, Zoo Southside, from 12 Aug until 25 Aug.

Black Grace

As someone who likes to watch dancers dance I am interested to see New Zealand-based Black



Grace appear at this year's Fringe. With the promise of highly physical performances, rich in the storytelling

traditions of the South Pacific, video footage of the work looks distinctly promising. It's a show perhaps for purists; I can't wait to see what this company has to offer.

Assembly Roxy, from 30 Jul until 22 Aug

Missing

The hit of the Dublin Dance Festival



in 2013, 'Missing' by David Bolger explores what it might feel like if a loved one disappeared. This is

one of those shows where you see a lot of good feedback from people on Twitter. With a stellar list of awards behind them, 'Missing' promises to be beautifully haunting.

Dance Base, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug

Find out more about the 2faced Dance Company at www.2faceddance.co.uk

TW

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Natasha Gilmore: Alternative perspectives

TW INTERVIEW

There are plenty of children's shows at the Fringe which are actually as entertaining for grown ups, but what if the kid's show itself was reinterpreted for older eyes? That's the challenge choreographer Natasha Gilmore set herself after realising how she and her children often interpreted differently stories that they read together.

She teamed up with Robert Alan Evans and musician Kim Moore to create two dance pieces based on the popular children's book 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea', one for children, called 'Tiger Tale', and one for adults, called simply 'Tiger'. The two productions follow the same story and feature many of the same elements, but with a different perspective depending on who is in the audience. We spoke to Gilmore to find out more about this fascinating project.

TW: When and how did the idea come about to expand the ideas in 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea' into these two new dance pieces?

NG: When reading my children certain books, like 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea', I began to reflect on how my adult eyes perceived things so differently, looking for metaphors of a more cynical world. This really intrigued me, and prompted the idea of doing two pieces around the same story, one from the perspective of the child and one from the view of the parents. I know that you can create sophisticated children's work that adults can enjoy, but I wanted us to be able to make an adult version of the piece that dealt with things like the breakdown of the



parents' relationship. So we perform the children's show during the day and the adult version in the evening.

TW: So, the two pieces very much follow the same path story wise?

NG: Yes. What's really interesting is that, in terms of material, there is a lot that is the same between the two shows, but what is totally different is the way it's read by the different audiences. Performing the piece in the same day to the different audiences is really bizarre because the atmosphere is so different. The performers are also affected by this and there is a shift in the way it is performed, with the loud responses from the children. 'Tiger' and 'Tiger Tale' tell the story of a family. In the version created for children we look at the daughter as the key person that young people identify with, and what the family life feels like for her. While 'Tiger' goes into more depth about issues such as the complications of the parents' sexual relationship, a subject that would not be on a child's radar.

TW: What are the key themes of the two pieces?

NG: When the piece starts we meet a family who have become trapped in their everyday routine, they have ceased to communicate. They are suffocated by the life they have created for themselves, a life that's devoid of any risk taking. Then a tiger arrives and everything changes. The subject of

risk taking is an inherent driving force behind the piece. If we create safety in our lives do we deny access to things that can really enrich us, despite the element of risk involved? It can be hard as parents to allow your children to take risks, but without any risk in their lives how will they learn for themselves and take responsibility for themselves? As adults we can become stuck in a routine, and then change becomes frightening, even though we may not feel fulfilled with the routine situation. The family in our story are stifled by the rigidity of their lives. They have trapped themselves without planning to. That's what creates space for the catalyst. In the production there is very real physical risk taking place as performers navigate themselves through an unpredictable changing landscape as the set reconfigures throughout the piece.

TW: How did the collaboration with Robert Alan Evans work? Did you divide the work up - movement, setting story - or did you both input on every element?

NG: There wasn't a separation of creative input, a dividing line of where his or my input started and stopped exactly. We both gave ideas for initial improvisations that helped shape the piece, and then we went onto construct a storyboard based on the ingredients we had. For me as a choreographer working with Rob made the process

really efficient, because within week one of the process we knew the exact structure of both pieces. So choreographically it was like filling in the gaps without the risk of going off on tangents, which was amazing.

TW: And tell us about the music. Kim Moore has composed the music for both pieces. Is it basically the same score in both shows, or does it differ?

NG: Most of the musical score is the same, but as 'Tiger' has additional elements to 'Tiger Tale' that show details of the parents' relationship these need their own music score.

TW: When you're creating a brand new dance piece it always interests me how it works, what comes first, the music or the movement?

NG: Kim was in the studio with us right from the beginning of the process, which meant the music for the piece was able to evolve organically. She would improvise using live music as we explored different creative tasks, creating the right atmosphere with her music and inspiring the dancers. Then gradually, as these sections were formed and became more solid, the music would also become more refined responding to the exact choreography. As the music is played live there are elements that she responds to in the moment of each performance, which keeps it really fresh and exciting. Having said that, there are some parts

of the work that are meticulously timed with the dancers so the music stops and starts at precise moments and help tell the story. The evocative sound score is a central part of the piece and helps build the tension of the arrival of the tiger, which at first only the daughter can hear.

TW: Although 'Tiger Tale' is aimed at children, would grown ups coming to 'Tiger' get a fuller experience by seeing both productions?

NG: It's not necessary to see both shows, each one stands on their own, but often we have parents accompanying their children to 'Tiger Tale' and they are excited and intrigued to then watch 'Tiger' so come again in the evening.

TW: You've directed at the Fringe before. Is it a great forum for new dance works?

NG: The Fringe is a good opportunity to have your work seen by diverse audiences and theatre promoters from across the UK and internationally who may then book it for future touring. We are so lucky to be a part of a showcase called 'Made In Scotland' which is a curated showcase promoting high quality music, theatre and dance to international promoters and audiences at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Both 'Tiger Tale' and 'Tiger' are on at Venue 150 @ EICC from 1 Aug until 19 Aug.

Choices galore on the cabaret Fringe

TW GUEST TIPS

The cabaret strand of the Edinburgh Fringe has grown hugely in recent years, with a plethora of exciting shows and acts taking to the stage each year. One of our all-time favourite performers in the cabaret Fringe - and someone who played a key role in establishing a stand-alone cabaret community at the Festival - is Sarah-Louise Young. Indeed so much is she a favourite of ours, in 2010 we gave her a ThreeWeeks Editors' Award.

Although not performing her famous 'Cabaret Whore' show this year, there are plenty of chances to see Sarah-Louise. She is in 'Night Bus' at the Pleasance Courtyard each lunchtime starring opposite Linda Marlowe, and is also in 'Showstopper! The Improvised Musical' at Gilded Balloon. And not only that, but she's directed 'Lynn Ruth Miller: Not Dead Yet' and 'Nicky Gainer's Empty Nest'. Yet, in amongst preparing for all of that, she took time out to help you guide this year's cabaret programme...

The cabaret scene has really grown over the past few years and since the addition of a specific section in the Fringe guide, it's even easier to find what you are looking for. I've been coming to the Festival for eighteen years and am still excited to see what is on offer. It's really hard to pick my top five with so many fantastic artists, from homegrown talents like East

End Cabaret and Lady Carol, to much loved foreign imports Lady Rizo and Amy G. If you're really stuck then there are plenty of great variety nights too, like 'Vive Le Cabaret', Lili La Scala's 'Another F*cking Variety Show' and Ali McGregor's 'Late Nite Variety Night Nite'. But in the meantime, here's five of the best, in no particular order:

In Vogue: Songs By Madonna



Back after last year's success, Australian Michael Griffiths leads us on a journey through Madonna's songs and career. This isn't a tribute show or an impersonation: it's clever and funny and invites you to question your own relationship with the star, whilst delivering all the hits you would expect. If we ask him nicely, hopefully next year he will bring over his Annie Lennox cabaret.

Assembly Checkpoint, from 31 Jul until 25 Aug

Tina T'urner Tea Lady



Ms Tea Lady won Best Newcomer at this year's London Cabaret Awards, and I am really looking forward to seeing the full length show. Described as 'Mrs Overall meets Beyonce', this is great character comedy and songs, and is part of the La Favorita Freestival, so you can try before you buy. There are now three different free show strands and they are all worth a look, with some fantastic new and established acts choosing to bring their work straight to the people without having to sell off body parts to afford it.

Cowgatehead, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug

Lynn Ruth Miller: Not Dead Yet

Okay, this is a bit cheeky of me as I have directed this show and written original songs for it with Michael Roulston, but as last year's TO&ST



Award winner, she deserves a mention. This inspiring 80 year old, who took up performing at the age of 71, leads us through the ups and downs of a life well-lived and the meals which kept her going in between. It's a much more personal story-telling show than last year's hit which ran for two sold out weeks at the Soho Theatre, but fans of the diaper throwing diva will not be disappointed: it still has her trademark wit and wisdom.

C nova, from 30 Jul until 25 Aug

Christeene: The Christeene Machine



I will be honest with you: I have not seen Christeene on stage yet, but I have seen a lot online and of all the acts at the

Fringe this year, this is the show most people have told me to catch. So in the spirit of the Fringe to try something new, I am including this 'gender-bending, booty-pounding, queer perversion of punk dragged through a musical theatre gutter'. How can I be disappointed?

Underbelly Cowgate, from 31 Jul until 23 Aug

Fascinating Aida: Charm Offensive



No Edinburgh hit list would be complete without these three funny, fabulous ladies. With thirty years experience of writing and performing comic songs and sketches, their material is still fresh and on the nose. Expect old favourites and new hits...not for the faint hearted!

Find out more about Sarah-Louise's shows at www.sarah-louise-young.com/



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Guy Retallack: A musical retelling of the 'thrill killers' crime

TW INTERVIEW

The true story of Leopold and Loeb, the so called 'thrill killers' of 1920s Chicago, has inspired several films and plays, perhaps most notably Alfred Hitchcock's film version of 'Rope', a play written just a few years after the original crime. Though a more recent stand-out work based on the case is Stephen Dolginoff's musical 'Thrill Me', which opened off-Broadway in 2005.

The show was then staged in London in 2012 by CliMar Productions, with director Guy Retallack bringing the story alive for a British audience. And this August, CliMar and Retallack are bringing their production to the Fringe, the first time the musical has been performed at the Edinburgh Festival. We spoke to the director about the story, the show and what we can expect from its Fringe run.

TW: For those unfamiliar with the Leopold and Loeb story, give us a little background to the crime.

GR: It happened in 1924 in Chicago. Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb were two bright, well-educated young men; they both came from very wealthy backgrounds and were training to be lawyers. Over time both of them became obsessed with the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and his 'Superman Theory'. They believed that some superior people were above the law and started committing minor crimes, each one becoming bigger and more daring than the last. Eventually they set their sights on the ultimate crime, murder. The following events were declared the "Crime Of The Century" as there seemed to be no motive for the young men involved, other than the search for the ultimate thrill, which resulted in the pair going down notoriously in the history books as the "Thrill Killers". Those are the basics, to tell you any more would give the plot away.

TW: How is that story retold through 'Thrill Me'? How accurate a re-telling is it of the real-life crime?

GR: Many of the events covered in the show are well documented, some stretched slightly for dramatic license. Though when I was in Chicago recently, with one of the producers, we met up with one of the most knowledgeable experts on the crime



and it became apparent that so much is still unknown. Many vital questions remain unanswered, for example who actually struck their victim? Answers both men took to their grave. But I would say the depiction of events in the show is as accurate as any film has ever been.

TW: What drew you to the piece?

GR: The story and the music. The fact that the piece is so lean, so economical, and yet somehow it manages to capture a complete world.

TW: You mentioned the films. Have you seen any of the other cultural works based on the Leopold and Loeb story? How does 'Thrill Me' compare?

GR: Yes, I've seen at least three others, obviously including Hitchcock's 'Rope'. I think what is so amazing about this piece is the use of music, which at times is so intense yet despite that, you almost forget that there is music there at all, and you just get sucked into the vortex of the story. I believe the piece captures the process of real corruption, and the emergence of an evil act.

TW: Does it ever feel inappropriate transforming such a sinister crime into musical theatre, even nearly a century on?

GR: Of course you worry, from time to time, about retelling such a story for entertainment, but I believe Stephen Dolginoff's interpretation, and take on the two men's relationship, is so incisive, and heartfelt, that we cannot help but engage with these two young people. It's as fascinating as it is horrifying, because you watch how two young men become more and more corrupt, and what is even more interesting is you feel you understand

how they get to such an extreme and awful place.

TW: How did you go about transforming the piece from page to stage for this production?

GR: Everything is about the relationship, not the horror, so the focus of our work is continually emphasising how the Leopold and Loeb characters interact, what they feel about each other. I use a process called 'actioning', which I discovered when working for Max Stafford Clark as his assistant and associate director back in the mid 1990s. It always fascinates me how appropriate this process of conscious analysis is for interpreting song in musicals. At the beginning of rehearsals, it always starts with a table read, then discussing and deciding on a series of actions that we collectively believe serves the scene, and then I'll normally try to get the project up on its feet, to see what the actors bring to the scene, in a fairly raw way.

TW: You won a lot of acclaim for the London run a couple of years back, why did you decide to bring the show to the Edinburgh Fringe this year?

GR: I was very keen that following the London run, 'Thrill Me' should tour. I've done an enormous amount of touring in my life and I believe it's a great way for theatre to develop and a wonderful way to reach audiences. Edinburgh feels like a natural home for this show, people are very open-minded, and are always looking for high-quality incisive powerful drama, and this fits the bill perfectly. And I hope that this co-production between Richard Williamson, CliMar and Greenwich Theatre will be the launchpad for a national tour next year.

TW: Has the production developed or changed at all since the London run?

During rehearsal I have consciously avoided referring to the original production as much as possible. Although I have our original stage management script, I have tried to forget about it and rely on what the two new actors - Jo Parsons as Loeb and Danny Colligan as Leopold - bring to this story. I would say yes the piece has developed, partly because I have another opportunity to look at the script and how it works, and partly because these two young actors bring a different dynamic to that of Jye Frasca and George Maguire (two of my favourite actors in the world, I should add!).

TW: Having already done a London run, do you have any future ambitions or plans for 'Thrill Me' beyond this year's Festival?

GR: We'd love the show to win lots of awards, tour forever, and then have a major London run!

'Thrill Me: The Leopold & Loeb Story' is at C from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.



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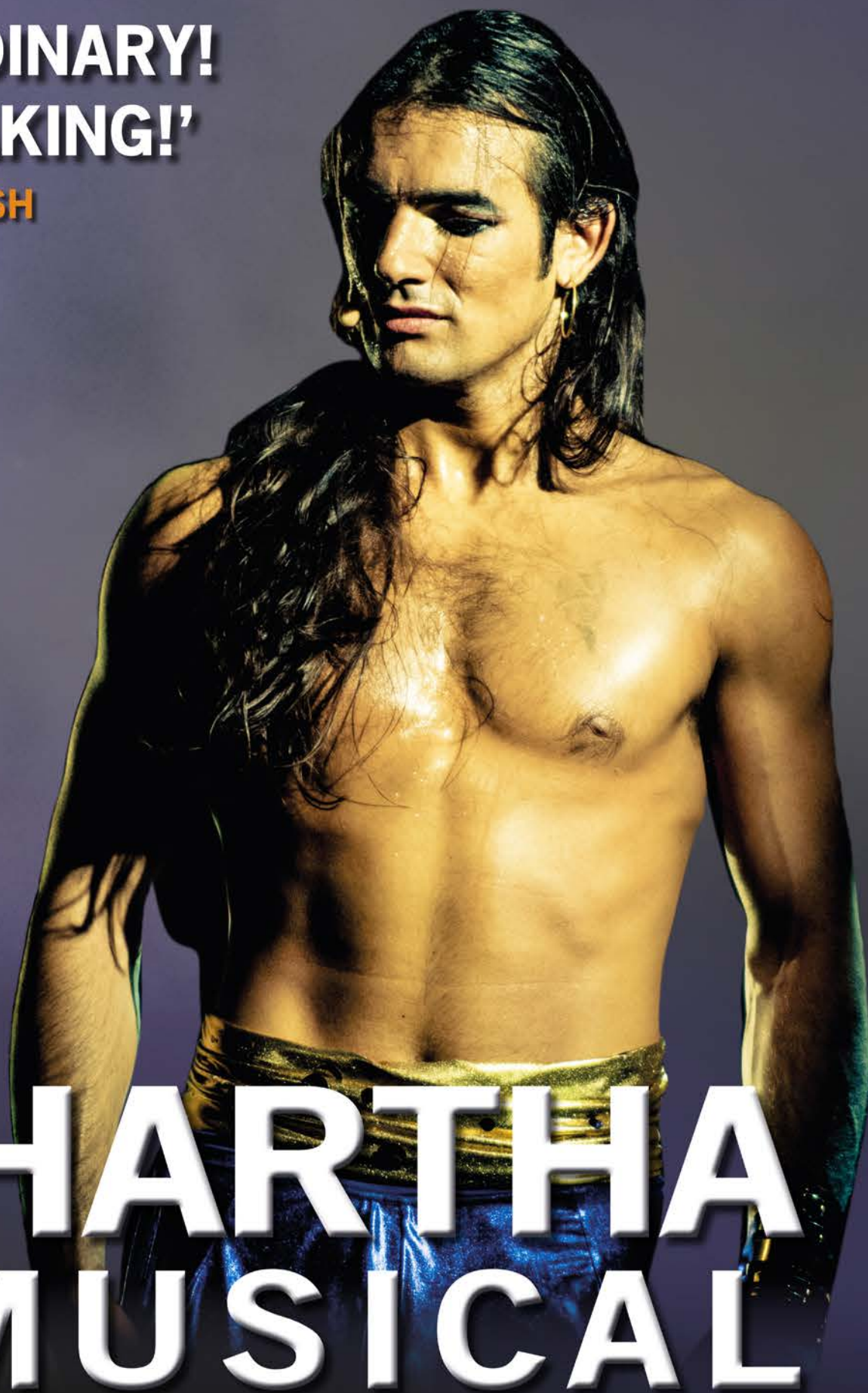
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TW 3 TO SEE

3 musical adaptations

Here I've selected a trio of productions that fall into the category 'adaptations'. Well, almost.

Ernest, Or Much Ado About Muffins (pictured right)

I have a weakness for Wilde; it probably has something to do with the fact that I played Lady Bracknell in a school production of 'The Importance Of Being Ernest' at a very impressionable age. I am, furthermore, mildly obsessed by cucumber sandwiches (completely delicious with a nice cup of tea) and also things yesteryear (though I don't especially want to live there; imagine life without the internet now. Imagine it. Not pretty, is it?). Anyway, this, as you may have gathered, is a songified version of Wilde's arguably most famous work, that most witty comedy of unlikely coincidences. Mmmm. Cucumber sandwiches.

C cubed, from 31 Jul to until 25 Aug.

The Odyssey: An Epic Musical Epic!

Talking of quality school productions (and it was, believe me), this next show is a school production, but it's from a big school, with a lot of talented young people in it, so I am



going to take a chance on this latest outing from Audacious Productions. You all know the story. Odysseus wants to get home, but the gods aren't on his side, and a whole lot of distractions get thrown his way. This production claims to be a comedic and frenetic take on Homer's time honoured tale, so actually, it might be a good thing for all you folk who think that classics are boring. You know who you are.

C, from 31 Jul until until 9 Aug.

The Girl Who



Okay, not sure this qualifies strictly as an adaptation, but it is inspired by the classic 'Choose Your Own Adventure'

books. Remember those? The ones where you read a bit then it gives you the option of going to either page 17 or page 64...? So, it's a bit like that, except that instead of a reader being in control of where the story goes, it's the entire audience at any given performance; Anna is searching for her parents, and you get to choose how she finds them. This new musical has been created by an award winning team - Scott Gilmour and Claire McKenzie of Noisemaker Productions, responsible for last year's 5/5 'Freak Show', again working with Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, so you can feel pretty sure that this is going to be



a good use of your time.

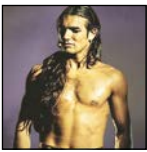
Assembly George Square Gardens, from 1 Aug until 25 Aug.

3 new musicals

Next I perused the Fringe's musical theatre programme in search of brand new musicals for your delectation, and I've managed to narrow it down to just three top premiere picks.

Siddhartha, The Musical

Now, this show has had a very interesting genesis. The journey began back in 2006 when singer-songwriter Isabella Biffi was contacted by staff at Milan's L'Opera Maximum



Security Prison and asked if she would conduct a musical workshop as part of measures to help rehabilitate

inmates. This led to a musical theatre programme in which all Opera prisoners - even the lifers - participated as cast and crew. 'Siddhartha', inspired by the novel by Herman Hesse, is the fourth musical to be created from this programme, and has transferred successfully to the 'outside', receiving critical acclaim ahead of its UK premiere in Edinburgh.

The Assembly Rooms, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.

O Is For Ofsted



I can't confess to having ever witnessed anything by this company, but one of my reviewers has, and she seemed to like it. What I can confess is that one of the things I do with my rare moments of spare time is to serve as a governor at the village primary my daughter attends (control freak, me?) and have witnessed first hand the, um, stressful effects that an impending Ofsted inspection can have on even the most well prepared and capable of school staff. A musical about this kind of thing? Go on then.

theSpace on North Bridge, from 11 Aug until 16 Aug.

Laika: A Space Dogyssey



Well, the company behind this show are the usually pretty reliable Double Edge Drama, but I have to be honest and say that it wasn't their reputation that led me to choose this particular show for inclusion in my 'new musical' themed 3 To See. Who could resist a show with a title like 'A Space Dogysss'? Well, not me, evidently. And I am further sold by the promise of singing dogs. Because I'm like that.

Gilded Balloon, from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

CHECK MUSICALS
COVERAGE ONLINE
ThreeWeeks.co.uk/musicals

TW GUEST TIPS

People often forget what a great musical programme there is at the Edinburgh Festival, and of all genres too. A lot of it, though, is stand alone gigs rather than the residencies you find in other genres. But some music people come for the whole shebang. To get you in the musical mood we asked ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winner Daniel Cainer to pick out some highlights.

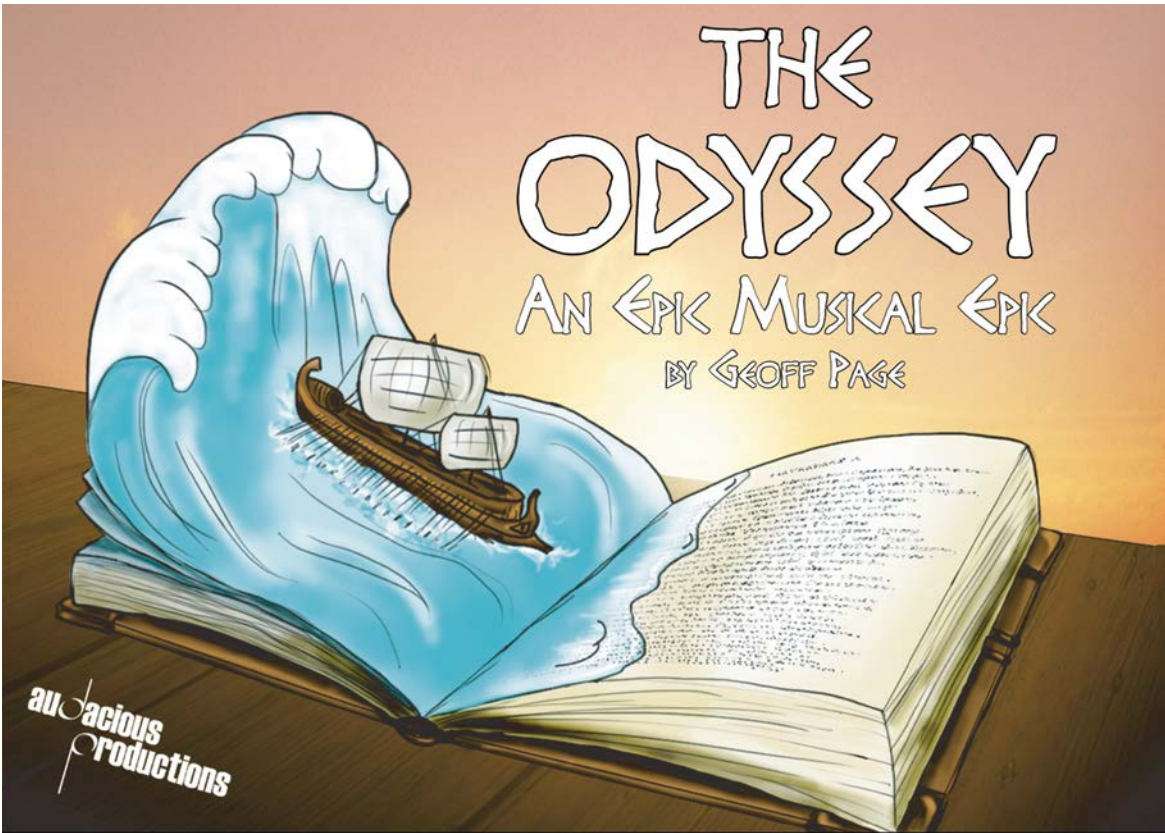
Along with the honour of receiving an Editors' Award last year, for what I can only assume was an acknowledgment of me having simply survived multiple Fringes, comes this rather more challenging task of picking a few acts out of the bulging Fringe guide. Having looked through the music section I have been stunned at my ignorance and feel not unlike the judge of an infamous Old Bailey trial in the early 1960s who was unaware who the Beatles were. "Beetles? What are these beetles?" snarled the judge. "They are a beat combo m'lud" replied some helpful young barrister, after which the judge was probably none the wiser. Music, of course, covers a wide area, and it would be unfair of me to pretend I've got it all covered. But what I have done is picked for you some Fringe institutions, every one of them a class act.

Camille O'Sullivan.



A Fringe favourite conspicuous by her absence for the last couple of years returns with, I assume, her usual irreverent, sultry, chaunteusy, schtick. Camille is a charismatic, sexy, drama queen of a singer with a terrific range and great band. Plus when she found out that I had written songs for the deceased cult cabaret cult singer Agnes Bernelle (for many years a co-resident of her native Dublin) I was suddenly shot from the basement to the penthouse on the elevator of her estimation. Thanks Camille, you will have forgotten me, but clearly I not you.

The Assembly Rooms, from 30 Jul until 24 Aug.



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Dean Freidman



A singer-songwriter from the 1970s who had huge hits but who then disappeared off the radar. It turned out that the huge royalties generated from said hits went to pay for the mansions of some rather unscrupulous music business management. This was, of course, not untypical of the time. How much more straightforward it is now that nobody pays for music in the first place. Dean is an extremely accomplished songwriter and musician with a unique voice in a register higher than you might expect. Hearing and watching his audience lovingly duet with him on the extremely schmaltzy 'Lucky Stars' is something that everyone should do at least once. Plus when he found out that I'd written songs for Agnes Bernelle...

Sweet Grassmarket, from 6 Aug until 24 Aug.

Antonio Forcione



Antonio is at his best an eighth wonder of the world. Alright, joint eighth then. Come to think of it, there is rather

a big jump from just one item for each of the first seven categories to several billion in the eighth. But you get my drift: he is a fantastic, virtuoso guitarist. Musical, technically brilliant, joyful and soulful with a wicked

sense of humour that permeates through all his material. I hope that he still does his party-piece which is a dazzling, musical-comedy solo guitar instrumental that will make your jaw drop, unless you happen to be wearing a balaclava. I'm not sure if I know about the Agnes Bernelle thing though.

Assembly George Square Studios, from 8 Aug until 17 Aug.

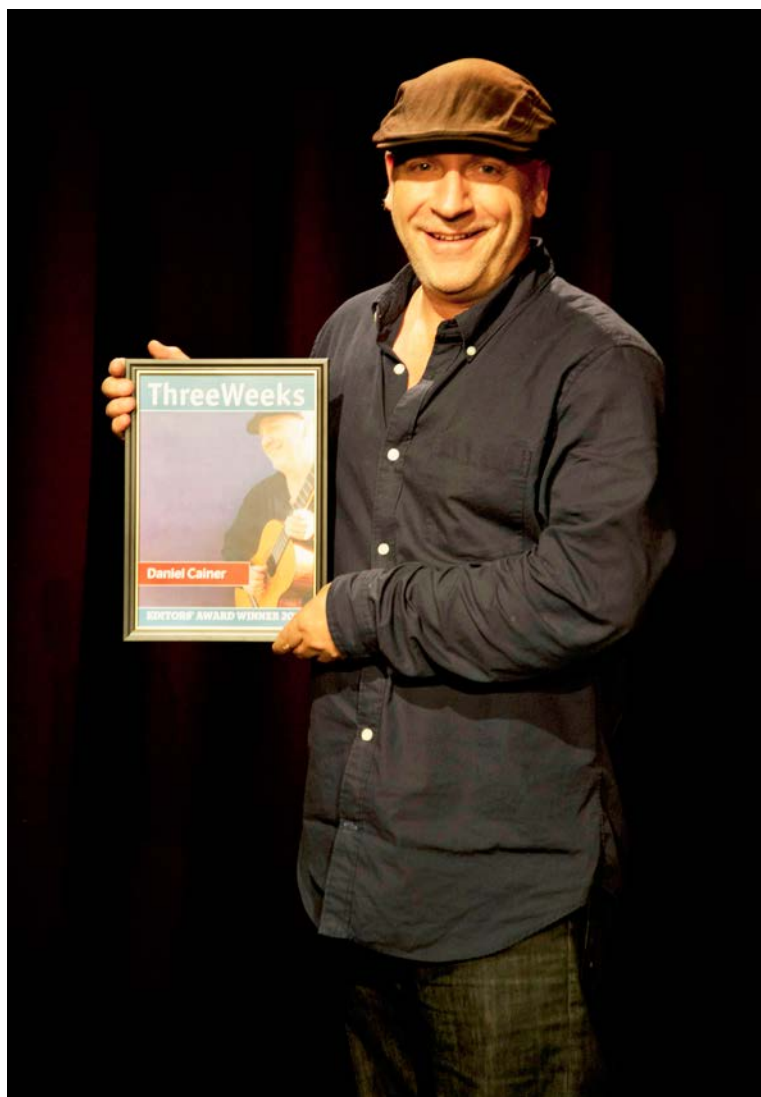
Fascinating Aida



I know Sarah-Louise Young tipped this on the cabaret pages as well, but I couldn't not include them here too. So

consider them doubly tipped. They're still at it: two grand dames and a bit of slightly younger, posher totty. Alright, they can be a bit mannered, a bit Home Counties, and the music is mostly pastiche, but Dillie and Adelle are true mistresses (and I am being gender specific here quite deliberately) of the comedy song. Revitalised by the viral YouTube hit 'Cheap Flights', a fabulously imagined Irish reel parody that encapsulates the budget airline experience more accurately than actually flying on one, the girls go from strength to strength simultaneously revitalising audiences of a certain age throughout the land. Plus, they know all about the songs I wrote for Agnes Bernelle.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, from 31 Jul until 25 Aug



Folk Heroes

You can take your pick of some of the great and mighty grandfathers of the UK folk scene who are playing selected dates throughout the month. There's been a bit of a revival of the folk genre lately and every young whipper-snapper of a band these days has to be seen sporting a banjo or perhaps two with which to duel. Why, even my own promotional poster this year features one... and, for the record, I can actually play it (just). So feast your folky-ears on John Renbourn (Acoustic Music Centre), Martin Carthy (Acoustic Music Centre) and the great Richard Thompson (Queens Hall) to name but a few. Which reminds me: have I mentioned Agnes Bernelle? Now there was one hell of a banjo player.

So there are my tips. Though this exercise has exposed me to a long list of other interesting sounding acts of with which I'm not familiar, so I am determined this Festival to take my chances and see more things that I've not heard of... which is in what the Fringe, in my not so very humble opinion, is about. So, I finally recommend, should you.

Daniel Cainer's own show 'Jewish Chronicles' is on at Underbelly Bristo Square from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.

CHECK MUSIC COVERAGE ONLINE
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TW

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Ribbon Road
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Sally Barker
Sally McGreevy
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Sandy Brechin Band
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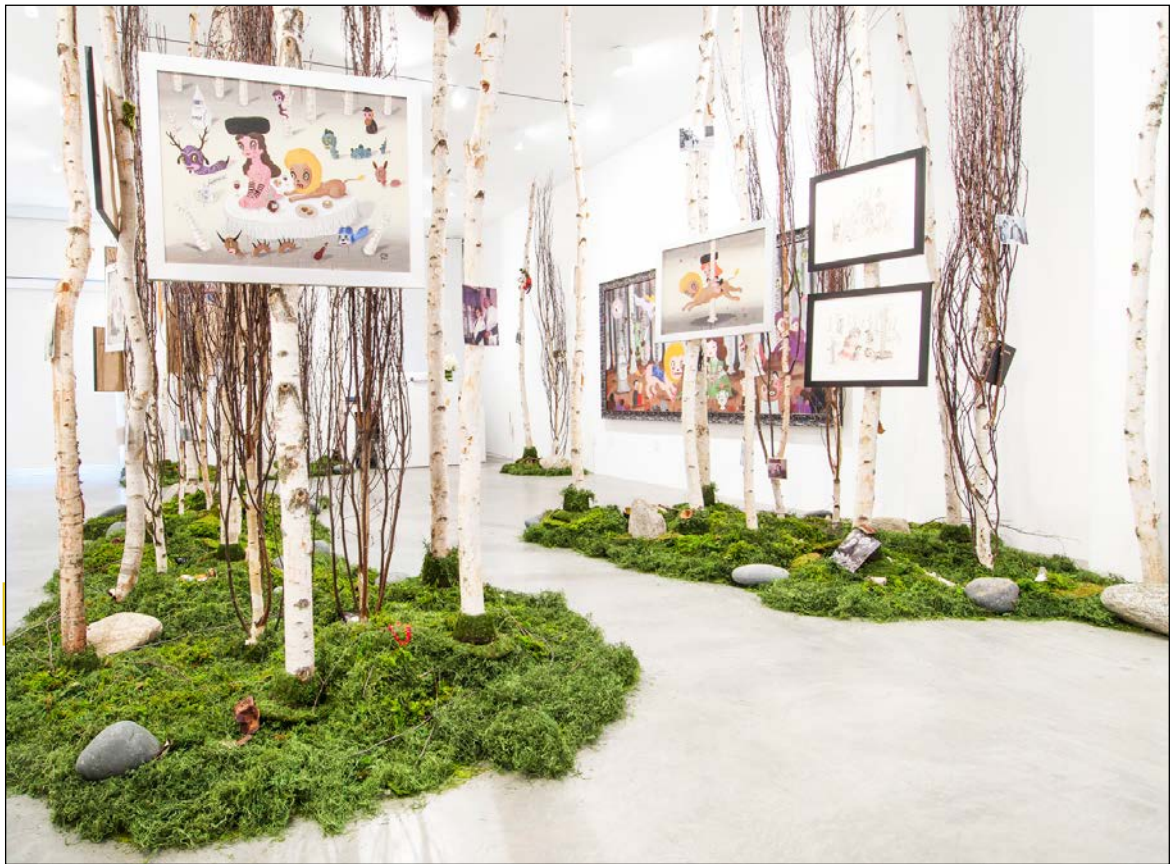
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TW 3 TO SEE

3 talks and walks

Mary Queen of Scots -
The Edinburgh Story



It's always a bit of a gamble doing a walking tour in Scotland. But the weather's actually been alright in Edinburgh so far this summer. Well, except at the very moment I'm writing this, when the haar has come down and it's all very damp indeed. But come rain or shine, this walk is worth doing, especially if you, like me, enjoy hearing about historical figures in the settings where they once stood. Especially ones who lived in such turbulent times as Mary Queen Of Scots. The famous monarch spent six years in the Scottish capital at a pivotal time in the country's history, and how better to hear about it than when treading through historic Edinburgh itself?

Outside MacDonald Holyrood Hotel, from 1 Aug until 26 Aug.

Carnival Of Curious Animals



Are you one of those people who struggle to resist clicking on links to online filler articles about weird creatures

they've found in the depths of the sea? Or about the world's longest-lived animals? Or extraordinary animals that have done amazing things? You know, the online articles composed of a long procession of large pictures and not enough information? Of course, this isn't me we're talking

about, but if YOU are one of those people, then I can't help thinking that this might be your kind of Festival event. And there'll be more than just photos here. Learn from scientific journalist Henry Nicholls and Paolo Viscardi of the Horniman Museum about the likes of Lonesome George the bachelor tortoise. This is only on once, but don't despair if you miss it. I'm sure there'll be other things in the Hendricks' Carnival Of Knowledge line up to tempt the likes of you.

Hendrick's Carnival Of Knowledge, 8 Aug.

Poverty and Life Expectancy
at The Festival Of Politics



This event is hosted by Polly Toynbee, and will tackle what is a very current issue, given the presently rising use of food banks in the UK, and the fact that poor diet is obviously and inevitably linked to low life expectancy. And it's an especially important topic for Scotland, as the country's population have a lower life expectancy than elsewhere in Britain. It's just one of the events taking place at this year's debate-packed Festival Of Politics, so don't forget to take a look at what else is on, especially in light of what's coming up in September; I can't help thinking that most of the events will have at least a tinge of referendum about them.

Scottish Parliament, 16 Aug.

3 book festival events

Susan Greenfield -
Are Computers Bringing Out
The Worst In Us?

Well, I feel pretty sure that social



networking and discussion forums are responsible for some pretty nasty behaviour, but that's not exactly what this is all about... Susan Greenfield is one of the UK's best known neuroscientists and the author of 'Mind Change', a book which looks at what the rising use of technological devices may be doing to our brains, asking the question of whether we are making potentially damaging alterations to the way we think. Has too much screen time led to, for example, a decline in empathy?

Charlotte Square Gardens, 20 Aug.

Melissa Benn -
It's Different For Girls



Melissa Benn is doing two events, but only one is sold out at the time of going to press, so fingers crossed there'll still be tickets left by the time you read this for 'It's Different For Girls', in which the author of 'What Should We Tell Our Daughters' presents a positive manifesto for mothers and daughters, at a time when young women are bombarded with airbrushed celebrities and casual media misogyny, and live in a world where it's fine to use the word 'girl' as an insult.

Charlotte Square Gardens, 17 Aug.

Philip Ardagh and Axel Scheffler



These two are very popular at my house, because it's home to a small person who loves to read. When she was even smaller she delighted in the illustrations of

Axel Scheffler, possibly best known for his collaborations with Julia Donaldson, and now that she's a bit older she's a big fan of Philip Ardagh because she's lately been enjoying his series of 'Short Cuts' books about different historical figures. Anyway, our approbation is reason enough for you to make your way to one of the two events they are doing. And if our approbation isn't enough, there's this: Philip Ardagh has a lovely, long and luxurious beard. Yes.

The Grunts With Philip Ardagh and Axel Scheffler, Charlotte Square Gardens, 11 Aug (for ages 6-9).

Old Possum's Book Of Practical Cats With Philip Ardagh and Axel Scheffler, Charlotte Square Gardens, 12 Aug (families and 7+).

3 at the art festival

Counterpoint



Counterpoint is a series of events and exhibitions featuring the work of eight boundary-busting contemporary

artists, put together with the aim of "expanding critical and conceptual thinking about visual art in relation to other subjects". The creatives involved include Ross Birrell, who shows a new chapter of ongoing project 'Envoy', and performance artists Alexa Hare, Ortonandon and Jeans & MacDonald. The project also features works commissioned by the Edinburgh Art Festival and Talbot Rice Gallery by Shona MacNaughton, Michelle Hannah and Ellie Harrison.

Talbot Rice Gallery, until 18 Oct.

John Byrne



If you're a fan of that there John Byrne, artist, playwright and general all round cultural somebody, that native of

Paisley responsible for 'The Slab Boys Trilogy' and TV's 'Tutti Frutti', then you're in luck, because there are two exhibitions featuring his work available to view in Edinburgh this summer. The National Portrait Gallery offers up a collection of drawings, paintings and multi-media pieces from throughout his career, while Bourne Fine Art's show of paintings will be accompanied by a 'cabinet of curiosities' also featuring his work.

John Byrne: Dead End, Bourne Fine Art, until 1 Sep.

John Byrne: Sitting Ducks, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, until 19 Oct.

Mythical Homeland
(pictured above)

Los Angeles artist Gary Baseman interprets the holocaust and its effects on culture and identity with drawings, paintings, photographs and a short film, all installed in a small birch tree forest; it looks very visually arresting and is bound to be moving. Summerhall have loads of great exhibitions on over the summer, and to be honest, I found it quite a

challenge to select just one from the fairly extensive programme of visual treats. So don't just go and see this one, check out the other great displays on offer too.

Mythical Homeland, Summerhall, until 26 Sep.

3 workshops

Tap Into Health:
Movin With Melvin



This sounds like it would be a great introduction to the lovely world of tap dancing and though I am not

especially in need of introduction, it's been longer than I am willing to tell you since I passed my tap exams (with distinction, obviously), and I could probably do with a refresher. The lovely Movin Melvin is a familiar face at the Edinburgh Fringe, and has many devoted fans. This might just be the perfect complement to attending one of his two shows, 'The Ray Charles Experience' or 'The Tap Dancing Preacher', which can be seen on alternating dates throughout August. There are only five workshops, though, make sure you check which dates.

C, from 9 Aug until 23 Aug

Ukulele Workshop
with Tricity Vogue



Fringe institution Tricity Vogue has a history of delighting Fringe-goers with her ukulele cabaret shows. This year

she will mostly be performing 'Songs For Swinging Ukulele' but will take time out to host two workshops for beginners who have caught the ukulele bug. This introductory two hour session will cover basic chords and strum patterns, and culminates in a fun jam session for everyone, regardless of skill level. I may just nick my daughter's ukulele and go along.

Rae Macintosh Musicroom, 2, 9 Aug

Baby Wants Candy Workshops



There's a lot of comedy improv to watch at the Edinburgh Fringe, and I'm imagining you all going along

to it, laughing, applauding, but also, secretly thinking "I bet I could do that". The fact is, we can't all do that, but we won't know until we try, will we? So, here's your chance, and who better to have a go with than an internationally renowned troupe like Baby Wants Candy? The group have two shows in the comedy programme, 'The Improv All Star Explosion' and 'The Completely Improvised Full Band Musical', so maybe try and catch a performance before you head to one of the three workshops.

Assembly Checkpoint, 9, 16, 23 Aug

Nadia Brooks: Speaking about the words

Nadia Brooks is a 'lexophile' with a passion for rhyming, alliteration and entertaining words; and she's coming to Edinburgh as the Lexicon Lady, promising an hour of wordplay, with plenty of poetry, prose and puns, and some free Love Hearts along the way.

A journalist by trade, Brooks arrived with her first spoken word show at the Free Festival last August, returning with a brand new show this year. We spoke to the lady of lovely letters about taking her words off the page, her dabbings with stand-up, and what we can expect from the new show.

TW: I do "absolutely adore alliteration, think rhyme is sublime and like being foonsped spoolfuns of spoonerisms", as your blurb puts it. So basically your new show is just for people like me?

NB: Brilliant! Shall we start a 'Fight Club' style organisation for like-minded lexophiles? Although as we wouldn't be able to talk about it, we might come a bit p-unstuck. Though I do reckon there are plenty more of the likes of you and I around here than folks are letting on. I think a lot of citizens secretly enjoy a good pun. Words are fun. They're very popular with the populace. Also, Swizzels Matlow have sent me a crate full of Love Hearts to give away at the show, so if that doesn't get people excited, well, I don't know what will.

TW: You've undertaken an eclectic range of creative projects, though you seem most prolific as a journalist. So what attracted you to spoken word?

NB: I suppose journalism is my 'day job' and a privileged day job it is too, as I get to interview a lot of interesting people and many personal heroes. Though so far not Professor Stephen Hawking, who I'd love to interview. From an early age I knew I wanted to spend my life writing and so I would create humorous poetry. My earliest gig was with a friend, we took to the steps of one of the primary school mobile classrooms during dinner break and sang a song I'd written. My teacher made us perform it again to our classmates. It was called 'Pocket Fluff'. It was all about that mysterious substance that inexplicably appears inside garments. It's the dark matter inside the black holes of haberdashery. I know that doesn't exactly make sense but I love the word haberdashery. Everyone does don't they? I also like mamihlapinatapai, saudade, fernweh and jaunty.

TW: Is delivering your words in public easier or harder than writing an article and posting it into the ether?

NB: It's definitely much harder, so to anyone who's going to come along,

please be gentle with me. First and foremost I consider myself a writer and not a performer. For me the pen is mightier than the s(poken)word. I feel my written words speak better than I do. Actually, I'd love to write things for others to perform.

TW: Last Fringe you performed a show telling stories of your travels in America. How did that go?

NB: Brilliantly. It was my debut Fringe show so I didn't know if anyone would turn up. I seemed to be a hit with the Countdown viewership, students and mature adults. It was an accident that I did it. I'd written a book about the 6000-mile solo American road trip I did two years ago and a friend who had performed at Edinburgh suggested I do a show about it. I'm currently looking for a publisher for the book by the way, so if anyone fancies the idea of a book that I like to think blends Michael Palin, Professor Brian Cox, Alan Bennett and Nelly Bly please get in touch!

TW: Back to 'Lexicon Lady', where did the idea for the new show come from?

NB: I love how words weave meaning thanks to the bountiful tapestry of language. It's better than the one in Bayeux and not as moth-eaten. Also I'm hoping the show might come to the attention of Susie Dent, the word-loving woman's word woman. It's my dream to be her apprentice or even just make her a cuppa really.

TW: The blurb promises poetry, prose and puns. Is that the alliteration thing again, or do all three appear? How does it work? Did you write the show in one go, or does it bring together existing poems and ponderings?

NB: There will be pithy poems, poignant prose and perky puns as well as a litter of alliteration. Like many writers I always have a notebook with me to note down musings. I must look so quaint as I'm scribbling away with such old-fashioned implements. So the show is a melded mass of messy meditations made magnificent.



TW: Presumably you enjoyed your Edinburgh Fringe stint last year? What attracted you back?

NB: Indeed I did. Edinburgh is glorious. It's one of the best cities in the world, probably even the universe, although I bet the capital of Tatooine is a blast, especially that cantina. When I wasn't watching the films of 007 as a youngster I used to listen to my dad's 'Beyond The Fringe' LP. So to be lucky enough to be immersed in the ace-ness of the Edinburgh Festival is about as exciting as being a Bond girl. I'm also hoping someone might bring me a kaleidoscope which is why I've referred to one in my blurb. Kaleidoscopes really are spectacular. A rainbow supernova in a twisty hand-held tube - how do they do it?!

TW: Our reviewer last year said your show "walks the line between spoken word and very gentle stand-up". You've done some more straight up comedy as well, I think. Would you consider doing a show in the Fringe's comedy programme?

NB: My first ever stand-up gig was at the Comedy Store in LA a few years ago. It went quite well so I did open mic nights in the States for a while when I was over there doing script supervising on feature films. Curiously it led to me doing a French voiceover for a Sarah Silverman sketch, which was sadly ditched because I sounded too young. I did more stand-up again this year at Riot LA, an alternative comedy festival in Los Angeles, and was second runner-up in my heat of Foster's South Coast Comedian Of The Year competition in May, which I didn't expect. The stand-up thing is more just about having another avenue for my words to wander down. Though I'm probably too 'young Thora Hird meets The Littlest Hobo' to be allowed in the Fringe's comedy section.

TW: You're back as part of the Free Festival. How did you find that last year? Were the Free Festival audience's generous?

NB: The Free Festival is champion. Last year the audience was very generous - I donated all my bucket money to the Make-A-Wish Foundation and so we were able to fulfil a few wishes. This year any loose change the audience care to give will go to charity again.

TW: What are your top three spoonerisms?

NB: First: A spoonerism evokes

laughter, shared laughter is common ground and common ground is grounds for peace. Which is why the spoonerism balked into a war. Second: When the ape tried to climb to the highest bed, but he misjudged it and fell instead, his monkey business turned into bunky miss-ness. And last but not least, Spam and June of course!

'Lexicon Lady: A Woman of Lovely Letters' is on at Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters from 31 Jul until 9 Aug.

CHANSONS FRANÇAISES



Accompanied by playbacks, Dr. Zahida will sing some of the best hits of Edith Piaf, Mireille Mathieu and many more. She will take you on a trip to the 50's, 60's and 70's with My Way...the French way ...And you will regret nothing as you'll sing along the finale song "Non, je ne regrette rien" with Zahida.

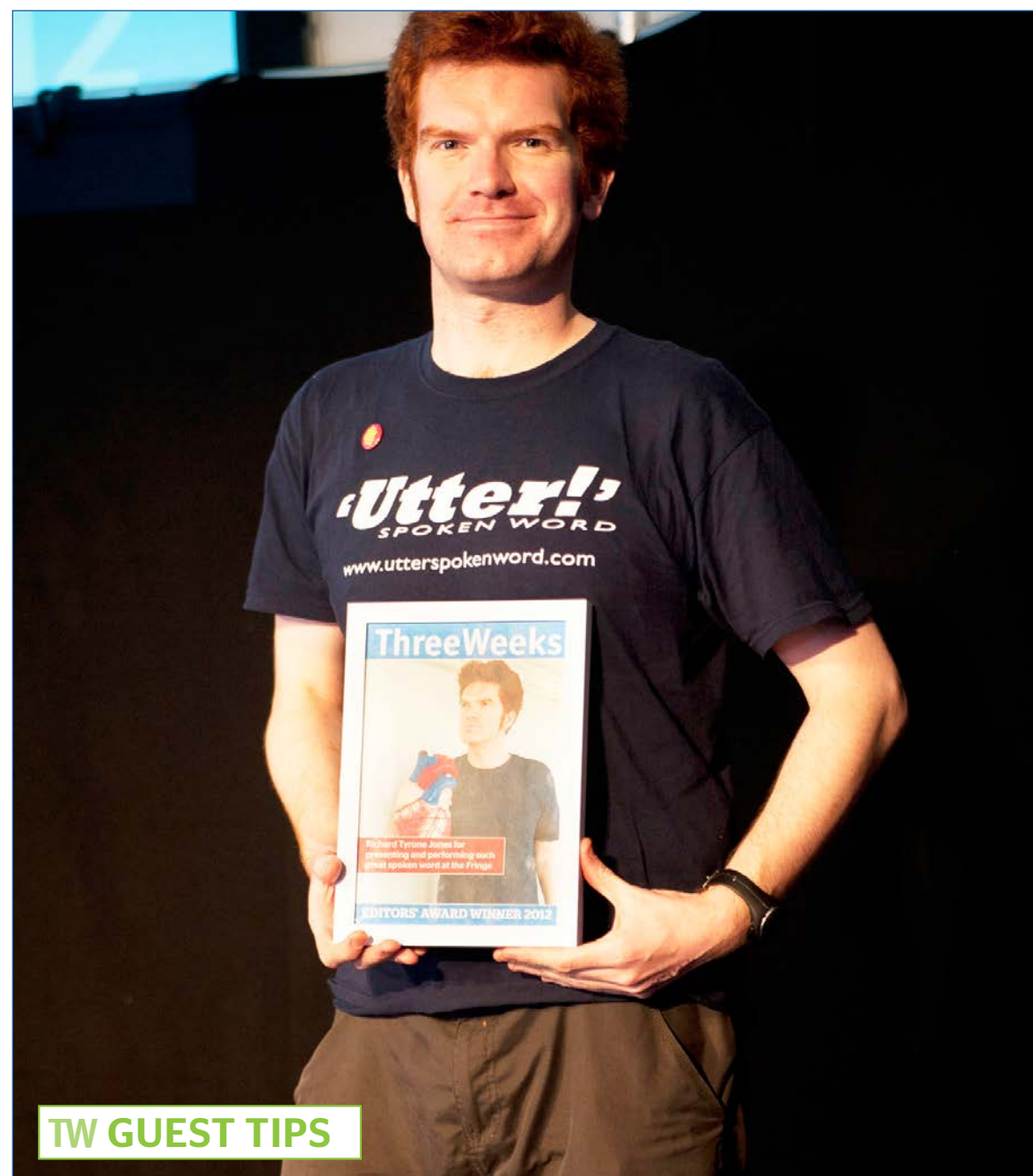
SPOTLIGHTS@THE MERCHANT'S HALL
VENUE 278, 31 JULY & 1 AUGUST AT 5:55PM

TW

Let's talk about the words

The inclusion of a stand alone spoken word section in the Fringe programme was very welcome indeed, providing a home for the brilliant acts of wordplay that don't necessarily set out to make you laugh (always at least), but which don't really count as theatre. Of course quite a few 'talks' have now slipped into the chapter that aren't really of the spoken word genre, and some spoken word shows still list themselves elsewhere, so it can still be a little confusing to navigate what's on offer. But who best to help you than Richard Tyrone Jones, both a champion and a star of the spoken word scene, and a ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winner in 2012?

As well as programming the Free Fringe's spoken word strand, Richard has his own spoken word show 'Crap Time Lord' at the Pilgrim Bar in Cowgate and a comedy show comprising just five words 'What the f*ck is this?' at the Banshee Labyrinth. Oh, and he's also hosting two charity 'Utter!' spoken word specials with Phill Jupitus, Mark Grist, Sophia Walker etc on 12 Aug at Canons' Gait and on 18 Aug at Banshee Labyrinth. But he still found time to put together a spoken word top five for you guys. Check out Richard online at rtjpoet.com



TW GUEST TIPS

I wish I could plug all 70+ shows I and my PBH Free Fringe Spoken Word Co-Director Fay Roberts have programmed, but spoken word isn't restricted to the 'spoken word' section of the programme. It stretches its tentacles of misery city-wide....

'Can't Care, Won't Care'



A show about the role of carers in the UK might sound like the most depressing thing imaginable.

Yes, it probably will be, but it's by Sophia Walker, BBC Slam Champ and winner of PBH's Best Spoken Word show (with 2013's '8 Mistakes Around The World'), and directed by theatrical stalwart Monkey Poet, so it will also be rhythmical, powerful, true, uplifting, cutting and hilarious.

Banshee Labyrinth Banqueting Hall from 2 Aug until 24 Aug

John Berkavitch - Shame.



My 2012 almost-hit show 'Big Heart' fused spoken word with projected animations. But Berko's show does

that with even more projectors, a trendy hip-hop soundtrack and three breakdancers. Bastard. I've heard great things about this from everyone who's seen it and I'm looking forward to gazing on in both Shame and Envy.

Underbelly, Cowgate, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug

Pornography and Heartbreak - David Lee Morgan.



You won't like this show, an intense mea culpa detailing the sordid perversions of a (somewhat)

fictionalised fat old John facing up to the complicity of his sexuality in prostitution and sexism, all addressed to a rape victim. Even worse, it rhymes. If you liked it there'd be something wrong; but if you're gobsmacked into silence like the preview audience I was in, that's the correct response. Reckless, powerful and awful - that's a recommendation.

Banshee Labyrinth, from 2 Aug until 24 Aug

Standby For Tape Back-up - Ross Sutherland



If you do a show about your relationship with your dad, it's a hit. Well, here Sutherland delivers

speedy synchronous stories to looped VHS footage in a hi-tec '10 films with my dead Granddad', so he can't lose. The only VHS my Granddad left me was a hardcore porno, which would make a troublingly different show. The way Ross makes the experimental popular, and vice versa, makes him my favourite member of Aisle 16 (except for Tim Clare and all the others).

Summerhall, from 1 Aug until 24 Aug

Edinburgh Traditional Building Festival - Roof Slating Demonstration

Now this is what the Fringe's spoken word section is all about! Because the reason we campaigned so hard for a stand alone spoken word section in 2012 was never to provide a home for creatively re-imagined folk tales, exciting true-life storytelling, epic literature or sonorous poetry. No, it was to promote roof slating, stone masonry and painting and decorating demonstrations with ten separate cut-&-pasted descriptions! Yes, slate can exhibit dynamic character development! No, they shouldn't be in 'Events'! Yes, metaphors will be layered thick as spackle, and... [okay, you've made your point now Richard].

TW 3 TO SEE

3 shows for music loving kids

Here are my 3 To See music-tastic shows for your children.

Monski Mouse's Baby Disco Dance Hall



I suppose you really need children who like to dance as well as listen to music for this one. But then, that may as yet turn

out to be the real theme of this set of 3s To See. So I should probably have called it 'Shows For Music And Dance Loving Kids', but it's just too late for that now. Anyway, Monski Mouse has been coming to the Fringe for a few years now, and delighting the under-fives and their parents with her eclectic disco mix of everything from nursery rhymes and eighties classics to Latin, pop and swing. We loved it when we saw it back in 2012.

Assembly George Square Gardens, from 31 Jul until 17 Aug.

Ali McGregor's Jazzmatazz



Highly talented ThreeWeeks Award winning cabaret star and general all round Fringe favourite Ali McGregor is back

this year with her acclaimed grown up show Late Night Variety Nite Night, but more importantly for the purposes of this preview piece about children's shows, she's also doing another run of Jazzmatazz, her fab kids' show, for children aged 1+. Perhaps it's being a parent herself that's made her so good at knowing how to entertain children, or perhaps she's just totally ace. Probably the latter. Enjoy. Oh, and more dancing here too.

Assembly George Square Gardens, from 20 Aug until 24 Aug.

Ready Steady Ceilidh!



And now to even more dancing, with added music, and this time of the Scottish kind, as is highly appropriate, given

that this Festival happens in Scotland. 'Ready Steady Ceilidh' is the offspring of the adult-orientated (on at 11pm) 'This Is Ceilidh', and will be hosted by comedian/CBBC star Iain Stirling, who will presumably add lots of humour to the dance and music compote. One for the highly energetic 6+ year old in your life.

Assembly George Square Gardens, from 31 Jul until 25 Aug.

3 theatre for older children

We're not necessarily talking about older-older children

here. These shows are more theatrical productions (as opposed to clowny toddler events) for children who are in the top end of their first decade, and probably a bit older too, because these are the kind of shows that parents will also really enjoy. Well, that's what I think, anyway.



The Bee-Man Of Orn (pictured)

Always expect good things from Newbury Youth Theatre, it's a Fringe rule, and the

reason why we gave the company a ThreeWeeks Editors' Award back in 2009. This year's show is an adaptation of nineteenth century author Frank R Stockton's 'The Bee-Man Of Orn' (famously illustrated by Maurice Sendak in a mid-sixties edition) and follows the central character on his journey to the deepest ocean, the court of a cruel king and the cave of the Very Imp. For children aged five and over.

Quaker Meeting House, from 4 Aug until 9 Aug.



Human Child

This show from the interestingly named Collapsing Horse sounds equally interesting;

it's described as a "blazing fantasy adventure" inspired by changeling myths and the poetry of WB Yeats, and is delivered via the media of theatre, music and puppetry. It's already received a lot of great reviews from other publications, who have praised the talented cast and the aesthetically pleasing and highly entertaining nature of the production, as well as drawing attention to the well designed yet minimal set. It sounds pretty sophisticated, so I think this is one that you might want to go and see even if you don't have a child of 8+ to bring along.

Underbelly, Cowgate, from 31 Jul until 24 Aug.



The Comedy Of Errors

Shakespeare plays are great, obviously, but even the most boisterous and

comical productions of them can be a bit long and dense for most children, I suspect. So perhaps the best way to start your kids on the path to Shakespearean enlightenment is with something like this, an adaptation made specially with 7+ audiences in mind, brought to you by Take Thou That Theatre with Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. The blurb promises a production that draws on Vaudevillian traditions and sees a cast of seven playing the two sets of identical twins; hilarious mix ups and a lot of running around will ensue.

Assembly George Square Studios, from 31 Jul until 16 Aug. .

Dan Clarkson: Another Potted Fringe show is elementary

TW INTERVIEW

Beginning as a piece of street theatre in 2005, 'Potted Potter', condensing all seven of the Harry Potter books into just seventy minutes, arrived as a full show at the Fringe in 2006, and soon became a hit show for kids, adults and Potter fans everywhere. Created and performed by Dan Clarkson and Jeff Turner, the Edinburgh run was quickly followed by a UK tour, with the show later going global, with a second cast required as Dan and Jeff fitted the performances around their work for CBBC.

Returning to the Edinburgh Festival in subsequent years, 'Potted Potter' soon became something of a Fringe institution, ensuring that an eager audience awaited as spin-off shows 'Potted Pirates' and 'Potted Panto' arrived. And, we're sure, for the latest new show too, 'Potted Sherlock', which will condense all 60 of the famous detective stories into one new Fringe show. Ahead of that we spoke to Clarkson about the Potted shows, condensing Sherlock, and putting on hats.

TW: After Potter and Panto, why the condensed Sherlock show now?

DC: We are all huge fans of Sherlock Holmes and found that the stories and characters really gave themselves to comedy. Plus these productions usually boil down to what I want to dress up as. First wizards. Then princesses. Now, as I'm older and wiser, the next logical step was a Victorian detective!

TW: There are quite a lot more Sherlock stories than there were Harry Potter books. Did you have to read them all? Were you Sherlock buffs before the project?

DC: My brother and I were big Sherlock fans before and half the fun was being able to re-read all the books, watch all the films and relive all the stories. But yes 60 stories is a little bit more than seven books. But we decided it was time to up the stakes and really challenge ourselves. Ask me again in three weeks if that was a good idea or not!

TW: Where did the idea for 'Potted Potter' originally come from? Were you influenced by the Reduced Shakespeare Company shows?

DC: 'Potted Potter's first incarnation was as a 20 minute sketch to entertain the people in the queues at Borders bookstore who were waiting at midnight for the release of the sixth Potter book. It went down better than either myself or Jeff could have ever imagined, and so we decided to expand the show and bring it up to Edinburgh. Absolutely the Reduced Shakespeare shows were one of our many influences. I remember seeing 'Shakespeare Abridged' when I was fifteen back in the mid 90s and it being one of my favourite pieces of theatre. At the time it was truly ground breaking and I remember thinking "Wow, you can do shows like this for a living".

TW: Did you originally anticipate their being a series of Potted shows, or was the Potter production intended as a one off?

DC: It was never our intention to have a series of shows. To be honest, I don't think we ever thought Potter would ever go further than that original Edinburgh run back in 2006! Even now we are waiting for people to realise that we are just two friends messing around and for them to

tell us to stop being so silly!

TW: Presumably with the Harry Potter show you could you assume your young audience knew the basic stories already. Can you make the same assumptions about the Sherlock Holmes stories?

DC: I think with Sherlock, the familiarity comes from the characters themselves as opposed to the stories. You put a deer stalker on anyone's head and see how long it takes them to say 'Elementary'! But people being less familiar with the stories really gave us the freedom to have fun in the way we told them. Our hound from 'The Hound Of The Baskervilles' is worth the ticket price alone!

TW: I guess half your young audience might assume Sherlock is set in modern times and he looks rather like Benedict Cumberbatch. Presumably your show is set in Victorian times?

DC: We'd be idiots not to acknowledge the genius that is the BBC 'Sherlock' series, and the legendary Mr Cumberbatch. But yes, our show is very much set in Victorian times. It's one of the greatest times in British history and lends itself so well to parody. Plus I look amazing in a top hat. Again it's really all about the opportunity for me to play dress up!

TW: Presumably a few things in the Sherlock stories aren't appropriate for a kids show?

DC: This is definitely the most mature show we have ever done, that was heavily influenced by the source material, and we will always stand by the fact that rather than being a 'kid's show' we are a 'family show' and try to present comedy that can be enjoyed by every age group. However yes, some of Sherlock Holmes' recreational activities had to be politely removed!

TW: 'Potted Potter' became something of an Edinburgh Fringe institution. Do you enjoy performing your shows at the Festival?

DC: Wow, really? I'm showing my mum that - she will be so proud! Enjoy doesn't begin to cover how we all feel about performing at the Festival. It's like Disneyland for actors and is such a unique and exciting experience that nowhere else in the world really comes close. We are so happy to be back.

TW: Are there any other oeuvres you'd quite like to make into a Potted show?

DC: Being the closet geek that I am, I would love one day to play a certain Time Lord, and seeing as the BBC have yet to knock on my door I think I might have to take matters in to my own hands and start Potting!

TW: And finally, what's the best Sherlock story? And why?

DC: There are so many to choose from, and my favourites change daily. But currently I love 'The Adventure Of The Sussex Vampire', an amazing tale where a gentleman comes to Holmes worried that his wife is in fact a vampire and secretly feeding on their infant son. Trust me, 'Twilight' has nothing on this tale!

'Potted Sherlock' is on at Pleasance Courtyard from 30 Jul until 25 Aug.



Around the venues

The Edinburgh Fringe is based around a network of independently run venues, each with their own character and specialisms. The ThreeWeeks news team caught up with the teams behind three of them to find out about their plans for the 2014 Festival.

theSpace UK

The venue operation with one of the biggest show counts at the Edinburgh Fringe celebrates two decades at the Festival this year, and with sixteen performance spaces to its name, theSpace empire has come a long way from the single church hall in the depths of the Old Town where it all began. Though Venue 45 remains a much loved part of the Space network.

“Busy”, is how Space chief Charles Pamment describes putting together a 270 show programme each summer. And all the busier this year, we assume, as Pamment has three new spaces to operate, mainly to accommodate some site-specific shows in his programme. “Production Company Fourth Monkey are using four floors of theSpace on North Bridge for a late night immersive show”, he explains, “which is an adaption of ‘Alice In Wonderland’. Meanwhile ‘Victorian Vices’ at theSpace on Niddry St uses a brand new space for a site specific programme set in a devised Victorian environment, presenting ‘Sweeney Todd’ and ‘The Picture Of Dorian Grey’”.

“We also have a unique show in a caravan on the cobbles outside our Niddry St venue”, he adds. “Barbara and Yogashwara’s ‘Safe Space’ is a ruthless adult comedy horror in a caravan exploring power, abuse and new age spirituality!” And also new within the Space domain this year is the ‘Festival Garden’ in Hill Square, outside theSpace @ Symposium Hall venue, a stone’s throw from the Fringe’s Bristo Square hub. “This will be designed as ‘step in’ bar”, he says,

“where audiences and performers alike can relax in a slightly more sophisticated environment”.

One of the reasons the Space programme is so extensive is that Pamment goes out of his way to accommodate shows which wish to do shorter runs, while many of the other venue operations of similar size prefer acts to perform for the full three weeks. But this flexibility is important, the Space chief reckons, because it’s not only the big established names who need to be able to perform for just a segment of the Festival.

“We do have over 50 shows running for three weeks this year and many for two, but the one week show is just as important. In fact, most short-run shows really reflect the ethos of the Festival as a platform for new work; many are young, developing companies new to the Festival who can’t afford a longer run”.

He goes on: “Experience tells us that these producers, directors and performers are quite probably the future of the arts in the UK, so where better to give them a platform to begin that journey? We are proud we do that. It’s also worth mentioning that one week shows do win awards too. Shame on those awards that don’t reflect that!”

No venue director likes to be forced to pick highlights from their programme – “everything’s a highlight” they’ll tell you – and with 270 shows to choose from it’s a particularly big challenge for Pamment. But, aside from the aforementioned site-specific shows, which the Space boss is clearly excited about, he also notes: “Our new writing programme is again very strong and includes new takes on topical issues like equality, race, terminal illness and technology; we even have a show about Michael Gove!”

“The 100 year anniversary of WW1 is also prominent” he says. “‘Forever Young’, ‘Brotherhood’, ‘Soldier Box’, ‘The Constant Soldier’ and ‘Rose of Jericho’ all explore the conflict in different ways. Other shows include ‘Darkle’ from the writer of the BBC’s ‘Paradise’, plus we welcome back Mulberry School from Tower Hamlets who bring ‘The Domino Effect’. They are the only school ever to win a Fringe First award in the 70 year history of the Fringe. And ‘Jim’ is already the winner of the 2014 Drama UK Edinburgh Festival Fringe Award telling the story of two sons preparing to say farewell to their terminally ill father”.

But what about that two decade landmark? How have things changed in the twenty years that theSpace has been in business at the Edinburgh Fringe? “I think people always expect me to say it’s bigger, better and so on”, Pamment muses. “I don’t know if that’s especially true. From the outside looking in it may seem so, because the Fringe Society lists hundreds of venues in its programme these days. But on a closer look a large percentage of these simply aren’t suitable performance environments”. He goes on: “The evolution of the of TV-star stand-up programme has increased the profile of the Festival in some quarters where perhaps before there was less awareness. And certainly technology means media coverage has become stronger and more widespread. All these elements have made the Fringe a bigger event, but you know, the Fringe was already a really strong platform for new, emerging and developing performance back in the 1990s. And I think more important than the programme being thicker, is that the Festival has become an even stronger platform for new talent”.



Greenside

Some have called the Greenside venue on the Royal Terrace behind Calton Hill one of the secret gems of the Edinburgh Fringe, though it’s not an especially well kept secret, given that the operation has garnered a sizeable loyal following within the Festival community over the years.

But being situated away from both the Bristo Square hub of the Fringe and the recently resurgent George Street festival zone, Greenside isn’t necessarily a place you’ll stumble across by mistake while rushing from one central venue to another. Until now. Because the Greenside team are about to open for business at a second location for the first time, and it’s on Nicolson Square right next to all that Bristo Square busy-ness. Which should introduce the set-up to a whole new audience, who may then also be tempted to the original Greenside

venue back on Royal Terrace.

“We never wanted to rush into finding a new space”, Greenside director Tara Kilbourne tells ThreeWeeks, “we knew that any new location had to be ‘right’. The list of essentials when finding a new venue is never ending and we looked at countless spaces before finally coming across what was then a building site on Nicolson Square, a methodist church that was undergoing a million pound refurbishment. But even with the scaffolding, builders everywhere and a constant buzz of drills we knew we’d found the right space”.

“We are so excited to finally be able to share with everyone this cracking new venue” says Kilbourne’s co-Director, Darren Neale, of the space that will now be known during August as Greenside @ Nicolson Square. “Where to start. It’s in an amazing location, right in the heart of the Festival just seconds away from BBC @ Potterow and Bristo Square. The refurbishment has recently been

Northern Stage

After two years with a Fringe base at St Stephen’s church in the New Town, Northern Stage are this year setting up home at King’s Hall on the Southside of the city, placing them just around the corner from that cultural hub Summerhall and much nearer the Bristo Square epicentre of Edinburgh’s festival month.

“During our two summers at St Stephens we learnt a lot about ourselves and the Fringe and how it all works”, Northern Stage Creative Associate Mark Calvert tells ThreeWeeks. “And it has given the team a lot of vital experience ahead of the move into King’s Hall, with a much more ambitious programme and a definite sense of collaboration with other key venues in Edinburgh”.

“Kings Hall’s key difference to St Stephen’s is its location” Calvert admits. But that’s important, he reckons. “This year we’re right in the heart of the beast, nearer Bristo Square, so we have much more competition for audience but also much more chance of people finding us. You were never going to find St Stephen’s by accident, you had to make a choice to go there”.

The biggest of the collaborations Calvert mentions is with Paines Plough at the now nearby Summerhall. Says Calvert: “We are collaborating with Paines Plough to present their portable Roundabout auditorium in Summerhall’s courtyard. Paines Plough are showing four new pieces of their own work and they’re hosting some pretty incredible companies,

from the Greater North, that are part of the Northern Stage programme of work”.

Northern Stage is a major presenting and producing house in North East England, which also tours shows nationally and has its own artist development programmes. The company decided to take on the ambitious task of running its own venue at the Edinburgh Fringe primarily in a bid to provide a platform for theatrical talent from across its ‘Greater North’ region.

“I think that when we had a look at what we were programming at Northern Stage, alongside conversations that we were having with a number of regional artists, Erica Whyman, our Artistic Director at the time, decided to combine a ‘love affair’ she’d had with Edinburgh with the fierce regional ambition for work that was being made across the Greater North. We wanted to find a showcase for the work from our part of the world at the biggest theatre festival in the world”.

To that end the Northern Stage venue seeks to support and help the companies it brings to the Fringe. “We wanted to change the model of how artists could get to Edinburgh, when money is such an obstacle”, Calvert says. “So as part of our offer we cover accommodation, there’s no recharging and we try to offer enough technical support for the shows to be presented as the artists and companies intended”.

You feel that the shift to King’s Hall, and the tie ups with Paines Plough and Summerhall, are all signs Northern Stage is now here to stay as a key player in the Edinburgh Fringe’s theatre strand. And – with comedy and

completed so the space is quite literally gleaming. Glass fronted elevators, the beautiful Well Cafe, outdoor seating areas and two outstanding performances spaces that, we think, makes this one of the most exciting new venues at the Festival”.

Kilbourne and Neale have adopted the same programming approach to their new building as with the old, though with three stages now at their disposal they were able to include significantly more shows in the schedule. “We are proud to be an ‘open programming’ venue”, Kilbourne says. “We think that’s the way the Fringe was intended, so you will find everything at our venues from Fringe Virgins to Fringe Veterans, professionals, students groups and acts from all over the globe. We think our open programming philosophy helps create a diverse, eclectic and vibrant Fringe Programme”.



Neither director wanted to be drawn into the messy task of picking out one or two shows from their 2014 programme for special tipping, with Neale instead insisting that the Greenside programme “covers every area”. He concluded: “We really think we have the sort of programme which means you can start with us at 9am and leave at midnight seeing the best of Fringe talent under one roof”.



more commercial productions now so dominant within the Festival at large – Calvert hopes that his company’s expansion here is part of a revitalisation of a special element of Edinburgh’s Fringe.

“I think you could say that the Fringe is moving away from its cultural roots and that needs to be readdressed”, he says. “Venues such as Summerhall, Forest Fringe and ourselves are putting together programmes of work that are driven by the exploration of culture and art, for an audience that needs and

wants to be part of that debate – in a society that increasingly sees value in being a customer rather than a provider or an enabler”.

He concludes: “I’m not saying that we’re waving some magical cultural wand and the world will become changed by our ‘artistic interventions’, I say that with irony, but offering people the opportunity to engage or see the world in a different way and be entertained during that experience is a valid and much needed counterpoint to the other offers across the Fringe”.

All about ThreeWeeks

LONGEST ESTABLISHED:

ThreeWeeks is the longest established magazine at the Edinburgh Festival, the world’s biggest cultural event, and has been discovering and championing new and exciting comedy, cabaret, dance, musical, theatre and spoken word talent every summer since 1996.

HALF A MILLION READERS:

Each August half a million festival-goers rely on the ThreeWeeks free weekly magazine, daily email, website and podcast for a comprehensive guide to all of the festivals that take place in Edinburgh during August, including the International, Book, Art and Politics festivals and the awe inspiring Edinburgh Fringe.

ALL OVER EDINBURGH:

The ThreeWeeks weekly magazine is available to pick up for free at sites all over Edinburgh during August, with pick-up points in bars, cafes and box offices at all the key festival venues. This preview edition is also delivered direct to homes all over central Edinburgh.

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The ThreeWeeks editors have been covering the Edinburgh Festival for over eighteen years, and provide their expertise and continued passion for the world’s greatest cultural extravaganza each August, interviewing performers, directors

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Since 1996 ThreeWeeks has also run an acclaimed media-skills training programme each summer, providing formal and on-the-ground arts journalism training to hundreds of talented young writers, giving future arts and media talent guidance, feedback and unique access to the world’s most exciting festival. An all-new ThreeWeeks media-skills programme will launch in Spring 2015. This year we welcome back a number of alumni from media-skills programmes past to review the Festival.

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ThisWeek London is a new sister media to ThreeWeeks, providing year round coverage of cultural events in London, including daily recommendations from the ThisWeek team, and the Caro Meets interviews with some of our favourite performers, producers and directors. ThisWeek London also benefits from ThreeWeeks’ eighteen years covering the Edinburgh Festival, tipping Fringe favourites old and new (and brand new) as they appear in London. Check us out at ThisWeekLondon.com, or sign up for the weekly bulletin at ThisWeekLondon.com/signup.

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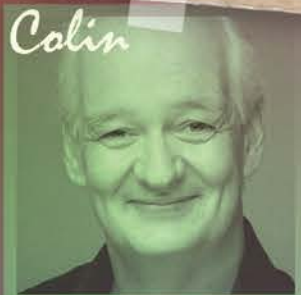
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WHAT DOES THE TITLE MATTER ANYWAY?

Colin



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Greg



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Josie



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Mike



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Phill

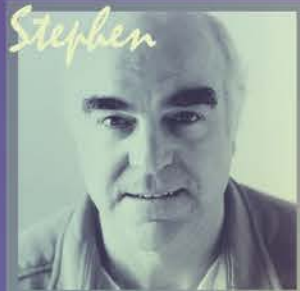


AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

HOSTED BY
CLIVE ANDERSON

STARRING
COLIN MOCHRIE 6-10 AUG
GREG PROOPS 6-19 AUG
JOSIE LAWRENCE 6-9 AUG
MIKE MCSHANE 13-15 AUG
STEPHEN FROST 6-19 AUG
RICHARD VRANCH 11, 12, 16 AUG
PHILL JUPITUS 16-19 AUG
MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE 10 AUG
AND **PHILIP POPE** 6-19 AUG
ON THE PIANO

Stephen



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Richard



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Marcus



Philip



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

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to be announced

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