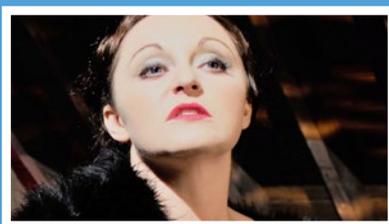


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READ OUR INTERVIEWS FROM PAGES 5 - 12

CHECK OUT 50 REVIEWS - EVERY ONE A RECOMMENDED SHOW - FROM PAGES 13 - 19

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ALL THESE INTERVIEWS ARE ONLINE NOW AT THREEWEEKSEDINBURGH.COM/INTERVIEWS

TW AWARDS

Every August we present the ThreeWeeks Editors' Awards on the final weekend of the Festival.

These go to the ten things that the ThreeWeeks editors believe made any one year's Festival extra special. There are no specific categories and winners can be people, shows, companies, venues or even whole festivals. And there are no specific criteria other than the winners bringing something extra special to Edinburgh.

We've been handing out our Editors' Awards at every Festival since 2005. Here is a guide to some of our past winners who are back at the Festival this year, alongside the Fringe institutions that have also won an Editors' Award, like Mervyn Stutter's 'Pick Of The Fringe', Bob Slayer's Heroes programme and PBH's Free Fringe.

Look out for details about all the 2018 winners in the final TW Daily bulletin of the year at the end of the Festival. Sign up to receive the TW Daily every day of the Fringe by email at threeweeksedinburgh.com/signup

Past Editors' Award winners back at the Fringe

What The Moon Saw | Zoo Southside | until 26 Aug

A winner in 2013 for a "specific brand of contemporary break and hip-hop fusion choreography" that had repeatedly impressed our team over the years, 2Faced Dance Company's varied shows continue to impress. This year they present a show in the Fringe's Children's programme.

Daniel Cainer: Old Dog, New Shtick! | Underbelly George Square | until 27 Aug

Also a winner in 2013, though we'd been enjoying his shows since 2009, back when we presented Daniel with his award we noted how "every year he arrives at the Fringe with offerings praised for their artistic brilliance and charm".

Edinburgh Renaissance Band: Castle And Kirk | artSpace @ St Marks | until 18 Aug

A winner from last year now, though we'd been enjoying these guys' shows for many years before that, and they've been performing at the Fringe longer than we've been covering it. "Have you ever heard music from shawms, cornetts, sackbuts, nakers, crumhorns, rackets and serpents?" we asked last August, "if not, make a date to see this excellent ensemble in 2018"

Elsa Jean McTaggart | theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall | until 25 Aug

A winner from 2012. Elsa "ignites the room with her awe-inspiring mastery and passion for music of all genres" we said back then. And she continues to enthral her Fringe audiences with two shows this year.

Eric's Tales of the Sea - A Submariner's Yarn | Just The Tonic at The Caves | until 26 Aug

A winner all the way back in 2009, then we noted how Eric truly utilised the potential of the full-hour comedy show to offer "an epic experience, where intrigue, suspense and sadness really can sit alongside laughter".

The Garden Of Delight | Duddingston Kirk Manse Gardens | until 19 Aug

A constant favourite of the ThreeWeeks team - though they got their Editors' Award in 2011 - are Theatre Alba who present theatre in the Duddingston Kirk Manse Gardens. This team "always maximise the potential of their beautiful performance space" we observed then, earning plenty of highly positive reviews along the way.

Goose: Golden Eggs | Assembly George Square Studios | until 19 Aug

Winners at Edinburgh Festival 2016, after noting the various positive write ups they'd got from the ThreeWeeks team we concluded "we love what they do and the way they do it". And it's true, we do.

Hot Brown Honey | Gilded Balloon Teviot | until 27 Aug

A winner last year and a show we love



so much we put it on the cover of our Preview Edition. Listed in cabaret, but energetically defying genre categorisation, this extraordinary troupe offer an important and uncompromising exploration of race, gender, identity and culture that our reviewer last year called an "adrenaline-fuelled middle finger to repression and the patriarchy".

I Hate Children Children's Show | theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall | until 25 Aug

Another winner from 2011 who is back at the Fringe again this year. Said we: "Paul Nathan is a superb performer who has a sarcastic ease rarely found outside late night comedy. Sinister yet avuncular, he even manages to involve every child in a magic trick". He's back with two versions of this show this year.

Ian Smith: Craft | Underbelly Bristo Square | until 26 Aug

A winner just last year, Ian is an excellent comedian whose shows over the years have prompted our reviewers to use words and phrases like "beautiful",



"funny", "funniest", "skilful", "stylish", "satisfying", "hugely entertaining", "perfectly executed", "endearing" and "some of the finest granite material on the circuit". Check out our new interview with him at threeweeksedinburgh.com.

Japan Marvelous Drummers | Assembly George Square Theatre | until 27 Aug

A winner in 2015, back then we pointed out how our reviewer had hailed their "astounding skill and stamina", and the show's "explosion of raw power and noise", calling their performance "big, loud and utterly wonderful"

John Robertson: Sweaty, Sexy, Party Party | Just the Tonic at The Tron | until 26 Aug

A Fringe veteran and constant favourite of the TW review team. Indeed he's been making fans, achieving high acclaim and gathering good numbers of starry critiques from our reviewers for many, many years now, which is why we handed him one of our Editors' Awards in 2016. Basically, always recommended.

Kate Smurthwaite: Clit Stirrer | Banshee Labyrinth | until 26 Aug

Another Editors' Award winning stand-

up. "Comedy that cuts through the crap" one of our reviewers once stated. "This is a performer who won't just entertain you, she will make you really think" we said on handing her an award in 2013.

Mark Watson: How You Can Almost Win (Work in Progress) | The Stand Comedy Club | until 23 Aug

A winner right back in the first year we presented the Editors' Awards in 2005 and still returning to the Fringe each year with top shows. Including this year this work in progress. Again, always recommended!

Patrick Monahan: #Goals | Gilded Balloon Teviot | until 26 Aug

Talking of always recommended, that also applies to this winner from 2012. "A gifted storyteller", "natural entertainer" and "skilled comic" with an "effortless quick-wit" are just some of the plaudits he's won from our team over the years. Also look out for his dating show this year at Just The Tonic at The Caves.

Prom Kween | Assembly George Square Gardens | until 26 Aug

Among our 2017 winners back this Fringe is this new musical with contemporary themes, snappy show tunes, pithy jokes, on-point pop culture references and superb surprises. Our reviewer loved this "life-affirming musical" so much last year, we just had to hand it one of our awards.

Rob Auton: The Talk Show | Just The Tonic at The Caves | until 26 Aug

Over a number of festivals, our reviewers have been impressed by Rob Auton's uniquely affecting, hilarious shows which fall somewhere between stand-up and spoken word. And this year he's scored another 5/5 from our reviewer.

Robin Ince: Chaos Of Delight | Gilded Balloon Museum | until 26 Aug

Another winner from 2011, there had been many Festivals before then when we could have dished out an award to Robin, but it was that year he presented four shows in one Festival, three in the Free Fringe. Always recommended, he is back at the Festival this year with 'Chaos Of Delight'.

DollyWould | Summerhall | until 26 Aug

We gave Sh!t Theatre an award in 2015 for "creating important, politicised yet entertaining work" and then handed this particular show a 5/5 rating two years later. Of this show we said: "It is a step away from their typically politicised productions, but it's as clever, funny and oddly relatable as any of their previous work".

Sofie Hagen Tries Something | Laughing Horse @ The Counting House | until 26 Aug

Sofie Hagen has won a multitude of acclaim for her Edinburgh shows over

the years, not least from the TW team. It was in 2015 that we handed her one of our Editors' Awards. Meanwhile in her 5/5 review at Fringe 2016 we noted "her masterful delivery often reflects her confident ownership of her own pain, and she's brilliant at doing 'creepy' jokes without actually making people uncomfortable". Go see!

Stuart Bowden: Our Molecules | Underbelly Bristo Square | until 26 Aug

A winner in 2015 for the "sizeable fistful of enthusiastic 4 and 5 star reviews"



he'd garnered from ThreeWeeks in the preceding years. Those past reviews have included lines like "sparks of surreal brilliance", "full of wit and charm" and "an absolute joy to watch". So go watch!

Terry Alderton: The Musical | Assembly George Square Studios | until 27 Aug

An Editors' Award winner in 2010, back then we noted how Terry's shows had impressed TW reviewers in Edinburgh and elsewhere too. To quote one of those reviews of old: "he is an absolute pleasure to watch, even more so to listen to; he is unmissable". Go check out his new show 'The Musical'.

Wil Greenway: Either Side Of Everything | Underbelly Bristo Square | until 26 Aug

When we presented Wil with an Editors' Award at Fringe 2016 we noted the kinds of words our reviewers have used to describe his various shows over the years: witty, beautifully crafted, wistful, impeccable, hilarious, heartbreaking, hugely entertaining, life-affirming, honest... and weird. We continue to love his eloquence, his humour, and his polished, well thought out performances.

Yianni Agisilaou: I, Human | Pleasance Dome | until 26 Aug

We handed Yianni one of our ThreeWeeks Editors' Awards back in 2013 and he has only continued to impress the TW team with his Edinburgh shows since then. Among the phrases employed by ThreeWeeks reviewers for Yianni's shows are: "accomplished and charming", "vivacious, witty and intelligent", "funny and informative" and a "bloody nice bloke". And check out our new interview with him at threeweeksedinburgh.com.



INTERVIEWS

ThreeWeeks editors Caro Moses and Chris Cooke talk to some of our favourite performers - check out even more Q&As at threeweeksedinburgh.com

CHRIS MEETS | COMEDY INTERVIEW

Rosie Jones: Fifteen Minutes

“During birth, Rosie’s shoulder got stuck”, says the blurb for Rosie Jones’ new show, setting out the premise. “It was her fault. It was the eighties and she did insist on wearing exceedingly stylish shoulder pads. As a result of this sexy shoulder slip up, Rosie didn’t breathe for fifteen minutes, which led to her developing cerebral palsy. In the hour, she explores who she would be if those crucial first fifteen minutes had gone differently”.

Which is to say that, in ‘Fifteen Minutes’ Rosie asks “who is ‘able bodied Rosie?’” Nobody knows for certain, said blurb concedes, “but Rosie’s hunch is that she’s probably a knob-head”.

We decided to catch up with Rosie herself to find out more about the new show and the story behind it.

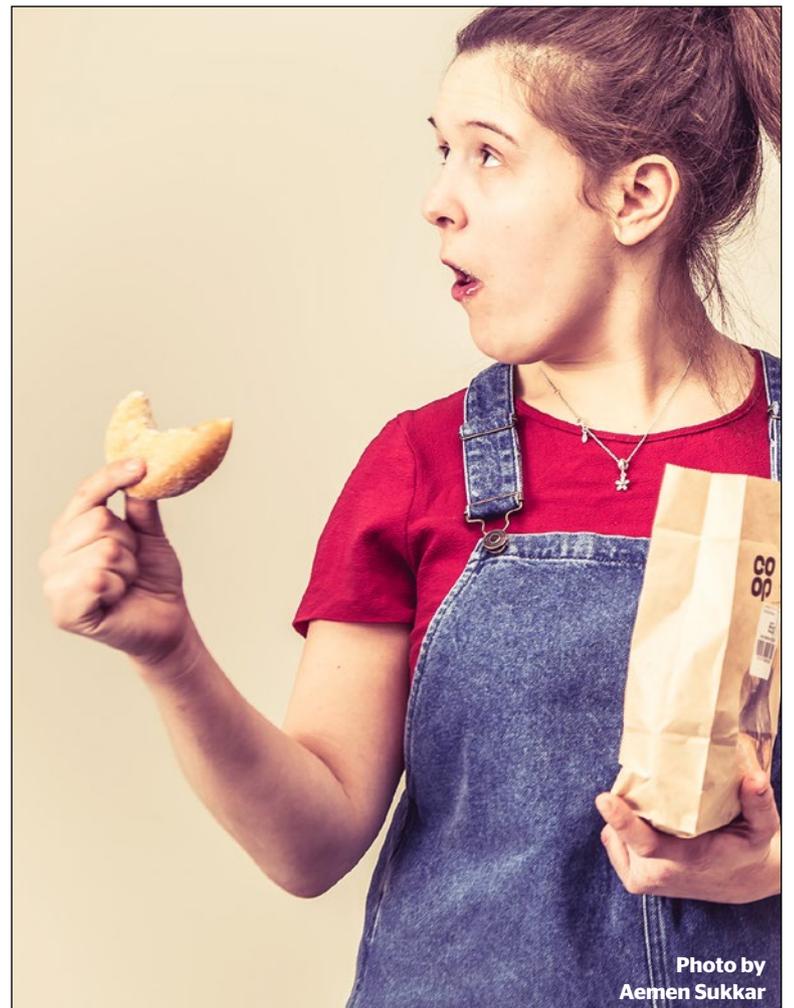


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CC: Tell us about the premise to ‘Fifteen Minutes’.

RJ: When I was born, I didn’t breathe for fifteen minutes, which is a really long time! But it’s actually a short time for your whole life to change. I got cerebral palsy as a result of being starved of oxygen. The show explores who I would be if I were able bodied; I’m pretty sure that she’d be a prick!

CC: Where did this idea come from? What process did you go through in writing the piece?

RJ: All my life I have thought about ‘able-bodied Rosie’. To me, she’s this other person on a different path to me and I often wonder what she’s up to. And I realised that this concept could fit quite nicely into a show. I had already written a lot of material about my life and my disability, so the writing process was a case of comparing and contrasting it to the other Rosie’s life.

CC: How does writing a full-hour solo show compare to

performing on the circuit?

RJ: I’m a big fan of a narrative, which is crucial in a full-hour solo show. The word ‘journey’ has been ruined because of over-usage, but it is just that. With 60 minutes, you have time to play with and it is fun to push yourself and do something more than just tell jokes. But the jokes are still the most important part of the show, naturally.

CC: We’re a few days into the Festival already, how has the show been going?

RJ: I’m happy so far... I’m still waiting for the anxiety to kick in. I’m trying not to get swept up in the whole Fringe. I’m not reading reviews and I’m not comparing myself to anybody else. My favourite part of the day is genuinely the hour I’m performing my show. I enjoy it so much. And as long as I enjoy it, I’m happy!

CC: Part of me feels bad asking your a question about disability because it seems like such a

cliche thing to ask. Do you wish journalists like me didn’t always ask these kinds of questions in interviews?

RJ: No, not at all. My disability is an important part of who I am. Of course, it’s not all of me, but it would be bizarre to ignore it completely. I think it is so vital to talk about disability, because the more we talk about it the less of a taboo subject it becomes.

CC: Good, so can I ask you a question about disability then?! Because it feels like finally - albeit very very slowly - there are now more opportunities for performers with disabilities. Would you agree?

RJ: Definitely, but - as you said - the progress is very slow. Almost as slow as I talk! I think Lee Ridley - aka Lost Voice Guy - winning ‘Britain’s Got Talent’ was a massive step forward in the right direction. It showed people that disabled people can be funny. But we’re not nearly there yet. 20%

of people in the UK have a disability and we’re so far away from seeing that amount of disabled people in the media.

CC: Do you think that, because you are disabled, you can talk about topics and/or say things other comedians might not get away with or be comfortable with?

RJ: Yes! Definitely, definitely, definitely, and boy do I push it. It’s fun to break stereotypes. I don’t always go for the shock factor, but if it’s the right thing to do, I do go there and say things that perhaps other comedians would shy away from.

CC: You recently appeared in ‘Silent Witness’. Which do you prefer, writing, acting or stand-up?

RJ: I’m in a great position where I don’t need to choose, I love writing, acting and stand-up and I’m so lucky to be given the opportunity to do all three

regularly. They all require different skills, so I never get bored. You know what, I am living the bloody dream!

CC: What else are you hoping to do and see while in Edinburgh for the Festival?

RJ: So. Many. Great. Performers. I’ve already seen some corkers - Jen Brister, Lou Sanders and Luke McQueen all have hilarious, hilarious shows. I just want to see as many as possible whilst I’m here.

CC: And looking beyond the Fringe, what projects will you be working on next?

RJ: Oh, you know, this and that! I have quite an exciting writing project I’m starting in September, so I’m chomping at the bit to get going with that. And then hopefully a few more acting roles. And then, when I’m out of my post-Edinburgh slump, I’ll get writing for my 2019 show! Bring. It. On.

‘Rosie Jones: Fifteen Minutes’ is on at Pleasance Courtyard until 26 Aug.

Sid Singh: American Bot

CHRIS MEETS | COMEDY INTERVIEW

Sid Singh grew up in Silicon Valley and this year he is using his Fringe show to take to task big tech and the people who run these multi-billion dollar companies. With so many controversies around this industry in the last year - from fake news to dodgy data to accusations of misogyny and abuse - there's definitely a lot to talk about.

We can't wait to hear Singh's personal insights and to find out quite where he manages to find the humour in it all! Coming on the back of the success of his stand-up album 'Amazing Probably', it feels like Singh's comedy career is really gaining momentum at the moment, even while he concurrently pursues a second career in law back in California.

Which means now seems like the perfect time to get the lowdown on him, his comedy and the world and issues he will explore in 'American Bot'.

CC: Good to meet you. Let's start at the start, tell us about how you got started in this comedy lark.

SS: Nine years ago, when I was still in college, my parents really wanted me to become a doctor. I even worked briefly as a cancer scientist and as an intern at a hospital, but I absolutely hated it. Meanwhile the friends I used to drink with in college thought I was funny enough to do stand-up. So, looking for an escape from an endless future working in a hospital that I'd hate, I tried my first open mic. Nine years later, here I still am!

CC: How would you describe your comedy?

SS: I try to do observational comedy about the world around me. As a brown man who gets to travel a lot, that leads to a decent amount of social commentary, but my focus has always been to make the joke funny first and then hopefully the point good second.

CC: What can we expect from 'American Bot'?

SS: As this is my first one man show - as opposed to 60 minutes of pure stand-up - you can expect a lot more facts and a much more singular focus on my theme: the craziness of Silicon Valley.

CC: What motivated you to focus on big tech and Silicon Valley in this year's show?

SS: I grew up in Silicon Valley and then left for eight years to go and do college and comedy. I subsequently came back to go to law school and found a completely different place that was even more catered to the tech companies at the expense of all the other citizens. Then, as the head of an organisation at UC Hastings that provides legal services for homeless people in San Francisco, I got to see first hand what happened to people devastated by this gentrification and a government whose embrace of liberal values was little more than lip service.

CC: As you say, you grew up in Silicon Valley. So did you have to do much research for the show or is it mainly based on your personal experiences of the companies and people based there?

SS: It's a little bit of both. The genesis of this show came from getting kicked out of a bar because of the colour of my skin. I couldn't believe it when that happened. But then, after working for start-ups, and heading up the legal service for homeless people, and frequently volunteering at another free legal clinic, I came to research and understand the systemic racism that was behind my own personal experiences.

CC: Creative people are increasingly dependent on the likes of Google and Apple to reach an audience. Does this make it harder to take these companies to task, either about how they treat creative people or their impact on the wider world?

SS: The fear of taking these companies on is why we're in this mess in the first place. Google and Apple, for what it's worth, do a lot of good in this world. That's why it matters more to take them to task when they do something awful - because they might just listen and recalibrate. Honestly, it doesn't even have to be all that complicated. The Electronic Frontier Foundation started ranking companies based on their adherence to basic data privacy and most of them immediately started complying, just to look good on an otherwise meaningless website. As the consumer base they want to impress, we have power and shouldn't be afraid to use it.

CC: The toxic and somewhat hypocritical corporate culture of this world has been very much in the spotlight of late. Are things changing for the better?

SS: Companies are lazy. They want to get away with whatever they can until you call them out on it. The #metoo movement has done a good job of getting rid of some of the worst offenders. But progress is slow and I know I certainly have a number of friends who are still unhappy with the lack of respect they are given simply for being women. We have to keep the pressure on, because if they do, these companies will eventually bow down to the will of the people.

CC: The entertainment industry often isn't much better, in that it frequently preaches liberal and progressive ideals, but then isn't necessarily practicing them. Do you think things are changing for the better there?

SS: Ha, no! The entertainment industry is similarly getting rid of the biggest offenders, but the industry has much bigger problems than just that. It's not enough to just protect people of colour and women from people trying to physically assault them or verbally abuse them. Hollywood respects cash over everything. If you truly respect the underprivileged, pay them the same as all the other stars.

CC: Tell us about the comedy album you made?

SS: Well, I felt I wasn't getting enough stage time at the main clubs in San Francisco. Hell, one San Francisco festival even said they wouldn't book me because "they already had a Singh". So I decided to make my own stage time and give myself as much of it as possible.

The album was the culmination of that and my first seven years of comedy. I'm honestly quite proud of it, though I was really surprised and humbled when it went to number three on iTunes and landed on the Billboard charts for comedy. I really just made it because I wanted to give myself a goal of something to strive for when I started performing at these indie theatres.

CC: What attracts you to the Edinburgh Fringe?

SS: The chance to perform an hour of stand-up every single day to a brand new and sizable audience is a luxury not available to most American comics. I'll come here every year I can and do as many shows as possible!

CC: How have you been preparing for the Edinburgh run?

SS: By trying to interview as many people who work for these tech companies as possible. From assistants to powerful CEOs, from the heads of mergers and acquisitions at \$10 billion companies to the people interning in tech, I've tried to gather as many opinions as possible to use in order to craft my own perspectives and jokes based on it.

CC: Other than performing the show, what else are you hoping to do while you are in Edinburgh?

SS: Watch as many of my friend's shows as possible! There are so many amazing performers here. What a treat!

CC: And finally, what have you planned post the Festival?

SS: Haha! I have no idea until I find out if I passed the California Bar! But maybe dodge attempts from Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk to kill me?

'Sid Singh: American Bot' is on at Just The Tonic at The Mash House from 2-26 Aug.

Patrick Eakin Young: Toujours Et Pres De Moi

Erratica is a London-based company that creates what it calls "diverse musical spectacles". These are theatrical experiences that often include striking music, clever choreography and innovative uses of technology.

In 'Toujours Et Pres De Moi', the show the company is presenting at the Fringe this year, that technology - the Nineteenth Century illusion of Pepper's Ghost - is pretty old but very innovatively used.

We wanted to find about more about the show and the thinking behind it, so sat down with Artistic Director Patrick Eakin Young and got chatting.

CC: Tell us a little about 'Toujours Et Pres De Moi'. What can we expect?

PY: 'Toujours Et Pres De Moi' is a piece about a man and a woman who find themselves reliving their troubled past by watching ghostly images of their younger selves romp around on a table-top stage. The show uses a Nineteenth Century illusion called a Pepper's Ghost to create the holographic figures who move, fight, love, and tumble in and out of two wooden boxes manipulated by the performers.

CC: Where did the idea of employing the 'Pepper's Ghost' illusion come from?

PY: In 2008 I read an article about a New York theatre company called 3-Legged Dog using a Pepper's Ghost illusion in a piece. I thought: "I bet



you I can make one of those". So I taught myself how to make a Pepper's Ghost through internet research and trial-and-error, making table-top installations before moving on to larger scale works. I was fascinated by the illusion, but also the way that it physicalises themes that I explore in a lot of my productions: presence and absence, memory, and the persistence of the past.

CC: What does it actually involve? For the uninitiated, how does it work?

PY: A Pepper's Ghost is in theory quite a simple concept. Spoiler alert: it uses a two-way mirror! So basically, you project video onto a surface and then reflect that image off a two-way mirror. If you light behind the mirror just right, then the audience sees both the reflection and whatever is on the other side so that it looks as if the video image is actually in the space behind. Rather than masking the screen and trying to hide the source of the images, I choose to expose the entire illusion and how it is made.

CC: You have your performers interacting with the ghostly images. Does that require them to be particularly precise in their movement?

PY: Yes, they have to be incredibly precise! Because yes, the one innovation that I seem to have stumbled on in my tinkering is how to make the holograms interact with objects. In every other Peppers

Ghost I've ever seen, the image always appears in a black space. But I discovered that if you place objects in the right place in relation to the projected image, they can look like they are touching. It gives the illusions a real sense of weight and presence, even though you know they are not really there.

But it requires the objects to be in the exact right position, otherwise it doesn't quite work. The performers in this piece move through a very precise choreography, putting the boxes exactly where they need to be and when. When they do it right, the audience sees it as seamless, and you forget that the boxes and the holograms aren't actually occupying the same space.

CC: It's a wordless performance - but is there a narrative that runs throughout? If so, how is that communicated?

PY: There is a narrative, although it is quite simple: a man and a woman look back on their troubled past. Clearly they were a couple, and something traumatic and difficult passed between them. The holograms show us - and them - scenes which suggest some details: the woman has been ill, she has been unable to have a child or has had a miscarriage; there is another young woman, with whom the man has had an affair. They fight, they dance, they love, and in the end they acknowledge each other's hurt - although I'm not sure they totally reconcile.

We don't get the whole story, but rather snippets, images and an evocative tableaux of their experience. The two performers do not speak, although there is voice-over at one point. Rather, they communicate the narrative through their physicality and movement, through their gaze and their concentration. It's the holograms that show us aspects of the story, but in a kind of dreaming way. It's up to the audience to imagine the details.

CC: Tell us about the music. What music have you selected and why?

PY: Like all of Erratica's work, this piece has music at its core. And like most of my projects, it started with a playlist. I made the piece using unaccompanied vocal music - for up to five voices - explicitly so that it could be performed with live singers where that was an option. We have done that elsewhere, though not at the Fringe. Initially I put together a long playlist of options and then started to whittle it down to the eleven musical pieces in the show.

The works that I chose in the end span from the middle ages to the 2010s. But they all have some connection to the themes of the piece - so loss, memory and the persistence of the past - and a lot of the text in the music echoes images in the show. The title, 'Toujours Et Près De Moi', comes from a piece that James Weeks wrote called 'Complainte', which takes up a long section in the middle of the show.



CHRIS MEETS | PHYSICAL INTERVIEW

It's a setting of a poem by Mary Queen Of Scots - written in French - about the death of her husband and how his memory is always close to her.

Fringe shows you will ever see. We have to move a four metre by three metre stretched-mylar screen into position, refocus lights, re-align projections, and so on, all in about fifteen minutes. It's kind of nuts and probably shouldn't be done. But we're able to do it with careful planning and the support of the excellent technical team at Assembly Roxy. Despite the constraints of the Fringe, I think the show looks great, and comes close to what a more traditional production of this show would be.

CC: The constraints of performing at the Fringe are well known, with so many shows using each theatre each day. Is that particularly challenging with a show of this kind, where there are some technical complexities on stage?

PY: OMG it is ridiculously challenging! I think it is fair to say that this is one of the most technically ambitious

'Toujours et Près de Moi' is on at Assembly Roxy until 27 Aug.

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Victoria Firth: How To Be Amazingly Happy

Photo by
Cathy Pilkington



CHRIS MEETS | THEATRE INTERVIEW

Victoria Firth has been working in and around the theatre for more than two decades as a director and a performer, but this year she brings her first full length solo show to the Edinburgh Festival. The project was inspired by a workshop led by Fringe favourite Bryony Kimmings and sees Victoria explore a very interesting and very personal theme. We were intrigued by both the show - 'How To Be Amazingly Happy' - and the journey Victoria has taken in creating it. Which meant we just had to ask some questions.

CC: Good to meet you. Let's start at the start, tell us a little about your career to date as a theatre maker.

VF: I guess this is my third incarnation as a theatre maker. In my 20s I trained as a young director and directed some text-based work, mainly with young people and students, and for a theatre in health education company. Then in my 30s I made some short solo 'live art' pieces, which I also performed in. I was doing an MA in Ensemble Physical Theatre at the time, so these were all quite body-based with no text at all. Now in my 40s I've made 'How To Be Amazingly Happy!', which is my first full length production. It's a solo work and it brings together all of my experiences, both personal and professional.

CC: So tell us more about 'How To Be Amazingly Happy'. What themes does it cover? What form does it take?

VF: 'How To Be Amazingly Happy!' is about failure: what happens when you go after something and don't get it. It's about times when you don't conform to what's expected of you or what's common for other people. And it's about moments in your life when you're not really sure what you're supposed to be doing.

In this case it's looking at not having children. Either because you can't or don't want to, or maybe they've been and gone, or you're just not sure what to do or how to go about making a family. It's also about how you reset your expectations and go about making your own happiness.

I hope it takes the audience to a place where they are braver about doing what they want to, and are excited about taking risks and having more fun.

The form moves around including storytelling, physical comedy and audio recordings with nods to clowning and cabaret.

CC: Why did you decide to do a piece on these themes?

VF: I really wanted to make a full length show, but I didn't really know how to or what to make it about. So I did a course and what became apparent was that a good starting point is things you know about and which matter to you.

I spent several years angst-ing about whether to have children and how that might happen, so it was a topic that just wouldn't go away. At first I was very reluctant to do something auto-biographical, but the more people I talked to the more people said "yes", that's something they related to and would like to see a show about.

Part of my journey to being happier is to be more creative, and so it really it makes sense to tell this story through performance - it's a live experiment.

CC: Did you do any research for the piece or is it primarily based on personal experience?

VF: It's primarily based on my experience, but that includes all the parallel journeys that my friends were on and the insights I got from other people I connected with through these common interests. In my peer group, I knew lots of people who shared some, or all, of these challenges. Which is surprising, because people don't often talk about parenting concerns, fertility failures or their secret dreams. Part of what the show doing is talking very honestly about what a lot of people are wrestling with privately.

CC: As you've already alluded to, it's a theatre show but with plenty of storytelling and physical comedy. Did you find it difficult picking a genre to classify it under in the Fringe Programme?

VF: Yes totally. I have experimented with form deliberately. Firstly for the audience. I wanted everyone to find something that they could relate to, both in terms of theme and form. So there's comedy, stories, physical action, strong images, a daft song, a lip sync number and so on. Secondly that exploration was for me, to see what I could do as a performer and to find out the best ways to

communicate with an audience.

CC: As you've also mentioned, this is your first full length solo show. What has it been like preparing for a project like this?

VF: At first it felt very risky. I was inhibited about what people would think, about me as a performer trying my hand at it in middle age and also about the subject matter, which is very personal at times. This held the project back for a long time, but I really wanted to go for it, and I'm all about making your own destiny and happiness, so this year I decided to go for it.

Once I talked to other artists who had started later in life - or who, like me, had moved around in other roles in theatre - I got more confident and everyone has been very generous and supportive with their advice and encouragement. I realise with hindsight that a lot of my doubts were based on my own fears not reality, and as soon as I really got going it's been nothing but exciting. It feels right - like "yes", this is what I'm supposed to be doing right now. I'm swimming in the right direction.

CC: You mentioned the course, which I think was one led by Fringe favourite Bryony Kimmings, who you say has definitely inspired the show. Has anyone else inspired this show or your performance style in general?

VF: I've recently been doing some clowning training, first with a Brazilian clown, Angela de Castro, and then with Jamie Wood. I've learnt so many lessons from that - for performing and for life! To slow down, to connect with people, to be in the moment, to be without expectation and see what happens, to be playful and enjoy what you're doing.

CC: What draws you to the Edinburgh Fringe?

VF: When I did the Bryony Kimmings workshop, which was in spring 2017, she said if you leave this course and start making your show now, you can take it to the Fringe next year. I didn't start mine for a long time after that, because of other commitments, but that still stayed in my head as a challenge and an ambition, and so as soon as I could I worked towards it.

As long as I've worked in theatre, Edinburgh has always been a high point of the year and a must do on the theatre calendar. I've come so many times it seems like a second home and I'm so delighted to be a part of it.

'How To Be Amazingly Happy' is on at Pleasance Courtyard until 27 Aug.

Egg: Richard Pictures

Egg are Anna Leong Brophy and Emily Lloyd-Saini, back at the Fringe with 'Richard Pictures', a new character-led sketch show promising to explore "toxic masculinity and female friendship" with plenty of "high energy silliness and unexpected twists". You may have previously seen the duo performing as Egg in the Free Festival or as part of improv outfit BattleActs. Or via their respective acting or radio projects.

But it's Egg and 'Richard Pictures' that we wanted to know more about, so we threw some questions in their general direction.

The Apricity Project: The Antiscians

My interest was piqued by the sound of this show from The Apricity Project when I realised that its creators were inspired by the work of Scottish writer George MacDonald, pioneer of the fantasy genre. The piece was written by Ryan Napier and Courtney Oliphant, who also perform in the play. I spoke to them to find out more about how they came to be using MacDonald's story as a jumping off point.

CC: How did you come together to form Egg?

ALB: We'd been improvising together as part of 'BattleActs' for a few years and found each other endlessly amusing. And every year at the Fringe we'd get drunk and shriek "we should do a sketch shooooow!" at each other while spilling gin on our shoes. We finally got our act together in 2016 when we took a short run of our first show up to Edinburgh.

CC: What can we expect from 'Richard Pictures'?

ELS: You can expect two off-white women making Very Serious Important Comments on gender and race - mainly via psychic readings, feeding the ducks and interacting with phallic vegetables. You'll laugh, you'll cry, but you'll only cry if that's how you express mirth, and we make no judgement of that.

CC: So it sounds like you have some serious things to say about gender, gender politics and the misogyny that persists in society, but then you're in no mood to be serious at all. How to you mix up the serious with the silly?

ALB: It's always amazed us how much you can sneak beyond hard-drawn enemy lines with a laugh. By framing an issue in a joke, you take away the element of attack that makes people so averse to examining their

prejudices, and introduce a way of looking at it that they can reflect on with positive associations. With all the seismic shifts in worldview that have been set in motion in the last year, we've been able to genuinely explore the issues that affect us as two mixed-race women and feel like they are not only relevant, but that people are genuinely receptive and excited to hear from us. And that's a new feeling and pretty thrilling. On the other hand, we are just two very silly people who find it impossible not to turn the absurdity up to eleven.

ELS: We also have a sketch set to dance music that's just about toilet roll. so...

CC: I'll be honest, I was halfway through your promo bumf before I figured out why the show is called 'Richard Pictures'. Am I just stupid?

ALB: When we came up with the name we thought eeeveryone would be having the same immediate "AHA!" moment as us. Turns out, gin was a vital element in that equation. But also, you might be stupid. And that's okay too.

CC: For the uninitiated, how would you describe your style of comedy?

ELS: We've got characters for the character comedy types, storyline for the theatre types, banter for the stand-up types, and a shitload of wigs. You know, for the wig fans.

CC: You mentioned the Fringe 2016 show, which is when we first saw you as a double act. How does the new show compare to 'Static'?

ALB: This show packs way more of a punch. We bloody loved 'Static', but also we were brand new as a duo and not brave enough then to make the sketches we have in 'Richard Pictures'. We were figuring each other out - our relationship as a double act, what we found funny - and this time we didn't have to worry about that.

CC: Having done lots of improv, do you find sticking to a script hard work?

ALB: Dahling, please, we're trained, we thrive on scripts. No, it does take a while to script the sketches - and our director Phoebe can often be found shouting at us to "write it down and stop changing things!" - but the improv gives us the confidence and trust to play around with it when it feels right. There are sections of the show that are entirely improvised and a lot that is very tightly scripted. Our favourite thing to do is to play with that line of the audience not quite knowing what is scripted and what is just for them.

Egg perform 'Richard Pictures' at Pleasance Courtyard until 26 Aug.

LINKS: eggcomedy.com

CHRIS MEETS | COMEDY INTERVIEW

Photo by Garry MacLennan



CARO MEETS | THEATRE INTERVIEW

CM: Can you start by telling us what the show is about? What story does it tell? What are the primary themes?

RN+CO: The show is about a warlock named Watho, who, conquered by the turmoil of grief, keeps two girls in isolation. When the girls meet for

the first time, they're challenged by their differences and strengthened by their decisions to overcome them. 'The Antiscians' covers themes such as grief, desire and the strengths of diversity.

CM: It's inspired by the novel by

George MacDonald, isn't it? Can you tell us a bit about him and his work?

RN+CO: Yes, the initial inspirations of our show is from MacDonald's short story 'The Day Boy And The Night Girl'. George MacDonald was a Scottish poet, author and Christian minister, and was a major influence in the fantasy genre for generations, even becoming mentor to CS Lewis. MacDonald's stories provoked our love for the fantasy genre; a genre we don't typically see on stage outside of children's theatre. MacDonald effortlessly exudes his knack for beautiful language and descriptive imagery in his works.

CM: Will we recognise the story in your show, if we've read the novel? How closely does your show resemble the source?

RN+CO: If you've read the novel, the story will be recognisable in a skeletal aspect. Though there are some themes and characters that stem similarity in structure, our story differs quite a bit from the 'The Day Boy And Night Girl'.

CM: What made you want to use the story as your inspiration for the show? How and when did you come across it and why was it appealing as a source material?

RN+CO: We came across George

MacDonald's stories many years ago and both fell in love with his effortlessly magical language that is wonderfully transporting. We both have Scottish heritage and Courtney's Grandfather used to read MacDonald's work to her mother as a child.

We had never considered using MacDonald's work as source material, until we began discussing the themes that we wanted to explore through a new play. We found ourselves desperate to discuss grief, friendship, racial reconciliation, and the necessary risks of love and life if you choose to live it. We realized early on that "The Day Boy And The Night Girl" gave us the perfect framework to discuss these themes that we felt were the necessary spine for our story, and the landscape needed to be able to sow seeds of hope and reconciliation.

Choosing a fairy tale structure also opened ourselves up to a larger audience, making our play accessible to people of any age, race, or maturity. 'The Antiscians' is executed through an enchanting fusion of verse, dance, and physical storytelling, with our spin on MacDonald's heightened use of poetry and descriptive narrative.

CM: You wrote the show together, of course. How did that process work? Is it easy to work together?

RN+CO: We spent several weeks talking about the story and things that were important to us before we

formally began to write. While the process was primarily fluid, we both learned to broaden our horizons and respect our different perspectives. We both respected the power of a play with a unique cultural voice as we symbolically blended our experiences as a black male and white female.

CM: You also appear in the show - how does being both writer and performer affect things? How does it affect the way things work with your director?

RN+CO: As writers, we had very strong conviction towards the objectives being pushed and it ended up really enhancing our character development process as performers. It did prove to be difficult during the workshop process however, as we became so self conscious and critical of ourselves hearing the words read out loud from others for the first time! In those early stages, it was also at times challenging to turn off the writer brain and let the actor brain take over. We had multiple meetings with the director focused solely on the story and script. By the time we entered the rehearsal process, we had prominently been in unison on all the fundamental themes and important messages we desired to convey.

The Antiscians is on at Greenside @ Royal Terrace until 18 Aug.

Faye Treacy: The Problem With...

CHRIS MEETS | COMEDY INTERVIEW

Faye Treacy is both a musician and a comedian, and in 'The Problem With Faye Treacy' she brings both of them together. For while it's a storytelling show at heart, she also plays and loops her trombone throughout. The concept itself caught our eye, and there's a very interesting story behind this show too. With all that in mind, I threw some questions in Faye's direction, about her concurrent careers in music and comedy, and what we can expect from this year's show.

CC: Hello there, good to meet you! Let's start at the start. How did you come to be combining the trombone and stand-up? How does it work?

FT: I'm a trombonist professionally, and it felt right to bring up the thing I had experience performing with when I first started out doing comedy. I'm storytelling in this show, it's a whole narrative, so I've got a loop pedal and I'm looping up my trombone throughout, so I can do stand-up over the top.

CC: Let's quickly talk through your music career. When did you discover your passion for music making? And why the trombone?

FT: My dad used to play a lot of old

punk records in the house and I heard the trombone first on the b-sides, because there were lots of ska and two-tone bands in there. I started on the cornet at nine and then moved on to trombone, because they said I had the 'personality for it'. I also played piano throughout school.

I'm really dyslexic - I failed my year two sats - but I worked out how to read music and it just stuck and so I practiced. I then won a place to study at the Royal Academy Of Music, because the only way to rebel against my punk dad was to study classical music! Since then I've been working on the session scene from orchestral work to pop/rock and reggae bands.

Now that I am doing comedy too, I feel very grateful I've got to straddle two creative careers.

CC: Yes, the comedy! How did that come about?

FT: In 2014 I started doing a kind of clown routine in London, which didn't stick. But then I started doing the stand-up in 2015 and went on to win Best Newcomer at the Musical Comedy Awards, so I decided to keep at it.

CC: What can we expect from 'The Problem With Faye Treacy'? What themes will you cover? What stories will you tell?

FT: As I said, it's a storytelling show, underscored with a trombone and a loop pedal. There's stand-up, some sincere moments, some tunes. The theme is family. My mum's a foster mum and it's about my relationship



with one particular foster sister. It's a heart-warming tale about my family life whilst I was growing up, but then in the summer of 2002 something happened that changed everything.

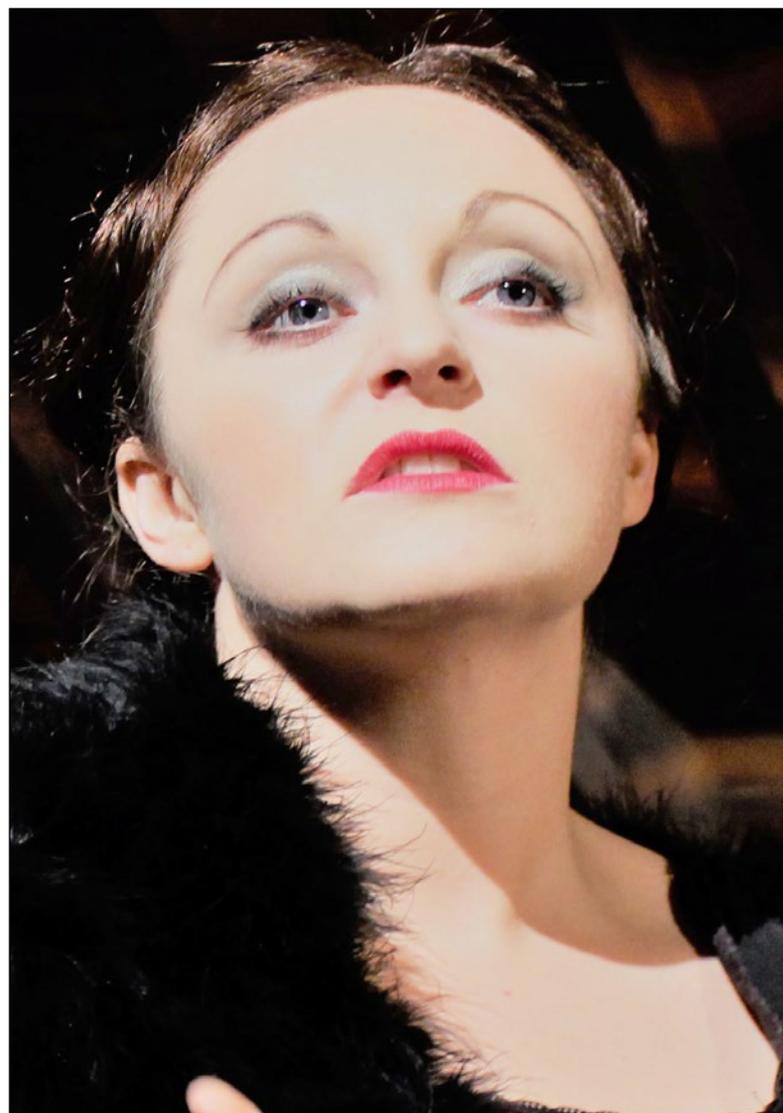
CC: This is your first full-hour comedy show. How have you found preparing for it?

FT: I've really enjoyed writing it and the process has been fun, but also a learning curve. I've liked doing the

longer narrative. It feels very real in places, and I'm proud of where it's got to and some of the jokes in it.

CC: As you mentioned, you had quite a bit of formal education in music. Does any of that prepare you for performing comedy too?

FT: I guess I kind of feel like I'm preparing for my final music college



Colette Redgrave: Picasso's Women

CARO MEETS | THEATRE INTERVIEW

As I was looking through all the many Edinburgh press releases that hit my inbox in the run up to the Festival, one particular show caught my eye on account of the appropriate nature of the venue: a staging of 'Picasso's Women' in an art gallery - the Fruitmarket Gallery to be precise - which seemed apt. To find out more about this production, I spoke to Colette Redgrave, producer and performer.

CM: Can you start by telling us what happens in the play, and how the format works? How does each bit link together?

CR: 'Picasso's Women' features three monologues performed as Fernande Olivier, Olga Khokhlova and Marie-Therese Walter. The audience are seated on three sides of the performance space in the main downstairs gallery at The Fruitmarket, and experience a very intimate and visceral performance. The three monologues are seamlessly joined by music composed by Tot Taylor and feature soundscapes that evoke memories and notable places in their lives with Picasso.

CM: Who plays each of the women?

CR: Fernande Olivier is played by Judith Paris; Olga Khokhlova is played by me; and Marie-Therese Walter, the youngest, is played by Kirsten Moore.

CM: Can you tell us a bit more about your character, and how you've approached the role?

CR: Olga was Picasso's first wife. He met her whilst designing sets for the Ballet Russes and Diaghilev. Olga was a featured dancer at the time. Their relationship deteriorated in the early 1930s when eventually Picasso admitted to his affair with Marie-Therese. Olga refused to divorce Picasso. In my mind and through my research she was an intelligent, multi-lingual and well educated woman with incredible tenacity and ambition. She left home to become a ballet

dancer: to leave a noble family later on in her life to do this was both courageous and risky at the time. She was plagued with injury and other medical issues, which must have been draining emotionally and physically, and yet she helped Picasso raise his game to circle amongst the Parisian elite. I approached Olga with a great deal of respect having been ballet trained myself, and the discipline that drilled into you plays a large part in my character preparation. I also think this is her chance to prove the critics wrong!

CM: What made you want to stage this particular play?

CR: I first read the play in 2002 after it was performed at the National Theatre and the Edinburgh Fringe. I always liked the idea of it being performed in art galleries in a very intimate manner. The monologues give the 'other side' to the artist and his artwork. It gives voices to the women immortalised in Picasso's viewpoint and his viewpoint only. Now we get to hear their point of view.

CM: Can you tell us about the playwright?

CR: Brian McAvera is a dramatist, director, curator and art historian. He has written 25 stage plays, radio plays for the BBC and RTE and two television films, one of which he

recital with this show. They're the same length, so I've had experience of having to focus and memorise a performance this long before.

But the thing with comedy is, you can't really practice it in a practice room, so it's a far more terrifying art form in that respect. And if the audience don't like it, I also can't blame the composer! Plus my final recital was just performed just the once. So this is going to be a fun slog.

CC: What attracts you to the Edinburgh Fringe?

FT: It's an amazing atmosphere and it's really good to hone your craft, and hopefully it's the place to push yourself up a level.

CC: Are there any other Fringe shows that you think might be improved by the inclusion of a trombone?

FT: Haha! Stewart Lee, if he were here.

CC: And finally, what have you got planned for after the Festival?

FT: Sleep. But then I want to take the show to other festivals. Hopefully Australia next year!

'The Problem With Faye Treacy' is on at Just The Tonic at the Mash House from 1-27 Aug.

directed. His best-known plays include this one 'Picasso's Women', a series of eight monologues first performed at the National Theatre in London, and at the Edinburgh Festival. They have since been translated into fifteen languages. Other works include 'The Troubles' trilogy, 'Yo! Picasso!', 'Kings Of The Road' and 'Francis & Frances'. He is also an artistic adviser to Focus Theatre, Dublin, and sits on the theatre committee of the Writers' Guild. In the world of visual arts, he has published twelve books and he writes regularly for the Irish Arts Review and Sculpture in the USA. Brian has been a huge support since I approached him in 2016.

CM: What made you decide to bring it to Edinburgh?

CR: It seemed fitting to bring this play back to one of its original platforms. Plus one of our patrons, Professor Elizabeth Cowling, very kindly introduced us to The Fruitmarket Gallery and the rest as they say is...

CM: Have you brought productions to Edinburgh before?

CR: I choreographed 'Quadrophenia' a few years ago but have never performed there. I am looking forward to returning, this time as a performer.

'Picasso's Women' is on at Fruitmarket Gallery from 13-26 Aug.

Neema Bickersteth: Century Song

CM: Can you start by telling us how you would describe the show? It's listed in theatre but seems as though it crosses more genre boundaries than that?

NB: 'Century Song' begins with the music recital form and then borrows heavily from the worlds of dance, theatre and fine art along the way. The songs chosen - which are performed in chronological order - all have wordlessness in common. We have connected them through visual imagery geared to the eras through which we pass. We owe debts to two source texts in particular for inspiration: 'In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens' by Alice Walker, which explores a largely untold history of black women in the Americas, and Virginia Woolf's 'Orlando', which follows its main character through many identities over a vast span of time.

CM: So would you say the show tells a story?

NB: It takes the audience on a journey. The journey isn't a traditional story - it's wordless and it's driven by music and visual imagery. But it is an emotional trip, it moves through time, and it definitely arrives somewhere: in the present, with a woman singing a kind of song that didn't exist 100 years ago.

CM: What are the primary themes of the piece?

NB: Audiences receive this show differently wherever we go - as a non-verbal piece, it's really subjective. So different people will see different things in it. For me, it's about all the versions of you that happened before you happened.

CM: The exploration of black women's history is a really important theme. Is it your hope that this show will educate people on this?

NB: This show doesn't work in the same way as a text-driven show. Maybe it will educate, but it doesn't teach a lesson - not in any ordinary sense. Maybe it takes the viewer somewhere they haven't been before. Maybe it makes connections they haven't seen made before. Maybe it offers something new to its audience - a new way to look inside someone else.

CM: What was the inspiration for the show? What made you decide to focus on these themes?

NB: As a classical singer, I have spent a great many years training my voice to the exclusion of almost anything else. Once I became immersed in the form, and no longer a student of it, then I began to question the form itself. I started to wonder how I, as a black person singing white European roles from another era, connect personally to this art form.

I also realised that my voice and my



CARO MEETS | THEATRE INTERVIEW

Fringe First winners from Canada, Volcano, return to the Festival with a fascinating show called 'Century Song', which explores 100 years of black women's unspoken history through wordless music, movement and visuals. With 'Century Song' being so interesting in both form and message, I wanted to speak to the performer at the heart of it, Neema Bickersteth, to find out more about the show and her story.

body - the idea of singing and dancing together - had gotten separated by all that training. Growing up, I always loved making noise, but I also loved moving my body. I would make up fake ballet dances in my living room. Who knows where that came from?! I think that because my parents are from West Africa, music and dance were just a part of my life. No one was afraid to move their bodies, no one was afraid to make noise. That always seemed natural.

So, at some point, it became problematic to connect with what I was trained to sing. I love this music, but I began to feel constricted in my expression of it, and I began to look for other ways to fuse my training and love of classical music, with my dawning awareness of other modes of expression.

That was the start. And because I had this secret that I wanted to sing and dance at the same time, that was how 'Century Song' began, with me and Kate Alton - the choreographer - just trying things together. I wanted to go back to my past, or my roots, or something within me, to try to put voice and movement together again: to mash up my unnatural-turned-natural voice with what my body always wanted to do, which was move.

So this began as an experiment. And then the creative team realised it was more than that. It was about what the music and movement was doing as it passed through me - it was about who I am - and, by extension, who we all are: a sum of historical parts that can't be pinned down or even spoken about.

CM: How did you go about putting the show together?

NB: Slowly! And with a lot of great artists working alongside me - which is how Volcano works. It started with the music, then the movement and then came a lot of questions and suggestions and more experiments.

I've been working on this show for over five years, yet every time I perform it, it's new again. I have to master my mind, the singing, the dancing, and then fill everything up with heart and self. It becomes a practice, a kind of meditation.

CM: What made you want to bring it to the Edinburgh Festival?

NB: I don't know a lot about producing, but my partner, Ross Manson, who founded Volcano, thought that Edinburgh was where the show needed to be in order to amplify it.

CM: How do you feel Edinburgh audiences are responding to the show?

NB: They're lovely. And they're buying tickets and coming to see it, so it feels like they're finding something in the show that they like. Some people are stopping me on the street and being incredibly sweet.

CM: What plans do you have for the show after its Edinburgh run?

NB: Apparently we already have interest in the show from several different cities

in a few different countries. I'm not yet sure what will come to pass, but I think I might be doing it again.

CM: What other aims and ambitions do you have for the future?

NB: I want to learn to play the guitar. Averagely well - yes I know that's not a word! There's a little travel guitar in a music store next to our theatre on Nicholson Street that I'm thinking of buying. I want to learn Tai Chi. And I want to keep having a lovely life with my family.

CM: And finally, what's coming up next for you?

NB: I have a gig in Toronto at a company called Soulpepper - singing in a concert. And with Volcano I'll be singing the title role in a massive reimagining of Scott Joplin's ragtime era masterpiece, 'Treemonisha', an opera that is unlike anything else in the canon. That creative team - myself included - has been working on it for about two years. A new libretto and new orchestration are being written in a joint Canadian/American collaboration. It musically gathers rag, blues, gospel and jazz into a classical form, and it tells the story of a black community in the 1880s electing a woman as their leader. It's a big one. That will open sometime in 2020 and hopefully make some waves.

'Century Song' is on at Zoo outside until 18 Aug.

LINKS: volcano.ca

TW:DIY

TW:DIY is a new educational programme from the TW team that is offering tips and advice to future talent in theatre, comedy and culture at large. Based at thisweekdiy.com, we'll be publishing interviews and features all year round that together form a great guide to doing cultural stuff.

To kick things off, this summer we are talking to lots of people who work and perform at the Edinburgh Fringe about the ins and outs of presenting shows at the world's biggest cultural festival. We'll then pick the top tips out of those interviews and collect them together to create a guide to doing a show at the Edinburgh Festival.

Along the way we'll talk to performers, producers, directors, choreographers, designers, stage managers, tech people, marketing people, PR people and venue bosses. We've already published numerous Q&As online - including this interview with Hit The Mark Theatre's Dean Penn - and interviews with all the people below. Plus check out new content going live throughout August.



For updates on all the latest TW:DIY content sign up for the TW Daily bulletin at threeweeksedinburgh.com/signup

Hit The Mark: Signing the Fringe

In this TW:DIY interview we talk to Hit The Mark Theatre's Dean Penn about his company's incredible efforts to make their show as accessible to all as possible.

With songs written by Al Sharland and Sam Swallow from The Hoosiers, 'AnimAlphabet: The Musical' is a high-energy show in the Fringe's children's programme which invites audience members to "join Colin The Country Cockatoo, Hip-Hop Donkey and Geoff The Geordie Jazz Giraffe on a fantastic family musical adventure".

But at this year's Fringe there is an added dimension, in that every performance is also accompanied by British Sign Language interpretation on a video screen at the side of the stage. Hit The Mark had worked with interpreter Stacey Stockwell to offer live BSL interpretation at past performances of their musical. But this year they decided to investigate the idea of filming her signing the show, so that they could offer interpretation at every single performance. And that's what they have now done.

CC: Tell us a little about the show.

DP: 'AnimAlphabet' is a musical about music. A story about our hero Colin The Country Cockatoo and his mission to save sound from a dastardly duck called Calando. Cockatoo is helped by six friends, who each represent a note on the musical scale, from the A of Alligator to the G of Giraffe - that's Geoff The Geordie Jazz Giraffe - and every note in between. With fun catchy pop music by Al and Sam of the platinum-selling pop band the Hoosiers, it's sometimes difficult to know who enjoys 'AnimAlphabet' more, the children or the grown ups who accompany them.

CC: Tell us a little Hit The Mark Theatre.

DP: Hit The Mark Theatre was formed in 2016 with the goal of creating high quality accessible theatre. With previous experience in children's theatre, education and working with children in care, we felt we were in a good place to create a brand new educational musical for children based on the songs and characters dreamed up by Al and Sam.

CC: What first motivated you to offer performances of 'AnimAlphabet' with BSL interpretation?

DP: We were keen that 'AnimAlphabet' was accessible from the start and were fortunate to have friends who were



CHRIS MEETS | CHILDREN'S SHOW INTERVIEW

experts in the areas of accessibility, disability and autism. Carly Jones MBE gave us advice regarding children with autism and relaxed performances. And Stacey Stockwell enabled us to provide accessible performances for deaf and hard of hearing audiences. In addition to the interpretation, we have two relaxed performances and a touch tour for visually impaired audience members during the Fringe, on the 6 and 20 August.

CC: What does having your show signed involved? What does it cost?

DP: Interpreting a show isn't easy. Stacey had to learn the entire show, including all the lines of all the actors. As you can imagine, it takes the interpreter a lot of time to fully learn a whole show. They then spend time in rehearsal with the cast running through everything before the performance. I can only imagine that creating all this would normally be very expensive indeed, but Stacey's passion about accessibility and her belief that 'AnimAlphabet' is a very special show meant she worked at what can only be described as 'not even mate's rates'! We owe Stacey numerous large wines when we get back from Edinburgh - she is truly marvellous and we are very fortunate to know her.

CC: How does the nature of the piece impact on what is involved in interpreting the show?

DP: 'AnimAlphabet' is clearly a family production and many of the audience will be younger in years, so up to about age ten. In order for the story to be understood Stacey uses a range of communication techniques, including British Sign Language, Sign Supported English, body language and expression. As it's a show for children she uses larger movement than she

might ordinarily employ to help tell the story.

CC: Initially Stacey's interpretation was done live, yes?

DP: Yes. Though obviously when a performance is signed live, we are constrained by the cost and Stacey's availability. I think out of 80 performances of 'AnimAlphabet', about six of them were signed. That's OK, and better than many other shows, but it wasn't quite what we had our minds on achieving at the outset. We wanted to go much further and make every 'AnimAlphabet' show accessible.

CC: Hence the move to offering video interpretation?

DP: Yes! Video interpretation enables us to offer interpretation at 100% of our shows, which is amazing. Every 'AnimAlphabet' show is now accessible to deaf and hard of hearing audiences. And in addition to the interpretation, we also use surtitles for all the songs to further increase accessibility.

CC: How do you go about creating the video interpretation?

DP: Because we'd been working with Stacey since the very early days of 'AnimAlphabet' she already knew the show, which made things much easier. Working from the script and various videos, Stacey then interpreted the show in front of a big green screen on a very hot day in early June on her house boat in Caversham. It took over a day to film and then the raw footage was edited and the background and song surtitles added. The editing took days to complete, after which we took the video into rehearsals and crossed our fingers that it would all work! More tweaking and editing was to follow and then we had our final video, which we

tested fully in front of an audience of thousands at Camp Bestival last month.

CC: What impact does the video interpretation have on the way the show is performed?

DP: It doesn't impact the show at all, that's the beauty of it. The 'AnimAlphabet' show is exactly the same as it was before. The only difference is the show has a video interpretation to the right of the stage. In fact Stacey is such an engaging performer that even in 2D she adds to the 'AnimAlphabet' production.

CC: How do you make sure the video is in sync with the live performance?

DP: Timing was our biggest concern. How do you keep time between a live performance and a video for nearly 60 minutes? We were very lucky that Stacey knows the show inside out, so what she was able to create remotely is really close to what happens on stage. The songs are also performed to a pre-recorded soundtrack and therefore always have the same run time. With twelve songs in total, that meant we were confident that slightly more than half the show would always run to time. For the remainder of the show we added about 25 places where we can resync the video if anything goes drastically wrong. It hasn't so far, but we always have that option if we need it. As it is, I sometimes watch the interpretation and can't quite believe how accurate and in sync it is! Either way, we are really proud to be offering a BSL signed video interpretation at every single 'AnimAlphabet' show at this year's Fringe.

'AnimAlphabet: The Musical' is on at Pleasance Dome until 27 Aug.

LINKS: animalphabetmusic.com

THREEWEEKS REVIEWS

ThreeWeeks publishes a new helping of reviews every day of the Festival in the TW Daily email bulletin. Here in the Review Edition you can read about some of the shows recommended by our review team so far - every one has a 4/5 or 5/5 rating. Check all our reviews online and sign up to the TW Daily for the latest batch every day.

CABARET

Le Gateau Chocolat: Icons (Soho Theatre)

Drag act Le Gateau Chocolat invites us into his past, to explore the musical icons who shaped him. In between songs he talks about his formative years, first loves and losses, family and religion. There are tales of heartache and heartbreak, but there's plenty of cheeky sass and sequins too. We're treated to covers including Kate Bush, Meatloaf, Bonnie Tyler and even a hauntingly beautiful version of 'You're the One That I Want' from 'Grease'. His soulful voice has an incredible range, with the aforementioned Ms Bush's 'Running Up That Hill' sung a good few octaves lower than the original. Accompanied by live music, it's pure entertainment full of nostalgia and joy, from a lovable act who had everyone singing along by the end.

Assembly George Square Gardens, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Beetlemania: Kafka For Kids (Full Sail Productions / Nick Williams Productions)

You know you've done children's theatre right when you have an audience made up of 95% adults, 5% children, yet everyone is crying with laughter. Especially when your audience is laughing at a woman having trouble controlling a group of rowdy, invisible people... in Finnish. But don't be fooled by the silliness, this is Kafka we're dealing with - it's sombre, it's about suffering, it's about flying puppets made of cardboard. Wait, what? In a production that stretches the bounds of what can be told to children, 'Beetlemania' will have you laughing at everything from pineapples to obscure Czech authors. I've read Kafka in the original German, and it wasn't anywhere near as good as this.

Pleasance Dome, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Ela Portnoy]

Circa: Wolfgang (Underbelly and Circa)

Mozart and circus. Two festival staples right there, albeit rarely both happening at the same time... until now, thanks to this fun new family

show from the Australian acrobats of Circa. The gap between the two apparently disparate genres is bridged by an amusingly deadpan accordionist, lending a jaunty air to a score which really works. The casting of Mozart as a slapstick clown might raise a periwigged eyebrow, but the younger viewers lap it up as he is helped by his tremendously capable assistant to, among other things, get dressed whilst cycling around the stage. A winningly amusing and, at times, dizzying succession of throws, lifts, leaps and silliness ensues. For circus thrills with a classy, classical touch, 'Wolfgang' hits the right notes.

Underbelly's Circus Hub on the Meadows, until 25 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Bruce Blacklaw]

The Gruffalo, The Witch And The Warthog With Julia Donaldson (Julia And Malcolm Donaldson)

This is the stadium rock of kids' shows: a beloved legend busting out classics, while doing a bit of newer stuff in between. Donaldson even gets the crowd shouting for 'The Gruffalo' as though it were an encore. The 'band' here is a family affair, with Donaldson supported by her husband and sister as well as a couple of younger performers (much younger when audience members are called up to help with 'Superworm') The staging is great and, because this keeps to the core texts, everything chomps along at pace, knocking out six lively tales in short order. "So many shows, Daddy", as my co-reviewer rightly noted. If your kids are fans of Donaldson's work then you can't go wrong with this.

Underbelly George Square, until 27 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Bruce Blacklaw]

Stick By Me (Andy Manley, Ian Cameron and Red Bridge Arts)

When you're little, there are rules - things you can't do, places you can't go. But then you work out how to find fun, invention and friendship within these seemingly arbitrary parameters. And that's what this utterly charming one-man show is all about, a slightly Kafkaesque take on a child's world - spartan and bounded, yet brimming with possibilities. Andy Manley overcomes his shyness with the audience and - you'll have to see this to understand it - makes friends with a series of ice lolly sticks. This is elevated by the detail - the staging, soundtrack and quality of Manley's acting convey volumes in this wordless show. Fun, invention and

friendship are the themes of 'Stick By Me', and also what its audience will feel.

Dance Base, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Bruce Blacklaw]

COMEDY

Felicity Ward: Busting A Nut (Phil McIntyre Entertainments Presents)

Having taken a year off from the Fringe, Felicity Ward is back with a sparky show that merrily swaggers along without a specific theme; instead she fills in the gaps for us on what she's been up to in her time away. Holidays, getting married, living with the in-laws (who, she gleefully informs us, will be in the audience the following night) are all playfully explored with superb wit and a delivery that is both manic and measured. She unapologetically jokes about her nearest and dearest, but it's all drawing on a love of their quirks and on how, in reality, she's got just as many of her own. It's a solid, polished hour of entertainment that proves why Ward remains a Fringe favourite.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

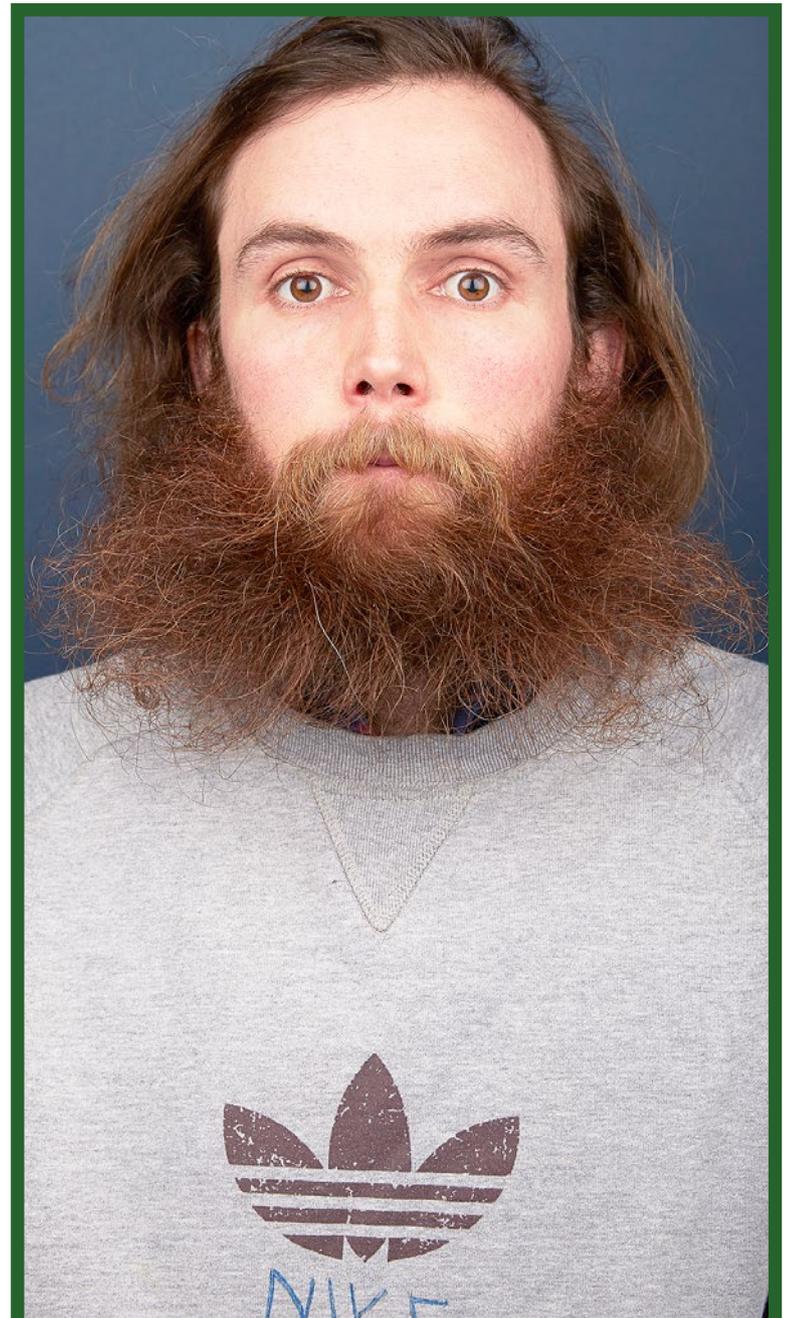
Sara Barron: For Worse (PBJ Management)

It's quite hard to resist spoilery gag-sharing for this review. But you know what that means: the gags are *good*. So, that stipulated, Sara Barron wants to tell us about moving here to the UK, getting married, having a child, being conflicted between American positivism and British reserve and, er, the sex play she wrote when she was too young to know anything about sex. With the obvious exception of the latter, it's maybe well-trodden ground, but Barron certainly owns it, and the room. This is a candid and - more importantly - well written, beautifully delivered and damned funny show, with a finely judged dose of gleeful filth alongside some pointed truths about being a mother, a wife and a lover.

Just The Tonic at The Tron, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Bruce Blacklaw]

Rhys Nicholson: Seminal (Underbelly and Phil McIntyre Management)

Sharply dressed and with a flash of red hair, Nicholson's character filled the



Rob Auton: The Talk Show (Rob Auton)

It's with good reason Rob Auton received a ThreeWeeks Editors' Award in 2017, and his latest show absolutely affirms it. It's the importance of talking - communicating and interacting - that Auton is so passionate about this time; even though he sometimes finds it hard. A subtext of mental health weaves through the show, reaching a particularly arresting moment which felt incredibly personal for Auton to be sharing. He views the world a little differently to some of us, so it's not your typical hour of comedy, but then that's not something you should ever expect from him. 'The Talk Show' does have superb one-liners, don't get me wrong, but it's also thought-provoking, heartwarming and heartbreaking. Just The Tonic at The Caves, until 26 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Daisy Malt]



Suzi Ruffell: Nocturnal (Off The Kerb Productions Ltd)

Skittering around with glee, Suzi Ruffell is in her natural habitat on stage. This year's show is all about the things that keep her up at night - the worries on her mind having their 3am press conference - and she's got a lot to tell us. Twitter trolls, Disney's heteronormative heroes, an encounter with a stingray named Barbara in Australia... she rattles through stories at great speed but it's this energy that makes her so endearing and deeply funny. Sexuality is a major theme throughout, from homophobia to playfully mocking lesbians' love of comfortable shoes. She's clearly very well directed but the innate comic talent shines through, with her writing tightly-honed. Inducing laughter virtually non-stop, Ruffell is absolutely one to see.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 5/5 | [Daisy Malt]

unleashed utter weirdness that had the audience in fits of laughter. She comes out with things that are so unexpected - sometimes even to her, it seems - that tickled all of us. I think most people were in tears at one point or another, me included. In a show reminiscent of the oeuvre of fellow Aussies Auntie Donna, there are quick one-liners, musical interludes and utterly baffling sketches with no context - but that's what makes them so funny. If you like your comedy weird and to induce so much laughter it feels like a work out, Lardner should be at the top of your list.

Assembly George Square Studios, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

Nick Ellera: It's Been Emotional (Nick Ellera)

Gently affable Aussie Nick Ellera sets out his stall upfront, namely late afternoon laconic stand-up reflecting on middle aged masculinity. Whether or not you are male or indeed middle-aged, you are warmly invited into his affectionately questioning depiction of his male-dominated upbringing, seasoned with a fine variety of cracking good jokes. There are occasional pauses to check the set list and so perhaps the joins between bits aren't as seamless as they might be, but that'll improve over the run; and besides, when said bits are, for the most part, as good and as well-delivered as Ellera's, then what does it matter? It's early days, but if I see a more life-affirming bit of downbeat deadpan comedy this Fringe, I'll be... well, you know.

Just The Tonic at The Grassmarket Centre, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | Bruce Blacklaw

Questing Time (Monkey Toast)

The setup is simple. "It's just D&D", explains host Paul Foxcroft - it's not all going to turn out to be some elaborate piece of theatre. Nope - every night, three guest comedians join Foxcroft on a 'Dungeons & Dragons' adventure, which we get to watch. Last night, Briony Redman, David Reed and Richard Soames proceeded through an adventure with such incompetence that it ended when the ghoul they were trying to kill tore its own throat out with boredom. Our audience (mostly gaming enthusiasts, granted) wept with laughter. Foxcroft is a superb dungeon master too, with a great memory for the bizarre character quirks he unwisely allows the comedians to choose for themselves. I plan to go again as soon as possible.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

Rose Matafeo: Horndog (Berk's Nest in association with Avalon Management)

Now on her third Fringe, Rose Matafeo is practically a veteran, and it shows in her confidence on stage. Warm and friendly, she recounts the things that she's most passionate about, even when they're not always good for her. She opens up about her troubles with relationships, rooted

room from the start. Confident, camp and charming (yet outright acerbic) he is, quite simply, blisteringly funny. You'll soon understand why he's already an award-winning comic in his native Australia, with a 'Live From The BBC' show under his belt. With the theme of relationships carrying the show along, 'Seminal' is masterfully cohesive. The thinking person's millennial, there's plenty for those of us in that bracket, but he's still broadly appealing. If nothing else, you'll want to hear about his time working on a cruise ship. Catch him early before it's too late, this is definitely one to add to your list.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

Adam Riches Is The Lone Dueller (Fight In The Dog)

Adam Riches has carved out a distinct Fringe niche. People going into his shows often know what to

expect - as everyone files in, there's a scrum as some desperately attempt to avoid the front row. His character comedy is big on interaction, big on improvisation when things go wrong, and always screamingly funny. 'The Lone Dueller' is a more plot-driven affair than previous outings, a tale of a swashbuckling romantic hero, aided by a cast of (piloted) mannequins. It is deliriously, wonderfully silly, and its willingness to make fun of everything about itself means it survives a couple of over-plotted scenes that drag a little. Riches was born to play this part - his charisma perfectly suits a swaggering Flashheart-type.

Pleasance Dome, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

Jordan Brookes: Bleed (Fight In The Dog)

Everything begins fairly benignly, the first third or so much more 'normal' than I've ever seen him, but

it becomes apparent that this is all part of the act as he slowly descends into chaos. A break up because of a joke he used in his previous show consumes him, and the complexity of why it happened, and his trouble with relationships, seems a constant battle. He's getting inside our heads, giving us a glimpse of what it's like to be inside his. A clever trick is used to try to take us there, and it's a headfuck in more ways than one. This is surreal concept comedy that doesn't just push boundaries, it obliterates them - how it makes you feel is up to you.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

Wil Greenway: Either Side Of Everything (NJC Presents)

Taking us on a journey through time, Wil Greenway pieces together stories within stories that all lead up to one key moment. The meandering process is all to build up the layers that

emphasise that we are all our own story with so many unique individual parts. Quirky descriptions of each of the characters, be it humans, dogs or beetles, bring them to life and pull you in deeper as you get lost in the tale. He speaks and interacts with the audience as if we are friends gathered together, playfully bringing people in through games of 'Would You Rather...?' Musical accompaniment and occasional distractions all add to the charm, creating an uplifting experience full of humour that's hard to forget.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

Demi Lardner: I Love Skeleton (Laughing Stock Productions)

Finding comedy in everyday things is not easy. Demi Lardner, however, appears to have mastered it. The simplest things are flipped and her hour of absurd sketch comedy



The Kinkens (Pip Hambly)

Burrow deep enough into the subterranean caverns of Edinburgh and you will find a strange and wonderful creature. Her name is Kinkens, a radio show host who invites questions from her listeners. Endearingly inept, she soon finds herself hopelessly and hilariously out of her depth. Incorporating elements of movement, clown and dance, along with music and speech, 'The Kinkens' skilfully treads the line between comedy and tragedy and handles, with the lightest of touches, the heaviest of existential questions: who are we? Why are we? Pip Hambly's physical performance is minutely observed, her comic timing impeccable. Those who prefer their genres served neat, be warned: this is a defiantly uncategorisable piece with a quiet power that creeps up on you.

Just The Tonic at the Caves, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 5/5 | [Geoff Mills]

in a slightly repressed but fulfilled childhood. Break-ups are a theme too but she doesn't dwell on this, focusing more the fact that she likes to give 100%; because if she doesn't, what's the point? Incredibly self-aware and self-deprecating, she is happy for the joke to be on her, especially when the eventual punchline makes her the victor. 'Horndog' is a superbly funny show from a wonderful comic at the top of her game.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

Elf Lyons: ChiffChaff
(Mick Perrin Worldwide in association with CKP and InterTalent Group)

Replete with her usual sense of fun and playful clowning, Elf Lyons' latest show is a musical about the economy, delivering her own hilarious version of expertise. Through mime, dance and song she's here to educate us all about the beauty of fiscal policy, and the whole thing is ridiculously daft. Rewording some favourite musical hits, Lyons frolics around the stage using a selection of props that are surprisingly relevant to economic concepts, including inflatable dolls that prove to be multi-purpose. Although a little knowledge about economics will help make some of the jokes tickle that bit more, it's certainly not a prerequisite. If this were how economics was taught to us in school I think we'd all have achieved top grades.

Pleasance Dome, until 27 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Malt]

Adam Riches Is The Guy Who...
(Plosive Productions / Tigco)

This is the guy you meet after you end a long-term relationship. He seems to want to be your friend - he definitely wants more than that. He seems nice - he isn't. He's the stereotypical faux-ally 'nice guy', under whose skin a predatory misogyny is simmering, ready to boil over. No one is safe from Adam Riches' new comic creation in the Underbelly's brightly lit Cow Café. The jokes are brash and loud, the audience interactivity is frequent, and there are plenty of times you feel guilty for laughing - only to discover that this is exactly the point. This is a challenging show, more so than you'd first think, that indicates Riches is taking his comedy in an interesting new direction.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

Bad Clowns: Hostage
(Bad Clowns Comedy)

Anyone who has sat through a piece of theatre so awful they'd welcome a gun-wielding maniac just to end the tedium - here's your hallelujah. Bad Clowns Comedy present a godawful play that is swiftly taken hostage by a man on the run who bears a grudge against its pretentious dramatists. The fallout is a fast-paced hour of delectable silliness, by three performers who are having as much fun as they should be with material like this. The Clowns are talented improvisers and the show features many delightful, clearly unplanned



Kiri Pritchard McLean: Victim, Complex (Live Nation / PBJ Management)

After discovering that a messy break-up was the result of her ex gaslighting her (when a partner tells you your behaviour is 'crazy' and you start to question your own mind), which led to years of anguish, Kiri Pritchard-McLean is angry. She wants to tell her side of the story, but vehemently does not want to be labelled a victim. It doesn't really sound like the premise of a comedy show, but following in Beyonce's footsteps, she wants to make lemonade from lemons and - through honesty, a fierce attitude and naturally funny storytelling - she squeezes every drop out of the lemons she's been given. This is comedy for the #MeToo age, fusing humour with biting reality in a way that is very powerful.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 27 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Daisy Malt]



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gags - hostage-taking clown Sam Walls is particularly good at these, though all three prove themselves adaptable and clever performers. There are even some unexpected twists thrown in for good measure.

Just The Tonic at The Grassmarket Centre, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

DANCE & PHYSICAL THEATRE

SHIFT (Barely Methodical Troupe in association with Underbelly)

In true Barely Methodical Troupe style, 'SHIFT' is a high-energy fusion of dance and acrobatics with an urban edge, heavily focused on playfulness and friendship. Dressed all in blue, the four performers seemingly flit into an alternative reality where their bodies are fluid, launching around the relatively small stage with incredible dexterity. Superb tricks with giant rubber bands add an additional layer of technical prowess and originality. There's some astonishing breakdancing which seemed to defy gravity, plus throws, flips and those balancing tricks your parents told you not to try with your siblings - but breaking the rules is what this troupe does best. High fliers in every sense, the four create a breathtakingly magical spectacle.

Underbelly's Circus Hub on The Meadows, until 25 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Daisy Mait]

The Artist (Circo Aereo and Thom Monckton)

Thom Monckton's artist is chaotic and silly - or so he would have you believe. Though he has a few near misses with a staple gun, and becomes easily distracted by everything from a bowl of fruit to an annoying leak, everything is perfectly planned to deliver hoots of laughter and squeals of delight from the audience. At points it starts to feel a bit circuitous: will he ever paint that picture? But when he finally does, it becomes a clever and entertaining finale. My 7 year old co-reviewer came out beaming and said: "he must have practiced that a lot". She's right - Monckton is an assured, confident performer and it feels like he's having a lot of fun playing the part, too.

Assembly Roxy, until 27 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Marni Appleton]

EVENTS

Edinburgh's Greatest Hits - The Story Of The Capital's Music (Edinburgh Music Tours)

This was an enjoyable morning walking round parts of the city that busy people usually miss, hearing great stories about the Edinburgh music scene from friendly people who know it well. There are many overlapping layers to learn about; the Festival Theatre was originally an old music hall that went on to host bands such as T-Rex in the seventies, and



Photo by Idil Sukan

Six (Kenny Wax / Global Musicals)

A truly kick-ass performance, 'Six' features a pop band made up of Henry VIII's six wives, in a concert that packs a punch in the face to the patriarchy. Harking back to the Spice Girls on the one hand, and the Tudors on the other, we follow each woman's story in a series of energetic solos, whilst the others support as a high-energy chorus. Sequined, slick and with stunning costumes, this group has serious power. Whilst I can't ignore the fact that the dresses and dancing were hyper-sexualised, they also gave the show a force that was tangible in each head turn, hip swish and belted note. It was simply an awesome performance - go and "get down like it's 1499".

Underbelly George Square, until 27 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Ela Portnoy]

austrian cultural forum

CELLO ON FIRE

PETER HUDLER

'His wonderful playing blurred the boundaries between genres and instruments'

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fringe

there's a strong personal connection between The Beatles, David Bowie and Edinburgh. There are also lots of intriguing stories to hear about local bands, from The Bay City Rollers to The Scars. Many of the old buildings are still there, so go along and immerse yourself in the lively Edinburgh music scene, treading in the footsteps of some of the world's finest musicians.

Outside Main Entrance To National Museum Of Scotland, until 25 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

MUSIC

When You Fall Down: The Buster Keaton Story (James Dangerfield)

James Dangerfield falls down with a thud more than once in this exquisite new one-man show; like Keaton he gets up again, to tell the story of the death-defying genius' personal and professional struggles. Dangerfield's dance, mime and physicality are riveting, and can be compared directly with Keaton's when his films are projected onto a screen behind the stage. His songs and singing technique are reminiscent of contemporary West End shows, but it is the palpable intensity of his commitment that makes this show very special - he wrote both book and libretto as well as composing the songs. 'When You Fall Down' gives

an eloquent voice to a silent movie pioneer who often went unheard in his own lifetime.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 27 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

Jan Tait And The Bear (Ensemble Thing)

This professional contemporary chamber opera, based on a Shetland folk tale, is very suitable for children! The singers' and narrator's enunciation was perfect so everyone could follow the story and get the jokes, while there was plenty of action to maintain the drama. It's a full-on scary Norse Saga in theme and costume, so there were associations with 'Noggin the Nog' for adults and the Brothers Grimm for children, but the sight of a convincingly costumed bear tucking into a picnic basket made everyone laugh! Rising opera singers Catherine Backhouse and Brian McBride (playing four roles) were engaging performers, and the excellent acoustic chamber group consisted of fine post-modernist instrumentalists (cello, clarinet and accordion) who also doubled as the chorus. I loved it!

Summerhall, until 16 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

Three Colours Guitar (Three Colours Guitar)

When a guitar's played well it's like a mini orchestra, with an almost limitless possibility of timbres and styles; tonight these possibilities were

multiplied by three! Declan Zapala, a virtuoso of contemporary techniques, began with Eric Roche's 'Roundabout', a master class in perpetual motion and percussive playing. Matt Buchanan joined in for the traditional tune 'Wild Mountain Thyme', but in a mesmeric style you'd never hear in a folk club! Next, John Wheatcroft commanded the stage with the warm enticement of sophisticated, laid-back jazz, in his own arrangement of Jerome Kern's 'All The Things You Are'. Things got even better when they played together, culminating in Fleetwood Mac's instrumental song 'Albatross', which reduces me to mush every time!

C too, until 19 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

#Pianodrome Live (Sound Mirror)

The pianodrome is an amphitheatre built from old "upcycled" pianos - including five working instruments - and is an agreeably resonant place to hold a musical party. ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winner, the hilarious Will Pickvance, was our host in Edinburgh's Botanical Gardens (the bar is under a lime tree!), introducing the excellent house band S!nk and tonight's guests, violinist Kate Young and accordionist Raphaël Decoster. The amphitheatre inspired a good-humoured gladiatorial energy between the highly engaging multi-instrumentalists, who stalked and confronted each other while



Photo by Harry Elletson

BARK! The Musical... How The Little Dog Found His Voice (Swansong Productions)

"C'mon you pussies - BARK!" is the clarion call of this endearingly hilarious musical, about a rescue dog receiving heartfelt advice from his canine friends in the park. The cast all play dogs; none of their owners appear though the dogs do sing lovingly about them. The choreography is laugh-out-loud funny, lots of scratching and sniffing, and the witty songs have been carefully researched to reflect the realities of dog life. I particularly enjoyed Laura Hyde as Golda the Jewish pug, and Brian James Leys as King, a gently authentic elderly labrador who made some adults in the audience cry. Musically, Emily Chesterton bow-wowed as Chanel the operatic afghan hound. This show is mandatory for anyone who loves dogs!

C, until 27 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

the audience clapped and shouted encouragement. A favourite moment was when saxophonist Matt Wright ran round squeaking his instrument in mock alarm! All was resolved when performers and audience danced together and so I give these gladiators the thumbs up.

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

Cathedral Lunchtime Concerts - Free (St Mary's Cathedral)

Ian Munro's lively xylophone playing and cheerful tunes transported me from the reality of the cool cathedral interior into a daydream of seascides and stripy deck chairs. This chirpy, light music repertoire would be highly restorative to anyone who had recently attended a theatre show with a harrowing theme and also very familiar to fans of concert bands. I'm pleased to say there was a liberal sprinkling of work by composer Leroy Anderson, most notably my personal favourites 'The Syncopated Clock' and 'Bugler's Holiday'. Munro's accompanist Gilmour Macleod, a talented soloist in his own right, played the second movement of Grieg's Piano Concerto, until the cheeky xylophone elbowed the piano aside and reasserted itself for the second half of the concert.

St Mary's Cathedral, until 31 Aug tw rating 4/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

The Sorries (The Sorries)

Quite unexpectedly, I found I knew

all the words to all the verses of 'The Wild Rover' (the clean version), and this concert really was a voyage of self discovery led by our amiable guides, The Sorries, who are so much more than a Corries tribute band! If any visitors want to meet the locals, get yourselves along to one of their gigs - we like them and the instant, happy, pop-up seventies folk-club ambiance they create. We gleefully sang along to tales of rebellion, execution and war particularly the poignant 'Green Fields of France' and the beautiful love song, 'Wild Mountain Thyme'. Special mention has to go to their entertaining duelling banjos style rock riffs battle. Folkie fun for all!

Quaker Meeting House, until 25 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

The Shakuhachi Experience (Markus Guhe)

The Japanese bamboo flute has a mysterious, ethereal sound; acknowledged expert Markus Guhe demystified it for us and introduced Taiko drumming too. His worthwhile commentary on the Shakuhachi, Japanese culture and history was interesting and helpful, however it interrupted the mood established by the traditional instruments so this was not a meditation. But even in a Western setting the music was contemplative - among the traditional tunes was 'Koden Sugomori (Nesting of Cranes)', hundreds of years old and describing the revered, sacred cranes; during this I had an insight into

a modernist composer that had been puzzling me for a decade! This was a lilting, gentle break from the excesses of the Fringe and a chance to learn something new.

Various @ theSpace, until 25 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

Belly Of A Drunken Piano (Go Productions)

This too-short hour of rhythm and blues made me nostalgic for smoky basement clubs with sticky floors and disreputable company. Stewart D'Arrieta had some great stories; he and his excellent band played his own songs in addition to Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen well and - joy of joys - the late, great Ian Dury. The numbers that really arrested my attention were a couple of the slower ones: familiar late-night tear jerker 'Tom Traubert's Blues (Four Sheets To The Wind In Copenhagen)' by Tom Waits and Stewart D'Arrieta's own setting of Charles Bukowski's poem 'There's A Bluebird In My Heart'. I'm surprised to report that the latter is my new favourite song - and that's the magic of the Fringe.

Assembly Rooms, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

THEATRE

(even) HOTTER (Transgress)

Using a series of interviews with women and trans people about their

bodies, Mary Higgins and Eli Potter (aka HOTTER) have weaved together a show about embarrassment, insecurity, love and dancing. They tell their own stories and those of others, drawing on an impressively broad range of experiences. Gradually they reveal more and more of themselves to us, at times physically leaning on each other for support, committing wholly to being courageously, profoundly honest. Some segments go on too long, some reference points are oddly dated (remember Robin Thicke?) and sometimes the whole chaotic jumble feels like it'll collapse - but it doesn't, and by the end you and a bunch of strangers are dancing onstage, and everyone just looks so happy.

Bedlam Theatre, until 27 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

Love Song to Lavender Menace (James Ley)

Carving out genuinely queer spaces - not just a Barclay's float at Pride - is precious, precarious work. That's brought home in this portrait of Lavender Menace, a gay and lesbian radical bookshop on Edinburgh's Forth Street that was open between 1982 and 1987. The writing is very good - if sometimes a bit thinky - and the production effective: funny and tender. It's self-referential, a performance of a performance, a queer theatrical space dedicated to a queer physical space. The acting duo bear it all with warmth and charm, though in their main roles they

occasionally fall just short of selling us the lust and humour of their rapport. But they're extremely dexterous throughout, cycling through the play's potpourri of scenes and characters.

Summerhall, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Alexander Hartley]

Island Town (Paines Plough and Theatr Clwyd)

Double portrait: first, a nameless nowhere town, depressed and declining, cut off from the fields around it by the choking girdle of the ring-road. Second, three inhabitants of this town: in the park, sixteen years old, drinking super-strength cider. These three are desperately bored and starved of opportunity, which is what makes Sam and Pete so susceptible to Kate's manipulative charisma. Social realism is a part of 'Island Town', as cuts to care services are part of the cocktail that produces Kate's nihilism. But her captivating personality, played by a haunting, electric Katherine Pearce, is at the centre. It's more a single portrait by the end-one exquisitely painted by Dominic Kennedy and Peter Small's sound and lighting design.

Summerhall, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Alexander Hartley]

Drenched (Third Man Theatre)

It takes a lot of confidence to hold an audience's attention through minutes of silence in a warm, dark bunker, but by that point Dan Frost's performance had so completely captured our attention that our

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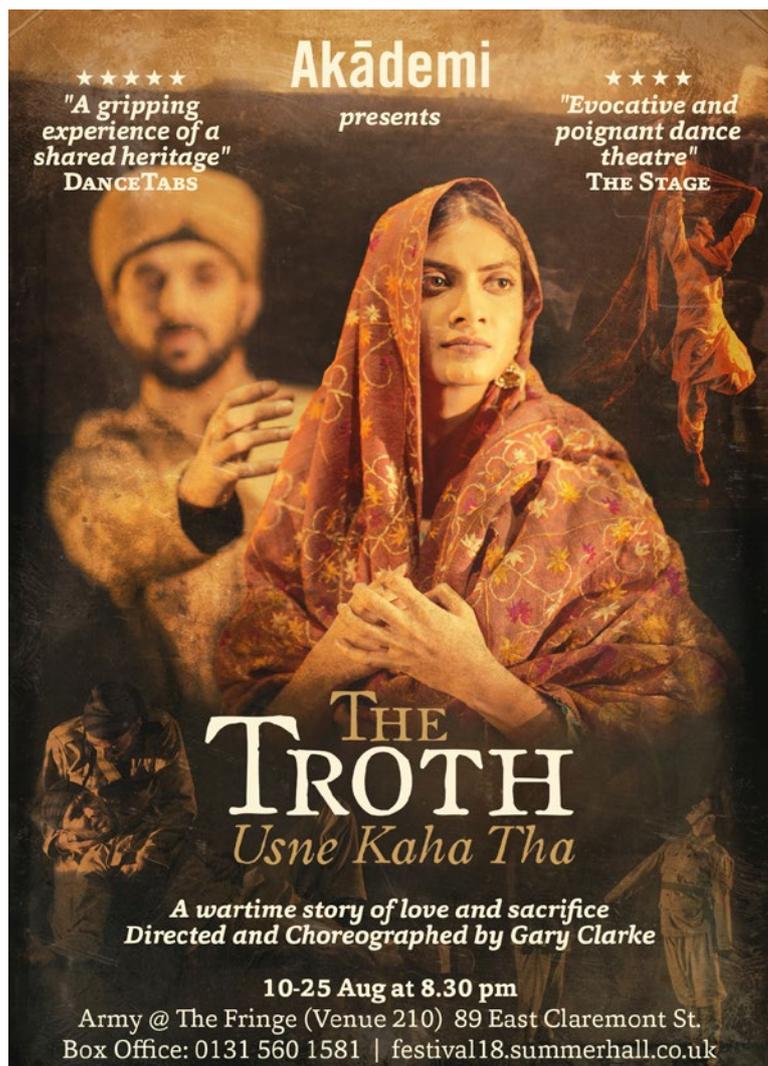
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We Are (Adaawe)

Fringe frazzling you? Then this is your show - the performers' energy is infectious. We drummed (drums were provided), we clapped, we cheered! This strong, all-women African drums and vocal group from Los Angeles were inspirational and inclusive - beautiful, powerful voices telling stories about other women making extraordinary, world-changing decisions. Their positivity and storytelling reminded me of 'The Moth Radio Hour' radio shows, only with beautiful singing and expert drumming and, just when I thought there should be dancing - the dancers appeared! Interesting ideas were aired and I switched between being thoughtful and being rather a cool drummer several times. The vocals were first class and the genuine camaraderie between audience and musicians warmed my heart.

Just Festival At St John's, until 25 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Louise Rodgers]



eyelids never drooped, and our focus never wavered. He plays renowned Cornish storyteller Matthew Drench, regaling his audience with the tale of the Zennor Mermaid, a heartbreaking fable touching on folklore and mental health. The moving, meditative story is interwoven with Drench's direct addresses to the audience, a smartly comic counterpoint to the pathos. A mesmerising performance, by turns bombastic, soulful and snarky, the juxtaposition of styles is the real strength. It's like 'Poldark' crossed with 'Toast of London', only better.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 27 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Andy Leask]

My Kind of Michael (Nick Cassenbaum)

It's hard to watch your heroes fall, whether they're a friend, a parent or a famous TV presenter. Nick Cassenbaum's childhood hero was Michael Barrymore, who very publicly fell from grace in 2001 when a man was found dead in his swimming pool after a party. Exploring how Barrymore influenced his life and his desire to perform, with able musical assistance from Andy Kelly, Cassenbaum whips through the show with all the flair and gumption of, well, a light entertainment TV presenter circa 1998. He packs a hell of a lot in, covering the significant moments in both his own life and Barrymore's, and his ceaselessly buoyant delivery keeps things consistently funny and entertaining.

There are some tremendous running gags, too.

Summerhall, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

Meek (Headlong)

A devout, patriarchal state in a dystopian future may sound like a rehashing of 'The Handmaid's Tale', but 'Meek' is no knock-off. Like Penelope Skinner's other play at this year's Fringe, 'Angry Alan', 'Meek' explores our obsession with the Internet and how desperate we are for 'likes' from faceless followers. This is a compelling, atmospheric production from Headlong, with energetic performances from all three actors, which poses complex questions about loyalty, betrayal and sacrifice. Although on the play's personal level the plot twists are a bit obvious, the way it relates to the wider political landscape is chilling, asking us to consider how we confront human rights violations overseas and whether we care enough to elicit any real change.

Traverse Theatre, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Marni Appleton]

The Flop (A Hijinx Production in association with Spymonkey)

A light-hearted farce, focusing on the infamous 'trial by congress' of the Marquis de Langey, 'The Flop' resembles something akin to a pantomime for adults. We follow the hapless Marquis through his naive marriage, and the legal battle over his alleged impotence. At times my rational brain noted that it was silly, and wasn't really saying much about anything of substance...but then my sense of humour drop-kicked that stuffy bore out of my head, and I surrendered to laughter. The cast play a number of roles, and play music too, while the cheerful destruction of the fourth wall is so tongue-in-cheek it's a wonder they can get their lines out! Riotously funny, endlessly endearing and delightfully shambolic.

Summerhall, until 27 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Andy Leask]

The Cloak And Dagger Show (Three Door Productions)

This show comprises two discrete halves: firstly, a walking tour, circumnavigating the Grassmarket, and then a short play. The tour moves at a sedate pace, and is short (my Fitbit only clocked 2000 steps or so). It eschews famous figures, focusing instead on the lives of ordinary folk, and is as full of gruesome and gory details as you'd expect, albeit with stronger language than usual. This is followed by a short, two-person play, based on real events. The performances are powerfully intense, and the script - based on a true journal entry - bears the weight of authenticity well. This is capped with a brief Q&A, connecting the play's violent encounter to the tour's historical details. Interesting, entertaining, and bloody good fun.

Sweet Grassmarket, until 27 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Andy Leask]

Angry Alan (Francesca Moody Productions)

We all know someone like Roger. He's warm, he's friendly - occasionally he'll say something a bit offensive but we let it slide, because he seems like such a nice guy. When Roger comes across Angry Alan, a leader of the men's rights movement, on YouTube, he begins to believe that he is oppressed by a 'gynocentric' society. Penelope Skinner's monologue examines the way the Internet allows people to prey on others' insecurities and push extremist agendas. The sense of terror is built so well throughout the play that the predictable way it ends is a little disappointing. However, Skinner's writing is mostly witty and wryly observant, drawing out the nuances of contemporary gender politics - and a lot of unexpected laughs too.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Marni Appleton]

The Myth Of The Singular Moment (Jim Harbourne)

A story of four extremely disparate characters - two humans, a whale and a photon - 'The Myth of the Singular Moment' is a show about choices and the multiverse, set to beautiful live folk music. Written by Jim Harbourne, who also performs with Kirsty Eila McIntyre, the show is straightforwardly staged and all the better for it. No costumes, few props - just two exceptional musicians patiently weaving their story together. The pair have terrific voices, and the moments where the music swells and they really go for it are the best in the show. It's a very simple story, but manages a couple of genuine surprises, and you'd have to be a real stoneheart not to be moved by the end.

Summerhall, until 26 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

Sticks And Stones (Paines Plough and Theatr Clwyd)

It's important to choose your words carefully in the dystopian workplace of 'Sticks and Stones'. Using a word that causes offence could land you on a political correctness course - and might even cost you your job. Playwright Vinay Patel interrogates our use of language, asking who determines offence and where the responsibility lies. Do we consider the words themselves, or the intent behind them? The production is fun and vibrant with lights, sound and movement bringing life to the Roundabout space. Though some of the physical humour is a little overdone, the zealous performances are a joy to watch while, at the same time, the script asks important and timely questions about how we show respect for other people.

Roundabout @ Summerhall, until 25 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Marni Appleton]

The Approach (Landmark Productions)

There is a poetic, elliptical dislocation to 'The Approach'. The dialogue perfectly captures the lilting

rhythms of speech, as we observe the changing relationships between three women. The play takes the structure of a series of conversations over coffee, during which the characters bring one another up to date on the love, betrayal, warmth and sorrow in their lives. Only two of the actors are present at any one time, and much humour is mined from the echoing and repetition of stories and structures. But at the play's moving climax, the repetition becomes something more, a Joycean cycle revealing something profound about relationships and memory, and about our deep, abiding need for companionship.

Assembly Hall, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Andy Leask]

The Basement Tapes (Zanetti Productions)

Stella Reid plays a girl sorting through her dead grandmother's stuff. There's a lot of it, because gran found it hard to let things go (she didn't even have a bin). Stuck between curiosity, boredom and listlessness, the girl whiles away the time by acting out little scenes with the objects. And then she finds the tapes. When she begins playing them, the play turns swiftly from funny to spooky. It's often the case in creepy stories that, by the time we hear them, the actual details of the horrors feel a bit disappointing - even banal. That's the case here, but Reid's superb performance and the drama of the unfolding mysteries nonetheless make for thrilling, skin-crawling fun.

Summerhall, until 26 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alexander Hartley]



Orlando (Dyad Productions)

Full disclosure: I love Woolf's novel, and I confess to feeling sceptical about a stage adaptation. I've never been happier to be proven wrong, as Dyad Productions' script is outstanding. Shifting to a first-person monologue feels like a natural step, rendering Orlando's confusion palpable: torn between living a vibrant life, and striving to capture its essence through poetry. Special mention must go to Rebecca Vaughan's performance. Never less than magnetic, she perfectly captures the nuances of the character in a portrayal every bit as subtle and complex as Orlando's own struggles with ideas of self, identity and gender. At the gripping climax, tears were rolling down Vaughan's face, mirrored in the eyes of much of the audience, this cynical reviewer among them.

Assembly Roxy, until 27 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Andy Leask]

All about ThreeWeeks Edinburgh

ThreeWeeks has been covering the Edinburgh Festival since 1996 - so this is our 23rd year covering the world's largest cultural event.

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We are previewing, reviewing and interviewing at all of Edinburgh's summer festivals: the Edinburgh International Festival, Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh Art Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Interviews: We are interviewing many of our favourite performers with new Q&As going live every day of the festival month. The interviews are conducted by our two Editors - Caro Moses and Chris Cooke.

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There are two editions of the popular TW Magazine this year. The **Preview Edition** was packed with interviews and show recommendations, and was distributed direct to Edinburgh homes and venues. You can also download a digital version online.

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TW:DIY is a new educational programme from the TW team that will be offering tips and advice to future talent in theatre, comedy and culture at large. Check out the regular TW:DIY interviews and guides online at thisweekdiy.com

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