

# ThreeWeeks IN EDINBURGH

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## CHILDREN'S SHOWS

### The Red Bus Children's Show

The Red Bus

Children and public transport may fail under most circumstances to conjure up images of fun, but the arrival of a certain bus to the meadows goes some way to disputing that. Shiny and red and charmingly decorated with bunting, this restored London bus must surely be a contender for the award for most novel Fringe venue! Inside, children ascend the stairs to the top deck and are treated to a delightful half-hour of storytelling, puppetry and song. Performances run throughout the day with different time slots featuring different storytellers and a different target age group. Whichever time of day you do choose to attend, however, the friendly team at The Red Bus endeavour to entertain all concerned. Festival fun for everyone, indeed!

The Red Bus, The Meadows, 6 - 30 Aug (not 27), times vary, £5.00, fpp 17. [kr]

tw rating 4/5

### Sparkleshark Bouncy Castle Productions

'Sparkleshark' is a series of disappointments. Firstly, there are no sharks in sight and only a smidgen of sparkle, let alone a sparkly shark. Secondly, it isn't suitable for ages 0+ like the blurb states (8+ minimum), meaning families walk out. Thirdly, crew members and company friends distractingly laugh and stamp like hyenas at apparent in-jokes that aren't funny to anyone else, and the ensuing sense of un-professionalism puts a downer on an already sub-standard experience. The tale of teen friendships, fallouts and the power of storytelling are tedious, although Alex Harding as gawky Jake is reasonably watchable. It's almost like patronising, moralising educational theatre and the ending is a huge pile of unoriginal cheese. It's well meaning, but misses the mark entirely.

theSpaces @ Surgeons Hall, 14 - 28 Aug, 1.10pm (2.10pm), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp 18. [gjs]

tw rating 1/5

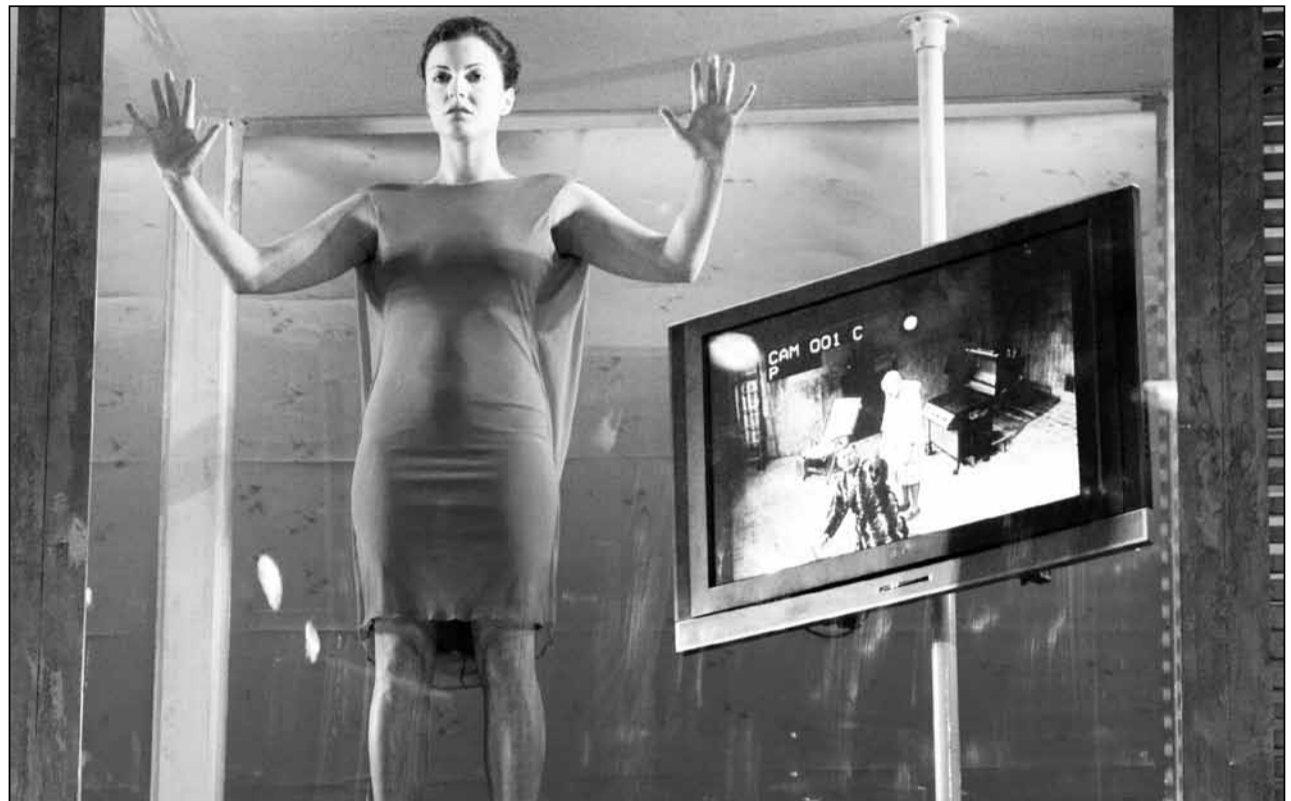
### The Wind in the Willows

Not Cricket Productions

Kenneth Grahame's classic literary tale of the mischievous and conceited Toad and his well-meaning chums Badger, Ratty and Mole is brought to life in this energetic stage production, and the cast perform extremely well to humorously convey the charming characters of the book. Despite this, however, it is clear that the anthropomorphic theme causes confusion with some younger audience members. Nevertheless, the inclusion of song, dance, fantastic costumes and the fact that the characters make excellent use of the stage - meandering in and out of the audience and incorporating light-hearted asides - ensures even the youngest audience members do not leave disappointed. Overall, a very professional and promising production, but probably best appreciated by an audience of slightly older children.

C too, 5 - 30 Aug, 3.45pm (4.45pm), £5.50 - £9.50, fpp 19. [kr]

tw rating 3/5



**SNAP OF THE DAY:** Stuck inside the Edinburgh Fringe bubble? No, it's Enda Walsh's 'Penelope' at the Traverse Theatre. Photo: Kate Edwards

## COMEDY

### Andrew Lawrence: The Too Ugly For Television Tour 2010

Chambers Management

Andrew Lawrence. Gets. Angry. But if everyone could turn their gripes into such comic outpourings, the world would be a much more enjoyable place to live in. Lawrence zips through his hour-long set with understated energy, pouring scorn on the stupidity, arrogance and rudeness that we all experience on a daily basis. Lawrence's stories invariably focus on a prolonged conversation between two people and his impressions are magnificent; a particularly comic gem is the parody of his Brummie housemate and the lengths Lawrence goes to in order to hear the words 'monster munch'. His diatribes are fast-paced, always elaborately worded and never dull. There's a huge range of comedians to choose from at the Fringe, but Andrew Lawrence is unmissable.

Pleasance Courtyard, 7 - 29 Aug (not 16), 9.20pm, £7.00 - £10.00, fpp 26. [lw]

tw rating 5/5

### The Antics - Fringing on the Ridiculous

Antics

It always seems churlish to whale on young burgeoning talent. Fortunately, the gentleman improv troupe 'The Antics' didn't seem to have any. Their hour-long show felt sloppy and self-indulgent - the actors all seemed too concerned with standing out to feed off each

other's energy or assist each other. There was also a notable dearth of creativity in their gags, and it seemed unlikely the company had ever really practised thinking on their feet. Charm can get you a long way in an improv show, but The Antics all seemed so self-satisfied it was difficult to forgive them their lack of expertise. If Edinburgh is a proving ground for young talent, this show proved The Antics are in need of much more practice. Sweet Grassmarket, 16 - 22 Aug, 5.00pm (6.00pm), £8.00, fpp 28. [kc]

tw rating 1/5

### The Two (not so) Gentlemen of Comedy Present: Comede Varite Totale - Free

The Two (not so) Gentlemen/ PBH's Free Fringe

There's usually a chance with a free show that it's going to be variable, and this is no exception, especially in light of the format: the relevance of this review is questionable, as the line-up of this show changes every day, but one thing's for certain, headliner Kev Orkian is a star in the making. A cross between Borat and Bill Bailey, virtuoso pianist Orkian treated the audience to his faux-Armenian musings, a hilarious rendition of Elton John's 'I'm Still Standing' and a mesmerising blues piece to finish. While many comedians discuss little more than their middle class foibles - and the forgettable pair who preceded him did this exclusively - Orkian offers something exceptional.

The Banshee Labyrinth, 7 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 4.45pm (5.40pm), free, fpp 137. [amb]

tw rating: 3/5

### Confessions of a Smart Wrestling Fan

Apath Productions

I certainly don't know my WWF from my WCW and I definitely didn't think I cared before Liam Mullan showed me the light. This Fringe virgin's free one hour show was heavy on the type of fan based minutia one only finds in the dark spaces of internet chat rooms, but his infectious enthusiasm carried the show. Judging from the audience reactions, those who know the Graveripper is a wrestler rather than a nightmare get more out of it and his occasional dalliances into observational comedy were less convincing and several jokes fell flat, but for a free show with complimentary biscuits, 'Confessions of a Smart Wrestling' fan is not a bad option for an afternoon's entertainment.

Laughing Horse @ Edinburgh City Football Club, 5 - 29 Aug (not 16), 7.15pm (8.15pm), free, fpp 49. [ka]

tw 3/5

### Jim Jefferies: Alcoholocaust

Brett Vincent For Getcomedy.com

One angry guy and sixty minutes to vent. Although the whole 'moody man stands on stage and slags people off' thing has been done before, no-one does it better than Jim Jefferies. All races, religions and people are fair game; the only way to be truly prejudiced would be to leave them off the list in case they are offended. However, the material seems to have any real intelligence behind it, seeming a little like a conversation you would

cont>>

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cont>> have down at the pub with your alcoholic best friend, only funnier. This is by no means intended to belittle the show, though: it's intended for the masses, laughter is guaranteed, and his moving story leaves me thinking that he has a heart after all. Udderbelly's Pasture, 4 - 30 Aug, times vary, £10.00 - £17.50, fpp 78. [tv]

tw rating 4/5

### The Beta Males' Picnic Presents

Beta Males' Picnic

Here is the cream: a free fringe show that is absolutely hilarious and charming. And free. Free! 'The Beta Males' Picnic Presents' comprised of a selection of manic, supremely silly sketches smacking of lashings of Blackadder/Spike Milligan lunacy. Gleefully mad lines flew thick and fast: "Have you ever seen a naked man do star jumps in zero gravity? They call me the nightmare angel!", plus the group exhibited ease and charisma on stage. The show also featured a special guest appearance by Jay Foreman, whose witty songs on myriad topics from 'The Sooty Show' to the joys of stealing food (he's a veritable gastronomic kleptomaniac!) almost threatened to upstage this already sterling show. Oh-so-heartily recommended.

Laughing Horse @ City Café, 15 - 29 Aug, 12.00pm (1.00pm) free, fpp 34. [kc]

tw rating 5/5

### Rogues Handbook: Bumper Book Of Horror - Free

Rogues Handbook

Rogues Handbook return to this year's Fringe armed with the interesting concept of horror sketch comedy. Combining ridiculous costumes with well grafted story lines, the group creates an enjoyable hour's worth of entertainment which, although not particularly scary, is highly likely to make you chuckle. Tackling most of the notable horror personalities, they manage deft portrayals of characters such as an over emotional Dracula and a disabled poltergeist that requires the aid of home help in the form of 'Nigel'. Although this is far from perfect, it is definitely one of the better free shows available at the festival, and worth giving the time for.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 7 - 22 Aug, 5.00pm (6.00pm), free, fpp 116. [cq]

tw rating 3/5

## DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE

### Harlekin

Derevo

A million expertly crafted images are stitched together seamlessly in this sublime composition of captivating physical poetry. Behind the heavy curtain of the puppeteer's stage, a heart-rending tale of unrequited love, cruelty and suffering unfolds. Derevo transcend this dark matter to reveal pools of shimmering light in the tenacity of the human soul, matching sinister dances of death with exquisite physical manifestations of the beating heart. Each moment is pregnant with possibility, mesmerising its audience who are united in sighing and smiling. Derevo's unique concoction of theatrical influences, which include mime, butoh and commedia dell'arte, is at once disturbing and uplifting, playful and poignant. 'Harlekin' dances the dotted line between heaven and hell, our dearest hopes and deepest fears.

Pleasance Courtyard, 4 - 30 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 1.00pm, fpp 148. [hm]

tw rating 4/5

## EVENTS

### CineFringe Film Festival 2010

After the Edinburgh International Film Festival moved its programme back to June, a gap formed in the market for film screenings during the August festival. CineFringe have tried, with considerable success it seems, to fill that space with this programme of shorts, screened at Symposium Hall. The films - I saw Programme A - varied in subject, from quirky animation to experimental thriller, and in quality too, but that was part of the fun and excitement of the show. Perhaps in future this series will, like the Fringe Festival itself, showcase a huge amount of both the good and bad in up-and-coming artists. So, while the quality of the films varies, go to support a wonderful new addition to the Fringe programme.

thespace @ Symposium Hall, 11 - 28 Aug (not 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24), times vary, £4.50 - £5.50, fpp 156. [ef]

tw rating 3/5

## MUSICALS AND OPERA

### Gutted. A Revenger's Musical

Assembly & Marshall Cordell by Arrangement With Ward & White

Marketed as 'the comedian's musical', there is one quite unfortunate problem with Danielle Ward and Martin White's composition: it isn't very funny. Centred around the aptly named Sorrow, who marries her parents' murderer and subsequently embarks on a slapstick killing spree for revenge, this new musical is jam-packed with silliness, but not enough jokes, severed limbs or deaths to keep you entertained. A star turn from The Penny Dreadfuls - as Sorrow's evil but loveable assistants - just about manages to pep up a distinctly average show full of cheap gags and over-wrought jokes, with a chainsaw, killer M&M's and a yapping dog thrown in. Yet whilst the vocals and dancing are strong, they're utterly forgettable - a disappointment for a £15 ticket.

Assembly @ George Street, 6 - 29 Aug, 11.15pm (12.40am), £5.00 - £15.00, fpp 257. [gjs]

tw rating 2/5

## MUSIC

### Pick-Pluck-Twang

Tadeusz Wyzgowski

Taj Wyzgowski, accompanied by a double bass and a couple of acoustic guitars, provided an eclectic mix of jazz, blues and folk that was perfect for an easy Sunday evening's listening. His set, consisting of a selection of his own material as well as renditions of classics from Jimi Hendrix to the Bee Gees, proved his indisputable talent as a guitarist. Effortlessly switching from the noticeable dexterity required for 'The Bishop' to his closing blues played on electric guitar with a slide, he never failed to impress his audience. With the added extra of a more than satisfactory singing voice this made for a worthwhile gig that should be seen.

Acoustic Music Centre @ St Brides, 15, 22 Aug, times vary, £6.00, fpp 198. [aa]

tw rating 4/5

### Scottish Folk Roots and Offshoots

David Ferrard

The informal intimacy of The Royal Oak presents the perfect setting for this one-man folk show. Shaping an hour long performance around the musical consequences of his heritage, David Ferrard combines Scottish folk music with traditional song from the Appalachian region of North America. The

transatlantic musical tale that unfolds is engaging and intimate, to say the least.

Although the poignant ballads that open the show seem to stifle Ferrard's initial requests for audience participation, hesitance is quickly and dutifully overcome as the tempo increases and an affable on stage presence shines through. With a healthy dose of history accompanying each and every song, 'Scottish Folk Roots and Offshoots' offers an intelligent, stripped-back and note perfect journey. Soothing and beguiling - go see.

The Royal Oak, 7 - 30 Aug, 6.30pm (7.30pm), £5.00 - £7.00, fpp 201. [kr]

tw rating 4/5

## THEATRE

### A Brief History of Scotland - We Done Loads!

DBS Productions

Who knew everything worth inventing in the world originated from Scotland...? Well, according to this lot, those things include the television, cubism and even the world famous arse satchel, so if you're looking for a completely accurate portrayal of Scottish history you may have come to the wrong place. I now know that we can blame Adam and Eve for the awful weather the festival gets every August, and that 'Colombo' was to blame for the downfall of Scottish morality. The six actors jump neatly from sketches about Braveheart, Andy Murray and Mary Queen of Scots through to the modern day 'Ned'. This excellent re-working of Scottish history is cleverly written, well acted and ferociously entertaining and I know now for sure, Scotland truly is brilliant.

Sweet Grassmarket, 5 - 29 August, 6.25pm (7.15pm), £7.50 - £9.50, fpp 234. [sr]

tw rating 4/5

### Busting Out

Meet Condaleeza, Hilary, Starsky and Hutch: the four stars of this breasty showcase. Their bearers, Emma and Bev, lead us in an over-stretched hour of booby capers in a show something akin to an imitation of 'Puppetry of the Penis' meets the 'Sheila's Wheels' ads. The act is comprised largely of breast contortions (including the booby incarnations of Abba) as well as stand up titbits relating to the relevant topic and some songs - such as 'Get on board the titty train' - material which sometimes amuses, but often disgusts the audience. Although funny in concept, the puns felt tired, and the pure physical comedy crass. Instead of 'busting out', I left with my arms crossed firmly over my embarrassed chest.

Assembly @ George Street, 5 - 29 Aug (not 16), 6.50pm (8.00pm), £12.00 - £16.00, fpp 235. [lvs]

tw rating 2/5

**The Crying Cherry** Hartshorn-Hook Productions in Association With South Hill Park

Physical and vocal genius matched with masterful comedy timing and highly developed, perfectly polished cultural satire. Delivered in outrageous yet authentic Asian gibberish that never fails to elicit a roar from the audience, the incredibly talented Ian Bok and Maarten Hejimes make high art of slapstick as they cleverly parody Western stereotypes of Geisha, Samurai, beasts and birds with their high octave storytelling style, which draws on commedia dell'arte, martial arts, clowning and mime. The agile, tracksuit clad prodigies transform into characters, from the sublime to the ridiculous, with astounding physicality and elegance, provoking eruptions of laughter at every turn. Like nothing you will have seen before; words cannot do justice to these Gods of physical comedy.

C, 5 - 21 August, 11.30pm (12.35pm), £6.50 - £9.50, fpp 240. [hm]

tw rating 4/5

### Honest

Royal & Derngate, Northampton

Stepping into a cosy corner of Milnes Bar, Dave shuffles in, sits down and sizes us up. This is like sitting next to a stranger who insists on telling you his life story and won't let you get a word in edgeways; Dave is addicted to telling the truth and delivers a curious monologue on the trouble it causes. Highlighting the sheer volume of lies we tell ourselves and others so frequently, Trystan Gravelle performs with sincerity, precision, good timing and incisively dark humour. Minimalistic yet compelling, this play doesn't need any gimmicks other than the site-specific pub setting; the script is good enough on its own to suck you in for the full forty five minutes. Grab a pint and enjoy.

Assembly @ George Street, 4 - 30 Aug (not 16, 23), times vary, 6.30pm (7.15pm), £6.00 - £8.00, fpp 259. [gjs]

tw rating 4/5

### Icarus' Mother & Red Cross

Tufts University's Pen Paint and Pretzels

Sam Shepard's plays are not known for being easy and accessible, and those featured in this double bill are no exception. This vivacious company makes a good job of 'Icarus' Mother', in which a group of somewhat strange, morbid young people wait to watch a firework display and end up watching something more gruesome instead. The group fare less well with 'Red Cross', which would have benefited from older actors or a more convincing depiction of age. There is no doubting the cast's energy, but the performances need more polish and greater subtlety to do justice to the heavy subtext of Shepard's work. However, while the lengthy monologues show up these weaknesses, the cast show their strength in some nice moments of ensemble acting.

Spotlites@The Merchant's Hall, 15 - 30 Aug, 9.00pm (10.15pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp 260. [jm]

tw rating 3/5

### Rapconteur

Baba Brinkman/PBH's Free Fringe

Baba Brinkman is some kind of lyrical wizard, retelling the ancient stories of the world through his spell-binding rhymes. As he breathed 'Gilgamesh' into the microphone, it sounded like an incantation with the power to transport us back to a time of kings and conquerors, and the poets who immortalised them. 'The Canterbury Tales', 'Beowulf' and the Finnish 'Kalevala' are similarly re-imagined and set to beautiful, original music. Brinkman is witty and well-read, and his passion for his subject matter is infectious; I left simultaneously wanting to learn Sumerian and find out about 80s rapper Slick Rick. This is storytelling at its best, epic in the true sense of the word. His show feels like a gift - with impressive rapping.

Cabaret Voltaire, 7 - 28 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 8.45pm (9.35pm), free, fpp 282. [gg] tw rating 5/5

### Reykjavik

Shams/Escalator East to Edinburgh/Time Won't Wait

'Reykjavik' is a journey through a man's memories of a place, a time and a relationship. The audience is dressed in goggles and white overalls (don't wear a skirt or anything warmer than a t-shirt) and taken into a clinical white space where Y, the protagonist, sifts through his memories of his affair with an Icelandic woman. Much use is made of sound and projection and the audience is awkwardly shifted around the room to allow moments of physical theatre and interaction to unfold. It's clever and often lovely to look at, but we never get to know Y well enough to care deeply about his existential angst; the piece remains less than the sum of its parts.

The Bongo Club, 12 - 29 Aug (not 16), times vary, £8.00 - £10.00, fpp 283. [jm]

tw rating 3/5

### That Moment

Reclaim Productions Ltd/SPL

Everyone knows it's hard to make it in the theatre; that's why there're so many shows about struggling actors. Writer Dougie Blaxland has built this one around a solid handful of industry anecdotes, but while the observations ring true, they unfortunately aren't original. Solo performer Jenny Harrold attacks the sketchy script, intent on getting every laugh she can. Ultimately she struggles to handle the dozen or so characters, substituting an atlas of obvious regional accents for any depth and ending up hopping around the space, dropping and swapping personalities at high speed as the threadbare plot-lines come together. Lacking real insight or a greater theme, this is likely only to appeal to unsuccessful thespians who can't afford the ticket price.

Underbelly, 5 - 29, 12.50pm (1.50pm), £6.00 - £10.00, fpp 295. [df]

tw rating 2/5

### Tony Tanner's Charlatan

SST Productions

Tony Tanner, back in the UK after a long period acting in America, returns with this one-man show chronicling the life of Sergei Diaghilev, the Russian impresario who founded the 'Ballet Russes'. Exploring his relationships with such greats of early 20th Century culture as Stravinsky and Cocteau as well as his famous love affair with the dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, Tanner paints Diaghilev as a fascinating character, a man who witnessed the early artistic developments of the modern age. However, even though Tanner is engaging enough, there's little bite to his story, and on occasion the script is particularly wandering and dull. The middle section of the performance seems to ramble too, and unfortunately Tanner doesn't do nearly enough to retain our attention.

Assembly @ Assembly Hall, 4 - 30 Aug, 5.30pm (6.30pm), £9.00 - £12.00, fpp 297. [ef]

tw rating 2/5

### W;t

First Person Productions

A play about a professor of 17th century literature who is dying of cancer might seem like a potentially dry subject for a play, but W;t is anything but. Often bleak and sometimes poignant, this production resists the temptation to make it sentimental. The central performance is very strong and it is impressive to see a vibrant young actress bringing such depth and intelligence to her portrayal of a middle-aged academic, not to mention her skilful handling of Donne's poetry, the character's specialist subject. She is ably supported by the rest of the cast, although their unfamiliarity with some props is clear and they are obviously struggling to manoeuvre around cluttered areas of the stage.

C aquila, 15 - 30 Aug, 4.50pm (6.00pm), £7.50 - £9.50, fpp 305. [jm]

tw rating 4/5

## THREEWEEKS IN EDINBURGH

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TW RATINGS EXPLAINED: 1/5 BAD | 2/5 MEDIOCRE | 3/5 GOOD | 4/5 VERY GOOD | 5/5 BRILLIANT