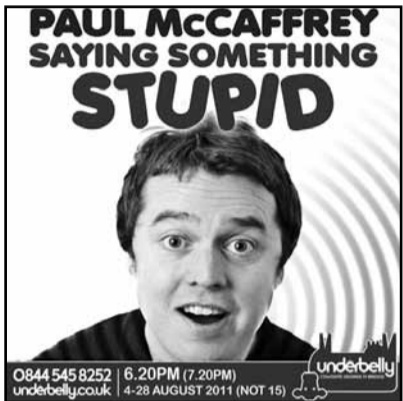


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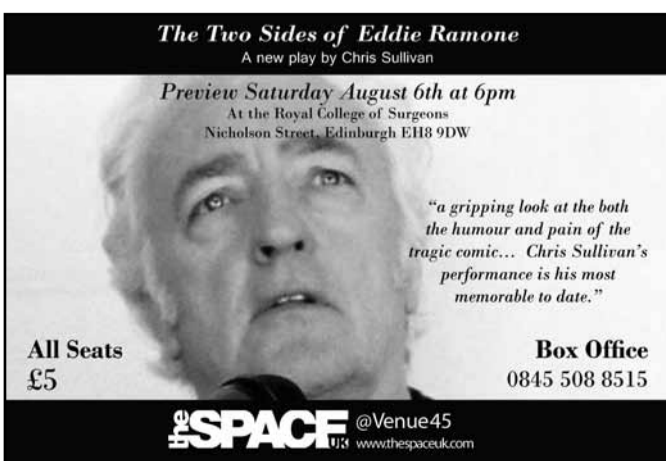
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CHILDREN'S SHOWS

The Amazing Bubble Show

The Amazing Bubble Man (USA)
"Bubble-ology" - finally we can put a name to the craze! This show celebrates the great but simple joy of bubbles and the ease with which they charm both young and old, producing gasps of glee from all. Bubbles bounce within bubbles, rotating and spinning with all the colours of the rainbow; children are called upon to show their skills at slapping, kissing and even eating the bubbles. The competition that ensues means that everyone's clamouring for their turn on stage, including the parents! There is even an attempt at showing the science side, and although it's probably lost on younger spectators, perhaps some budding scientist has been inspired. By the end, all participants are slightly soapy - and evidently delighted - with some good, clean fun!

C too, 4 - 29 Aug (not 15), times vary, £5.50 - £9.50, fpp18. tw rating 4/5 [pr]

King Arthur

Aireborne Theatre
Hilarious, charming and superbly enacted, this performance of 'King Arthur' is the definition of family fun. Merlin, the witty narrator, relates the amusing adventures of the noble Arthur and his comical Knights of the Round Table. Interaction with the audience means children are given the chance to become an integrated part of the legend. Furthermore, the self-reflexive nature of the show, featuring a performance within a performance, means things like role and costume switching, and other awkward bits typical of a small cast play, are cleverly used for comic effect. And although the music could do with more variety, it is humorously objected to by the characters themselves, making it a trivial factor which certainly does not hamper the show.

C eca, 3 - 29 Aug, 12.50pm (1.50pm), £4.50 - £8.50, fpp24. tw rating 4/5 [ma]

COMEDY

Aaaand Now For Something Completely Improvised!

Racing Minds/Laughing Horse Free Festival
'ANFSCI!' can be seen as nothing more than an act whose title is stolen from 'Monty Python'. Yet, at times during their one-hour show, these four men genuinely reach the heights of the early Python sketches while still retaining their family-friendly style. With only four men to play several different characters, no real set, and the fact that they're completely reliant on the audience's ideas for content, the limitations of their act seem insurmountable. Yet, it is here that this small troupe really shines, when things seem to be going wrong, they're at their finest. Currently their show is free; I would attend soon as I can't see it staying so for long.

Laughing Horse @ Meadow Bar, 4 - 28 Aug, 12:15pm (1.15pm), free, fpp32. tw rating 4/5 [cd]

Aaaaaaaargh! It's The Monster Stand Up Show

Monster Comedy
It is said that less is more, and giving seven comics seven minutes to showcase some of their best material whilst plugging their own shows is one of the best ways to share the hidden gems of the Festival with many who would otherwise have been oblivious for the rest of the month. Better still is that the selected comics (a different line-up every night) explore a different range of topics and techniques, from religion on Facebook, through offering cookies to the homeless, to the high school anecdotes of a proper redhead. Not everyone met the same comic standard but the intimate audience definitely wasn't short on laughter. Highlights included Felicity Russell and James Redmond (yes, that bloke off telly).

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde, 4 - 28 Aug, 8.15pm (9.15pm), free, fpp32. tw rating 3/5 [ng]

A Brief History Of Time

Michelangelo's Heroes/Free Festival
Michelangelo's Heroes may have won the BBC New Talent Award, but they admittedly haven't done much since. Their debut show at the Fringe proves, however, that they do have much to offer. Structured in the form of a science lecture, 'A Brief History Of Time' showcases the act's penchant for goofy humour and comical sketches which may or may not bear any relation to the main theme of the show. This can be a little distracting at times, particularly when they shove a picture of a woman being gangbanged in your face, using the old "Oh, how did that get in there?" line. Nevertheless, the show is an early sign of bigger (and much better) things to come.

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde, 4 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 3.05pm (4.05pm), free, fpp52. tw rating 3/5 [ng]

Anil Desai...

No stranger to the Fringe, Anil Desai returns for his third solo show with a light hearted performance that has something for all. Employing a mix of comedy, impressions and songs, Desai presents each of his characters in the form of special guests appearing on the show. Moving from the likes of Rajesh the Bollywood lounge singer to Candice the fluffer girl, he uses each character to explore different styles of comedy, adding variety to the performance and appealing to different tastes. The only thing letting him down are his costume changes, which slow the pace and thus the fluidity of the show; Desai remains a worthwhile watch, however, for anyone keen on comedy that includes everything from witty jokes to frivolous cabaret.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 18 Aug (not 9), 7.45pm (8.45pm), £9.00 - £12.00, fpp39. tw rating 3/5 [aa]

Attention Deficit Let's Go Ride Bikes! - Free

Ben Van der Velde/Matt Richardson/Free Festival
With a name like 'Attention Deficit Let's Go Ride Bikes!', I went in expecting a high energy hour. Instead, the stand-up felt disjointed and at times lacked momentum. Ben Van der Velde had the first half hour



SNAP OF THE DAY: It's the high flying Fringe - Britta Herrmann and Susanne Beschorner appear in 'Peter Pan - Learn How To Fly' at the Out Of The Blue Drill Hall. Photo: Paul Collins

of the show, and told some great jokes that went down very well, but others that missed the target completely. Matt Richardson, meanwhile, brought a bit more energy and some very funny moments to the second half. Although there were a number of big laughs during the hour, you get the feeling that the guys could do with a much later time slot and a slightly longer set. However, they're both talented comedians, and with some more confidence, they could offer a great hour of comedy.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 - 28 Aug (not 17), 1.15pm (2.15pm), free, fpp41. tw rating 3/5 [lam]

Bloke

FE Productions / Laughing Horse Free Festival
Billing himself as an 18+ throwback to the off-colour comedians of the '70s, Reuben Lee's stand-up is disappointingly mild. Nothing saps the power from an offensive joke worse than apologising for it: whether it gets a laugh or not, a comedian should stand by their material. Lee also suffers

from an undeveloped style, starting stories with no punch-line, throwing out one-liners without warning, and generally stop-starting throughout the set. Similarly, his performance had no consistent thread or to provide a focus for the show; there were no call backs to jokes, or seeding of new ones. Some comedians do this deliberately, for Lee it seemed to be more an accident than a choice.

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde, 4 - 12 Aug, 3.15pm (4.15pm), free, fpp50. tw rating 2/5 [jfb]

Bruce Fummey - My Afro Celtic Angst

Bruce Fummey Free/Laughing Horse Free Festival
Name-calling, racial ignorance, and a side-parted afro - Bruce Fummey had a tough childhood as a mixed race kid in Perthshire, but boy, has he turned it into a fantastic show. A natural storyteller, Fummey recounts tales of meeting his biological father in Africa, being raised by two white

cont>>



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cont>> Scottish aunts and trying to get by as the only mixed race child in his town. Fummey is such an amiable character that you can't help but get swept up by his stories, and the fact that he's obviously enjoying the show so much is incredibly infectious and the audience is on his side from the start. His material may not set the world alight, but it's a joyous way to spend an hour.

Laughing Horse @ The Beehive Inn, 4 - 28 Aug (not 15, 22), 9.30pm (10.30pm), free, fpp53. tw rating 4/5 [lam]

Christmas For Two: Friends With You

Christmas For Two

Sarah Campbell and Amy Hoggart came together to write for a BBC Three show entitled 'Laughter Shock' – a fact that becomes obvious as soon as the lights go up: the ideas involved aren't bad, but they aren't really as shocking as they think they are. The writing is a little sloppy, and many sketches could have been cut short by several minutes, and while some are a success - the depiction of a gruesome 18-30's club is particularly good, with excellent characterisation and really stupid dancing - others simply don't work. The sight of a careers adviser detailing opportunities for a professional female rapist isn't offensive or shocking, just painfully flat. There's plenty of good-natured enthusiasm on stage; if only it were matched by less half-hearted material.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, 4 - 28 Aug (not 17), 4.55pm (5.55pm), £6.50, fpp58. tw rating 2/5 [kw]

Please Hold, You're Being Transferred To A UK Based Asian Representative

Sadia Azmat / Laughing Horse Free Festival

It's hard to be Asian, to be female, and to sell car insurance. Sadia Azmat's bite-sized show essentially spends 30 minutes telling us this, as well as touching on racism and dodgy hold music. Utterly faithful to her script, she starts off looking uncomfortable on the stage, but later becomes warm and welcoming, and is surprised when the tiny room fills with laughter. One-liners are well delivered, and we're shown part of the world which normally stays hidden – at times in possibly too much detail. The production occasionally lacks flow, but this is something which may improve as the festival continues. On the whole, it's not at all bad to be connected to this 'representative' – and there's no annoying hold music either.

Laughing Horse @ Finnegan's Wake, 4 - 27 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 12:40pm (1:10pm), free, fpp135. tw rating 3/5 [ja]

Down And Out Comedy With Mike Belgrave

Mike Belgrave

"Hobosexual" Belgrave was hyperactive and witty, performing a speedy yet rambling narrative of his life as an Irish-North Indian Primark Prince and Hagrid lookalike. At times the hairy Londoner lost his thread completely, checking his trusty iPhone for prompts, he eventually finished the set early as he forgot his own material. However, his self-effacing charm seemed to compensate for this and the audience forgave him. The show was a mixture of stand-up and music and I was "lucky" enough to have a song performed especially to me on the ukulele; however, as it was about stalking women I felt less honoured than fearful. Nonetheless, Belgrave made a likeable and entertaining comedian, if a little pervy.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 - 29 Aug (not 22), 4.00pm (5.00pm) free, fpp68. tw rating 3/5 [dg]

Down To The Bone

Liam Mullone

Liam Mullone bumbles across the stage, drink in hand, a little like a strange Uncle at a family gathering; it's oddly pleasant and certainly amusing. There is an obvious prowess to the way his comedy is written and some of his analogies are genius. He takes umbrage to being described as pedestrian, so I will avoid that word, but he is terribly safe with his jokes. I very nearly panicked when he began blathering about his newly acquired children, something many comedians seem to engage in when they become parents and thus discover kids exist for the first time. To my relief, this was not dwelt on for long. He has the right raw ingredients for a very good show.

Laughing Horse @ The Three Sisters, 4 – 28 Aug (not 15, 16, 17), 5.15pm (6.15pm), free, fpp68. tw rating 4/5 [sm]

Elis James: Do You Remember The First Time?

Phil McIntyre Entertainments

Elis James ruffles his hair as he talks, bouncing about the stage and delivering his punchlines with an irresistibly roguish grin. He looks pleased with himself, like a mate down the pub who has just told a good anecdote. His stories about peeing in the local pool and his first kiss are ones we can all relate to, which is perhaps why we are all laughing. Although he deserves to be playing to much larger audiences it would be a shame to lose the cosy, confessional atmosphere that James creates. Trying to explain when I got home why I was still giggling maniacally to myself, I was only able to surrender, "You had to be there." And you do.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3-29 (not 18, 20), 8.15pm (9.15pm), £8.00 - £12.00, fpp71. tw rating 4/5 [rs]

Men Of War

Scratch

The title is misleading. There's no war, and it's actually three men and one woman; not the macho-fest I was dreading. 'Men Of War' is a bastion of comedic traditionalism, and the set is one of old-fashioned sketch formats set to modern themes – think the two Ronnies of the making jokes about paedophiles; the group make their contempt for modern "post-comedy" where the audience is "afraid not to laugh" very plain. All are splendid comic performers, able to switch character, accent and demeanour perfectly, and there are moments of biting satire and occasionally sublime absurdity, but mostly the tone is akin to the old Radio 4 style of comedy with brilliant entertainers doing average material. Which is fine, but not great.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 28 Aug (not 17), 11.00pm (12.00am), £7.50 - £10.00, fpp117. tw rating 3/5 [jh]

Movin' On Up! With Politically Erect - Free

Politically Erect

Any comedian, or indeed group of comedians that slate the Daily Mail readership are okay with me. These boys do just that in a brutally honest comment on British attitudes and culture: their satirical game show sketch about asylum seekers is nothing short of hilarious, and the rest of the audience seem to think so too. There is a pleasant grubbiness to Politically Erect. They work well as a threesome - both aesthetically and comically - and the quirky, matching, all-white costumes place them somewhere between hospital porter and convict. You do get the impression, however, that they've made up the routine over a pint, as they lost the hilarity in one too many of their sketches. Worth a look, nonetheless.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 4 – 28 Aug, 3.45pm (4.45pm), free, fpp122. tw rating 3/5 [sm]

Mythbunking Unexpected Productions

Alan Shearer is a deity in Peru. Gary Barlow has bionic legs. These are just some of the surreal myths circulated by a society called 'Mythbunkers' who are now ostensibly on the lookout for new members. Through entertaining media such as video clips, live anecdotes from our two friendly neighbourhood mythbunkers and even a sing-along with the audience, we're educated on elements such as the history of myths and how to spread them. The jokes have a habit of being as makeshift as the props used but there's a warming charm from geeky character, John, which mostly makes up for it. Poking fun at myths and facts alike, 'Mythbunkers' doesn't take itself too seriously, and is all the more refreshing for it.

Underbelly, 5 - 28 Aug (not 16), 1:10pm (2:10pm), £7.50 - £10.00, fpp123. tw rating 3/5 [ljc]

Eric Mutch: Schizophrenie

Eric Mutch/Laughing Horse Free Festival

It's not easy to say what Eric Mutch's 'Schizophrenie' actually is; an experimental mix of comedy and theatre may be the best description. Unfortunately it's not any good. To watch the show is genuinely embarrassing for all concerned; losing his train of thought constantly, Mutch tries his best to keep things rolling by moving on to different material which then falls equally flat. The problem is that he has a certain endearing charm which is perhaps his only redeeming quality. By the time the end of his one hour show is approaching, you are genuinely urging him to get better and to pull something great out of his jester's hat... yet

it never comes. I hope Mutch gets better, but it seems unlikely.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 - 28 Aug, 12.00pm (1.00pm), free, fpp72. tw rating 2/5 [cd]

Pearse James Presents

Freesome Pearse James

Pearse James was funny; the others, not so much. Do not be deterred however, as this show promises to showcase fresh meat every night and if new comedy is what you're after this is one place to be. The newer comics did certainly provide some laughs but their nervous demeanour and tendency to continually look towards James for approval or time checks was distracting at best. James kept the evening moving along nicely and the atmosphere was warm despite the nipples-could-cut-glass cold of the venue. I was entertained by the improvised art competition that surprisingly went down well. Certainly something a little different, but do bring a coat, gloves and a thermos of tea unless you want to catch pneumonia.

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde, 4 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 7.00pm - 8.00pm, free, fpp132. 3/5 [sm]

MUSICALS

If Walls Could Talk

Tip Of The Tongue Theatre Company

Damp and dreary, the Edinburgh weather wasn't putting many smiles on Festival-goers' faces. So Tip Of The Tongue's production of 'If Walls Could Talk' is just the happiness-boost to get people grinning. This bunch of student storytellers are far from damp and anything but dreary, and their short tales are heart-warming and personal without being overly gushy, quite a feat considering the range of issues covered, from ketchup stains on white trousers to watching a family member endure Parkinson's Disease. Don't expect the most visually astounding or hard-hitting of performances from this show, but do expect something completely charming. Definitely make the most of this sunny little Festival mini-gem.

C Aquila, 4 - 29 Aug, 12.15pm (1.15pm), £6.50 - £9.50, fpp270. tw rating 4/5 [ck]

THEATRE

Belt Up's The Boy James

Relationships and adulthood rarely simplify as they develop, and it can often be our fragile memories which stand firmer at the root of our emotions. As the audience is ushered and welcomed into a cushioned drawing-room, Jethro Compton embodies a young J.M. Barrie tracking his hushed Neverland adventures from quests with pirates to epic tales of strength and leadership. Playful innocence sets out to enchant before clashing hard against the fearsome processes of sex, loss and anguish as we witness the brutal purging of our protagonist's purity. Though Compton pulls down social barriers with childhood games, pockets of awkwardness do hinder the show's fluidity, but soon melt into the winsomeness and magnetism of this quietly devastating piece.

C Soco, 3 – 29 Aug, 10:50pm (11:50pm), £8.50 - £12.50, fpp241. tw rating 4/5 [ajj]

Counting Syllables Ionian Productions

Far too many syllables to count, but little of substance is ever said as two male lecturers trade an arts student back and forth like a tray of hors d'oeuvres. Kudos goes to Orowa Sikder for a dynamic burst of energy, but he's overshadowed by lead actress Julia Hartley who, while fetching, relies on dipping her head and smiling coyly. At times, it is hard to tell if the actors were staring earnestly at each other because they were emoting or trying to remember their lines. Meanwhile, the opening possibilities of pricking the balloons of pseudo-intellectualism dwindle to nothing; it's a sad day, too, when the most entertaining moment of a performance is an improvised response to a technical flaw.

Laughing Horse @ The Phoenix, 4 - 19 Aug, 5.25pm (6.25pm), free, fpp n/a. tw rating 2/5 [tsr]

Cul-de-Sac Comedians Theatre Company

Alan Bennett meets 'The League of Gentlemen' in this recognisable, yet in turns demented, tale of the lives of cul-de-sac curtain-twitchers. Whilst the plot becomes increasingly over-the-top when we discover all is not as it seems in the sac, there

are moments of precision and wit in the writing. One neighbour mentions that he can understand why his wife has left him for another living nearby, because they do, after all, "have a tennis court". The acting is as polished as the neighbour's best china, with the only cracks being in the aforementioned leap of credulity that the script takes, but not even this is enough to damage such an intelligent parody of suburban life.

Pleasance Courtyard, 5 – 28 Aug (not 15 & 22), 3:15pm (4:15pm), £8:00 - £10:00, fpp252. tw rating 4/5 [ljc]

The Magical Faraway Tree

Sleeping Trees Theatre

Enid Blyton will be turning in her grave. In this reworking of her stories, the innocence that makes them childhood favourites is given a disturbing, but even more imaginative, twist. Without props, scenery or sound effects, three young actors manage to draw the audience into a dark world of depraved pixies and evil Generals, as a young boy seeks magical medicine to aid his mother. While the comedic miming and absurd sketches woven into the plot may not be to everyone's taste, the actors enchant the audience in a manner reminiscent of Monty Python. Wonderful performances, particularly from Joshua George Smith, captivate those willing to go along with the cast, their diverse characters, and of course, their talking trees.

The Caves, 4-28 Aug (not 17), 1.00pm (2.00pm), £3.00 - £4.00, fpp280. tw rating 4/5 [kc]

Diamond Dick PaperTape Theatre

Rushed into a bustling 1920s clapperboard film, a director yells orders to her grey-faced cast from behind the audience in this comic homage to the late author F. Scott Fitzgerald. Mini-narratives bleed into one another over the course of an hour as the audience receives a glimpse into the roaring monochrome beauty of the American Jazz Age. It's pulled together by Diamond Dick, a sexy youngster who wishes to reinvent herself as a dangerous renegade, while the quickstep dialogue and fiery performance sequences dextrously explore social class structures and the hectic New York film industry. While perhaps requiring just a touch more depth, this witty piece deftly rekindles a glamorous and punchy age.

C Soco, 3 – 29 Aug, 7:30pm (8:20pm), £6.50 - £9.50, fpp255. tw rating 4/5 [ajj]

Killing Bill Gates Mechanical Tiger

Tim is a neurotic minor manager in Bill Gates' charity, scheming to murder him. The main gag is the absurd formality in which his clichéd team (Nice Guy, Chav Psycho, and Bitch) go about it. Unfortunately, the other jokes are just pop name-checks (Fallout 3, Arnie, Plan B, Cheryl Cole), or limp modern hyperbole (violence to kittens and 'sucking cream from a rectum'). The stage is cramped, so the dialogue relies on stage whispers, with characters who keep 'secretly' talking about someone three feet away. There is average choreography, some uninspiring monologue, and a lot of naff porn jokes. Overall, an uneven performance that manages to rush and plod its way to the end.

Laughing Horse @ The Three Sisters (Maggie's Chamber), 4-8, 10-14, 17-21, 24-28 Aug, 4.00pm, free, fpp273. tw rating: 2/5 [gj]

Masses Man

Theandric Taetro Nonviolento (Italy)

Performing political theory in your non-native tongue is always going to be difficult but whilst the subtleties of the show's arguments are lost beneath the cast's accents, their physicality ensures that their message is clear. Although the physical direction of the abstract scenes is a touch school-drama-club ("low and spiky!"), the actual characters are compelling and immediate. Particularly impressive are the violently seductive Masses along with the physically and morally corrupt bankers. The script is overly complex, especially when performed by non-native speakers, and the tone is a touch self-righteous, but all is forgotten when you feel the pull of Masses' hissed entreaties to "holy vi-o-lence". A brave, flawed attempt at a difficult task.

C Aquila, 4 – 16 Aug, 12.00pm (12.50pm), £6.50 - £9.50, fpp279. tw rating 3/5 [ab]

The Spectacular Tales Of Grinburrell

Southampton University Students' Union Theatre Group

Entering the world of Grinburrell and his travelling troupe of storytellers is an

engaging, charmingly ramshackle process. This show is superbly convincing, every story original and exciting, with the tale of a magical key managing to build a heart-slowng tension into a genuinely frightening point of climax. This is only beaten by the fantastical mystery of the next story, a cautionary tale about vanity wherein a young woman dances with her captured reflection in a sequence so hypnotically balletic. The only criticism is that a romantic subplot falls slightly flat, with characters curiously underdeveloped even by the end, but this is a play that children and adults both will find unfailingly enchanting nonetheless.

C too, 4 - 20 Aug, 2.05pm (3.05pm), £6.50 - £8.50, fpp299. tw rating 4/5 [sj]

Mary Blandy's Gallows Tree

Lita Doolan

Sitting with someone minutes from the noose isn't everybody's idea of post-breakfast entertainment; however, this one woman show is convincing and thought-provoking. Fragmented and confusing at times, Doolan movingly portrays a woman suffering from breakdown after a year of solitude as she faces hanging for a crime she was tricked into committing. Don't believe it to be simply an issue of innocence: this is a snapshot of death row in 1752 England which, with talks of capital punishment being voted for debate by the Houses of Parliament this week, certainly bears significance in 2011. "This is a hell!" cries Doolan desperately, looking around her cell. Guilty or not, the audience is left wondering: is imprisonment punishment enough?

Apex City Hotel, 4 - 21 Aug, 11:00am, £5.00 - £7.00, fpp279. tw rating 3/5 [dg]

Zanzibar Cats by Heathcote Williams

Roy Hutchins

An afternoon of performance poetry written by an anarchic old hippy won't be everyone's scene, but Williams' sly, conversational style has a broader appeal than you might think. Giving the reading is Roy Hutchins. Assured and playful, he comes across like a game show host quietly undergoing a mind expanding drug trip, dropping in and out of character, impersonating Einstein and Johnny Rotten, and evidently loving every word of the poems. These are a mix of silly observations and socialist polemics, surreal rambles in favour of bicycles and against state sponsored murder, gags about Darwin's nose followed by commentaries on mortality. It's certainly not everyone's idea of poetry, but there's enough energy and inspiration here to make it entertaining.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 29 Aug (not 8, 15), 3.00pm (4.00pm) £10.00 - £12.00, fpp315. tw rating 3/5 [df]

Rachael's Cafe

Little Fly Theatre

There's a precious gem buried at the Jekyll and Hyde pub: 'Rachael's Cafe'. A charming and slightly sad monologue delivered by the titular Rachael, a transgender cafe owner from Indiana. The play concerns itself with questions of gender and identity and offers a sensitive, and often insightful explorations of the transgender experience. The stage is somewhat at odds with the subject matter, and initially suspension of disbelief is hindered by the incongruity of an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus looming over an Indiana cafe – although this does allow for a neat visual metaphor later. Occasionally the play drifts into heavy-handed soapbox territory, but overall, this is a gemstone well worth digging for.

Jekyll & Hyde, 4 - 28 Aug, 2.00pm (2.50pm), free, fpp n/a. tw rating 4/5 [jc]



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