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Jason John Whitehead
letters from mindy

"Jason John Whitehead should be in charge of this country. His ideas on compulsory drug-testing and reclaiming the world from 'the bastard children' are pretty much a direct route to a better life for everyone" - *Canuck* (the review)

"A genuine gift for saying the most outrageous things in the most disarmingly charming fashion" - *Joe Coleman* (the review)

★★★★★
The Scotsman
★★★★★
Edinburgh Evening News

0844 545 8252 | 22.25PM (23.25PM)
underbelly.co.uk | 3-28 August 2011 (not 16) | dairy room

PAUL McCAFFREY
SAYING SOMETHING STUPID

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The Melody Blog
a modern musical

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 4 - 18 Aug (not 15), 12:00pm (1:00pm), free, fpp22. tw rating 2/5 [ck]

★★★★★
FRINGE REVIEW

CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Ian Billings: Dumbs Up!

IRB

At times very funny, at times groan-inducing ("that's why they're called groan-ups," quipped Billings as another moan rose from the adults in the audience) this show was a mixture of hit and miss. While the children enjoyed themselves, especially when asked to participate in choruses of poetic gems like 'There's a Shark in the Toilet', the convoluted story that served as the finale failed to delight. For me, the problem was more that, for a show claiming to "dumb up" rather than down, the content didn't deliver. Labelling all bullies Neanderthal "snot brains" for example, seemed a bit off. I might be asking a bit much from an hour-long children's show; nevertheless, I'd either change the title or the tune.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 29 Aug, 11.15am (12.15pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp22. tw rating 2/5 [ka]

Kreestan Sennakie's Magical Story Emporium

Quids In Theatre Company

I can't help but feel a little sorry for Kreestan. When I reviewed him, his performance was undeniably hampered by the fact that the audience consisted of one small boy, his mother and grandmother, and me. This led to one or two awkward moments when he looked for audience participation that was never very forthcoming, but he pushed valiantly on with his act, consisting of stories and magic tricks, aided by a giant orange dog called Milo. He was an engaging, likeable performer, but in all honesty, his illusions were pretty mediocre and depended entirely on props that can be bought from any magic shop. That said, the small boy seemed happy enough, and the show was very reasonably priced.

theSpaces on North Bridge, 5 - 13 Aug (not 7), 11.10am (11.55am), £3.00 - £5.00, fpp24. tw rating 2/5 [im]

The Hamwehads

Kat's Whiskers

It's difficult to describe in a few words this cute - if borderline nonsensical - show. Indeed, unlike many 'children's shows', it's certainly appropriate, and appeals to and holds the attention of the youngest audience members. It opened promisingly, with well written, plot driving rhyme; but when this subsided, it became much less engaging. As one character in the tale rightly noted, "this just gets weirder and weirder" - a statement that summarised the mild pantomime humour and eclectic range of characters which left parents utterly bemused. However, this well-meaning children's oddity has many of the right features for children's entertainment - a little shorter and some more of that wicked opening rhyme and this could be a more memorable show.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 4 - 18 Aug (not 15), 12:00pm (1:00pm), free, fpp22. tw rating 2/5 [ck]

COMEDY

Bad Bread: TV Times

Bad Bread

In the Fringe programme 'Bad Bread' describe themselves as "an award-winning sketch-troupe"; go watch them and then you'll understand why they might have deserved a gong. In this third year at the fringe, the boys are aiming to get on TV and so we are treated to their possible pitches for TV shows and advertisements. Utterly skewed and heavy on Pythonesque-puns, 'Bad Bread' will have you wishing that they do, in fact, have their own TV show. Ever wondered what it would be like if Carlsberg made concentration camps? Or if 'Reservoir Dogs' featured the 'Teletubbies' in starring roles? Now you can finally find out. I'm not sure if I'd kill for a ticket but I'd certainly maim for one.

Underbelly Cowgate, 4 - 28 Aug, 5.45pm (6.45pm), £8.50 - £10.50 fpp42. tw rating 5/5 [cd]

Chris McCausland - Big Time

Bound And Gagged Comedy By Arrangement With Beyond Compere

"I feel I should tell you that, yes, I am blind. Just in case some of you are sitting there thinking 'Christ, how drunk is this guy?'" So begins Chris McCausland's offering of clever and endearingly self-deprecating stand-up comedy. McCausland turns his wry, honest wit to topics such as the male experience of Topshop and middle-class groceries. His everyman humour can also be slightly surreal, as he paints us pictures with fantastical words and images. The effect is utterly charming and it's almost impossible to dislike him. The vague theme of the show is time and it's bookended by lovely anecdotes on the relativity of it. Indeed, this hour long show flew by, somewhat proving McCausland's point.

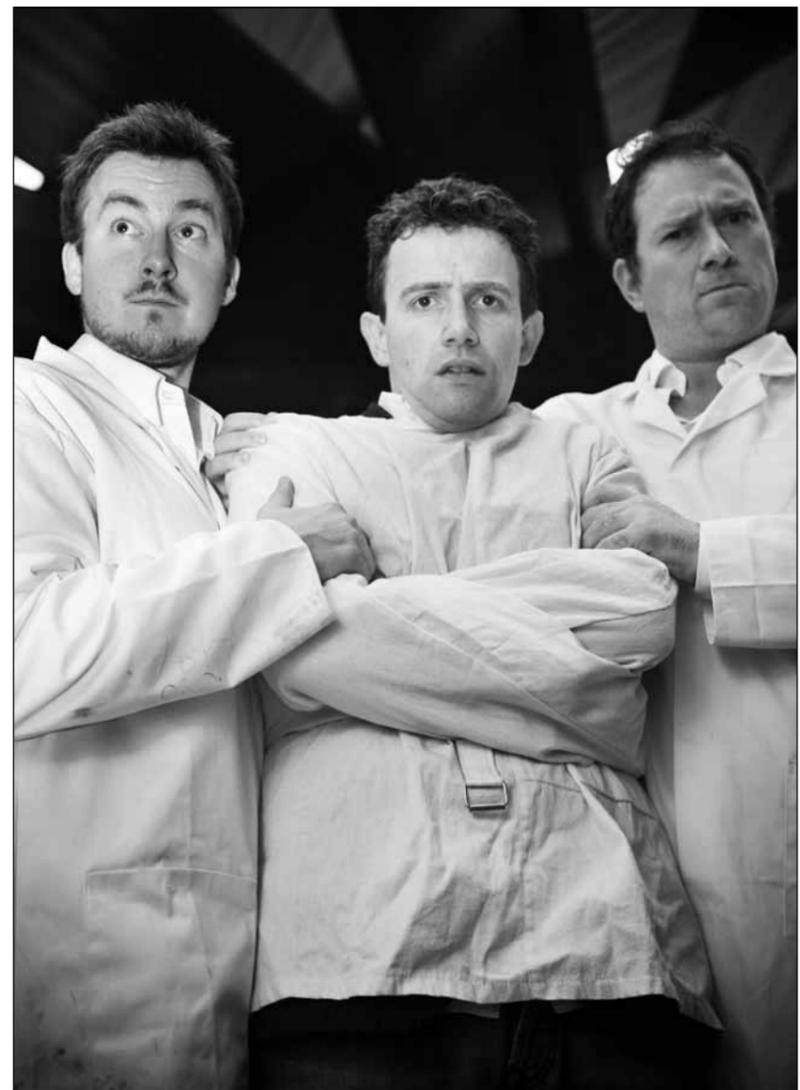
Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 28 Aug, (not 17), 7.00pm (8.00pm), £9.50 - £12.00, fpp57. tw rating 4/5 [ek]

Colm O'Regan: Dislike! A Facebook Guide To Crisis

Colm O'Regan

I really hope Colm O'Regan's tales of 1980s Photoshop and comedy court cases are true. We're taken through a story of his life and of Ireland through the medium of Facebook and a PowerPoint, which is brilliant when it works, but dire when it doesn't. The only thing holding O'Regan's show back is technical difficulties - that and the too-formal feel of a university seminar we all experience when faced with an overhead projector. But the newborn medium of Facebook for comedy is an effective one, and O'Regan uses it with skill and good timing. His short history of Ireland is particularly captivating, and his creation of comic characters makes us feel we really get to know the comedian and his world.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 29 Aug (not 16), 4:00pm (5:00pm), £7.50 - £10.00, fpp59. tw rating 3/5 [ja]



SNAP OF THE DAY: Who sent for the men in white coats? It's 'The Real Macguffins: Skitsophrenic' at the Pleasance Courtyard. Photo: Kat Gollock

The Dog-Eared Collective: You're Better Than This

Dog-Eared Collective

Flitting from one sketch to another with lightning speed and delivering abstract, off-the-wall but hilarious performances, this troupe leave you feeling like you've stepped out of a comedy whirlwind. A myriad of costumes, props, wigs and accents flit by as these four incredibly talented comedians create 'Snooker: The Musical', an Italian version of 'Top Gear', and a short film about street dance with help from the audience. The scope of their material is diverse and consistently funny, while the inventiveness of their many backgrounds and guises is to be marvelled at. The show is occasionally too fast-paced to quite keep up, but as you are speedily transported to the next scene, it's impossible to dwell on this minor grievance.

Underbelly Cowgate, 4 - 28 Aug (not 17), 4.00pm (5.00pm), £8.00 (£10.00), fpp67. tw rating 4/5 [ec]

4 Poofs And A Piano - Business As Usual

Bound And Gagged Comedy

Camper than a row of tents, the former house band of Jonathon Ross's BBC1 show are appearing at the Fringe again with songs and, of course, dancing. Their frequent tongue-in-cheek crudeness may not be to everyone's tastes, but if you're willing to look past this, then you're in for an hour of laughs and increasingly outrageous costume changes. Some of the songs lack originality, for example 'How To Write A Pop Song' is very much the kind of self-parodying fare that has been available on YouTube for years. However, it's not just for the songs' content that people should consider seeing the show - there's a tangible air of professionalism that makes this show a treat to watch.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 28 Aug (not 17), 6.00pm (7.00pm), £12.50 - £15.00, fpp77. tw rating 4/5 [lhc]

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Frimston And Rowett

Ever wanted to know every joke about birds ever told? Come to Frimston and Rowett, who gleefully take the audience through a whirl of tight sketches that never overstay their welcome. A marvellous opening sketch about birthday presents is reprised more than once with a new twist each time, and the way in which the sketches are unified through character repetition is clever and never feels forced. If the endings to some of their sketches occasionally lack bite, this is only shown up by the strength of their material, a sketch about the similarity of gangster nicknames—“No, not Johnny Thai, Johnny Tie!”—being particularly brilliant. I can’t imagine the sun going down on these two comedians any time soon.

Just The Tonic At The Store, 4 - 29 Aug (not 16), 7.00pm (8.00pm), £7.00 - £8.00, fpp80. tw rating 4/5 [sj]

The Segue Sisters In... Jailbirds

The Segue Sisters

The hour I spent with the Segue Sisters was like my first bite of haggis: extremely bizarre but oh, so tasty. There can be no doubt that their absurd humour isn’t for everyone, but the wit is lightning fast. In between the oddities, the sisters belt out near flawless three part harmonies, and if their jokes at times left me scratching my head, every single song put a smile on my face. Given the number of singing groups doing the same old gig at the Fringe, it’s refreshing to see these women daring to do something different. At times you’re not sure if they’re trying too hard to be funny or genuinely being bizarre, but once they stop teasing and start singing, you won’t care.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 28 Aug (not 17), 10.15pm (11.10pm), £5.00 - £10.00, fpp148. tw rating 4/5 [tw]

Laurence Clark: Health Hazard!

CKP in Association With Beyond Compare

Laurence Clark is on a mission: to preach the good work of NHS to the Land of the Free. Clark, who has cerebral palsy, uses a mixture of stand-up, pictures and video to document his attempts to find American health insurance, and to convince the US that it is possible to remain alive in another country. Along the way, he draws an arrow on the Queen’s ankle, attacks several people with a rubber tube and explains that Mussolini was not a socialist. The show is a bit of a slow burner but Clark’s natural wit soon has the whole room in stitches. A vital reminder that we should be grateful for the NHS, and a warning to man the barricades when privatisation comes a-calling.

Underbelly’s Pasture, 3 - 28 Aug (not 16), 6.40pm (7.35pm), £8.50 - £11.00, fpp108. tw rating 4/5 [kw]

Imran Yusuf – Bring The Thunder

Bound and Gagged Comedy by Arrangement With Comic Voice Management

Imran Yusuf talks with such unrelenting enthusiasm that it is inexorably infectious. His material, which covers everything from politics, multiculturalism and difficulties with women, shows a diversity that is supplemented by an undeniable passion for what he does. This is honest comedy delivered by a man who primarily seeks to entertain. Using questions of identity as a major focal point of the show, he delivers a powerful message of following one’s dreams and never giving up. But this is also accessible comedy – it is easy to listen to and therefore easy to like. It also, therefore, fails to offer anything truly different – a shame, as he has lots of potential.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 28 Aug, 7.00pm (8.00pm), £9.50 - £12.00, fpp92. tw rating 3/5 [caq]

The Inflatables – Free

The Inflatables

It is very difficult to pull off improvised comedy. You have to be exceptionally funny to be able to produce a compelling show on the spot, purely based on words the audience are shouting out at you. If you are not exceptionally funny, the resulting performance does not feel like a show at all. It feels like watching a Saturday morning drama group going through their warm-up games. ‘The Inflatables’ were very enthusiastic and clearly having great fun up there, talking in funny accents and saying silly things. Unfortunately the pleasure that they got from making up nonsense did not translate into an equally entertaining experience for the audience. This was a delightful show – but only for those in it.

Ryan’s Cellar Bar, 6 – 27 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 5.00pm (6.00pm), free, fpp92. tw rating 2/5 [j]

Sammy J And Randy: Ricketts

Lane Brett Vincent For Get Comedy

Take the surreal odd-couple comedy of ‘Spaced’, add the musical crime caper of ‘The Producers’, sprinkle with boisterous, profane gags, and imagine the whole thing cast by the Muppets – and you’re still not even close to the bizarre genius of ‘Ricketts Lane’. Sammy J is fast becoming a legend – a brilliantly self-assured performer whose every throwaway gesture is guaranteed to result in raucous rolling in the aisles. Randy, for that matter, is – well, the funniest and most foul-mouthed purple puppet at the Fringe. My only complaint is that ‘Ricketts Lane’ is nowhere near long enough – the scenes where the unlikely pair relax together, baking, inventing board games and singing songs, would keeping me laugh all night. A total triumph.

Underbelly’s Pasture, 3 – 29 Aug (not 15), 6.00pm (7.00pm), £11.50 - £14.00, fpp146. tw rating 5/5 [eb]

Mark Nelson – Guilty Pleasure

MZA

If imagining ‘The Scheme’ as ‘Friends’ with heroin makes you chuckle, as it does me, then Mark Nelson is the man for you. If you don’t know what ‘The Scheme’ is, then you can stop reading here and forget about going to see this show, as a decent working knowledge of contemporary Scottish culture is extremely helpful for Nelson’s show. In fact, a man in the front row from Los Angeles appeared to nod off – to Nelson’s great amusement. While observational humour of the Michael McIntyre ilk leaves many comedy connoisseurs cold, Nelson does it well and with edge. Like your funniest friend he tickles you into laughing at even the most obscene material. Still reading...? Go and see Mark Nelson.

Underbelly Cowgate, 4 – 28 Aug (not 17), 7.10pm (8.10pm), £9.00 - £11.00, fpp113. tw rating 4/5 [s]

Matthew Crosby: AdventureParty

Phil McIntyre Entertainments By Arrangement With Lisa Thomas Management

Not everyone’s expecting a riotous hour of comedy when PowerPoint is involved. Matthew Crosby has been a Fringe regular as part of the sketch show, ‘Pappy’s Fun Club’, and now is striking out on his own with ‘AdventureParty’ in which he celebrates his nerdy ways with hilarious visual aids such as childhood photos. Despite an admittedly slow and quite awkward start, Matthew Crosby’s self-deprecating comedy soon comes into its own with a full explanation of the fine distinction between being a geek and a nerd. Crosby interacts really easily with the audience, joyfully coaxing nerdy confessions out of them. The irrelevantly named ‘AdventureParty’ is definitely one to see, especially if you are nerdily inclined yourself.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 29 Aug (not 16), 4.45pm (5.45pm), £8.00 - £12.00, fpp115. tw rating 4/5 [km]

The Maybe Pile

Clark And Boothy / PBH’s Free Fringe

“We don’t just break down the fourth wall – we attack it and eat a bite of it,” declares ‘The Maybe Pile’s’ flyer. As you can imagine, I was pretty darn excited to go and have my fourth wall bitten and eaten. However, whilst this set of comic sketches is competent enough, it lacked any real pizzazz and I struggled to equate their intrepid tagline with the performance in front of me. The concept itself - a look at the comedian’s struggle to generate new and exciting material - had potential, but this trio struggled to pull it off. Although these boys’ sheer dedication implored me to like the show, it would be against my better judgment. For now, it’s a definite no-go.

Southsider, 6 – 27 Aug, 7.00pm (8.00pm), free, fpp116. tw rating 2/5 [ah]

Punching Mice Sameena Zehra

A master storyteller, Sameena Zehra has an easy style that gives life to her characters and paints vivid scenes for her captivated audience. Growing up in India, many of her stories tell of a life unfamiliar to her audience in Edinburgh: owning servants, terrorist kidnappings, and punching mice. Never losing the thread she moves confidently from tale to tale, expanding them with stories within stories and creating an engrossing chain of events. It is less stand-up than it is a witty lecture. Her light manner and skill as a storyteller make this show a delight to listen to, unlike so much of the unoriginal, unimaginative comedy I've seen elsewhere at the Fringe.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 5 – 28 Aug (not 13, 14), 1.05pm (2.00pm), free, fpp137. tw rating 4/5 [jfb]

Robin Ince’s Struggle For Existence

Robin Ince / PBH’s Free Fringe

The relentlessly intelligent Robin Ince is performing four different shows at the Fringe this year, but there was enough delightful material in this one alone for six or seven more. Ince, a fast-talking bibliophile, whose erudition was sorely wasted as the warm-up man for Vernon Kaye’s vapid television games hows, had such an overactive, magpie-like train of thought that he needed an extensive flipchart to remind himself to cover every last fascinating but hilarious subject. His manic enthusiasm was compelling and inspiring, and I left wishing that he were my wise lecturer or slightly eccentric uncle. A better title for this wonderful hour would be ‘Audience Members’ Struggle For Leg Room’ – so get there early!

Bufs Club (RAOB), 7 - 10, 14 - 17, 21 - 24 Aug, 9.30pm (10.30pm), free, fpp142. tw rating: 4/5 [jf]

Eric’s Tales Of The Sea – A Submariner’s Tale

Eric

People say we are merely the sum of our experiences. If this is so, then retired submariner Eric is streets ahead of many others. His ‘Tales Of The Sea’ is a series of autobiographical anecdotes delivered in a refreshing and heart-warming style, a genuinely charming presentation of character-building pranks, in which spearing gutted fish is just the beginning. Eric’s show has been a much-loved part of the Fringe since 2008 and I can see why: there is a lovely combination of shark tales, buckets and barbecues on nuclear submarines, and it’s perfect for anyone interested in glimpsing a dangerous world within our world that is far removed from their own. Eric is a gifted storyteller with a love of suspense, and good humour in buckets.

Just The Tonic At The Caves, 4-28 Aug (not 17 or 22), 3.10pm, £8.50 - £9.50 tw rating 4/5 [ep]

THEATRE

Two Johnnies Live Upstairs

Paroles Traverses / Institut Français d’Ecosse

In this promenade, one must imagine that the French Institute building is in fact the home of a celebrated French onion merchant from yesteryear and that one is being shown around by his great-grandson. So far, so reasonable. But when one encounters a rabbit hand-puppet torture-chamber, or the guide converses with Sean Connery via the TV, things become maddeningly perplexing. Ironically, given that French stereotypes are lampooned in the play, the work may be too quintessentially avant-garde for British tastes. However, it is a powerful, experimental piece and perhaps merits viewing purely for its weirdness. One of the strangest theatrical productions I’ve ever experienced, be prepared for lots of onions and factor in time for a stiff drink afterwards.

Insitlut français d’Ecosse, 5 - 26 Aug (not 13, 14, 20, 21), times vary, £8.00 - £10.00, fpp307. tw rating 3/5 [k]

Be My Baby by Amanda Whittington

Domina Productions

Much like a retrospective take on MTV’s ‘16 and Pregnant’, ‘Be My Baby by Amanda Whittington’ awakens the audience to the horrid trials and tribulations of teenage pregnancy in the 1960s, where these baby-bumped girls didn’t have the option of keeping their child. A beautifully written script and superb acting allows each character to brilliantly exemplify the many issues that come with having a bastard child in the 1960s. The only faults in this otherwise gleaming production are with the occasionally slow transitions and somewhat dragging scenes. ‘Be My Baby’ opens your eyes to the tragedy of society’s response to pregnancy, and, more widely, of simply being a woman in the mid-twentieth century.

Zoo Roxy, 5-13 Aug, 16.30pm (17.30pm), £6.00 - £8.00, fpp242. tw rating 3/5 [ew]

Be Prepared

Matthew Bellwood

A teller of private mythologies, Bellwood brings general significance to the insignificant moments of a life. A nice idea, sharing what he calls “dreams” to discover that others have the same dreams. Curiously, the show seems more

written than performed: usage of “do not” and “cannot” doesn’t suit the oral tradition. Despite this, Bellwood performs naturally and engagingly, never boring the audience with self-indulgence; reflections upon imagination, judgements and death involve us all. Thought-provoking but not terribly profound, polished but not exciting, suggestive but not evocative, this show is a wonderfully understated glimpse into the everyday in us all. But then, you can just get that from having a chat down the pub, can’t you?

Greenside, 5 - 27 Aug (not 14, 21), 4.05pm (5.05pm), £5.50 - £7.50, fpp242. tw rating 3/5 [mm]

Caruso And The Monkey House Trial

Prodigal Theatre Collaboration With Andrew G Marshall

This ambitious one-man show tells the scandalous true story of a 1906 court case, putting the audience in the role of jury. The show is clearly a labour of love but fails to delight due to a cumbersome script and the inflexibility of the sole performer. Whilst Ignacio Jarquin is charming as Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, his attempts to create dialogue by fitting between characters proves unconvincing and distracting. Equally, the operatic element is disappointing: Jarquin’s voice is not strong, often moving set whilst singing rather than committing to the music. Though Jarquin proves affable enough to win this jury’s support, this forgettable show sadly does not reap the potential of its novel conceit and captivating protagonist.

Hill Street Theatre, 5 – 29 Aug (not 10, 17, 24), 3.45pm (4.45pm), £7.50 - £11.00, fpp247. tw rating 1/5 [fww]

David Lee Nelson... Status Update

David Lee Nelson

A failed hybrid of theatre and stand-up comedy, ‘Status Update’ is a one-man monologue showing a man trying to find humour in a lonely existence after divorce. Nelson aims to steer between tragedy and farce, but fails to settle comfortably into either. The monologue is interspersed with long and tiresome home-videos in which he recounts the sour details of his marriage. There are moments of muted inventiveness, but Nelson’s stand-up is too staged to strike the intimate tone he aims for. The unexplained use of pre-recorded video adds nothing to the performance. It is a show that, in its close attention to David Lee Nelson himself, would benefit from an affable quirkiness that he entirely lacks.

Laughing Horse @ The Beehive Inn, 04-28 Aug (not 08, 15, 16, 22), 3.45pm (4:40pm), Free Non Ticketed, fpp 254. 1/w rating 2/5 [ij]

Donna Disco

Chicken Pox Fox and Live Theatre

Donna is an overweight eccentric fourteen-year-old who suffers from bullying at school and an uncaring mother at home. As part of a school project, she befriends Stewart, the tenant from the flat downstairs, and discovers she is not the only person who feels alone. This show is a tour de force of writing, acting and directing. Lee Mattinson’s beautifully crafted script creates a world of intricately drawn and believable characters. Paula Penman gives a virtuoso performance as Donna (and all the other characters), perfectly pitched between caricature and realism, effortlessly drawing the audience into this funny and heartbreaking story. It is rare to see a show of such delicate beauty. See it now before it starts selling out. Hill Street Theatre, 6 – 29 Aug (not 10,17,24), 5.15pm (6.15pm), £7.50 - £9.00, fpp 257. tw rating 5/5 [mc]

Eric Hermansson’s Soul

Lone Tree

Crushed under the weight of a small town and a strict puritan community, Eric Hermansson is told that the only way to save the soul is to starve it. Into his life devoid of pleasure and ignorant of culture comes Margaret, a woman from halfway across the continent who fills his world again and makes him wonder at the price of salvation. A beautiful production with a narrative voice shared by each actor, poetry passes from one mouth to another seamlessly. Lively dancing and heartbreaking music flavour the piece, and Erika DeBoer’s performance as city-girl Margaret is enchanting, showing perfectly a woman so startlingly witty she could make any man want to sell his soul. theSpaces on the Mile, 5 – 13 Aug (not 7), 5.10pm (5.55pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp260. tw rating 4/5 [ja]

Fetch

Two Dugs Theatre Company

‘Fetch’ transcends the clichés of what it means to be a Scottish man. Instead of revelling in the football violence and alcoholism seemingly often present in Scottish drama, communication and family are the centrepiece of this moving tale. It borders on the surreal as the two young Scottish actors play with puppets and deliver the works of Robbie Burns with a gusto that would have made the bard proud, yet there is no tartanry, just an honest attempt to make human connections. If you haven’t spent much time in Scotland, you’ll really have to listen to understand everything they’re saying; but even if you can’t glean any of the script, the pure sound of the language and the poetry is well worth the price of admission.

Greenside, 5 - 27 Aug (not 14, 21), 12.40pm (1.30pm), £5.00 - £7.00, fpp262. tw rating 4/5 [tw]

Flesh Eating Tiger

CalArts Festival Theater

Setting a play within a play on a stage with no walls whilst you break the fourth wall of the play within the play? Sounds a bit Charlie Kaufman meets Tristram Shandy. But what’s surprising is quite how well it works: a darkly funny ride through the tormented relationship between a writer, and an alcoholic director that may or may not be as real as it seems. Jarring shifts into the absurd threaten to capsize it, but sharp, semi-improvised dialogue and the pervading meta-fictional vibe avert disaster well before it strikes. It’s bolstered by fascinatingly physical performances from the two leads, making for a funny, moving and intriguing tale about love and the nature of addiction.

Venue 13, 5 – 20 Aug (Not 8, 15, 16), 7.00pm (8.00pm), £5.00 – £7.00, fpp265 tw rating 4/5 [rss]

Gutter Junky

Assembly And Salida Productions

“It’s ideas that turn these things and they can be unstoppable.” This is the profound message of the moving ‘Gutter Junky’. The story involves a British writer visiting the South American region to carry out research for his upcoming book. Little does he know that civil war is about to break out, making his experience more dangerous than he ever imagined, and his book more deadly than he ever dreamed. Laden with political significance, the play becomes reminiscent of an illegal and brutal invasion of a weak country in the name of democracy. The performance does appear overly dramatic at times, especially in the super slow-mo effect of the scene changes, but overall, this is thought-provoking and wonderfully enacted.

Assembly Hall, 4 – 28 Aug (not 15), £8.00 - £9.00, 3.00pm (4.00pm), fpp267. tw rating 4/5 [ma]

Story Shakespeare: Love’s Labour’s Lost

Year Out Drama Theatre Company Ceaseless energy and beautiful ensemble work makes this adaptation of the Shakespearian comedy a must see, filled, as it is, to the brim with wit and smut, much of which probably soars over the head of younger audience members. The youthfulness of the Year Out Drama group infuses the play, the modernised language of which is always paramount. A story of romance and deception, we see four pairs of lovers make and break oaths in minutes, testing the love that is sworn to them and using contemporary songs to bring the piece home. The poppish Don Armado is a highlight, his lover’s extravagance never failing to amuse, while the ensemble cast’s faultless attention to detail creates a vivacious and stunning backdrop for this already well-loved classic.

C too, 15 – 20 Aug, 11:05am (11:55am), £4.50 - £8.50, fpp300. tw rating 5/5 [ja]



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