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PAUL McCAFFREY SAYING SOMETHING STUPID



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FRINGE REVIEW

CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Bubblewrap And Boxes

Asking For Trouble
A big pile of cardboard boxes sits upon the stage. It is home to a strange little man, who happily spends his days arranging his boxes and making sure everything is just so. His world is peaceful, until a large box mysteriously appears, containing a girl, who shatters his tranquillity by forcing him to interact with her and moving his boxes about! There then follows a fantastic hour's entertainment, as the pair display excellent clowning skills whilst gradually becoming friends. Performed almost wordlessly, as the characters can only communicate when reading out lost letters that have found their way to their cardboard world, this show is a delight. Imagine 'WALL-E', but with fewer robots and more cardboard.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 21 Aug (not 8, 15), 10.45am (11.45am), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp20 tw rating 4/5 [im]

Flamenco For Kids!

Ricardo Garcia's Flamenco Flow (UK And Spain)
The stage goes black at the start of the show and, I wonder, where is the kids' show?! A lone guitarist is bathed in red light. And then, accompanied by his two dancers, Ricardo Garcia treats us to his new composition. I was completely caught by surprise - a moving, emotional, intensely passionate flamenco almost brought me to tears, for the short time it was on. Then - confusion over - the kids' show begins! And what fun it is, for children and parents alike; it is clear that everyone is enjoying the lesson in flamenco dancing thoroughly, one dad, in particular, taking it very seriously. A great children's show; I can't wait to see the one for grown-ups!

C eca, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15, 16, 17, 18, 19), 1.30pm (2.20pm), £4.50 - £8.50, fpp21. tw rating 4/5 [lc]

The Little Mermaid Ballet

Burklyn Youth Ballet
A beautiful rendition of a fairytale convention, 'The Little Mermaid Ballet' is based on the Hans Christian Anderson story, rather than the more popular Disney version; with a much happier ending, however. Expressive and wonderfully performed by a talented young cast, this lavish extravaganza presented a tale of magic, love, and oceanic escapades. Though speech was absent from the piece as it is indeed a ballet, the colourful exposure and dazzling costumes evoked reverence from the entire audience - even its youngest members, who proved attentive throughout the entire show. As the ballet drew to a spectacular close, children were invited to meet the affable cast, allowing for a unique opportunity to finally become acquainted with their storybook favourites.

Zoo Southside, 11 - 20 Aug, 10.30am (11.30am), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp24. tw rating 4/5 [ma]



SNAP OF THE DAY: 'Rachael's Cafe' at Jekyll & Hyde is based on a true story. And earlier this week the real Rachael flew in from Bloomington, Indiana to see the play for the first time, meeting actor Graham Elwell. Photo: Stuart Armitt

COMEDY

The Leeds Tealights: Animals With Jobs

Leeds Tealights
Like the elusive needle in a haystack, a good sketch show is hard to find; 'Animals With Jobs' is excellent. In an hour of tightly-packed jokes, the laughs just keep coming as sketch after sketch hits the mark. From a board of executives to a medal-winning schoolboy, the characters and their situations get more and more ridiculous and the jokes funnier and funnier; a highlight is the recurring sketch about 'Groundhog Day'. There are a couple of lulls and a bit too much emphasis on bringing old jokes back, especially towards the end, but these are just minor niggles in an otherwise excellent show. In a few years they'll be packing out the bigger venues, so see them here while you still can.

Just The Tonic At The Store, 4 - 28 Aug (not 16), 5.00pm (6.00pm), £7.00 - £8.00, fpp109. tw rating 4/5 [eb]

Aisle16 R Kool!

Tim Clare, John Osborne, Luke Wright
This was, without question, one of the most enjoyable hours I have ever spent. The three poets perform three pieces, and the audience is encouraged to notice the "coolest" of the three as there will be a vote at the end - hence the act's title. The poetry is witty, fresh and modern, with a Tony Harrison-style awareness of the weird space the contemporary poet occupies.

My favourite line is from a poem about hipsters - "You're French and underground, like the Hadron Collider" - whilst possibly my favourite poem was the brilliant 'Model'. The sweet and personal mixes wonderfully with the satirical and biting, and the three poets had the audience in stitches.

The Banshee Labyrinth, 5 - 27 Aug (not 16), 10.00pm (10.50pm), free, fpp35. tw rating 5/5 [at]

Aidan Bishop: Misspelled

Aidan Bishop
Sadly for Aidan Bishop, an undiagnosed dyslexic until the age of twenty-eight, this educational stand-up show about the difficulties of linguistic-processing could be compared to an incorrectly written word: all necessary elements are present, but something isn't quite right about the presentation. An affable and humble American, Bishop complains of bearing the brunt of condescending family jokes as he struggled in high school during the 1990s. Although the tables have turned now that he makes his living as a punchline-writer, his good-natured humour is pleasant and interesting, though never phenomenal. 'Misspelled' will challenge Festival audience's attitudes towards this unfortunate learning condition, but won't have them rolling with laughter. Consider it a mildly diverting lecture.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 28 Aug (not 15), 9.00pm (10.00pm), £7.50 - £9.50, fpp35. tw rating: 2/5 [jf]

A Kind of Surprise

Masud Milas and Sean Brightman
This is sit-down comedy at its most meandering and affable. What little structured material there is here is essentially a plug for these comedians' other shows. So while there is certainly comedic potential, it is never realised. Mainly, this is because Masud Milas and Sean Brightman seem to view this show as nothing but a warm-up for the rest of the day's performances. Though there are moments of humour, it seemed more like they were making each other laugh, leaving the audience feeling as though they were witness to two friends having a jokey conversation. If you want to see either of these comedians, I recommend going to one of their actual shows rather than this hour long preamble.

Dragonfly, 6 - 27 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 3.10pm (4.10pm), free, fpp105. tw rating 2/5 [sj]

About Tam O'Shanter

Bruce Fummey
Anyone who has not been to a Burns' Supper will find the majority of Bruce Fummey's set difficult to follow. A Scottish comic for a Scottish audience, the show begins with some of his older material - the science-based comedy of a funny Brian Cox. This is relatively successful and receives gentle laughter. His actual set, however, is more interesting and informative - but it isn't comedy. Those who are unfamiliar with Scottish culture may find that the

cont>>

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