

ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Hansel And Gretel

C Theatre

Dark and minimalist, this was not the 'Hansel And Gretel' I expected on the basis of the cheery picture of a gumdrop house in the Fringe Programme: with pale faced, hollow eyed actors and a sparse set, this was an altogether more grown up version of the classic fairy tale. It was certainly a visually interesting production, and the (male) witch's performance was wonderfully weird, but the slow pace and slightly clunky scripting meant that it struggled to engage younger members of the age 4+ recommended audience. Whilst this is probably not one for the CBeebies demographic, 'Hansel And Gretel' could be a good introduction to more serious theatre for children who are getting a bit too old for pantomimes.

C, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 11.15am.

tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Close]

Giddy Goat C Theatre

Giddy has 'vertigo' and the all-singing cast of this spirited show asks their audience to help him leap and bound. As he encounters goats who think they're sheep and sheep who think they're bulls, Giddy revels in inclusivity and unites the residents of Needle Mountain with the rams and lambs in the valley below. The script is a sharp and endearing adaptation of the popular book by Jamie Rix and C Theatre's performers deliver the tale with infectious enthusiasm through rap, Disney-esque ballads and baa-baa-shop quartets. The big goats onstage beam with encouragement as they garner bleats and cheers from the kids in the audience before inviting them to shake their hooves for the final chorus of the 'Giddy Go' dance.

C, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 12.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Eve Lacey]

COMEDY

This Is Soap C Theatre

If you've ever screamed at the TV in frustration at a ridiculous 'Hollyoaks' plot-line (though if you're watching 'Hollyoaks', I suspect your brain has generally absented itself), this may be the show for you. An improvised soap, with comedic kitchen-sink dramas unfolding daily, the action is driven by a mixture of audience suggestions and pre-conceived characters, and the pauses for sketch-based games were, thankfully, free of real embarrassment for the brave volunteers. Based on 'Eastenders', shades of 'The Archers' creep into the set-up - nothing much occurs, but in a thoroughly enjoyable manner. Some jokes are a little weak, but solid characterisation and good-humoured performances more than make up for them. Like all the best soaps, repeat viewing required.

C, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 1.15pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Kirsten Waller]



SNAP OF THE DAY: Here they are, the ThreeWeeks team for 2012, all set to guide you through the biggest Edinburgh Festival ever. Photo: Kat Gollock

James Acaster

Phil McIntyre Management

Making the most of his adorably awkward manner, James Acaster uses his charming nature to his advantage as he shares an imaginatively playful view of the world. He crafts otherwise mundane stories into something original and funny, comparing pulling in a nightclub to what goes on in an apple orchard, or between British and Danish cows. Despite the seemingly timid persona, the physical qualities of his performance are strong, and he handles audience interaction with ease, at one point dedicating a (surprisingly long) football chant to an unsuspecting audience member. Acaster's quiet nature may set him apart from the many extroverts with loud voices that make up the comedy world, but his adorability factor is sure to ensure a whimsically delightful journey.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug, 8.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

Laurence Clark: Inspired

CKP in association with Beyond Compere

Laurence Clark is governed by his infectious sense of humour, not his cerebral palsy. At this year's Fringe, he invites us to re-conceptualise the term 'inspirational', arguing that "the less well off you are perceived to be, the less you have to achieve to be called inspirational". During the course of his excellent set, he considers how we use this label too liberally, demonstrating his case by applying the word to everyone from Abu Hamza to Paralympians. His light-hearted and unrelentingly positive outlook helps to whisk the audience through an hour of clever material, in which Clark makes use of entertaining pictures, audio, video and devilish one-liners along the way. At the

very least, this show is inspired.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 5.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Ben Verth: Alsatian And Chips

Ben Verth / Scottish Comedy Festival

For Ben Verth, feeling old at 28 was something he coped with by delving into his past and reflecting on the funnier side of life. The Edinburgh comedian, who is also running the Scottish Comedy Festival, recounts bizarre and unbelievable events with the help of props and a slideshow. The best anecdotes are essentially very funny and are enhanced by Verth's assured performance; his conversational style engaged the audience, though sometimes the more rambling sections seemed a bit flat compared to the delightful comic highlights they separated. Although some material felt in need of tighter handling, the show's humorous core shone through often enough to produce an uplifting experience overall.

Scottish Comedy Festival @ The Beehive Inn, 1-26 Aug (not 9, 16), 5.10pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

I'm High On Life: What Are You On? Bonnie Davies (Australia)

In this lively storytelling sketch about growing up in a household of drug users, Bonnie Davies certainly wants you to know she's high. While her enactment of someone on heroin is amusingly convincing, life and the people in it genuinely are the only things she's using. Her positivity can feel a little contrived, and some of her anecdotes fall flat, but her endearing nature prevails and gives us plenty to smile about. The charting of her emotional ups and downs weaves together the tragedy in her life with the loving

nature of those close to her to create a feel-good atmosphere. On the whole this works well, but one wonders if she may have more substance in her memoirs that she could draw on. I left the show feeling amused, but not euphoric.

C, 2-27 Aug, 9.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Joe Mountford-Smith]

The Late Night Shack Show

The Shack Comedy Club

This showcase from The Shack - one of Edinburgh's rare year-round comedy clubs - began happily with compere Jojo Sutherland - who is a bit like a dirty-minded, teasing aunt - warming up the stage. Then came Andrew Watts, a harmless and likeable man with less-than-ground-breaking material, but who came up with some very witty moments of interaction with the audience. Stuart Black brought similarly solid material, but it was not until the arrival of Nick Beaton that we were treated to more original social observations, resulting mostly in his amused outrage. JellyBeen Martinez provided a shot of energy, bringing some cheeky laughs and Kiwi Andre King concluded with his well-observed but often dragging reflections on relationships. An enjoyable mixed bag, with Nick Beaton a definite highlight.

The Shack Comedy Club & Nightclub, 1-25 Aug (not 13), 10.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Macartney]

DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE

Prodigious Lite Fantastic

It's back to school as five youngsters appear uniformed in both attitude and attire. One by one, they prise

cont>



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cont> themselves from their make-shift desks with spontaneous outbursts of improvised movement. The acting and dancing do work, but the two seem disjointed, somehow, and unfortunately, this makes the piece feel fragmented. After the classroom, it’s on to Club Prodigious; we’re in the “drug-fuelled” 90s, apparently, but take away the eerie white masks and smiley face t-shirts and some may be none the wiser. Prodigious is, at times, too literal, too forced, too predictable but these performers have the ability to overcome all of that – in future, let them do the talking.

C, 1-27 Aug, 7.50pm
tw rating 3/5 | [Lucinda Al-Zoghbi]

EVENTS

How To Sell Your Show

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society Do you need advice on how to fill seats at your show? 'How To Sell Your Show' is a panel of seasoned Festival professionals, led by the Media Manager of Fringe Central, giving their best words of wisdom on all areas of publicity. From how to get the press into your show to how to effectively flyer your performance, this talk offers help for all, including those producing free shows. A question and answer session takes place at the end, meaning that even the most specific of concerns can be addressed. Best of all, the passion of those leading the event is clear from the start, making what could be dull exciting as well as very useful. Fringe Central, 1, 8 Aug, times vary.
tw rating 5/5 | [Alexandra Wilks]

MUSICALS AND OPERA

Bat Boy

Durham University Light Opera Group This self-styled mocky horror musical revolves around Edgar the bat boy. Durham University Light Opera Group take advantage of their whole stage, using ladders to create scenes from a dingy bat cave to the town hall, showing his journey from cave-dweller to acceptance into the civilised town of Hope Falls, finding out about his family history along the way. The accents were dodgy and things fell apart, yet somehow it all added to the panto-like hilarity of the show. Special mention goes to the facial expressions of the cast, especially the Sheriff and Edgar, as they beautifully punctuated punchlines and quips throughout the entire performance. Great fun, and even better when you don’t take the whole thing seriously and embrace even the weirdest of scenes. C, 2-27 Aug (not 13), 9.05pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Claire Hoyda]

The Happy Prince

English Cabaret with C Theatre Combine the enchantment of Disney with the mesmerising preciseness of Gilbert and Sullivan, and you'll be titillatingly close to what this endearing treat has to offer. The performances in this quirky show were competent throughout - I found myself breaking into a smile at the great promise in the youngest cast members and, at times, the near perfect harmonies in the production. A greater commitment to the roles and more polished acting would make the performance much more engaging; however it is not a long way from being effortless. Indeed, if it was performed in the early evening with cups of warm milk and pillows on offer, the children (and children at heart) would certainly be charmed off to sleep. C, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 2.15pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Patch of Blue Theatre 'Patch of Blue Theatre' returns with this joyous production following the ups and downs of the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. As the well-drawn, wide-eyed contestants are lovingly brought to life by the cast, we become the audience at

the Bee and are immersed in their crazy, competitive world. Dry interludes from Patrick Birch's Vice Principal keep the hectic dance pieces and enthusiastic characters on the right side of over-the-top. In a cast of scene-stealers, the trophy for adorability goes to versatile Ross Cobbold as giggly Leaf Coneybear, with prizes to Tom Mackley's William and Janette McManus's Logainne for services to lispng. Quirky and energetic, I had as much fun as the cast obviously did.

C, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 6.45pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Macartney]

The Improvised Musical No Shoes Theatre

If you're a musical theatre fanatic, or are just looking for an evening of fun, then the 'Improvised Musical' is definitely worth a look. Not only did the audience fuel suggestions for the show, but also provided props, which in itself added extra quirkiness. In places the performance was over-Americanised and as the players sang over the top of each other some gags were lost. However the witty performers knew how to think fast on their bare feet, and continued to pay attention to detail, seamlessly incorporating in all of the audience's suggestions. They ended the show with the silly title song: "Broken Biscuits Broken Hearts", but this imaginative show certainly won't leave your heart in pieces.

C, 2-27 August (not 13), 6.20pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Emma Obank]

THEATRE

Irish Shorts One

Theatre Alba

Coming to Edinburgh to watch a Scottish company perform two little-known Irish plays in an isolated village within the city limits is an odd adventure. Theatre Alba's amateur group perform plays by Yeats and Synge in Duddingston Kirk Manse garden, which overlooks a small loch at the end of a very pleasant walk around the base of Arthur's Seat. The location is perfect for these two early 20th century plays by two of Ireland's most famous writers, set in small, continually blighted Irish communities, loaded with widows, superstitions and the ghosts of the Irish dead. The plays lack drama, which is perhaps why they're not often performed, but the cast are striking and the location alone is worth the walk.

Duddingston Kirk Manse Garden, 31 Jul-4 Aug, 12.30pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Thom May]

Dead Man’s Cell Phone Red Chair Players

After Jean answers a stranger's phone before she realises he's died, she begins to use the phone to force herself into the dead man's life. The play doesn't fulfil the promise of its snappy dialogue: there is much hand-wringing about modernity, including the impersonal experience of the subway and our overuse of mobile phones, but it fails to become political or symbolic and instead opts for idiosyncrasy and romantic pseudo-spiritualism, closing with a brief turn in the absurd. The acting isn't bad and there are well-delivered speeches, although it occasionally lacks energy. The young cast are promising but I suspect the play is to blame; it ultimately falls short of being about much more than a "Dead Man's Cell Phone".

C, 1-11 Aug, 3.45pm
tw rating 2/5 | [Thom May]

The Bloody Chamber 3Bugs

Angela Carter's dark and quirky take on the ancient tale of Bluebeard, the notorious sadist and torturer of French folklore, is brought to the stage by a young and smooth cast. Believably transforming the stage to a windswept, isolated castle on the cliffs above the sea, and from there to a bloody chamber of horrors, the actors move gracefully and softly into a web of fear and anxiety until they are cornered and expecting... not the obvious! Bluebeard's charming, silky voice lures his young wife, as innocent as Eve, into tasting the forbidden apple. She uses

the key to the room she is not allowed in, and ultimately has to face death. Never write off the mother and a blind piano player!

C eca, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 9.35pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

The Company Of Wolves 3Bugs

“Don’t stray fromm the path”, Rosaleen’s grandmother warns her throughout this adaptation of Angela Carter’s adult version of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and this performance benefits by straying away from the beaten track and offering an innovative retelling. The audience are invited to sit upon picnic blankets as the action unfolds around them, and such an arrangement - when combined with soft acoustic interludes - gives such a sense of whimsy that the shocking and adult content benefits hugely from the juxtaposition, in a way that reflects Carter’s text. The energy of the cast really lifts this performance, whilst the use of body language is particularly impressive moving from childlike to eerie, foreboding to violent in a heartbeat.

C eca, 2-27 Aug (not 14), 8.35pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Beth Dawson]

Tales From Edgar Allan Poe Backhand Theatre with South Hill Park Arts Centre and C theatre

A gloomy and gothic circus menagerie opens before the spectators’ eyes, late at night. We face the gates of an asylum in the countryside, far away from civilisation, on a rainy, stormy, foggy night, all set to witness the dark tales of an even darker writer. Guided by our ill-fated friend, a young doctor sent to inspect the questionable methods of the asylum’s creepy director, we witness a clever storyline, and meet some remarkable characters telling us their intoxicating and notorious stories. The script and stage work are fantastic and mystical, with moving walls, swinging pendulums, a gruesome raven, and the eerie costumes, the striking make-up and the circus-artist-like actors blending together perfectly.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 11pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

Shakespeare For Breakfast C Theatre

C Theatre brings the popular TV genre ‘dramality’ to the stage: Picture the Montagues as the cast of ‘The Only Way is Essex’ and the Capulets as the characters from ‘Made in Chelsea’ and you’ll understand how this production is rife with cringeworthy moments you’ve witnessed a hundred times before; yet the seemingly tireless cast and audience members alike retain the capacity to enjoy. The company swap comfortably in and out of Shakespearean text, creating a balanced fusion of the bard’s well-known lines and continuous pop-culture references. The upbeat soundtrack is doubly brought to life by Romeo and Juliet’s recital of a soppy pop-lyric mash up in place of their traditional wedding vows. Light entertainment providing a well-intentioned way to shed the sleep from your eyes.

C, 2-27 Aug (not 14), 10.00am.
tw rating 3/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

Lady M Het Vijfde Bedrijf

‘Fuck Shakespeare’ exclaims Annemarie de Bruijn in this one-woman adaption of the Shakespearean classic Macbeth. Bemoaning her ‘bit-part’ in the original play, she tells the well-known tale from the point of view of Lady Macbeth’s handmaid. De Bruijn herself is no bit-part actress; indeed, she saves what could otherwise become just another adaption of an established classic, keeping her audience captivated as she moves seamlessly between characters, shining particularly in the role of the ever more demented Lady Macbeth. Focusing perhaps too much on the duties of the handmaid at the outset, the piece gathers momentum towards an enjoyable and visually striking conclusion. Well acted and well-written with moments of brilliant comedy, no previous knowledge of Shakespeare is required.

C eca, 2-18 Aug, 4.15pm
tw rating 3/5 | [Charlotte Ryan]

Serve Cold

Mark MacNicol

Revenge is on the menu in Mark MacNicol’s new play, in which a woman plotting against her ex-lover spends the evening with an unexpectedly religious prostitute. Nicola Clark is endearing and funny as the god-fearing Grace, strangely prim one minute and then hilariously world-weary the next. She is innocently trusting and infinitely forgiving of others, the opposite of the paranoid Joy, who prefers going on the offensive with extreme measures to being a victim. Joy’s character feels somewhat under-written; her motivations aren’t convincing enough for her slightly far-fetched actions, and Grace’s funnier, more interesting character carries the show. However, this is a thoughtful piece and the final punchline is very satisfying.

Gryphon Venues at the Point Hotel, 1-11, 20-27 Aug, 3.30pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

Repertory Theatre

The Elephant And The Mouse (Israel)

A polite, nervous young playwright is invited into the offices of a mad theatre director to discuss his latest play (which is definitely not about his father), but this is only half the story. This baffling, brilliant play focuses on fantasy, fiction and Freudian psychology, gleefully pulling the rug from under its audience every time its complexities seem to be becoming clear. Viewers familiar with Hamlet, the theatre director’s obsession, will get the most out of this clever farce, but this is an energetic tour de force that anyone can appreciate, and the audience were confused, gripped and thrilled in equal measure. Hilarious, fresh and delightfully bewildering, this is a treat for anyone who enjoys theatre about theatre.

C eca, 1-18 Aug, times vary.
tw rating 5/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

Twisted Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream Scottish Youth Theatre

Edinburgh’s Botanical gardens may well have been made to have ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ performed in them. They provide the perfect backdrop to one of Shakespeare’s most well loved comedies. Scottish Youth Theatre guide the audience through the gardens as the action unfolds. All the actors involved did a fantastic job, particularly the fairies, who sang and danced their way around the audience, encouraging them to wherever the next scene was staged. Standing under the trees, you are taken away into the woods with the lovers and the fairies, as The Scottish Youth Theatre succeeds in bringing Shakespeare to life. Worth a watch, but bring a broly!

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 31 Jul-4 Aug, 7.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Lyth]

Eurydice

UCLU Runaground

Get rid of your preconceptions about Greek mythology; this is refreshingly accessible for all, not just the seasoned theatregoer. This adaptation of the tragic tale of Orpheus and Eurydice brilliantly fuses physical theatre, dance and puppetry, while the classy and natural acting steers well clear of seeming forced - Melissa Taylor gives an especially standout performance as Eurydice. The modernised script has unexpected comic value too, particularly in Rob Thomson’s memorable performance as Lord of the Underworld. Meticulously directed, simply staged and accompanied by a jaunty soundtrack, the main reason this show is so enjoyable is that it does not take itself too seriously, picking a timeless Greek myth from the scrapheap of history and giving it a glorious makeover for the Fringe.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 3.20pm
tw rating 5/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Anon(ymous)

Pepperdine University (Malibu)

Different gods wander over a different continent, but the same motif of the journey pervades this inventive

adaptation of Homer’s ‘Odyssey’, and brings it to the Fringe. Rather than Odysseus the warrior, we find Anon the refugee, encountering characters that fight to maintain a fixed identity as they find themselves in constant movement. Although certain scenes seem disjointed within the narrative frame, rapid changes in tone between the humorous and the macabre keep the pace fresh. A scene in which Anon floats and plunges beneath the waves of a stormy sea in the company of a flirtatious goddess is a delight to watch, and a towering butcher with an eyepatch makes a convincing Cyclops. Overall, a lively and imaginative piece.

C, 1-11 Aug, 11.05am.
tw rating 4/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

The Three Faces of Doctor Crippen FreeRange Productions

This rather absurd tale of romance meets gruesome dismemberment follows the notorious murderer Doctor Crippen as he runs from the authorities. The different parts of the doctor’s personality (his public face, his sensitive interior, and his deranged alter-ego) are played by three separate actors who work extremely well together for comic effect. While the plot is simple and at times predictable, the young actors’ enthusiasm is infectious and they work hard to keep the audience engaged. A few of the jokes fall flat but the majority are received well, the scene of the actual murder being a particularly humorous highlight. The ending was a little rushed and disappointing, but on the whole it’s an amusing spectacle featuring some great one-liners.

C, 1-27 Aug (not 16, 17), 9.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

99.9 Degrees

Jackinabox Productions

A superbly cast set of fiercely individual characters brings energy and drama to this wickedly stylish piece. As a hostage situation unfolds around them, intense sequences of seamless choreography narrate the experiences that define each character. Free will becomes at once a luxury and an all-consuming longing - these moments of memory and self-reflection revel in freedom of movement and are fluidly conveyed, contrasting with dialogues exchanged from the rigid confines of office chairs. At times subtle, sharp and wilfully playful, these exchanges flicker with trust, mistrust, despair and wry amusement. The end result is both intimate and powerful; ‘99.9 Degrees’ is an immersive and sensory experience that will linger in your conscience like the heat from a glowing coal.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 5.30pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

Presidential Suite: A Modern Fairy Tale

B & G Productions (New York)

“You don’t understand how the world works!” the words echo from the stage, hang in the air, and resonate through the core of ‘Presidential Suite: A Modern Fairytale’. Its central protagonist - a misogynistic French economist - believes the world works as follows: throw money at a problem, and it will evaporate. Not so with hotel chambermaid Hermione, allegedly raped by the high-profile public figure. Anything but a classic tale of good vs. evil, ‘Presidential Suite’ is achingly relevant to contemporary Western society, which thrives on political scandal, gagging orders and the ever-present media glare. A stripped-bare set allows punchy one-liners to take centre stage and chemistry-fuelled scenes between the economist’s wealthy wife and power-hungry lawyer are blissfully reminiscent of Golden Era screwball comedies.

C eca, 1-18 Aug, 7.25pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Christy Brown]

ThreeWeeks

Editors & Publishers: Chris Cooke and Caro Moses
Published by ThreeWeeks Publishing a division of UnLimited Media, 221 Shoreditch High Street, London, E1 6PJ
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