

ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Flamenco For Kids Ricardo Garcia's Flamenco Flow (Spain)
Essentially an onstage dance workshop bookended by snippets of impressive flamenco, this is a chance for any child with a burgeoning desire to try classic Spanish dancing to fulfil that dream. Kids are taken through some basic steps by kindly guitar player Ricardo Garcia and two professional dancers, before putting all the moves together for a fully-costumed final performance. With a small group of enthusiastic volunteers, it all went fairly smoothly, but it could descend into chaos with a larger crowd. And, whilst seeing children dancing is undeniably sweet, you should probably only buy tickets if you've got a child who will definitely enjoy getting up and performing - it's not quite so much fun watching from the the audience.
C eca, 1-27 (not 3, 14, 21), 11.5pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Close]

The Man Who Planted Trees Puppet State Theatre Company
From the charmingly French pre-show announcement to the punningly introduced curtain call, 'The Man Who Planted Trees' is an hour of beautifully produced, elegantly performed bliss. As Dog - a fast-talking American puppet of the canine persuasion, and the show's undeniable star - points out, the title is pretty self-explanatory, with the story centring around an elderly shepherd living in the hills of Provence. France is conjured through scented breezes, versatile set design and fantastic puppetry, as well as some hilarious French language wordplay. The theme is undeniably environmental, but without a hint of eco-preachiness (though I left in so happy a mood that I probably would have hugged a tree). This is storytelling at its very best.
Scottish Storytelling Centre, 1-14 Aug, 3.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Holly Close]

COMEDY

The Fritzrovia Radio Hour
The props range from the typical (a bicycle bell) to the obscure (a lettuce), with the appearance of a particularly welcome watermelon drawing the largest reaction from the audience. The cast keep things well-paced and extraordinarily well coordinated; the fact that no one lost an eye is an impressive achievement on its own. The hour is split into three increasingly funny sections, eventually evolving into their own bizarre chapter of a warped radio programme. Each cast member is allowed time to shine and showcase individual talent, but it is when they come together that their best work is accomplished. Well worth seeing for the final act alone.
Gilded Balloon, 1-27 Aug, 5.45pm
tw rating 4/5 | [David O'Connor]

Barbershopera: The Three Musketeers Barbershopera
France is embroiled in a bitter pudding trade dispute with England, the Cardinal wants to wreck a Gallic village by building a holiday home, and Louis XIII has been rather too free with his royal plums. So begins Barbershopera's retelling of Alexandre Dumas' classic 'The Three Musketeers': a delightful a cappella comedy in which D'Artagnan is a woman, the French king has a thing for English men, and there's an above average amount of spanking. An affectionate mockery of both nations is one of the show's pleasures, with some quietly effective one-liners slipped in. But the real highlight is the singing. Barbershopera's gently bawdy songs are catchy, unashamedly silly and always superbly delivered. One for all to enjoy.
Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 11.05pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

Dan Wright: Michael Jackson Touched Me CKP by Arrangement With CHP Artist Management
'Michael Jackson Touched Me' explores Dan Wright's lifelong obsession with Michael Jackson, his endeavour to overcome this complex, and to finally beat it. This is the first solo show by Wright, best known for playing Little Cook in Cbeebies show 'Big Cook, Little Cook', and an attempt to appeal to an older demographic. This amounts to him dancing like MJ, abusing those who questioned the singer's character and a lot of time making fun of himself. Describing the show as bad, whether in the positive or negative sense, would be an exaggeration, however; the show makes for an enjoyable hour, although sometimes the lengthy stories detract from the jokes and more punchlines are needed.
Gilded Balloon Teviot, 2-26 Aug, 9.30pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Conor Riordan]

Soapbox: The Comedy Debate Slam
Rick Molland and Gus Lymburn's improvised comedy debate pits each comedian and his special guest against each other, arguing for or against ridiculous points-of-view suggested by the opposing team, or members of the participating audience. The cosy Beehive Inn - home of the Scottish Comedy Festival - plays host to this casual and inclusive battle of wits and silliness, where a friendly, bantering atmosphere is cultivated by the informality of Molland and Lymburn. But with the spattering of somewhat awkward silences and the unpredictability inherent to the style of the show, it sometimes feels as if the comedians may be having more fun than the audience. Elicits a few laughs, but with such an unstable foundation, this show may disappoint.
The Beehive Inn, 1-26 Aug, 1.15pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Alexandra Payne]



SNAP OF THE DAY: The Fringe's very own 'Carnival Of Clowns' at the Free Sisters. Photo: Paul Collins

My Banjo's Name Is Steven Anne Edmonds
Comedy in a small venue is something I tend to avoid; the proximity to the comedian allows ample room for embarrassment and awkwardness. Thankfully, Anne Edmonds blazed through any fears with this energetic performance in her Edinburgh Fringe debut. Anecdotal songs and quick wit carried the audience through the story of how she came to be a comedian, which weaves self-deprecating humour with brilliant impressions of those she had encountered on her journey. There were a few moments when the jokes fell flat: one about anal sex in particular was better suited for a late night audience, and even then would probably be unnecessary. All in all though, a very engaging performance, and a great way to start the day.
Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug, 12.10pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [India Doyle]

Bob Graham Work Ethic
As someone claiming to have had 31 jobs, Bob Graham doesn't need to work hard to deliver a show; he includes audience

participation and a slideshow within his work-ethic repertoire. He is relaxed and entertaining, handling his audience with ease and frequently calling on them to become part of his routine. However, the show drags in the middle when he asks people to play Top Trumps with home-made oversized cards, resulting in a compare and contrast of his past jobs. His clipboard is also distracting, suggesting an unfinished quality to the show. Despite this, the jokes were funny and witty, while the tone was conversational where appropriate. All that was missing was a larger audience.
Beehive Inn, 1-26 Aug (not 6, 7, 13, 19, 20), 1.25pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Ana-Claudia Magaña]

Garret Millerick: Sensible Answers to Stupid Questions Schadenfreude Productions Limited
Garret's entire life has been ruined by the stupid questions (not to be confused with questions asked by stupid people) that have cropped up over the years. In this hilarious hour of social, personal, cont>

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cont> and outward critique, he successfully answers any and all stupid questions that one could be faced with, rounding out the evening with the answer to the ultimate foolish question: “Is there a God?” Full of bitter anecdotes and darkly sharp wit, Garret gives a fantastically loud and brutally truthful show, worthy of any fellow cynic’s attention. Though some may be turned off by Garrett’s brash bitterness, his comedic insights are undeniably honest and hilarious.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 2-27 Aug (not 15), 11.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Ellie Willis]

Chris Martin - Spot The Difference

Phil McIntyre Entertainments By Arrangement With Lisa Thomas Management

Everylad Chris Martin fills us in on the exploits of an average twenty-something male, covering everything from winding up woodland creatures to practising the philosophical art of cockblocking. His observational humour and ‘mate down the pub’ approach to comedy is winning, and it’s always nice to see a comedian who doesn’t have to rely on cruel jokes or shock tactics to get a laugh; you’ll want to buy him a pint by the time he’s finished. His youthful routine might be a tad immature for older audience members, but his confident delivery and amiable nature is charming. For guilt-free giggles, ‘Spot The Difference’ should be at the top of your list.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 8.45pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

Gráinne Maguire: Where Are All The Fun Places And Are Lots Of People There Having Better Fun?

Avalon Promotions

Gráinne Maguire was quick to inform her audience that the endearing maniac with which she presented them was not some ill-thought-out character but her very own ill-thought-out personality; a distinction which set the tone for a funny and confessional hour. The theme (that niggling worry that there is always more fun to be had elsewhere) did not have a strong presence in the first half but as we reached the final 25 minutes it became the focus, opening up a rich comedic vein. An engaging performer, Maguire was able to keep the audience onside through some of the weaker pieces of material and rewarded them with a strong ending, neatly tying up the show’s varied strands.

Udderbelly Bristo Square, 1-26 Aug (not 15), 4.20pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Nicholas Jones]

Niall McCamley: Lemon Jousting And Other Shenanigans

Niall McCamley / Scottish Comedy Festival

If you can’t envisage what goes on in a show called ‘Lemon Jousting and Other Shenanigans’, be warned: actually seeing it won’t make things much clearer. We were told the theme was ‘love’, as Niall engineered a number of amusingly surreal (and barely connected) vignettes for audience members to partake in (lemon jousting included), yet at no time were we given any sense of our host’s grand plan for his bewildered playthings. As it turned out, there wasn’t one. Although McCamley had the charm to squeeze every available laugh from his audience’s confused contributions, it was overshadowed by a lack of coherence and an abrupt ending, which left me with very little idea of what the point had been.

The Beehive Inn, 1-26 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 3.55pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Rachel Aroesti]

Politics Now. Politics Wow! Sir Reginald Tweedy-Duffer / Scottish Comedy Festival

The premise of this show is basic but comically sound. We are introduced to Sir Reginald Tweedy-Duffer, the archetypal upper-class Tory, Secretary for Youth Affairs, and we join him aboard the Conservative PR juggernaut as he attempts to demonstrate just how “down

with the kids” politicians can be. Reginald himself is a reasonably convincing construction and the consistent, confident delivery of every clichéd youth-ism – groovy, lol, you name it – is commendable. There are a few stand-out gags, including a well-timed PowerPoint presentation used to great effect, but the overall joke – that Tories are outdated – eventually wears thin. Whilst the core idea is initially funny and culturally relevant, don’t expect much subtlety here.

Scottish Comedy Festival @ The Beehive Inn, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 12.10pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

1000 Years Of Scotland’s Dark Past The Edinburgh Dungeon

From the moment you descend into the dark, dank depths of the Edinburgh Dungeon, you are transported back to Scotland’s grizzly past. Guided by a host of shady figures, visitors venture back to a time when murderers and body-snatchers lurked around every corner, and catching the plague was the least of your worries. With a cast of historical characters who are both funny and downright frightening, chilling highlights include stumbling into the lair of cannibal Sawney Bean and his hungry family, and a night-time visit to the graveyard with Messrs Burke and Hare. Atmospheric and entertaining, ‘1000 Years Of Scotland’s Dark Past’ is for anyone who likes their history with the gruesome details left in. Terrifyingly good fun.

The Edinburgh Dungeon, 30 Jul – 2 Sep, tours run every 10 Minutes from 10.00am – 7.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Rebecca Low]

The Edinburgh Revue Stand-Up Show Edinburgh Revue / Scottish Comedy Festival

There really is something for everyone in this veritable compendium of comedic styling. Some surreal, some deadpan, some observational, but all engaging. The enthusiasm of the Edinburgh University Comedy Society is infectious, and what they lack in composure they make up for in boundless energy. Featuring a particularly noteworthy turn by Hari Sriskantha, the Edinburgh Revue show real promise; each one of the ensemble showcases their individual style in turn, which makes for a refreshing comedy performance. With the occasional flicker of nerves, the delivery of the show has a slightly frenetic feel, but the irrepressible honesty and wit of almost all the material indicates these are ones to watch, both now and in the future.

Scottish Comedy Festival @ The Beehive Inn, 1-26 Aug (not 16), 2.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

Rob Deering: The One Bound and Gagged Comedy

Deering’s cheerful and adept take on musical stand-up “rocks all over your face”. With an impish energy and a freshness that belie his eleven years of experience at the Fringe, Deering’s hilarious yet charming act is as quirky and endearing as he himself, and his experience shows in his relaxed manner and ability to put his audience completely at ease. Incorporating audience participation in a totally non-threatening way, perhaps due to the comfortable intimacy of its venue, this niche brand of comedy is as quick and intricate as the musical layering it showcases (never again will the place of the cowbell in stand-up go overlooked). Extremely enjoyable.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 8, 14), 8.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

Asher Treleaven: Troubadour Mick Perrin For Just For Laughs Live

Within the first ten minutes, Asher Treleaven informs his audience that his autobiographical show is “a grower not a shower”. Using six hats to represent different stages in his life, Treleaven explains that the purpose of his set is to determine whether or not his time on Earth so far has been interesting enough to talk about for an hour; it’s a premise that the Australian comic himself seems altogether unsure of initially. Despite this, Treleaven is warm and charmingly self-deprecating, and eventually hits his stride after an unexpected show of his diablo

skills (the result of three years at circus school) that is both funny and genuinely impressive. A slow burner, but one that does leave you smiling.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 4.30pm
tw rating 3/5 | [Rebecca Low]

MUSIC

Art For Lunch – Free Concert At St Giles’ Various Artists

It’s a Fringe-goer’s instinct to live as hectic a life as possible in August, but sometimes we all need to slow down. St Giles’ concert is, as some might say, is that much-needed break. With Will Pickvance on piano and Balazs Hermann on double bass, a feeling of tranquillity is created through the unique melodies compiled seamlessly using songs requested by the audience. The improvised twist and audience interaction adds a nice touch, giving the performance charm and character. A larger variety of instruments might have added some diversity but this was not a necessity. St Giles’ concert presents two performers, a piano, a double bass and a soothing 45 minutes as the perfect remedy to Fringe Festival overload.

St Giles’ Cathedral, 1-30 Aug, 12.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

The Blues Brothers – Live Hartshorn-Hook Productions

The trouble with tribute acts and long-running shows is keeping things fresh. Being both, ‘Blues Brothers – Live’ sometimes feels a little stale, though not for want of trying. The eponymous brothers perform with energy, leaping around the auditorium with fitful enthusiasm and belting out all the mandatory numbers, but they can’t help being upstaged by their backing singers, who shine on soul standards like ‘Think’ and ‘Shake a Tail Feather’. The large session band turns in uniformly fine performances but never cuts loose, and by the time the audience finally gets up to dance, it’s with a slightly embarrassed sense of obligation. Though it’s good enough to get your feet tapping, this will never make you groove like it should.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 9.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

Belles Amies! Oxford University Belles

Beatboxing and hand-jiving their way into Fringe 2012, Oxford University’s female a cappella group adopt the peppy enthusiasm of cheerleaders, thankfully sans pompoms and wobbly human pyramids. Occasionally giggle-inducing and saccharine, there are similarities between Oxford’s Belles and the New Directions of high school sitcom ‘Glee’, but in contrast to their onscreen counterparts, there’s no diva on a mission to steal the limelight. The ladies make a powerful ensemble in troupe colours of black and green, marching as one, signalled only by the key-calling harmonica. That said, jazzier costumes and tightening of harmonies might render ‘Belles Amies!’ less am-dram. Belles of the ballads they undoubtedly are, though, with the chillingly beautiful ‘Jar of Hearts’ raising goosebumps throughout the audience.

Spotlites @ The Merchants’ Hall, 1-18 Aug, 5.25pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Christy Brown]

Absolutely Free Live Music Whistlebinkies

Delve deep into the cavernous depths of Whistlebinkies for a lovely evening of high-energy folky/rock/ska/punk/indie and all-round great performances. Whistlebinkies arranges plenty of fun every night of the week, accumulating a plethora of somehow undiscovered local musicians to “rock the house”. My first night at Whistlebinkies showcased an impeccably energetic and talented band, The International Pop Assassins, performing some of their own classic ska alongside soft punk and rock hits from the 80s and 90s, including a pumped-up version of Echo and the Bunnymen’s ‘The Killing Moon’. A perfect musical environment for all ages to cut loose as

variety of genre, cheap drinks and killer acoustics will keep you dancing all night.

Whistlebinkies, 2 Aug-2 Sept, 9.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Ellie Willis]

THEATRE

Misanthropy New Celts Productions with No Idling Theatre

Misanthropy – the distrust of humankind. However, on watching this show, an audience can’t help but trusting, indeed, feeling involved in, the lives of the engaging characters as the mess of confusion and doubt unravels. Snappier dialogue would benefit the accomplished and professional cast by providing the edge that was sometimes lacking. However, the respect with which the serious subject matter is consistently addressed reflects a maturity in the script and its appropriately inconclusive ending increases the subtle digs at the audience’s growing unsettledness. In its conclusion, you realise the trust you once placed in your own identity is delivered into the cast’s hands, leaving you unnerved but entranced.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (odd days only, not 13), 4.50pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

This Way Up Antler with Matroska

With a set made entirely of cardboard boxes ingeniously arranged to create different spaces, ‘This Way Up’ is a real treat, mixing humour, live music and a fresh script as the play charts the end of Alex’s university life and her realisation that she must get a job. Mostly based in a call centre, the script is sharp and the laughs are plentiful, and though at times, the live music is a little too sickly sweet, this is balanced by the excellent comic timing of the actors, in particular Nasi Voutsas (Mark) and Jessica Stone (Suzanne). I was enchanted by ‘This Way Up’ and completely taken into Alex’s life, as I watched her find her place in the world. In one word: Delightful.

C, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 2.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Wilks]

Icarus: A Story Of Flight Backhand Theatre with South Hill Park Arts Centre and C theatre

“Men are meant for the earth, not the sky” muses one of the characters in this exploration of freedom, flying and falling. Icarus lands in a ‘Tempest’-like foreign land, meeting a Caliban equivalent in simple savage Guy. The fusion of myth and mundane mortality in this play is mirrored by its combination of soaring aerial acrobatic sequences with a confused script and in some places clunky acting. The circus-esque physical routines shine, particularly in a well-choreographed opening sequence, but ultimately these interludes cannot prevent the production from falling flat. A lack of fluidity is evident in both the grounded and aerial aspects of the production, which, unfortunately, clever staging and high production values do not redeem.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 5.30pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

As You Like It Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club

In the true spirit of the eccentricity of Shakespeare, this all-male cast presents a spectacle of linguistic complexity, slapstick humour and wigs falling off heads. Shakespeare’s classic comedy is thrown into a subtle tale of time travel as Rosalind tempts her love, Orlando, in the classic story of gender-swapping love games. Amongst the many surprises, filled with physicality and refined acting, are witty references to pop culture – music featuring the likes of Beyonce. The time travelling aspects of this performance are not immediately obvious and some melodramatic moments feel slightly forced, however due to the sheer enthusiasm of the cast as well as the originality of this adaptation you will be sure to laugh.

C, 2-18 Aug, 3.30pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

Why Do You Stand There In The Rain?

Pepperdine University (Malibu)

Centring on an apparently forgotten moment of Depression history (the rebellion of poverty-stricken WWI veterans), ‘Why Do You Stand There in the Rain?’ was, in the great tradition of (post-) war narratives, more than a little baffling. Not only do the years pass and the settings change at a disorientating rate, but this ambitious scope was matched by a tone that swung from all-singing, all-wise-cracking to emotionally harrowing far too quickly. What clarity there was came from the brilliant cast - particular props to the veteran with a head-injury, who disguised some ridiculously heavy-handed characterisation until the very last moment.

C, 1-11 Aug, 12.50pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Rachel Aroesti]

Maria, 1968 Antler Theatre

The lights go up on the sight of a young man slumped on a grubby sofa, partially clothed and possibly stoned. He is Noah, a tortured artist, living with an unambitious duck-impersonator and driving away his increasingly frustrated girlfriend. From here, everything just keeps getting better, as we are introduced to the characters inhabiting Noah’s typewriter, facing the quite different problems of vengeful Greek brothers and a shit-filled barn. The script is taut and convincingly realistic, the comic timing excellent and the cast almost faultless, with characters ranging from the sensually Byronic to the put-upon coward, and everything good in between. A play that deserves to have a hugely successful début – see it, and see it soon.

C, 2-27 Aug (not 14), 4.05pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Kirsten Waller]

More Light Half Remembered Dreams

How far would you go to avoid death? The unfruitful lovers of the Chinese Emperor entombed with their deceased master will find out, as they must quickly adapt or die in this captivating, disturbing portrayal of Bryony Lavery’s ‘More Light’. In their Fringe debut, the cast show talent beyond their years and the seemingly flawless performance of the lead, Natasha Shah, brilliantly guides the audience through the moral and mental decline of the seven childless Empresses during their chilling battle with death. Aided by meticulous direction and useful overhead projections, Half Remembered Dreams succeeds at entertaining its audience and is unavoidably gripping from beginning to end.

C eca, 1-27 Aug, 7.15pm
tw rating 4/5 | [James Valentine]

Tagged New Celts Production with Hidden Stories Theatre

‘Tagged’ is very much a show for the here and now. #zeitgeist. It tries to do something tricky: make a profound statement about modern life, using the facile superficiality of social networking as a medium. Largely, it succeeds, but not without reservations. It’s barely 35 minutes long, so the cast don’t have time to develop their characters much beyond broad caricatures: the lonely, desperate shut-in; the sexually-promiscuous party-girl; the nice, romantic guy. OK, that’s the point of the play – that’s how people appear if judged solely on their Facebook activity – but it can’t help but diminish the impact of the play’s final moments. ‘Tagged’ is funny, smart, and will appeal to the smartphone generation. Andrew Leask (quite) likes this.

C eca, 1-27 Aug (odd days only, not 13), 3.50pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Andrew Leask]

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