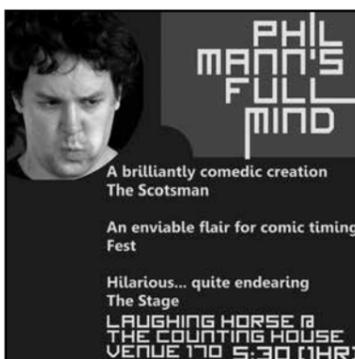


ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



CHILDREN'S SHOWS

The Elves And The Shoemaker

Theatre of Widdershins
After the success of last year's 'The King's Got Donkey's Ears', master puppeteer Andy Lawrence returns with a fabulous retelling of the most shoe-centric Grimm fairy tale, reframed within the underdog story of independent retailers versus big business. The audience are immediately pulled into the fun and friendly world of Elvis Schumaker III, expert cobbler and enthusiastic narrator. Lawrence moved seamlessly between roles, helped along by catchy songs and a little bit of dad-dancing, with the adorable set concealing a myriad of beautifully crafted puppets. Some sections did drag a little, but several of the young audience were audibly disappointed when they were told the show would be ending. A truly lovely way to spend your early afternoon.

Scottish Storytelling Centre, 31 Jul - 26 Aug (not 15), 1.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Holly Close]

COMEDY

A Theory of Everything

Danny McChrystal / Free Festival
Not quite causing a laugh a minute but bursting with potential, Danny McChrystal reluctantly rationalised on everything from how not to dump your partner to the illegality of heading into outer space. As the gig progressed, the more fluid Danny's performance became, as he kept the audience chuckling with a combination of one-liners, stories of his experiences, and the discussion of his cynicisms. It's certainly not for evangelicals or hardcore Catholics; much of the set focused on mocking the Bible for its tales about 600-year-old arc-builders. The comic was sometimes driven to casual banter, but did well to entertain a small audience and proved that he didn't have to rely on pre-written material to be funny.

Laughing Horse @ Edinburgh City Football Club, 3-15 Aug, 7.15pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Tales From The Unaccepted

Ed Caruana, Elaine Mason, Gary Tro, Richard Todd and Sunil Patel

The top of a graffiti'd double-decker in the guts of the Cowgate; was I in the Fringiest venue on the Fringe? The bizarre location added a lovely intimacy to this two-set show hosted by the chatty and charming Elaine Mason, whose natural friendliness (and games... with prizes) turned us into a cheery afternoon audience. Next we were treated to Gary Tro's endearing and self-deprecating exploration of failed romances, his warm wit overriding his slightly nervous energy. Surreal storyteller Richard Todd followed, and both his height and performance made him seem slightly too big for the bus - his animated, haphazard comedy could easily



SNAP OF THE DAY: It's The Pajama Men, improvising at the Fringe, and also presenting Drennon Davis - check out an interview between the three of them in the next ThreeWeeks Weekly Edition, out on Wednesday. Photo: Paul Collins

fill a theatre. Despite frequent talk of "no punchlines," this warm, unpolished and genuinely funny trio kept the whole crowd laughing.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, 2-12 Aug, 12.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Macartney]

Catie Wilkins: Joy Is My Middle Name Corrie McGuire For Objective Talent

Exploring the idea that our names influence what we become in life, Catie Wilkins returns to Edinburgh with another delightfully hilarious show. Part of this comic's appeal lies in her vulnerability and subtlety, which immediately has the whole audience under her spell and on her side. Her talents as a writer shine through as she takes us on a very well constructed journey, from her own childhood when she didn't live up to her optimistic middle name, to her more recent discoveries that representations of women in the fifties weren't quite as bad as we might think. The gentle way in which Wilkins performs her stand-up is truly refreshing and highly enjoyable. Pure Joy.

Underbelly, 2-26 Aug (not 14) 7.45pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Simon Thornton]

The Full Irish Gary White, Aamir Kajani, Christian Talbot, Greg Marks, Lisa Joyce

The only thing that this show was full of was awkwardness, racism, and forced

laughter. Save for the final section featuring Aamir Kajani, 'The Full Irish' was an undoubtedly uncomfortable experience; other performers, Gary White and Greg Marks, blamed the audience for their flopped jokes. Humour in the two first acts seemed entirely missing, replaced by aggressive racism and awkward anecdotes which left a sour taste in everyone's mouth. The aforementioned Aamir Kajani's performance, however, was the light at the end of the tunnel. Though he could use a bit more practice at being concise, he easily lifted the room's spirits with playful stories of his Indian upbringing in Ireland. I recommend Aamir's performance but try to avoid the others at all costs.

Laughing Horse @ Finnegan's Wake, 3-26 Aug, 6.00pm
tw rating 1/5 | [Ellie Willis]

Kemsley and Callaghan: Keeping Their Cool Harriet Kemsley and Sarah Callaghan

Replete with awkward humour and superb comedic timing, this duo will keep you laughing and begging for more in one of the best free comedy shows I've seen at the Fringe. Kemsley and Callaghan touch upon the more important things in their twenty-odd years of experience, such as how Disneyland turned Kemsley into an atheist, and how to approach an ogre-like woman who's slept with your boyfriend. Kemsley embodied a

hilarious combination of bashful and weird, which juxtaposed perfectly with Callaghan's in-your-face attitude, creating a phenomenally diverse show. Callaghan should slow down her delivery and try not to refer to her notes as often, but that comes with practice. All-in-all a fantastic show not to be missed.

Laughing Horse @ The Newsroom Basement, 3-26 Aug, 8.15pm tw rating 4/5 | [Ellie Willis]

Dan Nightingale: The Eleven and a Half Ill-Conceived Edinburgh Shows of Dan Nightingale

An enthusiastically charming albeit self-deprecating storyteller, Nightingale gives an insight into the world of comedy with a whirlwind of hilarious material squeezed into eleven and a half parts. Excitingly imaginative autobiographical tales range from the freakishly small sizes encountered in Topman to housemates not understanding the concept of using the crusty end of a loaf as a "bread defender". These whimsical tales are complemented by a knack for impressions and biting witty punchlines, which bring Nightingale's imaginative view of the world to life. He puts his audience at ease with his amiable charm: this feels less like a stand-up routine and more like a night of hilarity with a beamingly positive acquaintance - Dan Nightingale is one to watch out for.

Pleasance Dome, 3-26 Aug, 6.50pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Kristine Gallagher]

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FNT Live presents... The Jingling Lane Family Singers

A young troupe of comedians debuts at the Fringe with this insightful and hilarious collection of parodies, skits and sketches. Well-written, well-acted and well-rehearsed, this is a fast-paced and farcical indictment of modern life which pokes fun at classroom chavs, evangelical Christians awaiting the end of the world, and Jedward. Incorporating visual media to great effect, particularly in a side-splitting 'Star Trek' sketch, this is a truly original and creative take on a tried-and-tested format. Though it lags in places, impressive comic performances by each member of the cast lift 'The Jingling Lane Family Singers' into something really enjoyable. Something for everyone - don't miss.

C aquila, 2-27 Aug (not 13), 8.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

Absolute Improv!

To Be Continued...

In this lively show the experienced To Be Continued... troupe successfully blended the elements required to make this kind of improvised comedy - scenarios based partly on audience suggestions - work well. A rapport with said audience is essential and the talented foursome of performers achieved it using time-honoured improv show tactics, from using the spectators' shouted-out ideas to taking verbal or physical input from volunteers on stage. They were rewarded with some great suggestions, which were incorporated into energetic, quick-witted and madcap performances based on a variety of different 'games'. Some parts were weaker than others, but the few less-successful elements did not dampen the high spirits created by the rest of this brilliantly performed show.

C nova, 2-27 Aug, 6.45pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

Aberdeen VS. Glasgow VS. The World II - Free FGC Comedy / Laughing Horse Free Festival

Featuring a different set list every day, this show gives six acts a short solo slot each then brings them together in a quick-fire game round. Given this format, what you get is largely down to luck, andl must have been having an unlucky day because what I got was a series of stand-up routines that were for the most part unoriginal and flat. What troubled more than one of the performers was that their material was not exciting to start off with, or did not come together well, or both. That said, there were redeeming moments from two comedians new to the game, Tom Tumilty and Scott Jeffery, who provided glimmers of promise in an otherwise murky show.

Laughing Horse @ The Newsroom, 2-26 Aug, 4.30pm .
tw rating 2/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

Rob Beckett's Summer Holiday

Phil McIntyre Entertainments

Rob Beckett's show is so-called because it is his summer holiday: his working class roots won't let him see it as proper graft. And it doesn't look like hard work either; this sweetly delivered hour on a "chavvy" childhood (his words) is never laboured. Like Russell Brand, Beckett is a master at evoking the tucked-away absurdities of family life with just a few subtle observations, but refreshingly, his nostalgic snippets come without any attempts at grandiose philosophising. And while most comics will merely profess the factual accuracy of their anecdotes (undoubtedly his strength: audience interaction was a little bit stilted), Beckett has the pictures (and more) to prove them, which eventually leads the show to its joyous finale.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 6.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Rachel Aroesti]

Catriona Knox - Hellcat Mick Perrin For Just For Laughs Live

A controversial beginning sets up an intriguing performance as Catriona Knox informs the audience that it's Judgement Day. Before we discover our fate, we are led through our final hour, which features novelty characters bursting with eccentricity. Catriona immerses herself in an assortment of characters varying from Andy Murray's mother to a blunt

make-up artist lacking enthusiasm. This is an intimate performance that succeeds in creating a naturally uncomfortable atmosphere as the strikingly realistic characters look you straight in the eye and tell you their tale. The laughter wasn't consistent throughout, but at her best, Catriona is hilarious. If you can hack the awkward tension, 'Hellcat' is well worth your time.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 5.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

Shirley And Shirley Unleashed Joanna Carolan, Pascale Wilson And Michael Pearce / SO Comedy

Two Shirleys, one tall and one small, unite in performing a series of comic sketches. Bursting with energy and insanely flexible facial expressions (I think their faces may actually be made of rubber) the pair succeed in generating laughter, controversy and unexpected, dangerously close-to-the-bone stuff! From scenes of an incestuous nature to a controversial royal gathering, each sketch is unique. Every audience member is soon on the edge of their seat, fearfully anticipating being the unfortunate subject of the next joke, as it becomes evident that these girls do not hold back. Despite some sketches being better than others, I can't deny that this hour flew by. I was quite simply left wanting more.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, 3-27 Aug, 4.10pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

DANCE

(remor) Res de Res

It may seem a clichéd notion that good things come in small packages, but for '(remor)' it is completely true. This dance performance takes place in an intimate purpose-built prison cell and immediately encourages a connection with the characters portrayed. The subject matter is equally intimate: a couple explore the disintegration of their relationship through beautiful choreography. Fast sequences verge on being animalistic, and at times acrobatic: dancers negotiating a prison bunk combine with slow balances and some touchingly pedestrian moments, taking the audience on a stunning emotional journey. Do not be discouraged by the length of the performance, though it is only 11 minutes long the impression it gives is certain to last much longer.

C nova, 2 - 27 Aug, times vary.
tw rating 5/5 | [Beth Dawson]

Up And Over It - Back On Our Feet

Dynamic duo Suzanne Cleary and Peter Harding dazzle in this spellbinding performance of virtuosic technique, athletic stamina and strong characterisation. Throw into the mix video artist Jonny Reed, who takes their scintillating skill in Irish dancing, and you have a super swift show. For those who don't know, 'Up and Over It' were 'Britain's Got Talent' semi-finalists in 2011, information that's shown through a montage of TV interviews and YouTube clips. Tapping en pointe, to prove a point, with their hands, in a dance-off, in the kitchen - Cleary and Harding have created a rhythmic language of their own which beautifully synchronises in this performance partnership. Original, witty and extremely clever - a must see this season!

Assembly George Square, Aug 2-26 (excluding 14 and 21), 6.05pm
tw rating 5/5 | [Lucinda Al-Zoghbi]

MUSIC

Flowers For The Living - Free Rosi Lalor

Enchanting, though bordering on contrived, this selection of folksy tunes is pleasant but altogether predictable. The definition of easy-listening, Lalor's set meanders down memory lane - a partially fictitious memory lane for the purpose of fulfilling folk clichés, including encounters with a mysterious sailor in girlhood. There is no doubt that Rosi Lalor can sing and also write; the songs are well-constructed ('Somewhere Over the

Spectrum' is particularly special) and her voice has a vulnerability that adds to the faraway feel of the show. However, the frankly mystifying personal revelations between songs make it all feel slightly manufactured; the ingredients are there in abundance, but the soul to put Flowers For The Living a cut above the rest is somehow lacking.

Laughing Horse @ The Newsroom, 2 - 26 Aug (not 6, 13, 20), 3.15pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Olivia Sleat]

Classical Guitar - Jonathan Prag Jonathan Prag

Not everyone would think to pair Bach and Bartok, Cole Porter and Celtic Hornpipe, least of all in a solo performance for acoustic guitar. When it comes to music, though, Prag is an unapologetic anthropologist, taking in a bewildering medley of cultures and influences. Deftly handling the complex arrangements, he renders Irish folk songs richly emotional, explores crisp classical movements and closes this intimate set with a fiery and frankly brilliant flamenco. If at times he comes across as an affable music teacher, he nevertheless plays with passionate precision, intensely expressive even during the most effusive flurries of notes. Like the composers he admires, Prag draws on deep traditions and diverse styles to make exquisite, intricate music.

C too, 2 - 27 Aug (not 14), 1.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

Footstomping Traditional Scottish Music

On the Royal Mile at the heart of the festival is Whiski Bar, delivering a true taste of Scotland with its extensive whisky collection. Fitting in with ease is The Gorms, a three-man band who provide an eclectic mix of Scottish and Irish songs with a touch of modernity to suit the audience. The evening maintains intimacy with much charm as the band approaches individual tables and serenades them with heartfelt music. The Gorms radiate increasing enthusiasm, seeing more guests drawn in as the night goes on. A variety of bands will perform throughout the festival and the night provides the perfect opportunity to soak up Edinburgh's distinctive mood with a whisky and some enchanting music.

WHISKI, 3 Aug-2 Sept, 10.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

MUSICALS

The Secrets Hidden In The Beatles Rockband

New Celts Production with Dedwest Productions

With hardly any Beatles, or much playing of the Rockband game, at least there was a semi-interesting plotline to keep this show ticking along; it tells the tale of two childhood friends reunited after two years, who finally air secrets that have been plaguing them since they last spoke. 'The Secrets Hidden In The Beatles Rockband' didn't, overall, paint a particularly impressive picture: the songs were okay, though let down by the rawness of one actor's voice, and though the choreography could have been worse, it certainly didn't sparkle. Possibly the best performer in this show was the pianist, but with very simple melodies, even he couldn't bring much pizzazz to the whole thing.

C eca, 2-26 Aug (even dates only), 3.50pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Charlotte Mortimer-Talman]

Sweeney Todd

The Lincoln Company

The stride was set from the very first song: experiencing the first number in this production of 'Sweeney Todd', it felt like anything else that followed could only be a let-down, yet this was definitely not the case. Each song was full of life and energy, drawing the audience in to the infamous barber's story. Like most musicals it was not note perfect and at certain points the acting wasn't as sharp as it could have been, but the clever use of a small space intrigued the audience and made us eager to find out just what was going to come next. Humour was definitely the light in this dark tale with loads of laughs to be

enjoyed. The stride was set, and this show ended up sprinting.

C Too, 3-27 Aug (not 14), 7.50pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Rachel Campbell]

Therapy No Shoes Theatre #LittleFest at C nova

A deep and intricate therapy session that captivates more than just the two actors involved on stage in this show which deals with the loss of a child, sees weights un-lifted and traumas un-solved. When Peter finds Joe and the courage to see him four years after a tragic event, he is not so welcome in the new and efficient life of the doctor: Joe has moved on, burying his guilt and remorse in the structured life he has created for himself, while Peter still feels his dead child's weight sitting on his shoulders and can't free himself from the pictures of the past. Dialogue and song accompany the disappearing and shifting roles of who is patient and who is doctor. This has deep potential.

C nova, 2-27 Aug (not 13), 9.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

Some Small Love Story Hartshorn - Hook Productions

Cast list aside, there was nothing small in this particular love story. In an instant, this spectator found herself utterly enchanted by the romantic adventures of Grandmother, Grandfather; and Mr and Mrs New Year's Eve, represented by a four-person ensemble. This engaging quartet invited each audience member to hop aboard the Love Story express - destination: separation. From the meet-cute butterflies to the soul-destroying grief at the death of a partner, heart-wrenching performances compelled us, for a sixty-minute moment, to care. Musical interludes, though superbly performed by pianist and players, seemed somehow intrusive, superfluous. Sentimental it may sound, but the only music I needed to hear was already there, in the dialogue; the core-shaking "I've never loved like this before".

C nova, 2-27 Aug (not 13), 7.45pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Christy Brown]

The Loves I Haven't Known Bush And McCluskey

It's a well-known fact that any guy with a guitar will automatically have girls flocking to their side. Being able to play a musical instrument instantly makes you sexier, right? Not if Chris Bush and Ian McCluskey's stories are anything to go by. Through a blend of witty songs and brilliantly funny scenes, 'The Loves I Haven't Known' explores the joys and pains of adolescent first loves, near-misses and proper, sort-of-grown-up relationships. Accompanying themselves throughout, everymen Chris and Ian's pared-down but hugely entertaining musical is sweet, incredibly easy to relate to, and at times almost truly poignant. If you've often thought Ed Sheeran could do with a few more one liners and the odd melodica solo, then this is the show for you.

C nova, 2-18 Aug, 8.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Rebecca Low]

THEATRE

The Fastest Train To Anywhere The Flanagan Collective #LittleFest at C nova

'The Fastest Train To Anywhere' sounds exciting: a one man show about a strange journey on a train like no other, it stops for cigarette breaks, amongst other bizarre occurrences. The basis for the story - a man bored of his humdrum life getting on a train unsure of where he is going - is an interesting premise but, sadly, it doesn't quite work here. The writing has moments of brilliance but suffers from the presence of too much cliché, and at times is really quite dull. Luke James' performance is admirable - he takes on a large number of roles and fulfills them with urgency - but due to the dry script, the jokes fall flat. Trains take us places, but 'The Fastest Train To Anywhere' left me on the platform.

C nova, 2-12 Aug, 3.00pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Alexandra Wilks]

Cover DugOut Theatre

Covering up secrets, hiding our shame - we do it to make harsh realities less painful or more diplomatic. However, in a show where honesty isn't always the best policy, it's perhaps ironic that I don't want to cover up how I feel about this show. As truths trickle out, the witty script jumps off the stage and forces you to remain in your seat. Almost simultaneous moments of comedy and seriousness are dealt with skilfully by this group, who offer a masterclass in performing such a deceitfully simple work. An unexpected meeting and consequential evening of revelations, this play is brought to life with panache and vigour. If you see it, I'll guarantee you won't be covering up how much you enjoyed it too.

C nova, 2-27 Aug (not 13), 3.20pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

The Template For Lack Of Conversations Alison Trower

Alison Trower presents a refreshingly profound performance where philosophy and biology are enthusiastically entwined. Striking a perfect balance between the emotionally engaging and the cold, factual presentation of biology, this series of surprising chapters sees this sole performer presenting witty yet profound observations of the bigger picture. Audience interaction includes a game of Jelly Baby Snap! and harmonious sing-alongs. At times this performance is unexpectedly amusing and Trower can catch you by surprise with her shocking deadpan nature, sending you into unexpected laughter. The transitions from each chapter to the next are seemingly unrelated, but are sharp and continually engaging, making it easy to understand their common united theme: exploring the beauty, depth and complexity of human existence.

Laughing Horse @ Edinburgh City Football Club, 3-18 Aug, 12.00pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

Deirdre and Me SJC Productions

From the cobbles of the Royal Mile to the cobbles of 'Corrie, Deirdre and Me'; judging by the Fringe programme's blurb, looked like it might present an amusingly quirky caricature of the ultimate soap superfan. However, from bereavement to bullying, the plethora of sensitive issues covered unveils this as a less-than-straightforward comic show. The script was well-written but the emotional cocktail of laughter, frustration and sadness had an unsettling, if undesirable, effect. Although it wasn't always clear whether the comedy could be maintained throughout, the committed and professional performance is impressive, with a challenging script which would leave less capable actors laughing at themselves. Not as mindlessly entertaining as the soap itself, but nonetheless, worth a watch.

C nova, 2 - 27 Aug (not 14), 6.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

Three By Poe

RHR Productions (New York)

Edgar Allan Poe fans: prepare to be spooked! In "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Tell Tale Heart", using only the lights, bare stage and simple costumes, Richard Smithies makes the most of this simplicity and builds dramatic tension with an engaging portrayal as the murderer from each story. If you are not so familiar with the works of Poe, this may be one to avoid as there are no strongly visual moments to aid comprehension of the storyline, so despite Smithies' captivating voice - giving the works of Poe dramatic vitality and life - it could become a little boring. The more initiated, on the other hand, can prepare to be enraptured, as Smithies' chilling portrayal of murderous villains pulls you into Poe's horrifying literary world.

C, 2 - 27 Aug, 4.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

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