

EDITION #01:  
SAT 03 AUG 2013

## CABARET

### Anthropoetry (Mellor & Steele)

'Anthropoetry' combines electronica and slam poetry to create a stunning performance. Poet Ben Mellor and musician Dan Steele are a brilliant team: Mellor's poetry is punchy, witty, and occasionally dystopian, while Steele's instrumentals come pretty close to perfection. Using the body as their main theme, they present poems which are both cutting and beautiful. The Heart deserves a particular mention, though other poems - like those about the digestive system and the mammary glands - show the pair's more comical and political sides. There were some points where the link to their theme was a little tenuous, but this is entirely forgivable given the standard of the prose and performance. Fun, genuine, brilliant.

C nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 8.00pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Jasmine Faller]

### Now Leasing (Lea McGowan USA)

With a charming, yet confusing, twist, Lea McGowan manages to surprise every member of the audience with her introduction to 'Now Leasing'. She glides and bounds around the performance space with a wild energy, which combines acrobatics and aerial performance. As McGowan touchingly explores life's difficulties, she displays a variety of physical talents, though there is also a poem and a rather unusual interpretation of Grease's 'Sandra Dee'. It's just unfortunate that such a promising and lively show is let down by several jokes which are lost on the audience and a disjointed storyline which becomes difficult to follow. But if you're curious to see Sandra Dee overcome ADD it's worth a watch.

C nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 3.25pm.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Rebecca Lunn]

## CHILDREN'S SHOWS

### The Steadfast Tin Soldier (Paper Finch Theatre)

Bittersweet is the best word to describe this show. It's definitely not for children too young for a bit

of heartbreak, but with its sharp wit and good music, it is also full of joy. From the Pratchett-esque sewer rats to the Napoleon-obsessed Jack-in-the-box, each character has its own unique charm and on the whole they are well performed. There were a few issues with projection and enunciation, and some monologues lacked energy, but this can hopefully be put down to preview nerves. The troupe show an imaginative approach to storytelling which, minus a bit of clumsy choreography with their paper ballerina, is effective. With a bit more gusto next time round, this should grow into a charming show.

C, until 26 Aug (not 12), 11.00am.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Lizzie Milton]

### The Paper Princess (Monkeyshine Theatre)

Dressed in brightly-coloured party clothes, two ladies invite the audience to a birthday party. On entering the venue, the first step in this brilliantly immersive experience is to decorate a paper prince or princess. These then feature in an enchanting puppet show, which tells the thrilling story of a flying paper princess and her adventures. The performance is delivered enthusiastically and seamlessly, with the aid of a beautiful miniature theatre, adorable puppets, and live music playing in the corner, resulting in a thoroughly engaging show for younger children. They are integrated into the performance throughout; being made to feel as though they are guests at this delightful birthday party. A great family show.

C nova, until 9 Aug, 11.00am.  
tw rating 5/5 | [Jessica Cropper]

### The Ugly Duckling (C Theatre)

A fun, interactive and charming story about an ugly duckling that becomes a beautiful swan. This theatre adaptation expands Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale to include a whole host of characters, including a vain kitten, a self-important cockerel and a friendly toad. Each C Theatre actor successfully brings to life a multitude of animal characters, injecting each with their own amusing and lovable personality that children and adults will adore. This performance perfectly combines humour, storytelling and audience interaction, keeping children engaged and involving them in the storytelling process. Despite the additions to the story, the performance remains

true to the original tale's moral that true beauty lies within and that being nice is more important than being pretty.

C, until 26 Aug (not 12), 10.00am.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Anita Magee]

### The Man Who Planted Trees (Puppet State Theatre Company)

Beautifully blending storytelling and puppetry, this performance is sensuous, humorous, emotional and thought-provoking. Over the course of the show, which is based on an original tale by Jean Giono, we follow the narrator's path through four decades, following a significant meeting with a shepherd engaged in quietly restoring and reforesting a desolate valley in France. Rick Conte's storytelling is captivating and engages all the senses; he draws the audience into smelling the lavender, hearing the wind and feeling the rain. This, combined with the antics of Richard Medrington's hilarious dog puppet, which makes adults laugh as much as the kids, adds up to a definite family favourite. The show has been touring internationally for five years, so don't miss your chance to see this fantastic company in their home city. A stunning storytelling show!

Scottish Storytelling Centre, until 17 Aug (not 5, 12), 3.00pm.  
tw rating 5/5 | [Anita Magee]

## COMEDY

### Mick Ferry: Has Been Found Wanting (Lee Martin / Gag Reflex)

With his affable, informal and relaxed approach to this show, Mick Ferry treats his audience like a group of mates in the pub, generating interest and apathy in equal measure. Ferry's casual manner dictated a style lacking in sharp punchlines or witty one-liners but, fortunately, he is blessed with some genuine comic talent. With this comedic skill, and his personable delivery, Ferry kept the audience's attention throughout, as he rambled through conventional subjects like family values, racism and growing up. Creating an atmosphere reminiscent of an evening at the local, Ferry offered a couple of pints worth of comedy, but kept us sober enough that nobody left early with a hangover.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 25 Aug (not 12), 6.15pm.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Robert McGowan Stuart]

### Bob And Jim - Two Stars (Bob And Jim)

This seamless duo have been everywhere and done everything together, and it hasn't dented their hearty passion for life. Bob and Jim present a delightfully slow-paced trawl through their many escapades. Charting their drastic career progress from membership of a street gang to performing at National Trust stately homes, Bob and Jim's life stories never fail to engage. Sprinklings of ukulele playing help to bring their varied musical offerings to life: from involvement in the Madchester scene to entertaining groupies in their caravan. Laid-back and on-point, the show's many detours are as funny as the main thread. It was a treat to watch these two blokes bumbling their way through life and improvised costume changes. Two smartly-dressed stars worthy of five.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 25 Aug (not 12, 13), 8.20pm.  
tw rating 5/5 | [Jonathan Mayo]

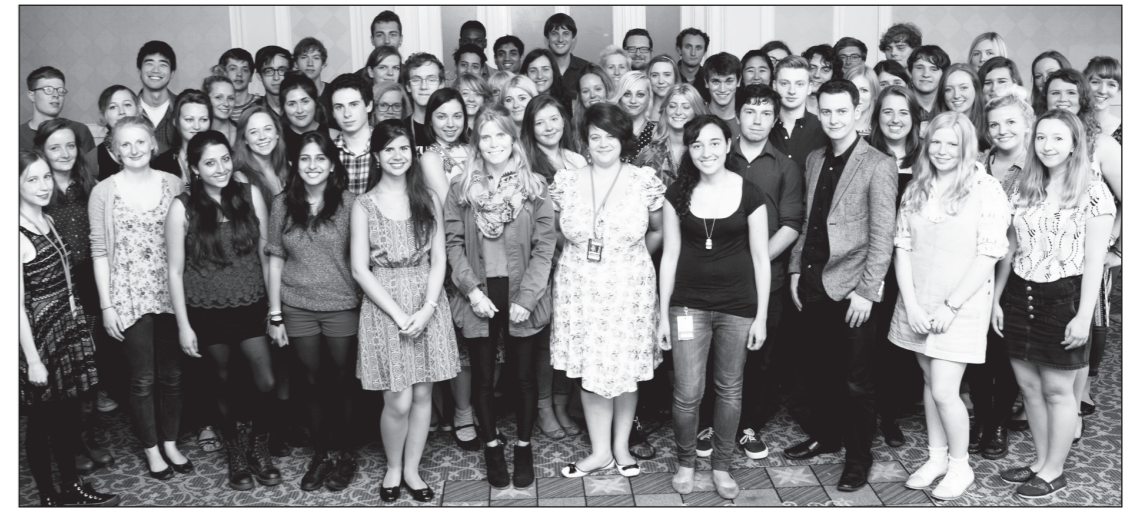
### This Is Soap: The Improvised Soap Opera (C Theatre)

This comedy troupe crafts together an improvised soap opera entirely from audience suggestions. The cast, who also perform the always popular 'Shakespeare For Breakfast', flex their comedic muscles in this funny, anything-goes show, combining different personalities, accents, plot twists and surprise appearances. Onlookers are asked to invent character names to start the ball rolling and it can go anywhere from there, as each member displays great powers of comic observation and quick thinking. The unexpectedness of invented circumstances keep both the performers and the audience guessing what will happen next. As always with improv, results may vary, however, this team works seamlessly together and are constantly on their toes.

C, until 26 Aug (not 12), 1.15pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Alice Harrold]

### Mary Bourke: Muffragette (Mary Bourke/ The Stand Comedy Club)

Mary Bourke's affable Irish accent and soft-spoken delivery wraps up her acidic wit and wry observations in a big, pretty, feminist bow. She's on a one woman mission to re-brand feminists as "Muffragettes" (since some women recoil at the thought of being called a feminist), trying to take back the movement



## SNAP OF THE DAY: Here they are everybody, the ThreeWeeks Review team 2013! Photo: Kat Gollock

from the mythical man-haters and give it back to those crazy cats who just quite fancy equality. Don't be afraid of the repeated use of the 'f' word however, as 'Muffragette' is a fun and frothy show. It's peppered with pop culture references, with insightful and intelligent comedy about the society we live in and the media we consume. Vive la (Muffragette) revolution!

The Stand III & IV, until 25 Aug (not 1, 12), 5.50pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

### Nish Kumar Is A Comedian (Phil McIntyre Entertainments)

Nish Kumar is a comedian, don't you know, and he more than lives up to the title in his very funny new show. It's unsettling for a routine to be so incredibly warm and charming, when much of the material comes from Kumar's experiences of racism in his home country. However, he manages to shine a light on the ridiculousness of a few bad situations in an upbeat, almost impish way. His non-threatening middle class persona keeps it all quite safe and pedestrian, leaving the audience openly guffawing at what could potentially have been risky material. Nevertheless, in only his second solo show, he proves himself to be an extremely bright, fun and interesting new talent.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 25 Aug, 8.10pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

### Ladyboner (Art Sex and Snacks)

Don't watch this show with your

parents - as the name suggests, it's a little bit naughty. Arriving on stage in a fluorescent green outfit, Australian comedian and self-proclaimed goth Lisa Skye clearly feels the need to be provocative. She delivers her comedy in the form of art, poetry and a rather accurate depiction of 'dad dancing'. Skye is a very engaging performer and her recounting of personal experiences provides a lot of laughs, but the shock-value of some of the material can overshadow that. She definitely has the potential to be very entertaining: witty, but not quite as outrageous as she possibly thinks she is.

C Nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 4.50pm.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Grace Brennan]

### John Robins - Where Is My Mind? (Phil McIntyre Entertainments)

"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Taking inspiration from an old tattered copy of 'The Great Gatsby', Robins takes his audience on a nostalgic journey beginning with his awkward adolescent years and running right through to his ageing, ailing thirties. The witty dialogue flows seamlessly from story to story, with topics spanning from rimming to reverse parking, each of which is as hilarious as the last. This self-deprecating stand-up captivates his audience brilliantly and holds them, with ease, for the duration of the show. Keeping it simple, Robins presents comedy in its rawest form: one man, one microphone, one

fantastically funny show.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 25 Aug, 9.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Peter Dorman]

### Darts Wives (Gavin & Gavin)

The real sport is not darts but backstabbing, in this professional and polished parody of football WAG culture. The four brilliant actresses play both the ambitious wives and the dart-hurling husbands, with rapid role reversals. The DWAGS are delightfully warped, and will stop at nothing to help their men win, from cognitive therapy to sado-masochism with hair-straighteners. The plotline includes dysfunctional sisters, a sexting stalker and warring spouses; culminating in a headline-grabbing betrayal. Jokes flew thick and fast, and although a couple of them missed the mark (Anne Frank gags are always risky), the majority had the audience snorting and applauding continuously. Don't miss out on this exuberant and relentless comedy.

Assembly Roxy, until 26 Aug (not 7, 12), 4.50pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Isobel Steer]

**TW ratings...**  
**1/5 Bad**  
**2/5 Mediocre**  
**3/5 Good**  
**4/5 Very Good**  
**5/5 Excellent**

## MUSIC

### The Oxford Gargoyles - Jazz A Cappella (The Oxford Gargoyles)

Now in Edinburgh for their eighth consecutive year, the Oxford Gargoyles are an undeniably practiced act. Individually assured, each of the twelve singers blends their voice expertly into genuinely beautiful harmonies. They aren't quite so confident when it comes to the playful choreography, but their occasional missteps don't distract from impressive vocals. Likewise a few wobbles on the highest notes don't detract from their otherwise exceptional range. This is a short, sweet set of jazz standards, pop numbers and the occasional Disney show tune. Bold arrangements and sudden tempo-changes keep the format fresh through a diverse set including a swinging 'Tainted Love' and an exquisite 'Round Midnight.' Eclectic and enjoyable, this is a fine showcase for some truly talented performers.

C, until 17 Aug, 2.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

### The Alleycats: Contemporary A Cappella (The Alleycats)

From Aretha Franklin's 'Respect' a lesser known Ed Sheeran track, via jazz classics, there is nothing a cappella singers The Alleycats are afraid to tackle. Though their dance moves leave the audience cringing, every member of the thirteen strong group has undeniable vocal talent. Their enthusiasm and willingness to not take themselves too seriously makes for hilarious viewing, and the cheesiness really is infectious. Add a bit of audience participation to the mix in the form of Florence and the Machine's 'Shake it Out' and what you have is a very good show with a lot of character, though perhaps the choreography needs refining a little. They're a talented bunch, The Alleycats, and certainly not to be missed.

C, until 13 Aug, 3.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Gray]

### Whale Of A Time (Coreyah Korea)

Different, bizarre and sometimes surreal; comparing Coreyah to any mainstream western artist is difficult. Consigning them to the narrow strictures of one genre - even more difficult. Performing everything from Beatles covers to Korean folk love stories, the band were passionate throughout, their energy infectious and their music uplifting. Ever listened

to a Geomungo or Daegum? I hadn't. These two classical Korean instruments, played alongside a guitar, percussion and vocals, created a beautifully layered sound that can only be described as coreyan; an ensemble of tradition and modernity. Unfortunately, the language barrier was problematic at times, hindering act and audience from truly connecting. Nonetheless, whilst Coreyah may not be everyone's cup of tea, it would be a real shame if they slipped under the radar.

C nova, until 17 aug (not 12), 7.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Ankur Anil Shah]

### Sotho Sounds: Junk Funk (Mick Perrin Worldwide In Association With Risenga Makondo)

Sotho Sounds' instruments may be made out of rubbish, but the same can't be said for their music. Incorporating an eclectic mix of genres, this group, hailing from the Kingdom of Lesotho, have created an energetic show full of homemade instruments, incredible harmonies and a fair amount of twerking. It's evident that the band don't take themselves too seriously, bringing elements of humour through the donning of crazy wigs and their amusing song descriptions. Unfortunately, some songs did start sounding similar, but the occasional interlude of softer a cappella and Wellington boot dances succeeded in recapturing my attention. The band were clearly having a good time, and their enthusiasm was infectious. It's impossible not to leave in a good mood.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 26 Aug (not 14), 1.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Victoria Beardwood]

## MUSICALS & OPERA

### A Theory Of Justice: The Musical! (DEM Productions)

If political philosophy sounds too taxing a subject for you, the cast of this frolicsome production make it into something much more fun. As a professor is tossed around through time, it allows the players to skid on and off stage as an array of philosopher caricatures from Socrates the puppet to Kant as a drag-queen fairy godmother. Satisfactory acting is boosted by delightfully camp dance moves, mannerisms and facial expressions along with expressive accents which make for a show scattered with audience chortles. The musical score is comprehensive and some

pretty good harmonies are belted out along the way, both in rap and ballad form. Turns out politics and philosophy aren't so Greek to me.

C, until 26 Aug, 12.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Natasha Gartside]

### Kiss Of The Spider Woman (UCeLsewhere)

Alternately flashy and heart-rending, this ambitious revival set in a South American prison chronicles the unlikely friendship between an ardent revolutionary and a bold homosexual as they use fantasy to escape their horrific reality. Ben Whittle, outstanding as the sensitive, flamboyant Molina, leads a superb cast of students who sing, dance, and act compellingly throughout. While the musical features ambitious dance numbers executed with energy and aplomb, it is most powerful in its quieter moments, poignantly capturing the pain and longing of the tortured prisoners as they dream of their wives, their mothers, and of freedom. Though the story loses some of its sway near the end, the cast makes the most of the material to keep the audience transfixed.

C, until 15 Aug, 12.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Elaine Teng]

### The Bridge (Benjamin Scheuer)

From tales of his childhood cookie tin banjo all the way through death, love and surviving cancer, 'The Bridge' is at once charmingly boyish and disarmingly brutal in its honesty. Performing their quietly told yet potent autobiographical tale, Ben and his guitar instantly welcome you, like a friend, into an intimate portrait of his frighteningly real story. Whilst not especially startlingly unique in vocals or style, the show's mellow folk rhythms, sometimes jumping into swaggering jazz or a punchy Beatles-esque tune, neatly knit together this often uncomfortable narrative. Dropping into repetitious refrains at its lower moments, this show is at its best when Ben assaults his guitar, his head of curls thrashing all over as he smashes out his life-story with exhausting frankness.

C nova, until 26 Aug, 9.05pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

## THEATRE

### Substance (Sunday's Child Ireland)

"Find the sliver of sky", Jodie urges fellow drugs worker Simone in 'Substance', a brutal blend of physical and conventional theatre

from Traverse 50 writer Eva O'Connor. But there is little light to be had for the four characters in this portrayal of life revolving around the bagging, selling and (on Fridays) ritualistic taking of cocaine. Set in a single flat, the production makes powerful use of physical theatre to illustrate the characters' repetitive, inescapable daily routine and the evolving relationship between Simone and Jodie, who quietly steal the show from their initially dominant male counterparts. But despite this, the play's nihilistic descent into violence has a sadly familiar predictability, while the tantalising promise of delving deeper into the characters' relationships feels unfulfilled.

C nova, until 26 Aug, 8.40pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

### Alice In Wonderland (Oxford University Dramatic Society)

This production combines iconic elements of Lewis Carroll's well known story with newly imagined scenes exploring a darker side to Alice's home life. While confusing at times, as the play continues, the parallels between Wonderland and reality become more apparent, and a picture of stifling Victorian society unfolds. The talented cast skilfully switch characters and make a good use of space to create a convincing Wonderland, though the realist scenes, while well acted , are often complex and hard to follow. The choice to show a disturbing background to this beloved children's story is an interesting one, but I can't help feeling that this grown up approach removes some of the magic and charm we expect to find down the rabbit-hole.

C nova, until 26 Aug, (not 13), 2.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Elspeith Rudd]

### Snap Out Of It! (Strung Up Theatre Company)

'Snap Out Of It!' is not an average play. There is no plot, no characters and no script. Consisting of numerous accounts of mental illness taken from Cambridge students, repeated verbatim, this truly affecting and deeply interesting play may cause tears, but it is an education in empathy and understanding. The performers are, in their own words, "not actors" but rather mouthpieces. Even so, they do an incredible justice to their material. Never overshadowing the accounts themselves, they switch in and out of the multiplicity of voices which are presented with ease. Testament to the play's power, on leaving I felt as if I understood more of what it means to be part of the

flawed but wonderful human race.

C nova, until 26 Aug, 11.00am.

tw rating 4/5 | [Samuel Evan Graydon]

### Whistleblower (ImmerCity Ireland)

'Whistleblower' is almost excellent. Almost. The audience are the jury in the trial of a fictitious, Edward Snowden style whistleblower. We hear from the punctilious prosecutor, an impassioned activist, and the accused himself. The verdict lies in our hands, and it is here that the company make their only misstep. Having skilfully, sensitively explored the ins and outs of this complex issue, the play's facilitator instructs us to discuss our verdict before casting our vote: to mull over these complex issues publicly, with complete strangers. With an uninhibited crowd it may work, but in this performance, what followed were five uncomfortable minutes of awkward silence. With a little tweaking, though, the currently very good 'Whistleblower' could be something really special.

C nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 4.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

### Island State (Quirk Productions)

Quirk Productions' award-winning play certainly is quirky. Yet while this darkly comic two-woman performance is engaging enough, it never quite settles on a tone, or message, leaving me dissatisfied. Both actresses are very good, conveying their broadly written characters - the only survivors of a drowned Britain - convincingly, without straying into the pitfalls of caricature. They make the most of the tiny, claustrophobic studio space, really selling the idea of this tiny, ever diminishing island. I expected more from the premise, though, and it felt as though the script was struggling to say something meaningful about British identity - historically, politically, culturally - but it wasn't sure what to say, exactly, rendering the whole thing inconsequential. Perhaps that was the point?

C nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 2.05pm.

tw rating 2/5 [Andrew Leask]

### The Gypsybird Speaks (Max Bell Theatre Company)

The play begins with an Orville-lookalike in a dress swooping across the stage, probably one of the most coherent moments in the production. Centred on the disappearance of a young woman, 'The Gypsybird Speaks' explores the impact of this on members of her community, who have gathered in an otherworldly wood to share their thoughts. This results in a series

of drawn-out nature metaphors, culminating in the sight of an insect-woman smearing blood on cast members. Confused? The plot certainly is. Sadly this detracts from the cast, who infuse the production with wit and vitality, just not enough to save the play from getting lost in the forest it is set in. The Gypsybird may speak, but you probably won't understand what it is saying.

C, until 26 Aug (not 13), 5.15pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Melissa Steel]

### Brush (Synesthetic Collective)

'Brush' is a refreshingly raw and quirky take on the familiar 'starving artist' theme. The stage is transformed into a squalid flat where two art school graduates, Matt and Swanny (Danny Mellor and Forest Watkins), relate their tangled web of lives and loves. Mellor and Watkins's performances do Melanie Anne Ball's painfully realistic dialogue justice, imbuing the familiar rants of a twenty-something adrift with the right mix of humour and self-pity. It really is hard not to become immersed in their reality. This illusion only falters when the play covers the topic of sexuality, the storyline verging on a hackneyed trope and losing some of its subtlety. Otherwise, 'Brush' is fresh and fearless.

C Nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 7.40pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Melissa Steel]

### Damned (Aireborne Theatre)

The flyer for 'Damned' claims it "developed into an absurdist drama of its own accord", but anyone familiar with Samuel Beckett will see that Jack Harrison's play is highly influenced by this Irish playwright's work. However, those unfamiliar with Beckett need not feel put off; the play is intended to be hard to follow, strange and esoteric for the audience. It depicts the conflict between Hansteg and Alteg in their attempt to control Etranger. While Hansteg believes Etranger must be taught logic, Alteg holds that Etranger must develop his imagination. The structure of the play is intensely repetitive, and this factor, combined with the intimate space, make this a claustrophobic experience. However, the dialogue is witty and sharply performed, and the set design is imaginative.

C nova, on Aug 2-26 (even dates only), 1.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Michael Black]

### Human And Other Things (Namat Theatre Company)

This is a serious attempt to bring a story inspired by Egyptian literature to a wide audience; unfortunately

it has ended up being inaccessible and may therefore struggle in its aim. There are allusions to Egyptian writers, but they will be hard to spot for those unfamiliar with Egyptian literature. A woman and man are trapped in a flat against their will. Both appear to be victims of political oppression, which has somehow left the man paralysed and turned the woman to terrorism. But the viewer is not given enough to be able to grasp the cause of the man's paralysis and entrapment, or see the motivation for the woman's terrorism. Meanwhile the dialogue does not always sound exactly like English, while the acting feels forced.

C nova, until 10 Aug, 5.30pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Michael Black]

### Bright Lights (Léonie Kate Higgins)

Léonie Kate Higgins is a natural solo performer, bringing charm and energy to her Fringe show 'Bright Lights'. The setting is Léonie's last day at the office before she escapes to pursue fame as a singer, and sees her indulging in anxious day dreaming in which her future in music is disastrous. Many might think the mindless boredom of the office has been done to death in comedy, especially in recent television shows, yet if they give this a chance, they won't be disappointed. Léonie gives a personal performance, showcasing a talent for singing, engaging the audience and bringing to life those incidental characters around her. Keep an eye out for the part where she uses a telephone and lamp to stand in for studio recorder Kenny and manager Dave Fish.

C nova, until 26 Aug (not 1, 12) 3.15pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Michael Black]

### INFO

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“When I started at the Fringe the average audience attendance was just three people. As the saying goes: you learn more about yourself as a performer in front of three than you do in front of three hundred. As a seasoned performer I can honestly say some of my most rewarding experiences were in front of single figures... but if it happens this year I'm going to kill myself and everyone in my venue - because this is mostly a lie to put new comics at ease”

Fringe guru Brendon Burns has five tips for new performers at the Festival - read them at [www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2013BB](http://www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2013BB)



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