

**EDITION #04:
TUE 06 AUG 2013**

COMEDY

BrainSex (Timandra Harkness)

Drawing on the work of academic experts from universities across the UK, entertaining and well produced VT, and an erudite but accessible understanding of her source material, Timandra Harkness makes this comic lecture effortlessly engaging and a pleasure to watch. Starting from the premise that you don't teach people, you show them something interesting and then they teach themselves, she free-associates the comic, every-day applications and overlaps between neurology, psychology and philosophy with an unguarded, personal account of her investigation into what makes a brain male or female. Flitting eruditely from scientific studies into the shape of cab-drivers lobes to comic blues songs about science not yet having accounted for consciousness, you'll walk away from it amused, informed, and possibly with chocolate.

The Box @ Assembly George Square until 26 Aug, 2.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Joe Abel]

Graham Clark: Afraid Of The Clark

You can expect more than a few laughs when you go to see this liberally-bearded comic. There were times during his performance when he had the crowd in absolute hysterics, although the show itself was sometimes a bit jarring; not only did he jump from topic to topic erratically, making it sometimes difficult to follow his thread, but there were also times when he seemed to be struggling for material. However, once he did get onto a roll, he offered comedy gold. Subject matter stayed on quite trivial ground, but his show was more focused on the banter with the audience rather than on pre-prepared material. Don't expect to have your sides splitting the whole time, but when this guy gets it right, he really gets it right.

Assembly Roxy, until 26 Aug (not 12), 7.00pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Jessica Cropper]

Anti-Clever (Jake Bourke)

There was a lot about this show that could have been better. Bourke

seemed to fail to connect well with his audience, although this may have had something to do with the fact, revealed at the end of the set, that half of the people present had been expecting bingo, not stand-up. Although the prepared material was often interesting, it suffered in its delivery; anecdotes often trailed off into nothing, and an over-reliance on pauses left much of the remainder feeling stilted. The funniest moments by far were unprepared, a stand-out being Bourke's description of a military flypast which briefly derailed the set as 'the world's most expensive heckle'. All of which leads me to wonder, maybe he should just try improv instead?

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, until 25 Aug, 6.45pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Tom Bateman]

Robin (A One Man Comedy) (Getting Into Grips)

'Robin' is a show that seems likely to be given either 1/5 or 5/5. It's just that kind of experience. I'm going to go with 5/5. It's a surprising, funny, and incredibly unusual piece of maverick comic theatre that places incredible strain on its sole performer, Adam Drake, while also demanding a lot of its audience. It is a daring and ambitious journey through the mind of its titular protagonist, and Drake's performance, playing two or three characters at once, makes it work. While 'Robin' may not be to everyone's tastes, I urge you to persevere; it may be one of the most indescribably wonderful pieces of theatre I've seen.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), 4pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Tom Bateman]

Gravity Boots (EdCom And 3 Of A Kind Productions)

Enter into this madcap show with an open mind and you will be rewarded. A sketch show made up of surrealist stories and nonsensical songs, it might not be for everyone, but if you do like it then you will really, really like it. The whimsical ideas that have emerged from these funny fellows' brains have combined to create wacky sketches that work on many levels. A Mighty Boosh-esque scene in which two mermen recount their personal story has some hilarious dialogue, but also moments of wonderful visual comedy, while another sketch could be taken as either a commentary on the fictional nature of religion, or as just a ridiculously silly scene.

However you take it, this bizarre show is not to be missed.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 26 Aug (not 12), 5.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Victoria Beardwood]

Awkward Hawk (Paul Duncan McGarrity)

Endearing comic Paul McGarrity talks us through his social awkwardness, recounting the most surreal tales with a modest shyness that makes him truly likeable. However, I'm not convinced that without this self-asserted unease, that the show would be as funny - the material is not especially gripping but McGarrity's repeated mannerisms (pushing his glasses back up his nose and grinning), show the charm he possesses in his presentation and he instantly becomes a charismatic act. Discussing his encounters in London and Uganda, the Northern-born performer defies efforts to be cool and encourages everyone to embrace their inner geek. So if you're admittedly socially awkward, check out 'Awkward Hawk'; there aren't any solutions offered, but at least you'll know you're not alone.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, until 25 Aug (not 12), 3.30 pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Grace Brennan]

Claudia O'Doherty: Pioneer (The Invisible Dot Ltd)

Somewhere in the realm between stand-up, absurd storytelling and interactive performance art lies Claudia O'Doherty, and if you can get past her boisterous, unnaturally loud voice then you're in for a treat. Making good use of screens, projections, videos and more than one Shania Twain interlude, O'Doherty is forcefully energetic (intimidatingly so), and the show is slick and well put together. Her comedy is really quite juvenile at times, yet it's self-aware; she courses through her media CV, proving to the world that she CAN be taken seriously and DOES NOT have to move back in with her parents. 'Pioneer' is smarter than it seems, yet the gags are dumb and funny; a truly bizarre show full of surprises.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug (not 12), 9.50pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Elizabeth Jewell]

Jamie Demetriou: People Day (The Invisible Dot Ltd)

Jamie Demetriou played a number of engaging, twisted and hilarious characters in this intimate performance. An oversized choir boy ready to pop, and an absent

father who never quite got the hang of party games, are amongst his bizarre creations. This is not character comedy that relies on imitating stereotypes, and is all the stronger for abandoning any clichés. Demetriou's own amicable character shone through, particularly when lamenting his place in a porta-cabin just outside Pleasance Courtyard. It's a great porta-cabin though, and this is great comedy, which makes you wish more of the world was populated with people quite this messed up. Plus, there's enough going on in the interludes between characters to guarantee there's never a dull moment.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug (not 12), 7.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Jonathan Mayo]

Worst Show On The Fringe (Nigel Lovell / PBH's Free Fringe)

This disappointing showcase's title did its performers no favours. With each comedian already having received a one star review, the audience's expectations were nearly non-existent, rendering any laughs a welcome bonus. Yet the show's premise, and MC Nigel Lovell's recitation of each act's past critiques, amplified the silence when jokes fell flat. Every comedian relentlessly repeated the ineffective, unfunny use of audience participation - I ended up knowing more comic facts about my fellow audience members than about any of the performers on stage. Had the showcase focused more on the quality of the material, and less on the comedians' past painful appraisals, this might have felt more like a comedy show and less like four people almost inadvertently proving the critics right.

Bristo Bar & Kitchen, until 24 Aug, 12.30pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Polly Davidson]

Vikki Stone - Definitely (Corrie McGuire for Objective Talent)

In what can only be described as a non-stop, musical and highly comical extravaganza, Vikki Stone is back at the Fringe after her sell out run last year. With a strong focus on Stone's obsession with the TV talent show formula, the audience is treated to an array of songs and slide-shows that never fail to entertain. There are times where the humour wanes and Stone goes off on a slightly unnecessary tangent, but this is excusable as these moments are still fascinating



SNAP OF THE DAY: It's A Band Called Quinn 'Biding Time' at Summerhall Photo: Mark Dawson

to watch. The entire set is a grand theatrical experience and it will be a great surprise if Stone's third show does not match and surpass the success of her previous two.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 25 Aug, 7.20pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Rory Morgan]

Waking Up To Myself! (Raymond Mearns / Scottish Comedy Festival)

Raymond Mearns reminded the audience that only a certain (middle-aged) demographic finds him funny. His set comprised mostly profanities and boorish imitations, like the aggressive drunken ramblings of the bloke at last orders who you pray isn't on your night bus home. Interestingly, though, his improv skills were far stronger than the scripted jokes and his repartee with the audience was quick and clever. Unfortunately, the script revolved around a tired-seeming "kids these days" routine and a series of painful gags about how to bonk his wife without the kids hearing. The style worked for many, and the laughter was raucous at times, but if you're expecting any sort of delicately worded, refined humour then you'll be disappointed.

Scottish Comedy Festival @ The Beehive Inn, until 25 Aug (not 12), 7.45pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Elizabeth Jewell]

THEATRE

Pussyfooting (SleepyWells Productions)

Pussyfooting is the first show from SleepyWells Productions from Sheffield. This youthful group's play is a comedy in which the female characters lose control over themselves when their feet start telling them what to do, offering a serious yet humorous look at domestic life and the strains it can put on a relationship. It's hard, though, to really understand the meaning of the feet which the women can't escape, though there are hints of a connection with mental illness. SleepyWells certainly demonstrate promise with their entertaining performances and also their creative set design - rather than filling the stage with traditional props, the group use chalk on slate to build the environment around the characters. 'Pussyfooting' almost manages to get it right; this is fun but slightly incoherent.

C aquila, until 26 Aug, 1.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Michael Black]

Tea At Five (Old Joint Stock Theatre Company)

With her cut-glass speech, over sparkling tea-things and a haze of

glamour, Meghan Lloyd as Katharine Hepburn rubs away at the resilient veneer of this icon of Hollywood class. We're told of golden triumphs and a catalogue of disasters, yet the queen of sophistication retains her headstrong determination and wicked humour: legs astride, swaggering in heels and every bit the alpha-female. Hepburn lived by a motto of attention to detail and here her performative alter-ego, Lloyd, revels in that same absolute precision, with a mean economy for gesture and expression. Modestly staged but with more refinement than Hepburn's impeccable quiff, 'Tea At Five' serves up a captivatingly elegant show and a real treat of a story.

theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall, until 24 Aug (not 4, 18), 11.05am.

tw rating 4/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

1/5 Bad

2/5 Mediocre

3/5 Good

4/5 Very Good

5/5 Excellent

Mercy Killers (Harold Clurman Lab Theater)

Raw, emotional and devastatingly honest. When Joe's wife is diagnosed with cancer and the health insurance company refuses to pay, his life and his beliefs begin to fall apart. Broadway actor Michael Milligan's solo show gives an insight into the destructive personal impact of the American health care system. It makes public the private stories of thousands of Americans and shows an urgent need for change in a system failing so many. His performance is incredibly powerful and passionate, sweeping the audience up in Joe's story; making them laugh sometimes and bringing them to the edge of tears at others. Milligan has written a beautifully moving and thought-provoking piece that will leave you feeling a mixture of thankful, angered and saddened. Assembly Hall, until 26 Aug, 2.45pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Anita Magee]

Baddies (Regent Rep)

What seemingly starts as some silly Godfather spoof soon turns into a moral debate in this wickedly funny production of 'Baddies'. Reminiscent of the recent furore over the humanity of Ian Brady, it looks beyond the one-dimensional 'evil' that characterises fiction and society's bad guys. Regent Rep scrutinises a parade of movie stereotypes, from the pervy romantic lead to the soulless villain. With some teasingly great comic timing, this show sadly lets itself down in the closing scenes, as everything hurries to an ending before a substantial story has materialised. Despite a talented cast's best efforts, a too-brief script meant the 'Baddies' didn't really get the chance to make good.

theSpace on the Mile, until 17 Aug (not 4, 11), 6.05pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

Free Money Magic Show (Ian Saville / Free Festival)

Magician Ian Saville gives us a lesson on the world financial crisis. I say 'lesson' because I was unable to shake the feeling that I was back in school during this show. He seems like a Politics teacher, desperately trying to make Marx accessible to disinterested teenagers. Saville tries to wow us by pulling pennies from behind ears and performing some dodgy ventriloquism, but this is only met with sniggers from the back of the 'class'. It's a shame that the magic is so corny because Saville actually has some insightful things to say about economics. His delivery is a little befuddled and old-fashioned, but if the audience

stick with him they might learn a thing or two.

Laughing Horse @ The Newsroom, until 25 Aug (not 5, 12, 19), 7.30pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Melissa Steel]

The TEAM Makes A Play (Red Paw Productions)

A show of a documentary about creating a show might seem like, at worst, a cop-out way of making a cheap Fringe production and, at best, an elaborate promotional advert. However, by recording every fall-out and near meltdown of Fringe First winners, The TEAM, this documentary just about manages to hold its own as a worthy performance. Intelligently threaded together (albeit with some repetition and dragged out story-telling) the documentary exposes the hidden story of their production, 'The Mission Shift'. On stage, a damning exploration of American capitalism, while behind the curtain we see actors forced to stifle artistic expression in the face of a society obsessed with money. This is a not especially maverick but nonetheless irate message to The Man.

theSpace @ Symposium Hall, until 10 Aug, 11.0pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

Solfatara (Atresbandes)

A Spanish feast of sharp physical theatre; quirky, absurdist musings and unfathomable ridiculousness is the order of the day from Catalanian company, Atresbandes. This is a show that certainly yells out for attention. It creates a blisteringly accurate portrait of wrecked relationships and emotional brinkmanship, with the help of a lot of silliness, a stropky subtitle translator and a creepy manifestation of one's inner conscience with a balaclava. Whilst sometimes leaping into the downright crude, in its finest moments 'Solfatara' is anything but. In this barmy place where puff pastry, lemon air freshener and Mozart played on a synth somehow make eye-opening and even perfect poetic sense, you'll find a beautifully novel and terrifically bonkers new show.

Summerhall, until 25 Aug (not 8, 15), 8.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

Burton's Last Call (Dotted Line Productions)

The first time you meet our actor he is not in character, explaining the constraints of the Free Fringe and thanking the audience for their attendance. But when he emerges from behind that black curtain only a short moment later, the transformation is undeniable.

His portrayal of a declining Richard Burton is effortless. It may seem rather cliché, but it would not do him justice to say anything other than that he becomes Burton: charming, pained, brutally honest, complete with acerbic wit, unashamed of his ambition or his background, and wonderfully unabashed about acknowledging his talent. A powerfully intimate performance, perhaps geared towards an older audience, but charming nonetheless in its simplicity and realisation.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, until 24 Aug, 3.45pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

Captain Gingerbeard (David Burke)

This is stand up comedian and Fringe regular David Burke's first foray into storytelling for children. It's listed under theatre in the programme, because of its experimental nature, but Burke hopes his new material will be able to find a younger audience. Thankfully he has plenty to offer and makes use of it imaginatively. Perhaps most interesting is his idea of making the history of the potato famine and emigration accessible and entertaining for children, though the feeling, in a lively discussion at the end between Burke and the audience, was that the presentation was slightly too demanding for a child's concentration. Burke has plans to use the idea for a children's book, so keep an eye out.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, until Aug 25 (not 7), 2.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Michael Black]

Lockerbie: Lost Voices (Elements World Theatre)

'Lockerbie: Lost Voices' is a triumphant tale of love and loss. The cast give seemingly effortless portrayals of the victims; Doreen McGillivray and James Bryce are incredible in their portrayal of a older married couple, stunning in their intimacy and realism, and a genuine joy to watch. The whole cast is so completely bewitching, that when the bomb hits, it feels so confusedly unexpected; you get the sense that these are such painfully unfinished lives. Yet in the wonderfully moving scenes after the explosion, the cast give us a sense of calm and finality, with some of the closure that such tragedies steal from us. A truly stunning piece of theatre.

Scottish Storytelling Centre, until 26 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 7.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

Hound Dog (Ginny Davis Productions)

Expect more titters than barking laughs from this light comedy about family relationships. I felt the actors were straining at the collar in these stereotypical roles, struggling with a mundane plot which needed a chalkboard sign to move it along. I'd put it down to my being a cat-person, but then even I'd say the greatest freedom and most decent performances came from the two dogs. Set entirely within one room, it's a contrived scene of a family of four and their canine pet. Yet one tail-end twist hints that returning Fringe writer Davis might not be so straightforwardly sweet. At times amusing and touching, it could at least be used to soothe the blues after any macabre drama you may have witnessed.

Sweet Grassmarket, until 11 Aug, 4.00pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Amber-Page Moss]

Mrs Moneypenny Returns (Mrs Moneypenny / IMWP)

After a two years absence, Mrs Moneypenny returns to the Fringe with a sensory spectacle... in a kitchen. With the help of her assistant Dawn, and one or two members of the audience, she cooks and natters her way through the hour, touching on topics from shooting outfits to spurtles. If that's not enough to tempt you, then the aroma of gourmet snacks (sweet and savoury) as they bake in the oven certainly will. And yes, you do get a taste. The performance is bright and breezy, and not at all penny-pinching; both the prepared material and improvised moments will keep you smiling. Doesn't matter if you're not a fan of AGAs - this show is a thoroughly delectable experience.

AGA Showroom, until 25 Aug, times vary.

tw rating 5/5 | [Natasha Gartside]

Next Door (Out of Balanz)

Prompted by the death of his neighbour, Ivan Hansen begins a nostalgia trip back through his childhood, tracing the many moments in his life that have shaped him as a person. The two master storytellers weave together physical theatre, huge numbers of props and an infectious energy to create an incredibly compelling production. There are constant diversions in the tale, which feels a little like an excuse to cram as many stage tricks in as possible, but it's worth it for the one-man battle scene, and the wonderful characterisation of the personalities we meet along the way. The incredible warmth of the

performance makes it a joy to watch. And be sure to stay for the drink at the end.

Underbelly, Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 13), 6.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

Pirates and Mermaids (Poor Boy)

Intimate, honest and interactive, this one and a half hour monologue might make you forget you're watching a play. Plus, the outdoor location provides a pleasant change to theatre studio darkness this summer. As the play tackles universal themes of home, love and family, you're actively encouraged to reflect upon your own life, though, given its heart-warming and romantic nature, it's probably only one for the theatrically sweet-toothed. Drawing upon traditional Scottish fairy tales, this piece of new writing includes technical touches that make it very much of its time. But the real credit goes to Jeremiah Reynolds' charming, convincingly considered characterisation. Slips between accents only accentuate the theme of conflict. Beautifully believable, there was a genuine tear in my eye.

Scottish Storytelling Centre, until 25 Aug (not Mondays), 10.30am, 12.15pm, 2.30pm, 4.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Amber-Page Moss]

Ban This Filth! (Alan Bissett and Sacha Kyle)

I've struggled with the rating for this. This idea-fuelled show is a springboard for debate: if you think Alan Bissett makes a good point you'll love it, if not, you won't. But to be honest, that's largely irrelevant. This show, however, is incredibly relevant: to our current social and sexual climates, and the Twitter-battle currently raging. Bissett, in my opinion, has put together an incredible piece, perfectly highlighting the impossibility of making a statement that can't be argued with, and the confusion and frustration that stems from that. If you have even the most remote interest in gender or sexuality you should see this. Even if you just hate it and disagree with every Bissett says, it's important.

Scottish Storytelling Centre, until 11 Aug, 9.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

Hindsight (Fair Pley)

Time travel, mid and quarter-life crises, and a television-enthusiastic protagonist, combine here in an unsatisfying tale of one immature man's incredibly uninteresting life, and his increasingly poor life

choices and romantic obsession. As the plot unfolded, or rather unravelled, it grew increasingly convoluted. The acting simply wasn't strong enough to save the show from its many plot-holes and shortcomings. Moments of comedy were few and far between, while any heartfelt sentiments promised by this comedy drama were non-existent. The dialogue at times was almost painful, and this production struggled under the enormous strain of an increasingly ridiculous set of facts added to the initial premise, as well as its overall lacklustre execution.

The Assembly Rooms, until 25 Aug (not 12), 1.15pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

Our Fathers (Babakas)

This totally charming experimental piece uses film, dance and comedy to have a good hard look at childhood and parenthood. The characters are the cast fictionalised, and the three - lively, crazed singleton 'Sofia' (Sofia Paschou), pouty Situationist dancer 'Bert' (Bert Roman) and contemplative actor 'Mike' (Mike Tweddle) - more than fill the stage trying to understand their fathers. There's no fourth wall: 'Sofia' dates the entire audience, snuggling up to us one by one, eventually having our child. Babakas' many innovations - the home-video footage, multilingual jokes, a dramatised Skype call and life told through diaries - are fun as well as intelligent, emotive as well as outré. By the end some understanding dawns, experiences in common being about enough. Wonderful.

Summerhall, until 25 Aug, 12.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Gavin Leech]

The Unremarkable Death Of Marilyn Monroe (Dyad Productions)

Elton Townend Jones' startling, sensual, sarcastic investigation into the secret insecurities of a star and sex icon makes you race to keep up. I suspect (from one audience member's loud laughs) that it includes more comic nuances and name-dropping than those unfamiliar with the details of Monroe's life can easily appreciate. But it's when it reaches its darkest points that it is most successful. In this one-woman confessional, Lizzie Wort gives it her all, every movement full of energy. Her wide smiles and exuberant tones are characteristically stoic, even in outbursts of anger and grief. It's a discomfiting dynamic, distracting from the atmosphere of approaching tragedy that the clothes-strewn stage and

increasing fidgeting with pills make eerily apparent. Anything but unremarkable.

Assembly George Square, until 26 Aug, 11.0pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Amber-Page Moss]

The Principle Of Uncertainty (Arditodesio Company)

Prepare for a science lesson which will leave you dabbing your eyes. Not being a science-whiz meant some of the lecture was a little too complicated for me, but the connection formed between science and emotion is certainly thought-provoking. The first musical interlude gave me goosebumps, whilst the rest are cleverly used to bring to life the thoughts the professor is withholding from the audience. With the use of small props and anecdotes Professor Lapage embeds questions in our minds throughout, as he develops a more personal story. As the scientific world clashes with our own emotions the audience can't help but empathise with the vulnerable academic, but what is the tragic tale Professor Lapage slowly reveals?

Summerhall, until 25 Aug, 6.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Rebecca Lunn]

Howie The Rookie (Landmark Productions)

Brace yourself for Mark O'Rowe's outrageous whirlwind of a story. A hit when it was first produced in 1999, this new one-man production of the show sees Tom Vaughan-Lawlor play two Dubliners, whose lives and stories interweave over the course of two days, leading headlong into tragedy. Launching into the story as tough guy Howie, Vaughan-Lawlor brings to life all the characters and details of this fast-paced story in an energetic performance. He then switches roles to the attractive but cowardly Rookie to do it all over again for the story's second half. This show has it all-humour, poignancy, violence and vivacity!

Assembly Hall, until 25 Aug (not 07, 12, 19), 12.40pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Anita Magee]

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“How have I prepared? I have practiced standing in a darkened room for 59 minutes shouting at strangers. It’s going really well. I have also dosed up on vitamin C in preparation for the inevitable fringe scurvy ”

Zoe Lyons answers the ThreeWeeks Quick Quiz questions. Read her answers at ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2013ZL. Plus a host of other performers answer the same questions, check them out at ThreeWeeks.co.uk/interviews



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