

EDITION #07:  
FRI 09 AUG 2013

## THEATRE

### On The Line: Media (News Thought / PBH's Free Fringe)

Assuming the format of a television news talk show, this production sets out to explore the question of media responsibility. Taking the fictional 'World Of News' article 'Immigration Invasion' as its starting point, the show subjects us to a pretty rigorous examination of prejudice in our society; tackling classism, sexism, racism; not even the humble nose-ring escapes attack. The piece is very well researched, the argument well laid out, and the performance tackled with relish. With so many topics and so many perspectives presented, however, the ideas do get cluttered at times, and it is difficult to assess exactly what point is being made when, but overall this is a clever and relevant satirical comedy.

La Tasca, until 24 Aug (not 8, 20), 2.45pm  
tw rating 3/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

### Loving Dick (Leading Van Productions / PBH's Free Fringe)

Leading Van productions present their audience with a comedy about everyday relationships, from three very different perspectives: Connor, the teacher with no drive; Lana, the feisty European; and Max, the lad's lad assistant to Connor. Divided into very aesthetically pleasing chapters, the show follows the individual trysts and trials of the characters, until they are unwittingly forced to merge. In a funny and captivating production, the question asked is what is sex, actually, and what is its purpose? They offer the idea that sex is many different things to many different people, and demonstrate how wrong it can go when two people can't see eye to eye. A very undemanding show, with a lot of audience appeal.

The Fiddler's Elbow, until 24 Aug (not 13), 9.30pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

### She Was Probably Not A Robot (Stuart Bowden)

Superb solo storyteller Stuart Bowden returns to the Fringe with a comedy about the end of the world, and what happened after. It's a familiar set-up given an offbeat and appealingly twisted telling, full of daft slapstick, impeccably timed comic understatement and shiver

inducing, straight-to-the heart observational poetry. Bowden's performance is amicable and absorbing as both the pleasantly deranged sole survivor of the apocalypse and an androgynous alien with an interest in arts, crafts, and building replica planets. With the aid of some tinfoil, a bed sheet and a few simple musical loops, he creates a hilarious, bittersweet and completely enthralling world with a rag-tag homemade feel. It's richly emotional, quietly beautiful, and an absolute joy to watch.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 12, 19), time 4.10pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

### Who's Afraid of Rachel Roberts? (Torch Theatre Company)

Helen Griffin vividly enacts Welsh actor Rachel Robert's decline into alcoholism following her divorce from actor Rex Harrison. The programme jokingly explains that this is her third solo show at the festival because "no one else will work with her" but it makes sense, given the nature of this performance, that she has chosen to work alone; her solitude on stage works because it creates an essential intimacy between actor and audience. Playing with the setting of a talk show, Griffin frequently addresses the audience, accusing them of judging her or being just as guilty as she is. The show is often explicit and probably not for the faint-hearted, but this style is entirely justified, and beautifully utilised, to bring the relentlessly characterful Roberts back to life.

Assembly Roxy, until 26 Aug (not 12, 19), 3.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Michael Black]

### This Is My Box (Rue De La Rocket)

Exhaustingly energetic and hyped up on loveliness, Karli Evans and Karen Thomas welcome you into their humble theatre box. From here, they plunge head first into sketches of all the different shapes and sizes of boxes that, well, box in, women: there's the ever-smiling mother box, the perfect wife box, the career girl box, the scintillating booty-shaking dancer box, and so, you get the picture. Pretty conventional in the female stereotypes they critique in a way that sometimes feels a touch out-dated, these performers nonetheless delve firmly outside the box when finding perceptive ways to present and satirise these characters. Glowingly expressive

and zinging with attitude, this is a worthy watch for those who want funny feminism or just plain fun.

Sweet Grassmarket, until 18 Aug, 9.35pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

### Threeway (Invisible Dot Ltd)

Looking for pansexual adventure, Julie and Andrew invite a man they found on the internet into their home. It's the morning after 'the event', however, that the real adventure begins, as the threesome wake to find their bodies are no longer theirs. Playwright DC Jackson uses the body-swap to springboard into racism, sexism, social and sexual politics and relationships. It's a very refreshing take on both 'relationship' plays and the 'body-swap' genre, refusing consistently to remain in either category, parodying itself and others of its type. The characters are fantastic, believable and well-developed, and the performances are sensational. Using an absurd situation to cast light on human interaction, 'Threeway' is beautifully original and utterly hilarious.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug (not 12), 12.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

### Another New World (Another New World / PBH's Free Fringe)

Disaster has struck an expedition to the Arctic, leaving only the Captain and his advisor alive. The narrative juxtaposes scenes of the two seamen with those of their wife and fiancée back in England, as they struggle to come to terms with not knowing the fate of the crew. The script is good, with an interesting plot and clever chronology. Overall, however, the production does drag. The trouble is that there isn't enough substance in the characters for the audience to sympathise with them, and as a consequence we don't really care about their fate. But with some development of the characters, and a bit more energy in the performance, this has the makings of an engaging production.

Cafe Camino, until 24 Aug, 5.00pm

tw rating 2/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

### Rites: A Children's Tragedy (Young Pleasance)

In an idealised countryside town set in the seventeenth century, the apparent peace is suddenly disrupted. As Wendla turns 14, she innocently asks her mother where babies come from, and the response is evasive. What follows is the story of Wendla and her

peers, attempting to overcome the anguish and confusion of dealing with their own sexual development. This adaptation of Frank Wedekind's 'Spring Awakening' conveys the power and desperation that got the original play censored in 1917, and although it's been turned into a one-act play, this version is still a strong portrayal and criticism of a society that chose to ignore adolescence. All in all, Young Pleasance gives a powerful and engaging performance that undoubtedly pays homage to this jewel of classical theatre.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 17 Aug, 12.00pm  
tw rating 4/5 | [Natalia Equihua]

### The Autumn of Han (Red Dragonfly Productions / Grist To The Mill)

'The Autumn of Han' does not achieve brilliance, but it is certainly more than competent. The dialogue does well in conveying the spirit of the setting and production, and while the show does frequently lose momentum, it's generally well acted; Michelle Yim in particular gives a convincing performance as the manipulative beauty, vain and self-assured ZhaoJun, but through the role conveys enough charm and passion for love, that her character does not seem irredeemable. The most natural and convincing dialogue in the play is her bitter and clever exchange with corrupt minister of selection, MaoYanShao. An interesting portrait of vanity, the price of beauty and peace, and the lengths to which people will go in search of vengeance.

theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall, until 24th Aug (not 18), 5.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

### Kubrick3 (PIT)

'Kubrick3' is the inventive and humorous story of pathological liar, Alan Conway, who uses the myth and mystery surrounding the acclaimed director Stanley Kubrick to create a false existence, adopting the auteur's identity, and building a grand life for himself through this deception. It's brilliantly staged; the clever splicing of Kubrick into 4 actors who move on stage in a collective swarm, creates a fantastic sense of the different elements of Conway's own personality and self-importance. Admittedly, the play is exceedingly slow to get off the ground, but once in full swing, its darkly comic elements are genuinely funny, and in the play's last moments a projection of the infamous Alan Conway interview serves as a poignant reminder



**SNAP OF THE DAY: Back once again every night at the Bedlam Theatre, it's the Improverts.** Photo: Kat Gollock

that this dramatisation is firmly grounded in Conway's reality, or rather in his delusion.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 (not 13), 7.10 pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

### Punchline (Grist to the Mill)

Punchline' is simply not very funny. This is ironic, not really because it is billed as a comedy, but because the subject matter of the play debates what it is to be funny, constantly referencing our protagonist's lack of skill as a comedy writer, and asking why he would even want to be a comedian. 'Punchline' does benefit from little bits of well written natural dialogue, but primarily its strength is in its dramatic moments and a rather thought provoking conclusion, which again rather ironically displays the strenuous effects and difficulty of comedy writing. Not funny enough to be comedy, full enough to be drama, but not an effective enough mix of the two to find a comfortable middle-ground.

theSpace @ Surgeon's Hall, until 24 Aug (not 18), 1.05pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

### Finding Libby (Alarum Theatre)

A new play written and performed by Kate Saffin, this is a one-woman show about a one-woman life. Dowdy and worrisome Pauline, whose whole life has been dulled by her parents' middle class obsession with respectability during her childhood, takes the bold step of

embarking on a canal boat holiday. On board, this respectability is, of course, revealed to be illusory and grotesque. There are charming segments of writing, and Saffin plays the role of a woman whose whole life has been 'getting on' perfectly, though the play lacks the killer blow which the plot calls for. The play touchingly illustrates the truism that everyone has a secret life, but in this case shows us little about the person who lives it.

Assembly Hall, until 16 Aug, 12.00pm

tw rating 3/5 | [James Hampson]

### Static (New Model Theatre)

'Static' is a two-man show, starring the expressive Hugh McCann as all the actors, and Tom Nicholas as the shrewd playwright. McCann is the real deal, bustling with energy as he delivers a riveting performance. Barefoot, no stage and without much of a set to support him, he plays all the characters, including a protester furious at the Capitalist system and his parents. From the Iraq War to the financial recession, 'Static' is about the exasperation felt by younger generations regarding the society they live in. It did seem fragmented and rushed at parts, probably because McCann was playing all the characters. It wouldn't have hurt Nicholas to recruit more actors just to give the play steadier pace and more clarity. A tremendous effort, however.

The Fiddler's Elbow, until 24 Aug, 5.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Shiv Das]

### Albert Einstein: Relativively Speaking (Tangram Theatre Company)

Part history lesson, part musical comedy, 'Albert Einstein: Relativively Speaking' is intriguing, informative and entertaining. John Hinton gives an appropriately eccentric portrayal of Einstein, carrying the show with gusto and enthusiasm, accompanied by Jo Eagle on keyboard. The plot follows the renowned scientist from his journey to America from Nazi Germany through the development of his special theory of relativity, and on to its advances and its consequences. Hinton gives life to the historical and scientific material, often pulling members of the audience up on stage to demonstrate Einstein's theories and narrating parts of his life through song. Overall the show was good fun and certainly worth seeing, however neither the comedy, music nor drama were quite raw or focused enough to blow me away.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug, 2.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Julian Joseph]

1/5 Bad  
2/5 Mediocre  
3/5 Good  
4/5 Very Good  
5/5 Excellent

## Working On A Special Day (MEXART)

Sometimes, a play comes together so well that it becomes bigger and better than simply the sum of its parts. This, sadly, is not such a play. It's sad because MEXART bring a host of quality components to their first Fringe production: The staging is exceptionally clever, the acting solid, some lines strikingly witty, while setting it on the day Mussolini met Hitler in 1938 creates an atmosphere of tension, and its themes of sexuality feel bold. Yet, as a whole, it just doesn't fit together well enough. The staging doesn't contribute to the theme, the theme seems only superficially related to the setting, and the characters are somewhat underdeveloped. Though showing strong potential, MEXART need to work on getting their act together.

Assembly George Square, until 26 Aug (not 12, 19) 11.00am

tw rating 3/5 | [Ivan Kroupin]

## Pants On Fire's Pinocchio (Pants on Fire)

A sinister and silly modernisation of the fairytale, via Frankenstein, B-movies and dubstep. It starts off having issues: the play is bookended by leaden 'profound' voice-overs, the story's moral - "for god's sake go to school" - is repeated over-much, and the soundtrack blares out at regular irritating intervals. But the physical comedy more than saves it: the cast's full-body puppetry, goofy accents - including a perfect John Lithgow - animal costumes, and 1950s advertising jingles are really great. And the whole thing is crammed full of ideas - they change the set, in seconds, dozens of times. Pinocchio is here a brat rather than an innocent misled, but his luck's so bad and his rise so grand that you

forgive him before the poignant finish.

Pleasance Dome, until 26th, 1.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Gavin Leech]

## The Project (Nottingham New Theatre)

An ambitious combination of theatre and dance that questions the complicity of the spectator in morally ambiguous entertainment, 'The Project' feels more like an idea in progress than a coherent piece. It focuses on a woman with an initially unexplained "condition", to be treated by her enforced participation in a performance designed both to rehabilitate participants and entertain an audience. The premise of what people condone in the name of entertainment raises pertinent questions - especially given topical parallels with an era of arguably exploitative reality television. But 'The Project' feels like it misses an opportunity to really shock its audience into exploring these in depth, leaving a production that never quite makes you as uncomfortable as it probably should.

Zoo, until 26 Aug (even dates only), 8.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

## Big Daddy Vs Giant Haystacks (Foundry Group)

A hilarious heavyweight comedy which looks at British wrestling in the 70s and 80s, through the careers of two heavy weight wrestling stars. In this side-splitting two-hander, David Mournfield plays Giant Haystacks, the wrestler we love to hate, whilst Ross Gurney-Randall takes on the role of the 26 stone nation's favourite Big Daddy. This stylised performance makes

the most of its cracking costumes, wrestling moves live on stage and nostalgic cultural references and jokes, all of which are appealing, though some of it might be a little lost on younger audience members. There's lots of funny stuff here, but there are also some touching and complex moments, which demonstrate that the wrestling world isn't all fun and games. A champion comedy and not just for wrestling fans.

Assembly George Square, until 26 Aug (not 13, 20), 12.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Anita Magee]

## Wardens (Schadenfreude Productions Limited)

Three traffic wardens, a chemist, and a community support police officer in a hostage situation; yes, it does sound like the beginning of a joke, and yes, this show definitely is a laughing matter! The people have had enough, riots have broken out and the traffic wardens are the target of their rampant anger; even the police seem to be set against them. This excellent satire is full of comical characters, witty one liners and the truth about what it's like to work in Britain's most despised profession. If you hate traffic wardens, then you'll love this riotous show, and who knows, you might even begin to feel a little sympathetic. Maybe.

Assembly Roxy, until 26 Aug (not 14), 3.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Anita Magee]

## Bedtime Solos by Jakob Holder (Central Standard Theatre - Kansas City)

'Bedtime Solos' focuses on what you might think of as your average straight couple in their twenties or early thirties. We see them in their bedroom over the course of what should be a heated night of passion, but which turns instead into an observation of men's and women's different approaches to love, sex, and relationships. A blend of dialogue, monologue and physical theatre, 'Bedtime Solos' sheds a ruthless light on the innermost dynamics of lovemaking and relationships. The text by Jakob Holder, uncomfortable and yet lyrical, is the most engaging feature of this production. Unfortunately, the style of delivery employed by the performers is often too over the top to be compelling, and the juxtaposition of physical theatre with somewhat more traditional dialogue can be jarring.

Assembly Roxy, until 26 August (not 13, 20), 11.20am.

tw rating 3/5 | [Claudia Marinaro]

## The Trojan Women (Dixie State University Utah)

Bringing a Greek classical adaptation over to the Fringe from the States, Dixie State University offer high production values, but sadly many of the cast cannot match the quality of the set. Ami Porter gives a fine performance as a distraught Hecuba, and her delivery is made even more effective by the immersive staging. Sadly the rest of the female chorus and leads give melodramatic and slightly irksome performances, and the aggressive male roles come across more sassy than fierce. Overall, the play is enjoyable to watch, but had the majority of the cast applied a little more subtlety to their performances, this play could have been more than just satisfactory. Yet that one stand out performance does make this worth the trip.

C Nova, until Aug 8, 11.30am.

tw rating 3/5 | [Rory Morgan]

## The Big Bite-Size Breakfast Show (White Room Theatre's Breakfast Plays)

They do say breakfast is the most important part of the day, and this serving of five digestible pieces is definitely worth getting up for. Mocking melodrama, moving monologue or plain hilarity- you'll get a little taste of everything. Sourced from different writers but invariably intelligent and witty, these will ease mind into a day of munching up the Fringe atmosphere. Sometimes the comedy can catch you off guard, making you unsure where it's heading for a while. But bear with it and you'll be laughing as the lights go down. Complimentary coffee and croissants add a tasteful (and tasty!) touch. Three varying programmes and a family show are offered, and I would expect these other menus to be just as delicious.

Pleasance Dome, until 26 Aug, 10.30am.

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

## The Pearl (Dumbshow)

A real treasure. Dreamy verse, dance-like movement, an original score of soft piano and puppetry make an imaginatively beautiful adaptation of Steinbeck's novella. With some stylistic surprises, it still stays true to the story's splintering themes of greed, hope and the prison of poverty. A literature-lover might criticise the vague setting and altered character names, since Steinbeck's inspiration was a Mexican folk tale. Still, the strange mix of Irish, Queen's English and Yorkshire accents are justifiably well-executed and less risky. The actors' youth is no hindrance; Hester Bond as Joanna especially

shines. But all of the performances are as promising as the pearl itself, and the piece's most stunning quality is the strongly-stitched co-ordination between them. Take a dive.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug (not 13), 12.30pm.

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

## Masters Of Drip (Smash Castle Productions / PBH's Free Fringe)

Comedy? Tragedy? Absurd theatre? This is all of these, and yet also something else. A heterogeneous mix of short sketches brilliantly enacted; and by writing their own script and composing their own music, Michael Friederich and Gavin Rankin are displaying an entire set of talents, becoming, in turn, creators and performers, puppeteers and puppets. They are only at the start of their career, but these two will definitely impress you. One cannot help but impatiently wish for a future, longer show with a powerful concept. Mark my words, with a little discipline, dedication and focus, these guys have great chances of becoming the next Gilbert & George - well, the theatrical, darker, version, that is. Don't miss it.

The Fiddler's Elbow, until 24 Aug (not 7, 13, 21), 7.00 pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Iris Ordean]

## The Inventor And The Escort (Ines Wurth Presents)

Julia, a professional escort, responds to a call by Jeffrey, the inventor of popular sexual devices, a shy rich man in need of companionship. Deciding to re-enact a beach scene from Jeffrey's past, they soon find themselves unintentionally unwrapping each other's true selves - and this will change everything. Take 'Pretty Woman', put it in a slightly different context, and there you have it. Unfortunately, this turns out to be no more than an amateurish echo of the famous story, although both actors clearly show potential. Furthermore, the script, even if containing interesting exchanges at times, overall does not help the performance.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 25 Aug 12.00pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Iris Ordean]

## It Goes Without Saying (Bill Bowers)

The wry wit of a natural comedian, the magic of mime, and the tragedy of 'Angels In America' distilled into a solo show. Ex-mime artist Bill Bowers offers the audience a chronological narrative of his remarkable life story, and exquisitely conveys various

characters and situations using no props whatsoever - he doesn't need them. His act is both entertaining and deeply moving, as well as being a lesson in personal history, from the trail his Scottish ancestors took across America, to the Cold War locked-down mindset of his family in the 50s, to the infamous HIV epidemic of the 80s; the latter in which he suffered a great loss. This powerful show is a rare privilege to watch.

Hill Street Theatre, until 25 Aug (not 13), 10.05pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Isobel Steer]

## Our Friends, The Enemy (Alex Gwyther)

A tremendous tale of compassion and peace was milked dry in this tedious one-man-show. The solo performance compromised an opportunity for emotional arousal in the piece, and the story drowned under what felt like a show-reel of Gwyther's favourite accents. A couple of sparkling moments were unfortunately overshadowed by an unimaginative and predictable ending, and the relentless military metaphors felt contrived and patronising. An underscore of vaguely emotive music was overplayed, and although the minimalistic set and authentic military uniform were helpful in the transportation of the scene to the WW1 trenches, they felt a very obvious choice. A little more imagination and fuller commitment to the emotions of an otherwise enchanting tale could transform this piece into something far more provocative.

the Space @ Surgeons Hall, until 24 Aug (not 11, 18), 6.05pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Kate Pasola]

## Play For September (Lost Watch Theatre Company)

There should be a bright future ahead for 'Play for September': a sharply written exploration of blurred morality, divided loyalty and growing up. Set against the backdrop of two girls' final years at school, the production centres on a relationship between writer-actress Olivia Hirst's 15-year-old character Kay and her teacher, insightfully commented on throughout by Kay's best friend Elle. These often witty interjections help the play avoid being undermined by the clichés that sometimes surround its subject matter, as Elle sardonically addresses them head on. This frees the excellent cast to deliver a tale that is at times amusing and often provocative; but ultimately is a moving education in different layers of vulnerability.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug (not 13), 2.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

## Open Wide Tour (Open Wide Collective / PBH's Free Fringe)

Open Wide Tour takes a provocative, challenging approach to homophobia and taboo. The show is experimental and leaves the audience bewildered in places, but there are nice moments of self-awareness which keeps the piece grounded. The show is shocking at times for its raw, blunt style but the experimental nature means the gist of the scene is not always clear or easy to grasp, and it's this confusion that lets the performance down a little, and means the message loses some of its impact. The show might not be for everyone but it certainly provides an interesting experience that promotes awareness of homophobia and encourages you to think about the nature of ignorance.

The Fiddler's Elbow, until Aug 24 (not 6, 13, 20), 2.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Elsbeth Rudd]

## Men (Tap Tap Theatre)

'Men' is about two women and two boys. At least, they act like boys: they occupy a bully-victim paradigm whose clichéd, cack-handed dimensions let down what is otherwise a well-written, very well-acted play. The moments of awkwardness in Miriam Battye's excellent script evoke a modern-day, funnier Pinter, while the repartee is witty and often caustic. The premise: Frank, in arrested development, is a talented writer inhibited by his domineering housemate, Cyrus. His sister and a friend attempt to extricate him from this poisonous relationship. The homoerotic tension is nicely handled. Unfortunately, the decisions made by all the characters except the sister are increasingly unbelievable; consequently, the emotional pay-offs are ineffective. Still, until it starts coming apart at the seams, an entertaining play.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, until 26 Aug, 12.05pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Arjun Sajip]

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“As much as porn seemed democratic and fun, it never felt right. I wanted it to. But it didn't. Of course it didn't. When you find yourself watching women being slapped and degraded on a daily basis, no matter how much it may excite your bollocks, it doesn't make your heart feel good. It's only when you step away from it that you notice how much you have been brain washed. It's an addiction ”

Brett Goldstein on his 2013 show 'Contains Scenes Of An Adult Nature' at Pleasance Courtyard. Read his full guest column online at [www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2013BG](http://www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2013BG)



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