

**EDITION #08:
SAT 10 AUG 2013**

COMEDY

Jessica Fostekew: Moving

Laid-back comedienne Jessica Fostekew provided an hour of amusing anecdotes about the trials and tribulations of living with a hoarder, and came armed with some comical diary entries written by her younger self. Never stuck for words, she kept an entertaining monologue flowing smoothly for the full 60 minutes. Fostekew has a welcoming persona, vivacious and funny, and an hour at her stand-up show is comfortable and enjoyable; you definitely won't come away disappointed, even if it isn't the kind of show that will stay with you for a long time after you walk out the door. Audience participation is minimal, and so if you fancy comedy you can just relax to instead of having 'front-row anxiety', this is a good choice.

The Cabaret Voltaire, until 24 Aug, 5.05pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Jessica Cropper]

Aidan Goatley Is On The Mend (Aidan Goatley / PBH's Free Fringe)

Aidan Goatley performs a confident stand-up show which runs along observational lines, with particular focus on British politeness and repression. His decency and goodwill shine through, but many of his 80's/c-list English reference gags fall flat for an international audience. Neither of his advertised themes - mental health and films - dominate, with more gags about manners and school life, but the section where they do appear is touching. Ultimately, his show is about taking control and raising oneself after a trauma, and though neither subject lends itself well to comedy, he nevertheless performs a sweet, funny, and happy-making show. Definitely one of the better free comedy gigs this reviewer has seen at the Fringe so far.

The Voodoo Rooms, until 25 Aug, 6.05pm
tw rating 3/5 | [Jasmine Faller]

The Best Of Irish Comedy (The Stand Comedy Club)

An end-of-night best-of-the-craic in a toasty function room, anchored by Martin Mor, who compères with great skill, bringing the crowd in and making everyone feel at home. Jarlath Regan presents a set of calm and assuredly humane stand-

up about social faux pas and the minutiae of daily life, but without the blundering silliness of most observational comedy. The house is full, almost certainly because of the show-stopping performance of David O'Doherty, who expertly closes proceedings with jokes half the crowd have heard before on telly and want to hear again, and sends us out satisfied. With a changing bill every night, it is a fine and friendly night if you end up in that end of town.

The Stand III, until 25 Aug, 10.25pm
Tw rating 3/5 | [James Hampson]

Nadia Kamil In Wide Open Beavers (Nadia Kamil)

From the beginning, it is clear that Nadia Kamil has more things to say and jokes to tell than time will allow. After chaotically crashing onto the stage, she inhabits character after character before showing off her pioneering feminist burlesque. Kamil's set is broadly about intersectional feminism and the casual misogyny of the world around her, delivered with the disarmingly bookish eccentricity of the likes of Josie Long; the feminist burlesque and Virginia Werewolf routines sum this up perfectly. There is audience participation, but the good type, ie. it makes everyone laugh and doesn't humiliate or degrade the participant. As she closes with a rap segment that neatly avoids being terrible, the set has steered around potential cliché to send you home smiling.

The Stand IV, until 25 Aug (not 12), 3.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [James Hampson]

Michael Legge - Free Wi-Fi (Michael Legge / The Stand Comedy Club)

Michael Legge takes the stage - to 'Eye Of The Tiger', no less - where his initial upbeat, cheery demeanour lasts all of a minute or two; relieved of his happy face, he begins to question why comedians have to be cheerful, not tragic, and we can be assured that now the show has now properly begun. Impersonating a poisonous bunch of Twitter-whingers, and subsequently pulling out a printed list of things he despises, Legge is vitriolic, but gloriously funny. His charismatic brand of loneliness and bitterness is hilarious and oddly uplifting. Legge unfortunately lost his thread once or twice and scuppered a joke or two, but deserves a resounding recommendation.

The Stand Comedy Club II, until 25 Aug (not 12), 3.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Elizabeth Jewell]

An Improvised Improv Show (Luc Valvona and guests)

Inviting all improv enthusiasts of the Fringe to perform alongside a fresh new team of comics, the show offers an hour of absurdity, silliness and the occasional comical win. The audience is encouraged to throw forward suggestions of emotions or locations to kick off the scene, which can either strike gold or whirl into an episode of nonsensical chaos. With an ever changing line-up of performers, the show is always going to be a gamble; however, it could just be for you if you're looking for some light-hearted, interactive comedy where no-one takes themselves too seriously.

Edinburgh City Football Club, until 25 Aug, 1.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Kayleigh Head]

The Durham Revue: Friends Without Benefits (Durham Revue)

The material offered by this five-piece sketch group felt unoriginal, each sketch slowly building to a predictable punch-line. With fairly standard material revolving around children's TV shows or clichés taken literally, there was nothing to get excited about, and this was compounded by uninspired staging and an over-reliance on plastic chairs, the troupe's sole prop; almost every sketch saw the performers seated. The show wasn't completely awful, however. There were moments which had the audience chuckling, and the musical interludes between sketches had been chosen to fit with the punch-line of the preceding scene, which was a nice touch. However, some jokes that felt particularly out of place made one wonder if they'd been scripted after picking said music. Ultimately, the writing let them down.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 13), 2.00pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Jonathan Mayo]

John Robertson - The Dark Room (Corrie McGuire for Objective Talent)

If you've ever wanted to observe a floating head dishing out hilarious jibes at children, then John Robertson is your man - and that's not even the main purpose of the show. Audience members participate in a relatively futile and ridiculous text-based adventure game entitled 'The Dark Room', a crazy interactive show, unlike anything live I've ever witnessed, which was genuinely funny in

parts, interesting and absurd in others. The kids in the audience loved the opportunity to contribute suggestions, as well as win daft prizes, but there was a sense in which there was no finality to the thing, like we'd just been playing a video game with an aggressive narrator. I'm pretty sure that was the point, though. And I'm glad it was.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 14), 8.40pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Jonathan Mayo]

Time Traveller (Sarah Hendrickx)

To describe this show as an atypical stand-up experience would be a bit of a stretch. The nature of Hendrickx's delivery and demeanour is more akin that of a story-teller, who occasionally punctuates their stories with moments of wittiness. She has a natural charisma that really makes you want to listen to her, however, at some points, it was as though the comedy was getting lost amongst the sometimes overly-anecdotal nature of the show; meanwhile an over-reliance on banter with certain audience members may have proved somewhat alienating to everyone else. Nevertheless, her musings on mental health were comically heartfelt and brutally honest, and to be perfectly blunt, she could easily be considered the thinking-person's Sarah Millican.

Dragonfly, until 24 Aug, 2.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Mairi McNico]

Greg Proops (Talented Artists Ltd)

Former King Of improv and Fringe mainstay Greg Proops has quite the reputation to live up to. Unfortunately, for the most part, this show fails to capture what helped make him such a hugely popular performer. Although still a highly talented improvisation artist, teasing the crowd with witty asides and off-the-cuff comebacks, Proops' set is loose and aimless. Appearing to please neither the attendees nor the comedian himself, it featured references either too obscure or too modern for his audience. Shouting out a suggestion like 'Hungarian wrestlers in a salon' might have put Proops more into his comfort zone; he seemed out of it tonight.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 14 Aug, 9.00pm
tw rating: 2/5 | [Joseph Trotter]

Gusset Grippers (Gusset Grippers / Free Festival)

Prepare for a biology lesson like no other. 'Gusset Grippers' is a quirky and upbeat show, written and



SNAP OF THE DAY: That'll be the 'Best Of Burlesque' at Assembly George Square then. Photo: Rich Dyson

performed by physiotherapist Elaine Miller, and is packed full of pelvis jokes and pelvis-related anecdotes. Despite dealing with the potentially embarrassing subject of female incontinence, the performance is light-hearted and at no point feels awkward, a true testament to Miller's professionalism and ability to engage with the audience. The subject of the show, however, restricts the comedy to a very particular group of people and, at times, an overflow of facts and figures caused attention to wander. But this is ultimately a triumph of using humour to tackle a difficult issue. Though perhaps not suitable if planning to eat lunch immediately afterwards.

Laughing Horse @ The Newsroom, until 25 Aug, 12.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Roberta Thomson]

Be Careful What You Wish For with Alice Lashman (Lynsey Bonell / PBH's Free Fringe)

Lynsey Bonell, aka motivational team leader Alice Lashman, delivers an amusingly clichéd life coach workshop, guiding the audience through the details of successful wish-making. The impersonation is so accurate that when I first arrived I was worried the character might be genuine. However, Bonell soon departs from reality, portraying what can only be described as resembling a hyperactive child at a party. Workbooks are handed out, and we hear testimonies from

previous class members, which brings a slight opacity to events. Luckily, this is overshadowed by the generally optimistic nature of the show. The script is not necessarily clever but it will have you pausing for thought the next time you blow out your birthday candles.

Madogs Cocktail Bar & Grill, until 24 Aug (not 12), 2.25 pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Grace Brennan]

THEATRE

Shakespeare's Cymbeline (FreeRange Productions)

In spite of his genius, some of Shakespeare's plays don't exactly have a good reputation, and 'Cymbeline' is one such play. With a convoluted plot and frankly yawn-raising script, FreeRange deserve a hearty pat on the back for taking on this ruly of the Bardic litter. However, I really rather wish they hadn't bothered. Here the dark tale of the King of Britain and his wayward children is staged plainly, with a confusing mix of modern and Elizabethan setting, making for a production that lacks the imagination or energy to keep an audience gripped. Saying that, there are some commendable performances here, that juggle with Shakespeare's later, peculiar language with confidence, if not outstanding creativity.

Just the Tonic at The Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), 6.00pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

Long Live The Little Knife (Fire Exit / David Leddy)

Welcome to the world of con-artists Liz and Jim. Their quest for fortune is never easy, in this black comedy containing 'Inception'-like layers of story with flashbacks and monologues. Characters shift, and the lines between performance and reality blur, though the accomplished direction and performances navigate the intricate narrative with ease. In this terrifically affecting story, the witty and lucid script zips along, only pausing for moments of surprising emotion and a few singly horrifying revelations that genuinely made my blood run cold. By exploring the ideas of forgery in all of its incarnations, we see that 'truth' is frequently hard to come by. Overall, David Leddy succeeds in cementing his reputation for a theatrical experience few can match.

Traverse Theatre, until 25 Aug (not 5, 12, 19), various times
tw rating 4/5 | [Andrew Pollard]

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

Not The Messiah (Three's Company)

You don't have to be a fan of Monty Python to enjoy this absolutely brilliant and moving play about the tumultuous life of late group member Graham Chapman. The script and performance managed to be both laugh-out-loud funny and utterly captivating, even bringing a tear to my eye. You'd be forgiven for mistaking George Telfer for Chapman himself, thanks to his accurate and emotionally honest and poignant retelling of Chapman's life, in which he battled alcoholism, cancer and homophobia. With Telfer playing all the characters, often several in the same scene, this show has a complex format, but it worked well due to his considered and talented portrayal of every person. An incredible show.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 24 Aug, 1.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Victoria Beardwood]

Faulty Towers The Dining Experience (Interactive Theatre International)

Most definitely an 'experience': far from fancy, but you can't fault the fun! Working wonderfully together, the three actors uncannily nailed their character's mannerisms, transporting the audience straight into the legendary TV series. Would you believe there are still so many ways for Manuel to get it wrong? Original hilarity, improvisation and personal insults kept it fresh - it would be better if they'd kept this up more in the show's second half, but then it wouldn't be complete without a recreation of the classic moments. Despite gritted teeth at the German gags, B'est restaurant was buzzing. With a three-course meal, Fawltly fans will find a recipe for a fabulous night out. My only

warning is don't get too comfortable - disaster can erupt at any moment!

B'est Restaurant, until 27 Aug (not 10, 17, 24) 2.00pm, 8.00pm.

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

A Circus Affair (Circosis)

Mr Kiko and Sarita are each pursuing their dream of a life in the circus. They bump into each other along the way, literally, and this chance meeting sparks the birth of a double act, a marriage and babies. The narrative, flimsy to begin with, rapidly peters out to non-existent. This could be forgiven if the circus tricks that replaced it were impressive, but Andrew Cook and Sarah Mason don't make them look easy. There were a lot of mistakes, and people in the front row seemed to get frequently hit by things. The real problem here is that in trying to appeal to adults and children alike, 'A Circus Affair' actually makes itself unappealing to all ages.

Zoo, until 10 Aug, 7.00pm.

tw rating 1/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

Cinderella Lives! (Aisling Kiely)

Written and performed by Aisling Kiely, 'Cinderella Lives!' is an enjoyable, funny, thought-provoking look at feminism. Her piece questions how far women have progressed, using elements of physical theatre and a well-executed series of characters in conversation with one another. Kiely is a talented writer and performer, able to be funny and entertaining about serious, challenging issues. The show is clever and creative in its approach, raising questions about women's liberation and the forces that created this freedom. As Cinderella is given a modern makeover, it draws on the contrast

between the fairy tales we are told as children and the expectations placed on modern women to "have it all".

Venue 13, until 24 Aug (not 12), 8.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Elspeth Rudd]

The Confessions Of Gordon Brown (Many Rivers Production)

From Kircaldy to Helmand, two equally hopeless provinces, writer and director Kevin Toolis takes an incisive look at Britain's political scene before and during Gordon Brown's leadership. The engaging and thought-provoking performance lets Brown tell us how it all went wrong, often slipping into humorous and aggressive asides that attack modern politics. His critique, of how important looks are in politics, is cleverly presented through a series of attacks on other politicians' appearances. This is amusingly interspersed with his own adoration of the praise he receives as he recites his acceptance speech. Occasionally sombre, the performance remains a light-hearted and interesting insight into the unique situation of Gordon Brown's leadership, intriguing as much as it entertains.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug, 1.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sam Turner]

Made For Each Other (Atomic Force Productions)

Made For Each Other is a thoughtful piece. Looking at the relationship between two men, it examines whether gay marriage is any different from heterosexual marriage and also why this question even needs to be asked? Gerry is disillusioned by the idea that marriage should be arrived at gradually, while Vincent fears telling him the truth about his Alzheimer's. John Fico gives a fine performance in the roles not only of Vincent and Gerry but also of Vincent's mother and Gerry's grandfather. The idea that we're moving away from homophobia with each generation is challenged by the character of the grandfather, who comes to accept Gerry before his father does. A show to make you question your own views about marriage and relationships.

Sweet Grassmarket until 25 Aug (not 20), 5.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Michael Black]

Inside (Strawberry Blonde Curls)

This immersive one-woman play, written and performed by Rosie MacPherson, offers an unflinching insight into the life of a young woman held captive for twelve years. The intimate setting of her

basement prison leave the audience feeling too close for comfort, which only enhances this experience. Exploring the relationship between our nameless protagonist and her faceless captor reveals that not everything is as black and white as it seems. MacPherson manages to capture the teenage innocence and hope her character still retains despite her situation. On top of that, her well-researched representation of a character in an unimaginable situation feels surprisingly realistic. Harrowing, complex and original, MacPherson will move you to tears and have you looking out for her name in the future.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 26 Aug (not 13), 12.15pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Sophie Nicoll]

Measure for Measure (Theatre Oikos)

The ambition of this production is praiseworthy. But this adaptation of Shakespeare's tale of corruption is heavily inspired by Luhrmann's 'Romeo and Juliet', and it comes off feeling a little derivative. The updated setting just managed to work, but the music and projected video clips felt distracting and incongruous, adding none of the clearly-intended 'edginess' to the production. Amidst the slightly uneven acting emerged some truly standout performances: Harrison Charles displays a considerable natural comic ability in his turn as lecherous pimp, Pompey, as does Ella Higham as the believably bawdy Mistress Overdone. However, Hannah Dalton's emotionally charged portrayal of Isabella is not only wonderfully stunning but a cut above the rest. Despite its shortcomings, an all together good production.

Zoo Southside, until 10 Aug, 5.50 pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

Dumbstruck (Fine Chisel)

Known as the loneliest whale in the world, the so-called 52 hertz whale has a call that the rest of its species cannot hear. But this enchanting play - revealing how one man came to live on an isolated research station listening for that unique song - has a lilting melancholy that will engross you from the outset. With four excellent musicians evocatively recreating the sounds of the sea and the sixties-era rebelliousness which was a backdrop to the protagonist's earlier life, the production's music is worth a ticket in itself. Yet that is just one element of a superbly told, incredibly poignant story about sound and silence that will resonate long after the performance has ended.

Zoo, until 26 Aug (not 14), 5.15pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

The King And Queen Of The Universe (Slippers & Rum)

Slippers & Rum's production of Kurt Vonnegut's short story exudes sophistication. This is partly due to the decadence of the 1930s upper-crust society that the piece portrays, but it's mostly down to the skill of the actors playing them. Vonnegut's plot involves the revelation of social differences, and looks at how this shatters the lives of those naïve to it beforehand. Frankly, it is the best of this type of play that I have seen. Tom Powell's stage adaptation, whilst perhaps lacking a little scenery, was managed very well indeed; at the end I actively wanted it to continue. Moving and poignant, it's not likely that I will forget this show in a while.

C Aquila, until 23 Aug, 1.05pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Samuel Evan Graydon]

Jordan (Stickleback Theatre Company)

All sorts of nasty hobgoblins and grotesque boggarts lurk around this modern Rumpelstiltskin fairy tale. Physical abuse, mental illness and toxic maternal love all menacingly patrol this real-life story of Shirley Jones. A girl of the Morecambe sands, of soggy chip packets and dreary seaside life, Shirley is pushed to the edge as her precious relationship with her baby is put into jeopardy. Performed with tormenting sensitivity and vulnerability by Sian Weedon, 'Jordan' is a truly eye-opening production that casts a spell of quiet solemnity and sadness over its audience. Elevating the most haunting of fairy tales to a disturbing reality, 'Jordan' is a feat of storytelling that spins horrific real-life into a golden work of theatre.

Assembly Hall, until 26 Aug, 1.10pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

Goodbye Sun And Bear (The Bare Project)

Before seeing 'Goodbye Sun And Bear' it had been a long time since someone had given me a bubble wand to use as I pleased. This play certainly has a great artistic vision: the minimalist set juxtaposing with the sometimes delightfully flamboyant costuming and make up. Having to pretend that my bubbles were snow was a lovely detail which warmed my heart. The wonderfully crafted props and original live soundtrack, performed by the cast, were also enchanting. However, these artistic fineries cannot fully compensate for the meandering nature of the script, which seemed to lack the sharpness of its surrounding visuals. The absence of clear meaning

occasionally left this beautiful play lost in its own oddities.

C Nova, until 17 Aug, 1.05pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Samuel Evan Graydon]

I Want To Tell You Something (Sugarworks)

Set in a tiny back room venue, where intimacy with the performer is almost compulsory, a woman wants to tell you about her life, and the life of a mythical woman. She wants to hear about you, your own stories, and she wants to make the words into something bigger. Intense and interesting, this unique take on storytelling and autobiography draws emotive parallels between reality and literature, delivered in a convincing and affecting manner by performer Caroline Sniatynski. Audience participation is an undaunting and gentle part of the performance and should not deter potential watchers. Deserving an audience larger than it received, this show has great potential and is well worth catching.

Sweet Grassmarket until 25 Aug, 5.40pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Christie Rolley]

Oh My Irma (Never Mind The Noise/ Derrick Chua/ Haley McGee)

Haley McGee's 'Oh My Irma' is a difficult one to describe; what begins seemingly as a murder mystery becomes an anecdote told by troubled girl after the death of her mother. In this dark, comedic one woman show, McGee unfolds the story using nothing but herself and a suitcase. This show is chaotic, poetic and tense, calling into question the mental stability of the character and raising issues such as self-harm. It might take a few minutes to work out what exactly is going on, but McGee's energetic performance vividly brings the scene to life and you'll be left hanging on her every word, movement and facial expression.

Hill Street Theatre, until 25 Aug (not 13), 6.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Anita Magee]

VISUAL ART

Artists' Open Studios And Exhibitions (Coburg House Art Studios)

I wish I could have spent an entire day at Coburg House. With an incredible variety of work on show, from jewellers to ceramicists, painters, sign writers and even a kilt-maker, there would certainly have been enough to look at. However, the real treat was being able to see the artists' work spaces; to see the books they read, the pictures

that influence them, the notes left to themselves, and the photos of their cats. This is a truly personal, heart-warming and informative experience, far removed from the unwelcoming sterility of typical art galleries. Not having missed it this year, fear not; you can pop in next summer, or at their open weekend in December.

Coburg House Art Studios, until 4 Aug, 11.00am.

tw rating 5/5 | [Tom Bateman]

Jennifer Thomson Exhibition (Bonkers Original Gifts)

This exhibition in a gift shop was more gift shop than exhibition. Thomson's bright, tourist-friendly paintings, available here in print, calendar and coaster form, are executed competently enough, and there's no doubt that they'd make very good gifts for family members, as a change from fudge and tartan. They may even strike a chord with fringe-goers, who will be able relate to the scenes of queuing and crowded tourist hotspots. However, for people in pursuit of something more artistic, this exhibition struggles to deliver, and there's a limited choice of pieces to view. With the Scottish National Gallery within spitting distance, I know where I'd rather go for my art fix.

Bonkers Hanover Street, until 25 Aug, 10.00am.

tw rating 2/5 | [Tom Bateman]

MORE ONLINE>

“Many performers at the Festival are talented enough to put in no effort. Some just comment hilariously on super market trolleys or phones. I've never had that talent: I need to work furiously and hope that something interesting enough to share with an audience might just happen ”

Tim FitzHigham on his challenging show of challenges at the Pleasance Courtyard. Read his full guest column online at www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/2013TF



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