

**EDITION #12:  
WED 14 AUG 2013**

## **THEATRE**

### **SingleMarriedGirl (Heather Bagnall In Association With Tasty Monster Productions)**

This extremely light comedy about one married woman finally making steps towards self-discovery and a social life is occasionally amusing and certainly motivational. However, fumbled lines and awkward scene changes (a monologue with scene changes, I ask?) makes it stilted, and a little unbelievable. Meanwhile the script is brimming with cheesiness, and seriously, 'chagrinned'? Do people ever say that? It sounds like Stephanie Meyer minus the vampires. In fact, minus any drama at all, with things only threatening to go ever so slightly wrong, and never even managing that. Perhaps it's a positive celebration of the pointlessness of human life. But I found it hard to make myself care about the themes of fashion choices, family history and Facebook.

theSpace on North Bridge, until 24 Aug (not 11, 18), 8.00pm.

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

### **The State Vs John Hayes**

Lucy Roslyn has taken on her character so absolutely that her black eyes burned with cold depth, her uniquely strong voice ruling the audience. Latecomers and a firework display outside couldn't possibly faze her. She played with them. With themes of murder and multiple personality disorder, Roslyn drew inspiration from real life cases to create a stark new script. A Death Row cell; details of the crime dripped, piece by piece, in a Southern drawl. Having held out on these for an hour, the end is bluntly abrupt. It seemed to promise something monumental, only to have the lights suddenly go down. Highly discomfiting, it still manages to drag from the audience twisted smiles and half-ashamed laughs. Beautifully brutal.

C nova, until 26 Aug (not 12), 9.50pm.

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

### **Birdhouse (Jammy Voo)**

Funny and crazed musical expansion of Hitchcock's horror *The Birds*. Four near-identical extras - uptight, obsessive birdwatchers - sing, wail, and play, trapped in a cinema, first by homicidal birds

and then by bird trauma. (Voyeurs make good historians). It's both goofy and really rich in metaphor, but the symbolism is sometimes unclear, the narrative making room for pensive interpretative bits where the women rage and confess and become birds. The songs are fantastic, with Emily Kreider's manic holler leading their harmonies through dark, epic folk, including powerful original compositions by Greg Hall. Shout out for the shadow puppetry, an entrancing road trip and light violence. The birds themselves are given a voice, the monsters empathised with and, eventually, freed.

Assembly George Square, until 25 Aug, 5.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Gavin Leech]

### **The Uncanny Valley (Superbolt Theatre)**

A futuristic and spectacularly intelligent piece of theatre, that combines puppetry, powerful movement and truly engaging acting. The endearing and loveable meteorologist Wilson, played by Frode Gjerløw, falls in love with a robot, something the outside world can never understand. Gjerløw perfectly captures the movement, facial expressions and emotions of a cripplingly awkward but staggeringly kind man. Honestly some of the best stage acting I have seen in years; the trio as a whole are impeccably polished and confident in their movements. It is a funny, heart-warming and intriguing show, one that is so perfectly formed it leaves the audience in awe. If you see one piece of theatre at the Fringe this year, choose 'The Uncanny Valley'.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 25 Aug (not 12), 12.25pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Alice Taylor]

### **The Love Project [Look Left Look Right / Every Day]**

Sometimes the most meaningful drama is not found on the stage, but in simple rhythms of everyday life. This is powerfully illustrated by 'The Love Project': a moving and often affectionately amusing piece of documentary theatre. Four actors recreate stories and views given by ordinary people interviewed about love, never altering the answers and retaining quirks of speech. The result, like its subject, strikes at the essence of human existence. From the couple married for 56 years, to a woman who has broken her engagement, to the small boy who thinks his girlfriend won't work out because she "never wants to be

near him", the anecdotes - and the actors' skillful recreations - have a quiet resonance that cannot fail to touch your heart.

Underbelly, Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 14), 2.50pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

### **Northanger Abbey (Box Tale Soup)**

Whether you're a fan, a stranger, or even (like this reviewer) an outspoken critic of Austen's work, you're equally as liable to be enthralled by the brilliant, dynamic and laugh-out-loud stage adaptation of Jane Austen's gothic classic. Lavished with reams of comedic virtuosity by the charming art of Noel Byrne and Antonia Christophers, their amusing and inventive use of an ensemble of papier-mâché puppets breathes fresh life into Austen's work. Bristling with endearing, Henson-esque slapstick that at times causes more than mere ripples of laughter, I don't think anyone could have imagined that putting Jane Austen and puppets together could result in such an enjoyable end product. Indeed, this sentiment was evidenced by the cacophony of superlatives that wafted through the exit corridor after the show had come to its conclusion.

Gryphon Venues at the Point Hotel, until 24 Aug (not 11, 18), 2.15pm.

tw rating 5/5 [Eddie Nisbet]

### **My Village And Other Aliens (Terence Blacker)**

There's only so much you can do with a guitar, a ukulele, a stool and a glass of wine. But from these meagre tools Terence Blacker succeeds in evocatively crafting a whole village: tittering gossips, village perverts and all. A decidedly more literary than theatrical event, punctuated with witty if forgettable folk songs, Terence paints the life of a writer and his place in the local community. Trying a bit too hard to escape the strait-jacket stereotype of the conceited author, the show consequently veers at times down dangerously dodgy and rather crass roads. Yet, if you like your literary references shoved in by the bucketful, your authors honest, dry and charmingly musical, then Terence's show is one for you.

Zoo Southside, until 26 Aug, 5.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

### **I Could've Been Better (Idiot Child)**

Interactive pastoral play about eccentricity, with a shocking

undertow. The solo actor James Whiteaker immerses himself in cheery childlike trainspotter Jimmy just as he immerses himself in a ridiculous swimming rivalry with a child twenty years his junior. Jimmy conjures his beloved Allerton village using only his grinning simplicity, the audience (as townsfolk), and a giant model of a swimming pool made of liquorice allsorts. We make blank paper aeroplanes for him, and he reads love letters off them. His soliloquys to his damaged lover Sue are incredible, eloquent, but through them Jimmy reveals himself to be unbearably fragile, based on a few cold comforts. This makes his inevitable humiliation all the more brutal. Powerful, bittersweet, wistful.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26th Aug, 1.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Gavin Leech]

### **Book Of Blakewell (House Of Blakewell / Vicky Graham Productions)**

There's no shortage of shows about struggling performers, and plenty of comedies pairing a hapless neurotic with an overreaching diva. 'Book of Blakewell' is both of these, sort of - the undeniably talented musical duo responsible joke up front that any semblance of plot is only a shaky frame for their existing setlist. Alice Keedwell has a strong voice and an operatic range, while Harry Blake is an accomplished pianist, with compositions knowingly riffing on modern styles, music hall and cabaret. Too often, though, they descend into plodding recitative. It's unsophisticated satire taking aim at middle class attitudes, made leaden with predictable rhymes and little discernible wit, and ultimately sounding hollow. For most, this will be a book worth keeping closed.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 7, 14), 3.30pm

tw rating 2/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

### **Penthesilea (Playedes Theatre Company)**

Gripping theatre that explores passion, gender roles and power play. Captivating their audience instantly, these superb actors revived an old tragedy by Heinrich von Kleist. Its dark and edgy plot is set in a place where men and women are at war. The Amazonian Queen falls in love with Achilles but fights to not succumb to a man and lose her power. Minimal props and staging allow the seamless acting to speak for itself, and despite the dense language, the story is clear. I felt myself leaning closer towards



## **SNAP OF THE DAY: Free Fringe theatre with 'Captain Morgan And The Sands Of Time' at Fiddlers Elbow.** Photo: Natalia Equihua

the characters faces, as they drew me in with their well timed humour, percussive rhythms and moments of shock. I'd urge anyone to go discover this thought provoking classic for themselves.

Sweet Grassmarket, until 25 Aug, 9.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Eleanor Lang]

### **No Holds Bard (Royale Productions)**

"What did you see, a one-man Hamlet?" says Gran each year when I return from the Fringe. Michael Hurst trumps Nan's wildest imaginings with a one-man Hamlet featuring Othello, King Lear and Macbeth. An actor holds a gun to his head, then we're whisked on a disorientating excursion into the recesses of his disturbed mind, occupied by the characters mentioned above. Bullying, abuse and torment ensues, comic relief is provided by a boorish, Glaswegian Macbeth who casually fries up breakfast whilst chatting to the neurotic Hamlet. An Olivier-style foaming-mouthed, dubiously accented Othello raises more than a few awkward titters. It's dodgy ground that I'm not sure works, thankfully his appearances are brief. Tweak the borderline offensive Othello and this sweaty, schizophrenic, Shakespearian mash-up could become a classic.

Assembly Roxy, until 26 Aug (not 12,19), 12.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Sharp]

### **21st-Century Poe (Marty Ross)**

There's an argument to be had that the tales of Edgar Allen Poe are just fine as they are, thanks. No need for re-inventing. But for what Marty Ross does with some of literature's most mystical and macabre works, that is, make them sing with new energy and beguile an audience all over again, I'm happy to make an exception. Offering different stories for different evenings, the poetically re-worked 'The Fall of the House of Usher' which I saw, manages, in its modernisation, to still preserve and reverse the original, even intensifying its impact. Physically sweating out his enthusiasm for Poe, Marty Ross delivers a bewitchingly good story that leaves a haunting reminder long after the lights have gone down.

Paradise in the Vault, until 11 Aug, 5.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

### **Clown For Hire (Tick Tock Productions/ Assembly)**

Even clowns aren't immune to the employability crisis, you know. For Julius the clown is down on his luck and can't find a way of making his dream of performing a one-man show turn into reality. So, in the interim, he passes his time bumbling with props, talking to a bucket, launching into unimaginative slapstick and nagging his audience. Flat on narrative and struggling to communicate any message, I don't think this can be the one-man show

Julius is longing to create, because in all honesty it's not too good. Vigorously physical, stereotypically, if not funnily, clownish and at least performed with conviction, let's hope his dreamed of clown show has a lot more to give than this one.

Assembly George Square, until 26 Aug, 2.00pm.

tw rating 1/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

### **The Veil (Le Foulard) (Lucy Hopkins)**

A satirical piece which plays with stereotypes and ideas about art and theatre. The programme fails to describe this intelligent show properly. Lucy Hopkins presents the audience with an assortment of characters, including an egotistical, self-proclaimed artistic genius and a melodramatic flamenco diva, each so different from the other that it's easy to forget this is a one woman show! Hopkins' Lecoq school training is clearly evidenced by the way she moves with ease between characters, remarkably switching physicality and personality with a swish of her only prop, a veil. While some found her multiple personalities hysterical, other members of the audience sat in silence, unable to comprehend just what was so funny about this random jumble of characters; this is clearly a divisive performance.

Pleasance Dome, until 26 Aug (not 12, 19), 4.20pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Anita Magee]

## Close To You (Jennie Eggleton)

"It is something that becomes your only friend". 'Close to You' is an original, moving drama that provides insight into the way anorexia affects a young mind and affects its every thought. The story follows fictional aspiring star Jennifer and her struggle with an eating disorder but intertwines with the tale of the real struggle of Karen Carpenter, Jennifer's idol. Jennie Eggleton switches between characters seamlessly, and gives an incredibly convincing and moving performance. The play follows Jennifer's ups and downs as an aspiring actress, and her relationships with her friends and family before she ends up in hospital. Based on true events, Close to You is a powerful, moving and very raw eye-opener into the inner thoughts of someone struggling with anorexia.

Greenside, until 17 Aug (not 11) 2.45pm.  
tw rating 5/5 | [Sarah Virgo]

## Chorus (Machinist Theatre)

Great concept: play about students performing Classical plays in a field, and finding parallels with their own personal dramas. For Greg, left behind by an ambitious girlfriend, there is Antigone - all about love foiled by duty. For Ozzy, whose friend's drug habits are scaring him, The Bacchae - about hedonism destroying the hedonist. And for Sarah, whose husband has cheated on her, Women of Trachis - which is usually about vengeance, but here, best of all, the troupe break down, refusing to live out the old, 'pretentious' tragic story. Unfortunately, their delivery is halting, occasionally overdone, and the student part of the plot relies

on dodgy devices - a broken chair and a distressing phone call. But admirable still.

Greenside Theatre, until 17th Aug, 1.45pm.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Gavin Leech]

## Major (Oriel Theatre Company)

An absurdist take on Nikolai Gogol's 'The Nose', 'Major' is an amusing and entertaining foray into Tsarist Russia. In a bizarre tale which involves an shaving accident, a lost appendage and a trawl through the bureaucracy of the state, audiences are guided through the madness by a pair of rhyming narrators and a catalogue of sorry characters. Convincing and with expert comic timing, the performers were strong both individually and as a cohesive collective though some poor diction in places meant that some lines were lost. Visually impressive and making use of some innovative set, props and puppetry, Major is a strong and confident piece well worth making an effort to see.

Space Cabaret @ 54, until 10 Aug, 2.05pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Christie Rolley]

## Nick: An Accidental Hero (Renee Lyons)

When Nick Chisholm collapsed with a stroke on the ruby pitch in 2000, the future prospects for him were horrifyingly bleak. Now in this one woman powerhouse of a show by Renee Lyons, Nick's story is given a vibrant and heartening lease of life, as his incredible, inspiring battle over adversity is both preserved and celebrated. Making up a whole world of characters, witty and wonderful, just from the conviction of Lyons' acting and some precisely placed stage-craft and lighting, 'Nick: An Accidental Hero' is a heroic production in its touching sincerity

and original storytelling. Never lapsing into gushy sentimentality or over-dramatisation of illness and disaster, this show offers a master class on faithfully adapting real-life tales with impressive creativity.

Assembly George Square, until 26 Aug, 3.15pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

## Morning And Afternoon (Andy Hinds with Louise Chantal Productions - Festival Highlights)

In this pair of short, linked plays, writer, director and performer Andy Hinds presents the stories of two brothers who have drifted out of each other's lives, and their eventual reconnection. The first of the pair, 'Morning', is the painful, searingly honest story of Niall, intelligent, introspective and awkward, while the second, 'Afternoon' focuses on the misfortunes of Danny, his wayward older brother. Hinds plays both parts skilfully: the change of wardrobe, hair, and mannerisms render each part absolutely distinct from the other. Taken together, they present a moving story of life, loss and love, at once familiar and brand new. Hinds' performance is never less than perfection and the monologues are wonderfully crafted.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug (not 13, 20), 1.55pm. tw rating 5/5 [Andrew Leask]

## Specie (Fat Git Theatre)

If you resent prolonged eye-contact, squirm at the mention of genitals and have a pathological fear of ball-pits, you'll have to grab a stress-ball before stepping into this ballsy thought-provoking offering from 'Fat Git' theatre. 'Specie' imagines that gender is a fluid concept, where one can change sex and swap that of their children on a total whim. The concept becomes cloudy in places; there are implications that gender-swapping is limited to those who can afford it and that swapping-back might not be so easy, and divisions between those who condone and those who oppose the movement in gender technology are not quite fleshed out sufficiently. Incredibly relevant, thought-provoking subject matter, 'Specie' falls slightly short by being making its complex premise a little too ambiguous.

Pleasance Dome, until 26 Aug (not 13), 12.10pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Sharp]

## Each Of Us (Ben Moor)

"We are all simply transmitters and receivers of stories", Ben Moor declares in this new one-man show. And as storytellers go, he takes some beating. With a rare richness of language and imagery, Moor describes a playfully dystopian reality in which overweight

Underground passengers wear "baby not on board" badges, the lonely attend reunions for non-specific schools, and failed relationships are extinguished on "pyres of moving on". Moor's protagonist has experienced such a break-up, providing the catalyst for this exploration of love, loneliness and friendship. The tone and wordplay are unashamedly intellectual, and with echoes of post-modern authors like Don DeLillo, have a density that won't be to everyone's taste. But for those who like their theatre deeply layered, Moor's performance is mesmerising.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug, 3.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

## Nirbhaya (Assemble, Riverside Studios and Poorna Jagannathan)

Nirbhaya is a Hindi word meaning 'fearless' which became synonymous in 2012 with Jyoti Singh Pandey, the victim of an appalling sexual assault. This shocking event and her subsequent death set in motion a public outcry and forms the starting point of this distressing but compelling play. Performed by the survivors of real life abuses, at times this is intensely uncomfortable viewing. As each tells her deeply personal story, the show develops into a universal exploration of victimhood. Their harrowing testimonies are handled with great care, and the text crackles with poetry, fury and complexity, while simple stage pictures pick out moments of particular horror or fragile beauty. Like the women at its heart, this is a powerful and fearless production.

Assembly Hall, until 26 Aug (not 12, 19), 4.00pm tw rating 4/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

## The Sign Of Four (FreeRange Productions)

Conan Doyle's classic tale of international intrigue, locked-door mystery and dubious stereotypes is ripe for an energetic retelling. Unfortunately FreeRange Productions don't get it quite right, never settling on a tone and ending up somewhere between faithful adaptation and comic pantomime. David Gurney makes an unusually genial, professorial Holmes, while Jake Wilson's dapper Watson swivels between over-eager student and lovelorn puppy dog. The supporting cast, though committed, tend to overplay it, leaning towards yelping deliveries and underwhelming mugging. Their well-timed asides and silly sight gags fail to lift a production labouring under the weight of exposition and lack of momentum. Despite the company's obvious flair

and enthusiasm, by the end this performance shows few signs of life.

Just the Tonic at The Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), time 1.00pm  
tw rating 2/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

## Failontology (Rapid Gambit)

A German scientist and his Argyll jumper-wearing secretary. Their charge? Keeping the universe's forces in balance. As they battle with the complexities of gravity, this two-man performance has the audience guffawing at random with its healthy doses of buffoonery, and has that Doctor Who feel - y'know, futuristic, yet stuck in the 70s. Some of the jokes are hilarious, but they also get a little worn out as moments are stretched to their last possible second, introducing unnecessary tension. Furthermore, at the beginning it's not wholly clear what exactly is going on, but this can be forgiven because of such highlights as a tussle involving plenty of eye poking. With vintage props to create a homey atmosphere, this is a sweet and nutty show.

Zoo, until 26 Aug, 4.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Natasha Gartside]

## Company Of Wolves (Big Shoes Theatre Company)

Cleverly adapting the words of Angela Carter to create a dark and dreamlike scene, 'Company of Wolves' is effective and well constructed. Professionally executed moments of dance, physical theatre and original acoustic music pepper the moments of text and the seamlessly interwoven stories leave audiences entranced. The cohesion of the company was admirable and the harmonies in song were beautiful. Although performing among a talented young cast, particular mention should go to Amy Kennedy. Her portrayal of the werewolf was outstanding and showcased her clearly innumerable talents with physical transformation and characterisation. Some of the best youth theatre the Fringe has to offer, 'Company of Wolves' is definitely worth catching.

Space @ North Bridge, until 10 Aug (not 7, 9) 2.05pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Christie Rolley]

## VISUAL ART

### Witches & Wicked Bodies (National Galleries Of Scotland)

Images of witches are universally recognisable, even if only as

uninspired Halloween costumes. Taking in six centuries of occult artworks by Goya, Blake and many lesser known names, this exhibition provides a more complex view, revealing the allegorical and starkly sexual subtext to these familiar motifs. With numerous etchings and black and white prints on display there's a suitably macabre mood. Dramatic depictions of light, shadow and smoke fill the works with unsettling motion, while a select few paintings stand out in bold and breathtakingly vivid colour. Careful curation tracks differing portrayals of witches through Europe's complex history, convincingly casting them as reflections on cultural struggles between science, sex and spirituality. Beautiful, grotesque and fascinating, this is a spellbinding exhibition.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, until 1 Sept, 10.00am

tw rating 5/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

### Through American Eyes: Frederic Church And The Landscape Oil Sketch (National Galleries of Scotland)

Renowned American artist Frederic Church travelled throughout his life, painting landscapes around the world, but was always drawn back to the scenery of his home in New York State. This modest, free exhibition charts a part of that journey through a selection of preparatory sketches in oil. Some are charmingly scrappy, capturing the changeable effects of light, weather and season in confident, quick brushstrokes. They're straightforward but effective scenes depicting exotic environments, icebergs at sunset, and the unspoilt, sprawling America of the 1800s. In contrast to the gigantic, fully-worked 'Niagra Falls from the American Side' which dominates the main gallery downstairs, this is a small, pleasant collection demonstrating both the artist's methodical process and his quiet obsession with nature.

Scottish National Gallery, until 1 Sept, 10.00am

tw rating 3/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

## WORDS & EVENTS

### The Original Underground Tour (Auld Reekie Tours Ltd)

This reviewer, along with many of those alongside her, was left genuinely shaken by a tour that has no need of gimmicks or actors who jump out at you from dark corners. 'The Original Underground

Tour' is less a ghost tour than a very interesting historical trip around Edinburgh's underground vaults... which just happen to be considered haunted by many, and one can see why. During the journey through the damp and gloomy vaults a confident tour guide recounts the dark and bloody history of the place, this, combined with the atmosphere of the surroundings is more than enough to cause even the most sceptical to shiver with fear. Not just educational but really very thrilling.

Auld Reekie Tours - Meeting Point, until 1 Sep, times vary.

tw rating 5/5 | [Jasmine Faller]

### Rebustours - Hidden Edinburgh (Rebustours)

Though it is the ultimate treat for the Inspector Rebus fan, Rebustours is not simply an opportunity to gush for two hours with fellow enthusiasts, but rather a celebration of the city that inspired Ian Rankin to create his beloved characters. With a gruff charm and a very dry sense of humour, tour guide Colin Brown keeps even those totally unfamiliar with the books riveted with his dramatic readings and interesting tidbits from Edinburgh's history. Centred around the University of Edinburgh campus, the walking tour does not showcase the most famous or scenic parts of the city, but explores areas unknown to the average visitor. A necessary stop for the Rankin reader, Rebustours is an educational, eye-opening experience for all.

The Royal Oak, until 24 Aug, 12.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Elaine Teng]

### Jem Rolls (Big Word Performance Poetry/PBH's Free Fringe)

Fast-paced, loud and even a little bit scary, Jem Rolls demanded the audience's attention. With poems covering an eclectic mix of topics, from childhood to tourism and dinosaurs, Rolls has something to say about everything. His poetry is witty and clever, usually with a subtle but sharp political streak, but it is not just his poems that make Rolls stand out. Even in anecdotes or general chat with the audience, Rolls almost talks in poetry, showing how much of a natural he is with words. Never has someone talked so rapidly in so many rhyming words with absolutely no slip-ups. Add in some hilarious actions and storming in and out of the audience, Jem Rolls captivates for the entire hour.

The Banshee Labyrinth, until 24 Aug (not 20), 8.40pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Helena Wadia]

## MORE ONLINE>

“ I was the kind of teacher I hated to have. A fun teacher. The professors I admired were the ones that stuck to the subject matter, never showed a sense of humour, and wore tweed jackets ”

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