

EDITION #18:
TUE 20 AUG 2013

CABARET

Songs For Cynics (Roulston & Young/Festival Highlights)

Sarah-Louise Young and Michael Roulston voice the thoughts every cynic has been afraid to say out loud through witty lyrics to catchy tunes. 'Songs For Cynics' is a simple but sweet duet performance by two upbeat and talented musicians. The set mainly consists of songs about disappointing lovers, the more interesting sex lives of others and, of course, that friend with the ugly baby. The duo make for an early evening treat, although not one to be enjoyed with your mum and dad, as Sarah isn't afraid to delve into the awkwardly intimate and embarrassing in and around songs. An honest and amusing performance from a talented and hilarious team.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, until 25 Aug (not 14), 6.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Rebecca Lunn]

Caryatid Unplugged (Evi Stamatiou)

Evi Stamatiou's one-woman, charmingly low-budget show was a bizarre experience. She attempted to combine physical clowning with a serious political narrative, detailing immigration in and out of her native Greece. Playing all her own characters, some dialogues worked better than others; some were extremely witty and effective, while some felt contrived and over-acted. She was unafraid, though, to address the paradoxes of the British immigration system and the darker underworlds of smuggling and human trafficking. Yet, the show's primary aim was to amuse, and so is never short of characters played with hammed up 'funny voices' and a fair measure of song and dance. Stamatiou gives a glimpse into Greece's artistic and economic traditions, which is an original idea, but was held back by the one-woman format.

Hill Street Theatre, until 25 Aug, 9.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Elizabeth Jewell]

The Full Brontë! Literary Cabaret (Scary Little Girls)

The 'Full Brontë!' is a wonderfully raucous journey through the life and work of the Brontës. My adventure began with a Cosmo-style 'Which Brontë Sister Are

You?' quiz leaving me indefinitely branded 'Emily' by our host. While the show occasionally slowed, when it regained momentum it reached a frantic and delightful conclusion. Monika De Plume is your excellent, uppity compère and self-proclaimed leading lady, unafraid to mock her audience, her on stage companions or indeed herself. Her sidekick, Non, provides her fair share of slapstick, and their piano playing companion has a beautiful singing voice that is somewhat underused. A wonderful juxtaposition of vulgar humour and high culture, this show on PBH's Free Fringe is far more valuable than the price of admission.

Fingers Piano Bar, until 24 Aug (not 19)
4.20pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

The Sweet Release

For a burlesque extravaganza look no further than The Sweet Release's Sunday special. Two fabulous hours of a glittering array of dancers (and one hula-hoop expert). From the beautiful and sexy to the weird and wonderful, all the performers have their own unique style. Whether you are a complete novice or burlesque show veteran, I can assure you that there are parts of the evening when you will see something completely unlike anything you have seen before. Most of the performers also have their own Fringe show, burlesque or otherwise, so this is a fantastic opportunity to sample a little bit of what is on offer. A night of indulgent entertainment and a brilliant excuse to stay out late.

Sweet Grassmarket, until 23 Aug, 11.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Alix White]

Tomás Ford: Electric Midnight Cabaret (Tomas ford.com/ JumpClimb)

Probably one of the most terrifying acts you'll see at the Fringe this year, this unique horror show is not for the faint hearted. Tomás Ford's split personality is simultaneously threatening and apologetic. He assaults the audience by invading their personal space and they ended up laughing, I suspect, more out of fear than anything else. It's not necessarily a cabaret show as you might expect it, and though Ford does attempt this method of showmanship, soon enough he reverts to his usual industrial electro madness. It makes me wonder a bit, what sort of person creates a show as deranged as this? But then again, what kind of person am I to be enjoying it?

Just The Tonic At The Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), 12.00am.

tw rating 5/5 | [Samantha Strachan]

CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Yurtakids! The Red Bike (Principio Attivo Teatro)

A delight of mime, shadow puppetry and storytelling, 'The Red Bike' is a tale which audiences of any age can enjoy. Detailing a city in which a financial tyrant steals the shoes of his poor workers, this show has a larger message to deliver about money, hidden beneath a charming tale about a growing family. A strong, humorous and expressive company enchant all audience members and more than a few adult tears were shed, whilst the innovative venue adds a touch of magic. Intelligent children's theatre which spins an intricate yet engaging narrative, 'The Red Bike' is a breath of fresh air in a festival where volume is often prioritised over value.

Summerhall, until 24 Aug, 2.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Christie Rolley]

COMEDY

At Wit's End (Rankin & Holme)

A versatile bunch composed of five different stand-ups with five different skill sets, their material reflected this diversity. Yet, stand out performances from Gabriella Rankin and Harriet Collins only encapsulated how this 'group' often came across as five individual acts, therein lacking any genuine chemistry. At their best when they played on your expectations, they also portrayed some of society's most intriguing personas alongside everyday encounters. The show could have done with being refined more, in order to weed out some of the shorter, less memorable sketches that sadly only served to see the clock tick over. Ultimately, in the vast sea of sketch shows this group will need to do more to stand out, but don't let this detract from an otherwise entertaining performance.

C aquila, until 26 Aug, 5.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Ankur Anil Shah]

Dark Side Of The Sun (Superhero Club)

It is a testament to the professionalism of performers when they can appear on stage and seem unfazed by the fact they're barely outnumbered by their audience. The four members of Superhero Club are young but their sketches are

original, lively and fast paced. They jump from character to character seamlessly, obviously very much enjoying their time on stage. They joke about ordering banter online, but certainly don't need any help on that account. It's a laugh a minute comedy; from advice on passing your Duke Of Edinburgh Award to dancing with plastic swords, there is nothing the Superhero Club is afraid to try. An easy to watch, light-hearted hour.

theSpace @ Surgeons Hall, until 24 Aug (not 18), 11.05am.

tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Gray]

Britain's Got Fuck All Talent! 2013 (Flick Ma Beens!)

Following the well known 'Britain's Got Talent' format, Liam Withnail smoothly presents an interesting and humorous cross-section of the 'British public'. Highlights included the vivacious Mr Hardcastle who warmed the audience up with a taster of the sexually charged and witty humour that would follow, epitomised by the perfectly crafted Jellybean Martinez, a character honed to the flamboyant peak of hilarity and not-so-creative song-writing. Characters may change on the night but the man behind it remains the same and as a result of audience voting, the best personalities are sure to return. Where Jellybean Martinez and Kenny Boyle really succeed is in the audience participation. And while much of the humour comes from their personalities themselves, their off-the-cuff puns, insults and remarks deftly hit the comic bullseye.

Just The Tonic @ The Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), 3.35pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Sam Turner]

Lead Pencil (Lead Pencil)

Just another sketch show? Not quite. With a nostalgic nineties theme, Lead Pencil takes you back to the days of 'Art Attack' and 'The Fresh Prince'. Intervals immersed the audience in some cheesy songs of the era that should possibly have been left there - but who doesn't love a bit of 'Mmmmbop'? The group's observational sketches were nonetheless sharply relevant to the present day and I left the show wondering how I ever survived without an iPhone, let alone with my Nokia 3310. The finale, in tune with the hilarity of the rest of the show, encapsulated for me where Lead Pencil's talent lies; their musical sketches. It's there that I really believe this talent trio will find greater success.

Underbelly Bristo Square, until 26 Aug, 1.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Ankur Anil Shah]



SNAP OF THE DAY: It's 'Pendulums Bargain Emporium' at Pleasance Dome. Photo: Mark Dawson

Rob Auton - The Sky Show (Rob Auton/PBH's Free Fringe)

It's not often that a comedian can genuinely make you cry with laughter - the contrived scenario of someone intentionally trying to make you laugh can sometimes produce nothing more than a giggle - however, for Rob Auton comedy is just second nature. It's hard to categorise this comedian - he was erratic, eccentric and threw in the odd monologue about his love for the sky. Auton has this drunk, childlike quality to him, making him instantly lovable. I don't have the vaguest clue what goes on in this guy's head but I know that I absolutely have to see this show again, with as many friends as I can convince to go before the Fringe is over.

The Banshee Labyrinth, until 24 Aug (not 13), 4.00pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Alix White]

Sam Lloyd - Fully Committed (Gilded Balloon in association with Sloat Entertainment and EMX Management)

Far removed from his other well known character - Ted from 'Scrubs' - Sam Lloyd takes the stage as the protagonist of 'Fully Committed' - a story about a struggling actor manning the phones in an exclusive restaurant. Thirty six more personalities follow in this one

man play by Becky Mode. Lloyd's versatility shines through as he puts on a different voice for his customers, colleagues and family. He covers accents ranging from French to Indian to New York; both female and male. He reminds me of early Robin Williams as he bounds around the stage putting on faces to match his many voices. He goes through so many transformations you almost forget that this guy is the same person who played the bumbling Ted.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 25 Aug (not 13), 5.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Samantha Strachan]

Mark Olver - Dancing About Architecture (Philomena Productions)

Mark Olver is the genial host of a chat show about stand-up comedy, with guests differing daily. I saw a line up of four, including the ever popular Milton Jones. Olver's questions, whilst not exactly hard-hitting, drew out honest and occasionally funny answers. The comedians discussed starting out in stand-up, and offered some pearls of advice to budding comedians, such as not worrying about judgement, and the importance of failure. There was also an interesting debate on the morality of swearing. Whilst the chat show offered an insight into the world of stand-up, it may fail to hold the attention of anyone not interested in actually becoming

a performer. Even the speakers themselves looked a tad bored at times.

Assembly Checkpoint, until 22 Aug (not 15, 17, 18), 1.45pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Isobel Steer]

Matt Okine - Being Black & Chicken & S#%T (Soho Theatre and Century Entertainment)

It is now quite clear to me why this Australian comedian has got such a buzz surrounding him. He won Best Newcomer at The Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 2012, so I went to this show with high expectations - which were completely exceeded. A fresh face at the Fringe, Okine's show gave the audience an insight into his background and current life, moving from one hilarious scenario to another. The name of the show is a big clue towards Okine's material - he likes chicken and "the good kind of racism". But don't go thinking this will be a completely predictable stand-up show - there are a few surprises along the way.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, until 25 Aug, 6.00pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Alix White]

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

My Name Is Sue (Dafydd James, Ben Lewis and Underbelly Productions)

It's odd how a character so unsettling can garner so much affection from an audience, but such was the charm of Dafydd James' Sue that it seemed inevitable. The protagonist of this performance was capable of creating both sinister and heart-warming moments, but either way, the whole show was captivating and deeply funny. The musical ability of James and his accompanying performers must also be appreciated, as each song was played with glorious quantities of childhood fancy and non-idealised menace. Sue was a brilliantly unpredictable figure at the heart of proceedings, and consequently the audience was absorbed throughout. Even though the unexpected conclusion to the show may have cast Sue in a possibly negative light, you couldn't help but leave with at least a little bit of fondness for this endearing misfit.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, until 26 Aug, 2.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Robert McGowan Stuart]

Romesh Ranganathan - Rom Com (Phil McIntyre Entertainments by Arrangement with Lisa Thomas Management)

The premise of Ranganathan's misanthropic show is to expose what really happens after the credits roll at the end of a rom com. The topics

he covered, such as parenthood, veganism and racism weren't untrodden ground, but his sarcastic delivery managed to make me forget this for the most part and laugh... a lot. This cynical comic's jaded stage-persona managed to make even the simplest jokes funny, and you had to giggle at his improvised interactions with audience members. If you're looking to see an enthusiastic comedian who is high on life, then Ranganathan is not the man for you, but for a world-weary husband and father, talking about his general day-to-day annoyances, then buy your tickets now.

Underbelly, Bristo Square, until 25 Aug, 6.50pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Victoria Beardwood]

DANCE & PHYSICAL THEATRE

Parkin'Son - Giulio D'Anna (Big In Belgium, Richard Jordan Productions, Drum Plymouth, Theater-Ann-Zee, Summerhall)

I am not ashamed to say that 'Parkin'Son' had me in tears by the end as, looking around the theatre, I was by no means the only one. A very expressive and heat-felt piece of choreography by Giulio D'Anna; he and his father manage to portray their closeness as well as their distance with astounding simplicity and grace. Really beautiful. It's a slow burner though - it starts strange, and makes even less sense in the middle with a segment of light violence. It's really only at the end when everything comes together that the piece becomes beautiful as a whole. I cannot tell if this journey from confusion to understanding for the audience is intentional, but it works.

Summerhall, until 25 Aug (not 19), 6.20pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Jasmine Faller]

Pudasi (Norian Maro)

This magical Korean piece combines music with movement in a triumphant and enjoyable performance. The energetic cast draw you into the show, creating a powerful and enthralling atmosphere. They use ribbon and material to create effect, bringing colour to the stage. The whole performance is accompanied by rhythmic drumming and haunting chants which transport the audience into the past. Although the movement is fluid, the show itself is not, and has some confusing elements: the story is difficult to grasp and at times feels disjointed. However, for those wanting to enjoy some feel good music and

enthusiastic performers, this show is for you. It is an interesting and refreshing combination of the arts.

C, until 25 Aug, 10.00am

tw rating 3/5 | [Lyndsay Snoddon]

The Summit (Scratchworks Theatre Collective)

Five actors explore the story behind an athlete's journey to the Olympics, through devised theatre and contemporary dance. Whilst the performance itself is good, the story is a bit stereotypical which gives the play a rather amateur feel. The movement is thrilling, in time and precise, but the dialogue lets the play down somewhat. The sisterly rivalry, forms of pressure on the athlete, and the recovery from injury stories all seem rather obvious, though the touches of comedy do brighten up the show. It is exciting to see a story form with minimal set and props and it is a testament to the actors that they have the sheer physical strength needed for this production. A fun and topical play.

theSpace on North Bridge, until 23 Aug (not 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22), 9.10pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Helena Wadia]

The Island Of Doctor Moreau (Piper Theatre Productions)

Five incredible actors - one mesmerising performance. From the minute the lights came up, I sat on the edge of my seat. This innovative piece combines the music of one instrument with the pure talent of five intriguing actors to give a piece of dramatic excellence. The actors share roles, changing from one character to the next, transfiguring from humans to animals and then back to humans again. This adaptation of 'The Island Of Doctor Moreau' by HG Wells is purely physical and utterly fascinating, a powerful performance that takes the audience on a journey from the minute they sit down. With nothing more than simple lighting, black back drops and five simple costumes - it's chaotic, gripping and breathtakingly amazing.

C Venues - C Aquila, until 25 Aug, 12.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Lyndsay Snoddon]

What Is The Weight Of Your Desire (VerTeDance)

This is a fearless, expressive and moving show. The four dancers use brave and very physical dance moves which aim to answer a series of questions about femininity. What do your clothes say about you? Why do females want to change their bodies so much? Do we expose our true selves when we expose our bodies? Dancing to an impressive selection of music, the dancers present both the oppression

that surrounds women and the stereotypical 'men's magazine' view of the female body (which is shown in a hilarious over the top catwalk type dance). Constant eye contact with the audience makes this a very real piece of theatre, and turns it into a very sympathetic show. Clever, exciting, funny and intense.

Zoo, until 25 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 6.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Helena Wadia]

MUSIC

Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers (MTD Productions)

Combining their powerful drumming with lashings of fiercely energetic stage presence, The Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers are an almighty musical force living up to their name, which translates as 'limitless reverberation'. Showcasing their innovative taiko drumming routines, which originate from Japan, the group deliver an intense, playful and unique performance using a combination of bells, jongs, hand-held drums, flutes and a number of enormous odaiko drums. Along with their dramatic costume changes and the appearance of an army of UV ninjas, the taiko drummers are an astonishingly skilful and passionate group of musicians, who will leave you with the unforgettable feeling of drumming pounding through your chest for weeks to come.

Assembly George Square, until 26 Aug (not 19) 12.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Kayeleigh Head]

MUSICALS

Assassins (Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society/Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic)

Using the format of a fairground shooting game, 'Assassins' explores the lives and motives of nine infamous figures who attempted to assassinate various US Presidents. There were some strong cast members, such as Genevieve Gaunt, as hippy chick Lynette 'Squeaky' Fromme, and Martha May Bennett, playing the ditsy Sarah Jane Moore, who were as strong in their own scenes as they were together, bringing the clever dialogue and songs to life. Comparatively, some performers seemed to lack energy, but this could be down to the fact the these two parts had some very witty script to work with. The plot was interesting but its portrayal sometimes lacked cohesion and was thus a little hard to follow. Overall, an enjoyable musical, especially for

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theSpace @ Surgeons Hall, until 23 Aug (not 18), 2.15pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Victoria Beardwood]

Between Empires (Orange Tree Productions)

A clash of cultures between Britain and India during the eighteenth century sets the scene for Between Empires. It is a familiar but comforting story of forbidden love peppered with a few despicable villains, blackmail, a wedding and the possibility of death. The musical follows the love story of George, sent from the East India Company, and Anala, the Indian ruler's niece. Anala is already set to be married to another, someone she does not know, and the secret lovers struggle for their freedom to be together. The original score made excellent use of traditional Indian song and instruments; the number 'To Be Free' in particular showcased the blend of East and West. 'Between Empires' is West End material, touching, beautiful and exploding with life and vibrancy.

theSpace @ Symposium Hall, until 24 Aug, 5.35pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Sarah Virgo]

Gobsmell - The Musical (Amerrycan Productions)

A dentist's office was always going to be a strange setting place for a musical. Gobsmell brings such a dichotomy to life as it outlines in comedic detail the experience of Travis, an American dentist, in the titular sleepy Yorkshire village. However this interesting premise is let down by a collection of disjointed and uninspiring songs performed with some difficulty by the cast who, it was clear, were unused to dealing with such material. This was a shame as the spoken sections of the piece were often humorous and poignant. Special credit should go to the three young people in the show who delivered slick and amusing

performances, keeping pace with the adults. A musical that really ought to just be a play, Gobsmell is disappointing and does not fulfil its potential.

theSpace @ Nidry Street, until 24 Aug, 3.55pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Christie Rolley]

Snakes! The Musical (Quite Nice Theatre)

'Snakes! The Musical' is truly brilliant new writing at its most accomplished. Quite Nice Theatre tackle their ridiculous premise wonderfully - a small theatre company have taken 'Snakes On A Plane' and made a musical, but they need £50 million to turn it into a West End mega-hit and you're their investors, watching a slimmed down version. Hilarity ensued, in what was a very funny show. 'Snakes' is a wonderfully inventive meta-musical and its versatile, creative and energetic cast will keep you laughing non stop. With music as insidious and catchy as it is brilliantly funny, 'Snakes' is as original as it is hilarious, and it could very well make your Fringe.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, until 24 Aug (not 19) 4.20pm.

tw Rating 5/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

THEATRE

Pole Factor (Angry Bairds Production)

A play about young ladies who pole dance their way to fame on a reality show. It doesn't sound like the most cerebral fare at the Fringe, but you'd be mistaken. Playwright and director Nazish Khan's creation is a vicious, incredibly current satire on the media in Britain today. Sameera Mohammed (Natasha Atherton) invents the persona of Coco, a fiery pole dancer on a crusade against a local mosque, driven by a traumatic past. The cast is universally strong, evoking the media archetypes

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they portray, from the reality show wannabe to the born-again Muslim, with the great realism called for. It is a refreshing critique of British society that anyone who has ever opened a tabloid will identify with.

theSpace on the Mile, until 24 Aug (not 18), 8.05pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Melissa Steel]

Honest Iago And Three Other Choice Villains (RHR Productions)

Shakespeare's villains are deceitful, manipulative, can be kings or soldiers, and can bring death and sorrow. With such a multiplicity of wickedness this show presents a selection which includes some of the most malevolent characters from 'Othello', 'Richard III', 'Hamlet' and 'King Lear', all interpreted by actor Richard Smithies. For each villain, the most prominent soliloquy or scene is recited, but the performances are flat and detached from one another. Furthermore, there is little that distinguishes the representation of Iago's mischief, Claudius' resentment and Edmund's displeasure. The most compelling scene is that of Richard III which truly brings the seduction and disgust for the character. Unfortunately, the disconnection between each villain and the dispassionate delivery of the lines, make of this an unsympathetic reiteration of Shakespeare's works.

The Space On The Mile, until Aug 24 (not 11, 18), 3.50pm.

tw rating 2 / 5 | [Natalia Equihua]

Losing The Plot (John Godber Company and Theatre Royal Wakefield)

Jack, an idealistic art teacher, has a breakdown and walks out on his family. His wife Sally then writes a best selling comedy book full of unflattering portraits of him. As this couple struggles with Sally's new fame and Jack's marginalisation, it is impossible to take sides: we feel for the publicly humiliated Jack, and cheer for Sally's accomplishment.

The dialogue is tense, engaging and reaches frightful levels of dissolution. The question about the inherent value of art becomes much more compelling as it gets coloured by the personal experiences of two characters we care for. Great acting from both Sue Cookson and Steve Huison, who infuse a detectable sense of self-interest into their passionate convictions. We both question and love them in this absorbing play.

New Town Theatre, until 25 Aug, 4.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Kyung Oh]

Anoesis (Junction 25)

Verging on performance art, 'Anoesis' is a brave, unconventional and immersive piece of theatre, placing the audience as part of the performance. With a register and exam at the start it established a feeling of authority over us and put the audience in the same mind-set as these young performers. Throughout the show they use a combination of choreography, spoken word, audience participation and theatricality, especially a brilliant use of power-play, to tell the story of themselves, and the reforms of education currently being discussed in parliament. The performers were deeply personable in their delivery, but while technically impressive, it was hard to decipher the show's main message.

Summerhall - The Dissection Room 50, until 25 Aug (not 12, 18-23), 11.30am.

tw rating 3/5 | [Christopher Spring]

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