

Three Weeks Daily

EDITION #20:
THU 22 AUG 2013

CABARET

Myra DuBois - Service With A Sneer (Myra DuBois/PBH's Free Fringe)

With her name in flowers like a funeral display, the charming Myra DuBois takes to the stage as only a drunken drag queen can. With her trusty, yet dim-witted, sidekick Thomas on the sound desk, DuBois tells us stories about nothing in particular. With a drink always in her hand (or at least nearby!) she talks us through the witty yet disconnected stories of her life. There's no theme here, but that doesn't seem to matter. When she's not singing (horribly) she engages in some hilarious banter with the audience, which is by far the funniest part of her show. Crude and a little bit bitchy, DuBois is exactly what you need if you're still up at midnight.

Laughing Horse @ The Phoenix, until 25 Aug (not 19), 8.45pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Christopher Spring]

CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Yurtakids! A Story of a Man and His Shadow (Principio Attivo Teatro)

Extremely expressive despite featuring very few words, 'A Story of a Man and His Shadow' is incredibly charming and cleverly understated. A slightly confusing narrative does not detract from the overall visual feast of the piece as the action plays out between our adorable protagonist and a sinister figure determined to invade his house. The slapstick comedy which plays out between the two is amusing and had the younger members of the audience in fits of giggles. However it was the cameo performance of the man's faithful balloon which delighted audience members most.

Enchanting at every turn, 'A Story of a Man and His Shadow' is essential family viewing.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, until 25 Aug, 10.00pm. tw rating 5/5 (Priyanka Raval)

COMEDY

Bench Bites (Jam Sponge Comedy / Free Festival)

Football or not, the show must go

on. Despite the raucous shouts from upstairs, Jam Sponge Comedy pulled off a very tight and entertaining sketch show. 'Bench Bites' has a simple premise, looking at a series of interactions on a single park bench. From a ukulele-playing stalker with some brilliant songs, to a brilliant old couple arguing about pigeons, there some great characters. The young group display good comic timing and clever characterisation - they clearly enjoy people watching. Using theatrical influences, it had an interesting subtext, though you'll have to consider it afterwards as it whizzes by so quickly. Exhaustingly energetic throughout, it's hard to leave without a smile on your face.

Laughing Horse @ The Phoenix, until 25 Aug (not 19), 8.45pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Christopher Spring]

Katerina Vrana: Feta With The Queen (Katerina Vrana/Free Festival)

Despite its title, there was nothing cheesy about this performance, neither, thankfully did it detail the preferred dairy products of Her Majesty. Katrina Vrana, with a personality as big as her hair (a source of many of her jokes), relates her experiences as a Greek in Britain. Contrasting the loud, proud,

Feta eating Greeks with her oh so accurate enactments of the tea-drinking, queue-forming, strongly-worded-letter-writing ways of the British, she hilariously demonstrates that there's no smoke without fire when it comes to stereotypes. Continual laughter and many an exclamation of "It's so true!" could be heard from an audience enamoured by the charming, outrageous Vrana. 'Greece is broke!' she often exclaims, but there was nothing poor about this Greek's performance.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, until 25 Aug, 10.00pm. tw rating 5/5 (Priyanka Raval)

The Quint Fontana 2013 Comeback Special (Quint Fontana / PBH's Free Fringe)

Follow Quint Fontana as he takes to the stage and descends into a whirlwind of showbiz, alcoholism and despair. Fontana boasted of some of the highlights from his 'Greatest Hits' record (on cassette) and treated us to more than a couple of musical numbers. Such gems included 'Cock-Talking' and 'Keeping A Toad', with his depressed, deadpan pianist obliged to do more key changes than anyone thought necessary... or possible. This late-night spoof

cabaret is expertly dysfunctional, dangerously dumb and really very funny; as the evening progressed and Fontana got more intoxicated, the bawdy jokes got amplified and the secrets came rolling out. Quint is egotistical and rude, but hilarious. Comedy for the inebriated at its finest.

The Voodoo Rooms until 25 Aug, 9.50pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Elizabeth Jewell]

Showcatcher (Assembly)

With the festival being absolutely packed (and then some) with such a huge variety of acts, it can be easy to miss some real crackers featuring at the Fringe. 'Showcatcher', hosted by the hugely likeable (and well researched!) Myf Warhurst, involves a series of interviews, in which performers come on to chat about their acts and about the festival in general. The fabulous boys from smash show 'Briefs', and the endlessly interesting South African comedian Tumi Morake, gave us a fascinating look into how their acts came together and evolved. The line-up changes daily, so it's a great way to scout out new acts to see. Make it your business to catch 'Showcatcher'.

Assembly George Square, until 25 Aug, 3.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

Bruce Fummy - The Jacobites And Bonnie Prince Charlie (Bruce Fummy)

With a great concept and an unquestionably impressive stage presence, Bruce Fummy puts on a very decent show. Recounting the tale of the Jacobites and Prince Charles, with brilliantly timed and novel gags, Fummy makes it hard for his audience to lose their focus.

It's great to see a stand up routine that successfully incorporates history, and it's surprising how well tales of the past and laughter complement each other. You'll learn a lot, and tourists and locals will also love his very Scottish mannerisms and delivery. Regrettably, Fummy does get a little jumbled and obscure with his jokes towards the end of his set. However, considering the scope of the whole routine, this is rather forgivable.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, until 25 Aug (except 19), 7.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Rory Morgan]

Flipper Committed Suicide (Giada Garofalo / Free Festival)

Giada Garofalo has a penchant for pointlessly over-thinking things - an activity she calls "mental wanking". Her Fringe debut is

the result of her taking a one-year-sabbatical from sex, in order to clear her mind and focus on herself, a show that explores grief, and courage. With her unbridled thought exercises, and by trawling through her troubled adolescence, Garofalo takes us through why, until recently, she was so prone to depression or, as her therapist put it, had a "tendency to be bipolar". Though she warns that it can get dark at some points, the more personal her material became, the more interesting it was. Laughter came naturally and frequently in this show, that displays a young woman's honest and courageous confrontation with herself.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, until 25 Aug, 4.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Kyung Oh]

Sad Faces Threw A Party (Ditto Productions)

Jack Bernhardt, Tobi Wilson and Tom Crowley are Sad Faces, an excellent sketch trio who have returned to the Fringe with an all new show about a birthday party on the brink of disaster, to which you're all invited. It's clear that these guys know what they're doing in this seamless blend of sketch comedy and audience participation.

The crowd in the Attic laughed the whole way through the set, which often used sound effects as a punchline; this wouldn't have been possible without the brilliant woman on sound and lights who got each cue bang on. In the end though, it was Bernhardt who stole every scene with his hilarious characters and adorable personality. This laugh riot is not to be missed!

Pleasance Courtyard, until 26 Aug, 4.30pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Alice Harrold]

The Good The Bad And The Morally Ambiguous (Sheffield Revue / PBH's Free Fringe)

With 'The Good, The Bad and the Morally Ambiguous', these students from the University of Sheffield have put together a fast paced, high-energy sketch show worthy of its already received critical acclaim. For the most part, the sketches on offer are funny, cleverly written and occasionally exceptional. One example includes the 'editor sketch', which hilariously embodies the incompetence that almost every adult has come across at least once in their lives. The material is a little clichéd at times, tackling themes done so often they no longer get laughs. In most places however, things remained refreshing and

Summerhall, until 25 Aug, times vary.
tw rating 5/5 | [Kyung Oh]

Where the White Stops (ANTLER Theatre)

You have to be hardy, strong and

enjoyable. A great deal of comic talent is exhibited, just waiting to be discovered.

Chiquito, until 24 Aug, 3.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Stephen Maughan]

MUSIC

The Les Clôchards - The Boys Are Back In Town

Opening with their unique version of "The Boys Are Back In Town", The Les Clôchards immediately and uncompromisingly confirm their anticipated return to Edinburgh this year. The five piece, with their adopted "part-time hobo" personas, fill the room with their spin on popular songs from a reggae 'Ace of Spades' to a 'Like A Virgin' ballad. The quintet intertwine and bounce off each other, showing great musical skill and knowledge, feeding their high energy to the audience, which at the end begged for more. The show is woven with their 'personal' anecdotes regarding each number, adding yet more humour and personality to the already fun filled show. Hugely entertaining, quirky and clever, The Les Clôchards are a must see.

Assembly Checkpoint, until 25 Aug, 9:10
tw rating 5/5 | [Lauren Stephen]



SNAP OF THE DAY: National Theatre of Scotland's 'Ménage à Trois' at Paterson's Land. Photo: Mark Dawson

most of all, have your wits about you, to survive the White: the bewildering, blustering space of endless emptiness, beyond where no man has gone. Thankfully, Antler Theatre have all the necessary vigour and striking ingenuity in hand. A rugged, minimalist production of saucepans and handmade tools, shaggy fur coats and woollen hats, 'Where the White Stops' is a playful and fantastically physical production, that batters you, like a blizzard, with minute after minute of innovative and hearty storytelling. Both warmly emotive and chilling with danger and a mind-bending sense of the unknown, littered with transpitive sounds and headily imaginative stories. 'Where the White Stops' treads into the territory of truly exceptional theatre.

Underbelly, Cowgate, until 25 Aug, 24.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Katharine Wootton]

The Boss Of It All (New Perspectives)

Adapted from a film by Lars Von Trier, 'The Boss Of It All' feels like it's right at home here on the stage. From the proscenium arch formed by the office lights, to the socialist storyline exploring power over others, this is a perfect homage to the original masters of the farce genre. An out of work actor is hired by a cowardly boss to be the president of an IT

company, so the boss can save face with his employees before selling to a malevolent buyer. With transcendent power shifts and superb performances, this is a show I have run out of superlatives for. So instead I'm just going to say: see it.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 25 Aug, 2.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Andrew Leask]

The School Of Night's Spontaneous Shakespeare (Extempore Theatre - Festival Highlights)

This just might be my favourite thing on the entire planet. An improv show with a literary twist, it begins with a variety of games, in which our four literate, articulate extemporisers improvise around books provided by the audience, and compose Chaucerian verse inspired by a member's family history. All this is just a warm up for the main act: a fully improvised Shakespearean play - in iambic pentameter - dreamt up on the spot. This is peppered with recaps of the action in different dramatic and poetic styles ensuring that the audience is constantly amused and that the performers are always working hard. If all the world really were a stage, I'd like to imagine it would be something like this.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, until 25 Aug, 2.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Andrew Leask]

Here's Connie (Carrie Anne Wilde)

Self-written, one woman play 'Here's Connie' is a brave, poignant and deeply compelling piece of theatre. This is the story of a woman desperately trying to find her way in a life that has dealt her a bad hand, though often succumbing to the ever tempting hedonistic escapism of one night stands, alcohol and pounding nightclubs. Waking up hung-over one morning, Connie's piecing together of memories from the night before leads her to evaluate the state of her life and the people in it. Most significant about the piece is its unflinching handling of uncomfortable societal truths, such as the problem of technology obsessed youth, and porn's brutal eradication of romance. Graphic, explicit, truly evocative; there is something in this performance that will speak to everyone.

the Space @ Jury's Inn, until 24 Aug, 2.10pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Priyanka Raval)

Ulysses (Tron Theatre Company)

Attempting to stage James Joyce's impenetrable modernist masterpiece is, like the novel itself, ambitious and quite possibly insane. On a spectacular, cluttered set the book's numerous episodes are handled deftly and with appropriate irreverence, pared down to a succession of quick-fire fragments. Backed by an enthusiastic

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supporting cast taking on dozens of roles between them, Jean-Paul Van Cauwelaert invests long-suffering anti-protagonist Bloom with wit and sympathy. The production draws energy from humour and sight gags, but allows the musical language to speak for itself, successfully clarifying without simplifying the text. That said, anyone unfamiliar with Joyce's work will still find this a bewildering experience. In that sense alone it's a fine interpretation of the source material.

Paterson's Land, until 26 Aug (not 19, 20), times vary

tw rating 4/5 (Dave Farnoli)

The Sleeping Trees' Odyssey (Sleeping Trees)

Homer and his infamous 'Odyssey' have had their fair share of re-imaginings over the centuries, but few, I doubt, have been quite so raucously giggle-raising as this one. The comic and enchanting trio that make up Sleeping Trees really slog out blood, tears and sweat (lots and lots of it - you really can't say they've not got oodles of enthusiasm) in this wittily devised take on Odysseus' epic journey. Hurling through the endless characters and heroic battles with lots of teasingly silly funny voices and frenzied physical mime, this is a really joyous and epically comical production that retains cracking storytelling in and amongst dozens of big, hearty laughs.

Just the Tonic at the Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), 4.40pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Katharine Wootton)

American Gun Show (Elephant Run District)

The flyers with a red moustache and a huge cowboy hat, the title of the show; everything indicated this would be another stand-up comedy about the US, and indeed, the show began with incredibly well told anecdotes of what it's like to be a citizen of this country.

However, Chris Harcum's charisma was enough to have our attention instantly. Once he'd drawn us in, the tone became more serious: he mixed jokes with facts about violence and guns in his country; and more importantly, he transmitted the real fear and anger of living with this issue. This is not just a satire, it's a mirror into our own actions, and Harcum delivers a powerful message that echoes in your mind long after the show is over.

Gryphon Venues at the Point Hotel, until 24 Aug (not 11, 18), 5.30pm.

tw rating 5 / 5 (Natalia Equihua)

In The Kingdom Of The Blind (Reverend Productions)

On a set strewn with crispy leaves,

far from civilisation, three exiles set up camp, forging a future always on the move, free from technology, society and the shackles of everyday living. With Ray Mears as muse, the team set about creating fires, tents and a new identity for themselves, with inevitably intriguing consequences. Branded as 'On the Road meets Into the Wild' the show doesn't quite have the insatiable drive and restless pace one might have anticipated, making it a bit more cuddly bear than Bear Grylls at times. That said, 'In the Kingdom of the Blind' does foray into the suspenseful and plays around with the audience's curiosity, making it a dramatic, if not overwhelmingly adventurous, production.

Venue 13, until 24 Aug, 6.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 (Katharine Wootton)

Fault Lines (New Celts Productions And For The Love Of Theatre Company)

How to live out your life that's been ruptured beyond repair? Three women, three fault lines, traced back to their shared origin, a childhood tragedy. Bethany's quiet acceptance, Kat's angry discontent, Rachel's steely activism: they have coped differently, and fifteen years on, they come together to relive, retell, remember. In this insulated, precarious space, I surrendered myself to their stories, watching them explain their present with revelations of the past. At the end, I cried with them, not knowing why - a sense of closure? a sadness for their murdered friend? a reflection of their fractured lives? - but I knew I was experiencing what they were, feeling what they felt. Hauntingly beautiful script, breathtaking acting, I left behind not a theatre, but an intimate, compassionate encounter with three real characters.

Northern Stage at St Stephen's, until 24 Aug (not 19), 2.40pm.

tw rating 5/5 (Isobel Steer)

Four Walls (EUTC)

Sometimes it can feel as if houses have a life of their own; and this is certainly true in James Beagon's 'Four Walls'. At once a joyously childish and gravely mature play, it follows a young girl who discovers her household furniture is alive. What starts out as a fun adventure slowly becomes a darker and more complex issue, something that is handled with great sensitivity by the cast. It's a little hard to pinpoint the target audience as it is sometimes too complex for children and a little immature for adults. But despite this, there are moments of fun appropriate for any age group, and the play is sweetly quirky and thoroughly imaginative.

Bedlam Theatre, until 24 Aug (not 11, 18), 1.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Melissa Steel)

In Holy Matri-moany (Z Theatre Company)

This hilarious comedy ridicules any couple's big day by portraying the gossiping, the imperfection, and the absurdity of two families whose very opposite children have decided to love each other forever. In the style of a sitcom meets 'Four Weddings and a Funeral,' we see a series of cliché situations - like the obnoxious mother-in-law, and the failed maid of honour's speech - as they ruin Pippa's dream wedding.

Each situation is created with enough energy and mastery to keep us entertained from wedding bows to the last toast. Unfortunately, the incredibly well delivered humour hides the fact that this play lacks a plot. Once the last line is given,

and we've laughed for the last time, you'll leave the theatre feeling there could've been more to this comedy of wedding errors.

theSpace on North Bridge, until 22 Aug (not 14), times vary

tw rating 3 / 5 (Natalia Equihua)

If Room Enough (withWings)

A joyful and exuberantly physical production of 'The Tempest'. The first stage entrance is through a washing machine, and the rest of the play lives up to this unusual opening. On the "isle of noise", Prospero uses his captive spirit Ariel to wreck his enemy Alonso's ship, and ensure Alonso's son's marriage to Prospero's daughter Miranda.

The choreography beautifully conveys the dreamlike, surreal plot, and is accompanied by wonderful and catchy original live music.

The talented young company has already won several awards with this show, and it is easy to see why. The performances are outstanding, and the set ingenious (especially the revolving beach hut). This sweet, funny show will sweep you off your feet.

Northern Stage at St Stephen's, until 24 Aug (not 12), 1.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Kate Pasola)

Pleasance Dome, until 25 Aug (not 12), 2.40pm.

tw rating 5/5 (Samantha Strachan)

The Pyramids Of Margate (Gulliver Bell)

Though it examines boredom, this play is never boring. In solo shows the viewer is absorbed by the consciousness of a single individual, and Martin Stewart is well able to keep us interested in his character. David has nostalgic memories of the Dreamland fairground that used to be on Margate beach, but the irony is that his life outside his office job is itself something of a fantasy world, with his Doctor Who obsession and his participation in an astronomy project. Stewart's performance, the lighting and the soundtrack make this drama a lively, engaging experience. Some viewers might miss the significance of the Doctor Who and other sci-fi references, but otherwise 'The Pyramids of Margate' hangs together excellently.

Hill Street Theatre, until Aug 25, 5.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Michael Black)

Mask (CalArts Festival Theater)

With its outstanding actors and strikingly well executed choreography, this creatively staged play dropped the audience into a gritty pit of blistering passion. Kidnapping the audience's attention, the plot painted layer after layer of human interest. Its mutual cruelty and tangible dysfunction gripped audience-members by the throat,

rendering them fully invested in the desire and disgust. However, before we were able to absorb the

climax, we were thrown into the bows and offered little opportunity for reflection. Perhaps it was the intention to provide only a snapshot of the heady ferocity, but the ending felt lacking in resolution or satisfaction - meaning the violence felt somewhat unsubstantiated, rather than a device leading to denouement. Extended a little, 'Mask' could be outstanding.

Venue 13, until 24 Aug (not 12), 1.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Kate Pasola)

Pleasance Dome, until 25 Aug (not 12), 2.40pm.

tw rating 5/5 (Samantha Strachan)

The Dumb Waiter (Spartan Ensemble with Ian Watt and Paul Comrie)

If there's one morsel of theatre bound to leave a bitter, if not entirely un-enjoyable, taste in the mouth, it's this site-specific production of Pinter's 'The Dumb Waiter'. Down in the kitchens of the New Town Theatre and secluded from the outside world, bar a dumb waiter, the audience become engrossed in Ben and Gus, and their wait for, well, who knows what? Like 'Waiting for Godot' with a culinary kick, this production sizzles with suspense and is seasoned with moments of darkly absurd humour. Completely overwhelming the cold, sterile space with furnace-like intensity, it instantly sets you squirming, unable to get out of the catch of mind-games firing around the kitchen. A twisted treat not to be missed.

New Town Theatre, until 25 Aug (not 12, 13), 11.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Katharine Wootton)

Pleasance Courtyard, until 25 Aug, 12.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 (James Hampson)

Mammoth (Kuopio City Theatre coordinated by Ace- Production)

Staying true to the Finnish form of truly bizarre art, Lea Klemola's 'Mammoth' succeeds in both entertaining and bewilder. As technology and mankind's domestication is choking her, a woman tries to find her roots in modern times. Supporting characters, such as the dull, gadget-obsessed husband, the grandmother playing the son, and

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the trusty dog, bring this story to life with both realistic and unrealistic scenes. Whilst this play does come with an earnest message it doesn't lack for humour, and ends with the perverted sort of twist only someone Nordic could come up with. I'd love to highlight each member of this stellar cast but unfortunately I'm restricted to 120 words. Instead I implore you: please go and see this play.

Pleasance Dome, until 25 Aug (not 12), 2.40pm.

tw rating 5/5 (Immi Calderwood)

stage picture gradually becomes clear, we are faced with three nude performers and a giant tourniquet system - the source of the rumbling - as though the performers are attempting to staunch the flow of blood from the very room itself. The hour and a half that follows, ushering us into the early hours of the morning, offers fleeting encounters with half-formed characters, eerie and abnormal beings, as they recreate their nightmare world onstage. A silent yet resonant production, 'Tourniquet' is a thing of startling beauty, a sensory deluge, that will leave you reeling.

Summerhall, until 25 Aug, 11.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 (Andrew Bell)

SPOKEN WORD

**Utter! Presents...
Identity Mix-Up
(Keith Jarrett /
PBH's Free Fringe)**

Keith Jarrett steps out in front of his audience wearing a black t-shirt and shorts, covered in labels that in some way define him, one for every letter of the alphabet. He starts his poem, removing the labels one by one until he is again a blank canvas. Jarrett manages to explore important topics, focussing on discrimination and identity, whilst injecting comedy into his poetry. Constructing one poem on each form of discrimination (gender, race, age, religion, disability, sexuality), Jarrett offers poetry which is clever, insightful, humorous and humbling. He speaks clearly, with occasional added elements of music and song. His autobiographical touches and a friendly rapport with the audience complete the allure of this show; an excellent poet and one to watch.

La Tasca, until 24 Aug (not 22), 4.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 (Helena Wadia)

Repertory Theatre (The Elephant And The Mouse)

'Repertory Theatre' is a cleverly constructed, precisely produced two man show: at times witty, at times farcical and at times slightly tragic, and our two man cast turn in remarkably exact performances -

INFO

Published by ThreeWeeks Publishing, a division of UnLimited Media www.unlimitedmedia.co.uk