

Fear Factor: Canine Edition

John Grady—Playhouse Studio

This one-man show stars John Grady, who was once a member of the Blue Man Group. Grady—tall, slightly balding, impeccably dressed in a grey suit—deftly weaves a tale of love and relationships. This semi-autobiographical tale is delivered with such ease and grace that one is drawn into the story from beginning. The matter-of-fact delivery makes one feel Grady is speaking to us directly. The play centers around the decision to euthanize a beloved pet, but also speaks to human relationships and our desire to bond with those around us.

Brad Biehn

Grady opens with a short description of the Fear Factor TV series, although at first we're unsure where he's going with it. Shortly thereafter, you understand how the story will develop and you can't help but be taken in. Grady's expert story-telling abilities give you first-person perspectives and if you've ever owned a dog, you'll find yourself replacing Abby's name with your own mutt's moniker. As a therapy dog owner, I feel a special bond with this poignant account. However, you don't need to own a dog to enjoy this play—if you've ever loved a dog, or loved a person who loved a dog, you will love this story.

The story has some bright sides and some sad sides, and enough giggles to keep you grinning. Even though you're grinning, you should keep tissues on hand. If you're not already in tears by the end, one look at Grady's teary eyes and you'll swallow hard to keep the moisture out of your own eyes.

Ray Yuen

Under the Mango Tree

RA RA WAI PRODUCTION—Warehouse

Having grown up in a village in exotic Fiji, Dubois invites us into her childhood experience. This performer concentrates on her set up and tells her story masterfully. She is a true storyteller. You will see a strong performance and a great deal of desire to be loved and affirmed. The show is definitely life affirming.

It is charming and lovely to see the letter writing between the daughter and her father. The father experiences life in Vancouver far away from his home in Fiji. There is some great cross-cultural humour. Indians don't say thank-you. The father mentions how everyone says sorry and thank-you all the time in Canada and that got a laugh from the audience. The child grows up to be 16 and is forced to be a child bride in an arranged marriage and she doesn't know anything about the man she will marry. She describes an intense first sexual experience.



Photo Credit: Diiverse.com

Alexandra Elliott and Black Heart Dance weave a tangled tango of passion, lust, and desire.

Dubois combines dance and Hindu music to tell her story. The world she lives in is secluded and is a tropical scene with butterflies and mangoes and trees and villages. But she gets to hear about her Bappu's adventures in Canada.

A well told story and a confident and controlled performer. Veneesh Dubois delivers.

It is a sad ending but the character always brings the audience back to how wonderful life is and how it is a gift to be celebrated. This a storytelling gem. And anyone who knows immigrants and or has lived in another country will be touched by this story of apartness and being far away from loved ones.

The theme is, of course, the universal one of the love between the father and his daughter. This is a one-woman show that will have a special appeal for an older audience.

Yvette Jones

Sofa So Good

Small Matters Productions—MTC Warehouse

This delightful clown show tells the tale of Rocket and Sheshells, a young couple moving into their first home together and who obviously are neophytes at sharing a relationship. But in the skillful, talented hands of actor/co-creators Adam Keefe (Rocket) and Christine Lesiak (Sheshells), they end up sharing a great deal more with the audience (their

neighbors). They share absolute hilarity. From solving the mysteries of a dildo to waging battle with a demonic couch, these two clowns capture the hearts and minds of their audience members from the very first moments. An hour flies by all too quickly in this fast-paced production and at the end, the audience just doesn't want to let go.

Keefe and Lesiak, co-founders of Edmonton-based Small Matters, also share a gift for physical comedy well beyond anything I've seen from many other clown duos. Their choreography is at an extremely high level and they are in perfect sync. This is a tremendously tight tandem. Another reason for the high degree of excellence in *Sofa So Good* involves the third co-founding member of Small Matters and co-creator of this show: the director, Jan Henderson. One of Canada's leading specialists in clown and mask, Henderson is an award-winning teacher and humour expert. You can't do better than to have one of the best at the helm.

The legendary Groucho Marx once said, "A clown is like aspirin, only he works twice as fast." Take a double dosage of Rocket and Sheshells before they leave Winnipeg. They have the cure for a bad day.

Robin Chase

