

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE**Sinéad Cormack—MTC Mainstage**

An interesting concept, but it needed to be more fully developed. This is a one-woman show, and when you walk in to take your seat, she's meandering about onstage, presumably warming up, before the show starts. Because of this, there was no way of knowing when the show really started, and it was surprising to suddenly see her start talking in a different language. It was basically a little bit of her life while she jumped around on a mat which was a map of the world. While she leapt about on this mat, a recording of various countries or cities played, which opened and closed the show. To me, it was more of a geography lesson/life story than a show.

*Arden Pruden***Speech & Debate****Pocket Frock Productions—MTC Up the Alley**

As promised, there were sex scandals and misfit teens. At some points it seemed to be very much about accepting yourself for who you are; and although I don't think that was the aim, it seemed to be the result. The actors themselves performed quite well, doing some pretty wild things onstage like stripping down to nude body suits and underwear. The language warning should be taken very seriously, as a lot of it was pretty vulgar, but very accurate in showing how teens speak today. It ran a little long at an hour and a half, however, and some parts seemed to drag.

*Arden Pruden***N.O.N.C.E.****Steve Larkin—MTC Up the Alley**

How many people get to be poet-in-residence in a therapeutic prison for sex offenders? You get to hear amazing poetry. Steve's delivery is so rapid-fire you probably get more words per minute than any other play you've ever seen. And every one is delicious. This isn't just about his time working at the prison, he also weaves in the tale of his bittersweet romance. Go be entertained and find out what N.O.N.C.E. stands for.

*Lisa Campbell***Scarlet Woman****SunsetGun Prods.—Rachel Browne Theatre**

This production sends up the 1940s film noir tradition, borrowing heavily from *The Big Sleep*. Unlike a couple of other send-up productions I have seen, this one hits the mark. The two actors play multiple roles in a plot that is even more twisted than the Bogey-Bacall film classic. The main difference between this production and the other send-up shows is that the actors play each character with such conviction it is always clear



Photo Credit: Diiverse.com

A Spanish bullfighter's life of blood and seduction portrayed in flamenco fire by Bolero Dance Theatre.

which character they are portraying.

I don't suppose they need my help, but I highly recommend this show anyway.

Kevin Longfield

You feel like you're watching a vintage movie because of the cheesy accents and the gangster outfits; the black-and-white clothing puts a stamp on the image. This fast and furious play switches scenes as quickly as it switches characters. Keep your senses alert and keep your names straight—if your attention wanders at all, you'll forget who's who and who did what. *Scarlet Woman* is an exercise that takes you on a mental roller coaster ride. If you're in a mellow mood for some relaxing Fringe, this show probably isn't for you, but if you like twists and turns, sit down and enjoy the fury.

*Ray Yuen***Cyrano: A Puppet Show****Castaway In The Attic—MTC Mainstage**

My husband loves puppet shows, but I'm lukewarm about them.

Now that I've seen *Cyrano*, my attitude toward puppet shows hasn't changed. But at last night's performance, I totally forgot I was watching puppets. The anguish, the passion, the jealousy, and guilt I saw expressed went beyond creatures with static expressions.

The fencing was clever, the emotions palpable, the denouement heart wrenchingly beautiful. My apologies are extended for weeping aloud. I'll be quieter next time—I must see this again.

Cyrano de Bergerac, my favourite play in the

world, performed so exquisitely—I'm still standing applauding as I write this brief note.

*Xiam Webster***Whiskey Bars****Big Empty Barn Productions—Playhouse Studio**

Singer/actor/playwright Bremner Duthie is, quite simply, extraordinary in this solo show about a weary cabaret actor attempting a comeback and questioning himself profusely as he prepares to go onstage. The entire play is set in the dilapidated dressing room of an old cabaret theatre with Duthie playing against an unseen female reporter interested in writing about him and reviewing his show. He obliterates the fourth wall by having the invisible reporter placed in the audience—a wonderful maneuver as it allows all of the audience members to feel that he is baring his soul for them personally. Duthie is a master of introspection, leaving nothing on the table as the emotions of his character pour out of him and fill the venue. Duthie's character is obsessed with the works of German-Jewish composer Kurt Weill; and Duthie draws the audience closer to him by singing ten Weill songs, sprinkled throughout the show. Duthie has carefully chosen songs with lyrics related in some way to each segment of dialogue, so you never have the impression that any of the songs are simply "song breaks", but rather are natural extensions of his character's thought processes. This brilliant show is not to be missed.

Robin Chase