

**Top Dog****Puppy Productions—Kids Venue**

*Top Dog* is pure curiosity, discovery, and energy unleashed. It is frantic, energetic, controlled chaos.

Audience participation is set up in a way that includes everyone who wants to participate, but doesn't put anyone on the spot. It is simple, engaging and—most important for a show like this—genuine and honest.

The actors are obviously having a blast on stage, and the audience picks up on it immediately. There isn't really an overarching story, but it doesn't need one. The four performers just enjoy themselves on stage in a very silly, imaginative way, and take the audience along with them.

They speak in what is close enough to language to be recognizable, but far enough away to be fun and silly every time—every time except once, where a very important message is delivered.

This show is suitable for all ages from 1 to 100, provided you are OK with having fun and being silly.

*Eric Rae*

**Choose Your Adventure: An Improvised Tale****Parking Lots Improv—Cinematheque**

Inspired by the 'choose an adventure' books that give you multiple options, this improv troupe brings something to the stage that I've never seen before.

Though it would seem that pausing every few minutes to offer the audience the two choices would quickly become tedious, it did not. However, it did take a while for these performers to really get the story going, which left it a little dry at the beginning. But once these guys got on their game, they were off with a bang, and extremely funny.

*Arden Pruden*

**The Seducer's Diary****Little Light Theatre—Rachel Brown Theatre**

This play, written by Winnipeg playwright Michael Nathanson, appears to be inspired by Kierkegaard's 1843 novella of the same name. In both works, the seducer pursues a calculated strategy to seduce a woman named Cordelia.

In Nathanson's play we see the very slowly developing relationship between Cordelia and Edward, when David arrives on the scene. He says, "I know the words that will melt a woman's defenses," but he doesn't really have much work to do, as Cordelia is quite clearly bored with reliable but uninspired Edward, who is more a friend than a lover to her.

This work is a series of three interlocked monologues that each actor delivers while acting out scene after scene with the other two. This gives them the opportunity to air their characters' thought bubbles on the events as they take place, as well as to break the theatrical convention against looking at the audience.

This Winnipeg-based production's well-chosen cast consists of Jeff Strome, Laura Olafson, and Ryan Miller, who inhabit the characters of the average frustrated chump Edward ("I have an eight-year start."), assertive, self-aware Cordelia ("I want this to take place on my terms."), and smarmy David ("Persevere, play the game, and you will be rewarded."), respectively.

The set included three coat racks interspersed with two mirrors, seeming to indicate the importance for each character to try on and find out what is the best role to play in this triangle. For example, Edward thinks that his main problem is that he is not a snazzy dresser like David, and he takes steps to remedy this, but doesn't

realize that his biggest issue is that he does little to inspire romantic feelings in Cordelia.

The quick-paced direction and psychologically deep acting of this production make it consistently engaging to watch. Unfortunately, however, the "seduction" of a bored woman who seeks adventure, is not all that noteworthy or instructive.

*Konrad Antony*

**Le Frenchword Presents "Fancy Mud"****Le Frenchword—Rachel Browne Theatre**

This is true Fringe! Wierd is the best description of this and trying to explain this act to someone is going to get complicated. Just treat yourself and take this in and say you really Fringed.

What drew me to this play was the title (which, FYI, has nothing to do with the play). All three actors are mesmerizing, but the tiny young female is particularly talented, zany, and riveting, reminiscent of a more tuneful Yoko Ono.

You will not be bored. You may not know what you've just seen, but you will love it. Not for the prudish, as the audience gasped at the scandalous finale.

*Lisa Campbell*

**Big in Germany****Ten Foot Pole Productions—MTC Mainstage**

This is a hilarious send-up of the meteoric career of the Canadian rock duo Omnipotence and their career in...Germany?

Upon returning to Canada after a year of fame in the center of Europe, they pick up where they left off. Bruce, the guitarist, gets mistaken for a gay porn actor, and Alex, the lead singer, makes ends meet as a waiter.

However they have NO success as rock musicians on their home turf, Toronto. After hooking up with gay porn director Phil, we see a silly transition from rock stars to gay porn icons, after truths are revealed in Bruce's graphic, autobiographical porn script.

At some point Alex tries to revive their Rock Duo days and they sink all their cash into a massive concert flop at AAC!

This is a hilarious poke at both Canadian pop and homosexual culture, with jokes galore in this fun Fab Two story.

*Kevin Campbell*

