"Reporting on the Fringe"

**Fringe Derby Doll** 

O

JennyRevi

ISSUE#4 Tuesday, July 22, 2014

I entered the King's Head last night intent on cold beer, hot wings and a rendezvous with Astrid and Otto Rot. I got the wings and the beer, but the Rots stood me up. Rock stars! What can you do?

Never mind. I was lucky enough to catch up with Ottawa native Nancy Kenny of Broken Turtle Productions. Nancy was the winner of the Canadian Association of Fringe Festival's award which allows winning Fringe shows to sign up for a spot at as many Fringes as they can afford, without depending on any luck-of-the-Fringe-draws.

Nancy decided to take her show Roller Derby Saved My Soul to London, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. And, she figured, why not film it all on the way?

So she raised money on Indiegogo, hired an eager young film crew, and, most incredibly convinced a Volkswagon dealership in Ottawa to donate the wheels to take her and her merry band across Canada.

Along with documenting her own Fringe adventures, she chose to follow three other companies, (with five shows among them): fellow solo performers Jem Rolls in ONE MAN TRAFFIC JAM, and Martin Dockery in The Surprise, along with Dockery's two-hander, Moonlight After Midnight, and a young company of Fringe newbies out of Saskatoon who are

mounting both Dr. Frightful Presents: Dead Air and Aiden Flynn Lost His Brother So He Makes Another.

There have been some bumps in the roadno billets in Toronto, having to buy extra hard drives when the one they thought they'd never fill was full-but otherwise, Nancy reports things have been going great, and that Winnipeg is her second favourite Fringe-she is an Ottawa girl, after all.

Still, I bet she says that to all the Fringes. We could find out-maybe in a neatly edited montage-as early as next year, when she hopes to take the finished film through the Fringe circuit once again.

Considering that along with the traveling, performing, and film producing, she's still able to do her day job wherever there's an internet connection, I don't doubt that she can.

Book it—I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Scirocco Publishing, whose ads have emblazoned the Jenny Revue's back page for many a year, has a booth in Old Market Square. He publishes Daniel McIvor's works, and Kevin

Longfield's history of theatre in Manitoba, among other drama and theatre related tomes. And all titles are 25 per cent off!

Trolls ahead-I was looking at the Freep's continuing coverage of the harassment of the lead actress in Lies of a Promiscuous Woman, and was

dismayed at the comment section where it was suggested either that the harassers had a point (which is idiotic), or that the entire incident is a publicity stunt to boost ticket sales.

How then to explain the two protesters who accosted Fest Director, Jason Neufeld on the street days prior to the acts of stalking and vandalism? Pretty elaborate street theatre for a PR stunt, especially for an audience of one.

Left Jenniless—There's only two issues left and we want to hear from you. Tell us everything before it's too late. You can connect directly from the web or email jennyrevue@ shaw.ca.

We're off tomorrow and, actually, I'm off now. See ya' Thursday.

#### Coral McKendrick



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# BUZZ Beviews

## Reviews

Reviews

Reviews

#### Lies of a Promiscuous Woman

#### Monkey Centurion/The Company of Woman— Eckhardt-Grammatté Hall (UofW)

Despite a slightly misleading title, don't expect a saucy tale of the Blessed Virgin's untold exploits. This take on the New Testament is an intelligent and thought-provoking discourse that delves into feminism, religion, faith, and consequences.

Audra Lesosky's writing is sharp, well researched, smart, and original. Theresa Thomson delivers the best performance I've seen of her vast work, bringing laughter and tears. The Madonna chorus provides punctuations to the poignant monologues and diatribes. The parallel storyline brought focus and accessible humanity. The standing ovation was well-earned; bravo to all.

Blasphemy be damned. This is a must see. Primrose Madayag Knazan

#### Home

#### Jurasco Productions-RRC (enter on William)

I saw the second performance of this show and found it to be well done. I was impressed at how well Wayne remembered the entire long program, including the verse by James Kavanaugh. I was reminded of TJ Dawe's long monologues as Wayne recited his monologue. Wayne had found his passion for his subject in this performance and it was well done. This is a show for people who are concerned with the use of pesticides in our crops and toxins in our environment.

Bob Bruce

#### Einstein!

#### Sew and Sew Productions-MTC Mainstage

I used to tell my children that Grade 12 Physics was the most fun in high school, so this play was tailor-made for me. The 90 minutes breezed by, but that was not the same experience that the people who accompanied me had. Everyone else complained that it was too long.

Jack Fry is an engaging performer who does a great job of contextualizing Einstein's work, life and times. We learn how his personal life, politics, and plain luck affected his career and discoveries, and how his overpowering curiosity about the physical world damaged his personal world.

At the same time the play meanders a bit, and it has so many characters that at times I had trouble keeping track of everyone. And even though the script needs cutting, it also leaves out some important ideas. In the opening scene Fry shows how many practical uses Einstein's discoveries have, but he never mentions the most famous application of all, the atomic bomb. The closest he comes is in a slide projection at the end of the show that lists, among other applications "Nuclear power."

Finally, the production really suffers from the use of a mike on the actor. Throughout the show Fry sounded like he was breaking in a particularly noisy pair of shoes. When he came out after his performance to thank the audience, he showed that he could project his voice well enough to be heard, so I do not know why amplification was necessary. I'd also lose the expository slides at the end of the show.

Kevin Longfield

This is a one-man historical exploration of Albert Einstein's early career, and focuses on his long struggle to have his Theory of Relativity proven correct.

Jack Fry does a great job of bringing personality to the piece and keeping it interesting. His use of some video helps demonstrate some of Einstein's theories, and by focusing on his life, makes sure it is not just a dry lecture.

I had seen the BBC/HBO movie *Einstein and Eddington*, which also covers some of this time period and some of the events featured in the play. This meant I was already familiar with a lot of it, but there were a number of new things in the play that had not really been mentioned in the movie.

All in all, a very enjoyable production. Murray Hunter

#### **Best Picture**

#### RibbitRePublic Theatre-Planetarium

This cast of three Fringe veterans do scenes and shout-outs for all the 85 or so Best Picture Oscar winners (and a few other movies) in a one-hour show.

They helpfully include a list of all the winners in the program, of which I had seen around half and knew something about another 15. As a lot of people probably don't know too many of the early ones, most of those only warrant the title being mentioned. A few such as *How Green Was My Valley* get sent up a bit, as it somehow beat out both *Citizen Kane* and *The Maltese Falcon* for the Oscar.

More time is spent on the more modern and well-known movies, but the pace is pretty frenetic. Jon Paterson, Kurt Fitzpatrick and Tara Travis work well together and their banter about various characters or plots in the movies is really good.

Avid movie buffs will likely get some of the more esoteric jokes, and be able to identify a few more of the scenes, but I think it would still be fun for the average person.

Murray Hunter

#### In Wonderland

Reviews

#### MTYP Summer Studio–MTYP Richardson Hall

The best part about this show is that there are constantly new things happening to grab your attention (not that my interest ever needed to be re-piqued). This is a creative and original look at *Alice in Wonderland*, told primarily through dance.

It takes the classic characters in stride, making them all interesting and clever. The show opens with eerie group songs, reminiscent of a chorus, and once the dance starts, quickly spirals into chaos, which is of course perfectly fitting for Wonderland.

My only regret was that it wasn't long enough for my liking. I could've watched that show for hours.

Arden Pruden





# Reviews

Reviews

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Reviews

#### **Confessions of an Operatic Mute**

BUZZ

#### No Fixed Address Prods.—Son of Warehouse

Briane Nasimok is a competent speaker and tells a good story—unfortunately, his story isn't particularly witty, profound or funny.

Yes, he arouses a few chuckles but he evokes sympathy more than laughter—the "I feel sorry for you" kind of sympathy, not the "you just ripped my heart out" kind.

This autobiographical journey provides little reason for the audience to connect or care. The story is mostly uninteresting and about as insipid as if I took an hour to tell you about my life. *Ray Yuen* 

#### Pizza Man

#### Coffee Guy Prods.—Alloway Hall (Man. Museum)

This energetic, exuberant romp gives us two young female roommates who have lost control of their lives. One has just been fired from the latest in a string of dead-end jobs—for refusing to sleep with her boss, no less—and feels she's wandering aimlessly through life; the other one has found out the boyfriend she broke up with is married.

The girls decide the best way to deal with these things is to create a situation where they have control: to find a man who they do or don't know, and rape him. Since the girl who broke up with the married man loves food and has ordered pizza, the idea comes up to force their wills on the pizza delivery guy. (I wonder if holding his anchovies occurred to them.)

Ethical struggles follow, as the girls can't decide whether to go through with their plan, even after they tell the man what they're up to. They even find a way to "nonchalantly" incorporate the arguably rape-y song *Blurred Lines* into the mix. Eventually, heart-to-hearts abound for all three and maybe some life lessons are learned. Everyone here puts on a spirited performance. The characters are generally likable, and ultimately, its heart is in the right place, as the play takes an over-the-top concept and brings it down to earth. There are a couple of sitcom-like zingers that did seem funny only because you don't expect them in a non-comedy troupe Fringe play.

I'm just glad I wasn't one of the poor customers stuck waiting for one of those pizzas in the delivery guy's car still to be delivered after he delivered the girls' pizza.

Beau Hajavitch

#### The Stiltskin Trials Weilgapatwa Productions—MTYP Richardson Hall

It's apparent very quickly that this show is incredibly dark. Prepare yourselves for the worst. It doesn't so much tug at your heartstrings as it does fill you with disgust and anger, and, perhaps even confusion.

The performances were solid, though they could be too quiet at times, and in certain instances, it dragged, but this can be excused, because as the show went on the energy seemed to pick up.

The actors clearly have a passion for the final scenes, and I'm not sure whether I should fear that or respect it. It's a good-looking show, with clean changes, and clean performances, but certainly not one to take the kids to.

Arden Pruden

#### Undress Me

#### Empty Sea Company-MTC Up the Alley

This gripping tale has you on the edge of your seat from start to finish. The lowly character continues to sink through the story until he spirals into an abyss by the end, taking your heart with him.





Just when you think that the character, Julian, can't sink any farther, he takes another nosedive. He continues to free-fall until he eventually hits rock bottom. Where does he go from there?

This has been one of the highlights of the Fringe for me. I highly recommend that you live through this tragic adventure.

Ray Yuen

#### Taxidermy 2: Another Musical Shwawawa Productions—MTYP Richardson Hall

As promised by the title, this musical is just as hilarious as the first, and the cast's sense of the comedic timing is clearly extremely finely tuned. It's a good late-night show, full of crude humour (some of which doesn't make a lot of sense but somehow is funny anyway) and jokes that would probably offend most people.

The actors also have a remarkable ability to play off things that go wrong during the show, like one cutting his hand halfway through a scene. Amazingly, they made light of this, accepted a band-aid from an audience member, and pushed forward, even making reference to the incident in later scenes. Definitely a great show to end your day with.

Arden Pruden

#### The Cockwhisperer—A Love Story Colette Kendall—MTC Up the Alley

Most of the jokes are funny but some are bust-out laughing worthy. While the majority of the show is dedicated to sexual humour, you'll find some moments where you need to hold back tears—and not the laughing kind of tears.

Kendall is a great storyteller and her words will engage you throughout. She makes little use of the projector and flip-board, but when she does, brace for hysterics.

Ray Yuen



www.jennyrevue.com

# he BUZZ Reviews

### Reviews

# Reviews

## Reviews

#### VERIKA

#### Black Heart Dance–Warehouse

This skillfully performed dance show is everything that a great contemporary dance show should be: modern and edgy with classic dance inspiration and a metaphor easily understood by the audience with room for their own interpretations and discovery.

The gritty pointe work and use of ropes for some aerial figures served the theme beautifully, while being athletically and aesthetically enjoyable. The choreographer's pre-show introductions and lengthy projected credits (there is no physical program for the show) somewhat dampen the anticipation for this incredible performance, but it picks up quickly, and the introduction will be helpful for audience members unfamiliar with the genre to better appreciate and understand the dancers' interpretations. Bravo, Black Heart Dance.

Ashley Kowalchuk.

#### Understudies: A New Musical Floppy Fish Performance Co.—MTC Mainstage

The first thing I noticed about this show is that they're mic'd, and unfortunately there was a lot of static from the mics. On occasion I could hear them whispering to each other backstage through the mics, which really took away from the performance.

The worst part, though, was that even with microphones, the band was louder than the singers, which made soloists really hard to hear, and group songs painfully loud.

It's a shame because it seemed like there was probably decent action and jokes in the songs, but I couldn't hear most of them.

The exposition was delivered dryly, and there were one or two strong actors, but overall it felt awkward and flowed poorly. The romance

# MARKETPLACE PLAYERS present

## Cruisin' in September

A one-act play by Denis Thornton (COMEDY—SONG—DANCE)

\*\*With cameo appearances by on-air personalities from ENERGY 106 RADIO

Venue 10, Planetarium Auditorium (Come Sail on the SS Columbia)

was forced, the action didn't make any sense, it was hard to follow, and overall just wasn't as funny as it was trying to be.

There is potential in the script, but it feels more like a first draft than a performance ready piece.

Arden Pruden

#### **Shadow Spaces**

#### Union Station Theatre Co.-RRC (enter on William)

The actors are stiff, and the lines are delivered almost tentatively. I understand that this is a drama, but it is almost over-dramatic and the romance between the two men is awkward.

While it seems like it's supposed to be, it feels more as though the actors are unsure of themselves rather than the characters.

As a whole, the show has enormous potential in terms of both the script and the performances, but it felt as though the whole thing needed to be workshopped before it was presented.

Arden Pruden

#### **Little Red**

#### Bananafish Theatre—Playhouse Studio

This re-telling of *Little Red Riding Hood* has an exceptionally macabre feel to it, established immediately by the set. As the play goes on, you're plunged into a rather surreal world that feels almost post-apocalyptic. There is a lot of talk on abstract ideas, such as *The Sandman*, or paths that lead nowhere and everywhere, and the whole thing feels very metaphorical and vague.

While it can feel slow at times there are a lot of interesting things going on but I will admit, I didn't get it. I understand what it was about overall, and it was very well performed, but I didn't get it. It's certainly a show that really makes you think about what's going on. Or maybe it's trying to confuse the audience and I'm not supposed to get it?

Either way, it not for everyone, but it's at least worth looking into.

Arden Pruden

#### Red Hot Mama: A Sophie Tucker Cabaret WestOfThePrairies—The Cinematheque

Wow what a show! This woman has an exceptionally powerful voice and an exceptionally powerful stage presence.

This show transports you right back to the era of cigar-scented late-night shows and raunchy jazz music. The atmosphere is amazingly set, and she plays the crowd expertly, spacing her life story out with jokes about her boyfriend Ernie, and songs relevant to her situation.

You really want to be friends with Sophie Tucker, she seems like a riot. A must-see. Arden Pruden

#### Trouble Walked In: An Improvised Noir Mystery Parking Lots Improv–Cinematheque

You have to hand it to a group that can spin an improvised story line for an hour. Defining some boundaries at the beginning helps, and I suspect that the actors all have film noir character types sorted out before they start, but that does not detract from their accomplishment.

On Sunday night they investigated a murder at a bookstore. The story dragged a bit at times, but mostly they kept the ball in the air, and occasionally they delivered some explosively funny lines. Most of the time when I see improv I admire the inventiveness of the performers without necessarily enjoying the story they create. Yesterday both worked for me.

Kevin Longfield





# BUZZ

Reviews

RAVIEWS

## Reviews

#### It Ends With a Bang

#### In The Morning-Cinematheque

For many people, the Fringe is where a theatre career starts. It's where you get your first feedback from a paying audience, and where you learn what works and what doesn't. The young people who present It Ends With a Bang seem to fall into that category.

There's a clever premise here and some good moments, and the cast have evidently worked hard to prepare themselves, but this show is more about experience developing potential than it is about the product on stage.

The script is more an extended sketch than it is a play, and it borrows too much from screenwriting and not enough from playwriting. The characters do not have much depth and the actors do not listen or play intentions often enough.

Still, there are some good instincts on display. I look forward to seeing more work from these folks in the future.

Kevin Longfield

#### Spec. Ed

#### Leithelle Productions-MTC UptheAlley

This is more storytelling than a play, but I do not mean that as a criticism. Leith Clark is a great storyteller with a good sense of timing and the ability to extract the key elements of a story.

In Spec. Ed. Clark describes his experience teaching "Special Education", a program which has had various names over the years, and which describes children who do not fit into the mainstream. Regardless of the motives for naming this group of people, categorization tends to dehumanize any group, and what Clark does brilliantly here is show how individual each person he has taught is, and how special the kids in Special Ed are.

The key difference in dealing with the people Clark teaches is illustrated in the opening scene, where Clark cracks the whip to bring an imaginary group of "ordinary" students into line. With his Special Ed students, however, Clark learns who each student is, and adapts himself to get the most out of each student.

My only qualm about this show is that I wish that teachers would use the same strategy as Clark does with all their students, regardless of their level of academic and intellectual ability. Kevin Longfield



members of Bizarro Obscure. This motley pair of time traveling circus performers are searching the universe for a ten-year-old boy who must be rescued from demons 313 years in the future. They managed to squeeze a few dimensions together for the audience at the Jenny Prevue.

#### Nashville Hurricane: A Curious Tale of **Fingerpickin' Fury**

#### **Chase Padgett Productions—PTE Mainstage**

Chase Padgett, the Portland, Oregon based star of last Fringe's hit 6 Guitars, returns with show that is similar to that one in some regards. He plays fast-paced guitar pieces, occasionally sings, and acts out four different characters, as he tells the story of the child guitar prodigy nicknamed the Nashville Hurricane in the mid to late 1970s.

We hear this story from the point of view of the reluctant child star( who seems more interested in physics than performance), his lackadaisical mother, his abusive manager Smokey Jones (a former revivalist preacher), and a mentor. All these characters had very different accents and postures, and Padgett transitioned between them without a hitch.

There was some audience participation during the show and Padgett, as one character or another, reacted smoothly and was spontaneously able to turn just about any response into something funny. This was true even when a particular audience member didn't give him much to work with and things could have become awkward.

Reviews

One disappointment for me was that Padgett only performed four guitar pieces during this 75-minute show, which seems to be a lot less than what he did last year. However, the last piece, performed by the Hurricane character after he decides he just wants to play music for himself, and not as a career, is a showstopper indeed. Padgett throws in all types of guitar techniques into this finale, including playing with one hand, using a beer bottle as a pick, finger picking, and other captivating movements, while performing the song The Devil Went Down to Georgia.

Konrad Antony

#### This is a Play Theatre & Play-MTC UptheAlley

I have always regarded Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest as a bulletproof play: no matter who performs it, it is structured and written so well that it will entertain an audience. I can now add This is a Play to that list.

This is a Play is a play within a play, where we learn the actors' thoughts as they work through a mediocre production.

The company that presents this play, Theatre & Play, makes some unfortunate choices, and they are not professional-guality actors. Still, they drew constant laughter from their audience.

Their first mistake was spelling out the premise in great detail in the program. This betrays a lack of respect for their audience, and robs them of the joy of discovery. Second, they had the composer character on stage instead of a voice-over, which slowed down the show. And finally, the pace of both plays is equally slow. The Maclvor part should be crisp and clean, but it is as slow and overwrought as the turkey the actors are supposed to be presenting.

Even with these problems, I suspect the audience would have gone home happy. I just wish they had seen some of the other productions of This is a Play that I've seen.

Kevin Longfield



# SHOWS REVIEWED

11 O'Clock Number... 340 ft A Small Affair All You Can Eat/The Top? African Folktales with Erik DeWal **Best Picture Bizarro Obscure BLOODSUCKER!** The Musical Braincravers: The Curse of Extollo... Caws & Effect Chase & Stacy's Joyride ChubRub Cabaret Cockwhisperer—A Love Story, The Communion Confessions of an Operatic Mute Cruising in September Cursed Damn Your Eyes Davy the Punk Devil's Circus, The Die Roten Punkte Delores a Mime Opera Dr. Frightful Presents: Dead Air (2) Eating Pasta off the Floor Einstein! (2) Fake News Fan Girl Flying Dreams (2) Gary Has A Date (2) Godspell HOME Horrible Friends: Free Beer, The Hudson Bay Epic, The Infinity or Bust In This House: Vice, Virtues and Vixens In Wonderland It Ends With a Bang jem rolls One-Man Traffic Jam

La Belle Laide Lies of a Promiscuous Woman (2) Little Red Making Believe Middle of Everywhere, The MITTELSCHMERZ Moonlight after Midnight Nashville Hurricane: A Curious Tale... (2) One Man Back to the Future (2) only just... Pizza Man Play Piano Play Quo Vadis Red Hot Mama: A Sophie Tucker Cabaret Shadow Spaces Slaves of Starbucks Snake Oil (2) Spec. Ed Speechless Stiltskin Trials, The Suddenly Last Summer Surrounded Tales She Tells Taxidermy 2: Another Musical **Teaching Shakespeare** This is a Play (2) This Is CANCER Trouble Walked In: An Improvised Noir Mystery Understudies: A New Musical Undress Me Vampire Lesbians of Sodom VERIKA Wang Dang Wanderlust Who Killed Gertrude Crump? You Can Do Magic

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