"Reporting on the Fringe"

ISSUE#5 Thursday, July 24, 2014



We are about to slide, stumble, or crash through the final few days of the Fringe, which means the Jenny is on the straightaway and closing in on the finish line.

Usually on a Thursday I report on the previous night's escapades at the Midnight Cabaret. I missed this year's though, so I can't report on how it went in its new location, (but maybe someone who attended will do that in our final issue tomorrow).

There's an unfortunate side effect of The Jenny neither advertising or recapping the Midnight Cabaret. Since we didn't list its participants, any who may not yet have appeared in these pages won't be eligible for a Jenny Award. (While we don't nominate every show mentioned herein, we like to have as many options as possible to twist into tortuous categories.) Winning this would be a dubious honour if it weren't for the unique, hand-made donkey trophy that comes with it.

I would pad the list of eligible shows by listing the Patron's Picks but I see the only one who hasn't graced our pages is 2 Ruby Knockers, 1 Jaded Dick: A Dick Darrow Investigation. And now it has. **Pen & Ink**—I was happy that Lenora Rose Patrick availed herself of the Reviews part of the Jenny box, where we used to get ALL of our reviews before Email became ubiquitous. And while I am sorry to hear that she's having trouble connecting with a paper issue, I am happy to hear that the outlying Jenny boxes are being emptied. Of course, all back issues join the current issue in the box in the Beer Tent. And if you want a current issue without venturing there, the King's Head box usually has copies of the latest issue.

ave Huden

While I don't miss transcribing reams of handwritten reviews and letters, I am happy that people remember you don't need to be wired to submit stuff to us.

Of course, it's a matter of some debate at Jenny HQ, as to whether the Jenny ought to be entirely web-based, since everyone has cell phones and other mobile devices (except Dave Cramer, Michelle Cook, and Coral McKendrick, of course). So we could make the paper, but only read it on our home computers.

There is some suggestion of a smaller paper version, perhaps with QR codes that would

take you directly to the review thus tagged. Or something like that. (Long gone are the days when the Jenny was in the forefront of technology because we had personal computers but needed to mail hard copy to almost everyone else. I am now officially the Fringe Luddite.)

Anyone with any opinions or suggestions is welcome to weigh in. Use jennyrevue@shaw.ca to email us, or post to our FaceBook page.

The clock is ticking. Well it always does, but now "tick tock" sounds like "dead line".

Tomorrow's the last issue, so say whatever you want to say about whatever you want, but do it before noon Friday.

Coral McKendrick

### DON'T FORGET TO VISIT

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AND CLICK THE LINK TO THE JENNY REVUE Online Fringe Program & Schedule

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**Congratulations** to **The Jenny Revue** for over 20 years of reporting on the Winnipeg Fringe Festival!



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# BUZZ

### Reviews

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### Reviews

### **Magic Unicorn Island**

### Stars and Hearts—Eckhardt-Grammetté (UofW)

My own reaction to this was particularly intense—had I gone directly home from the show, I likely would have hugged my son until he squirmed, then lain down to cry for a while.

Wait. Wasn't this billed as a comedy?

Yes, but like Jayson Mcdonald's best shows of prior years, there's a dark point under the humour, which happened to hit one of my own strongest triggers.

I commend him. It's an excellent piece of theatre I personally would recommend but never want to see again.

It starts with laughs a plenty, as McDonald mimes God creating the universe; then, because he's lonely, filling it with life in hopes of eventually having beings in his own image. The miming of the evolution from a squirming sea creature to primitive man drew even more laughs.

Then it begins to edge in that serious edge, with a hapless student attempting to sum up the whole history of war where it soon becomes apparent, that even with covering most wars in seconds, he'll be at it for hours, if allowed.

This, of course, finally brings in the main plot. The Empire has decided the way to peace is to send drone strikes against every other country until those countries surrender and joins them to make a united world.

Enter Magic Unicorn Island, as the next generation disagrees with this policy. The world's children have stolen away to a hitherto unknown island and are building a kids' paradise—described through the speeches of its 14-year-old "President or whatever".

The satire is sharp, well pointed, and more than a little poignant. God's occasional reappearance adds to the laughs—but the end is inevitable and really there's no way to make it funny. Macdonald knows better than to even try.

As satire, it's a raging success—but for those who confuse satire with comedy, be ready for a change of tone at the three-quarter mark.

Lenora Rose Patrick

## Fruitcake - Ten Commandments from the Psych Ward

#### Rob Gee-WAG

Rob Gee is of course a Fringe favourite—and for good reason. This man can make anything funny, and his stories from his time as a mental health nurse are a perfect example of that.

The show, based around the Ten Commandments, is probably one of the funniest things I've



Lisa Lottie at The Cube. Hoop magician, contortionist, and gymnast par excellence.

seen all year, and somehow really makes me want to work in mental health; but at the same time, it sounds horrifying.

So I'd rather watch his shows than experience it first hand.

Arden Pruden

### Sound & Fury's Hamlet & Juliet

Sound & Fury–West End Cultural Centre

These men really know what they're doing. Their comedic timing is amazing, and they know exactly what to say to get a crowd laughing, especially if it's a rowdier crowd.

It got to the point very quickly where I couldn't tell the difference between what was planned and what was improvised. I don't even know if any of it was improvised or not. These guys are hilarious, and boy do they know how to play a crowd.

Arden Pruden

### The Hobbling Buddhas

### Better To Burn Out/Tim C. Murphy–Planetarium

Tim Murphy's *The Hobbling Buddhas* is a beautiful performance of storytelling relating the experiences of a Vipassana retreat. Whether any of the events ever happened is irrelevant; the authenticity and beauty of Tim's words make the story true.

This is a wonderful story, drawing in discussions of depression, faith, personal reflection, childhood, and back-pain. His use of words paints a picture that the audience can immerse themselves in. He plays with the fourth wall, engaging with his audience to draw them into the narrative. His performance is poignant and makes us consider how we feel, what we feel, if we feel.

The tale may not have a happy ending, but it leaves you with much to think about in your next moment of silent reflection.

Christina Fawcett



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### We Glow

### Theatre 4.669-United Way of Winnipeg

This was an interesting venue, and absolutely perfect for this show. They took the audience along with them in this one, having a few select members playing the role of their bosses while the actors defend their positions and describe to us the story of their lives together. The whole thing is brimming with excellently performed satire, and they certainly used the space to its full potential. Very charming, very funny, go check them out.

Arden Pruden

### **The Quitter**

### Thunder Blunder–MTYP Mainstage

So it's a life story, was the first thing that popped into my mind, and what a charming way of telling this life story. While the show itself felt particularly scripted in the beginning, I was able to look past this, as the actor has an excellent way of telling warm jokes, and seeming like altogether just a genuinely nice guy. He really seems like someone I'd want to be friends with. Arden Pruden

### Dandv

### **Big Empty Barn Productions-WAG**

In this play, seasoned performer Bremner Duthie assumes the character of Mergatroid, a dandy who tries to persuade us to adopt a personal style based on who we are rather than what Calvin Klein or Abercrombie & Fitch tell us to wear.

Duthie has a terrific singing voice and inhabits his character completely. Unfortunately for me, the Mergatroid character wore out his welcome early in the piece. He just didn't seem to be saying anything new after a while, and I found myself waiting for him to finish so that I could hear the next song.

Here, too, a sameness evolves. The play as I understand it is a plea for people to be individuals, and to use their clothes as a personal statement of individuality. Unfortunately for me, the singing undercut that message. Each of the song interpretations had a sameness to them, regardless of the period they came from or the tradition in which they were written.

All that said, it was a very pleasant way to spend 75 minutes, and he should have had more than the 20 something people in the audience on a Tuesday afternoon.

Kevin Longfield

### There are Two Errors in the the Title of This Show\*

### MacPherson & Plouffe Consummate Professionals-Alloway Hall (Man. Museum)

It's improv with a plot, and that's pretty cool. These two guys open up the details of the characters to the audience, and then move on with their already decided plot that is designed to produce a dark comedy.

Well, I'm not sure about dark, but it sure was a comedy. The actors are hilarious, and it's a shame that the audience was so small, because they deserve huge crowds. Even when they need to stretch the scene out, they do it fantastically.

These are just two genuinely funny guys, don't miss out on them.

Arden Pruden

### The Two-Step

### Cheep Art–Planetarium

Christine Longé tells a story well, dances a fair step and carries a passable tune. She uses those tools to present a biography of a world traveler through her journeys around the world, and her journey through life.

This warm and cute story has amusing moments but not enough to keep me engaged. If vou've never left North America, you may get some insight, but if you've ever left Englishspeaking soil, there's nothing new here. Her relationship never gets a hold of the heartstrings and her adventures aren't unique. It's a nice story but it's one that didn't need to be told. Ray Yuen

### **Nothing Serious**

#### Acting as a way of life—Alloway Hall (Man. Museum)

I wanted to like it, I really did. It's so unfortunate, really, because I saw what they were trying to do and there's always potential in making fun of actors and artists, but only if you do it right.

The show comprised three scenes, none of which made any sense together, and the writing in all three was rather poor-as was the acting. There were attempts at humour, but for the most part they didn't make a lot of sense and interrupted the flow of the scene. There were one or two good moments, but in the 35-minute mess that was this show, I was left with an overall sour taste.

Arden Pruden

### **The Storyteller**

### **R-G Productions–Warehouse**

This classic battle puts the eternal optimist against the eternal pessimist, setting up a challenge between hope and despair. Where the optimist ably plays the part; the pessimist steals the show, with her convincing storytelling and powerful voice.

In between battles, we experience shadow dancing, sometimes sexy and alluring, sometimes flippant and irreverent. This engaging show thrusts you into a reality where women are subjugated, enslaved, and lucky to be alive.

Ray Yuen







## the BUZZ Reviews

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Hannah Gehman and Dagen Perrott of Knavish Hedgehog from Much Ado About Nothing.

### The War and Peace Show PEACENIKS INC.—WAG

Anyone who thinks peace activists are overearnest, humourless people should see this show. So should anyone who is looking for an entertaining night out.

This 75-minute cabaret-style production features short plays by an all-star team of writers: Rick Chafe, Sarah Constible, TJ Dawe, Ross McMillan, Ellen Peterson, Alix Sobler, and Gordon Tanner. The ensemble cast work seamlessly together: Andrew Cecon, Jill Cooper, Tom Penner, Heather Russell, and Alissa Watson brought the works to life and kept the ball rolling.

From the pre-show sing-along of sixties protest songs, to the patter between skits, to the scenes themselves, this was a highly polished, thoughtful, and hilarious evening of theatre.

It's perhaps unfair to single any artist out, but I have to say that the most impressive work to me was Gord Tanner's creation of a real play with real dramatic tension in such a short time frame.

All works shone though, and so did my spirits as I walked out of the theatre. Thanks to Project Peacemakers for making this evening possible. *Kevin Longfield* 

### Much Ado About Nothing

#### Knavish Hedgehog Productions-MTYP Mainstage

The first thing I noticed is that there are both some very strong actors, and some not so strong actors, and this is very apparent in the larger group scenes.

The actors, regardless of talent, seem to be evenly spread over everything from leads to spear-carriers, and it's almost as though it's a learning experience for some of them rather than a show.

However, those actors who were strong were exceptionally strong. They really impressed me, while others did not. Overall, it's a nice show, though I wouldn't call it a little one. If you have a passion for Shakespeare, take a peek if you haven't already. You'll enjoy yourself. this looming doom fest provides about as much entertainment as a pie-in-the-face. I giggled once in a while but Lalso spent some time

SNAFU Dance Theatre–Warehouse

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once in a while but I also spent some time cringing because some of the jokes just didn't work.

Kitt & Jane: An Interactive Survival Guide...

A mildly fun show that simply isn't that funny,

Fortunately, the interactive gags take over where the jokes leave off—entertaining the audience enough to keep their attention.

As a comedy, it wasn't funny enough; as a political statement, it isn't serious enough. Yes, I hate Monsanto too; but the actors don't use enough humour to belittle it, and the atmosphere isn't serious enough to chastise it.

Kitt's ukulele strumming and quirky singing make the show, but it's not enough to maintain this 75-minute discourse.

Ray Yuen

### Riled Up and Wasted On Light Buddy Wakefield–Artbeat Studio

Somehow I get the feeling that everything down to the venue was picked and used specifically to enhance this performance. Wakefield is particularly good at grabbing your attention and keeping it, whether it's through a poem or through a tangent (or in one case, a tangent of a tangent).

Everything he says is in equal parts hilarious and frightfully true. His sense of humour and timing is amazing, and he really knows how to talk to the audience, and how to make them feel welcomed and even relaxed during the show.

He just really knows how to perform, and if you like poetry of any kind (even if you're not a huge fan) he's quite something to watch.

Arden Pruden

Arden Pruden



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### 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)

## BUZZR

## Reviews

### Reviews

### Screwtape

#### By the Book Productions-One88

John Huston has a very powerful voice. You snap to attention immediately and it's hard to ignore him once he starts talking—not that you'll want to.

He portrays a 'modern devil' if you will, one who attempts to damn souls to hell just because, or to win a war, or to set an example for his nephew. The shifts of emotion are always sudden, and always very well done.

It's easy to see this guy really likes his role. Whether or not it's a good thing that he likes playing a devil, I can't say.

It does drag in bits at times; but overall it's an exceptionally interesting show.

Arden Pruden

#### Bodybag

#### Mosaic Theatre-Eckhardt-Grammaté (UofW)

When I walked into the theatre, I was dismayed to see that I was the seventh person joining the audience. It is difficult to perform in front of a crowd that small, especially in a theatre that holds over 200. Then the lights went down and the performer left the audience to go onstage.

Patrick Mercado did not seem to let the small house demoralize him, but it must have been tough. The program gives a good idea of what to expect from this show, as Mercado used various forms to illustrate his loneliness and inability to fit into mainstream society.

This is very much the work of a dedicated artist who is still learning his craft. Some aspects worked better than others, and I hope in time that Mercado learns from his hits and misses.

Some material was really effective. His Lord's Prayer moment was one place where everything clicked into place. He also needs a bigger audience to give him a better idea of what works and what doesn't.

This was my first visit to Venue 9, but I can't help but think that if this show were in a venue closer to Old Market Square that Mercado would have drawn the audience he needs.

Kevin Longfield

### XHL

#### The Miracle Violence Connection—MTC Mainstage

The NHL is on strike so an oil/tobacco baron sells all of his assets to start an edgier, brasher, bolder hockey league to win over fans.

Does the formula sound familiar? Think back a decade ago when a wrestling honcho devised the XFL. The XFL was a farce and burned spectacularly—the same thing happened with this show.

The stupid gags and the pot-shot jokes aroused the occasional yuk but they mostly ended with a yeesh. This show brings back memories of "He Hate Me," and I'm sure he would have hated this show.

Ray Yuen

### La Belle Laide

#### Lady of the Lake–Warehouse

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La Belle Laide is a dance show. It attempts to tell a story with no dialogue (or monologue or... trialogue?) and minimal lighting, set and props. The actors' bodies and some music are basically the only means of communication between the audience and the performers.

Do they succeed? Do they ever. Janelle Hacault, Tanja Woloshen and Rodrigo Belifuss convey their emotions and intentions not only in the expressions they create, but also in the way they create them. Janelle is graceful and poised, Tanja is sensual and passionate, (and sometimes a bit scary), and Rodrigo moves between the two, being by turns tortured (not physically), distant, violent and malleable.

As I mentioned before, the lighting, props and set are minimal, but effective in helping the artists convey their message without getting in the way of the physicality of the piece. I would have liked to see more of Brett Owen, but I can see how that might get in the way of the narrative, so I guess even that isn't a real complaint.

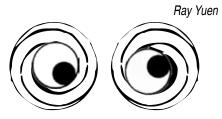
Eric Rae

### Accelerate

#### Drive Dance-MTC Mainstage

Some of the dance routines were beautiful, some of them edgy. The interludes were both fun and functional at the same time. The choreography flowed smoothly and effortlessly, while the music provided an energetic and electric background.

There are a lot of spectacular dance shows this Fringe and this stands among the best. This approachable show should be entertaining to all and the near-full house at MTC Mainstage provided evidence that this monumental effort is no secret—don't miss out.



## Eletters

### **Dear Jenny:**

I had a similar, but less alarming, experience to the one Theresa Thomson has had over her play.

Years ago I responded to a letter to the editor in the Free Press by a rigid evangelist who attacked other religions as false, because scripture quotes Jesus as saying "Nobody gets into heaven except through me."

I poked fun at this attitude with some word play suggesting that Jesus would take a three-point stance at the Pearly Gates, and that entry to Heaven meant charging the gates like a middle linebacker.

What followed were months of letters and tracts dropped in my mailbox, (we know who you are and where you live) and voice mail, some from as far away as Halifax (Canada, not England). All messages were anonymous except for the newsletters and tracts, which sometimes had a post office box number. Eventually they petered out.

I finally realized that the psychology at work here is a twisted persecution complex: we're persecuted like the ancient Romans, so we can't identify ourselves. Somehow, however, they forget that the early Christians didn't try to persecute the Romans or other nonbelievers. That came a few centuries later.

This kind of attention is unpleasant, but it passes. In the meantime, everybody should keep an eye out for Teresa, and her attackers should take to heart the passage from St. Matthew that says, "whatever you did to the least of these, you did to Me."

Kevin Longfield

### **Dear Jenny:**

Just as a note, every time but one that I have passed a non-Beer Tent box, all Fringe, it has been empty of Jennies! While I commend you for drawing so much attention, I have been missing the sight of issues to read.

Lenora Rose Patrick



# SHOWS REVIEWED

11 O'Clock Number... 340 ft A Small Affair Accelerate All You Can Eat/The Top? African Folktales with Erik DeWal **Best Picture** Bizarro Obscure **BLOODSUCKER!** The Musical Bodvbag 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 Dandy Davy the Punk Devil's Circus, The Die Roten Punkte Delores a Mime Opera Dr. Frightful Presents: Dead Air (2) Fruitcake - Ten Commandments... Eating Pasta off the Floor Einstein! (2) Fake News Fan Girl Flying Dreams (2)

Gary Has A Date (2) Godspell Hobbling Buddhas, The 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 Kitt & Jane: An Interactive Survival Guide... La Belle Laide (2) Lies of a Promiscuous Woman (2) Little Red Magic Unicorn Island Making Believe Middle of Everywhere, The MITTELSCHMERZ Moonlight after Midnight Much Ado About Nothing Nashville Hurricane: A Curious Tale... (2) Nothing Serious One Man Back to the Future (2) only just... Pizza Man Play Piano Play Quitter. The Quo Vadis Red Hot Mama: A Sophie Tucker Cabaret Riled Up and Wasted On Light

Screwtape Shadow Spaces Slaves of Starbucks Snake Oil (2) Spec. Ed Speechless Stiltskin Trials, The Sound & Fury's Hamlet & Juliet Storyteller, The Suddenly Last Summer Surrounded Tales She Tells Taxidermy 2: Another Musical Teaching Shakespeare There are Two Errors in the the Title of... This is a Play (2) This Is CANCER Two Step, The Trouble Walked In: An Improvised Noir Mystery Understudies: A New Musical Undress Me Vampire Lesbians of Sodom VERIKA Wang Dang Wanderlust War and Peace Show, The We Glow Who Killed Gertrude Crump? XHL You Can Do Magic

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Jenny Box it:

The King's Head The Beer Tent (inc. paper & pencils) Hospo at MTC (lobby) Planetarium MTC Warehouse

PTE (near Fringe ticket tables) CanWest Global Performing Arts Centre(MTYP)

Crocus Bldg, N entrance (parking lot) Visit The Jenny Revue website: www.jennyrevue.com

# RAMATIC



Jake's Gift Julia Mackey



The Miser of Middlegate Carolyn Gray









Like Wolves Rosa Laborde



Salt Baby Falen Johnson

STREWED PORAMA

