Anaesthesia; the loss of sensibility

Lame Ass/Mata Redonda—parking lot of e.children

I hear veteran Fringers complain the Fringe has become too safe, with fewer companies upholding the Fringe spirit of risk, adventure. and innovation. Anaesthesia is an example to the contrary.

This is an edgy and demanding show. It's heavy with pain and pleasure, like a fruit tree weighed down with over-ripening fruit. It's intellectually challenging, with heavy language and ideas. There's bondage gear (I think), sexual provocation and deviancy, half-naked and sexually charged characters, sometimes encroaching the personal space of audience members. We're surrounded by brick and cement, and there are no chairs to sit on.

The story is like Long Day's Journey Into Night set during the decline of the Roman Empire. There's a relentless power struggle amongst the three characters struggling to avoid obliteration.

I was a little bored at the start, but I became engaged in the struggle. It got more interesting as the possibility emerged for the characters to help each other out of their (shared) misery. The resolution was incomplete, but in a satisfying way.

One more thing: I think the prostitute's character would have been more interesting if she was less vampy. She was seductive, but at times trying to be sexy instead of really just being sexy.

Michael Case

BLOODSUCKERS! The Musical

Kiss the Giraffe Productions—The Warehouse

You can count on director Leith Clarke to deliver the goods, and when the package includes a clever script, the result is a highly entertaining 75 minutes of theatre.

The young cast all work well together, and the tunes and choreography are what you'd expect from a hit musical. I wouldn't have complained if I had paid full MTC price for this production.

Kevin Longfield

Bloodsuckers!

Bloody Brilliant! This is the perfect show for Night of the Living Fringe.

Director Leith Clark and playwright Joseph Aragon bring together one of the all-time best Fringe ensembles for a show that demands repeat viewings.

One minor complaint - sometimes the music was too loud to hear the lyrics, but for the most part it wasn't a huge problem.

I guess I'll have to knock another show off my list—I definitely need to see this again.

Allan MacKenzie

Bloodsuckers is a treat from start to end. The songs add extra zing to an already amazing play.

The choreography, although shaky at times, still did not change the outcome of the show. The one-liners, acting and all around performance make Bloodsuckers: The Musical a guaranteed must see at this year's Fringe.

Joseph Passante
Adventures of Clifford & Bernard

Just your typical Filipino sitcom,
Set in Tyndall Park
Or the Maples
Or Transcona?

Two Browns Don't Make a White
Venue 9

Jenny's of the World, Unite!



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Photo by Leif Norman

Tied to their jobs, workers face long shifts to survive in Factory



Theatre of the Living Statue's Mummenpansz keeps audiences on their toes

Jill's War

Sarasvati Productions—Warehouse

This show reminded me of a statement I heard at a national playwriting conference a few years ago: "We are changing the world, one play at a time."

Jill's War shows theatre's potential to shake people's worlds.

The program says this play tells the story of Canadian aid worker, Gillian Clark, who died in the August 19 bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad. It does much more than that.

Gillian is the narrator, the portal through which we see the effects the second gulf war has had on everyone it touches. We also see how tenuous the idea of a future is when war ravages a country. In the end, we grieve not only for Clark, but for all the other people whose future was ripped away from them by war.

One of the most devastating scenes for me was, on the surface, one of the happiest: a video clip of exuberant Iraqi-Canadian children introducing themselves. War seemed a world away, but their names and faces showed how close war can be to even the most peaceful scene.

Hope McIntyre is a major theatre artist. She weaves video, dance, music, voiceover and drama seamlessly to produce a powerful 70 minutes of theatre. Jill's War is really as good as theatre gets.

Kevin Longfield

You know when you walk into a theatre to find a soldier in fatigues sporting a gun at the entryway, that you can expect to have your sense of balance upset. This is not a play to attend if you want to remain in your bubble of "happy-life-in-Canada".

Jill's War attempts to make the Iraq War we all hear about in the media a personal war. It does so in series of monologues, vignettes, dances and videos that tell the true stories of Iraqis and Coalition soldiers who were part of the terrain that real-life Canadian Gillian Clark traversed in her last days as an international aid worker in Iraq.

As one might expect in a multimedia show with a large cast, some of the transitions are more fluid than others and there is some variation in the actors' abilities, but for the most part it was a competent and engaging production.

Cheryl Soluk as Gillian Clark put in a strong performance and made the stress of a nearly burnt-out aid worker quite tangible.

Also, watching Geoff Trubiak negotiate the awkwardness of appearing to be a loyal Iraqi citizen while working as a translator for the Coalition Forces was heartbreaking.

Video was used to integrate the perspectives of children into the play, and while this did allow their voices to be heard, one particular segment involving an Iraqi artist (I think) was of poor technical quality, making it difficult to understand and its role in the production unclear.

Segments of Middle Eastern dance were lovely supplements to oral story-telling, and the show would not have suffered from having more of it.

Andrea Patenaude

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