

## Monopoly Money Pit

### Project PIT—Son of Warehouse

All right, let's just say right at the start, *Monopoly Money Pit*, by Mozdzen and Melnyk is definitely not for everyone. Children, seniors with pacemakers, people with weak stomachs, men, old people, women, young people, the easily confused, the bored, the jaded, and those capable of being offended should stay away.

At one point, the performer pisses in a pot, onstage, nothing hidden, no special effects. He then proceeds to top that particular scene several times. I kind of think that they'd be tickled pink if they could get an audience member to vomit—real audience participation.

About half the performance seems to be a naked man in a childish caricature mask cavorting madly about the stage. Oddly, the near facelessness of the crude mask removes a lot of the shock of male nudity. That and his nonsensical intensity give him a sort of cartoonlike quality, as if he's just drawn that way. It's when he puts on his costume, becoming a deformed and transgressive cartoon character that he begins to seem genuinely disturbing.

Luckily, he doesn't actually do anything seriously dangerous, but the suspicion that he might



Photo Credit: Diiverse.com

*A hot night of espionage, sex, and a prolific writer's scribbling. Free love, Restoration style in Or.*

keeps us watching. And for what its worth, the performance never actually lags. The intensity builds slowly throughout.

Sitting through it is like watching an autistic child, trying to build an impossible machine out of leftover board game pieces and week old sandwich meat on the other side of the park. It doesn't make a lick of sense, but there's an astonishing sense of purpose, of dedication and drive, an obsessive resolve, that at times leaves you with the occasional impression that there's a glimmer of sense to it. But that's just an illusion.

Plot? Story? There isn't any. They don't care about that stuff, so don't bother expecting it. There's deep symbolism, if you're into that sort of thing, but really, it's just there as a vehicle, it's not actually important.

There are cheap gags, scatological references, childish double entendres, and simply pointless stuff. It doesn't add up to anything, but the performers go at it dead serious and with ranting intensity. It's all just momentum for the sake of itself, sort of like a Tour de France bicyclist who decides to ride down the outside of the Empire State building—maybe not a good idea, but man look at that crazy bastard go.

Ultimately, this isn't really about anything but keeping the audience watching, and I'll give them credit, they never let you go.

I'll leave you with one thought—at least he didn't do the worst possible thing with that stick.

*Den Valdron*

## The Seminar

### Poiema Productions—Rachel Browne Theatre

These four young women from Edmonton—fresh out of college—delighted Fringe fans with their first show in 2010, *Happily Ever After?* Rather than simply go one step further with *The Seminar*, they've taken a giant leap.

The play is an over-the-top, satirical exposé of the beauty industry and its spokespeople who try to convince you that "Ugly is a choice. Choose to Change!"

Actor/Playwrights Sara Vickruck and Brianne Jang have avoided the usual clichés often found in such send-ups, and instead have created a wonderful tour-de-farce.

The performances by all four actors are outstanding. Candice Fiorentino is delicious as the main beauty maven in charge of the makeover session, Melissa Heagy is hilarious in her portrayal of the robotic-like plastic surgeon, Jang is delightful as a 13-year-old assistant who has already undergone beautification (the younger they "choose to change", the better), and Vickruck (also the co-director) gives a gut-wrenching performance as the unwilling patient who will surprise you with an emotional plot-twist at the end.

From the surgical sound effects that had audience members squirming (and laughing) in their seats to the great, perfectly-executed choreography in a couple of musical numbers, this is a show you must choose to see.

*Robin Chase*

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