

The Visitorium

Local Theatre, from a dummy in the cheap seats

JUNE 21, 2011

VISITORIUM

FRINGE-COMA 2011 – Day FIVE

Righty-O...finished off the last post JUST a touch late, so we'll try and get this one done in snappy, professional style. Which is, after all, what I'm known for. So up and on to day five of the '11 Ottawa Fringe with a double-premiere bill at the Arts Court Library!

First up is one I was anticipating, as its an example of my fav'rit kind of theatre...namely, the one-woman show (I like it SO much, I just bought advance tickets to see repeat viewings of two of them in this very Fringe...but more on that later). This one was courtesy of Elizabeth Blue, out of Noo York, I do believe, called **AM I BLUE**. Blue plays herself, or at least a comic-theatrical version thereof, bringing us along through her attempts to make sense of her life and loneliness. She hits up life coaches, sex therapists, dodgy business courses and more before finally just hitting the bars. The story, simple enough take on the modern girl's search for happiness stays fresh and VERY funny throughout thanks to Blue's clever writing, obvious acting talent, and the direction of Maia Garrison. It also does not hurt that Elizabeth Blue is ten pounds of adorable in a five pound bag.

(https://visitorium.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/mg_9598.jpg).

What, you thought I was
kidding?

The show is laugh-out-loud funny without sacrificing any warmth, and you never stop rooting for the hapless heroine. A perfectly goddamned delightful way to start the day.

After catching this beauty in the Library with the awesome Jen Vallance, I stuck around and went right back in with the similarly awesome Michelle LeBlanc (seriously, this MUST be my lucky day) for the second show of my night, Rob Gee's **FRUITCAKE: TEN COMMANDMENTS FROM THE PSYCH WARD**. I'd heard good things from people who'd seen his show elsewhere, and considering how fast this performance sold the fuck out, I guess I wasn't the only one. After the Fringe staff tracked down some folding chairs to pack a few more butts into the Library, the show was on. And brother, wotta show.

Rob Gee is a pro Nurse with years under his belt at some genuine Psyche wards on the continent, and his show is a one-man (my **SECOND** fav'rit kind of theatre!) retelling of some of the high points, lows, too-crazy-to-be-believed stories (but still true) and assorted nutters, lunatics, and manic

depressives that made up his life. You probably need a wicked sense of humour to make it through some of these experiences and Gee definitely has that in spades. His delivery is a friendly rapid-fire patter, occasionally shifting into playful poetic verse and always entertaining as Hell. Rob had his packed house eating out of his hands from the minute he strolled onstage. The fact that you'll come out of this hysterical show with a much wiser and more compassionate view of the mentally ill is maybe the most wonderful added bonus you'll get at the Fringe this year (although DOUBLE YELLOW LINE did give me a fortune cookie...almost forgot about that!).

Two for two on the evening, always a good feeling...I strolled out and nabbed two quick Samosas from the courtyard, practically tossing them down my hungry maw while darting across the intersection to Studio Leonard-Beaulne for ANOTHER one-manner. Honestly, I can't get enough of them. This one was Matt Smith's **ALL MY CHILDREN**. Writer-performer Smith plays Max Poth, an aging rogue who seems to be realizing that he's let his opportunities for love and family pass him by. He's loved 6 women in his life, all of whom left him, quickly married, and had one child apiece. A strange urge compels him to track these children down, ages ranging from 13 to well in their 30's. By an even stranger compulsion that Poth himself seems unable to explain, he then tells them all that HE is their real father. Which he is most certainly NOT.

The oddball plot slowly reveals itself to be a very clever bit of mojo indeed, and is held together by Smith's wonderful, wonderful job in the spotlight. He wears Max Poth like a glove, and renders a seamless and utterly believable character that just engrosses the audience with his bizarre story. AMC is long for the Fringe at 80 minutes, but it is very worth the extra 20. I was well impressed with the show, even if I was starting to hit that wall once more.

Yes, it was late night, and I've been going hard for 5 days now. I chugged a warm RedBull to try and stay awake, forcing my weary frame to an 11 o'clocker. I half worried that I'd start nodding, until I remembered who I was about to go and see, over in the Arts court Theatre: Jimmy Fucking Hogg! Perfect! I needed adrenaline? Friends, adrenaline was about to punch me right in the face!

I'd caught Jimmy last Ottawa show **LIKE A VIRGIN** back in '09, so had high hopes for his latest, **CURRICULUM VITAE**. All hopes were quickly fulfilled as Jimmy shuffled onstage, scruffy beard and unkempt hair setting the scene for his latest comedic tract, this one about the ups, downs, and mostly downs of his working career, the same fertile ground Barry Smith mined in last year's **EVERY JOB IVE EVER HAD**. Jimmy owned the space beautifully, jokes piling over brilliant mimes and raunchy one-liners one after another. But where Jimmy really shines is when he goes off-book...then you're just fucking his to play with as he sees fit. And Jimmy Hogg, he likes to play.

Thee performance was surprisingly not packed, so Ottawa, consider this your Jimmy Hogg wake-up call. He's **HERE**. He's in **TOWN**. Go **SEE** him, or you'll regret it the rest of your miserable lives. And I think you have enough regrets already...don't you?

So, four for four. A perfect day of Fringing, if I do say so. And I'm looking forward to tomorrow's 4-pack just as much!! Now I'm off for some sleepies, so I can try and be awake for it all. Peace, love and soul, Fringers,

The Visitor (and Winston)

FRINGE FEST

ELIZABETH BLUE **FRINGE COMA** **JIMMY HOGG**

OTTAWA FRINGE FESTIVAL **ROB GEE**

Published by visitorium

Aspiring writer, budding theatre geek, and where do I go from here? [View all posts by visitorium](#)

2 comments

1. **Amy** says:

JUNE 24, 2011 AT 8:26 AM

So, first of all, I'm SO glad that Mr. Rob Gee brought "Fruitcake" to Ottawa, because I FREAKIN' LOVED THAT SHOW in Winnipeg in 2009 (9? 8? God, time passes...). I saw it twice, and told everyone I knew to see it. He came to Minnesota with it last summer (yayyy!), which made my heart sing — Rob Gee, in MY town. Wow.

Second of all, I'm so glad you caught Matt's show. Matt Smith is one of the #1 reasons I started writing solo performance material, no joke. I've known him for (quickly tries to count)15 years? Something like that. I took improv and original performance classes with him in Seattle, when I lived there, and pretty much anything "wise" or "enlightened" or "useful" that I have to offer up regarding solo shows in practice or theory can be traced back to him...he's just awesome. I've actually made him coach me on the show creation process long distance, over the phone, for the past couple years, including this past summer when I was in the throes of a total, breakdown-freakout-psychotic-episode about "Entwined" ...he helped talk me back from the ledge. I hope he's having fun in Ottawa!

Nighty,
Amy

REPLY

◦ **visitorium** says:

JUNE 26, 2011 AT 5:57 AM

First off, THANK you, Miz Salloway, for being the only human being to comment of these Fringe-posts of mine. You is appreciated!

And as for Matt Smith, he does indeed seem to be a master. I've heard recently from some others who caught his show (which generated shockingly little waves in O-town, but that's the danger of touring I suppose) and who can't stop singing his praises. It was an underrated gem, for sure. I hope he comes back.

REPLY

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)