

The Herald



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Brilliantly demented singer commands stage with material

Fringe Music/Cabaret

Oh La La

The Famous Spiegelent

Snap

Assembly George Square Theatre

The Fabulous Punch and Judy Show

Gilded Balloon at the Counting House

Rob Adams

ISABELLE Georges isn't the first person to use a Fringe venue as a Tardis.

The Parisian singer may be at an advantage in the Spiegelent as she sets about evoking her hometown in the age of the great exponents of chanson on a stage where many stars, legend has it, strutted their stuff and where many showbiz ghosts linger. But she still has to convince you that you're not in St Andrew Square, and she does.

Georges is a throwback in the best sense, a song and dance woman who brings her material

alive with her physicality as well as her voice.

She delivers Piaf's Padam Padam like a hurricane of indignation, drops to a fragile, vulnerable whisper for Jacques Brel's Ne Me Quitte Pas and is brilliantly demented in detailing the wartime horrors of his graphic Next.

She is assisted splendidly by a quartet including two of the Scottish jazz scene's finest, Brians Shields (bass) and Molley (reeds), and while it's a treat to hear the latter's trademark lovely tenor saxophone tone in tandem with

Georges' expressive ballad singing, she hardly needs a band at all when she dons her tap shoes, creating a whole orchestra of rhythmical colour and trading ultra-creative choruses like a jazzier with her drummer.

She's also witty and a dab hand on one of the most unfairly vilified of musical instruments but to identify that or tell you where she keeps it would be to give too much away.

SOME of the cast of Snap could be from another time, too, as a show that uses mime to splendid

effect is often redolent of the age of silent films, with the returning trio of suited and hatted figures suggesting an Oriental version of the Marx Brothers or the Three Stooges but with added sleight of hand.

There's real artistry in this presentation, which is part of the Korean Season, with quick-change performances that defy belief for speed, while also setting new levels of elegance, and paintings created on the spot that alter apparently by their own volition.

Some of the card tricks might

be better viewed in a more intimate space but the charm of the company and the individual brilliance of the illusionists make it easy to recommend.

IF YOU thought Mr Punch was vile, then you ain't seen nuthin' until you've encountered his Aussie incarnation in The **Fabulous Punch & Judy Show**.

Not for nothing is this romp in the Counting House attic on after the 9pm watershed and even adults of a more delicate disposition might need protecting from its rugged

rambunctiousness. There's something admirable, however, about the gusto with which this Punch attacks a role that's vocabulary-expanding in its lasciviousness and is developed with neurological analysis of a sort and multiple part-playing by his three colleagues.

I got a bit lost, to be honest, as regards the plot and some of the detail seemed a mite gratuitous but it lives up to its promise of burlesque, vaudeville and grotesque theatre.

All shows end today.

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