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## News Snippets - Sep 2006 to August 2007

### Fringe Venues Join Forces

The formation of the Association of Independent Venue Producers (AIVP) actually took place during the 2006 festival. 20 leading venues, in terms of the proportion of ticket sales, got together for the initial meeting on August 21<sup>st</sup>.

The AIVP is determined to maintain the status of Edinburgh as the premier festival city by fighting off attempts from the likes of Manchester to challenge its prestige. However, it is concerned at the lack of official support for the Fringe, especially given the considerable economic boost that it provides to both the city and to Scotland. It is particularly unhappy with the failure to advertise the Fringe outside Edinburgh and the lack of infrastructure in the city to deal with it.

The AIVP called on public bodies such as the City of Edinburgh, the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Arts Council and Visit Scotland to become more actively involved. We will have to wait and see if they have any success.

### New EIF and Fringe Directors

A changing of the guard has occurred at both festivals. Jonathan Miller, Brian McMaster's replacement as Artistic Director of the Edinburgh International Festival, took office after the 2006 festival, his appointment having been previously announced in March 2006. The unveiling of his first programme in March 2007 led to a number of feature articles on him in the national press. See the [Info and Previews](#) page for links.

Over at the Fringe, Paul Gudgin announced that he would be leaving in June 2007 after 8 years in the job. The new director is Jon Morgan.

### Assembly and Aurora Nova Tie-up

The most intriguing aspect of the Assembly's announcement on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2007 that it is expanding to cover 8 venues this year was that it will "embrace" Aurora Nova, a venue which has established a reputation in recent years for cutting-edge international physical theatre.

It appears that Komedia, Aurora Nova's backer, has pulled out. Wolfgang Hoffman will continue to select shows for the venue, but with more mainstream work. The question is – what does embrace actually mean?

Assembly will also take the Hill Street Theatre under its umbrella, as well as introducing the Freemasons' Hall on George Street as a venue (first time for 20 years); it will have two spaces, Majestic with 350 seats and Mysterious with 200 seats.

### New Visa Rules May Affect Fringe from 2008

The Scotsman [reported](#) on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2007 that proposed immigration changes will affect the Fringe from next year. The Fringe says that it is currently on a permit-free festival list which permits performers from outside the European economic area to appear without a work permit. It claims that the proposed new points-based system (PBS) would result in these performers needing a temporary work permit with the Fringe acting as their sponsor. Each PBS application will cost the performer £200, and the Fringe would incur costs in its role as sponsor plus it would require two full-time staff to handle the applications. Using

2007 figures they maintain that around 3,000 performers would be affected.

The Fringe is lobbying Scottish MPs, arguing that, as it stands, the change could endanger up to one fifth of the Fringe.

## The Times to Sponsor Book Festival

The Edinburgh International Book Festival and Times Newspapers Ltd announced a new sponsorship deal on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2007. Times Newspapers will invest a six figure sum in the festival over the next three years.

## Early Punter Rush Crashes Booking Systems

Both the Fringe and the Book Festival have experienced computer system crashes on the first day that tickets were available for sale, as they struggled to cope with initial high demand.

[Problems were experienced at the Fringe and the Gilded Balloon](#) during the first few hours, as punters and touts rushed to snap up tickets for Ricky Gervais' single performance at Edinburgh Castle (26<sup>th</sup> August). Tickets were being offered on EBay later the same day.

The Book Festival usually experiences a first day rush on one author - Muriel Sparks sold out within a couple of hours in 2004. However, there were four authors who were in great demand on the first day this year: Alan Bennett, Andrew Marr, Jeremy Paxman plus Charlie & Lola (from the popular children's book and TV show). All four events were sold out despite the [computer problems](#) which upset both punters who turned up at Waterstone's in George Street (the queue went back to Charlotte Square) and those who tried to book over the Internet.

## Threatened Strike at the Usher Hall

The Evening News [has reported](#) that the potential loss of some jobs at the Usher Hall have been met with threats of strikes during the International Festival. The Usher Hall has been closed since the autumn, undergoing a £19m renovation.

## Fringe to Avoid Visa Rules

The Evening News [reported](#) on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007 that the Immigration Minister, Liam Byrne, has stated that the Fringe will continue to enjoy its permit-free status, and that the fee will only be increased from £85 to £99 rather than the £200 figure that had been previously mentioned.

## Apostolic Church Opts Out of Being A Venue

The Edinburgh Apostolic Church objected to a scene in the play Double Dutch where a man asks two women to have sex with him and his friend in front of a video camera; the girls refuse. The promoters, Understairs Arts, refused to cut the scene, and the church ultimately withdrew permission for them to use the building. [Details](#) in The Evening News.

## Assembly Rooms to Close for Refurbishment?

There appears to be a Council plan, originally drawn up under the previous administration, to refurbish the building which would involve closing it for one festival. Needless to say, Assembly impresario William Burdett-Couts is not impressed. [Story in The Evening News](#).

## Is Fringe Killing Comedy?

[This article](#) by Bruce Dessau, the Comedy critic of the Evening Standard, subverts the more usual complaint that "Comedy is killing the Fringe". To be more specific he protests that only the well-known comics tend to make any money, while the remainder use cheap shock tactics to put bums on seats with a detrimental effect on standards. The case is taken up in [The Scotsman](#).

## Understairs Goes "Under"

The Stage has [reported](#) that Understairs Arts, first time venue managers at the Fringe, who were involved in the dispute with the Edinburgh Apostolic Church (see item above) has gone into voluntary liquidation, leaving 35 shows without a venue.

## Usher Hall Strike Called Off

A promise that staff members will be offered an opportunity to return to the Usher Hall after refurbishments have been completed if they have been unable to find alternative posts has led to the threatened strike at this year's festival being called off. [Details](#) in the Evening News.

## Fringe Tickets Falling Through the Cracks

The Sunday Herald reports [ticketing problems](#) at the Fringe Society and some of the major venues. The issue stems from the ability of these various organisations to sell tickets for the same show, and according to the Sunday Herald is leading to some double-selling plus indications that allocations have been sold when they have not. The problem appears to stem, wholly or in part, from the fact that the venues are using a new computer system called VIA while the Fringe is still using WTS. Hopefully the problem will be sorted out before ticket selling starts in anger!

## Film Festival to move to June

The Guardian [reports](#) that the Film Festival plans to move to June from next year, citing the problems of competing with all the other August festivals and attractions. The Scotsman has a [longer article](#).

## Festival Promised £2m by Scottish Government

The Stage [reports](#) that Alex Salmond, the new First Minister of Scotland, has reaffirmed the promise in the SNP's manifesto to inject £2m into the Edinburgh Festival in a bid to stave off competition from cities such as Manchester. Talks will commence to decide how the money should be used.

## Assembly Rooms Refurbishment Put On Hold

The Stage [reports](#) that the proposed refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms has been put on hold, pending scrutiny by the new SNP/Liberal Democrat administration, after complaints from Edinburgh's four principal subsidised theatres and the company which runs the venue during the Fringe.



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## Pre-Festival Stuff for 2007

2006

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General preview information has just about come to an end. Therefore, I will probably not update this page again.

Final update on 5th August, 2007.

## Initial Thoughts on the International Festival Programme

"The first cuckoo of spring", alias the International Festival Programme, was heard yesterday (28<sup>th</sup> March 2007) when this year's offerings were announced. An online version of the programme brochure (7MB in pdf format) can be downloaded from the [EIF's web site](#). Unsurprisingly, much early media comment surrounds Jonathan Mills, the new festival director.

Here are links to the initial reports / thoughts of the professional critics ..

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=1104> The Scotsman (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/theatre/drama/story/0,,2045213,00.html> Billington article on the new director and the programme in The Guardian (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/theatre/news/story/0,,2044875,00.html> The Guardian (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

<http://www.thestage.co.uk/news/newsstory.php/16361/new-director-mills-unveils-edinburgh> The Stage (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

[http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/article1582499.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/article1582499.ece) The Times (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/features/features/display.var.1292729.0.0.php> The Herald (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/s2.cfm?id=490762007> Scotsman article on the new director and his first programme (30<sup>th</sup> March 2007)

<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/review.cfm?id=502512007> Scotland on Sunday article on the new director and his first programme (1<sup>st</sup> April 2007)

What do the punters think? One thought from a drama punter (me) is that this art form seems, as in recent years, to figure little during the first week. I cynically wonder if this is a deliberate ploy to minimise the competition from the Fringe. On the plus side, the first week this year will feature a co-production with The National Theatre of Scotland, in association with The Lyric (Hammersmith), of *The Bacchae* by Euripides.

Meanwhile with my visual arts hat on, I notice that it makes a return this year after a long period of shameful neglect. Site specific installations by Michael Lin, Apolonija Susteric and Richard Wright around the theme of Jardins Publics have been commissioned.

Here are more coherent thoughts on music and opera from Susan, a friend and fellow punter, when I emailed her yesterday. "One of my previous criticisms of the Festival was its lack of choral and period music. So, I am very pleased to see that there is a special series of choral music and that even the opera is mostly devoted to early music. That will be a real feast as the groups which are appearing are excellent. That is definitely, for me, the strong point of this year's Festival. However, as expected, opera in general has taken a real hit. There is only one later opera and it was just performed in Edinburgh a few years ago.

While the groups producing the operas seem very good, the operas being presented are very limited in scope and there are very few of the great new and established vocal stars of the past. This is what I had loved the most---the opportunity to see so much opera and talent. What a loss! This is especially true of male vocal artists....Sad, sad, sad....

With regard to orchestral concerts at Usher Hall, there are some very exciting orchestras and conductors like Tilson Thomas, Maris Johns, Thomas Ades, so this seems far less affected, thankfully. Queens Hall is, however, very disappointing, much fewer vocal concerts and not the exciting chamber music of the past. It is mostly performers doing other performances as well. This, of course, was somewhat true in the past but many other artists would come to Edinburgh just to sing there. Of course, it doesn't help that poor old Queen's Hall seems slated to be a thing of the past as well. This too is such a loss because in the past, so many very talented artists were introduced to the world through the Festival. There were so many artists we discovered there, whom we never would have known about, and have since followed as their fame grows and grows. Again, the decrease in vocal artists is such a loss...."

## Fringe Programme Unveiled

The programme for this year's Fringe was announced on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007. The number of shows will top 2,000 this year, a fact which is much trumpeted by the organisers. I am not convinced that ever bigger is good ... but I will leave my thoughts for another day. Initial thoughts on the programme quickly followed from the media with The Scotsman stable leading the way, as expected.

<http://edinburghnews.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=891592007> The Evening News was first out of the blocks with its summary of the highlights on the same day ...

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933&id=894232007> followed by the initial thoughts from the Scotsman reviewers (8<sup>th</sup> June 2007) ...

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933&id=895342007> and another piece in The Scotsman on the same day (8<sup>th</sup> June 2007).

[http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/theatre/2007/06/for\\_editors\\_1.html](http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/theatre/2007/06/for_editors_1.html) Initial thoughts from Lyn Gardner in the Guardian (8<sup>th</sup> June 2007)

<http://www.whatsonstage.com/index.php?pg=207&story=E8821181223230> ... and from WhatsOnStage.com (7<sup>th</sup> June 2007).

The Fringe programme contains somewhat terse descriptions of its shows due to space constraints (there are 2000+ shows to fit in). If you require more information it is best to consult the programmes of individual venues where they are available. I will update the following list as information becomes available.

- The [Traverse Theatre](#) programme is now available. It can be downloaded from [this page](#) (2MB pdf file)
- The [Assembly](#) programme is now on their web site
- The [Aurora Nova](#) programme is available [here](#)
- The [C Venues](#) programme is now available on their web site
- The Pleasance programme seems to be only partially available on [this page](#) (21<sup>st</sup> June 2007)
- The Udderbelly programme can be browsed on [this page](#). A joint Gilded Balloon/Udderbelly programme brochure is available (was provided in the Scotland on Sunday on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2007)
- DanceBase's programme can be downloaded from [this page](#) (630KB pdf file)
- Gilded Balloon's programme is available on [this page](#) (including the ability to order a programme brochure)
- [Zoo's](#) programme can be browsed on their web site
- Free Edinburgh Fringe Festival (alias Laughing Horse) programme can be browsed on [this page](#)
- The Free Fringe (PBH) programme can be browsed on [this page](#).

## Punters' Thoughts on the Fringe Programme

26<sup>th</sup> June 2007 ... There appears to be a general feeling that, on first glance, the Traverse programme looks quite strong this year. I tend to agree and it will probably form the basis of our drama choices:

*Damascus, Long Time Dead, Walworth Farce, Is This about Sex, Venus as a Boy* and *Yellow Moon* are near certainties. We enjoyed Tim Crouch in *The Oak Tree* a couple of years back and look forward to seeing him again in *England*.

Elsewhere, *Nijinsky* (Teatr Jaracza), *Chaplin* (Pip Utton), *Romeo and Juliet* (Aquila Theatre) and *Macbeth: Who is that Bloodied Man?* are among those drama shows that are on our initial shortlist.

We are Aurora Nova fans and probables for us at this venue include *Astronomy for Insects* (blackSKYwhite) and *Hangman* (DO-Theatre), while the opportunity to listen to Jos Houben of Complicite on *The Art of Laughter* is unlikely to be missed. *Lacrimosa* and *Leitmotif* are also possibles at the moment.

We are probably not the people to listen to with regard to comedy; the new breed mostly does nothing for us. For what it is worth: *Jerry Sadowitz – comedian, magician, psychopath* is a must see (this assumes that you know what to expect from him?!); Will Adamsdale in *The Human Computer* (very good in *The Receipt* last year) will get our vote; while *Johnson & Boswell Late but Live* sounds intriguing (but perhaps we are just falling for the marketing device?!).

## Visual Arts Details

The Art Festival issued a [press release](#), dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007, which provides details of all exhibitions this summer in a 14 page pdf document.

The larger galleries which come under the National Galleries umbrella had previously provided [details of their exhibitions](#).

*Picasso on Paper, Warhol* and *Naked Portrait* are all appealing to us.

## Book Festival Programme Launched

The Edinburgh International Book Festival programme for 2007 was launched today (14<sup>th</sup> June 2007). It will be sponsored this year by The Times, running from 11<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> August 2007 and featuring 700+ events with over 600 authors.

Major themes this year include: Focus on China & India, Slavery Stories, and East & West (relations between the Islamic world and the West).

Full details, including the [press release](#) can be found on their [website](#) from where the [full brochure can be downloaded](#) (pdf format, but beware that it is quite large, circa. 7 megabytes).

<http://news.scotsman.com/edinburgh.cfm?id=932672007> Initial thoughts in the Evening News (14<sup>th</sup> June 2007)

## Jazz and Blues Festival Details

Details of this year's Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival programme, which will run from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup> August 2007, are now available on their [website](#), including details of ticket deals for children and students. The [full brochure can be downloaded](#) from the website. It is in pdf format and circa. 3 megabytes in size).

<http://news.scotsman.com/edinburgh.cfm?id=917502007> Initial thoughts in the Evening News (12<sup>th</sup> June 2007).

## Film Festival Programme Launched

The programme for this year's festival was announced today (11<sup>th</sup> July 2007). It will run from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2007. Stars that are making appearances include Bob Hoskins, Samantha Morton, director Mike Leigh and *Trainspotting* author Irvine Welsh.

Details of the programme can be found on the [Film Festival Web Site](#). A [written article](#) and a [video](#) on the

highlights can also be found there.

<http://news.scotsman.com/entertainment.cfm?id=1079792007> Initial thoughts on the programme in the Evening News (11<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

## Useful Links to Monitor for Festival Info

Here are those links that are particularly valuable to monitor festival coverage in the media:

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933> Base link for the Scotsman's news coverage of the Fringe

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=1104> Base link for the Scotsman's news coverage of the International Festival

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/edinburgh2007/0,,2102154,00.html> Guardian home page for 2007 coverage

<http://living.scotsman.com/performing.cfm> Performing Arts section of the Living.Scotsman provides general coverage of the festival

<http://living.scotsman.com/music.cfm> Music section of Living.Scotsman

<http://living.scotsman.com/visual.cfm> Visual Arts section of Living.Scotsman includes the exhibitions that are on in August

<http://living.scotsman.com/comedy.cfm> Comedy section of Living.Scotsman includes items on comedy on the Fringe

[http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/specials/edinburgh/](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/specials/edinburgh/) The Times

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/edinburgh> Telegraph home page for 2007 coverage.

## Early Previews / Articles

The items in this section are predominantly in chronological order. There are many feature articles on individual shows on the Internet but with a few exceptions I generally tend to ignore them, cynically viewing them as glorified advertisements for the already famous and those who have dreamed up a device that appeals to the media. For the rest – who do need the publicity – BroadwayBaby.com allows performing groups to submit their press releases for [publication](#) while video clips can be found at <http://www.festivalpreviews.com/>.

<http://living.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=858632007> Interview with Martin Hammer, curator of the Naked Portrait exhibition in the Scotland on Sunday (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2007)

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933&id=975102007> Article with views on each of the Fringe super-venues plus brief thoughts on their shows to look out for – Scotsman (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007).

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933&id=1025092007> Brief article on the now rival camps of the Free Fringe and the Laughing Horse who both offer free shows on the Fringe – Scotsman (30<sup>th</sup> June 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=1104&id=1058102007> Getting to know the new directors at this year's festivals – Scotsman (7<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/theatre/drama/story/0,,2123724,00.html> "The show must go on – even if it bankrupts the lot of us" – a salutary tale of the costs of putting on a Fringe show – The Guardian (7<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/features/features/display.var.1534755.0.0.php> Article on Harmony and Humanity series of concerts at the International Festival in The Herald (10<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/features/features/display.var.1538086.0.0.php> Interview with Tilda Swinton, new patron of the Film Festival – The Herald (12<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

[Slide Show](#) of 10 items from the Naked Portrait exhibition – Daily Telegraph.

<http://living.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=1032072007> Preview of Picasso on Paper exhibition at the Dean Gallery – The Scotsman (3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007).

[http://www.musicomh.com/classical\\_features/edinburgh-preview\\_0707.htm](http://www.musicomh.com/classical_features/edinburgh-preview_0707.htm) Preview of music on the International Festival – musicOMH.com (12<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/performing.cfm?id=1090532007> Article on “building” Traverse 3, i.e. adapting the Drill Hall (13<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/performing.cfm?id=1096652007> Hurrah! First sighting (unless you know better) of the “50 things you must not miss this August”. Useful read – Scotsman (14<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,2126374,00.html> The primary means of generating publicity around festival time (or simply filling space in the paper) used to be the stories of outraged councillors who wanted to run some second-rate show out of town, usually on the grounds of offending the moral decency of the good people of Edinburgh. Lately, this wheeze seems to have been replaced by “will Edinburgh lose out to other British cities that see festivals as a good way of increasing tourism”. Yawn ... I feel a rant coming on ... but not until after this year’s feast. Meanwhile, if you are interested then here is an early example this year (no doubt there will be more) – The Observer (15<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

Having put our own twopenneth in earlier, here are the initial thoughts of some other punters that I have come across: [View from the Stalls](#), [Benjamin Yeoh](#) and [Fourth Angel Theatre](#) – added 16<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/theatre/drama/story/0,,2129367,00.html> Second sighting of “the 50 best”, this time from The Guardian (19<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

[http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/specials/edinburgh/](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/specials/edinburgh/) closely followed by The Times previews and recommendations. Follow the links to [comedy & theatre](#), [opera & dance](#), [music](#) and [kids & art](#). Er, have they not heard of the “50 best” then – which journalist school did they go to? (21<sup>st</sup> July 2007).

<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/review.cfm?id=1136612007> Preview of the Warhol exhibition - Scotland on Sunday (22<sup>nd</sup> July 2007).

<http://seaninthestalls.blogspot.com/2007/07/edinburgh-delight.html> Another blog uncovered: [seaninthestalls](#) – added 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2007.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/scotland/edinburgh\\_and\\_east/6911992.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/6911992.stm) Announcement of exhibition of Richard Demarco’s archives at the National Portrait Gallery to celebrate his involvement in the arts in Edinburgh – added 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007. [Longer article](#) in the Evening News later that day.

Festival recommendations - [Evening Standard](#) (25<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://arts.independent.co.uk/theatre/features/article2800178.ece> Quelle surprise ... another article on Manchester challenging Edinburgh – Independent (25<sup>h</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/articles/220707.htm> Useful preview opener from editor Peter Lathan at the British Theatre Guide (25<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.festmag.co.uk/blog/index/> Previews in the form of blogs. I am confused as to whether or not Festmag are collaborating with The Skinny this year (25<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

More from Peter Lathan – [general previews](#), [Shakespeare productions](#) and [classic productions](#) – British Theatre Guide (27<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/music.cfm?id=1175232007> Last minute preview of the Jazz & Blues Festival which starts today – Evening News (27<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/edinburgh2007/story/0,,2135620,00.html> Lyn Gardner tells those would-be punters out there why the Edinburgh Festival is the greatest show on earth – us paid-up punters already know of course ... but it's still good to hear it - Guardian (27<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

Preview of Picasso: Fired with Passion at the National Museum of Scotland - [The Times](#) (27<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

The Telegraph has upped the stakes ... [100 must-do things](#) at the Festival – Daily Telegraph (27<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/30cb1070-3c55-11dc-b067-0000779fd2ac.html> somewhat perfunctory preview of the Festival – FT (28<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

The Times has got the message; the Sunday paper weighs in with “[100 best](#)” (29<sup>th</sup> July 2007)

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/edinburgh2007/story/0,,2137038,00.html> We are all over the place! I was only just getting used to the “100 must-do things” in The Torygraph (and The Sunday Times just this morning) when here is The Observer bringing it down to a paltry “best 25”! (29<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

[Slide show](#) of 10 of the items from the Warhol exhibition – Daily Telegraph (31<sup>st</sup> July 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/performing.cfm?id=1194752007> Article on how to find free shows – The Scotsman (1<sup>st</sup> August 2007).

<http://arts.independent.co.uk/theatre/features/article2824043.ece> Article about American comedians at the Fringe, ending up with a pick of comics on the Fringe – none of which are American?! – Independent (1<sup>st</sup> August 2007).

[http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this\\_britain/article2826117.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article2826117.ece) Is the Edinburgh Festival still the most important in the world asks the Independent – er, yes ... next question (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/news/display.var.1589570.0.0.php> That old chestnut - warning about comedy taking over the Fringe – Herald (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007)

<http://www.list.co.uk/article/2654-just-an-illusion/> Magicians at this year's festival – The List (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/performing.cfm?id=1211692007> The National Theatre of Scotland is important to the festival, to the theatre and to Scotland. Joyce McMillan writes about their festival shows and forthcoming productions in the autumn – Scotsman (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007).

<http://edinburgh.threeweeks.co.uk/browse.asp?all=true&cnt=feature> ThreeWeeks gets going. Features page includes recommendations across festivals – ThreeWeeks (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/performing.cfm?id=1217302007> Article which rightly encourages you to go off the beaten track to discover hidden gems that may be lurking there – Evening News (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/music.cfm?id=1217422007> Music on the Fringe – article about T on the Fringe – Evening News (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007).

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933&id=1218432007> Some of the Musicals on the Fringe – Scotsman (4<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=933&id=1218412007> Safe Bets – shows that the Scotsman has seen before (4<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.edinburghguide.com/festival/2007> A revamped EdinburghGuide.com has appeared. It looks on

first glance as if coverage of the festival will be much reduced – I hope that I am wrong (4<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

<http://arts.independent.co.uk/theatre/features/article2829259.ece> Recommendations in the Independent on Sunday (5<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

[Recommendations](#) in the Sunday Telegraph (5<sup>th</sup> August 2007).



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## Info on Reviews of Shows at the 2007 Festival

2006 reviews

The main objectives of this page are to:

- tell you where you can find reviews on the web
- provide a summary of those shows which have scored most marks with the critics
- details of some of this year's awards
- provide links to Visual Arts and Jazz & Blues reviews.

This punter's personal views (after his visit to this year's festival) can be found [here](#).

Page final update on 28th August 2007.

## Where to Find 2007 Reviews

There are a plethora of sources to satisfy even the most voracious consumer of reviews:

- [Scotsman](#)
- [Guardian](#) – [latest reviews](#) and [A-Z of reviews](#)
- [Times](#)
- [The Stage](#)
- [British Theatre Guide](#)
- [Fest](#)
- [ThreeWeeks](#)
- [FringeReview](#)
- [Edinburgh Festivals Magazine](#)
- [EdinburghGuide.com](#)
- [Chortle](#) (comedy)
- [Glasgow Herald](#)
- [The Independent](#)
- [Daily Telegraph](#)
- [BroadwayBaby.com](#) – [latest reviews](#) and [A-Z of reviews](#)
- [Total Theatre](#)
- [One4Review](#)
- [Curio Festival](#)
- Worthwhile blogs ... [viewfromthestalls](#) and [seaninthestalls](#) (it looks as if Sean will be producing a retrospective when he gets home).

## Most Critically Acclaimed Shows

Let me start off by stating the obvious: there are many enjoyable shows which never make these lists. We have seen many "minor classics" in Edinburgh over the years that went largely unnoticed by the critics. Indeed, we have a number of shows in our planned schedule for this year that have had little publicity during the "preview season". So, do not be a complete slave to reviews: listen to the "word on the street" and perhaps try something different – you might be pleasantly surprised.

The minimum requirement to get onto the following lists is that a show must have had a minimum of three reviews ... which is not easy. This summary iteration was made at 07:30 on Friday 24th August 2007. This is the final summary for the 2007 festival:

- There is no "absolutely must see" show this year
- In theatre (drama and musicals) *England* at Traverse 4 tops the list, followed by *Ravenhill for Breakfast* (short piece – different one every day), *Dai (Enough)*, *The Container*, *Walworth Farce*, *Traces*, *State of Matter* and *Subway*. Just behind come *Yellow Moon*, *Long Time Dead*, *Poppea*, *Miracle in Rwanda*, *Get Your War On*, *The Bacchae*, *Damascus*, *Venus as a Boy*, *Macbeth: Who is that Bloodied Man?*, *Failed States*, *Phaedre*, *Wish I had a Sylvia Plath*, *Battle of Stalingrad* and *Someone who'll Watch over Me*
- In the field of comedy *Michael McIntyre* currently leads the way, closely followed by *Mark Watson*, *Stephen Grant*, *Jerry Sadowitz*, *Brendon Burns*, *Glenn Wool*, *Adam Hills*, *Jim Jeffries*, *Reginald D. Hunter*, *Russell Kane*, *Rick Shapiro*, *Richard Herring* and *Jason Byrne*. A host of other comedians are only just further behind, including *Paul Sinha*, *Stewart Lee*, *Andrew Lawrence* and *Simon Amstell*
- *Six Women Standing in front of a White Wall*, *Woyzeck* and the much hyped *Fuerzabruta* lead the way in the dance & physical theatre section. I know that the Fringe programme classifies *Fuerzabruta* as theatre but I, rightly or wrongly, intend to include it in the dance & physical theatre section. They are closely followed by *Victoria*, *Hangman* and *On Danse*.

A late entry – *Trisha Brown* (International Festival) in the dance and physical theatre section (added 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

*The Smile Off Your Face* has received good ratings but I have been loath to include it as the running time is a mere 20 minutes.

## Awards

There is an ever-growing number of awards at the festival. Here is a selection.

**The Scotsman Fringe First** winners are announced during each week of the Fringe. The initial batch of Fringe First-winners on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2007 comprised: *The Container*, *Walworth Farce*, *England*, *Scarborough*, *Truth in Translation* and *Damascus*. The second batch of winners was announced on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2007: *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, *Ravenhill for Breakfast*, *Hangman*, *Popsicle Departure 1989*, *The Smile Off Your Face* and *Emergence – See*. The final batch of winners, announced on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2007, consisted of *Subway*, *Mile End*, *Hugh Hughes in ... Story of a Rabbit* and *Wish I Had a Sylvia Plath*.

**The Glasgow Herald Angel awards** are also announced weekly during the festival. In the initial batch of awards on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2007, the Archangel award went to *England*, while the Angel awards went to *Woyzeck*, *Victoria*, *Follow Me*, *Kidsamonium*, and *Venus as a Boy*. The second batch of winners was announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2007: Alan Cumming getting the Archangel award for Dionysus, while Herald Angels went to *Jordi Savall*, *Incarnat*, *Six Women Standing in Front of a White Wall*, *Sounds of Progress*, *Timeless*, *Hamell on Trial* and *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*. The third batch of winners, announced on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2007, comprised: Archangel to Philip Howard, the retiring artistic director at the Traverse with Herald Angel awards going to *The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela*, *Concerto Italiano* (for the Monteverdi concerts at Greyfriars Kirk), *Siren*, *Kenny Young and the Egg Plants*, *Big in Japan (or Three Steves and A Bob)* and *Subway*.

**Intelligent Finance's if.comedy awards** (which replaced the Perrier awards in 2006): Brendon Burns (best comedian), Tom Basden (best newcomer) and Arthur Smith for Arturart (show which best captured

the spirit of comedy on the Fringe).

**The Stage Awards for Acting Excellence at the Fringe:** **Garry Cooper** for *Long Time Dead* (best actor), **Eugenia Caruso** and **Janet Bamford** for *Truckstop* (best actress), **Shalimar** for *La Femme est Morte, or Why I Should Not F\*\*k My Son* (best ensemble) and **Madi Distefano** for *Popsicle's Departure 1989* (best solo performer).

**The Carol Tambor Edinburgh to New York award** went to *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*.

**Amnesty International's Freedom of Expression award** went to *The Container*.

**Total Theatre awards:** 1927 for *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (best emerging company); **Rude Mechs in association with Erich Jungwirth and Richard Jordan Productions** for *Get Your War On* (best original work by a Collective / Ensemble); **Ontroerend Goed** for *The Smile Off Your Face* (for experimentation); Traverse for *News from Nowhere* and Fruitmarket Gallery for *England* (best small scale works); **Sadari Movement Laboratory in association with AsiaNow Productions** for *Woyzeck* (best physical performance); and Jos Houben (Significant Contribution).

**FringeReview awards for outstanding theatre shows:** *Sting for Nolte*, *Follow Me* and *Retreat*.

## Visual Arts Reviews

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/art/visualart/story/0,,2131894,00.html> Reviews of Picasso on Paper, Picasso: Fired with Passion and Richard Long: Walking and Marking –The Observer (22<sup>nd</sup> July 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/visual.cfm?id=1062552007> Review of Picasso on Paper exhibition at the Dean Gallery – Scotland on Sunday (8<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/d6d2d302-3ca7-11dc-b067-0000779fd2ac.html> Review of Naked Portrait – Ft (28<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/art/visualart/story/0,,2138329,00.html> Review of Andy Warhol: A Celebration of Life ... and Death at National Galleries of Scotland – The Guardian (31<sup>st</sup> July 2007).

<http://living.scotsman.com/visual.cfm?id=1196872007> Shorter review of the Warhol exhibition – Scotsman (1<sup>st</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2e288f06-414f-11dc-8f37-0000779fd2ac.html> Review of Andy Warhol: A Celebration of Life ... and Death at National Galleries of Scotland – FT (4th August 2007).

[http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/specials/edinburgh/article2181587.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/specials/edinburgh/article2181587.ece) Review of Andy Warhol: A Celebration of Life ... and Death at National Galleries of Scotland – Times (5<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

## Jazz & Blues Festival

Selected reviews:

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1182962007> Courtney Pine and Tommy Smith Play Coltrane – Scotsman gives it 5 stars (30<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1189282007> Scott Hamilton & Danny Moss – Scotsman (31<sup>st</sup> July 2007).

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1200852007> Jacques Loussier Trio – Scotsman (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1213672007> Humphrey Littleton Band – Scotsman

(3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1220412007> Al Foster Quintet plays Miles Davis – Scotsman (4<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1218982007> Bad Apple – Scotsman (4<sup>th</sup> August 2007).

<http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/reviews.cfm?id=1220072007> Time Kliphuis – Scotsman (4<sup>th</sup> August 2007).



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## Punters' Visit to the 2007 Edinburgh Festival

We travelled up by train this year rather than by plane. The journey was largely uneventful. We took some gin with us so that we could have our traditional "we are off to Edinburgh G+T" – somewhere between Doncaster and York I seem to remember. It was drizzling when we arrived in mid-afternoon but it is only a short 10 minute walk to Penny's B&B where she gave us a warm welcome. After quickly unpacking (we travel light) and sampling Penny's homemade scones, we were off ...

### Day 1

The Art Festival programme is quite strong this year and we kicked off with a visit to *The Naked Portrait* at the nearby Portrait Gallery. It consisted of a mixture of paintings, photographs and sculpture spread over two floors in the gallery. It was interesting to observe that many of the sitters in the early part of the exhibition looked slightly embarrassed and this resulted in a remarkably quiet atmosphere, the visitors obviously affected by the sitters' and their own embarrassment. The atmosphere lightened in the second half, notably when the photographs of the celebrities were reached; they, perhaps unsurprisingly, showed no embarrassment. It was an interesting and thought-provoking exhibition.

After an early evening meal we wandered down Frederick Street to Aurora Nova, home of dance and physical theatre, to see *Hangman* by DO-Theatre. It consisted of a series of vignettes on the theme of crime and punishment, imaginatively performed by five bowler-hatted dancers; a good opening to our Fringe programme. Then over to the Traverse for a lighter end to the evening with Stewart Lee and Iain Gillie's *Johnson & Boswell - Late but Live*. It was based around the idea of a modern day book launch for Boswell's *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* and *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* in period costume with Miles Jupp as Boswell and Simon Munnery as Johnson. It was easy to spot the locals in the audience; they were the ones who gradually laughed less and less during Johnson's tirade against the Scots when he first came on stage which went on for a full 10 minutes. An enjoyable show even if it did rather run out of steam three quarters of the way through.

### Day 2

Day 2 started with breakfast at the B&B. We chatted with an Italian couple who

were touring Scotland and, as with many tourists that arrive in Edinburgh during August, they found the size and scale of the August Feast somewhat mind-blowing. Our first show of the day was Rona Munro's *Long Time Dead* at the Traverse, a new play about mountaineers and their closeness to death: innovative set, good dialogue and very well-acted. Our only minor carp is that it is probably 15 minutes too long (but we say this about many plays!).

We stay at the Traverse for Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Farce*, a tragedy played as dark farce where an Irish father attempts to rewrite the reasons for his sudden bloody departure from Ireland through a daily "play" which he and his two sons have put on for many years, largely hidden away from the world in their flat off the Walworth Road in London. The pace is fast and quite dizzying, the acting excellent – in the running for the best show of our visit.

We take a leisurely walk to Traverse 3 (alias Edinburgh University Drill Hall) for the next show, Rough Magic's *Is This About Sex?* This was a gentle, amusing, slightly dated but definitely lightweight show that the acting failed to save ... and it was way too long. The day finished with another visit to Aurora Nova for *Astronomy for Insects* from Russia's blackSKYwhite company. I can only describe it as a strange somewhat surreal show that was composed of a series of what appeared to be often unrelated vignettes with insects, aliens, Santa Claus, among others. A very harsh, loud and overly persistent soundtrack ensured that we struggled to enjoy it.

### Day 3

Monday morning and we were back at Aurora Nova where we bumped into Ruth and Graham, friends from previous festival visits. We were all there to see *Woyzeck*, Georg Büchner's work, performed by Sadari Movement Laboratory (a Korean troupe). The story surrounds a simple man who is bullied by his boss, experimented on by a doctor, and loses his woman to a sergeant-major. The dancers turned in good performances, making imaginative use of chairs. Enjoyable.

Up to Princes Street to visit the excellent Warhol exhibition, *Andy Warhol: A Celebration of Life ... and Death* at the National Galleries of Scotland. My particular favourites were the Polaroid-based society portraits, particularly Debby Harry, although most people prefer Lisa Minelli, plus the blue and black portraits of Jackie Kennedy before and after JFK's assassination. Janet, and many others, delighted in the ability to play with the floating helium-filled silver pillows.

Back to Aurora Nova via one of our favourite watering holes, The Cumberland, for *The Art Of Laughter* which was billed as a talk / demonstration by Jos Houben, a founder member of Complicite. For 50 very enjoyable minutes Jos explained some of the basics of making an audience laugh, complete with examples which included help from some members of the audience. His delivery was understated and all the funnier for that.

This was followed by another helping of humour when we made our first visit to The Pleasance to see *Punt & Dennis: Stuff and Nonsense*. The stars of *The Now Show* (radio) and *Mock The Week* (television) were undoubtedly professional and amusing but what appeared to be the recycling of existing material made for a somewhat disappointing show. We ate at the excellent David Bann restaurant which is close by The Pleasance. It is a popular vegetarian restaurant where tasty and imaginative dishes can be found. Something to get off my chest at this point – the prices in many Edinburgh restaurants appear to have risen by 25-30% over the past year, rises that have not been matched by increases in the quality of the dishes or in the levels of service (in certain establishments service has deteriorated). None of this applies to David Bann which represented excellent value for money ... and no I am not a shareholder, part-owner, related to the owner, on the take, *et cetera*.

A gentle stroll along Cowgate, through the Grassmarket and over to the King's

Theatre on Leven Street for the National Theatre of Scotland's much vaunted production of *The Bacchae*, part of this year's International Festival. In the reviews that I have read, apart from Billington in the Guardian and The Stage, the critics absolutely loved this experimental version of Euripides' play which included a camp Dionysus played by Alan Cumming and a gospel choir for the chorus. While I found it spectacular – Dionysus' entrance, the burning of Pentheus' palace, the flower darts and the bright lights aimed at the audience to show the divinity of Dionysus – I am in the Billington and The Stage camp. The play's complexities were largely lost while I found the pace very lumpy, occasionally it moved from top gear, usually when it involved some repartee from Cumming, into almost reverse gear.

## Day 4

Tuesday started with the first (preview) performance of *Game Theory* by EK Performance at the Traverse. This show which deals with conflict resolution has received mixed reviews. I enjoyed it, probably because I am interested in the subject matter. It contained three discrete pieces: talks about talks to resolve a conflict at the national level; the effects of the conflict on one family; and the bringing together of a man who had been erroneously condemned as a traitor during the conflict (and whose life was destroyed) with the woman who condemned him.

We were attracted to *Truth in Translation* at the Assembly on the Mound by the early favourable reviews. It dealt with the dealings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission through the eyes of the translators. I was generally disappointed, as it was not as hard-hitting as I thought it might have been and it made no concessions to people (like me) who have forgotten some of the detail. I was also unhappy with: actors talking over each other, particularly early on ... although it got better later; excessive use of devices such as lockers; and what I considered to be an ineffective video accompaniment.

Back to the Traverse for *Venus as a Boy*. At the risk of upsetting Luke Sutherland who wrote the novel on which the play is based and who provided the musical accompaniment, I put it in the one person show genre. It tells the story of a boy from the Orkney Islands looking for true love that eventually ends up as a male prostitute in London and dies at the early age of 38. This is a poignant piece that is beautifully acted by Tam Dean Burn. In my guise as a fan of the one person show I heartily recommend it.

After dinner with Veronique, friend and one time B&B hostess, we head off for our only outdoor show, Biuro Podrozy's *Macbeth – Who is that Bloodied Man?* in the Old Quad at Edinburgh University and guess what ... it was raining ... mostly drizzle so it could have been worse. Characters on stilts, Nazi-looking motorcyclists, and more burning palaces ... this is a spectacle with minimal dialogue ... "More the charred bones of Shakespeare's play than the flesh" says Lyn Gardner in The Guardian. So long as you are not expecting vanilla-flavoured Macbeth (one critic obviously was) then this is an inventive and spectacular production.

## Day 5

The first show on Wednesday was *Yellow Moon* at the Traverse. It used a storytelling technique to describe a youth who stabbed his mother's boy friend to death and fled to find his long-lost father. It was OK (3 star show) without being anything special.

Over at the Assembly Rooms on George Street we saw Athol Fugard's *Exits and Entrances*, a play set in the 1960s which dealt with two meetings between a young playwright (based on Fugard himself) and an ageing actor-manager (Andre Huguenet) – a sort of out with the old and in with the new. I am afraid that I found the pace a trifle funereal.

This was followed at the same venue by *An Age of Angels*, another one person show. It centred on the seemingly uninteresting event of a ball being kicked over a school fence and across a busy highway. Mark Soper played 10 different characters who were involved in this event. Early on it seemed unpromising. This, coupled with the fact that the early characters included a paedophile who was watching the children in the playground and a spastic child, resulted in about 15-20 members of the audience leaving. This is another of my pet hates – people leaving shows. The two thirds of us who were left saw the plot gradually and skilfully unfold, layer by layer, until the eventual tragedy was revealed. This was an enjoyable show, well written and well acted.

The last show of the day was Will Adamsdale's *The Human Computer*, an amusing piece on how infuriating and painful PCs can be to use. The first part of the show benefited from audience participation, as individuals were chosen to play items such as the hourglass and a piece of spam. A certain level of anarchy – Adamsdale struggled to keep control of some of his audience recruits – made for more laughs. The second part, where he wandered through networks and servers, did not work for me at all. I feel that there is a rich seam of comedy to be mined here but the show in its current guise failed to exploit it. Adamsdale could probably do with a bit of help from someone who knows more about the ins and outs of computers.

## Day 6

We went to the *Picasso on Paper* exhibition at the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art on Thursday morning, walking through the pleasant parts of the New Town and over the Water of Leith. This was another enjoyable exhibition, containing 150+ drawings and prints. I am always fascinated by the drawings and paintings of Picasso's women, and there are plenty of such drawings here. The Bull, a series of 12 lithographs where the creature changes each time, becoming gradually more stylised, is one of the highlights of the show. Time Out ... we had a leisurely lunch with Aurora, Jim, Susan and Cal who we met on our first visit to the festival many moons ago.

Festival activities resumed with *Victoria* at Aurora Nova. This powerful piece was based on an elderly woman, played by Dulcinea Langfelder, with senile dementia who struggled to recognise her visitors. Although her memory was fading her imagination was intact, as she danced the tango with her wheelchair as a partner and talked to her shadow. This was a gentle, thoughtful piece of physical theatre on a difficult subject, witty and poignant – one of the best shows so far.

On to Assembly@St. George's West for *Emergence – See!*, Daniel Beaty's one man show that concerns the rising up of a slave ship in the Hudson river in modern day New York. Beaty plays a myriad of characters in providing a portrait of black America, giving something of a virtuoso performance in the process. Although the show has been largely well received, including a Fringe First, I found that it wandered off at a tangent too much and his delivery, which was mostly high octane top gear stuff, to be somewhat tiring – quite why he needed a microphone given the natural power of his voice I did not quite understand.

A visit to the Udderbelly to see *Jerry Sadowitz – Comedian, Magician, Psychopath* rounded off the day. If you are easily offended by swearing, tirades on racism, immigration, jokes about disabled celebrities and much else besides then JS is not for you unless you can spot the irony. This is sometimes quite easy to do when his standard bitter and twisted look occasionally collapses into a brief smirk. His close-up magic with cards was excellent as usual – an overhead camera being installed to provide the audience with a better view. I would personally have preferred a bit more magic and slightly less of the rants. I liked Brian Logan's closing sentence in his review for The Guardian, "With his bitterness such a fertile source of black comedy, heaven forbid that Sadowitz should ever feel appreciated." Reading reviews across the piece this year JS may well be in some danger here ... he almost

sounds like a national treasure!! ... or should that be a f\*\*\*ing national treasure?

## Day 7

The final day of our visit started with [Damascus](#) at the Traverse. While the acting was excellent the play lacked a certain *je ne sais quoi*, i.e. I am not sure where it was ultimately going. Although it has been generally well received several critics have complained that nothing happened after the interval, and I tend to agree with them although I did enjoy it.

After a quick beer we were off to the Pleasance Dome for Pip Utton's [Chaplin](#). We are fans of Utton, an Edinburgh stalwart who specialises in the one person show. We enjoyed the show as Chaplin, close to death, looked back on his life. Good use was made of video, including interacting with it (shades of [All Wear Bowlers](#) at Aurora Nova a couple of years ago). However, the piece ultimately lacked a bit of depth; another 15-20 minutes over the existing running time of 50 minutes may have produced a better result.

Time permitted a visit to the Pleasance Courtyard to sit and watch the festival world go by before returning along Drummond Street to the Dome (briefly playing the – and where precisely was Darnley's body found? – game) for [An Air Balloon Across Antartica](#). This was a poignant play about a female explorer who seeks a meaning to her life after the death of her son and the breakdown of her marriage. She was joined by the ghosts of Shackleton, Scott and Amelia Earhart. It was a pleasant, relatively gentle piece but quite how it got 5 star ratings from some reviewers I do not know.

24 shows (and three arts exhibitions) down ... just the one show to go. After dinner we headed to the Fruitmarket Gallery where Tim Crouch's [England](#) was being performed. This show had received most of the plaudits on this year's Fringe, including a Fringe First and a Herald Archangel, as well as topping my reviews "league" (average star-ratings across 11 sources). The first part is played promenade in the upper gallery and introduced a character with a rich boyfriend who falls ill with a degenerative heart condition. Tim Crouch and Hannah Ringham "share" this part. In the second part, played on the ground floor of the gallery, the character, having had a transplant (paid for privately) and recovered, goes to a developing country to meet the widow of the donor who we find is convinced that her husband's death had been engineered. The broad theme of this tightly written and well acted one hour play was inequality.

We spent the train journey south the following morning pondering the usual question – how did the festival compare with previous years. The Art Festival was very strong, probably the highlight for us. The Aurora Nova programme was stronger this year but the Traverse programme, while of a reliable standard, failed to live up to the pre-festival hype. There was no "absolutely must see" show on the Fringe or International Festival this year although the overall standard of what we saw was good. Of course, this may simply be a reflection on our growing ability to avoid the "turkeys". If we had to pick a favourite we would both go for [The Walworth Farce](#). In summary, the visit to the August Feast was as enjoyable as ever, helped in no small measure by the beauty of the city and meeting up with old friends.

## Recommendations

My short list of recommendations (from the shows that we have seen) is as follows:

- [The Walworth Farce](#), [England](#) and [Macbeth – Who is that Bloodied Man?](#) (Drama)
- [Hangman](#) and [Victoria](#) (Dance and Physical Theatre)
- [Venus as a Boy](#) (One person show)
- [Jerry Sadowitz](#) if you can stomach him and [Johnson & Boswell – Late but](#)

- *Live* (Comedy)
- *Andy Warhol: A Celebration of Life ... and Death, Picasso on Paper and The Naked Portrait* (Visual Arts).

## And What Should We Have Seen?

We always come away from the festival wishing that we had seen various other shows during our stay but were unable to fit them in. This year's batch of missed opportunities included: *Dai (Enough)*, *The Battle of Stalingrad*, *The Container* and *Get Your War On*.

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