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### THE GEORGE HOTEL

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# Fringe Children's Shows: We are the monsters, Summerhall; The Soundimals Tamer, Institut francais d'Écosse; Madama Butterfly; Institut francais d'Écosse



Stuart Meyers, Maxwell McCarthy and Asaf Hochman in We Are The Monsters  
Edinburgh Fringe 2015  
summerhall.co.uk  
madeinscotlandshowcase.com  
Photographer - kalle-kukkonen

Colette Sadle: We are the Monsters. Theater an der Parkaue 2015. (36222439)

Mary Brennan / Monday 24 August 2015 / Arts & Ents

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Fringe Children's Shows

We are the monsters

Summerhall

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The Soundimals Tamer

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Madam Butterfly

Institut francais d'Écosse

THREE STARS

Mary Brennan

Young eyes see things – even everyday, familiar things – differently from adults. Luckily choreographer Colette Sadler shares that free-fall ability to look at empty card-board boxes, or the droopy arms of a cast-off anorak and think: alien critters... maybe, monsters! In her work for adult audiences, Sadler has often conjured hybrid forms where the pliancy of dancers is melded with inanimate objects in a quizzical look at evolution. Here, in We are the monsters, her first dance piece for children (aged 4 to 9 ) she shapes the playful possibilities of oddball combinations into a posse of bizarre beings who co-exist in a landscape of cardboard boxes. Bit by bit, those boxes give up secrets. A waggly protruberance pokes out – is it an eye-stalk? a tentacle? and who or what is it attached to? There's just a hint of scary unknowns in the initial encounters, but these monsters are essentially fun-loving, friendly creatures, their weird lumps and bumps and bulges encased in shiny-stretchy costumes or clever topsy-turvy amalgums of trousers and jackets. There's a lot of personality, mischief and humour under the fur fabric, while spotting how the ordinary clothes have become monster-costumes is a treat in itself – look out for kids trying this at home, turning all the family hoodies into a giant creepy-crawly with no head!

(run ended)

Hearing is believing in the Soundimals Tamer because there are no animals – not even a flea – to be seen in this circus ring. It's probably just as well the lion isn't lurking in one of the up-stage crates: Tony Gratoski is such an inept keeper-cum-trainer, the beast would be out of the tent and on the prowl for snacks before the Sound Manipulator could press the whiplash button on his desktop. The whip, by the way, is actually a short piece of cord, and despite the impressive ring-master uniform, Gratoski is really a rubber-faced clown with a flair for making us buy into his animal act illusions. If his is a performance grounded in old-style buffoonery – grandiose intentions forever wrong-footed by misfortune, usually of his own contrivance – the twist is in the new technology that can underpin the make-believe with its witty noises off. Even that lion can be heard to laugh when Gratoski cracks the whip and ineffectually orders the big cat to do tricks. Luckily, help was at hand. A little girl in the front row answered Gratoski's call for an assistant and proved a perfect accessory to his tomfoolery. In some ways, this seems a simple show for 5+ audiences, good-natured and daft. It only seems that way because the sound effects and the clowning are anchored in richly astute experience and techniques – invisible big cats, and helpful little girls, wouldn't laugh at anything less!

(until August 31)

Puccini for three-year-olds? Madama Butterfly expressed through dance? In truth, solo performer Nathalie Cornille isn't slavishly replaying the opera or its tragic narrative: she's offering a caringly crafted soupcon of these art-forms to very young audiences who – unlike many adults – don't have the "it's not for me" preconceptions. Dressed in white, Cornille moves elegantly to selected arias from Madama Butterfly, her dance more redolent of fleeting moods than exact story-telling. When she temporarily leaves the stage, video-footage – projected onto a large fan of white material– continues the stream of movement and music, with animation adding in symbolic imagery. There's no hari-kiri, no death, only a fluttering fall of white petals and the sense that, for some children at least, a portal has been opened on classic art forms.

(until August 31)

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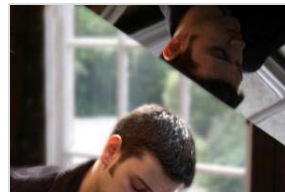
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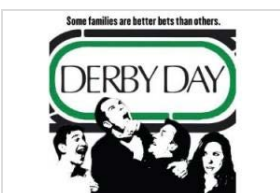
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