

METRO edinburgh festival

Courting controversy



Activism is given a workout: Anne Archer portrays Jane Fonda as she expounds her political views to a serviceman

THEATRE REVIEW

★★★★☆ THE TRIAL OF JANE FONDA

IN 1972, when actress and anti-war activist Jane Fonda stood in front of her peers cradling her Oscar for Best Actress in *Klute*, many expected her to use her acceptance speech to criticize America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Instead, she was pointedly restrained. 'There's a great deal to say and I'm not going to say it tonight,' she informed the

room. Sixteen years later, Fonda did speak to a private meeting of war veterans at St Michael's Episcopal Church in Waterbury, Connecticut, where she hoped to shoot the romantic drama *Stanley & Iris* with Robert De Niro.

'You're a traitor. You betrayed your country!' snarls one of those servicemen in Terry Jastrow's dramatisation of the fractious encounter between Fonda (Anne Archer) and the emotionally scarred soldiers. While some of the locals are willing to listen to the actress' version of events, others stoke the embers of enmity with insults: 'She ain't no

Barbarella any more, that's for sure!'

The *Trial Of Jane Fonda* lights the fuse on a crash-bang of verbal explosions that, sadly, never materialise. Writer-director Jastrow has clearly researched his subject, complementing speeches with archive footage projected on an overhead screen. While his play is heavy on historical footnotes, it's light on suspense or genuine emotional outpourings. The cast trade glancing, lightweight blows but never draw blood. **Damon Smith**

Until Aug 24, *The Assembly Rooms* (V20), www.arfringe.com

Music Review: Michelle McManus' Reality: The Musical

★★★★☆

The 2003 Pop Idol champion embarks on a whistle-stop tour of her journey from reality TV darling to sassy cabaret diva in this unabashedly feel-good singalong interspersed with pithy anecdotes including some choice words about Scottish nutritionist Gillian McKeith. Dressed, as she puts it, 'as latter-day drag queen', McManus belts out show tunes and gusto, building to the inevitable reprise of her winner's anthem, *All This Time*.

Until Aug 25, *Stand In The Square* (V372), www.thestand.co.uk

Children's Review: Tiger Tale

★★★★☆

A playful tiger helps a fractured family, comprising father (Vince Virr), mother (Kai-Wen Cheung) and alienated daughter (Jade Adamson), to break free from



A career in song: Michelle McManus hits the high notes

the regimented choreography of humdrum routine in *Barrowland Ballet's* family-oriented tumble in the jungle set to Kim Moore's live soundtrack. The moment Virr emerges in citrus-bright orange as the big cat and slinks across the laps of the audience, youngsters in the room purr with glee.

Until Aug 19, *Venue150 @ EICC* (V150), www.venue150.com

Comedy Review: Just Too Much: Frisky And Mannish

★★★★☆

Laura Corcoran and Matthew Floyd Jones's preening, power-popped alter egos come slightly unstuck in this fifth hour of parodic musical mash-ups. Feigning an emotional meltdown à la Britney, Miley and Bieber, which risks a tart rebuke from Sinéad O'Connor, the feuding

double-act relies more heavily than usual on props and contrived set-ups for appreciative laughs rather than trademark polished stagecraft. Lamentably, all of the gimmickry is just too much. Until Aug 25, *Underbelly, Bristo Square* (V300), www.underbelly.co.uk

Comedy Review: Single White Slut: Tim Key

★★★★☆

A large bed dominates the stage of Tim Key's haphazard hour of poetry and storytelling, which pulls back the duvet on his pursuit of the fairer sex, an odyssey to India and filmmaking with Anne Hathaway. There are several moments to power-nap as Key's theatrical style triumphs over comic substance, but sporadically he delivers, including a terse verse that upends childhood nostalgia for *The Wind In The Willows*. **Damon Smith**
Until Aug 25, *Pleasance Courtyard* (V33), www.pleasance.co.uk

Theatre Preview: Merry Christmas, Ms Meadows

Award-winning underground collective Belarus Free Theatre, which produces work to challenge censorship, government control and political correctness, returns to Edinburgh with a fascinating study in gender politics, identity, sexuality and conformity in the modern age. Artistic director Nicolai Khalezin and the cast draw inspiration from the sobering true story of a transgender British teacher, whose private life became a talking point in the national media. Tomorrow until Aug 25, *Pleasance Dome* (V23), www.pleasance.co.uk

Dance Preview: Gnosis

Edinburgh International Festival has commissioned this revival of Akram Khan's mesmerizing 2009 dance work, offering us a fresh opportunity to marvel at the choreographer-performer's heady fusion of classical Indian Kathak and contemporary dance inspired by the Hindu epic the Mahabharata. For these three nights, Khan is accompanied on stage by exceptional Taiwanese dancer Fang-Yi Sheu and an ensemble of gifted international musicians. Tomorrow until Aug 21, *King's Theatre*, www.eif.co.uk

Theatre Preview: You're Not Alone: Kim Noble

Quixotic artist and stand-up Noble offers a glimpse of day-to-day life on the third rock from the sun in this poignant and sometimes hilarious multimedia assault on the senses, which melds film, performance and comedy to bring to life his neighbours including a couple upstairs who have disruptively noisy sex, local business people and his father, who has dementia. Tomorrow until Aug 24, *Traverse Theatre* (V14), www.traverse.co.uk **Damon Smith**

Cabaret Review: Disney Rascal

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