

PRESS

Outlet: Toronto Life

Article: The Nine Funniest Stand-up Acts in Toronto Right Now

By Luc Rinaldi

September 19, 2016

<http://torontolife.com/culture/best-toronto-stand-up-sketch-comedy-comics/>

“The Double Whammy” - The Templeton Philharmonic

Briana Templeton and Gwynne Phillips performed in a few plays together while studying drama at U of T before teaming up for a Fringe Fest show in 2011. Since then, they’ve inhabited dozens of goofy characters—snooty high-society women, ditzy southern belles, salad-obsessed health nuts—in online shorts for Funny or Die and CBC Comedy, and onstage at Chris Hadfield’s Generator variety show.

FOR FANS OF: Second City, Catherine O’Hara

Outlet: Theatromania

Review: Unbridled & Unstable at Next Stage Theatre Festival

By Lauren Gillett

January 11, 2015

<http://www.theatromania.ca/news/templeton-philharmonic-unbridled-unstable>

Canadian Comedy Award-nominated sketch duo The Templeton Philharmonic (Gwynne Phillips and Briana Templeton) display their unique brand of eccentric and surreal wit at the Next Stage Theatre Festival this month in *Unbridled & Unstable*, a new show packed with social commentary, hilarious interpretive dancing and tongue-in-cheek equine spirit.

Sporting top hats and posh accents, Phillips and Templeton ride on stage as Edwardian snobs and move through a series of character-driven sketches where they play everything from obsessive purveyors of salad to monks inventing the game Charades during a vow of silence. Effortlessly combining nostalgia for old artforms, such as foley, with modern scenarios, like a Book Club meeting gone wrong, this energetic pair get big laughs throughout the 60-minute production, which also involves a couple of lucky audience members in a "horse race" on stage. You can bet on having fun. The Templeton Philharmonic is a class act.

Outlet: Mooney On Theatre

Review: "An Evening In July" at Toronto Fringe

By Lauren Stein

July 4, 2014

<http://www.mooneyontheatre.com/2014/07/04/an-evening-in-july-the-templeton-philharmonic-2014-toronto-fringe-review/>

There's something truly captivating about The Templeton Philharmonic's Toronto Fringe Festival offering. Between the solid acting and the beguiling garden setting, *An Evening in July* is an accomplished piece that will make you laugh as much as it might make you weep.

A site-specific production that makes its home a little bit off the path of the usual Fringe venues, *An Evening in July* uses the backdrop of the darling St. George the Marty's gardens. The audience is invited to tag along to follow an evening in the lives of two reclusive sisters, inspired by the Beale's of Grey Gardens, who are in the process of planning a special party. As we follow their preparations, we're treated to an intimate look into their lives and memories, their joys and struggles, and the one moment that changed their lives forever.

Gwynne Phillips and Briana Templeton have crafted a really intricate piece of theatre. Despite having felt that it took off to a bit of a slow start, the languid flavour of the show steadily picks up steam as it moves forward. I was enthralled with the two characters May and June before I even realized it.

I think the most striking aspects of this show lie in the details. From the authentically rich accents of the duo, to the props and set pieces deliberately spread around the garden and party room – in a haphazard way, of course. Each tidbit is a clue to who these characters are and the more you wander through them and explore before the show starts – they give you a good 11 minutes to do so – the more you might be able to piece together about the women.

It's no mystery why The Templeton Philharmonic has won so many awards, specifically for sketch comedy. Their flow is impeccable and their delivery feels authentic and relaxed. There was a seamlessness between the parts that were scripted and those that were probably mostly improvised that was really impressive, and there were moments where I'm not even sure if they were improvising or just extremely well-rehearsed.

There is minimal audience participation, although it isn't especially intensive and varies from picking specific audience members to incorporating all of us. Hey, who doesn't want to take a quick interlude to play a huge game of cards or remember their schoolyard days playing Cat and Mouse with a parachute? For those who want to feel even more immersed in the party experience, there's a pop-up bar as well.

The show is funny, certainly, but doesn't go without an air of melancholy that strikes hardest at the end. I think it's an inspired piece of theatre that might not sink in from the get-go, but will definitely hook you by the finish. If you're looking for something completely different, though still very much accessible, then *An Evening in July* is one you shouldn't miss.

Outlet: Comedy Uncovered

Review: The Templeton Philharmonic at NXNE

By Taylor Erwin

June 14, 2013

<http://comedyuncovered.com/2013/06/nxne-comedy-thursday-night-recap/>

There's no doubt the apex of the show was during The Templeton Philharmonic's fascinating set. They opened (opened!) with a brand-new sketch centered on NXNE being a "Norway Xylophone Networking Event", before executing a superb ode to Abbott and Costello's "Who's on first?" when referring to NXNE's headlining act, Ludacris. "What's his name? -He's Ludacris, -Well, I imagine so. But what's his name?" Quite the clever tribute. Another laugh-out-loud-loudly moment occurred when the women discussed their abnormal pregnancy symptoms. One performer described how she was fearful she may be pregnant with the spawn of Satan when her...ahem, 'ladyshell' began speaking Latin. You can't make this stuff up...because they already did.

The show peaked when Gwynne Phillips and Briana Templeton took on the form of two elderly friends who accidentally ingested drug-laced tea and proceeded to have a crazy trip. It was surreally hilarious.

Add to the Comedy Radar: The Templeton Philharmonic. This lady duo has the acting chops to carry their tyrannically rebellious writing to it's full potential.

My Entertainment World

Review: Sockdolager at Campbell House Museum

By Kelly Bedard

June 20, 2012

<http://www.myentertainmentworld.ca/2012/06/site-specific-period-pieces-sockdolager/>

Last night I took in a one-act site-specific double feature of *The Loyalists* in Victoria Memorial Square and *Sockdolager* at Campbell House, though the two have literally nothing in common apart from being set in Toronto in some century other than this one. I started off the night with The Templeton Philharmonic at Campbell House before sprinting southwest to catch the 9pm *Loyalists*.

The marketing on *Sockdolager* is in need of some Prozac because its darkly leering oddball tone makes the show seem entirely less digestible than it really is. The actual play, though decently dark, is not in the least bit unenjoyable and the acting calibre truly remarkable.

Sockdolager is, essentially, a simple story about dissatisfied people at a dinner party. The production starts off in the cramped Campbell House lobby as a hectic scene plays out in and around the audience, the characters descending from upstairs and bursting through the front door, assembling to dine. From there, sardonic narrator/valet Miguel Rivas charms, cracks wise and taunts while explaining how this evening of “spying” is going to go down. As a group, we observe a wonderfully awkward dinner, each character revealing exactly who they are in nuanced, perfectly timed little glimpses (debutante Adeline’s desperate grasps for the storytelling spotlight, mousy Edith’s chronic nosebleed, Cecil’s complete lack of couth). Then you follow a servant with a sign: *The Songbird* (Ely Henry’s clueless musician), *The Pickle* (Kat Letwin’s grumpy cook), or *The Moon* (Rivas) and they lead you to whichever of the three subsequent simultaneous scenes you’re to see next.

As a member of the Moon group, I was disappointed not to be with Letwin, knowing her to be a phenomenal improviser, but unlike most site-specific shows, the role of audience guide in *Sockdolager* isn’t very important (also, Rivas is fantastic, so no complaints here). Once each group arrives at their destination, the guide takes off to go participate in another scene (Letwin is needed in the kitchen scene all three times it runs; Rivas’s character Roland is needed upstairs in the bedroom before he can retrieve his group). Once everyone’s seen all three scenes, the whole audience and cast reassemble in the ballroom for the denouement.

That last scene is too long but otherwise the script is sharp and fun and appropriately nagging in its underlying points about class disparity, jealousy and fundamental loneliness. Each of the central scenes has its strength. The parlor scene between estate heir/misguided artist Felix Sweetman (played fantastically ebullient and achingly sad by Roger Bainbridge) and his childhood friend/silver thief Cecil Struthers (Kevin Dowse- boisterously manipulative) was the first I saw. Quick-witted and interestingly layered, it’s a showpiece for the excellent Bainbridge, but he walks all over Dowse (who is a standout in the earlier dinner scene then fades slightly against the brightness of his co-stars). The weakest scene is probably the second one I saw, wherein Shanda Bezic’s selfishly simple ingenue Adeline engages in an awkward and ill-advised tryst with Robin Toller’s deceitful Percival Feathers. Luckily, this dull and overblown exchange happens in the kitchen where Kat Letwin’s downtrodden Mrs. Griggs is attempting to cook dinner. A master of the exasperated look and muttered insult, Letwin easily steals the

scene even before she enters into an absurd dream sequence in which she unleashes an impressive jazzy voice and hypothetical character confidence. Here she's able to improvise a little, interact with the audience, showcase her spot-on French-Canadian accent and generally prove why she's considered one of the most versatile-meets-awesome young performers in Toronto.

Finally our group moved upstairs to where playwrights/Templeton Philharmonic founders Briana Templeton and Gwynne Phillips play the heart of the matter. Phillips's restless Edith Sweetman (wife of Felix) is rummaging through the guest room and mocking Maud Silverthorne (a former famed acrobat, their guest of honour, and Felix's mistress). When Maud enters, the two have it out in spectacular fashion and it's immediately apparent why the writer/actresses did this piece. They've written themselves the best roles and the best scene in the play, and both are brilliantly suited to their parts. Phillips gets a little crazy as Edith loses it later on, but in their confrontation scene she's excellently conflicted. But it's Templeton who easily steals the whole shooting match. The My Theatre Award winner is simply exceptional (and the reason I decided to attend, despite the problematic marketing). Her Maud demands attention, but, by god, she earns it. She's showy and commanding but when Edith corners her she breaks down into a snivelling shell of her own postures. It's a truly stunning performance in a production which isn't exactly lacking in acting talent.

Sockdolager is weird and twisty and uncomfortable but it's also laugh-out-loud funny and thought-provoking and brilliantly executed. My expectations, even of Templeton and Letwin (of whom I have sky-high expectations), were far and away exceeded.

NOTE: I would also like to point out just how insightful a title "Sockdolager" is, meaning both "outstanding or exceptional" (as Maud is perceived to be) and "something that settles a matter: a decisive blow or answer" (as the action of the play certainly is for the lives of many of the characters). Along with "Zugzwang", one of the most intriguingly apt titles I've heard in quite some time.