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Fringe review: Caitlin & Eric Are Broken Up

BY GLENN SUMI JULY 10, 2017 1:54 PM





CAITLIN AND ERIC ARE BROKEN UP by Caitlin Robson, Eric Miinch and Jess Beaulieu (Squeaky Wheel). At the Tarragon Extra Space. July 11 at 1 pm, July 12 at 7:45 pm, July 13 at 2:30 pm, July 14 at 4 pm, July 15 at 11 pm. See [listing](#). Rating: NNNN

Caitlin Robson and **Eric Miinch** play an ex-couple who see each other again, and, while reminiscing about the past revisit memorable scenes from their three-year relationship.

I have no idea whether Robson and Miinch were, or are, a couple, but their fights – about everything from the local comedy and cabaret scenes to MMORPGs to one disastrous trip to NYC – have the funny-sad ring of authenticity.

Under the direction of co-writer **Jess Beaulieu**, the quick-moving show feels like a millennial When Harry Met Sally, complete with bouncy soundtrack. The actors are likable – Miinch in particular gets away with a lot by flashing his boyish grin – but unafraid to go to darker places to reveal not-so-attractive human truths.

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ERIC MIINCH CAITLIN ROBSON FRINGE 2017 REVIEW



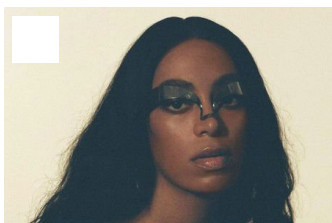
Glenn Sumi

Glenn started writing for NOW's theatre section in 1997. Currently, he edits and contributes to the film and stage sections. He sees approximately 280 live



stage shows and 150 movies a year. His mother once described his job as "Seeing The Lion King"

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CAITLIN & ERIC ARE BROKEN UP (SQUEAKY WHEEL) 2017 TORONTO FRINGE REVIEW

JULY 7, 2017 | EMILY DIX



“You can’t be that attractive *and* funny” — well, not unless you’re Caitlin Robson and Eric Miinch. Catch the comedic duo in [Caitlin & Eric Are Broken Up](#), produced by Squeaky Wheel, and playing now at the [Toronto Fringe Festival](#).

I went into [Caitlin & Eric Are Broken Up](#) with high expectations, and I was not disappointed. Fringe favourite Eric Miinch is well known in the Toronto comedy scene, and while I’ve seen Caitlin in mostly dramatic roles, I’ve seen her sense of humour offstage and knew that this pair was going to be dynamite.

The show wasn't what I expected. From the blurbs I'd read I was thinking it would be closer to sketch comedy; a combination of scenes based on stories from each other's past romances and heartbreaks.

Instead, the play was based around a fictional couple looking back on all the good and bad times they'd had together, with inspiration for each scene coming from a combination of the actor's own real-life stories. I think it was a wise choice to structure the show this way, it gave the audience the opportunity to connect better with the characters.

You may not relate to what's happening in every scene, but I don't think anyone who's ever dated someone seriously (*especially* if that someone was an actor/arts worker) could get through the show without finding at least one moment that really hits a nerve; they did an excellent job of creating funny yet realistic conflicts.

At times the show felt a little rushed — mainly because the restraints of the Fringe required the actors to move set pieces themselves while still in full lights, something that messed with the pacing of the play. Personally, I would've gone with an even more minimal set to help alleviate this. Still, a minor flaw in a very strong show.

When you're playing against Eric Miinch, it's going to be hard to hold your own. Miinch is dynamic on stage, bursting with an energy that makes him impossible not to watch. The characters were written to support this, with Miinch getting most of the punchlines while Robson generally played the "straight man".

While Robson's character was more subdued, she had moments of comedic gold — after boyfriend Eric goes to sleep rather than spending some intimate time with her, Caitlin stares out sadly at the audience, dead eyes, eating a cold Mc Double. Her expression was priceless.

The show is a comedy, but isn't without its moments of genuine heartache. I'll admit I got teary-eyed when a broken, exhausted Eric admitted, "I am a loser and I tricked you into loving me". Caitlin's tearful admission that she was going to "miss McDonalds" was equally heartbreaking, and both Miinch and Robson proved to be just as capable of making the audience cry as they are of making them laugh.

If the show goes on past the Toronto Fringe (which I very much hope it will), I would like to see some cleaner transitions and better use of tech, but as far as the actor's performance goes, it was spot on. Their opening night was packed full and received a standing ovation, one that I think was very well deserved.

Details

- [Caitlin & Eric Are Broken Up](#) plays at the Tarragon Theatre Extraspace (30 Bridgman Ave.)

- Tickets are \$12. The festival also offers [a range of money-saving passes](#) for serious Fringers.
- Tickets can be purchased [online](#), by telephone (416-966-1062), from the Fringe Club at Scadding Court, and – if any remain – from the venue’s box office starting one hour before curtain.
- Be aware that **Fringe performances always start *exactly on time***, and that latecomers are never permitted.
- **Content Warnings:** Not Recommended for Persons Under 14, Sexual Content, Mature Language
- This venue is accessible.

Performances

- Friday July 7, 6:45pm
- Sunday July 9, 5:00pm
- Tuesday July 11, 1:00pm
- Wednesday July 12, 7:45pm
- Thursday July 13, 2:30pm
- Friday July 14, 4:00pm
- Saturday July 15, 11:00pm

Photo of Caitlin Robson and Eric Miinch by Daniel Goodbaum.

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Fringe Fest 2017 was one for the record books

The biggest ever Toronto Fringe was also one of the best and most diverse

BY GLENN SUMI JULY 18, 2017 4:02 PM



*Brain Storm*

Fringe 2017 will go down in history for several reasons.


It was the biggest ever Toronto Fringe, with 160 shows, which may have had something to do with its record-breaking sales of \$519,707 (the first time it's broken the \$500K mark); it was the first Fringe at its **new home at Scadding Court**; the near-paperless ticketing system, which had a trial run at last winter's Next Stage Festival, went very smoothly; and this was the final Fringe under executive director Kelly Straughan.

It was also the year that **#FringeFemmeTO**, a hashtag to celebrate women playwrights, directors and choreographers at the Toronto Fringe, really broke through and got people discussing gender parity in theatre.

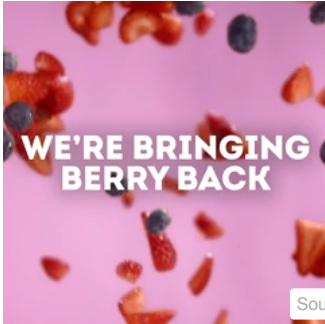
In fact, 67.5 per cent of shows, or 108 out of 160, were written, directed or choreographed by a female artist.



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That's an amazing statistic, especially since it's not reflected in the theatre scene during the other 50 weeks of the year.

It was also a great year for cultural diversity. Some of the strongest ensemble shows, like **Nasty**, **Grey**, **Hands Down** and **Lysistrata** showcased performers who reflect the population of the city, and not the same old white faces we see routinely on mainstages.

Since many Fringe shows often find another life afterwards (Kim's Convenience, The Drowsy Chaperone, Da Kink In My Hair are just the biggest examples), let's hope this diversity is the start of something permanent.

Speaking of remounts, lots of shows have remount potential.

I could see **The Clergy Project**, SoulO Theatre's show combining three members of the clergy (an Anglican priest, a rabbi and a Unitarian minister) telling their life and work stories, elsewhere.

The Howland Company and Slow Blue Lions' production of Sam Steiner's dystopic relationship two-hander, **Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons**, was solid enough – and so timely, considering the administration south of the border – to transfer somewhere else. The Theatre Centre, next year?

I hope the poppy novelty songs from Barbara Johnston and Suzy Wilde's **Maddie's Karaoke Birthday Party** find more life; they're too good to be forgotten.



And surely someone – Obsidian? Buddies? – will consider bringing back Steven Elliott Jackson's **The Seat Next To The King**, a powerful two-hander about race, queerness and politics.

Meanwhile, I'm hoping the Montreal Company La Fille Du Laitier, returns. Their **Macbeth Muet**, a wordless version of the Scottish play using the simplest of props and a whole lot of imagination, was one of the fest's hands down highlights. Perhaps they have a version of the Danish play to bring next time?

Here's NOW's annual list of the best of the fest.

OUTSTANDING NEW PLAYS (in alphabetical order):

Caitlin & Eric Are Broken Up by Caitlin Robson, Eric Miinch, Jess Beaulieu; **Delirium** by Martin Dockery; **Grey** by Chantal Forde; **Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons** by Sam Steiner; **The Life Henri** by Adam Bailey; **The Seat Next To The King** by Steven Elliott Jackson; **She Grew Funny** by Joanne O'Sullivan



Macbeth Muet

OUTSTANDING PRODUCTIONS:

"Am I Pretty Now?" A Musical Romp Through Plastic Surgery; **Bendy Sign Tavern**; **Brain Storm**; **Butt Kapinski**; **The Clergy Project**; **The Life Henri**; **Macbeth Muet**; **Magical Mystery Detour**; **The Seat Next To The**



King; **Seeking Refuge**; **Shirley Gnome: Taking It Up The Notch**; **32 Short Sketches About Bees**

OUTSTANDING DIRECTION:

Brain Storm (Taliesin McEnaney); Caitlin & Eric Are Broken Up (Jess Beaulieu); Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons (Harveen Sandhu); Macbeth Muet (Jon Lachlan Stewart); The Seat Next To The King (Tanisha Taitt); 32 Short Sketches About Bees (Paul Bates)



Lysistrata

OUTSTANDING ENSEMBLES:

Bendy Sign Tavern; Brain Storm; Grey; Hands Down; **Lipstique**; Lysistrata; Maddie's Karaoke Birthday Party; **Murder In The Cottonwoods**; Nasty; Seeking Refuge; 32 Short Sketches About Bees

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES:

Martin Dockery (Delirium); Deanna Fleysher (Butt Kapinski); Shirley Gnome (Shirley Gnome: Taking It Up The Notch); Ruth Goodwin and James Graham (Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons); Kat Haan and Ross Somerville (**Kara Seveda**); Janelle Hanna (**Bad Baby Presents: Rules Control The Fun**); Conor Ling and Kwaku Okyere (The Seat Next To The King); Rose Napoli and Jakob Ehman (**Ten Creative Ways To Dispose Of Your Remains**); Franco Nguyen (**Soaring In Liquid Skies**);



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Crimson Wave

JFL42, Toronto ON,
September 23



By **Audrey Carleton** (/writers/audrey_carleton)

Published Sep 24, 2018

9

A refreshing hour of candid local acts, Natalie Norman and Jess Beaulieu's feminist comedy show, *Crimson Wave*, stood out as one of the best shows I've seen at JFL42 this year. After bantering about their weeks and working the crowd off the top, the pair introduced a series of high energy, confident comedians who all had unique material — a testament to the creativity that follows when you set simple boundaries like "No rape jokes."

Amy Bugg and **Tamara Shevon** were the stars of the night, in my eyes, but the common thread among all four acts was that they all seemed excited to be there — a factor that's small and sometimes hard to detect, but that has the power to make or break a show.

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Maybe they were all that excited to be there, maybe the audience was just particularly receptive, or maybe Norman and Beulieu do an incredible job at priming both the room and their talent, but the small crowd at the Comedy Bar were in stitches all night.

The first act was **Emily Bilton**, an opera singer turned comedian who toes the line between self-deprecating and self-aware with every joke. Much of her humour revolved around her appearance and her queerness ("I'm a little lesbian. But am I a lesbian, or am I just a baby? Do I eat pussy or do I just crawl back into it?") But the jokes that landed the best revolved around mortifying experiences she's had. From being doored by a small elderly woman to being breastfed until age six (which she remembers vividly), Bilton has quite an interesting roster of stories to draw from on stage, and a witty retort in response to each one.

Brandon Ash-Mohammed, creator of *The Ethnic Rainbow*, a monthly comedy showcase for LGBTQ+ comedians of colour, walked on stage in a sparkly shirt reading "Queen Bitch," a family heirloom, he claimed. Ash-Mohammed's not afraid to bust a move mid-joke — in fact, many of his impressions of his Trinidadian grandmother and his re-enactments of conversations with his white father about money rely upon his dance moves. A lively and confident performer, Ash-Mohammed was a joy to watch.

A recent transplant from Calgary, Amy Bugg's deadpan sense of humour and cynical takes on the world were incredibly charming. Defending the unhealthy eating habits she picked up in being raised out west (she calls gravy "steak soup" and believes it should be properly eaten from a bowl), criticizing nutritionists for recommending that she eat kale ("A leaf that tastes like a magazine") and being "way too hard on butter," and enviously wondering out loud whether the strippers working at the club she passes on her morning commute get to sleep in, Bugg's got unique takes on the mundane, with sardonic delivery that makes her routine laugh out loud funny.

A renowned comic in the Toronto comedy scene, Tamara Shevon closed the evening with high-octane tales of getting blackout drunk and being invited to cottage weekends with her white friends. Shevon isn't afraid to break mid-story, laughing at herself and the characters in the stories she tells, and cueing to the audience that she's having a genuinely good time on stage. And this energy was infectious, leaving the room feeling good at the

(/music/article/lizzo_is_gonna_hav

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end of a stellar night of comedy.

For a show I came into with few expectations, I left *Crimson Wave* feeling revitalized by the candidness, wit, and positivity of the performers I saw.

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Saturday May 11, 2019

Emma Thompson was a playful and great host, while the Jonas Brothers indulged in nostalgia during their comeback campaign. Here's everything...

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Tough Jews is exciting and immersive theatre

Michael Ross Albert's play transports you to a T.O. speakeasy in the 1920s

BY DEBBIE FEIN-GOLDBACH APRIL 5, 2017 5:36 PM



Theresa Tova (left) and Maaor Ziv are two of the Tough Jews.

TOUGH JEWS by Michael Ross Albert (Storefront Theatre/The Spadina Avenue Gang). At Kensington Hall (56K Kensington). Runs to Apr 16.


Pwyc-\$25. thestorefronttheatre.com. See [listing](#). Rating: NNNN

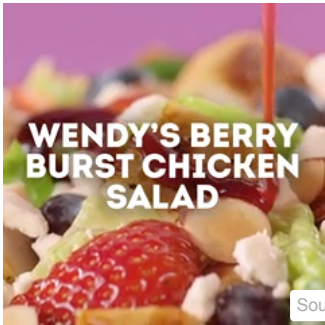
Down the alley behind Kensington Hall there's a door, and when you walk through it you're transported back in time to a 1920s speakeasy. Exciting and immersive, **Tough Jews** is really, as one of its characters might say, the cat's pyjamas.

The action – and there's much of it – unfolds in two acts set entirely in a Kensington Market basement. The house belongs to matriarch Ida (**Theresa Tova**), who fled Eastern European pogroms schlepping along her children Joe (**Luis Fernandes**), Ben (**Blue Bigwood-Mallin**) and Rose (**Maaor Ziv**). Ida had another son, Teddy (**G. Kyle Shields**), after settling in Toronto and before the demise of her husband.

Nineteen-year-old Teddy runs the family's hat shop, but that's a cover for their real business as gangsters, assisted by cousin Ziggy (**Stephen Joffe**). The play begins with a hot deal about to go down, but Ziggy's impulsive behaviour – in front of Joe's fiancée Marge (**Anne van Leeuwen**) no less – causes everything to go haywire.

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Playwright **Michael Ross Albert** has created a rich script filled with antagonism, violence, period-specific phrases and some Yiddish for added flavour. A yearning for a better life pervades each scene, with Teddy shouldering the burden of the family's hope. Albert conveys much through unexpected details, particularly in the stronger first act. For example, Ida's reluctance to allow her boys to fast on Yom Kippur stems from the poverty she endured in the old country. The storyline lags a bit in Depression-era Act two, but the resolution is still wrenching.

The play includes a multitude of strong performances. Tova's resolute matriarch controls the room with just a look, and Joffe explodes with hot-tempered swagger in each of his scenes. Every actor finds a unique way to express real humanity beneath the thuggery.

As the Storefront Arts Initiative's founder and director, **Benjamin Blais** has become masterful at placing immense stories on tiny stages. Fight scenes and fast-paced dialogue often overlap like a musical fugue, but Blais brings order and focus to the onstage cacophony.

This play is unapologetically local, a refreshing rarity on Toronto stages. Joe has to bury a body "all the way up past Eglinton," there's talk about neighbourhood streets and the Christie Pits riot overshadows the second act.

Equal parts funny and violent, the production resists nostalgia and whimsy. To its credit, *Tough Jews* never goes soft.

Tags

MICHAEL ALBERT ROSS LUIS FERNANDES BENJAMIN BLAIS
BLUE BIGWOOD-MALLIN STEPHEN JOFFE MAAOR ZIV
G. KYLE SHIELDS THERESA TOVA ANNE VAN LEEUWEN
STOREFRONT THEATRE

by Debbie Fein-Goldbach

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REVIEW: TOUGH JEWS (THE STOREFRONT THEATRE)

APRIL 4, 2017 | ALLISON GERSON



Though a bit gimmicky, *Tough Jews* delivers a stark, gritty look at Toronto's history

Tough Jews—a play by Michael Ross Albert presented by [The Storefront Theatre](#)—is an intriguing twist on both the typical story of early 20th century Jewish immigrants and the classic Prohibition-era gangster tale.

It's a funny and tragic adventure which explores hard questions of morality, intergenerational trauma, and the lengths to which people will go to protect their family. *Tough Jews* is set in Kensington Market in the late 1920's and early 1930's, a time when violence against Jews and other immigrants was common in Toronto. It features the Wolfman family, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, who are struggling to get ahead in a new, sometimes hostile environment.

The late father of the family ran a shoe store. His sons have turned to more lucrative but less legal pursuits and are running a speakeasy in the basement. The play starts with a bang—literally—as shots are fired, and the cousin of an American gangster is killed. With the murder, the family of small time criminals is thrown even farther into the world of liquor running, drugs, and organized crime.

While the underworld is the setting for *Tough Jews*, the real drama is in the relationships between the Wolfman children and their mother, Ida. It's an ensemble piece with each family member playing a key role in the story, and I thought all the performances were very strong.

Luis Fernandes was excellent as Joe, the oldest brother who left school at ten to and now uses his muscle to help support the family. He just wants to settle down with his blonde, non-Jewish wife in Florida, but can't break away from his circumstances.

G. Kyle Shields (Teddy) showed great range, evolving from the sheltered baby brother who wants to honor his father's memory to a hardened and bitter realist.

Theresa Tova, however, gave the standout performance as Ida, the matriarch. I was anticipating a stereotype. But from her first lines, you realize that, despite the accent, the guilt, and the "oy veys mir," this is not your typical Jewish mother. Her main concern when she sees a dead body in her basement is where she is now going to get her clothes mended—since her seamstress is the dead man's mother. She has suffered and lost too much during the pogroms in Russia to care about religion or law. She only cares about protecting her family.

The show is actually performed in a basement in Kensington Market made to look like a 1920's bar, and which you enter through a back door in the alley. Drinks are available for purchase before the show and during intermission. The space is small which makes for an up-close, intimate and multi-sensory experience. You smell the cigarette smoke, hear the loud yelling (there's a lot of yelling) and see the sweat, tears, and blood. There's a lot of blood too.

In addition to the authentic décor, the dialogue is full of period slang. Women are dolls, prison is the big house, and guns are bean-shooters. Maybe that's how people really talked in the 1920's, but to me it seemed too much and a little gimmicky. The story and the action felt real enough not to need it.

Tough Jews portrays a real part of Toronto's history that is often forgotten. Though we are now seen as a tolerant and multicultural city that welcomes immigrants and refugees, that hasn't always been the case. And at a time when anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant incidents are on the rise in Toronto, I think the show couldn't be more relevant.

Details:

- [Tough Jews](#) is playing at Kensington Hall (56 Kensington Avenue) until April 16, 2017
- Performances are Wednesday – Saturday at 8pm and Sundays at 2pm
- There is a matinee performance on Saturday April 8 at 2pm which will be preceded by a historical walking tour of Kensington Market at noon.
- Tickets are \$25 and \$20 for students/seniors/arts workers and can be purchased [online](#) or at the door.
- Kensington Hall is not wheelchair accessible and the performance space is down a steep flight of stairs.

Photo of Blue Bigwood-Mallin, G. Kyle Shields, and Luis Fernandes by John Gundy



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Fringe review: Recall

BY DAVID SILVERBERG JULY 8, 2017 5:20 PM



RECALL by Eliza Clark (Seven Siblings Theatre). At the Theatre Centre. July 8 at 9:15 pm, July 10 at 3 pm, July 12 at noon, July 13 at 7:30 pm, July 14 at 11 pm, July 16 at 6:15 pm. See [listing](#). Rating: NNNN

Eliza Clark's dystopian play careens from one tense scene to the next, as the actors excellently convey the suspense coursing through this psychological thriller.

In an attempt to stop crimes before they happen, the government monitors and often imprisons suspected murderous kids. In their crosshairs is Lucy (**Kyla Young**) who, with her mother Justine (**Genevieve Adam**), move from town to town, seeking to dodge the authorities. When they find haven in a safe house manned by David (**Luis Fernandes**), Lucy freaks out and relationships fall apart.

What works so well is Clark's crackling script, especially when Lucy and Justine battle over whether to trust David. Young shines as a child afraid to get too close to anyone, and Adam seamlessly inhabits a woman both lonely and fearless.

Flashes of humour, often delivered deftly by Lucy's friend Quinn (**Warren Kang**), provide much-needed light in Clark's bleak sci-fi world.

It's rare to find a top-notch sci-fi show at the Fringe that doesn't also flirt with satire. All the more reason to rush out and see Recall.

Tags

REVIEW FRINGE 2017 FRINGE 2017 REVIEW KYLA YOUNG
ELIZA CLARK NNNN 2017

RECALL (SEVEN SIBLINGS THEATRE) 2017 TORONTO FRINGE REVIEW

JULY 7, 2017 | MIKE ANDERSON



In *Recall* (playing at the [Toronto Fringe Festival](#)), the government has developed a series of tests which it believes can identify “pre-violent” people. This is [well-trodden sci-fi territory](#), as old as [Asimov](#).

Recall pushes the technology to the periphery, focusing instead on a cluster of characters: a subject, an accessory, an investigator, a bystander, and a wildcard. These characters are thrown together in various configurations, and as information flows between them, the story sneaks up behind us.

At least, that’s how I got into it: Madryn McCabe’s researcher somehow reminded me of a twisted Miss Frizzle, all that curiosity and verve and charisma turned to more nefarious ends; Kyla Young anchors the production as the girl everybody’s talking about, despite her attempts to sweep into the shadows; and Genevieve Adam steals just about every scene as a sweet-talking spitfire of a mother.

As for the show itself, I really admired their decision to take their concept a notch further than most treatments. Many pieces which explore these themes are content to glibly proclaim that conviction without crime is unethical, but [Recall](#) peels off in two directions. On the one hand, they show us how small indiscretions, particularly among young people, get magnified and twisted by this kind of surveillance — but they also remind us that, while “pre-violent” may sound like nonsense, if the system works as designed, it saves lives and prevents truly gory and horrific crimes. In the universe [Recall](#) paints, we aren’t weighting hypotheticals, we’re dealing with real blood on the real walls, and this makes it much more difficult to take refuge in detached moralizing.

There are places where the production wobbles, and a few concepts and characters who take a few minutes to really stick. There are plot threads I’d have liked to see pulled harder, and a few points which feel like [fridge logic](#) once you’re out of the theatre.

But we also forget how hard it is to do sci-fi and thrillers at Fringe: this is a fusion of two of the most challenging genres to pull off, and it had the audience on the edge of their seats right until the curtain call.

Details

- [Recall](#) plays at The Theatre Centre’s Franco Boni Theatre. ([1115 Queen St. W.](#))
- Tickets are \$12. The festival also offers [a range of money-saving passes](#) for serious Fringers.
- Tickets can be purchased [online](#), by telephone (416-966-1062), from the Fringe Club at Scadding Court, and — if any remain — from the venue’s box office starting one hour before curtain.
- Be aware that **Fringe performances always start *exactly on time***, and that latecomers are never admitted.
- **Content Warnings:** Gunshots, Realistic Violence or Gore, Mature Language.
- This venue is accessible.

Performances

- Friday July 7th, 01:45 pm
- Saturday July 8th, 09:15 pm
- Monday July 10th, 03:00 pm
- Wednesday July 12th, 12:00 pm
- Thursday July 13th, 07:30 pm
- Friday July 14th, 11:00 pm
- Sunday July 16th, 06:15 pm

Photograph of Warren Kang & Kyla Young by Will King

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10 Fringe artists to watch

With a whopping 160 Fringe shows, it's harder than ever to decide what to see once the fest starts Wednesday (July 5). These folks' shows should be safe bets.

BY JORDAN BIMM, GLENN SUMI JUNE 28, 2017 4:14 PM



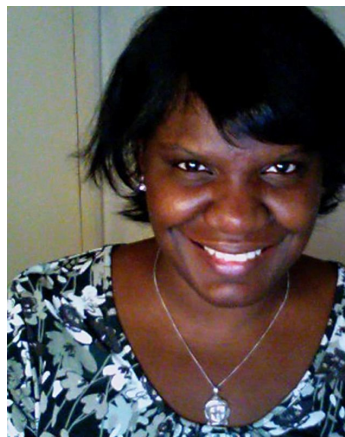
The Templeton Philharmonic

Decorated surrealist sketch duo **Briana Templeton** and **Gwynne Phillips** (aka the Templeton Philharmonic) are back, and it's **About Time!** Their new show promises a historical journey “through the ages.” The exact temporal stops remain secret, but the pair have previously set their antics in the 1920s and 1970s and seem primed for more ancient and far-flung settings. They're celebrated for their deadpan humour, extravagant set-ups and attention to detail, as well as for CBC Radio's recent *The Irrelevant Show* and TV's *Womanish*, so do your future self a favour and book tickets... in time.

From July 7 at the Tarragon Mainspace

Tanisha Taitt

After scooping up this year's Best New Play award, **Steven Elliott Jackson** wisely chose multi-talented director/actor/writer/singer Taitt to direct his intense and emotional political thriller, **The Seat Next To The King**. Based on a real-life scandal that rocked Lyndon Johnson's 1964 presidential campaign (LBJ's confidant and top aid Walter Jenkins was caught having sex with a man in a public washroom blocks from the White House, resulting in an FBI



ABOUT TIME (THE TEMPLETON PHILHARMONIC) 2017 TORONTO FRINGE REVIEW

JULY 8, 2017 | HOLLY WYDER



Gwynne Phillips and Briana Templeton (AKA. [The Templeton Philharmonic](#)) are no strangers to the [Toronto Fringe](#) scene, opening with a sold out show, all—as the title suggests—[About Time](#).

The audience begins the journey being led by a highly intellectual yet sarcastic British narrator, who introduces the concept of the show. Within 60 minutes, you get to see a ‘chronological ride through history with stops in different time periods.’

I was personally delighted to witness the duo for the very first time, having always heard great things about them, but never getting the opportunity to actually see their shows in the past. The great show that I was promised was delivered. And at the end of a five-show day, I was completely in love with all the characters and the variety of scenes they played out in a single hour.

I really loved the small cameo appearances of Thom Stoneman, who got to throw in a few comedic beats and quips for those scenes that needed an extra person. He got a chance to win the audience over with a brief breather interaction scene, breaking the forth wall to build in a collective time capsule, collected before the show started.

But of course, the stars of the show shone brightly. They even adjusted to a wonky sound cue by improvising 'the band sometimes...' in character while leading into the next scene. Templeton and Phillips are truly endearing performers, and they never ceased to surprise me with each new character.

My two favourite scenes included one about two English women having tea and consistently throwing in sexual innuendos, only to reveal how truly horny and undersexed they were in their marriage. My second favourite was a parody of *The Sound of Music* where Maria basically cracks under insanity. I'm still chuckling just thinking about it.

There was something hilarious in every sketch. If it wasn't in the writing, it was in the commitment the actors brought to each scene. I ended up sitting in between two women who weren't laughing much, and I wasn't sure if it wasn't their personal cup of tea, but it surprised me because I couldn't find anything about the show I didn't enjoy.

The special light of a clock they had for the transitions really brought the whole piece together, as well as the aforementioned narrator who moved us into each sketch and kept the story going. It's not always the easiest thing with a sketch show, making all the scenes flow together seamlessly, but it really showed off just how talented and intelligent the writing was.

I would make sure to get your tickets to this comedic wonderment soon. Especially if you've seen a [Templeton Philharmonic](#) show in previous years. You will not be disappointed.

Details

- [About Time](#) plays at the Tarragon Mainspace. (30 Bridgman Ave.)
- Tickets are \$12. The festival also offers [a range of money-saving passes](#) for serious Fringers.
- Tickets can be purchased [online](#), by telephone (416-966-1062), from the Fringe Club at Scadding Court, and — if any remain — from the venue's box office starting one hour before curtain.
- Be aware that **Fringe performances always start *exactly on time***, and that latecomers are never admitted.

- **Content Warnings:** Realistic Violence or Gore, Sexual Content, Fog, Mist or Haze Effects, Mature Language.
- This venue is barrier-free. The designated accessible seating is in the middle of the auditorium.

Performances

- Friday July 7th, 10:30 pm
- Sunday July 9th, 06:30 pm
- Tuesday July 11th, 03:00 pm
- Wednesday July 12th, 05:15 pm
- Thursday July 13th, 08:00 pm
- Saturday July 15th, 05:45 pm
- Sunday July 16th, 12:00 pm

Photo of Gwynne Phillips (left), Briana Templeton (right). Photo by Shannon Laliberte.

REVIEW: SOCKDOLAGER (THE TEMPLETON PHILHARMONIC)

JUNE 22, 2012 | TASHA DILORETO



Theatre in Toronto gets interactive with this darkly comedic production from the Templeton Philharmonic.

If you're looking for a laugh-filled evening and interactive theatre experience with the added luxury of air conditioning, get yourself to [Sockdolager](#) before it's too late! Hilariously funny with a touch of twisted macabre, this performance offers each audience something a little different every time.

Boasting a different ending at every performance, audience members are invited to bring their ticket back and see the performance as many

times as they'd like (space permitting!).

Created by the [Templeton Philharmonic](#) (the spectacular duo of [Gwynne Phillips](#) and Briana Templeton), this dark comedy is performed at the historic [Campbell House](#), a beautiful historic home that seems out of place in downtown Toronto.

Taking place in "Toronto the Good," the scene is set at a party hosted by society girl and Hollywood hopeful Adeline Sweetman, and her hilariously inartistic artist brother, Felix.

Other guests include a dry-witted valet, a Ponzi-scheme-entangled business man, a sleep-deprived musician, a wannabe film producer, the sensual trapeze artist *Bombyx Mori*, a disgruntled cook, and Edith, the nosebleed-prone wife of Felix.

Every member of the cast did an absolutely fantastic job in this performance, although my favourite may have been the valet Roland, played by Miguel Rivas. I may or may not have been yelled at by him while attempting to follow what turned out to be his sneaky ploy to see how closely people were paying attention to his instructions.

The two creators also really proved their talent with Philips doing a great job of portraying the neurotic, stick-in-the-mud Edith, while Templeton stood out for her role as the sultry *Bombyx Mori*.

This duo actually won the [Best Comedy Duo Award](#) at the [LA Comedy Festival](#), an impressive feat that really showed how great their chemistry and comedic timing has proven to be.

Without giving too much away, the way the performance works is that the audience begins as one group, watching the actors have drinks in the dining room. Then the audience separates into three different groups.

Each group follows their actor/guide, and is privy to a scene involving two of the actors in mini-sub plots that contribute to the overall story. Each group of three rotates to see each scene and everyone comes together again in the ballroom where things wrap up in a crazy way.

I would highly recommend [Sockdolager](#) to anyone looking for a fun night out. At less than an hour and a half, it's the perfect length to amuse and entertain without ever feeling overdrawn and excessively long, as I find a lot of theatre tends to be. And did I mention there is air conditioning?

Details:

- [Sockdolager](#) is playing at the [Campbell House Museum](#) (160 Queen St. W) until June 29
- The show runs from June 14 to June 29 with shows at 7pm and 9pm on June 19-20, 22-24 and 26-29
- Ticket prices are \$17 in advance and \$20 at the door
- Tickets are available at **416.597.0227**



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Review: Unbridled & Unstable

Templeton Philharmonic's delightfully bizarre characters could use sharper writing

BY GLENN SUMI JANUARY 12, 2015 12:28 PM





UNBRIDLED & UNSTABLE by Gwynne Phillips and Briana Templeton (Templeton Philharmonic). At Factory Studio (125 Bathurst). Jan 12 at 9:15 pm, Jan 14 at 6:45 pm, Jan 15 at 7:15 pm, Jan 17 at 9 pm, Jan 18 at 6 pm. \$15. 416-966-1062, fringetoronto.com. Rating: NNN

Despite an equestrian theme in the title, the publicity materials and the opening bit, there's really not much of a through-line in the Templeton Philharmonic's latest show. But that doesn't matter. The pair (Gwynne Phillips and Briana Templeton) are delightfully vivid, likeable performers who specialize in bizarre, off-kilter characters and premises.

Highlights include an amusing bit about an old-time radio show, with Templeton playing narrator and Phillips cuing some intentionally obvious Foley sounds. Templeton also shines as an eccentric novelist giving a reading. The writing and focus in this sketch are razor sharp.

As with many troupes, the TP have problems ending their sketches. An audience participation bit in the middle goes nowhere and is awkwardly staged. And the show closer, a musical take on the single life sung to Downtown, has a strong point of view but doesn't fit with anything that's come before.





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SummerWorks review: An Evening In July

BY JORDAN BIMM AUGUST 7, 2015 2:11 PM



AN EVENING IN JULY

St. George the Martyr Anglican Church (197 John)

Rating: NNN

Aug 7 at 8 pm, Aug 8 at 4 and 7 pm, Aug 9 at 8 pm, Aug 12-14 at 8 pm, Aug 15 at 4 and 7 pm, Aug 16 at 8 pm. 1-888-328-8384, summerworks.ca.

Revived and expanded from last year's Fringe Festival, this site-specific immersive show transforms the courtyard and adjoining rooms of St. George The Martyr into an opulent east coast manor in decline.

Decked out in 70s chic, **Gwynne Phillips** and **Briana Templeton** (a.k.a. The Templeton Philharmonic) play a set of bored blue-blooded sisters planning a birthday party. The duo put a high-brow gloss on sketch comedy, most of the show's humour stemming from deadpanned absurdist jokes, cleverly written puns or examples of their characters' egregious vanity and delusion.

These moments – and a few audience participation gags – are funny, but the frame and through-line need to be stronger for maximum impact. The performance ends up being more intriguing than hilarious or moving.

That said, the duo are clearly onto something new and unique and have lots of potential.