

Edinburgh Fringe 2014

The Chronic Single's Handbook

Genre:

FringeReview

RECOMMENDED SHOW

Venue: The Space at Surgeons' Hall

Low Down

A chronically single guy takes a trip around the world looking for the woman of his dreams. Randy Ross writes and performs this solo show.

Review

This is a very literary-style solo theatre show. Based on the writings of Randy Ross, we have an autobiographic three-quarters of an hour that tells a story by delivering a set of vignettes from his four month, post-redundancy trip around the world, to the aftermath of that trip.

The style is direct, with some simply done elements of theatre. The show is often more powerful for that less-is-more approach, and it also allows the power of the writing to come through without the distortion of theatre tricks. That said, the one or two set pieces in there were funny and effective so there is clearly scope here to decide on whether this is primarily a literary reading, or a more full on solo theatre show. Where it currently sits is somewhere between the two - engaging, interesting, sometimes emotionally charged, and often sharply funny.

Ross holds the stage well, with a gentle charisma, and an honesty that makes darker elements of the tale raw and effective. The story is fairly linear, interspersed with a few proverbs. Ross tells a story that is well worth hearing, offers no cheesy messages, but instead presents a journey of discovery that he is still on. Many in the audiences connected to that journey and this will certainly make a very marketable book!

Scenes are shared in direct storytelling style and Ross makes these memories entirely believable. We are back there with him, sharing those moments, savouring the ironic reflections, enjoying some of life's tougher punchlines. He plays women with comedic ease, never overplaying and this "measure" is a huge strength of the performance. This happens where strong writing meets bare, effective solo performance. Too many solo shows at the fringe overdo their sets, costumes and sound backdrops. Here we rely almost totally on the narrative, in the more than safe hands of an able raconteur - our host, our narrator, and someone who has something of importance to impart. Randy Ross is a chronic single, and is that condition curable?

I enjoyed this show for its courage to remain simple. I liked it less when it felt more like recital. I liked it most when the content became theatrically alive without losing its bare simplicity.

Overall, a quality solo show. Recommended.

Reviewed by Paul Levy 16th August 2014

Website :

<http://www.chronicsingle.com/>