



If Doctor Who is just for children, I'm a chicken nugget
Andrew Billen

Edinburgh: the 13 shows you need to book now



Dominic Maxwell
Updated 1 minute ago

We raise the curtain on this year's Edinburgh Fringe and Festival as Times critics pick a baker's dozen of shows that you absolutely cannot miss when you head over the Border

It's one of those paradoxes of life. The Edinburgh Fringe and its elder sibling, the Edinburgh International Festival, are the highlights of the summer. They're there to introduce us to the very best of what's new from emerging and established talent in theatre, comedy, dance, opera and more besides. You go to Edinburgh to throw yourself into the opportunities for seeing as much as possible. It's all about being flexible, spontaneous, picking up the buzz about what's hot and what's not, and taking advantage of never being more than a 20-minute walk from another amazing experience.

It also doesn't hurt to book ahead. No, you mustn't micro-manage every minute of your day. That way you start to resent the physical-theatre company that your diary tells you you must see at 4.30pm; to devoutly wish that the award-winning comedian's sold-out show could magically transform into a pint of lager with your friends. But here's our tip: sort out a couple of definites, two shows you really, really want to see, then experiment, play safe or slack off around them as you see fit.

1 of 2
Laura Solon Wolf
Marloh
Post a comment
★ Recommend (0)
Print

More from Arts

Muse - Devon's unlikely rock stars

How three geeky lads from Devon, led by a 32-year-old former painter and decorator, took on the pop world - and won

The secret life of Kylie Minogue

The soap star turned pop icon shares her life discoveries, from London life to why technology is not the future

Authors line up for first Walter Scott prize

Updated 1 minute ago
Some academics disdain the historical novel but a prestigious literary prize shows that the genre is growing in popularity

The Reverend Al Green on...

Updated 1 minute ago
The soul smoothie and ordained pastor talks soul legends, basketball and driving around Memphis in a classic Rolls-Royce

Last year there were 2,100 shows; this year, it's up to almost 2,500 at the Fringe alone. It would be deluded of us to consider that our 13 must-sees — in no particular order — are anything more than the beginning of the story. But they're shows that we are impatient to see, shows that we're happy to organise our days around. So roll on, August.

Chosen by Debra Craine, Neil Fisher, Dominic Maxwell and Libby Purves

1. I, Elizabeth

Guy Masterson, fresh from winning awards with his evocative production of *Morecambe*, moves into royal territory directing Rebecca Vaughan as the woman beneath Gloriana's crown.

Assembly@ George Street (assemblyfestival.com 0131-623 3030)
Aug 5-29

2. Death of a Theatre Critic

Can't resist this. Swedish Theatre offers a vengeful actor, a critic, a talk-show host and a "terrifying descent into butchery and madness". Ah yes, just the way one feels after a couple of weeks on the Fringe, in any role.

Pleasance Courtyard (pleasance.co.uk 0131-556 6550) Aug 4-29

3. Simon Callow in Shakespeare, the Man from Stratford

Callow, who holds a stage alone better than anybody and brought Dickens electrifyingly to life, takes on Shakespeare in a play written by the scholar Jonathan Bate. Of all our actors, this bluffly sensitive spirit is the most likely to step convincingly into the shoes of the elusive genius. Honed on a long national tour, it promises well.

Assembly@ Assembly Hall (assemblyfestival.com 0131-623 3030)
Aug 5-29

4. Caledonia

A world premiere from the National Theatre of Scotland, all too apposite as the Iceland-Ireland-Scotland "arc of prosperity" crumbles into penury. Alistair Beaton, master of sarcasm, sharpens his nib to revel in a story of greed, euphoria and delusion: a small, poor country thinking it is big and rich.

Kings Theatre (eif.co.uk/caledonia 0131-473 2000) Aug 21-26

5. Emma Thompson Presents: Fair Trade

A piece that greatly impressed Emma Thompson as one of the best scripts she's seen, apparently. The show lifts the lid on sex trafficking in a tough tale told through music, comedy, drama and physical theatre Pleasance Dome (pleasance.co.uk 0131-556 6550)
Aug 4-29

6. Agua

The German choreographer Pina Bausch may have died last year, but her company lives on. And in memory of her extraordinary

Sponsored
Editorial



Cool Camping
Style and freedom



Win a fabulous holiday and see what a hardened camper makes of 'glamping'

career, Tanztheater Wuppertal brings her *Agua* to the Festival. It's inspired by the musical and cultural flavours of Brazil and stands among the happiest works that Bausch ever made. From beach to rainforest, the choreography sends her dancers on a joyous journey that embraces kissing competitions and fairy lights.

Edinburgh Playhouse (eif.co.uk 0131-473 2000) Aug 27-29

7. Lemi Ponifasio

How often do we get to see Samoan choreographers strut their stuff? This year the Edinburgh Festival showcases Lemi Ponifasio, whose company *Mau* is named after the Samoan independence movement. Ponifasio's troupe presents two programmes that touch on his love of ceremony and mythology while highlighting his political and environmental concerns, especially for the small islands of the Pacific.

Edinburgh Playhouse (eif.co.uk 0131-473 2000) Aug 14-18

8. Bliss

Contemporary opera gets a bad press, but not many composers choose source material as fertile as Peter Carey's fabulous first novel. *Bliss* is the Faustian story of Harry Joy, a preening advertising executive who suffers a heart attack and tries to get his soul back from Hell. Brett Dean's operatic adaptation, which receives its European premiere at the Festival, got rave reviews in Sydney this year. It was the Australian composer's powerful score that impressed the most, closely followed by Amanda Holden's witty libretto. With the baritone Peter Coleman-Wright as the cocky adman, and Neil Armfield's slick production summoning up the excesses of the Eighties, this is the wizard show from Oz that you cannot miss.

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh (eif.co.uk/bliss 0131-473 2000) Sept 2, 4

9. Hans Teeuwen

Dutch absurdism, anyone? It's three years since Teeuwen first electrified Edinburgh audiences with his sheer intimidating commitment to silliness, when he stole the show as part of the Amsterdam Comedy Collective. Since then he's made himself one of the most unusual, unmissable acts to play in Britain, having abandoned his hugely successful comedy career in the Netherlands. Back home, he now concentrates on his sideline as a jazz singer instead. (He's a pretty handy pianist, too.) Yeah, he's a one-off. He may crack you up, he may leave you cold, but you'll have to admit that he's not like anything else you've seen.

Pleasance Courtyard (pleasance.co.uk 0131-556 6550) Aug 4-29

10. Laura Solon

Five years ago Solon came from nowhere to be the last-ever winner of the Perrier Award. Her belated follow-up last year, *Rabbit Faced Story Soup*, showed that this was no fluke: Solon is simply one of the most accurate and original character comics of the past decade. Few writers can mint such crafty one-liners; few performers can sell them so well, with so little spurious flash. And if the story itself was largely just an excuse to let her cast of neurotic grotesques do their thing, if the theatricality could be taken even farther, well hey, that's

why we're looking forward so keenly to her third one-woman show.

Pleasance Courtyard (pleasance.co.uk 0131-556 6550) Aug 4-29

11. Jeremy Lion Goes Green

"Fun for all the family," says the poster for this latest show from the comedian Justin Edwards, "although entirely unsuitable for children." Ah, Jeremy Lion, it's good to have you back. Since his last Fringe show as the booze-sodden children's entertainer, Edwards, pictured below, has mounted a solo comedy-musical show, appeared as the sweaty junior minister Ben Swain in *The Thick of It*, and married his fellow comedian Lucy Porter. Now, he's revived his greatest creation for another gnarly family show gone very, very wrong.

Pleasance Dome (pleasance.co.uk 0131-556 6550) Aug 4-29

12. Kevin Eldon

He's been one of comedy's great supporting players for two decades without becoming a famous name, but Kevin Eldon is too good to be known by comedy connoisseurs alone. You may know him from *Big Train* or *Hyperdrive*, but this is his first time out as a solo act at Edinburgh: Kevin Eldon is *Titting About*. If the title and the 2.30pm slot suggest some, um, downplaying of expectations, sorry, that doesn't stop this from being one of the most keenly awaited of debuts of the year.

The Stand (thestand.co.uk 0131-558 7272) Aug 5-30

13. Celebrity Autobiography

Over here, we've had Robin Ince's *Book Club* laying into the worst of modern writing. This import from New York, where it's been running Off-Broadway for three years, is even more focused. With a cast of comics including George Wendt (Norm from *Cheers*) and Michael Urie (from *Ugly Betty*), the show does exactly what it says on the tin. They read the most banal, the most vainglorious, the most unlikely passages from the best (best?) of celebrity autobiographies. It has cult hit written all over it. Expect guests bringing their own favourites: recent New York performers included Matthew Broderick and Brooke Shields.

Udderbelly's Pasture (underbelly.co.uk 08445 458252) Aug 5-29

Show less

Post a comment | Recommend (0) | Print

Most read

1	Ronnie Lee Gardner executed in two volleys of shots
2	BP boss sits on his hands as anger explodes
3	Axe falls early on £11.5bn of spending

How to give your home an austerity revamp



Suzi Godson
Mary McCartney married in secret. Was that wrong?

4

World Cup live: England hopes hang by a thread

5

President Sarkozy: Britain helped save our honour

If the recession blues are getting you down, a new colour scheme or even a garden shed can help to lift your spirits

