

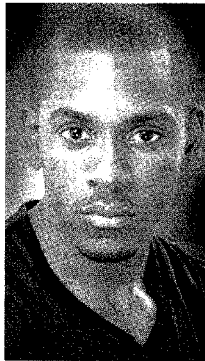
STUDENT SHOWCASES

Manchester School of Theatre, Manchester Metropolitan University BA (Hons) Acting Showcase

Soho Theatre, London
March 25

Director: David Shirley

Cast: Zora Bishop, George Brookbanks, Rachel Caffrey, Max Calandrew, Darrell Lee Davy, Oliver Devoti, Rebecca Gleeson, Leanne Golightly, Grace Gray, Blaire Harthern, Kayleigh Hobson, Katrina Innes, Luke Jerdy, Elliott Knight, Kevin Lennox, Rebecca Letford, Louisa Marie Lorey, Sam Lupton, Tyron Maynard, Natasha McClure, Cliff Myatt, Ian Pink, Susie Potter, Alica Rose, Hugh Saffrey
Running time: 1hr



Tyron Maynard

while Zora Bishop has a stunning face and a lovely, soothing vocal tone, particularly displayed in her monologue from *Away We Go*.

Elliott Knight is cute and slick in both his scene from the Mexican and a monologue from *Cock*. Sam Lupton has a compelling vulnerability as Jesse from *Lizards*. He convinces as cancer survivor Tony in a scene from *Kiss Me Like You Mean It*, trying to impress a strong Blaire Harthern as Ruth. Rachel Caffrey performs well as Maggie from *Teeth 'n' Smiles*, making use of the full stage and showing a good sense of physicality and sensuality.

Susie Potter is one of the most promising female graduates from this showcase. Her monologue from *Kitchen cum Lounge* draws the audience in right from the start and results in some roaring laughter as she proves a true expert at timing and pausing. She is equally strong in her scene from *Pulling*, where her diverse facial expressions speak a thousand words.

Her partner in these scenes Rebecca Gleeson also shows first-rate potential. A graceful and beautiful girl, she comes across as endearing, with a lovely openness in both her scene with Potter and her monologue from *Autobahn*. Both girls are strong contenders with unique looks, as well as very professional presentations of their skill sets.

Natasha McClure successfully inhabits the required American accent and demeanour for her monologue from *Orpheus Descending*. Meanwhile, Louisa Marie Lorey and George Brookbanks manage to put their own stamp on a scene from television favourite *Gavin and Stacey*. Bukhari has some of the best diction and physicality of the group.

Kevin Lennox performs a very versatile selection of characters, including Lord



Rebecca Gleeson

Reginald Fitzmabry from Shaw's *The Music Cure*. It is refreshing to see a classic piece among the mix of largely modern selections, and Lennox does it full justice. He is equally delightful as Michael, the insincere ex in *Immaculate*, arguably the most competent scene in the showcase.

His partner Kayleigh Hobson is also impressive as Mia and certainly knows how to execute a good line, never losing her great smile and wonderfully bubbly presence. Alica Rose and Rebecca Letford create a strong bond in their scene from *Whale Music*, while Darrell Lee Davy and Grace Gray believably tackle the drama and tension in a scene from *A Raisin in the Sun*, an old standard. Tyron Maynard is another male stand-out of the group, with an extremely castable look, powerful command of the stage in both his scene and monologue, and the ability to express anger without alienating an audience.

All in all, these students skilfully create an entertaining afternoon. Though a more diverse selection of periods and material, as well as a stronger emphasis on individualistic styles of dress for each student and their characters, would not have gone amiss.

Jennifer Reischel

Expert choice

Jane Estall, DJB Management
• Rebecca Gleeson
• Tyron Maynard

Arts Educational School Three-year Acting for Film and Television Showcase

Criterion, London
March 31

Director: Rupert Frazer

Cast: Adam Mercer, Steven Roberts, Chloe Rose, Rebecca Farrell, Eleri Morgan, George Brookbanks, Daisy May, Boris Mitkov, Mitchell Hunt, Shvorne Marks, Oliver Towse, Jennifer Grogan, Luke Storey, Joe Forte, Teri Ann Bobb-Baxter, Tom Senior, Rosie Orchinson, Daisy Ward, Mimi Davenport, Thomas O'Connell, Adam Youssefheygi, Matt Plumb, Max Wilson, Freddie Rogers
Running time: 1hr 5mins

There is no messing around with the Arts Ed showcases, and this year is no exception as director Rupert Frazer has woven together a tightly-knit event with a wonderful mix of comedy and drama.

The *Lying Kind* introduces us to Adam Mercer and Steven Roberts in what can only be described as a remarkable double act. Whilst Anthony Neilson's scene is now rather

familiar at student showcases, these performers really pulled off an immediate bond with the audience. Roberts' reedy camp is a little unsettling at first but, countered by Mercer's stern baritone, the two set a standard for comic timing counterpointing the laughs well against the backdrop of an all too real drama.

Certainly one of the highlights of the afternoon is supplied by Eleri Morgan and George Brookbanks performing a scene from Gary Owen's *Blackthorn*. While the West Country accents and talk of Young Farmers' discos may raise a smile, and a loaded shot-gun may raise tension, there is some marvellously understated acting taking place on stage here. Both actors negotiate the emotional territory of the scene particularly well, but it is Brookbanks who really stands out, with an innate ability to convey so much behind the dialogue.

There is something a little unsettling about the choice of a scene from *Punk Rock* by Simon Stephens. With all the actors working in duologues, here is Oliver Towse ostensibly giving a monologue with Mercer on stage again doing some cracking observational acting. While not a regular piece yet in showcases, it does allow for some smart, emotional fireworks, which Towse showcases extremely well.

Scarborough is another piece that develops nicely to showcase graduate talents. Luke Storey is particularly good as the cocksure lad, out for a dirty weekend with his girlfriend Lauren, played by Jennifer Grogan. There is plenty of mileage here for some good comedy but there is also an edge that doesn't reveal itself until the end of the scene. Grogan is working at a different tempo for good reason and the whole thing turns on a penny when it



George Brookbanks

is revealed that Lauren is in fact committing sexual assault with a minor. Gripping drama for a Friday afternoon in Piccadilly.

It is always good to see extremely contemporary work in graduate showcases and Laura Wade's *Posh* offers some wonderful moments on stage. Teri Ann Bobb-Baxter evidently delights in the authority and dexterity allowed by the character of Charlie the escort. There are two worlds colliding in this scene, giving us both aching realism and ridiculous comedy. Joe Forte is practically perfect in his innocence as Harry, the dinner-jacketed moron who mindlessly sets the battle of the classes and sexes back two thousand years.

Tom Senior and Rosie Orchinson are a couple of actors who have a natural appeal and presence on stage. Orchinson's is a particularly easy performance, highlighting a gentle understanding both of the text and the subtext of Roy Williams' *Days of Significance*. Senior, as the squaddie about to set off to war, touches beautifully on the doubt behind the bravado, and together the two actors acquit themselves admirably.

In contrast, Edward Gant's *Amazing Feats of Loneliness* by Anthony Nielson is a very difficult scene to judge. While there is an element of melodrama about the piece, its emphasis is comedy, and I venture to suggest this is what attracted Daisy Ward and Boris Mitkov. Both actors play out the piece well but it doesn't really stretch them as it perhaps should. In a situation like this we want to witness the actors' range as much as their ability to make us laugh.

Contemporary duologues are rife in Patrick Marber's canon of work, and Don Juan in Soho is no exception, offering a chance for Mimi Davenport and Thomas O'Connell to

shine. There is something particularly human about their portrayal of Lottie and Pete, and both actors thrive in a straightforward, affectionate scene that is free of gimmicks and token theatrics.

If there is a theme to this showcase, it is about how short, single pieces can twist and turn to reveal the full value of an actor's worth. This was demonstrated for much of the afternoon and brought to a point with *The Pillowman* by Martin McDonagh. Adam Youssefheygi's Michal appears an aimless innocent with a comic touch that plays up to the tortured anguish of Matt Plumb's Katurian. However, with some astute, understated acting from both, things soon turn into a frightening and thoroughly absorbing drama that is a credit to both director and performers alike.

Thankfully ending on a lighter note, there is subtle comedy to be found in Sam Peter Jackson's *Public Property*. Max Wilson is suitably awkward as the newsreader/author Geoff, but the fun is provided by Freddie Rogers' Jamie. Wilson and Rogers both hit their marks with the comedy, but again it's the slight twist in the tale that requires great timing and, in this case, really brings the house down.

Paul Vale

Expert choice

Jane Deitch, Jane Deitch Associates
• George Brookbanks
• Matt Plumb

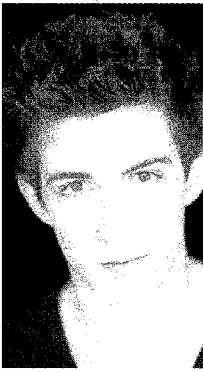
Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, BA (Hons) in Performance (Musical Theatre Option) Showcase

Criterion, London

April 8

Director: Sally Ann Gritton

Cast: Deon Adams, Greg Airey, Alana Asher, Francesca Berlin, Elle Branch, Melanie Bright, Daniel Buckley, Edie Campbell, Dougie Carter, Chelsea Corfield, Lee Dillon-Stuart, Wesley Dow, Sarah Evesson, Grace Gardner, Natalia Giaccone, James Houlbrooke, Joseph Houston, Tyrone Huntley, Joel Hutchings, Coleman James, Chloe Jane, Dean John-Wilson, Kate Kindeman, Leigh Lothian, Leonie Macasin, Candy Gigi Markham, Nina Marsh, Matthew McBrier, Ben McMath, Kimberley Moorhouse, Emily-Jane Morris, Nikki Pocklington, Ben Reynolds, Jessica Ruffey, Emily Scott-Dobie, Leah Shears, Anna Simmons, Curtis Skinner, Dominic Smith, Jeffrey Socia, Jade Spiwey, Jessica Vedmore, Richard Vorster, Craig Webb, Lilly-Jane Young
Running time: 1hr



Matt Plumb

The Mountview Academy musical theatre BA graduates of 2011 grace the stage in pleasingly colourful cocktail dresses that flow in unison, with some slick movement and a carefully hand-picked selection of excellent musical theatre songs.

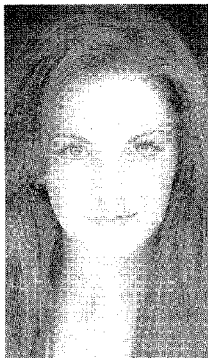
Grace Gardner opens the afternoon with some good, old-fashioned, Merman-esque belting with Don't Rain on My Parade from *Funny Girl*. Gardner (currently touring in *Jekyll and Hyde*), is followed by James Houlbrooke who effortlessly pirouettes through his solo *Cross the Line* from *Big - the Musical*. He is clearly one of the strongest dancers of the group.

Leonie Macaslin has a lovely modern feel to her vocal tone, which is well suited to her solo from *Legally Blonde*. She also convinces in a scene from *Check Please*, though full marks go to Candy Gigi Markham for getting some of the biggest laughs for her performance in the same scene as a woman who suffers from multiple personality disorder. As one of the strongest actresses of this showcase, Markham also manages to make *Maybe This Time*, a classic from *Cabaret*, her own. She also has a unique look and very versatile facial expressions.

Deon Adams shows off a suitably high tenor in *Petrified* from *Taboo*, and also makes his mark on a scene from *Surprise*. Joel Hutchings performs a stunning rendition of *Love Can't Happen* from *Grand Hotel*, with a rich, full voice and an effortless range. Melanie Bright is very attractive, with a model-like stature, while Dougie Carter is cute singing the title song from *She Loves Me*.

Jessica Vedmore is one of the highlights of this graduating year, owning a scene from *The Office* and later placing herself perfectly for the contemporary musical theatre market with *It Won't be Long Now* from *In the Heights*. Nina Marsh singing *Never Again* from *King David* makes herself very castable for the *Mistress* in *Evita*, while Natalie Giacone excels in the second half of her solo, *Journey to the Past* from *Anastasia*.

Daniel Buckley gives a very



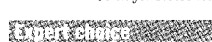
Jessica Vedmore

believable and heartfelt rendition of *So Close* from *Enchanted*, and a decent contrasting acting performance in a scene from *The Straits* - an audience favourite. His scene partner Lee Dillon-Stuart is equally excellent and later positions himself for a role in *We Will Rock You*, closing the afternoon brilliantly with *Pinball Wizard* from *Tommy*. Scottish native Joseph Houston seems far too attractive for a solo from *Shrek*, but certainly makes it his own, while Jeffrey Socia masters *Let Me Drown* from *The Wild Party* and is later a highlight in a scene from *Imaginary Friends*.

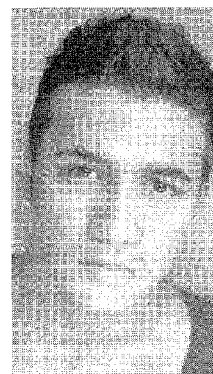
Elle Branch is rather brilliant in a scene from *Is This About Sex?*, as Lily-Jane Young conquers a scene from *Self Catering* with good comic timing. Tyrone Huntley stands out a mile in *I'm a Mean Ole Lion* from *The Wiz*, which is the perfect song choice for his sexy, very physical style, though he manages to show a rather different, more subdued side in a scene from *Self Catering*. Dean John-Wilson superbly captures the essence of *Till I Hear You Sing* from *Love Never Dies*, one of the male vocal highlights of the showcase. He also steals the scene as an angry ex in an excerpt from *Bad Jazz*. Ben Reynolds has a lovely warm tone and feel to his solo, *If I Sing* from *Closer Than Ever*, while Coleman James is a gifted actor with a beautiful baritone voice, perfectly captured in *I Won't Send Roses* from *Mack and Mabel*. Nikki Pocklington has possibly the highest female song of the showcase with *Lying There*, while Chloe Jane gives a wonderfully vulnerable performance with *Pretty Lies* from *Taboo*.

This year's musical theatre BA offerings from Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts were characterised by very strong vocals, fitting choreography, and well-directed, smoothly-connected segments.

Jennifer Reischel



Nicola Roberts, Nicola Roberts Management:
 • Dean John-Wilson
 • Jessica Vedmore



Dean John-Wilson

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, Acting and Actor Musicianship Showcase

Soho Theatre, London
 April 12

Directors: Iain Reekie, Jeremy Harrison
 Cast: Melissa Barnes, Adam Billington, Michael Borch, Aidis Davids, Lincoln Dile, Daniel Dingsdale, Geraint Rhys-Edwards, Penda Faal, Danielle Flett, Dave June Hearn, Maddy Hill, Javan Hirst, Oliver Hogan, Tom Hopkins, Stuart Hough, Natalie Ann Jamieson, Clementine Marlowe-Hunt, Lewis Matthews, Jill McAusland, Calum McLennan, Jerome Millington-Johnson, Ailidh Ogilvie, Kirsty Oswald, Huw Parmenter, Raymi Renee, Jessica Pearson, Alistair Ward, Heather Winstanley, Joseph Adelakun, George Blake, Kathryn Delaney, Tom Dunlea, Josie Dunn, Rob Falconer, Joey Hickman, Sarah Kearsley, Paul Matania, Nicolette Minster, Alex Mugnaioni, Charlotte Peak, Elliott Rennie, Robert Farquhar, Roy Williams
 Running time: 1hr 15mins

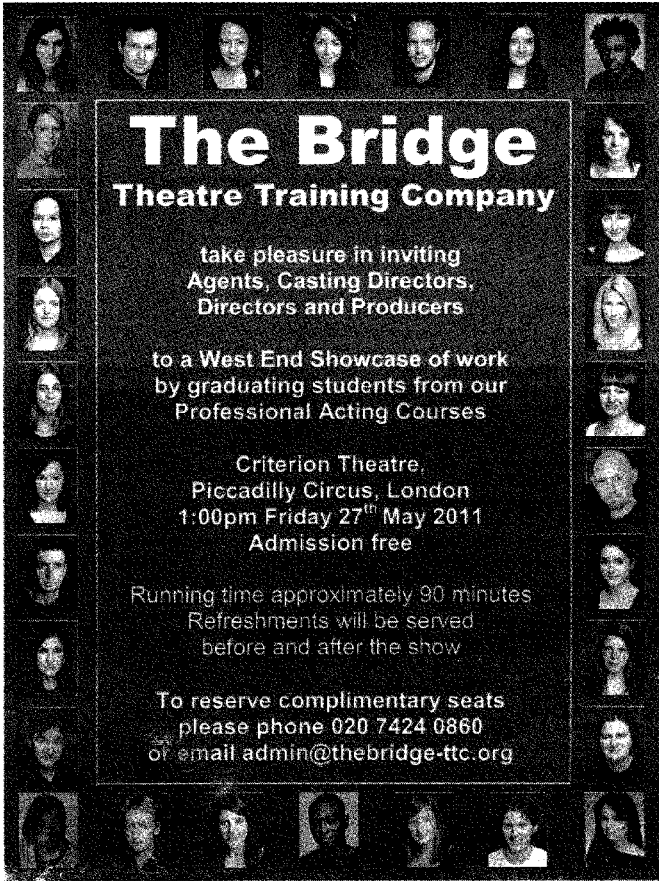
A quirky assortment of musically talented graduates takes to the stage with trumpets, glockenspiels and plenty of aplomb to give us everything from Brian May to Harold Pinter.

Dave June Hearn and Lewis Matthews start off the showcase with some strong partner work in a scene from *Relish*. Matthews in particular hits the mark with some zesty one-liners and enticing physicality. Kathryn Delaney is a powerful performer, giving her all in a scene from *Fat Pig* and later showing good musicality in her solo song *Say Goodbye* by Scott Alan. Raymi Renee picks a very suitable monologue from *Capriccio* that highlights his Latin heritage, while Natalie Ann Jamieson convinces as a feisty, unapologetic girlfriend in a scene from *Him and Her*. Kirsty Oswald and Joey Hickman gel well in a scene from *Humble Boy*. Oswald has a lovely naturalistic feel about her, while still appreciating the importance of filling the theatrical space.

Rob Falconer is a very earthy actor who is not afraid to pull out all the stops in a monologue from *Osama the Hero*, and Heather Winstanley is very watchable as a reluctant,



Adam Billington



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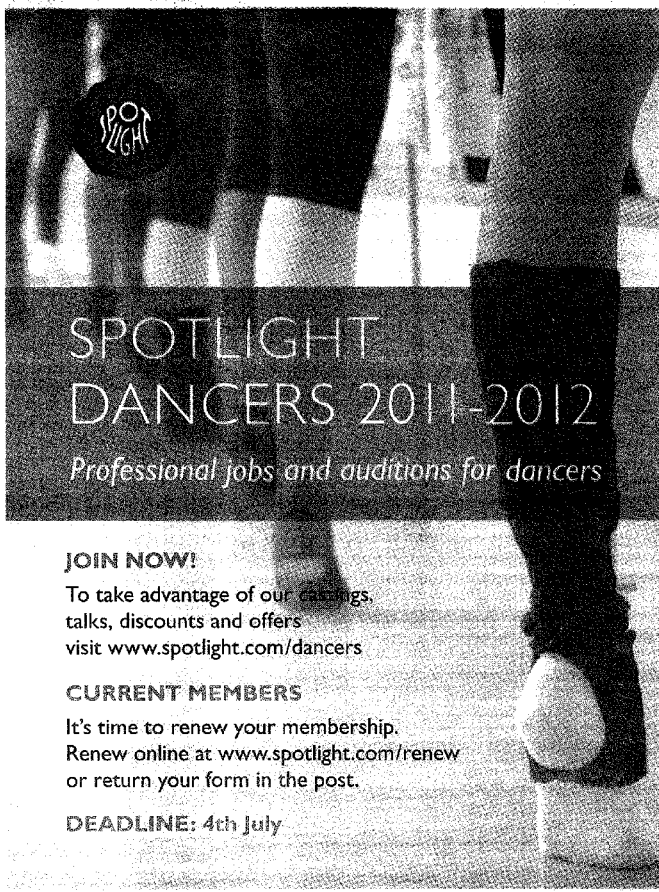
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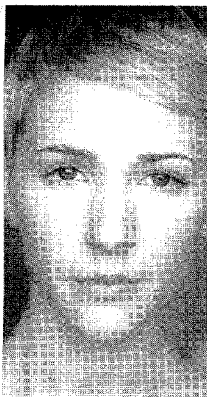
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Maddy Hill

a suitable interpretation of Brian May's Hammer to Fall. Ailidh Ogilvie literally bares almost all as an insecure and vulnerable character in The Architect. Josie Dunn and Huw Parmenter present one of the scene highlights of the afternoon as squabbling doctors in Green Wing. Dunn in particular demonstrating good comic timing.

All in all, quite a fine array of scenes and musical instruments, though one continues to wonder why the emphasis is continually placed on modern material.

Jennifer Reischel

STUDENT SHOWCASE

Danny Pellerini, DP Management:
• Maddy Hill
• Adam Billington

ALRA Three-Year Acting Course Showcase

Royal Court, London

April 13

Director: Louis Hammond

Cast: Luke Adamson, Chris Ashby, Ajjaz Awad-Ibrahim, Raj Bajaj, Josie Bloom, Nina Bright, Amy Collins, Will Cooper, Maria Crocker, Liam Currie, Heather Dutton, Sophie Anne Elliott, Sarah-Louise Harrington, Rudy Halgryn, Conor Harte, Jonathan Holby, Grace Hopkins, Beth Ita, Joseph Lindoe, Rachel Lingley, Robert Saunders, Talulah Smith, Emma Sylvester, Ben Tosh, Stephanie Winecki, Alysha Wood

Running time: 1hr

In a showcase that does not distinguish itself with any interesting directorial ideas, the work of several students shone through, despite the generally unoriginal choice of material (there wasn't much here that most of the professionals in the audience won't have heard many times before).

Liam Currie, for example, is already an accomplished and versatile actor. He was very convincing and compelling as a disturbed man who manages to smile through his twitchy anguish. His voice was expressively flat in an extract from Town by DC Moore, which he did with Grace Hopkins - also a thoughtful and sensitive performer in the style of

Maddy Hill is the female stand-out of the afternoon with a monologue from Been So Long. Her total commitment to the character and to portraying the complex, inner turmoil between self-protection and romantic love is compelling and startlingly honest. Unsurprisingly, Hill already has agent representation. Her look is also very suitable for screen acting work. Scottish native Adam Billington stands out as the male highlight in a scene from Pinter's The Collection, where he alternates perfectly between contempt and fear as a betrayed husband confronting the other man in a love triangle. Billington is also a 2011 Carleton Hobbs Bursary winner. He shows a lot of promise, in all departments. Equally notable is Clementine Marlowe-Hunt who draws us perfectly into a scene from The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency with great warmth, a strong sense of character and excellent voice projection.

Georgie Blake is rather formidable as an underage boy meeting a stranger from an internet chatroom for sex in a scene from Citizenship, while his scene partner Elliott Rennie has a very castable look and presence. Paul Matania and Rob Falconer give it some welly and rock, changing the mood completely with



Maria Crocker



Liam Currie

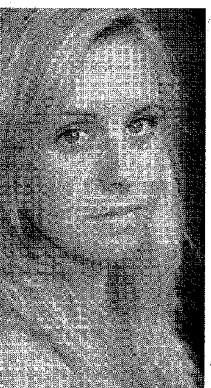
Anna Maxwell Martin.

Later in the showcase, Currie showed impressive comic timing, playing a cockney fall guy in a section of David Farr's The Danny Crow Show. Maria Crocker also proved herself to be very funny and talented in this piece, and was also good value in the extract from Studs by Gordon Steel. In the latter, she provided an excellent foil to the larger-than-life, very castable Heather Dutton, who has the makings of a strong comedy and character actress.

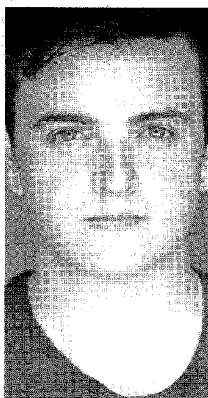
Currie's other impressive appearance (he portrayed three very different characters in this showcase) was in an excerpt from Mike Bartlett's Cock, in which he and Ben Tosh played a pair of quarrelling gay lovers. Currie's unassertive character was goaded by Tosh's loud-voiced, dominant character, until his reaction provided some hope for the future of the relationship. Both actors managed this with skill.

Luke Adamson is another good actor to watch. He carried off the Ewan McGregor role in an extract from Brassed Off with poignancy and passion, while Nina Bright brought the appropriate blend of 'managerial' and 'girl next door' to the role of Gloria.

Adamson also gave a good performance as the gritty, manipulative playwright in Simon Bent's Prick Up Your Ears, performing with the harried, pyjama-clad



Amy Collins



Conor Harte

Robert Saunders.

Saunders was enjoyable too in County Music, with the versatile Hopkins. In this extract, Saunders produced a pleasing portrayal of a rough, Tequila-swilling hoodie. Both actors here used the tone and register of their voices perfectly.

Watch out for Conor Harte. He was strong and funny in this showcase, as a schoolboy trying to persuade a girl to go on a date with him. Amy Collins gives a nice depiction of a schoolgirl who is much more poised than the boy who wants to date her. Harte also did well in that showcase stalwart, the ear-piercing sequence from Mark Ravenhill's Citizenship, in which he was well partnered by Alysha Wood.

Jonathan Holby is another pleasing performer. Reminiscent of Hugh Grant in his appearance and manner, he gave a witty account of one of the heightened RP-speaking men in James Graham's Tory Boz (another showcase favourite), with Stephanie Winecki as a competent foil.

It really wouldn't be right, though, to end this review without further reference to the outstanding Dutton. As well as ensuring that the show ended with gales of laughter - thanks to her impeccably-timed comic turn in Studs - she was good value in a gut-wrenching extract from Lee Hall's Bollocks. Here she played a troubled wife trying to deal with a disabled and embittered war veteran, played by Will Cooper. Between them, they conveyed tension and anguish with skilled sensitivity - to such an extent that this writer left the showcase longing to see them do the rest of the play.

Susan Elkin

Expert choice

Anthony Phillips, David Padbury Associates:

• Maria Crocker
• Liam Currie

Irene East, casting director:

• Amy Collins
• Conor Harte

showpeople



Freyja Edney

Melbourne-born Freyja Edney caught the circus bug early. Now 21 and demon fit, she is a member of Circa, the contemporary Australian circus troupe. One of the group's shows, also called Circa, is on an eight-month world tour and will be performed at City Hall during the Salisbury Festival on May 21

How did you get interested in circus?

My mum took me to a show in Melbourne by Australian kids' circus the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. I was three and said to her, 'That's what I want to do,' but I had to spend the next three years convincing her. I started doing classes locally at around six or seven. When I was ten, I ended up going to the Flying Fruit Fly Circus School in Albury Wodonga, on the border of New South Wales and Victoria. It was the same as normal school, but instead of doing PE or sports, we'd do circus. If you got into the performance group, you'd do extra training for two hours after school every day, and do shows and tours.

What did you train in?

The Fruit Fly has a very all-round programme, with a lot of basic training in conditioning and stretching. Everybody does a bit of tumbling and acro-balance. I sort of specialised in aerials - tissue and aerial ring or lyra, and hula hoops, which is my speciality now. I went there for seven years and later joined Circa.

What's your show like?

A lot of people compare it to dance. There's no direct narrative but there's a lot of feeling involved. It's mostly 'body things' - acrobatics and tumbling. And we have some solo acts, like straps and corde and my hula hoops. But we change things so no show is the same. The adagio scene is completely improvised every night. We have to be very well prepared to do that and spend a lot of time training together. We're always trying new tricks and seeing what we can improve.

Why is such exciting circus being produced in Australia?

The thing with Australian circus, no matter what genre, is that we're so far away from the rest of the industry it feels like it's often very inspired and new because we're not influenced by other companies. With the growth of the internet everything is a lot more accessible, so it means that remote communities can be inspired. Little companies like Gravity and Other Myths are popping up. The style and innovation in their show Freefall is incredible.

How do you like touring?

I love it. I find myself amazed some days that I'm actually living the life I dreamed of from three years old. This is the biggest tour the company has done, and out of the ensemble I'm probably the most at home on tour. It was beautiful arriving in Amsterdam as we'd spent so long in Canada where it was freezing.

Liz Arratoon

www.circa.org.au