

Edinburgh Festival Fringe – Bianco_Here Be Dragons *****

If like me you were taken to the circus as a child, you may be expecting an evening of animals jumping through hoops and clowns making rather obvious jokes. Well forget all that – ‘Bianco_Here Be Dragons’ **NoFitState Circus**’s sensational new show, is a different thing entirely.



For a very important start, there are no animals. This is **contemporary circus**, a professional touring production staged by some of the most skilled performers you are likely to see in a tent, or indeed anywhere else. In an intricately choreographed programme artists fly up and down ropes, aerialists swing from clouds, a man strips (well almost..) on a tightrope and, in a breathtaking finale, snow falls as a girl (the incomparable **Sage Cushman**) dressed in a white wedding gown dances on a trapeze. The high level acrobatics are interspersed with some slapstick humour, but even that is part of the dramatic story unfolding before us. The players have fun, run about, shout, ride bicycles, throw balls, cartwheels and flowers; this show is about the ordinary and the extraordinary, everyday life and once-in-a-lifetime drama. Scenes of rollicking light-heartedness give way to scenes of great passion. We are drawn into these characters’ stories; our spirits follow their flights across the skies, their soft landings – and their hard bumps.





'Bianco_Here Be Dragons' is a perambulatory experience – in other words, the audience walks around as the story unfolds. Scenes are shifted, stewards move us back and forth – it feels at times as if we are looking through a window. This does call for a certain amount of effort on our part, but it is effort well repaid; we very quickly find ourselves engaged in this travelling world. Ethereal voices tell us stories, figures appear then vanish. In some ways the effect is dreamlike, in others it's larger than life.

'There's only the passion, messiness and infectiousness of life' (Firenza Guidi – Artistic Director)

A huge part of the Bianco experience is the music; the band is

truly outstanding and could easily perform by itself. Lead singer **Andy Moore** has an impressive voice and knows how to use it – he moves seamlessly from song to chant and back again and plays several instruments. **Annette Loose's** sax is evocative and soaring, her voice mesmeric. The equally excellent **Doug Kemp** and **Calum McIntyre** complete the group. **Blaze Tarsha**, who must be one of the most versatile and charismatic performers in the company (she can even manage five hoola-hoops in one hoola) leaves the trapeze to sing with the band at one point – and yes, she can sing beautifully as well.

Annette Loose originally joined the circus in 2004 as a sound engineer, becoming part of the band two years later. She has travelled widely with NoFitState and loves the way in which every member has chosen to join the company and as a result has total commitment to it. She speaks highly of the Fountainbridge site and of the warm welcome back that the circus has received from local shops and businesses after its very successful initial visit last year.

Speaking before the show, **Firenze Guidi** explains that she aims above all to teach the performers to convey emotion and humanity. Expert aerialists who can't do this are, she says, only gymnasts: her artists are just that – artists: people who communicate great feeling through their art. If the audience takes that feeling away from the show 'My job is done.'

This is a fabulous show for all ages: recommended.

'Bianco_Here Be Dragons' is on at the **NoFitState Big Top (Venue 194)** every day *except* 11th and 18th August until 25th August 2014. Times vary: see [Edinburgh Fringe](#) website for details. **Please note** that this show does involve standing and walking about – there are no seats.