

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2018 REVIEW – Just William's Luck \*\*\*



*'Shedload Theatre present a love letter to Richmal Crompton's classic characters in a fresh and dynamic adaptation. Fusing imaginative physical storytelling, screaming and screaming, music, knights of the square table, Foley sound effects, the Outlaws trademark gusto, and all the best intentions.'*

Perhaps a palliative to *The Comic Strip's* punk nihilism take on middle-class children's fiction mores, *Just William's Luck*, is well overdue – with the urgent caveat being that it is surely must be mercilessly free of Hipster realignment by stealth. However, the show title's cheeky nod and wink play on the eponymous rascal's name is highly encouraging.

Unabashed at making rose-tinted spectacles of themselves, Shedload Theatre's medley of meddling with Richmal Crompton's inexhaustible canon (adapted by Jonathan Massey & Matthew Barnes) has lashing of Violet Elizabeth Bott squeal-good charm. Up to a point. The play-with-in-a play combines narrative, papier-mashed-up puppetry and panto-schtiking plasters over a scabby-kneed plot.

The redouble Outlaws are in their element as William aspires to Arthurian derring-dos with his trusted sword 'Excelsior'. Violet is dubbed a token girl 'Gnight' (sic) – or else she would 'scweam and scweam' until she was, well, sick!

Essentially, according to William's cartoon capered convoluted

logic, they will all attain the vaunted status of bicycle owners if only they can get their respective elder siblings married off. It is all jolly awful fun but the fumble down nostalgia lane is becoming strewn with pit-falls of paucity by thirty minutes in. The 80s TV series captured delightfully, a just not quite too long ago past age of innocence. Today's reading of the books unearths a not quite PC tolerant perspective – albeit small beer compared to today's tepidly tolerated bilious ranting however.

Inevitably the moral imperative that demands a happy-ever-after resolution to atone for William's naughtiness shines through with gusto. An unashamedly sentimental production of innocent smiles and silly-billy wiles, this is engaging, vintage William – just.

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