

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2018 REVIEW – Mairi Campbell: Auld Lang Syne \*\*\*\*\*



Is she going to play it  
with her teeth?

At the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Mairi Campbell riffs wildly on a wry conceit – deconstruct the iconic Robbie Burns ballad rabidly ‘sung’ but once a year across the Western Hemisphere (more pan-contextually, inter-continental as we later learn) – albeit with a deliciously disarming, confessional tweak.

Given the majority of its New Year’s Eve participants are barely coherent in their own language or idiom having gargled gratuitously amongst the scented vats of inebriation, let alone 18th century Scots, it could be big ask. Interestingly, a Google search has her version of the genre listed as *New Age*. She goes more for the Transition vibe – and she shares it well.

Campbell’s irresistible heart-harped love-letter to a song and her life is both melodic and a tribally primal skein of disparate threads – it rocks with the ages past and present, salves with cathartic balm.

Daisy-chain and buttercup golden kissed chins, the plaintive buzzard's lonely mew recall her dizzy times with lover/partner David as they rediscover the haunting origins of the elusive caterpillar to butterfly folk melody. There is a canny, teasing progression with the synthesis of both ochre-beat sounds and cryptic, possibly Pictic cypher back-screen projections.

The elemental insistence is naughtily juxtaposed with a certain pig-audio rectal dynamism where Mairi and her wayward sprite-sister, Katrina, tape-recorded farts before being summoned to psalms and worship downstairs before their Great Aunts brought on down from Skye. As with all trump-base comic vignettes, it's the way you smell'em.

There is a sing-along listen to your body-parts choral seminar – it is all about eschewing the consonants and allowing the essential viscera to resonate – and it works: that gut-feeling, to me – to you – sort of thing. The Led Zeppelin album cypher motif projections reach symmetry, the hour-glass we worry might be the time passing swiftly for the absent Katrina, might become an ouroboros, the eternal self-consuming, regenerative snake (the Garden Of Eden serpent riff being partisan fake-news if ever there was.)

From Mari Campbell's love's entangle roots of lyricism and amorphous melodies a tapestry of fragile and adamantine humanity blossoms. 'They are not just words upon a page/But sounds that move in mysterious ways.' Sean Connery and Sex In The City get a name-check as well. It is all earth-shatteringly down to a broch-solid ancestral peat-beat.

<https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on#q=%22Mairi%20Campbell%3A%20Auld%20Lang%20Syne%22>

