

## One Man Shoe



VENUE: **Assembly George Square Theatre**

TIME: **11:00am – 12:00pm, 3–28 Aug, not 14, 15, 21, 22**

TICKETS: **£7 – £10**

Somewhere, millennia from now, when humanity is no more than a footnote in the history of our soon-to-be robot overlords, an android will be slipping on a banana skin to the cackle of digital laughter. The pratfalling clown is one of the eternal entertainers. There is something innately likeable about a grown adult blundering around a stage with the grace of a toddler,

which is why it's one of the first comedy experiences kids are exposed to.

This Fringe, veteran performer Jango Starr's *One Man Shoe* is providing that introduction to clowning. Jango plays a Jaques Tati-style janitor, all oversized trench coat and amiable bumble, tasked with preparing the theatre for a performance by the magician, Fantastico. Spoiler alert: Fantastico doesn't show, so Jango must do the show himself.

At times, the show feels like a box-ticking exercise for slapstick and preschool magic. Bins are tripped over, rabbits are pulled from hats, spoons are bent. And yes, banana skins do feature. This is Clowning 101. The routines will

be familiar for parents of a certain vintage. The whiff of a Royal Variety Performance is never far away. But there is enough wonder and charm within to delight the freshest of eyes. And, like the best clowns, Jango switches like mercury between being an infantile clutz to a dexterous performer juggling whatever is at hand.

This perfectly serviceable show is at least one notch above a good children's party entertainer, but Jango's enthusiasm for his repertoire means it may be 15 minutes too long for the littlest ones. Great for kids who have never seen a man produce an endless series of balls from his mouth, but maybe not one for parents to trip over themselves to see. [➔ Edd McCracken](#)

## Dr Zeiffal, Dr Zeiffal and the Hippo That Can Never Be Caught



VENUE: **Assembly Roxy**

TIME: **10:15am – 11:15am, 3–28 Aug, not 15, 22**

TICKETS: **£7 – £8**

Hippo scientist Dr Zeiffal is lacking one very important qualification: she's never actually seen a hippo in the wild. Fortunately, she explains, there has recently been a sighting in Edinburgh – so now is almost certainly her moment. It's just a matter of tracking the little blighter down.

Mouths of Lions theatre company bring real energy and an easy charm to Dr Zeiffal's hunt for the eponymous mammal, employing plenty of 'he's behind you'-style pantomime fun and lots of cheery dashing about. The company's artistic director, Georgia Murphy, has lovely stage

presence as the timid yet extremely enthusiastic scientist – most of the young audience appear rapt by her every expression and are kept giggling throughout. Oliver Weatherly, doubling as the hippo and Dr Zeiffal's tardy assistant, is also enjoyable to watch, but he has far less to do, giving the play an unbalanced feel.

Theatre for family audiences can afford to take its time – it's important to give children of different ages the chance to get the joke, and younger ones particularly love repetition, but Mouths of Lions need to up the pace.

There are too many moments in this otherwise energetic piece that drag, a problem that would be easily solved by cutting the show's running time by 10 to 15 minutes and condensing the action. The company might consider adjusting the recommended age range on the show too – the babies and toddlers watching the performance I saw were easily distracted, and it's hard to imagine it doing much for children over the age of 10.

If you like spirited, silly, interactive theatre – and bearded men in hippo costumes – Mouths of Lions are worthy company. [➔ Jo Caird](#)

