


Mano Libera Press reviews – Edinburgh Fringe 2009

 **ThreeWeeks** the edinburgh and brighton festivals sorted since 1996



“From page o stage” sums up “Manolibera”, or perhaps the description “from slide to stage” is more accurate; as an artist, hired as a technician, draws on would-be-boring statistics slides projected on stage, two actors become cartoon caricatures and a living, unraveling comic. **Actors and drawings blend perfectly to create a world where drawn objects suddenly appear on stage** and where constant mishaps generate continuous ripples of laughter. **The interplay between reality and fantasy reveals that creativity can thrive anywhere** and even feed off routine. Through its liveliness and forthright simplicity, a powerful message about retaining one’s imagination in a increasingly problematic, consumer-driven world emerges, as we are swept from stage back into childhood.

ThreeWeeks, 08/08/2009



 **Clever cartoons for all ages**

Although not strictly speaking a children’s show (it’s in the Dance & Physical Theatre

section of the Fringe programme), this is a wonderful example of how a piece of theatre can cross the generational divide. Italian company, Scarlattine Teatro **has brought together two distinct talents – character acting and drawing – and turned them into a seriously clever piece of fun.**

Employed to change the transparency film on an overhead projector, a conference temp longs for something more creative to do. Armed with a few felt tips, his mind soon begins to wander – and before long, the officious conference speakers have shed their suits, and turned into an accident-prone couple on a day-trip. Standing in front of the large screen, the duo are completely at the behest of the pen-wielding cartoonist, who deposits them in **one hilarious scenario after another.**

Using a combination of on-the-spot sketches and pre-drawn cartoons, artist Michele Eynard makes life consistently difficult for his co-performers, Michele Cremaschi and Anna Fascendini – then saves them at the last minute. In the course of an hour, a few brief words pass their lips, but essentially **the show relies on body language** and a few well-placed sound effects. Floods, wild animals, horrible traffic jams and over-crowded beaches all plague the hapless pair as they search for peace and quiet. Happily for us, they never quite find it.

The List, 16/8/2009

DOWNTHETUBES.NET



Clare Walters, the original director of The Ballad of Halo Jones stage play, reviews Manolibera, a comics-inspired show at this year's Edinburgh Fringe...

Manolibera is a **very charming and ingenious show**. A technician is called in to operate a slideshow about a big corporation but, left to his own devices, he begins to doodle on the slides and quickly calls the two actors playing the earnest corporation bosses into his

creative and adventurous landscape. The action moves quickly as the two characters reveal their lives together, take a trip in their red car, visit the seaside, sail a boat and land on a desert island and discover oil which leads to the founding of the corporation. The actors become part of the cartoon world and sometimes their surroundings are being created around them as they rapidly move from scene to scene. I saw the show on a Saturday afternoon and **the whole atmosphere in C venues was like an old film matinee when no-one knew quite what was going to happen next. Children were burbling with delight and adults were rapt.** One of my favourite moments was when the technician was colouring in the car and the red pen was spilling over the actor's white clothing. It's not high-art cartoon drawing but it is vivid and effective work. The cartoon format meant that the action was relentless which made the show quite enervating – nothing ever went right for the two characters. The action is also very pacy and the use of language minimal. The female character shrieks virtually throughout and an array of vocal sounds are as important as words in any language – English, French or Italian. **The storytelling is very satisfying and the artwork great fun.** The precision of the movements of the actors and props and the work of the artist whether in positioning predrawn slides or drawing around and on top of the actors is faultless. **This show is unique and great fun.**

Clare Walters for downthetubes.net, 19/8/2009

THE SKINNY

Part of the Espresso contingent of Italian companies, *Manolibera* is light entertainment, a gentle satire on the encroaching multinationals and a live action cartoon. With music from Django Reinhardt and scenarios drawn onto a plain white sheet, it follows the adventures in mime of a couple consumed by consumerism.

The political theme is touched upon without any deep analysis: a terrifying vision of a world immersed in junk materialism is briefly dispatched, although the couple's various attempts to escape are always foiled by the simple logo of Smile

Multinational. Michele Cremaschi, Michele Eynard and Anna Fascendi lend their stereotypes charm and lightness, targeting the laughs at all ages and clearly enjoying the easy humour. The tale progresses, and the tone becomes darker, without ever submerging the illustration's allusive humour or the absurdity. The wit is slapstick and broad, and many of the scenes appeal to the younger members of the audience. Certainly, it would work as a children's show, since it never gets caught up in concepts or seriousness for too long.

This is a very European comedy that doesn't always translate, despite being simple and direct. Nevertheless, it is well performed and cheerful, a restful hour in a busy Fringe.

Gareth K Vile, Sun 16 Aug 2009

STAGE THE Edinburgh

This inventive import from Italy is great fun for a while as a pair of actors perform in mime and gibberish while a third projects cartoon overlays on them, occasionally drawing in alterations.

So, for example, they sit down on two stools and he puts them in a car, adding others and moving the cartoon background as they drive along. A cartoon tap left running threatens to drown them in rising cartoon water until they find a real plug and pull it, and a harmless-looking fish becomes a menace when the image-manipulator draws in piranha teeth.

There's a loose ecological theme to the show, with the automobile sequence

generating drawn-in air pollution and a shopping expedition leading to mountains of rubbish, but the point is not belaboured to the detriment of the comedy.

More of a problem is the fact that the device is not developed beyond its basic use, so that the episodes become somewhat predictable and repetitious, losing the element of delightful surprise, while a glacial pacing repeatedly allows the charm or inventiveness of a sequence to drain away as it lingers on.

The Stage

Review by **Gerald Berkowitz**

Published online at **11:00 on Monday 17 August 2009**



ITALY'S Scarlattine Teatro group has found a novel use for old overhead projectors, projecting live animation on to a white backdrop while, on stage, a pair of mime artists interacts with the playful scribblings, all soundtracked with the music of Django Reinhardt.

It's a neat and fantastically creative idea, and the two actors clearly have a lot of fun clowning around as Ercole and Cassandra in a series of comedic vignettes. The overall effect is like one of those Pink Panther cartoons when the animator starts trying to bamboozle the characters by changing the scenery and backdrop, and for the most part the well-drilled sequences are terrifically effective, especially the part when the pair find themselves stuck in a traffic jam on their way to the beach.

The humour is perhaps a little too gentle and simplistic in places, but all told this makes for an unusual and innovative hour's entertainment suitable for all the family.

*The Scotsman, By MATT BRERETON **Published:** 29/8/2009*