

Global News

<https://globalnews.ca/news/4349822/edmonton-fringe-festival-2018-show-reviews/>

5 stars

“An extraordinary blend of mime and magic”

★★★★★

-Global News

“An extraordinary blend of mime and magic” . “captivating and funny” “filled with stunning illusion, pantomime and comedy”

GIG CITY

<http://www.gigcity.ca/2018/08/24/fringe-2-plays-that-take-a-chance/>

“A marvel to behold”

★★★★★

-Gig City

“How-did-they-do-that?”

★★★★★

-Gig City

“Impossible to describe”

★★★★★

-Gig City

The two tap into a seemingly endless array of dexterous theatrical abilities (including clown, magic, mime, mask, puppetry, illusion, dance and various other circus arts) to mount a show that is a marvel to behold, a continuing treat and a boisterous display of exotic, theatrical talent.

★★★★★

-Gig City

Check into this hotel.

★★★★★

-Gig City

“she’s a knockabout comic with a face of silly putty” - nonny

The physical theatre company RAGMOP has been at the Fringe before. The duo, composed of Canadian clown Nayana Fielkov and American circus artist Matthew “Poki” McCorkle, sold out the whole run of their entertaining *Falling Awake* here a couple of years back. The two tap into a seemingly endless array of dexterous theatrical abilities (including clown, magic, mime, mask, puppetry, illusion, dance and various other circus arts) to mount a show that is a marvel to behold, a continuing treat and a boisterous display of exotic, theatrical talent.

As you might imagine, employing all these traditional though bizarre abilities in one show leads to an outlandish surreal experience, but the two ground everything in enough reality to keep the show from drifting off into “what-was-that-all-about?”

Although there was quite a bit of “how-did-they-do-that?”

In *Hotel Vortruba* (Stage 37), she’s a knockabout comic with a face of silly putty. He’s in full white mask – but then you can read anything you want into that baleful countenance. It begins in a fearful storm as Fielkov attempts to check into a hotel that would make Adam Sandler’s Castle Dracula feel like Buckingham Palace. After a quite hilarious bit where she goes through every terror imaginable, she finally gets the courage to ring the bell for the check-in guy.

You really can’t go into detail about what follows – one reason being that it’s impossible to describe. The two combine some remarkably complex physical comedy with some breathtaking magic tricks. Objects refuse to obey the laws of physics. They disappear before your eyes or float in the air with no describable wires or support. Endless wine bottles (and glasses) appear from a single small serving sleeve. A really big rat appears and goes into a protracted Fred and Ginger pas de deux dance routine with Fielkov. It’s graceful and complex and darned if some real chemistry doesn’t develop between the two. Next stop: *Dancing With the Stars*? Perhaps they’ll get their own Fringe show next year.

I could describe the big climax which includes (among other things) Fielkov, a clothes pin and a fishbowl – but you’d never believe it.

Check into this hotel.

5 out of 5

Edmonton Journal 5 out of 5 stars

<https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/festivals/0819-fringe-hotel-vortruba>

“It’s the perfect mix of magic, physical comedy and charm.”

★★★★★

-Edmonton Journal

5 stars out of 5

Stage 37, Auditorium at Campus Saint-Jean

A strong wind blows a young woman onto stage, the lightning and rain forcing her to find shelter. She gets blown around before reaching the hotel check-in. She starts banging on the stand, which bangs back.

Physical comedy is somewhat of a lost art. Getting a laugh out of a look or a silly gesture isn’t nearly as easy as cussing up a storm and hoping for some quick laughs. Thankfully, Vancouver’s RAGMOP has brought a hilarious and charming physical comedy show to this year’s fringe with HOTEL VORTRUBA.

Our female protagonist is looking for a warm place to rest her head for the night, a place out of the cold and the wind. What she finds is a place of magic and wonder run by a quirky man who moonwalks her luggage to her room and plays a version of two-card monte with a night cap. There isn’t much of a story to tell, but that’s not the point. This is one of those magical shows where you bring the whole family looking for some laughs, some smiles and some gasps. The bellhop twirls around on stage and covers his face in clothes pegs. The guest dances with a remote-controlled mouse and pulls off a headstand with her head submerged underwater. It’s shows like HOTEL VORTRUBA that makes the Fringe special, the type of show you will talk about for years. It’s the perfect mix of magic, physical comedy and charm.

– Justin Bell

VUE WEEKLY ★★★★★

<http://www.vueweekly.com/fringe/play/hotel-votruba/>

The acclaimed RAGMOP Theatre returns to the Fringe with an enigmatic comedy about a night spent in the spooky and mysterious Hotel Votruba. This two-person show uses physical contortions, exaggerated expressions, and fanciful footwork to wordlessly convey a jittery creature's night in a monstrous hotel as a masked lanky concierge begrudgingly attends to her needs. The plot, which is fairly thin, is told more like a series of vignettes rather than a linear story, mixing entertaining interpretive dance numbers with impressive magic tricks, balancing acts and slights of hand, the scenes range from the charming and bewildering to the grotesque and bizarre. What it lacks in a cohesive narrative, it more than makes up for in charisma and humour. -Ramin Ostad

12thNight

<https://12thnight.ca/2018/08/18/check-in-at-the-hotel-votruba-a-guest-12thnight-fringe-review-by-alan-kellogg/>

“As entertaining as it gets. Book it.”

-12thNight Edmonton

//slightly exaggerated//

Check in at the Hotel Votruba! A guest 12thnight Fringe review by Alan Kellogg

Hotel Votruba (Stage 37, Auditorium at Campus Saint-Jean)

Welcome to the Hotel Votruba. You can check out any time you want — but you'll never want to leave.

Vancouver's RAGMOP Theatre, who dazzled audiences here last Fringe with *Falling Awake*, is back with a terrific new production that falls under the somewhat dry rubric of physical comedy, but in fact expertly skips across the genres to delightful effect.

Nayana Fielkov, her character schlepping a road-weary suitcase, resplendent in a double-breasted houndstooth coat — and coming off like a particularly manic Roz Chast character with a *Bride of Frankenstein* coiffure — has a bit of a time attempting to ding the hotel desk bell. It happens, after a series of yuk-laden turns.

From the depths of the check-in counter emerges limb by limb the long, lanky form of her innkeeper, played by Matthew "Poki" McCorkle, who sports a dubious tux and Phantom-style mask. Outside, the elements are howling, along with occasional stage smoke (that produces a different sort of effect here in *Hades* this week, but still works). Throughout the story, the two emit a wide variety of sounds — singing wordlessly *Cirque*-and otherworldly-style, gurgling, muttering, grunting, gargling and more. Only very rarely (as *Mump* and *Smoot* do so well) do they break into a word or two of English, and to hilarious effect. The audience is enlisted at times to help out, and that works, too.

It seems wrong to go into much detail about the vignettes forever kinking the normal comings and goings of a hotel sojourn. Bending the quotidien dross is a huge part of the charm here. And the two (along with an unforgettable mechanical friend) roll it off with consummate dispatch. The staging involving multiple moveable carts is particularly innovative.

The pair are also impressive magicians, as you will discover. But I will say the *pas de deux* with a certain creature supposedly rare in this province marks a kind of theatrical first. While we're at it, let's toss a bouquet to Soren Olsen, who co-directed with the cast and delivers a first-rate sound design.

We don't do stars around this operation. But this is about as entertaining as it gets at any Fringe, anywhere. Book it.

— Alan Kellogg

“Trust me, go see this show.”

“overwhelming wonder and awe.”

★★★★★

-Edmonton Journal

An admission before we start: this is the second time I have seen HOTEL VORTRUBA. RAGMOP Theatre performed the show at last year’s Fringe as well. Now that we have covered the disclosures, let’s get to the review: this show is incredible.

If you aren’t fortunate enough to have seen it in past years, HOTEL VORTRUBA is best described as a clown show: slapstick comedy, physical acts, dance, movement, no talking, audience interaction. It’s all there and it all works together to bring a sense of overwhelming wonder and awe.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Our nameless heroine arrives through smoke and bluster at a hotel. Is this her hotel? Did she make a reservation? Again, there’s no words so it’s impossible to know the circumstances, but the circumstances don’t matter. The proprietor unfolds himself from under the front desk and we are off and running.

The next 60 minutes is a combination of magic and dance, a non-stop sense of joy and awe. The heroine dances with a remote-controlled rat; the proprietor mimes with a floating suitcase, unable to control its direction; a bottle and glass disappear and reappear in a rendition of three-card monte that will have you smiling from ear to ear.

It’s hard to restrain the positive adjectives for HOTEL VORTRUBA. This show deserves an explosion of superlatives, 250-words of “GO SEE THIS, IT’S GREAT!” over and over again. Trust me, go see this show.

<https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/festivals/0819-fringe-hotel-votruba?fbclid=IwAR3DMp4cWK8T48ji2EOmCHysaLaoLLTLwNkGRpQEIC24L5WQBfu9amD-1Lk>