



Harpy

Underbelly Cowgate (White Belly), 66 Cowgate, Edinburgh, EH1 1JX

Thursday 2nd – Sunday 26th August 2018 (not 13th), 16:00

A razor-sharp drama from Fringe First award-winner Philip Meeks (*Kiss Me Honey, Honey!*), *Harpy* is directed by Hannah Chissick (*Mother Courage & Her Children*, Southwark Playhouse; *The Beautiful Game*, NYMT; *Flashdance*, UK Tour), and stars national treasure Su Pollard in her Edinburgh Fringe debut.

Much loved Su Pollard has a career in showbusiness which has spanned four decades and is best known for her role as Peggy in the BAFTA Award-winning sitcom *Hi-de-Hi!*. Now, Su comes to the Edinburgh stage, in a play commissioned especially for her, to portray Birdie, a woman with an extreme disorder.

Her neighbours call Birdie a harridan and a harpy even most of them have never even met her. They see her obsessive hoarding as detrimental to the value of their own homes. But Birdie isn't hoarding rubbish; accumulating what others may regard as an excessive number of items is her life's work and she does it because something deeply cherished was stolen from her years ago. Since then, Birdie's not been able to give up anything. She'll do anything to get this priceless thing back. Anything at all.

For Birdie, saving what others regard as the junk from her own life allows her to make sense of the world around her; her possessions are artefacts of a time past. Shunned by conventional society, she regards it as her duty to salvage these tiny histories that without her would be entirely forgotten.

Harpy is inspired by the 1960s and 70s cinematic sub-genre of Grand Dame Guignol – or ‘hag horror’ - wherein fading stars battled to survive by playing mad, potentially dangerous women or bewildered creatures in peril. Beneath their acting veneer were brave and brilliant women and Meeks is fascinated by their survival instincts. This idea of struggling and fighting for what we believe in comes to the fore in *Harpy* which seeks to explore mental health issues, questioning what madness really is.

Meeks comments, I've suffered from mental health problems all my life. Currently I have to be on anti-depressants forever like diabetics need insulin. I'm also amazed by how many people are suddenly being diagnosed as being on one spectrum or another. I guess I've started to believe that everyone has mental health issues to some degree or another. And maybe it should simply be accepted as part of life. People should be themselves. Madness is normal. So, in this play the Harpy knows people think she's mad. She possibly suspects she's a bit batty herself. But she embraces her identity and this gives her freedom. She has a sad story to tell but she should also be an inspiration.

Notes to Editors

Title	<i>Harpy</i>
Performance Dates	Thursday 2 nd – Sunday 26 th August (not 13 th), 16:00
Running time	60 minutes
Location	Underbelly Cowgate (White Belly), 66 Cowgate, Edinburgh, EH1 1JX
Box Office	Tickets are available from www.underbellyedinburgh.co.uk or 03333 444 167 Previews: £6.50 Weekdays: £12 (£11) Weekends: £13 (£12)
Writer	Philip Meeks
Director	Hannah Chissick
Performer	Su Pollard
Producer	Suzanna Rosenthal for Something for the Weekend
Twitter	@supollardonline, @SFTWshows, @followthecow, #Harpy
Notes	Ages 12+

All enquiries, high res images and further information:

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