EDMONTON INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL

a fringe full of stars

Elon Muskrat

Venue 5 Acacia Hall

★★★★

Josh Languedoc's plays never mince words. And the playwright's newest work, *Elon Muskrat,* is no exception.

The St. Albert-raised artist explores how Elon Muskrat's pursuit of wealth, greed, power and corruption tarnishes not only the billionaire's soul, but also everyone around him. As Elon says, "I take things you love and give it a Native flavour."

He owns a rocket ship that blew up on its way to colonize Uranus. His portfolio also includes the satellite, Hovering Eagle, as well as Rezma, the greenest car on the market running on sweetgrass fumes.

Elon also owns and operates an Indigenous casino with a massive dream catcher that encourages people's dreams while they lose wads of cash.

In Languedoc's 45-minute play, Elon pitches the casino as an investment. The audience becomes investors eager to line their pockets while closing their eyes to the exploitation within. Invest in this casino and white guilt disappears.

Running parallel to Elon's crass actions, is a second story about Migwe, a gentle creature who started out life as a helper and a builder, until he too was tainted by the weight of riches.



Elon Muskrat



Heathers: The Musical

In this one-man show, Languedoc alternatively seduces and cajoles, teases and taunts in ways that make you laugh yet feel deeply uncomfortable. *Elon Muskrat* is a show that challenges the mind.

– Anna Borowiecki

Heathers: The Musical — Teen Edition

Venue 14 Café Bicyclette at La Cité Francophone

★★★★

Heathers: The Musical — Teen Edition delivers a bold, thought-provoking reimagining of the 1989 cult classic, staying true to its dark themes of violence and social pressure, while adapting the story for a younger audience. Directed with a sharp eye for both drama and humour, this production tackles complex issues with sensitivity and insight, never shying away from the raw emotions that make *Heathers* so compelling.

Guided by the thoughtful direction of St. Albert's Martha Livingstone, the production approaches these heavy themes with depth. Behind the scenes, Hannah Adamson, stage manager and lighting, expertly integrates atmosphere and performance, enhancing the show's emotional impact.

The young cast is a standout, delivering fresh, dynamic performances that breathe new life into the beloved characters. Veronica, torn between the dangerously magnetic JD and the toxic popularity of the Heathers, stands at the emotional core of the production. The show doesn't shy away from its mature themes — mental illness, suicide, and the brutal pressures of high school life — while ensuring that both teens and older audiences can engage with its depth.

The Heathers are sharp, witty, and commanding, while JD's portrayal adds surprising complexity beneath his brooding exterior. Direction and choreography inject high energy into the musical numbers, making them both fun and emotionally resonant, while keeping the darker aspects of the story at the forefront.

This production of *Heathers* is vibrant, emotionally charged, and unapologetically bold. It tackles tough issues with unflinching honesty, while retaining the dark humour and irreverence fans of the original will recognize and appreciate.

This production is an unforgettable experience that plays until Aug. 24, filled with stellar performances and all the emotional highs and lows that make *Heathers* a timeless story.

– Melanie Wright

Lost Sock Rescue Society

Roots on Whyte

★★★★★

Anyone searching for a whimsical and imaginative family show that appeals to every family member should check out *Lost Sock Rescue Society.*

In this beautifully crafted production, actors Christine Lesiak (Sandra) and Sabrina (St. Albert's Louise Casemore) create a high-energy, heartwarming production.

The Lost Sock Rescue Society is an organization that finds forever homes for single socks that have lost their twin. The society's mission is to recover, rehabilitate and rehome orphan socks.

Sandra and Sabrina are hosting a recruitment seminar to find more volunteers. Even before the play officially starts, the two recruiters step into the audience and mingle warmly with patrons.

SEE **A FRINGE FULL OF STARS** ON **32**



Lost Sock Rescue Society

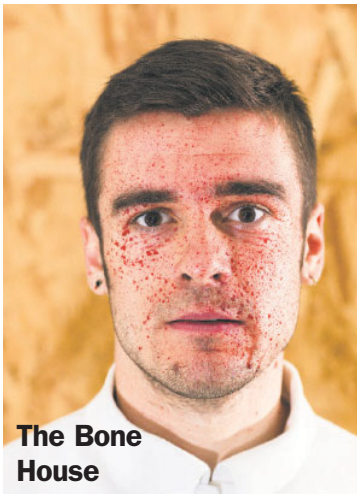
A Fringe Full of Stars FROM 31

Sandra, the older woman, has dedicated the past 20 years to mixing, matching and finding good homes for her charges. She has strict adoption rules and is set in her ways. Thanks to Lesiak's broad toolkit of talents, Sandra comes across as a three-dimensional woman filled with kindness, joy, passion and insecurities.

On the other hand, Sabrina is a young college student completing her practicum. She's super confident and presents a snappy power point presentation on updating and improving the system. Leary of change, Sandra tries to sabotage Sabrina's suggestions. As their different viewpoints grow, the well-intentioned recruitment session may just go down the toilet.

Lesiak and Casemore have written a snappy script, kept up a high-energy pace, delivered some of the funniest one-liners at this year's Fringe and kept a packed audience continually laughing for one hour. This light-hearted comedy is one not to miss.

– Anna Borowiecki



The Bone House

The Bone House

Venue 26 Sugar Swing Ballroom

★★★★★

The Bone House, written by Marty Chan, is an electrifying and immersive piece of theatre that pulls audiences into the world of Eugene Crowley, a lecturer obsessed with serial killers and the psychology of violence. Set within the confines of a lecture hall, Crowley — played with chilling precision by Jack Walker — guides the audience through his lecture with the help of his assistant, Jacob. What begins as a seemingly academic presentation soon unravels into something far darker, as Crowley reveals his own vulnerabilities and secrets, slowly peeling back layers of his disturbing persona.

The immersive format of the play enhances the tension, with the audience not just observing, but participating in Crowley's lecture. As the boundaries between performer and spectator blur, the suspense builds, leaving everyone on edge, wondering what will be revealed next. Crowley's obsession with serial killers becomes the perfect vehicle for exploring themes of voyeurism, violence, and the dark fascination we have with spectacle. It's a commentary on our addiction to the macabre, and the uncomfortable way we can't look away.

As the tension reaches its boiling point, *The Bone House* takes a sharp turn, revealing that Crowley's own life is tied to the very subjects he lectures on. The play builds to an unnerving climax, making it impossible to look away.

Chan's writing is taut and compelling, drawing the audience deep into the psychological labyrinth of Crowley's mind. With stellar performances and expert direction, *The Bone House* is a haunting exploration of our darkest impulses and the price of spectacle.

– Melanie Wright

Sam's Clam & Oyster Bar

FOH Pro Stage at the Luther Centre

★★★★

There's a lot to like in *Sam's Clam & Oyster Bar*, starting with murder, mythology, romance and revenge. The nonstop maritime adventure continues with a zany barroom brawl, clam addiction and a seduction behind the bar.

As the lights go down, patrons are introduced to a deadly storm rocking a fishing boat. The fishermen know they are doomed. Just before Poseidon climbs aboard with his trident, Captain Trout puts his baby son into a wooden chest and tosses him into the waves before the ship sinks to its watery grave.

Fast forward and a Trout descendant has moved to Salmon, Idaho to open a seafood, clam and oyster bar. After telling his grandson, Sam (Nico Majorana), a fishy tale about his ancestors, grandpa keels over dead.

Sam inherits the bar and proceeds to chart a course for survival. His problems spike from a business takeover by Cowboy Cam (Ethan Lang) to desperately searching for a new clam supplier. While at first the new clam supplier (Sam Daly) is friendly towards Sam, he morphs into a slippery eel with a hidden agenda.

This musical parody features a large ensemble cast including three St. Albert actors: Daly, Marshall Eglinski as a line cook Dan and Ben Healey as Grandpa and Long Armed Man. Sarah Kyle in the role of Pearl displays powerful vocals as Sam's romantic interest, even as Ali Balloun takes on the role of a drunk Mrs. Tucker and Astrid Deibert fills in as Paulie.

This delightfully wacky parody is about everything and nothing. It never lets the pace slow down and is packed with nonstop action and silly twists and turns that keep the audience guessing.

– Anna Borowiecki

Ghostbusters One Man Show

Grindstone Comedy Theatre and Bistro

★★★★★

Sean Bedard's *Ghostbusters One Man Show* is proof that some cult classics never die.

The St. Albert improv actor has taken the daring step of creating a solo show about the 1984 pop culture phenomena acting out all the roles with different voices, gadgets and costumes. And the audience loved every bit of his energetic performance, cheering him on and giving him a standing ovation at the end.



Sam's Clam & Oyster Bar

Bedard brings back all the major characters: Peter Venkman (Bill Murray), Ray Stantz (Dan Akyroyd), Egon Spengler (Harold Ramis), Dana Barrett (Sigourney Weaver) and Louis Tully (Rick Moranis).

In a plot refresher, Peter, Ray and Egon are fired from Columbia University after the dean dismisses their paranormal research. Only one avenue is left. They establish Ghostbusters, a paranormal investigation service operating out of a deserted fire station.

A spirit infestation is happening in New York City and soon the trio are getting more calls than they can handle. However, they haven't properly tested their equipment and energy streams from their proton weapons can cause an explosion.

They successfully capture a ghost and deposit it at an eco-containment unit in the firehouse basement. Suspicious of Ghostbusters, the Environmental Protection Agency comes knocking on their door.

Meanwhile Dana is possessed by Zuul, a spirit servant of Gozer, a shapeshifting God of destruction. Gozer has opened a portal to Dana's apartment building and wishes to bring about an apocalypse.



Ghostbusters One Man Show

Orchestrating a one-man show can be a minefield for an actor especially with all the crazy dialogue. However, he has help from all the wacky props on stage that are either pulled out of mysterious trunk or wheeled in from behind black curtains.

Basically, Bedard puts a fresh spin on 1980s cliches, jokes, goofiness and cynicism that were prevalent in the movie. And he leaves us wanting more.

Another interesting feature is that Bedard is a member of the non-profit Ghostbusters Cosplay Society. Since 2016, the society has donated $120,000 to charities. This year, all proceeds from ticket sales will be donated to Stollery Children's Hospital.

– Anna Borowiecki

Giorgi of the Jungle

Holy Trinity Anglican Chruch

★★★★

Growing up is a tough gig, but for a little girl it's even harder when body shaming is involved.

St. Albert playwright, Lynda Celantano, sets *Giorgi of the Jungle* in the 1980s and draws from her Italian heritage. It's a story of immigration and how young first-generation Canadians attempt to balance their parents' traditions with societal expectations in a new country.

Giorgi believes she's fitting in at school until one of her schoolmates draws a picture of her with a unibrow and other unwanted hair on her face. The young girl is embarrassed and rushes home to fix the problem, only making it worse — much worse.

Even though her two older sisters can be bossy, they come rushing to her aid. Marcella, the oldest, more feminine sister, completely supports Giorgi's desire to look her best. Instead Adele, the middle sister, has a tough-guy personality and is very protective. She offers to punch out the person who made Giorgi cry.

Giorgi's shaming is the catalyst that prompts the sisters and their mother to open up about personal experiences that humiliated and hurt them.

St. Albert's Kristen Throndsen as Giorgi creates a fully fleshed young girl who is hurt and confused by the outside world, yet relieved at the support she receives from family. Miracle Mopera gives Marcella's character a sassy vibe, while Jason Hardwick as Adele delivers the wittiest lines. And Antonella Cascione is every inch the Italian mother, both loving and demanding.

Giorgi of the Jungle is funny, heartfelt and emotional. There is none of the outlandish energy of some Fringe plays. Yet it has the quiet power to move us in a personal way.

– *Anna Borowiecki*

The Spotlight's Shadow

Venue 14 Café Bicyclette Stage

★★★★★

The Spotlight's Shadow is a tender and heart wrenching new musical that brings the hidden romance of two New York Ziegfeld Follies girls into focus.

Created by St. Albert playwright, lyricist, and actor Daphne Charrois, with music by her father, composer Dan Charrois, and directed by Vanessa King, the two-person show is both intimate and powerful.

Set entirely in a shared dressing room, the story follows Vera (Daphne Charrois), a hopeful newcomer eager to make her mark, and Nettie (Grace Bokenfohr), a glamorous Follies star.

As their friendship blossoms into romance, the pair are soon put to the test. Secrets, blackmail and the suffocating weight of a so-called "lavender relationship" force the women to confront the cost of honesty in a world determined to silence and criminalize them.

The chemistry between Vera and Nettie is magnetic, pulling the audience deep into their story. Their soaring vocals capture both the exhilaration and heartbreak of their journey, building to the powerful moment when they choose to stop hiding their love.

The visuals are equally striking: period costumes sparkle with Follies-inspired glamour, while the intimate staging pulls the audience into the characters' exposed vulnerability.

Though the story takes place in the 1920s, The Spotlight's Shadow resonates far beyond its period, carrying a message that remains clear and deeply necessary today: love is love.

– *Jessica Campbell*

Pair of Guys Lost: A New Musical

Venue 20 Mile Zero Dance

★★★★

Forget everything you know about the Garden of Eden and head to Mile Zero Dance to check out David Son's hilarious and daring reimagining. Pair of Guys Lost is a satirical biblical musical comedy where angels gossip, snakes hand out wisdom, and a Trump-like god scrambles to maintain his grip on paradise.

Instead of Adam and Eve, Son gives us Adam and Steve—two men created not for companionship, but to worship their creator. When their devotion wavers, paradise begins to unravel. What follows is a cascade of divine mishaps, with God's insecurities and tantrums building toward a spectacular destruction of the world.

The show thrives on its inventive twist and unapologetic political edge. The choreography is dynamic and keeps the energy flowing, while the songs are playful, funny and unexpectedly catchy.

Technical hiccups occurred during a few musical numbers, as the microphones occasionally made the lyrics difficult to catch. Still, the cast's energy, comedic timing, and physicality ensured the humour and spirit of the songs shone through.

Bursting with wit, warmth and originality, Pair of Guys Lost proves that even the oldest story can feel brand new. Smart, silly and surprisingly heartfelt, this bold new musical is an unforgettable reminder that sometimes the best way to tell a story is through satire and song.

– *Jessica Campbell*



The Spotlight's Shadow

Dressing Room Requiem

Venue 21 The Sanctuary Stage

★★★★

Dressing Room Requiem invites audiences backstage to witness the final moments of a cancelled show. As the cast and crew return to collect their belongings, memories of life on stage surface, blending humour, nostalgia and heartfelt reflection.

The show takes the audience through a tour of some of opera's most memorable pieces, creating a unique mix of story and music.

The performers are impressive, both as actors and singers. Their voices fill the stage, moving effortlessly from the lively "Drinking Song" from La Traviata to the playful "Three Little Maids from School Are We" from Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado, and soaring through the stirring chorus of "Va, pensiero" from Verdi's Nabucco. On-screen text provides context and translations for songs that are not in English, ensuring the audience can follow along and appreciate the full impact of each performance.

At times, the story seems to take a back seat to the music. The thread of cancelled dreams and bittersweet reflections on theatre life can get a little lost between the arias and ensemble numbers. Still, the humour, nostalgia and heartfelt moments give the show warmth and relatability. Anyone who has ever been part of a theatre production will recognize the camaraderie and exaggerated drama that unfold in the dressing room.

For those who love opera, this production will be a delight. For theatre lovers curious to dip their toes into the world of arias, Dressing Room Requiem makes for a rich and rewarding experience.

– *Jessica Campbell*



Pair of Guys Lost: A New Musical