

Circus Incognitus

Performed by Jamie Adkins

An hour of intricately choreographed mayhem in the tradition of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton from virtuoso clown, two times Drama Desk nominee Jamie Adkins

a little beauty **** The Guardian. Edinburgh 2014

Jamie Adkins plays a man heroically battling with the everyday objects of life, permanently on the verge of disaster. Free from hi-tech distractions, *Circus Incognitus* draws on vaudeville and the physical comedy of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, as virtuoso clown Jamie wrestles with a chair, tussles with a pesky hat, mounts a disintegrating ladder, negotiates a precarious slack wire and juggles almost everything. The audience are invited to join in the fun, tossing oranges for Jamie to catch on a fork held between his teeth, in a show that incorporates the full range of his circus skills.

Jamie Adkins began his career at the age of 13 in San Diego, California where he delighted passers-by as a street performer. Later, in San Francisco, he joined the Pickle Family Circus and Montreal's celebrated Cirque Éloize. A clown, juggler, balancing artist and poet, he was soon an integral member of the Cirque Éloize family of artists and created *Typo* with the company, which toured internationally for two years to critical acclaim and was nominated for two Drama Desk awards on Broadway.

In *Circus Incognitus*, virtuoso clown Jamie Adkins plays the vulnerable everyman, who has just written a terrific show. He wanders onto stage with the new show in a box, delighted to find the audience ready waiting. Knowing he has just the thing, Jamie struggles to build the scene around him using everyday objects. *Circus Incognitus* follows an extensive touring in France, as well as dates in Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and the United States.

Edinburgh festival 2014 review : **Circus Incognitus – a little beauty ******

Jamie Adkins' one-man marvel of a show blends clowning and vaudeville in ways that are subtle, clever and moving



'A sweet fool' ... Circus Incognitus, with Jamie Adkins. Photograph: A Phillipson/Livepix

Now here's a little beauty. Jamie Adkins' one-man circus show takes its inspiration from vaudeville and the old-style clowning of silent-movie greats such as Buster Keaton. Like many people, I'd quite honestly rather opt to eat my own feet than voluntarily go to a clown show, but I'd had sufficient tip-offs about this sly little entertainment that I couldn't ignore them.

I'm glad I didn't. This low-key, largely silent piece consists primarily of object manipulation and some slackwire work, wrapped up in a meditation on success and failure and how, when even on the verge of disaster, we keep on going. Adkins' shock-haired clown is the eternal little man, constantly astonished to be one step ahead of a universe that is forever tripping him up. He is a sweet fool. The pleasure is in Adkins' initial amazement at his own prowess and then the way his little ego starts to swell and he demands our applause.

He deserves it too. This neatly packaged, sweetly old-fashioned piece offers entertainment for all ages and has a highly developed sense of the absurd, as grapes are caught on plastic forks, oranges are bowled like cricket balls at Adkins' face and he constantly dodges disaster, often of his own making. There but by the grace of God go all of us, although in Adkins' case it's cleverly disguised skill, not luck, that is saving him from collapsing ladders, tipping chairs and ping-pong balls swallowed down the wrong way.

He plays the hapless idiot to perfection in an apparently unstable world, a place where gravity and the laws of physics must be bypassed if he is to survive. There are times when this is so underplayed and gentle that it's almost imperceptible. But that makes it all the more of a little marvel.

by LYN GARDNER

THE LIST

Circus Incognitus ●●●●●

Jamie Adkins' old-school street-to-stage clowning works a treat at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

9 August 2014, written by: [Donald Huterer](#)



Jamie Adkins' mastery as an all-round entertainer is predicated not only on a pretty prodigious set of skills – juggling, clowning, the slack wire and so on – but also on how relaxed he is when employing any of them.

He starts the show in darkness, playing with the light from the torch in his hands. His subsequent bumbling, empathy-inducing encounters with a chair and a large cardboard box are deceptive. Adkins knows his props. He can, for instance, do a lot with balls; whether of the ping pong variety (including a squash and a resurrection) or the softer kind that he stuffs into his cheeks. He also invites some deftly controlled audience participation involving a select few lobbing citrus fruit in his direction.

Somehow Adkins manages to make the most inconsequential matters engaging. Largely due to his unforced stage personality, and the combination of unpretentious knowingness and spontaneous innocence that he emanates. The show hasn't much metaphorical resonance or weight, but then it's not meant to be high-concept circus. Rather, it's the unapologetically populist and thoroughly rewarding work of a throwback vaudevillian in control of his talent to amuse.

In his own way, Adkins could almost be deemed a physical comedy poet. This fairly young man with the skew-whiff hair is an inspired yet easy-going goof, and oh can it feel good to be in his company.

THE STAGE [Edinburgh](#)

Circus Incognitus



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- New Town Theatre
- Jul 31 to Aug 24
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- Author: Jamie Adkins
- Director: Jamie Adkins
- Producer: Droles de dames
- Cast includes: Jamie Adkins
- Running time: 1hr
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Watching Jamie Adkins' Circus Incognitus makes audiences giggle with sheer delight. All around me it seems Adkins has adults and children alike eating out of the palm of his hand. On the few occasions our attention does drop, he catches it right back again with practised speed.

Adkins is a one-man circus. He's a clown in the tradition of Charlie Chaplin, a buffoon whose slapstick is powered by immense skill. But he's more than that. Rather than simply relying on his great charm, he also keeps our rapt attention through a series of increasingly impressive circus acts including acrobatics, juggling and tightrope walking.

From the pitch-black start where he catches a beam of light as though it were a ball, Adkins' style is brilliantly simple. There is a lo-fi feel to his work that is refreshing within the world of big bang circus. He communicates directly with us and responds to our laughter or gasps or silences as though we're a partner in his act. This rapport is tangible and makes you feel like you've just been part of the best double act ever.

By: [Honour Bayes](#)

THE PUBLIC REVIEW – August 2nd



Circus Incognitus – New Town Theatre, Edinburgh

Performer: Jamie Adkins

Reviewer: John Roberts

American clown and comic physical theatre performer Jamie Adkins brings his one man show *Circus Incognitus* to this year's Fringe and it's a delightfully charming and engaging hour of tomfoolery for the young and young at heart.

Circus Incognitus uses everyday objects such as a cardboard box, a chair, step-ladder and even fruit to create a playground of fun and frivolity, danger and suspense and outright laughter and it's all down to the charming persona of Adkins' clown. Here we are presented with a charming "everyman" who just wants to please the audience in front of him and he more than successfully accomplishes that task.

Circus Incognitus is a production that is full to the brim with happiness and inventive routines and his juggling slack wire finale is worth the admission price alone, but when you throw in some great moments of audience participation and you hear the sound of children and adults laughing together you can't help but be washed away by the show's delightful charms.

Adkins is a performer of consummate skill who judges his audience's reactions beautifully and uses their laughter and giggles to move the narrative along with great energy and pace, one only hopes that we see more of this understated clown in the UK in the future.

Fest
P46
5th August 2014



Circus Incognitus



A clown's beauty is in his or her lack of shame at disguising tremendous skill in unattractive goofiness, purely for the pleasure and entertainment of others. And it's this huge-hearted humility that runs through Jamie Adkins's solo show, anchoring his precarious acrobatics and cartoon danger in childlike delight.

Dressed in shabby vintage dungarees with a semi-permanent worried expression—even when he's gleefully aching a trick—Adkins leads us

through an hour of graceful slapstick that echoes with the ghosts of silent movie icons. Chairs see-saw under his balance, citrus fruits become deadly missiles and ping-pong balls materialise with undignified timing from his gullet, before being incorporated into a juggling act that masks fendish difficulty with silky nonchalance.

As with all good clown shows, there are unconventional solutions to silly problems (how to create your own drum roll? Why, by tossing a nut onto a snare drum of course), rickety furniture and audience interaction. But there are also moments of great elegance, when Adkins duets with a

bowler hat, tumbling it up his arms and across his back. Above all Adkins's persona has the sense of being recognisably classic while remaining remarkably fresh. There aren't many shows you could comfortably take both your great-granny and your littlest niece along to, but this is one of them. And if the beauty of clown is in its humility, the beauty of the Fringe is in being able to legitimately watch a clown show at four in the afternoon. ■ LUCY RIBCHESTER

New Town Theatre, 4:00pm – 5:05pm, 31
Jul – 24 Aug, not 6 Aug, 12 Aug, 18 Aug,
£12 – £14

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THE TIMES
Edinburgh 2
P1
06.08.14

Circus
Circa: Beyond
Underbelly
Bristo Square
★★★★☆

Circus
Incognitus
New Town
Theatre
★★★★☆

■ Front cover:
Lloyd Langford:
Old Fashioned at
Pleasance Dome,
Aug 6-8, 10-17, 19-25

The seven gifted cast members in this production by the prolific Australian circus troupe Circa behave with a deceptively casual craziness. The men seem especially deranged, whether it's the muscle-bound bloke wrapped in giant orange rubber bands or the younger acrobat bouncing between floor and trapeze. The distaff side, including a notable strongwoman and a slinky contortionist, tend to keep their wits about them. Yet no one is immune from lunacy. All share a penchant for donning giant rabbit heads — an easy means for each to release their inner animal.

Beyond reconfirms Circa's ingenuity at fashioning stylish, imaginative entertainment with a madcap wow factor. A variety show format is achieved simply via a pair of red curtains, two platforms and a couple of poles. In the director Yaron Lifschitz's sure hands, however, a classic vaudevillian setting takes on cuckoo dimensions. The overall tone is frisky and risky, unpredictable yet free of tension. A soundtrack blending quirkiness (a French-language *The Impossible Dream*) with easy listening

(Sinatra, Lena Horne) helps. In an emblematic sequence, the aforementioned strongwoman concentrates obsessively on a Rubik's cube, oblivious to the way the others clamber over or cantilever off of her. A later, tender passage of often tricky, seemingly effortless cuddling balances is accompanied by a Nat King Cole song. It's as if Circa is suggesting that madness can be romantic as well as chaotic.

Jamie Adkins, the creator and star of *Circus Incognitus*, is a circus-trained soloist steeped in street theatre. Comparisons made about his Chaplin/Keaton-style virtuosity aren't misplaced. This agile, endearing man with the skew-whiff hair knows his props, juggling everything from ping pong balls to torchlight. His habit of struggling with objects — a chair, a large cardboard box, a rickety ladder — generates plenty of laughs as well as audience identification. It adds up to a pretty lovely hour of all-ages physical comedy.

Donald Hutera
Beyond: 0844 5458252, to Aug 25.
Circus Incognitus: 0131 220 0143, to Aug 24



Edinburgh Fringe: best shows so far

Comedy

Bridget Christie

Last year's Comedy Award winner is back with a stonkingly funny but thought-provoking hour. *The Stand* (0131 5587272), to Aug 25

Tim Vine

From simple punchlines ("Isn't it ironic that *Carry On* films have stopped?") to more subtle ones ("Bees produce a teaspoon of honey a day. Only people forget that bees' teaspoons are a lot smaller than ours.") *Pleasance Courtyard* (0131 556 6550), to Aug 24



Alex Horne

We won't give away the high-jinks stunt that Horne pulls off in *Monsieur Butterfly*, but expect an amazing physical comedy challenge. *Pleasance Courtyard* (0131 556 6550), to Aug 24

Josie Long

How many other confessionals involve an imagined scene in which Nigel Farage comes face to face with lethal quantities



of marshmallow? *Stand* (0131 558 7272), Aug 24

Theatre

Unfaithful

A modern-day tale of two pairs of intertwined relationships that's brutal, forensic, but funny and forgiving. *Traverse* (0131 228 1404), to Aug 24

Confirmation

Chris Thorpe tries to see the world through the eyes of an English Nazi. *Northern Stage* at



King's Hall (0131 477 6630), to Aug 23

Dance/circus

Circa: Beyond

Madcap circus, taking in a muscle-bound man wrapped in rubber bands and more. *Underbelly* (0844 5458252), to Aug 25

Circus Incognitus

Jamie Adkins has a Chaplin-esque virtuosity, juggling everything from ping pong balls to torchlight. *New Town Theatre* (0131 220 0143), to Aug 24

Art

Katie Paterson: Ideas

Listen down the phone to an Icelandic glacier melting. *Ingleby Gallery* (0131 556 4441), to Sept 27