

Hunting of the Shark, reviewed by Lynn Freeman

Thriving comedy scene

IT'S an interesting thing, watching an audience pour out of a comedy venue. Depending on the calibre of the act of course, the people are smiling and immersed in conversation with their mates, talking over their favourite jokes.

They also tend to be in their 20s–30s. You don't see that nearly enough in our theatre audiences these days – neither the animation nor the age group (Bats accepted) and it's a damn shame. Leaves to be taken out of the comedy scene book.

In the queue to see **Brendhan Lovegrove**, Kiwi stand-up doing us proud in the London comedy venues, comes the man himself to chat to friends and fans.

Nice touch. Behind the microphone he's very assured – and very funny. A few jokes from his gig last year made a return, which was a little surprising, but mainly it's new material. And if **Wharri** says it's true, at least mostly, those true stories are his best stuff – an All Black saving him from a bash in a pub in England during a promotion and a few surprises. That couldn't make that up. Well **Wharri** you could with an imagination like Lovegrove's?

extra ones to cope with the demand. They're brilliant.

Assured, but still occasionally surprising themselves when they go on tangents. Their shows are crafted, but you never get any sense that they're bored with their material. And – funny! Ed Byrne is one of the best in this tough old business. Great comedy is universal, and it should make us question ourselves even while we're laughing. There's a perfect mix of meaningful and hilarious in a stand up routine and Byrne nails it.

Bats has three comedy shows on per night, some stand up and some, like *The Hunting of the Shark*, drama with a comedic bent.

This is by a still young ex-Young and Hungry group of practitioners wanting to do their own thing. They take Lewis Carroll's tale, throw in a rather disturbingly dark Alice in Wonderland and other Carroll characters and situations to make things even crazier, and create something all their own.

But they don't lose the emotional richness of Carroll's work, especially when the poor Baker describes in such shattering detail the story of his imminent death with the Shark is found – it's the best production filled with a few surprises. That includes most of the puppetry creatures which are astoundingly and eerily good.

Inknen, soloist **Freddy Kempf**, **Michael Fowler** Centre, reviewed by Garth Wiltshire

Horn fluffs

WE were lucky that at short notice conductor **Pietari Inknen** was able to step in for these concerts after the scheduled conductor **Jaap van Zweden** cancelled due to injury.

Unusually (on a Thursday) this first concert of all Beethoven works was a sell out. By contrast, Saturday was quite sparsely attended. In the first concert the Beethoven *Fidelio* Overture was well played but some horn fluffs were noticeable.

English pianist **Freddy Kempf** came to international notice when he was placed third in the

him not placing first quickly established his place as an international soloist.

His Beethoven *Piano Concerto No 4* was stylishly played and articulated but he does not ever it was a fine performance, well supported by the NZSO under **Pietari Inknen**.

Soloist and conductor at times seemed to rush a little, with resulting lapses in orchestral ensemble. **Kempf** is a charismatic player, always interesting to watch and hear. Beethoven's *Symphony No 5* was played and interpreted in standard fashion in terms of tempi although in the last movement the conductor and strings had moments out of sync with tempi a little pushed. **Lyell Cresswell's** imaginative

Saturday's concert, was an entertaining, enjoyable, new work.

Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 2 is a rather odd work, but a monumental score for the pianist to play. We half expect to see bandages on the pianist at the end of the tour-de-force. This was a convincing performance, not always perfect but mostly in the appropriate style. The orchestra gave ideal support under **Inknen**.

Kempf's beautiful *Chopin Prelude* as an encore showed another side to his playing. In the *Shostakovich Symphony No 5* **Inknen** really came into his own, eliciting not only exquisite string playing but also as the abrasive attack required from the strings. The orchestra responded superbly to his direction.

THEATRE REVIEW

Maui: One Man Against the Gods, directed by **Tanemahuta Gray**, St James Theatre, reviewed by Lynn Freeman

An epic story of here, made here

TANEMAHUTA GRAY shares qualities with his leading man, **Maui** – he's bold, courageous and unstoppable.

This spectacular has taken years to create and now to refine. This is the third version of *Maui* I've seen. Version two was impressive but a little rough in places and needed

some kind of narration to open it up to non Te Reo audiences. **Maui** is now a polished and breathtaking show and must surely be destined for the West End and Broadway.

One of the most important changes is the introduction of a narrator – **Maui's** adopted father, **Tama-Nui-Te Ra**, played with god-like majesty by **Te Kohe Tuhaka**. Even with the very good English plot synopsis given to the audience, he helps keep non-Te Reo speakers on track, and his own near downfall is more poignant for knowing how much guilt he feels over **Maui's** actions.

Tamati Patuwaia is a force to be reckoned with as **Maui**, always with a sense of mischief and naivety as he challenges the elements and the gods.

The four brothers work well as a team, much needed comic relief amidst the intensity of the story. This is as much of a musical as it is a dance/theatre work and the solos in particular by **Toni Huata** and **Kirsteen Te Rito** are emphatically operatic.

Big ups to the flymen, who really get this production off the ground.

You'll never see a more beautiful and dazzling show on this epic scale – it's got the grace of ballet, the drama of a Greek tragedy, the spectacle of *The Lion King*, the athleticism of modern day circuses (the aerialists are unreal) and the added bonus of being a story of here, made here.



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