

Freefall – Festival Freak Review

[Gravity & Other Myths](#) @ Holden Street Theatres – The Arch

1:00pm, Mon 22 Feb 2010

Summary: this show was *amazing*.

Now step back and explain.

I've no idea what attracted me to *Freefall*; the precis in the Guide is ambiguous and, indeed, a little *odd* given its location in the circus section. I walked in expecting some light acrobatics set against a bed of interesting characters embedded in some sort of basic theatre. Why'd I pick this show, again?

Regardless, as the lights drop, the young-looking cast appear, scribbling on hanging sheets of paper at the rear of the stage (a common motif this year, it seems). Then a large lightbulb is lowered from the roof – it's the only source of light in The Arch now and, as it is swung around its fitting (scooting within millimetres of the corners of the T-shaped stage) the soft orange light it emits lights up the faces of the cast with wonder.

And then the acrobatic part of the performance kicks in – and it's bloody amazing. There's tons of brilliantly choreographed tumbling and balance acts, the female members of the cast are swung and flung around seemingly at will, and the multi-level juggling is almost impossible to follow. And then there's the occasional spoken-word break, with the cast delivering lines based on the phobia theme... this could have been *incredibly* cheesey, but they manage to pull it off with the perfect balance of humour and compassion.

And the genuine sense of camaraderie that seemed to exist within the group... there's a tangible team on stage. If there's a spill (the odd juggling feat went awry), there's always someone to clean up. There's the little looks between them that indicate a focus, an intent, greater than the individual's need to get past the next trick. And, whilst the male members of the cast have a homogeneity about them (in dress and stellar ability), the women are more distinct: the coy, cheeky grin of Tilly Cobham-Hervey ("Blue"). The elegance of Jascha Boyce ("White"). The stunning balance and strength of Brie Henwood ("Stripey").

Now, there can be no messing around here; I heartily, unreservedly, recommend this to anyone and everyone, but with one small caveat: I saw this at Holden Street, not The Ringbox. And that may have coloured my experience somewhat, but I don't really care – because my emotional response to this performance was one of tearful *joy*. And that's something I haven't had from many shows... *ever*.

It's a ridiculously confined space for such a massive act... it's all *right there*. Christ, I was sitting in the second row, and one mis-directed club whilst juggling could have knocked all my teeth

out. When they're standing three-tall, the topmost person is staggeringly close to the roof of The Arch – indeed, the lighting rig in The Arch had to be reconfigured to provide the vertical space required for *Freefall*. And yet they towered above the miniscule audience that day – all ten of us, maybe – and they fucking *delivered*. I shit you not, I'm tearing up right now, just recalling the jaw-gaping joy I felt that afternoon.

And *then* I discover that, apart from instructor/mentor Triton Tunis-Mitchell (who's still on the junior side of thirty, and astonishingly strong), *not one* of the cast is over nineteen years of age. And that chucks a whole new perspective on things... because, whilst I'll see some of the same tricks elsewhere this Fringe (in fact, the entire first act of *Controlled Falling Project* could have been plucked from *Freefall*), I'm still stunned that a group so young were able to conjure up that strength, that skill, and deliver with such poise.

And the ending... *the ending!* An absolutely magnificent full-stop on a magical show; perfect punctuation.

Look, I could keep typing, but get no closer to communicating how much I loved seeing *Freefall*. I hope it translates well to The Ringbox – the kids(!) certainly have the skill to carry it – but such an amazing show, in such an intimate venue... this is one of my shows of the year, hands down.