

Constance Chapman - Edinburgh Fringe, August 2013

I attended the 2013 Fringe Festival with Strung Up Theatre Company, which was founded by two Cambridge students earlier this year. The company took two shows to Edinburgh this summer: *Snap Out Of It*, a piece of verbatim theatre about mental health which I performed during its five star run in Cambridge in March; and *Chaucer All Strung Up*, a new piece of devised theatre based on Chaucer's 'Franklin's Tale'.

I was a member of the five-piece ensemble that performed *Chaucer All Strung Up* in Edinburgh, and I enjoyed the many challenges that it presented. The first hurdle to overcome was that of training on aerial silks, since the play was set in a circus: I have been learning aerial silks at Cambridge Community Circus since February 2013, going from strength to strength, and performing on the equipment every day for the past month has allowed me to increase my endurance which will help with any future training. The devising process involved the whole cast and focused on the need to make Chaucer's original tale accessible to a modern audience, particularly one made up of children. We found that focusing on a family demographic, along with the novelty of circus performance, were good selling points while at the Fringe and we were able to sell out more often than not, which is rare for student theatre. Ticket sales were not the only marker of our success, however; we also received very positive reviews, gaining four stars from 'Fringe Guru', 'Three Weeks' and 'Broadway Baby' who stated "it is difficult to criticise such a well performed piece of physical theatre."

In all, the Fringe was a great experience and taught me a lot about the running of a semi-professional theatre company which could well be useful for my future career. I hope to continue to work with Strung Up Theatre Company in future, particularly on *Snap Out Of It*, a project which received acclaim at the Festival and was featured on BBC3 while we were there as part of their 'Free Speech' programme. Since mental health is such a major issue in today's society and especially in Cambridge, I feel that it is an important project to pursue and we have hopes to tour the production to other schools and universities for educational workshops in the coming years.