

Dan Sanderson – Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Summer 2016

With help from a generous Pembroke travel grant I was able to spend a month this summer at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival performing in CUADC's production of Kate Tempest's *Wasted*. A revival of a production at the Corpus Playroom in 2015, the play was adapted to be performed in a 50 minute slot at Olive Studio, Greenside Infirmary Street for a two week run.

Tempest is primarily a poet and spoken-word artist but in *Wasted* she has written a play that looks at youthful disillusionment and the inability to break a cycle of monotonous 9-5 work, followed by a weekend of escapism by inebriation. The play combines rapid prose with chorus sections of rap-style poetry to tell a bittersweet story of three twenty-somethings coming together for the anniversary of their friend's death. Our production was different, however, as we added the character of the dead friend, not part of the original script, as an ever-present omniscient narrator, reading out Tempest's lyrical stage directions, while the other three actors swapped characters throughout, giving the audience the impression that the characters were also "everyone that's ever felt how the characters feel".

We arrived in Edinburgh over a week before our run and began rehearsals in the small and damp space that was the lounge of our flat! Rehearsing for 8 hours a day was intense, but meant the play quickly began to take shape as we became familiar with the script, each other and the characters we were inhabiting. It was nice to rehearse in Edinburgh as we had more opportunity to soak up the atmosphere of the Fringe and see some of the incredible variety of theatre on offer. Highlights included an immersive performance of *Trainspotting*, which involved a character wiping his bottom clean of excrement (fake, I hope!) in the audience before placing the towel on my head (!) and *Britney*, a sketch show from an ex-footlight about a friend that had a brain tumour, which was both hilarious and heart-breaking in equal measure.

We had 2 weeks of performances, six at 10.15 am and another six at the more sociable hour of 4.05 pm! Kate Tempest is something of an up and coming name with a growing fan base and along with our novel marketing technique of using beermats as opposed to flyers and giving out free shots of Irn- Bru, we managed to play to large audiences, selling out for most of our performances. The reviews were also very positive: TV Bomb gave us 5 stars – "They do not miss a beat" and Broadway Baby gave us 4- "A sharp script underpinned by a strong cast".

I hadn't been to the Fringe before or even Edinburgh and I found the experience incredibly rewarding and fun. Everyone tells you that the atmosphere at the Fringe is incredible, but I was taken aback by the extent of the theatre on offer and the buzz all over the city. Every bar, restaurant and street was packed and alive with people and it was genuinely exciting to feel part of what was going on. I would whole-heartedly recommend the experience. However, it was also a very expensive experience and I am extremely grateful for the financial support that was provided to me by the Pembroke Players' Peter Cook Fund.
