

FLOEZ, THE Berlin-based theatre company dedicated to uniting acting, dancing, acrobatics, clowning, masks and music into a new art form, return to the Fringe after a two-year absence with their newest creation, a frequently funny, often imaginative look at the world of theatre from the other side of the cloth. Set in the wings of a small theatre staging everything from opera to burlesque, the show sees three theatre technicians, Bob, Bernd and Ivan, shift scenery, focus lights, tussle with inordinately long lengths of wire and complain about the displaced actors, singers, musicians and dancers who file through into their backstage world.

The three actors involved in creating the piece, Paco Gonzalez, Bjorn Leese and Hajo Schuler, create 29 different roles through remarkable

physical characterisation under the direction of Michael Vogler. But no one is "just" an actor in Floez. Vogler and Schuler bring mask-making skills to the mix, while Gonzalez and Leese are experts in clowning.

The masks themselves, stylised, larger than life, physically disguise the actors in order to allow them to change more readily into the characters they are portraying. Actors move between the hauteur of the theatre manager, the lethargic seen-it-all-before competence of the stage manager, the snotty keenness of the looks-obsessed new boy, or

the wide-eyed nervousness of the clumsy *corps de ballet* member. And punctuating it all is the keening innocence of the theatre ghost, a young girl, seen only by the theatre technicians over whom she is almost proprietorial, appearing to mark moments of hope and loss.

The connecting thread is that of the meeting point between reality and dreams, evoked in brief sketches that focus on one of the three technicians. The keen technician finds himself accidentally accepted for an onstage role, and expertly portrays that rapturous insight into another world, only to curl up in terror when he is asked to repeat the performance on stage. A bookish, friendless technician, forever falling over wires and putting the wrong plug in the wrong socket, keeps a pet in a flight box. And the

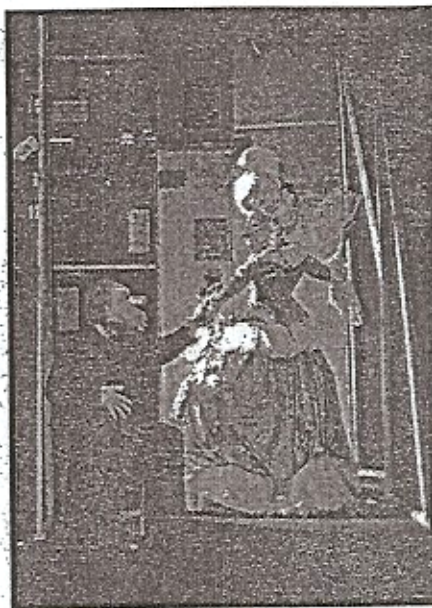
THEATRE

Teatro Delusio

Aurora Nova @ St Stephen's

Edinburgh

★★★★☆



Magical mayhem: 'Teatro Delusio'

stage manager, portly and practical, makes the romantic gesture each night of presenting a rose to a haughty opera diva.

Some of the scenes, particularly a memorable ballet spoof, are so sparkling that the entire theatre shakes with laughter. The relationships between the stars of the stage and the team of technicians are perfectly observed and although it is often sentimental, it is not mawkishly so. It's a little uneven, structurally, but aside from a few doses of rather unoriginal slapstick, particularly near the start – a dull mime of technical mishaps, electrocutions and miscellaneous maimings – this is an imaginative, almost relentless merry-go-round of absolute escapism.

SARAH JONES

To 22 August (0131-558 3853)