

THE FOUNTAIN

KATIE REDDIN CLANCY: IT'S A ROLLERCOASTER THROUGH SHOW BUSINESS, SPIRITUALITY, IDENTITY AND LOVE



Fresh back from highly successful runs at the Adelaide Fringe Festival and Melbourne International Comedy Festival, British comedy actress Katie Reddin-Clancy makes her debut at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival with her self-written, second, solo theatre production *Grace*.

Katie spoke with The Fountain about what we can expect from her show as well as a long list of writers and actors who have guided and influenced her work.

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TF: You are performing at the Edinburgh Fringe this year, how exciting?

I am – whoo hoo! Exciting and terrifying all wrapped into one. I think it's one of those: take every day at a time, know everyone's in the same boat and in the words of will.i.am, "man up and be fierce"...or something!

TF: The show certainly sounds intriguing, what is the premise?

Grace is about Alfie, the male half of a comedy double act, who re-enters the stage as Zora, a woman. Zora battles stage fright so Alfie plays characters they met on the road until she's ready. It's a rollercoaster through show business, spirituality, identity, love and was called "an important statement about gender and performance" when I was developing it in Australia earlier this year. I think that kind of sums it up.

TF: And what drove the project, where did your influences lie?

The history and detail of trans, non-binary and intersex journeys was brought to my attention by my friend Ela Xora. I thought the Artist's life was tough but my mind was blown when thinking about: what if you felt in the wrong body or your gender had been chosen by a Dr or actually you felt in the middle and wanted to embrace both. What if you felt this way and then had to battle prejudice, ignorance, bullying, hate crime, fear, discrimination just to be yourself. What if you had to let love go and distance yourself from your family just to live the life you want. It was something I couldn't stop thinking about. The fascination with what it is to be a performer has obviously been on my radar for years.

I'm not far off being obsessed with the work of the greats like Mark Rylance. I think I've seen everything he's done in the theatre since I became aware of his characters when he blew The West End's mind in Jez Butterworth's, *Jerusalem*. His Lady Olivia in, *Twelfth Night* was like something I've never seen before. He moved like he was a doll on wheels – genius.

I love hearing other people's process for creating characters and navigating the business. The pin board above my desk at home is covered with scribbled quotes from the greats in my opinion: Judy Dench, Ian McKellen, Michael Gambon, Timothy Spall. I love McKellen's quote, *"If I say often enough that I'm going to be in King Kong, I'm hoping that Peter Jackson will take the hint."* Also Judi Dench, *"I think you should take your job seriously, but not yourself – that is the best combination. I just feel incredibly lucky to be employed when there are so many actors and actresses who are not employed. That's why, you know, I sometimes feel desperate, in case I'm not going to be cast again."* The fear comes with the uniform.

I starred long and hard at those quotes when I used to get up at 4 am and write the show before I went to my day job. They kept me going. Particularly the quotes from writers. I used the John Truby Book, *The Anatomy Of Story* as a text book for a year. Good to know the self-sabotage, resistance, procrastination, fear and doubt isn't personal! I got a lot from, Steven Pressfield's books, *Turning Pro* and *The War On Art*. They had the real – get over yourself and get on with it message – that I needed. My favourite quotes of his are:

"Are you paralyzed with fear? That's a good sign. Fear is good. Like self-doubt, fear is an indicator. Fear tells us what we have to do. Remember one rule of thumb: the more scared we are of a work or calling, the more sure we can be that we have to do it."

"If you find yourself asking yourself (and your friends), "Am I really a writer? Am I really an artist?" chances are you are. The counterfeit innovator is wildly self-confident. The real one is scared to death."

"The artist committing himself to his calling has volunteered for hell, whether he knows it or not. He will be dining for the duration on a diet of isolation, rejection, self-doubt, despair, ridicule, contempt, and humiliation." It was the acceptance that this was the deal if I wanted to write that actually allowed me to get on and write.

TF: Have you been to the Fringe before, is there anything you are keen to see whilst in Edinburgh?

I've performed once before in the semi-finals of the, *So You Think You're Funny* new comedian's competition in 2014. I then stayed for a ten-day holiday seeing about seven shows a day – the dream. I really hope Cardinal Burns have a show up there as they were one of my favourites so was *Arthur Smith Sings Leonard Cohen*. The Fringe guide has arrived on my doorstep but I'm yet to sit there with a massive pot of coffee circling all the stuff I want to see. My show is at 1:45 in the afternoon which I'm thinking is a good time for theatre and for me to see a load of stuff each eve. One of my favourite evenings is yummy food, friends, laughs and a show so it's a bit like Christmas and Easter rolled into one for me!

TF: And what are your future plans beyond The Fringe?

That's good timing. Watch this space, she says confidently...I'll be watching it too!

Grace, Gilded Balloon Teviot Square – Sportsman's, 1:45pm, 4th – 27th August (except 13th)