

★★★★★
shows at the Fringe




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Edinburgh Festival Fringe theatre reviews: Fills Monkey: We Will Drum You | Up Her Sleeve | Velvet Determination | Sugar | Peaceophobia | Cock-Tales: The Antidote to the Vagina Monologues

Velvet Determination ***

Greenside @ Nicolson Square (Venue 209)

Fringe debutante Cynthia Shaw presents a not atypical one-person Fringe show, in that she tells the story of her own life and struggles as a piece of live storytelling testimony.

What elevates Shaw's show above many of her contemporaries doing the same thing is that, as well as being a rigorous and personable storyteller, she's also an extremely talented pianist, whose career journey involves performing as a backing singer for Paul McCartney at Carnegie Hall and appearing with the New York Philharmonic.

This small room at Greenside's venue on Nicolson Square is a world away, but she fills it with story and music, playing classical excerpts alongside her own tale of growing up in the industrial city of Pueblo, Colorado; the "armpit of the West", as Midwesterners might call it. Her father was a musician and she was raised with music in the house, yet her attempt to get into the Manhattan School of Music still felt like a journey to another world.

Shaw's formative years were in the 1970s, and her description of New York is that of a city which is bankrupt and crime-ridden in the era of the *Son of Sam*, but still a place and time of great personal and musical growth for her. Her story is as melodic as the music she plays. **David Pollock**

Until 27 August