



Fringe Review: A Regular Little Houdini

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A Regular Little Houdini recounts the coming-of-age tale of a young dockworker's son at the turn of the twentieth century, written by and starring Daniel Llewelyn-Williams. The audience is taken back more than one hundred years using narrative-style storytelling.

Our ten-year-old hero comes from a proud Irish immigrant family living in Newport, Wales. In 1905 his personal hero Harry Houdini tours Newport. However, his beloved grandfather, Gammy, holds a grudge against the world famous escapologist. Llewelyn-Williams interweaves the narrator's fictional story with real life events from the time. Knowing that he is a Newport native lends a respect and authenticity. Gammy's grudge results from a real-life publicity stunt where Houdini escaped from Newport Police. Though Gammy prevents our narrator from seeing Houdini perform at the local Lyceum Theatre, he continues to practice his own magic tricks above everything else, even school work.

He journeys all over Newport in search of perfect places to practice and perform. Through his eyes, the audience watches the maiden voyage of the Newport Transporter Bridge in 1906 and the Newport Dock Disaster of 1909. This disaster claimed thirty-eight lives. The emotion of our young narrator brings fresh heartbreak to the real-life tragedy.

Finally in 1913, as circumstances have limited the time he can dedicate to magic, he is given a second chance: Houdini is touring Newport again.

It does not feel like a one-man play, as Llewelyn-Williams adopts many characters, giving each their own voice and idiosyncrasy. Gammy is entirely disparate from Harry Houdini, our narrator, or his best friend Morris. The original score by young artist Meg Eliza Cox features beautiful Celtic violin.

A Regular Little Houdini artfully brings a little-remembered slice of history to life – with a laugh, with a cry, and a gasp of amazement. It proves one of the most heart-warming and transporting shows on offer this Fringe season.