LIAM RUDDEN – MUST SEE THEATRE

Edinburgh's Mr Entertainment picks his Hot Tickets to see in the Capital and beyond

Pretty Woman is on its way

Hamilton is here, Pretty Woman is on its way, and although it's only April, the Edinburgh Fringe and Festival will soon be taking centre stage

Have you seen Hamilton yet? The biggest show to visit Edinburgh this year had its glittering press night last month with the great and the good of the city in attendance for a pre-show reception at which producer Cameron Mackintosh was in ebullient form.

It's been a while since we chatted, in fact, the last time Cameron and I caught up was the after show for Mary Poppins' Dublin opening at the Bord Gáis Theatre.

"I'm bringing Mary Poppins back to the Festival Theatre, soon, very soon," he confided, and sure enough, a day later the news broke that the magical nanny flies back into the Nicolson Street theatre from 22 January to 15 February, 2025. Definitely one to look forward to. Hamilton's Scottish season finishes on 27 April and is a complete sell out. Check out my ★★★★★ review on The Edinburgh Reporter website.

While Hamilton is wowing them at the Festival Theatre, over at The Playhouse, Pretty Woman: The Musical (2-13 April), which seems to be plastered across every other Lothian bus at the moment, checks in.

Set in the Eighties, with music by Bryan Adams and Jim Vallance, Pretty Woman is the story of wealthy businessman Edward Lewis and escort Vivian Ward. When he hires her to accompany him to a series of functions, little did either of them expect the business arrangement to take an unexpected turn.

If you loved the 1990 romcom starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts, get ready to be swept up in Edward and Vivian's unlikely romance once more. Featuring Amber Davies as Vivian, Oliver Savile as Edward and Ore Oduba, last seen in Edinburgh as Brad in The Rocky Horror Show, as Happy Man/Mr Thompson.

Running time 2 hours 30 minutes including interval. Tickets £13-£99.50
www.atgtickets.com/shows/pretty-woman-the-musical/edinburgh-playhouse/

April finds The Royal Lyceum looking to Edinburgh author Muriel Spark for inspiration, though not to Jean Brodie, that woman in her prime, on this occasion. The Girls of Slender Means (13 April-4 May), based on Sparks' 1963 novella, is set in the summer of 1945 in the May of Teck Club, a hostel for the 'Pecuniary Convenience And Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means Below The Age Of Thirty Years', who are obliged to 'reside apart from their families in order to follow an occupation in London'.

Liám with Fiona Gibson, CEO of Capital Theatres

Despite the ending of WWII, the girls do their best to act as if it never happened; practising their elocution, jostling one another over suitors and debating whose turn it is to wear a Schiaparelli gown when the occasion demands. Not far beneath the surface, however, tensions are rising.

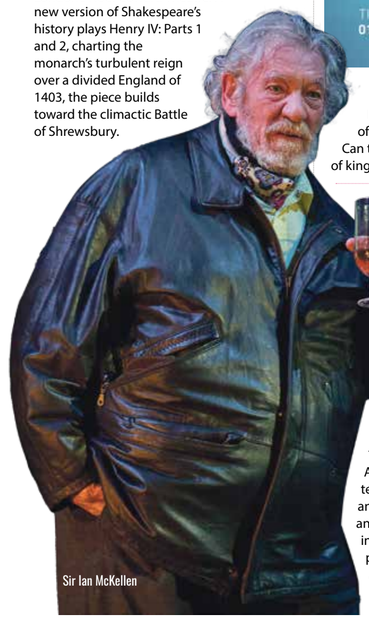
Running time 2 hours 20 minutes including interval. Tickets £16-£38
lyceum.org.uk/events/the-girls-of-slender-means

90 Days (12-14 April) by Kim Millar, is the story of 90 days that changed women's rugby forever. Premiering at The Traverse, 90 Days whisks us back to the Nineties and, through the eyes of the players, reveals how Scotland's first women's rugby team was created only to have their dream of playing against the best teams in the world dashed… before becoming the unlikely saviours of the 1994 Women's Rugby World Cup.

Lifting the lid on the challenges and prejudice the women's game faced in the early years, 90 Days reveals, for the first time, the events that led to the last minute cancellation of the Women's Rugby World Cup.

Running time 60 minutes. Tickets https://www.90daysplay.co.uk
www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/90-days-spring-24

If you managed to get a ticket for and were enthralled by Ian McKellen in his sell out 2022 Fringe production of Hamlet, you might want to take a theatre break to catch him as Sir John Falstaff in Player Kings (1 April-22 June), at London's Noel Coward Theatre. A new version of Shakespeare's history plays Henry IV: Parts 1 and 2, charting the monarch's turbulent reign over a divided England of 1403, the piece builds toward the climactic Battle of Shrewsbury.

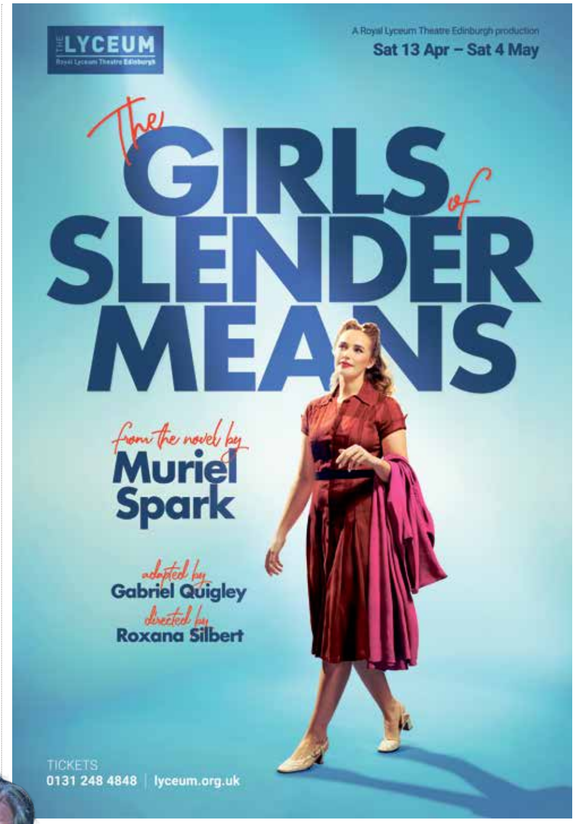


Sir Ian McKellen

The highlight, however, is sure to be Prince Hal's misadventures in the pubs of London with drunken knight, Falstaff. Can their friendship survive the pressures of kingship?

Running time 3 hours 20 minutes plus a 20 minute interval. Tickets £35-£287
www.londontheatre.co.uk/show/37071-player-kings

If it's a Tony® and Grammy® winning musical with a smoky, sensuous, jazzy, bluesy vibe you're looking for, you might want to check out Hadestown (booking through to December) at The Lyric Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue. Drawing on the Greek myth telling the tale of the ill-fated Orpheus and Eurydice, Hadestown transports the ancient legend to a post-depression industrial underworld where the poverty stricken are forced to become another's property to survive, signing away their life, if not their soul. It's a sinister, sexy, sassy tale of love and despair, power, corruption, rebellion and trust; a multi-layered retelling that makes it worth reading the programme notes before viewing.



Running time 2 hours 30 minutes including interval.
uk.hadestown.com

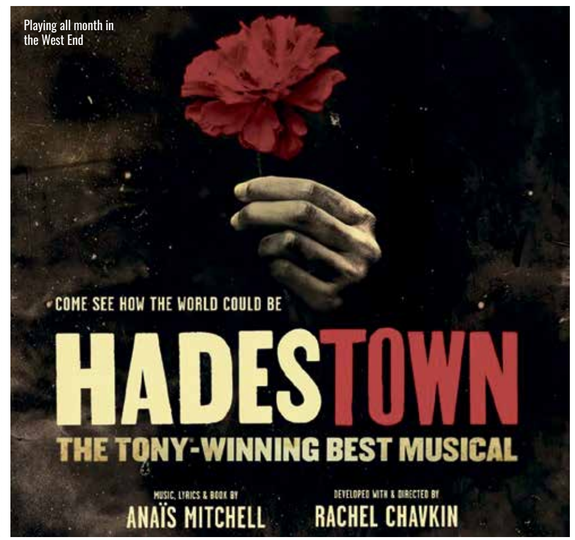
Now, it might seem a lifetime away right now, but Edinburgh's Festivals season is already ramping up with tickets on sale for Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) and some Fringe productions. From what have been announced so far, here are my Hot Tickets.

From the EIF programme, National Theatre of Scotland's The Fifth Step (21-25 August) at The Lyceum is a thrilling new play from the brilliant David Ireland, starring Jack Lowden as Luka. Luka has joined AA and is searching for a sponsor. James has been in the programme for years and looks like the ideal man to shepherd Luka through the 12 steps. However, the road to recovery isn't that simple…

Running time 1 hour 10 minutes. Tickets from £20
www.eif.co.uk/events/the-fifth-step

Fringe-wise, it's Miriam Margolyes and her one woman appreciation of Charles Dickens that caught my eye. Margolyes & Dickens: The Best Bits (7-15 August), will play at the EICC, daily at 4pm. Combining her infectious love for Dickens, the unstoppable 82-year-old, (she'll be 83 by the time the Fringe comes around), will bring Dickens' most colourful characters to life before opening the floor for a no holds barred Q&A. Explosive stuff, I reckon.

Running times 70 minutes. Tickets £25
www.pleasance.co.uk/event/margolyes-dickens-best-bits

Until next time, read my Edinburgh reviews via The Edinburgh Reporter website and subscribe (free) for all my other reviews at liamrudden.substack.com

Enjoy your theatre, folks.