

## Women on the Verge of a T-Junction

### The Scotsman

“strong witty subject... sharp and well constructed... funniest and most attractive drama around”

*Joyce McMillan*

### Edinburgh Evening News

Traverse Theatre

A performance that is firmly in the driving seat

Car crashes, mis-sold specs and great balls of fire. You'd have a hard time believing it from the headline events, but the MsFits are back.

And this time it is driving, and women drivers, who get the warm-hearted send-up treatment from playwright Rona Munro. She brings on three characters who most comedians would love to hate, and gives them centre stage.

Sandwiched in the centre of a pile-up in a hospital car park is hyperventilating Liz. She has just dropped her domineering fireman husband off at casualty and is on her way to attempt her driving test. For the fifth time.

And forgetting she's still a learner driver, she's got in the car and driven away on her own. Whoops.

Plumped right in the middle of Liz's bonnet is Bessie. At 82, she's having as hard a time seeing over the steering wheel now as she did when she had to drive a tank away from the front line in World War 2. Not that she's short of a full deck really. It's just that she gets a little confused now that her best friend Prudence is no longer around.

Landed firmly in Liz's boot is Ellie. With her phone stuck to her ear, and hormones running rampant around her body, she now has more appointments to reschedule than a medium-sized dentist's surgery would get in a year. And no-one is going to get in her way of making it to every single one of them.

All of which should necessitate a huge cast, serious stage scenery and the sort of production values towards which a major West End musical could only ever aspire.

Or rather it doesn't. This being MsFits land, all that is needed to bring these three quite different characters out on to the stage are actress Fiona Knowles, a chair, some well-judged lighting cues and a handful of hats and scarves.

With a rolling of her eyes so big that is enough to have her fans in stitches before she's even got a word out, Knowles sets about creating her characters from nothing. And as you watch them flower out on to the stage, little hints of how their lives are going to be entangled come gently floating into the script.

If it is a tried and tested way of telling a story, Knowles does it very well. And her observational comedy as you begin to recognise these characters is spot on. Nor does it all have to be cackle-inducing stuff. There's room for the odd poignant moment and even a quite honest contemplation of death and mortality in there too.

*Thom Dibdin*

## Women on the Verge of a T-Junction

### EdinburghGuide.com

The Byre Theatre, St Andrews

The MsFits collaboration between playwright Rona Munro and actor Fiona Knowles offers up a warm-hearted comedy performed with abundant energy. Supported by 'set' and props you could fit in the back of a Ford Fiesta, the action opens in the immediate aftermath of an RTA\* involving Liz, Bessie and Ellie. As their names suggest, taken together these three form a kind of Everywoman, whose inner life teems with fear and frustration but whose resilience shines through.

Marital power-struggles, life-work balance and the trials of aging come under the spotlight as we peel the layers of the women's lives. And although the laughter of recognition mainly comes from the females in the audience, men will also find that this play treads familiar territory.

Rona Munro's script is structured to make the most of the multiple viewpoints and drips exposition in a highly naturalistic way - these monologues steer clear of manipulation. But it is Knowles' performance that really makes it work. Sympathetic, dynamic, timed to perfection, she shifts gear from comedy to poignancy and back again with ease, including a hilarious foray into physical comedy for a fourth character, WPC Anne Guthrie. Altogether, a highly enjoyable experience.

*Lorraine McCann*

\*RTA - Road Traffic Accident

### Cornish Guardian

Mawgan Porth

Mawgan Porth on the Verge of a T-junction

Mawgan Porth provided the ideal stage for talented actress Fiona Knowles to showcase her award-winning talents on Saturday in Women on the Verge of a T Junction.

The brand new comedy drama by Rona Munro was hugely well received by a large audience at the hall, which underwent a revamp ahead of the big curtain up.

Fiona Knowles plays the part of all four key protagonists in this hilarious and often poignant one-woman show, which centres on three very different women whose lives become as entangled as their car bumpers following a minor accident.

As you would expect, the prang throws up all manner of chaos and confusion in this sharp, witty and well constructed show.

Geoff Brown, press officer for Mawgan Porth Village Committee, said: "She was absolutely brilliant and everyone who watched it couldn't stop laughing.

"It's the first time we've brought in professionals and the difference was unbelievable," he added.

## Stick Granny on the Roof-Rack

### Edinburgh Evening News

SUN, sea and sand. Here's the perfect antidote to end-of-year blues for those who know full well what's behind them. And it's not panto!

It's the MsFits again. That's Rona Munro writing the words with Fiona Knowles giving them comic interpretation on stage. And this gentle riff on family life sees Knowles creating three generations of a family on their holiday of a lifetime.

This is the holiday that Marie has been waiting for. She won it herself, but the hard-hearted competition company won't give her a holiday for one. It's a family holiday. So out-of-work husband Graham, nippy mother-in-law Nan and irksome last teenage daughter Kate all have to come too.

So while this might not be pantomime, it certainly has its seasonal echoes. Here's a family all cooped up together, all doing their own thing, and all hating every moment of it.

Marie is so tied up with looking after her family that she hasn't a moment to herself. She dreams she's in one of those urban myths where granny dies, but the family don't want to stop having fun so they bundle up the corpse and stick it on the roof-rack for safe keeping. Except the car gets stolen.

This compulsive woman, stretched to the point of breaking, is an all too recognisable creation from Munro and Knowles which, along with the familiar little traits of those around her, allows you to get right down and sympathise with her plight as she describes the horrors of family life.

Then it all changes, deliciously, as the spotlight switches to Nan. While Marie stomps off down to the beach, Nan goes searching for something on the roof-rack of the car. And the story we get from her is a slightly different take on family life to Marie's revelations.

Better is to come as Nan is left falling asleep in the car park and Knowles gets to continue the narrative from Kate's point of view.

This spiky adolescent has exactly enough of a persecution complex to make her funny. And her take on life is an instantly recognisable one.

While there's no fairy dust, drag or deformed old hag, this is just the sort of treat that keeps you chuckling long after Knowles has taken her bow.

*Thom Dibdin*

## **Stick Granny on the Roof-Rack**

### **The Woolminster Journal**

A Comic, Compassionate Catastrophe

The MsFits Theatre Company came to the Woolstore Theatre at Codford last month with their production of Stick Granny on the Roof-Rack.

Marie won a 'holiday of a lifetime' on a scratch card, promising sun, sea and sand on an exotic island paradise.

The winning card said it all. The heaven - an all expenses paid fortnight in a luxury hotel, and the hell - for all the family.

Take one everyday family, heat to 36 degrees, cover in sun tan oil, leave in a hired car to cook, then stand back and watch as years of family tensions boil over in an hilarious mix of laughter and tears.

Fiona Knowles took the audience on a comic, compassionate catastrophe of family relationships.

In this one-woman show Fiona changes from mother to granny to teenage daughter with total ease. She had just a few props to aid a superb and totally convincing performance.

During the show the audience were rocking with laughter one moment and in the next you could have heard a pin drop.

The evening was a real treat.

*Derek Miles*

## **Stick Granny on the Roof-Rack**

### **Strathspey and Baddnoch Herald**

The compassionate catastrophe of family relationships was captured in its full glory with the return to Carrbridge on Saturday by award winning actress Fiona Knowles with her new comedy drama Stick Granny on the Roof-Rack.

Playing to a packed village hall audience, Fiona launched into a captivating and colourful account of what should have been a holiday of a lifetime.

Sun, sea and sand - an exotic island paradise. Marie won it on a scratch card. The winning card said it all.

The heaven - an all expenses paid fortnight in a luxury hotel. The hell - it's a holiday for all the family.

Following on from previous hits including Love and Money and Sex and Chocolate, Fiona Knowles proved the teaming up with award winning playwright Rona Munro to be yet another guaranteed sure-fire success.

Welcomed on stage with her return to Carrbridge greeted by warm hearted applause, Fiona launched into the hour and a half tale with professional practice and radiant flourish.

As Marie she told of how the excitement of the scratch card win turned so haplessly pear shaped.

As Gran she explained exactly how she came to be stuck on the roof-rack and how she was saved by her 'you never know when you might need it' life jacket buoyancy aid.

And, as Katy, the daughter who's never quite left home, there came the teenager's perspective of an unfathomable and confusing adult world.

One actress, three generations and a sparkling well plotted script blistering with wit.

It was a fast-moving performance with Fiona skipping through the tale effortlessly switching from mum to daughter and to gran and back with hardly a breathcatching pause.

It was fun, it struck many a familiar chord and there were those in the full house audience left shaking with laughter with their eyes streaming with tears.

All in all a great night out and a wonderful light hearted view of the oft so mundane routines and commitments of family life.

*LJ*