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[home](#) > [theatre](#) > edinburgh fringe 2022 reviews: boy / intruder|intruz

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Edinburgh Fringe 2022 reviews: Boy / Intruder|Intruz

Two shows at Summerhall explore issues of identity - though with contrasting outcomes

by [David Kettle](#) | Monday, 08 August 2022



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'A harrowing, appalling story delivered with disarming tenderness, understanding, even wit'

Stef Stessel

Boy, Summerhall ★★★★★

Nature or nurture? It's the perennial question behind so much in human development – and the central issue, too, behind Carly Wijs's very moving *Boy* for Flemish theatre company De Roovers at Summerhall.

Twins Brian and Bruce had to endure intimate surgery as babies – an experimental procedure that, when it goes wrong, leaves Bruce as Brenda. At least that's outcome advised by a Harvard-educated quack, who assures the aghast mother and father that, with sufficient hormones and parental guidance, he really will become a girl.

Wijs tackles one of the most divisive issues of our current times, but she does so with admirable equanimity, and loads of compassion too. This is the writer/director, after all, that retold the 2004 Beslan school seige as a family show to huge acclaim in 2016. Crucially, actors Vanja Maria Godee and Jeroen Van der Ven deliver their at times harrowing, appalling story with disarming tenderness, understanding, even wit.

After layer upon layer of subterfuge are revealed in Godee and Van der Ven's ever more complex (and credibility-challenging) tale, what finally emerges is a reflection on the stories we tell, the memories we create, and how they come to define our actions and reactions, no matter how truthful they are. And as such, *Boy's* ultimate message of hope and resilience – well, partially, at least – might be just what we need to hear.

“ What emerges is a reflection on the stories we tell, and how they come to define our actions ”

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