

The Candy Butchers

Candy in the Hoola Hoop of Love By Ruby Boukabou



Hoola hooping, I am learning rapidly, is a far more sensual, technical and breathtaking activity than I'd thought...

"DON'T move your hips. Your ribs, your RIBS! And when it falls down - wiggle to bring it back up. Wiggle WIGGLE... NOW"

Surprisingly, the golden hoop circles my knees and rises back to my waist. It's my first lesson and I'm chuffed. "You'll need another six hundred" draws Derek Ives, who plays the lead clown character (and also rigs the whole show) and has been watching, as he leads me through the rabbit warren of the Opera House to the press office. I'd like to think three hundred. Or else I could leave it for the moment to the teacher, someone who's doing it damn well.

Jess Love is one of the four performers in *The Candy Butchers*, the company that combines seasoned professionals Ives and Azaria Universe with fresh NICA (National Institute of Circus Arts) graduates Love and DJ Garner. For its debut show, the company won The Most Outstanding Production Award at the Melbourne Fringe Festival 2004, and the 2004 Green Room Award for Outstanding Melbourne Fringe / Independent Theatre Production.

On stage, Love is a hoola hooping wonder. If you've seen her perform in *Spiegelwelt*, *Silencio Midnight Cabaret* or *Baby Take a Bow Burlesques* (Melbourne), you'll easily imagine how her bubbly stage presence can extend to a full show. With more hoops than I thought possible orbiting around her, she still manages to engage with her audience, grin infectiously and look damn cute.

As I walk into the studio, Love is standing in a wheelbarrow, hoolering five of the golden hoops. The wheelbarrow, she tells me in our chat punctuated by her sneezes ("I'm allergic to resin and this dress is covered in it") is an object of love in the poetically twisted circus tale.

The Candy Butchers is about a human circus, but it's the behind the stage scenarios that we see, says Love. "It's what the audience imagines of the world behind the stage and the crazy situations and lifestyles of the characters in this world."

It is the same show from 2004 with the characters developed. Also developed are Loves' skills and audience interactions from a recent stint in Europe. She performed street shows with Garner in Edinburgh Festival ("it's about gathering a crowd, chatting, we're actually just being ourselves"), London (short stint at Covent Garden re no licence) and Spain (at the end of a long strip of human statues in Barcelona, so audiences see one trick, clap and leave!) and Paris (Outside Pompidou Centre- superb).

Love believes, though, that the street shows don't translate to the stage. "The skills do, but not the format, not the style of jokes, not the banter. I don't like seeing it on the stage- but I love it on the street.

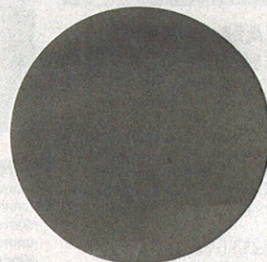
"(Onstage) I don't really talk much. On the street,

there doesn't have to be a reason, it's "hey check this trick out" whereas on stage it's more about why you're doing the show and what it's about."

Well what is she doing and how does she describe the genre? "Well 'contemporary circus' but that term's kinda ending" And what's beginning? "I don't know. I wouldn't want to predict."

Go on.

She squeals and we decide that the labelling is better left for the audiences and the critics. Which is when we proceed to the hoola hoop lesson.



What: The Candy Butchers: A Circus Sweetmeat
Where: The Studio Sydney Opera House
When: Nov 16-27, Tx \$20-30, Bookings: 92507777