

EDINBURGH
PREVIEW

Fifteen vital facts about the Festival

1 There is no such thing as the Edinburgh Festival. There is the Festival, the Fringe, the Film Festival, the Jazz Festival, the Book Festival, the TV Festival . . .

2 It's all meant to last three weeks, but long ago the keenest Fringe groups decided to come up a week early to try for good reviews, and now there's a week called Week Nought. Are they already coming up early for Week Nought? Will it be called Week Minus One?

3 Edinburgh becomes sexy only during the Festival. This is literal as well as metaphorical. I was up one year with Instant Sunshine and we went along to the BBC studio to do an early-morning radio interview on a programme which was shared with Glasgow. The harassed presenter said to us: "We're keeping it all away from Glasgow this morning, because the presenter there has been up all night drinking, after discovering that his girlfriend has run away to live with the producer." This could only happen during the Festival.

4 People meet people they haven't seen for years. One year I met a bloke I had previously seen in the middle of Lake Titicaca, between Bolivia and Peru. Not only that, but one of our group was staying with him in Edinburgh. 5 You meet people you haven't met before, but wanted to, at Edinburgh. One year I witnessed David "Fingers" Barlow, the venerable and nifty guitarist in our group, encountering Hank Wangford, who is a gynaecologist, face to face. "Hey — I've been to your lectures!" they cried simultaneously. 6 The official Festival (which pretends to be all about pure art) is subsidised art at its most subsidised and official. The Fringe (which purports to be Bohemianly carefree) is art at its most capitalist. Everything stands to make a naked loss or profit.

7 One year not long ago I was a Perrier judge, and the only cabaret artist out of hundreds we had not seen was Gerry Sadowitz. Four judges hurriedly went along that night and asked for

It's that time of year again.

Miles Kington, who first went to Edinburgh with the Oxford Revue in 1963, offers a survivor's guide

complimentary tickets, them being Perrier judges and all. Mr Sadowitz burst forth from the small cellar he was performing in and told them to piss off. "I don't want any of that Perrier crap here. I wouldn't have a sodding Perrier award if you paid me!" or words to that effect. Next night I went, at my own expense. He was brilliant, easily as good as the guy that won. The next year Sadowitz was performing to packed houses in a huge hall. The winner wasn't.

8 Of course, what Sadowitz was trying to say was that if the Perrier was taken too seriously, the Fringe would become all stand-up comedians and nothing else would get a look-in. He's been proved right. It was hard for comedians to get in among the plays, revues and music 15 years ago. Now it's hard for a decent play or group to get a look-in for all the Perrier aspirants.

9 I once saw Sadowitz on television. He was so frank and rank that only a few lines were permitted to go out on air. These were edited together by a series of waxy mixes. The result was the only good impression of the Edinburgh Fringe I have ever spotted in the media. All other attempts I have seen to convey the madcap, zany, drunken togetherness of the Fringe on TV or radio failed. So don't go by what you see or hear till you see or hear it in the flesh.

10 For the last month or two, plays, revues and acts have been doing pre-Edinburgh try-outs up and down festivals here and there. If they are not good by now, they bloody well ought to be. I have seen one, at the Bath Festival: *An Evening with Gary Lineker*, a new play by the great Arthur Smith. It was great.

11 There is a restaurant called the Bar Italia near the Usher Hall which has never, to my knowledge, been recommended in any restaurant guide, but to which I have returned more than any place in Edinburgh, partly because it's a big bustling Italian family place, partly because the food is always welcoming, but mostly because it always seems to be open, late or very late, and because I am always bumping into people I want to meet there.

12 I once put my theory about bumping into people to the test. I went to the Assembly Rooms to have a cup of tea, and said to myself: "I'll stay here till I meet someone I know." I could have been there for days. In fact, after half an hour I was in a group composed of such life-long friends as Ned Chaillet (Radio 3 drama man), Sue Limb and Roger McGough. The odd thing was that I had only met one of them before.

13 You could, actually, spend all Festival time at a premier venue like the Assembly Rooms or the Pleasance and not get tired of life, but the best thing of all is to talk to people and listen to people and pick up the word of mouth, and start going to things nobody else knows about. Till you tell them.

14 It is vital to go to at least one terrible show. 15 And remember, when you get back and tell everyone how great/unique/tiring/dreadful/unrepeatable Edinburgh is, don't be disappointed when they simply aren't interested, because you have to go there to know.

□ Miles Kington will be appearing with his group *Instant Sunshine* at the Pleasance (031-556 6550) from 12 to 24 August (except 19 Aug).

Polish for "Senses, Feelings and Passions" and includes nudity.

The Best of Mummenschanz (*Empire*, 031-225 5756, 17, 19-21 Aug. Not Suns). Surreal theatrical spectacle from the Swiss contemporary mime company.

Ubu Rex With Scenes From Macbeth (*Empire*, 031-225 5756, 16, 18-20 Aug). Fast-moving production of Alfred Jarry's surreal farce from Romania's National Theatre of Craiova.

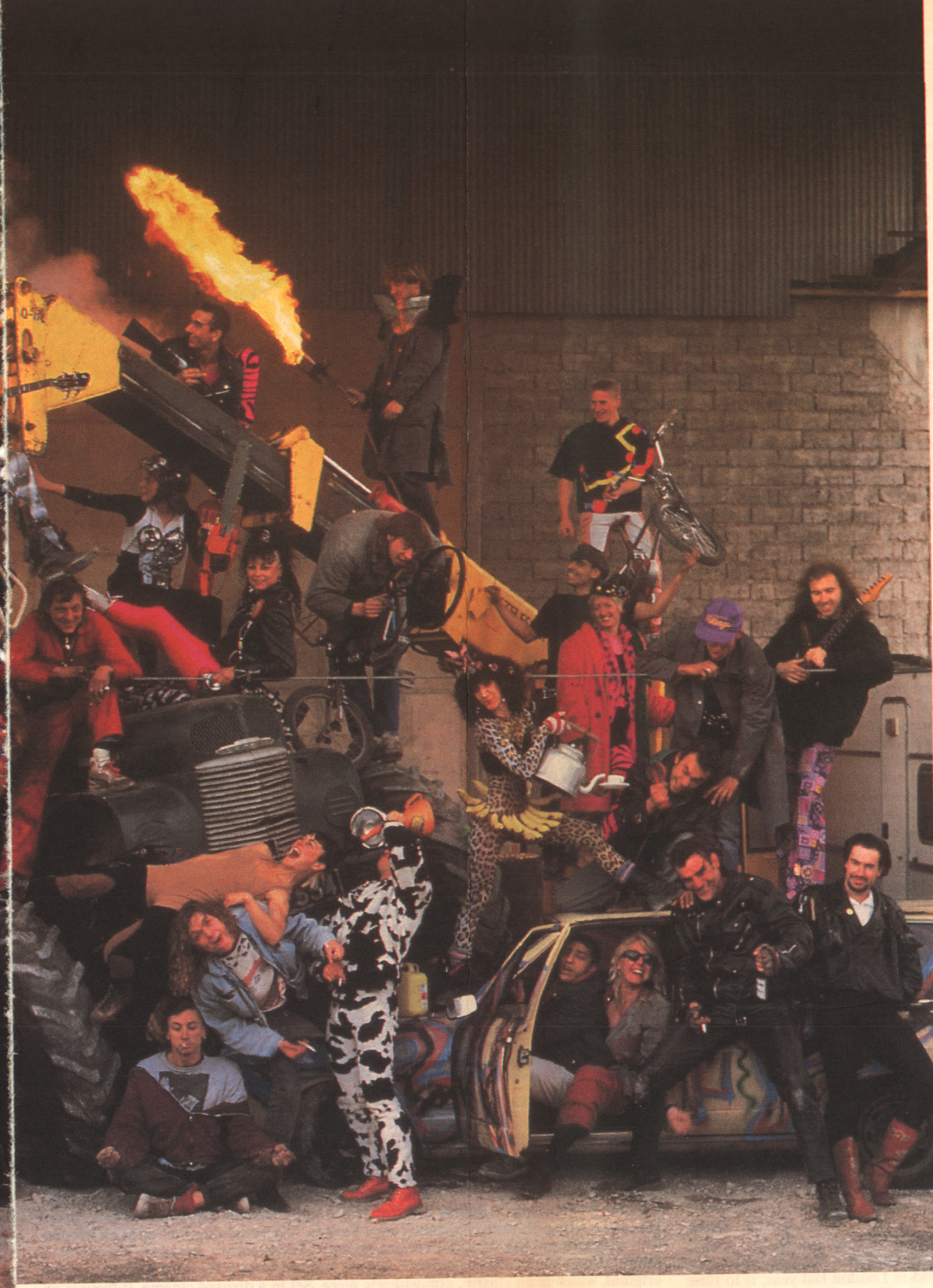
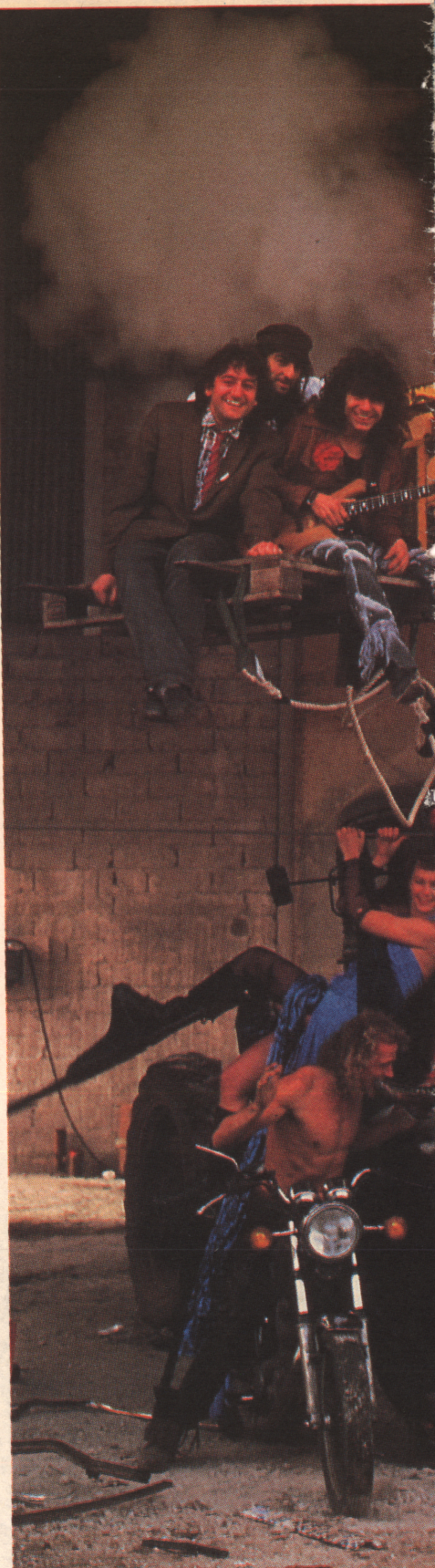
Today Is My Birthday (*Empire*, 23-27 Aug). The influential Polish director Tadeusz Kantor died suddenly while rehearsing this, his last play. His company, Cricot 2, performs it as he left it. Sarah Hemming

FRINGE

Glad (*Grassmarket Mission*, 12-17 Aug). A version of the play that took the 1990 Festival by storm. Edinburgh's homeless men portray their own lives in a moving show that has travelled to London and Berlin.

Out of Mind (*St John's Church Hall*, 19-21 Aug). Northern Theatre Company with a play staged inside the head of a silent boy, which won the National Theatre's Lloyds Bank Challenge 1991.

SEAN HUGHES'S humour is as Irish as Guinness, but travels better. Which is lucky, because the holder of the Perrier Award (right) has spent the last year on the road. In Los Angeles last month, he finally killed off the show that won the award, *A One-Night Stand*. There are new strings to his bow: he has written a sitcom for Channel 4 to be shown next year and appears in the new Alan Parker film *The Commitments*. His humour works by transforming the banal and commonplace into resonant comic material. His material reflects his anger-ridden Dublin upbringing, and he brings a Flann O'Brien-ish word-play to his humour — "My father's a very strange man . . . he comes from my mother's side of the family." It is not unusual to hear references to Samuel Beckett and James Joyce in his set. He has moved away from one-liners to more observational material — "I don't tell gags." He doesn't believe that comedy needs a butt and gets frustrated with those who view the craft of humour as a palliative with a punch-line. He has two shows in this year's festival: *I Shouldn't Be Telling You This*, But (Gilded Balloon Theatre, 031-225 2151, 9-20 Aug) which is a stand-up affair, and *Patrick's Day*, a show about two Irish barmen, also featuring his comic compatriot Owen O'Neill (same venue, 9-24 Aug). He returns to Edinburgh a more mature person, saying that he has rid himself of his Morrissey complex: "I suppose everyone grows out of their Morrissey phase . . . except Morrissey." Brian Boyd



Archaeos (above) calls itself "the most incendiary circus of toweringly alternative talent in the world". It is none the less quite good. The new show, BX'91, is the usual mix of brimstone and chainsaws. Leith Links (031-226 4001), 10 Aug-2 Sept

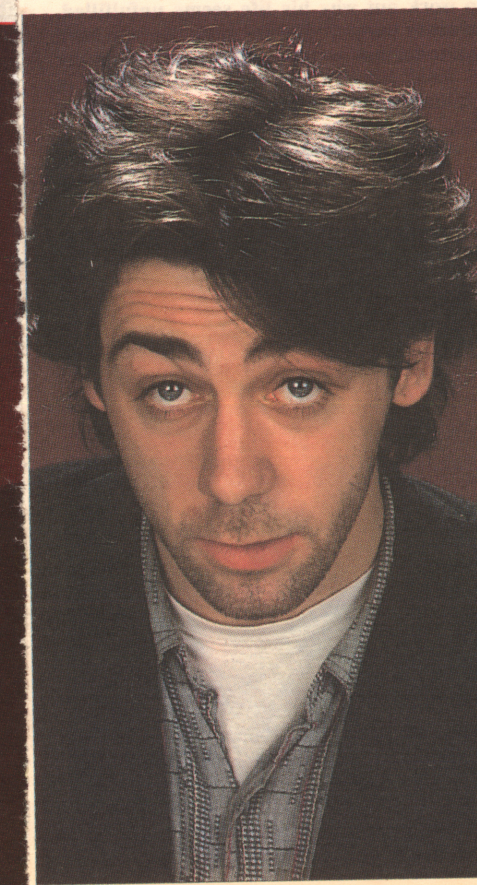
Tennessee Rose (*Cluny Church Hall*, 031-452 9620, 9-31 Aug. Not Suns). Tragi-comedy about a Tesco girl with an obsession about Tennessee Williams characters. Written by Richard Cameron and performed by the National Student Theatre Company (the combination that won the 1990 Independent Theatre Award).

A Dybbuk for Two People (*Assembly Rooms*, 031-220 4349, 9-31 Aug. not 13, 20, 27 Aug). Bruce Myers, leading actor from the Peter Brook company, performs in his own two-person piece about a Dybbuk — a restless soul that moves between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Ennio Marchetto (*Pleasance*, 031-556 6550, 10-31 Aug. not Thurs). Last year's cult returns: the impressionist who uses paper costumes to transform himself into famous people.

Stomp! (*Assembly Rooms*, 031-220 4349, 9-31 Aug. not 19 Aug). Luke Cresswell, creator of magnificent percussion spectacles, brings his curious assortment of DIY drums inside.

Kvetch (*Assembly Rooms*, 031-220 4349, 25-31 Aug, 11.30-1.15). Anxious moments and nagging doubts



IN A festival packed with alternative culture — alternatives to jokes, alternatives to thinking, alternatives to being moved — Christopher Logue's magnificent *Kings* is the real alternative. Brutal, beautiful, gut-wrenching, Logue's free translation of the *Iliad* Books 1 and 2 will be performed by the poet himself and Alan Howard in a 75-minute dramatic reading. Howard, the much-decorated Shakes-

pearan war veteran (Achilles in *Troilus and Cressida*, Coriolanus, Antony to Glenda Jackson's Cleopatra), will do most of the reading with the 65-year-old Logue as ironic foil. Don't be put off if you don't know the poem; Homer would be pressed to pick it out in an epic parade. Ajax is "grim underneath his tan as Rommel after Alamein". Paris has "curly-girly hair", Odysseus "gazes at his big left toe" in an awkward moment. There is even a joke — "How can a mortal make God laugh? Tell him his plans." But the great themes remain intact. Man's inhumanity to man is served up afresh with some glistening knife-cuts all Logue's own. Howard describes the *Iliad* as "perhaps the greatest anti-war document, which is nevertheless terribly excited about battle". *Kings*, he says, has not had the recognition it deserves: "In a hundred years people will be marvelling at this stuff." Don't wait that long; go and marvel now. A classic. (Assembly / Wildcat at the Meadows, 031-220 4349, 18-24 August, at 5.45pm).

Light in the Village (*Traverse*, 8-31 Aug. not Mons). New play by John (Losing Venice) Clifford, about a woman's struggle for dignity in a tiny, impoverished Eastern village.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) (*Assembly Rooms*, 18-31 Aug. not 26 Aug). *Hamlet* in three minutes, *Richard II* reinterpreted as an American football game. The RSC (Reduced Shakespeare Company) present their manically funny, boiled-down version of the Bard.

Workshop Negative (*Assembly Rooms*, 19-30 Aug). From Zimbabwe, Amakhosi theatre company brings a play about post-independence turmoil in Africa.

The Cruel Grasp (*Pleasance*, 031-556 6550, 10-31 Aug). The actress Janet Suzman crosses the footlights to direct this short, sharp black comedy by Thomas Kett. When Muriel finds a lover, her son reacts badly.

Can't Stand Up for Falling Down (*Assembly Rooms*, 9-31 Aug. not 11, 18, 26 Aug). Hull Truck performs the 1990 Independent Theatre Award winner — Richard Cameron's compelling portrait of three women linked by one brutal man.

Baggage and Bombshells (*See Red*, St Columba's by the Castle, 031-220 0541, 9-26 Aug. not 11, 18 Aug). Richard Crane and Fayna Williams, recipients of many Fringe awards, with a new show about war. Sarah Hemming

JAZZ

Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Andy Sheppard (*Queen's Hall*, 031-668 2019, 30 Aug). The highlight of this year's festival. Carla Bley is still the most inventive composer in jazz. Her style evolves in giant steps: the mammoth, self-conscious big band experiments of the Seventies have become tauter, more athletic, infused with African rhythms. She performs with an old friend — Steve Swallow, the great bassist / composer, and a new admirer — British saxophonist Andy Sheppard, who rightly makes no secret of his musical debt to one of the great jazz pioneers.

Gala Concert — Roots of Jazz and Blues (*Usher Hall*, 031-225 5756, 21 Aug). Barney Kessel is not that old, not the roots of jazz, surely? In fact, the American pop guitarist has survived the years pretty well — he's still able to outshine many younger musicians. The cast for this jamboree includes the Rebirth Brass Band from New Orleans.

Tommy Smith Group / John Rae Collective (*Queen's Hall*, 27 Aug). Tommy Smith has worked hard to shake off the influence of John Coltrane. The young Scot has succeeded, and is now regarded as one of the most

powerful and mature modern saxophonists in Europe.

Carol Kidd and her orchestra (*Queen's Hall*, 26 Aug). Carol Kidd may well be the most talented mainstream vocalist this country has ever produced. She has a very rare lyrical sensitivity; her songs revolve around words less than music. We learned from Billie Holiday that this is the key to singing the blues.

Tam White (*Queen's Hall*, late 30 Aug). This is singing the blues in a different vein. The coarse gravel of Tam White's voice may already be familiar — it crooned on the soundtrack of the TV series *Tutti Frutti*. If you missed that, you should hear this; if you know that voice, you'll probably be going anyway. Tim Kelsey

CLASSICAL MUSIC

The Marriage (*St Bride's Centre*, 14 Aug. 8pm). Mussorgsky one-act comedy after Gogol, staged by the Kirov.

Boris Godunov (*Usher Hall*, 16 Aug, 7pm). Kirov in concert.

Eugene Onegin (*Playhouse*, 21, 22 Aug, 7pm). New Bolshoi production of Tchaikovsky's great romance — the last one had been running faithfully since 1944 — just premiered in the US and not seen in Moscow yet.

Christmas Eve (*Playhouse*, 24, 25 Aug, 7pm). Rimsky-Korsakov comedy, staged by the Bolshoi.

Margaret Price (*Usher Hall*, 12 Aug, 8pm). In recital (Schubert, Schumann songs) with Philip Moll.

Continued over



MUSIC has often played second fiddle at Edinburgh, but Frank Dunlop is going out as festival director in a blast of divas. Margaret Price, Felicity Lott and the grand dame of all, Jessye Norman (above), will all give recitals. Norman should bring the Festival to a suitably monumental conclusion in a closing concert of songs by Strauss, Wagner, Tchaikovsky and Schoenberg. Phillip Moll accompanies. (Usher Hall, 1 Sep, 8pm).

THEATRE

Tango at the End of Winter (*King's*, 031-225 5756, 12-17 Aug. previews 8, 9, 10 Aug). The renowned Japanese director Yukio Ninagawa returns to the Festival, but this time directs British actors in English in a play by Kunio Shimizu set in a disused cinema (translated by Peter Barnes). See panel, page 14.

Too Clever By Half (*Empire*, 031-225 5756, 11-14 Aug, 7.30pm). Lenkhon Theatre of Moscow in Ostrovsky's comic satire.

The Ladies' Band (L'orchestre) (*St Bride's Centre*, 031-225 5756, 26-31 Aug). Sensual production by Open Theatre of Belgrade (Yugoslavia) of Anouilh's play in which an all-woman orchestra's concert in a seedy resort descends into chaos.

The Brude (*St Bride's Centre*, 031-225 5756, 9-13, 15-17 Aug. and Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh, 21-24, 26-31 Aug). R.S. Silver's neglected play about Robert the Bruce receives a full-scale production from Scotland's Brunton Theatre Company.

The Dispute (*St Bride's Centre*, 031-225 5756, 20, 21, 24 Aug). The National Theatre of St Martin from Czechoslovakia with a witty and sexu-



EDINBURGH will do something this year that no city outside the Soviet Union has ever done — have the Kirov and the Bolshoi in residence at the same time. Much of what they're doing is Mussorgsky, the tragic maverick who drank heavily, died young and finished little, which accounts for the fragmentary nature of some of the programmes. Highlights: *Khovanshchina* (above: Playhouse, 10 and 12 Aug, 7pm) — full Kirov staging of the Shostakovich version of Mussorgsky's epic five-act tableau opera; scenes from *Sorochintsky Fair* (Usher Hall, 13 Aug, 8pm) — Mussorgsky fragments in concert, from the Kirov; likewise scenes from *Salammbô* the following night. Michael White

ally titillating production of Marivaux.

Baal (*St Bride's Centre*, 19, 22, 23 Aug). R.S. Silver's neglected play about Robert the Bruce receives a full-scale production from Scotland's Brunton Theatre Company.

Shooting Ducks (*Church Hill Theatre*, 031-225 5756, 22-24, 26-31 Aug) New translation by Peter Tegel of a comic play by Russian writer Alexander

Vampilov, which was written in 1967 and banned during the author's lifetime. Directed by Philip Hedley and performed by the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. With Karl Howman.

Zan (*King's*, 031-225 5756, 26, 27 Aug). The controversial Polish company Theatre Eksprej has shocked audiences in Gdansk with its eclectic styles and sensuality. Zan derives its title from the initial letters of the