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## Roald Dahl's Marvellous Medicine ●●●●●

Kelly Apter

6 September 2017



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## Show inspired by great author's life has something for both kids and adults

In theory, it shouldn't work. A professor of neurological science in a white lab coat, talking about medical conditions with names of five syllables is hardly the ideal recipe for children's theatre. And yet, Tom Solomon has hit on something rather special and unique with his new show, [Roald Dahl's Marvellous Medicine](#).

Inevitably, some people will turn up expecting a lively re-telling of Dahl's book – which this most certainly isn't. But hopefully, Solomon's blend of anecdotes about the author's life, medical insights and daft but delightful audience participation will stave off any disappointment at the lack of George and his grandma on stage.

For as the show's title suggests, this is all about Dahl himself and his connection to medicine – which, I'll wager, the vast majority of those watching will have no knowledge of. Solomon had the privilege of meeting the best-selling author during the last few weeks of his life in 1990, when 24-year-old Solomon was working as a junior doctor.

The duo struck up an unlikely friendship, and Dahl shared thoughts and memories about his family's often rather unfortunate experience of the medical profession. All of which will be fascinating to the adults in the audience – less so the children. Few 8-year-olds will be bowled over by the fact Dahl invented the first instrument to drain water from the brain, thereby relieving those suffering from Hydrocephalus. Or be particularly keen to hear how Dahl helped form the Stroke Association to help his wife's recovery.

Those bits feel strictly for the grown-ups, as the small restless legs briefly testify. But Solomon is no fool, and mere seconds pass before he snaps everyone's attention back to his busy stage and on-screen action. Asked to shout out each time a doctor's bag appears on the screen, the children quickly re-engage – and if the quiz Solomon delivers at the end is anything to go by, they've absorbed all kinds of information along the way.

Because what better way to teach us how vaccines interact with white and red blood cells, than to get a group of kids up onstage, dressed in appropriately coloured t-shirts to act it out?

Solomon himself has a calm, fatherly tone and style which goes a long way to keeping all ages happy. A few minor moments of academic text could probably make way for more interaction, but for the most part Solomon has got the balance just right.

*Reviewed at Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh. Run ended.*