

# EDMONTON JOURNAL, AUGUST 17, 2010

## Clever satire takes the edge off Cancer

“Hello? Hellooooo?” A friendly, insistent voice greets us in the blacked-out theatre. It’s Cancer talking. We say hi back.

“Meeting me for the first time is massive,” Cancer says, an explanation for the darkness. Then he has us cheer on his grand entrance in unison. “We ! Want! Cancer! We! Want! Cancer!”

Toronto’s Bruce Horak personifies the big C in this clever, intensely entertaining cabaret that uses black humour to dispel our discomfort and dread.

Cancer is an egotistical though amiable creature who’s convinced we’re all his adoring fans. He’s got oodles of Facebook friends, more Google hits than Jesus, and just look at all the charitable events held in his honour. “You have no idea how it feels to be loved – nay, worshipped – in so many ways,” Cancer gushes.

He’s not afraid to brag, either. “I’ve done a lot of celebrities in my time,” he says, poring over his black book of past lovers.

Horak, of Monster Theatre fame, even dresses the grisly part. I won’t spoil it for you, except to say the clownish getup perfectly matches Cancer’s soap-bubble-popping smoothie-making frolics, facilitated by the lusciously long-legged Lucinda (Emma Brager).

Don’t think for a second this cocka-mamie show is in poor taste; it’s anything but. Horak uses satire to take the edge off a beast that wreaks pain and heartbreak on so many. Plus, he’s legit: a cancer survivor himself.

When Cancer finds out we all hate his guts, he’s livid. Post-tantrum, informed he can’t quit mid-performance, he skulks back to the stage, stultified. And begs for our sympathy.

Cancer is a hopeless romantic; he can’t help it if he falls in love with us so easily. “Do you have any idea what it’s like to be bombarded with chemotherapy, radiation and prayer?”

*This is Cancer* is as genius as it is absurd, with a satisfyingly violent climax. The silliness is rife but doesn’t overshadow the catharsis. Allow this remarkable show to spread all over your body. You’ll do more than survive.

-Elizabeth Withey

