

## REVIEW: RIGHT IN THE EYE – LIVE MOVIE-CONCERT OF GEORGES MÉLIÈS' FILMS, FRINGE 2019

Posted by Tanja Schangin | 07 September 2019 |  
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Entering the dimly lit, black-curtained performance room with its ceiling muffled in rococo stone roses and pomegranates in Edinburgh's French Institute feels like creeping into an old jewellery box to escape the Fringe's buzz. But the performance that

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is about to take place is everything but dusty: French multi-instrumentalist Jean-François Alcoléa's musical brainchild *Right in the Eye*, a live concert designed as a soundtrack to a series of silent films by the father of special effects, Georges Méliès, is an exuberant mixed-media feast full of experimental verve.

The wide-awake Alcoléa, supported by his collaborators Guillaume Havrias and Hervé Joubert, opens the show with a short documentary about Méliès himself, although subtitles would've done a better job at presenting the master's enthusiastic voice than the intrusive English dubbing did. But this little blemish is quickly forgotten when the musicians move to their smorgasbord of eclectic, ear-and-eye-popping set of instruments: there are familiar sights like keyboard and drums that do what keyboard and drums do, but these are interspersed with oddities that roar, purr and enchant. Among them are a melodica, gongs, shells, the glass harp and a gorgeous curiosity called the aquaphone (or ocean harp), which is played with a bow and creates an eerie fairy cave sound – you must google it to believe it. It gave me goosebumps.

Alcoléa himself is an excellent 21st century voice to promote the burlesque worlds of Méliès' characters: he's a joy to watch and his devotion to creating original, unexpected sounds is contagious. Just when you think he reached his limits after wiggling a drumstick between the spikes of a melon-sized cogwheel and ringing a receptionist's bell, Alcoléa kneels down and starts dropping plastic take-away lids on his piano soundboard.

At the same time, Méliès quirky slapstick of damsels in distress and multiplying alter egos, although more than 100 years old, can still make the contemporary crowd laugh. As Guillaume circles his forefinger ominously along the rim of a water glass, a poor man's sleep is disturbed on screen by a

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shapeshifter and a carnivorous moon in *The Nightmare* (1896). Once the performance is over, you descend the velvet-covered steps of the French Institute still drunk with sounds, giddy to go home, get loads of odd thingamabobs from your kitchen and start playing.

## REVIEW

80%

**SUMMARY:** Packed with musical oddities and a contagious performance energy, *Right in the Eye* is a feast for eyes and ears alike that stimulates and makes you want to go and experiment yourself.

## RATING

80%



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### Tanja Schangin

Born in Kazakstan on a day when the snow was 50 inches high; now living in Glasgow. Used to teach school kids in the Caucasus about Jan Svankmajer, but now works hard to become a filmmaker, cinematographer and animator. Relates every single word you say to film, but also has some amiable qualities.

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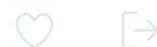


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