

Donkey and Horsey get together with free kazoos in balloon animal show debut at Free Fringe Festival - limited run.

Cecily Donkey's Belly Laugh Picnic features unique balloon animal sculptures as the characters in a safari adventure story performing for the very first time ever in Scotland at the Free Fringe Festival. The bright balloon animal stars of the show include well loved favourites such as bouncing Betty Bee and Lesula the blue bottomed Monkey plus new fun animal friends specifically designed for the show including Flo the Flamingo, who is nearly as tall as Verona Chard, their creator! www.veronachard.co.uk jazz singer, variety performer, composer, writer, producer and visiting tutor at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and trained at the Royal Academy of Music.

Themes around laughter, enjoying the outdoors, eating well and taking care of friends are subtly woven into the story through percussion, counting, singing, sounds, movement and lots of ensemble audience participation, all socially distanced and led by the antics of Cecily.

Best hoof forward: When Verona Chard lost her mum Betty at the beginning of the pandemic and all performing work came to an abrupt halt in 2020 she feared she might never feel like singing ever again.

A few months later, the pull of Cecil 'the balloon' Donkey and her supportive family audience members were too strong for her to ignore and she agreed to perform free 'Donkey Dots for Tots' sessions online with Cecily donkey (Cecil 'the balloon' donkey's daughter), as the 'star', in a bid to drag herself out of her Covid malaise. "I had cared for my mum for over 25 years as a 'sandwich carer' with no help from any official body even when requested, I didn't feel much like caring about anything after she died. It is a tremendous void". Explains Verona.

"Mum loved the Musical Balloon Band projects, she had a great sense of fun. Betty was registered blind and partially deaf, she so enjoyed our music with the vibration of the drums and the sound of children joining in with singing, percussion and movement. I feel that this is a fitting tribute to her and a focus for me to move forward."

Verona is joined by Roan Kearsley-Lawson percussionist (tuned and untuned) and her musical director Chris Neill has arranged popular children's rhymes and Verona's original songs with a jazz feel, encompassing swing, latin and funk themes with pop, global and classical inspiration mixed in too. Andrew Fettes directs the interactive music and balloon animal show for a family audience.

About The Musical Balloon Band: It was founded in 2013 by Verona Chard in collaboration with the Beanbag Music initiative at the Nottingham Theatre Royal and Concert Halls with research and development funded by the Art's Council. They have performed across the country and this is their first time in Scotland although Verona has taken part in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Festival several times before.

TICKETS - Box Office: 0131 226 0000 and <https://www.edfringe.com>

Cecily Donkey's Belly Laugh Picnic - with the Musical Balloon Band - Live Music with a Twist!
When: Thurs 26, Fri 27, Sat 28 and Sun 29 August - Limited run!
Time: 11:30am - 12:30pm
Where: Venue 170
The Counting House - The Ballroom, 38, West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DD

Suitable for the whole family, ideal for under 8's.

www.freefestival.co.uk @freefestivalfringe @edfringe <https://twitter.com/muballoon>
<https://instagram/musicalballoonband>

"feedback about you guys was nothing but positive, everyone loved it. Until the next time....." Glenda and Lyn - Hayes Carnival / Family Fun Day 2018, 2019

" the music was excellent and the script moved along at a cracking pace. The audience was fully engaged and it all felt like great fun!" - Neil Bennison, Music Programme Manager, Theatre Royal & Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham

"you've got something really special" David Longford - Creative Learning Manager - TRCH, Nottingham

"you were great and that the kids and parents were all very happy" - L. Cleaver, Special Projects, The Club at The Ivy

"I could tell that you just love what you do! It was a fantastic addition to our event!" C. Roberts - London Business School

"it was enchanting. The children were really enjoying it and it was a great way for them to find out about music - lovely!" Mandy Hare, General Manager - The Woodville, Gravesend, Kent



<https://www.musicalballoonband.com> (currently developing a new interactive website)