



Malkin's *Thunderfoot* an autobiographical fable

London Free Press, Joe Belanger

June 4, 2017

Children process information differently than adults.

Take Aaron Malkin, for instance, who was four years old when his mother died.

Those are the broad strokes that led to the creation of *Thunderfoot*, Malkin's first one-man show at London Fringe.

Malkin is a longtime Fringe Festival performer, the James or significantly taller half of James and Jamesy, with Alastair Knowles, who've won awards everywhere they've performed.

This is Malkin in a significant departure — what he describes as an “autobiographical fairy tale.” That's almost the perfect description of *Thunderfoot*. You could add poignant musical, drama, physical comedy or clowning, with a dash of stand-up and improv comedy, whether intended or not.

Malkin delivers an outstanding performance as four-year-old Mattias and several other characters, including his aged father and various folks such as the elderly lady who runs a bookstore in Småland.

The characters each speak to the massive footprints found in the road, huge trees knocked over and an earthquake, or “quaking” that draws the town together to figure out what's happening and what to do. There is a giant on the loose in town.

But it opens with Malkin first kibitzing with the audience, then under a single spotlight he says, “I was four when my father asked me to come sit on the living room

carpet. That's when he tells me ‘Your mother's dead.’”

And so the show begins as the little boy tries and fails for years to find out what happened to his mother, the adults in his world unable or unwilling to explain.

So, Mattias comes up with his own story. Malkin uses his significant clowning skills for much of the show, combined with his vocal sound effects augmented by recorded effects.

There are songs in the show with lyrics by Patrick Kearns and a sound design by Adrian Shephard-Gawinski that will rip your heart open, enhanced by Malkin's lovely, emotionally charged vocals.

Malkin's dramatic acting is inspiring, which is unusual when combined with audience participation and significant physical comedy. Even his mistakes, such as mixing up one of the character's accents, are fun.

Like James and Jamesy, Malkin incorporates his mistakes, audience reactions or comments into his scenes, a clear demonstration of his considerable talent at improvisation.

Thunderfoot will stay with you long after you've left the theatre, and will remind you of what it was like to be a child, the innocence, the unbounded imagination and the deep hurts that can take a lifetime to heal.

Thunderfoot is not just an “autobiographical fairy tale.” It's a cautionary tale.