

**BroadwayBaby** Over 700,000 pubs worldwide, plus your mates. [Install Now](#) Find your mates on Boozr. [Boozr APP](#)



By Paul F Cockburn | 7th Aug 2016 | ★★★★★

**T**rust me, Fringe magic still happens. Just when you least expect it, you stumble upon a rough little diamond of a show, lurking within the depths of an old church, even early in the day. Pittsburgh-based Grandview Theatre Group's version of *Dani Girl* may be legally designated as an 'amateur' one, but it's a production bursting with vitality (despite its undoubtedly morbid subject), exuding compassion and performed with speed, economy and a determination to never shirk from the cathartic.

sharp music and take-no-prisoners lyrics ensure that *Dani Girl* is a remarkably playful, hope-filled story

Starting as it means to go on, with nine year old Dani leading the funeral ceremony for the latest of her soft toys that she's diagnosed with some form of cancer, *Dani Girl* speedily introduces us to Ralph – either an imaginary friend, a genuine guardian angel, or Dani's imaginary and friendly guardian angel. She's had leukaemia, on and off, since infancy; her fairytale-loving father couldn't cope with the stress of it and left, while her mother clings with increasing desperation to her faith in both God and in "the Lord helping those who help themselves". A depressing opening? Far from it: Michael Kooman's sharp music and Christopher Dimond's take-no-prisoners lyrics ensure that, at least initially, *Dani Girl* is a remarkably playful, hope-filled story.

It's clear that Dani is an imaginative girl – inherited from her now-absent father, rather than a mother who insists that her daughter needs to take things seriously if she's ever to beat the illness and get back her hair. Luckily for Dani, she is suddenly forced to share her hospital room with Marty, a resentful boy with Hodgkins Disease who hides his deep-seated fears of the world behind a love of screen heroes ranging from Superman and Indiana Jones to *Star Trek's* Captain Jean-Luc Picard.

Natalie Hatcher is perfectly cast as Dani; vocally and physically she has the movements and attitudes of a rather 'young' nine year old, and yet a strong voice capable of matching every lyrical challenge given to her. Cynthia Dougherty initially has less emotional distance to go as Mother; indeed, she only really has one song to call her own – "The Sun Still Rose" – but she delivers it with heart-breaking power. Conner Gillooly as Marty proves to be an excellent foil to Hatcher's Dani – a tad curmudgeonly, yet still with that innocence shining through the cracks in his armour. The most exuberant performance, though, comes from Rob James, who plays Ralph and all of the other characters Dani and Marty's adventures require – a casting restriction that's cleverly referenced in the script.

Bursting with singalong melodies, witty lyrics and some surprisingly timeless cultural references (*Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and *Ghostbusters* to name but a few), *Dani Girl* is a surprisingly overlooked musical. Let's just hope that's not the case with this particular production, which, despite its location and time slot, deserves really big audiences. Producer/director Stephen Santa and his team are doing great work that really should be seen.

Over 700,000 pubs worldwide, plus your mates. Find your mates on Boozr. [Boozr APP](#)

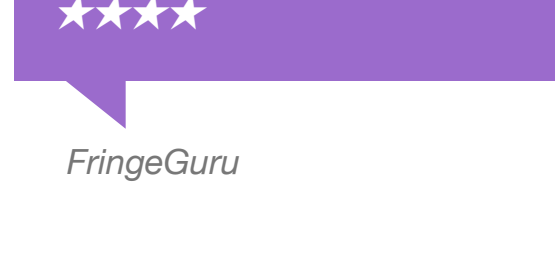
**AT A GLANCE**

Type: Semi-professional company  
Performers: 4

**GENRE TAGS**

- Musical theatre
- Children's

**WHAT THE PRESS SAY**



**MOST POPULAR** [SEE MORE](#)

Grid of featured shows: PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, MORMON, MAMMA MIA'S, MOULIN ROUGE!, THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG, GOT YOU COVERED.

**Halle Berry Didn't Mince Her Words About Her Feelings Towards Keanu Reeves**  
Digital Trends [Open](#)



By **Paul Fisher Cockburn** @fishercockburn  
Joined 2012 | Features 11 | Reviews 546 | Readers 1,379,421

Paul Fisher Cockburn is an Edinburgh-based freelance journalist and content writer. Clear, considered, concise.

**REVIEWS BY PAUL FISHER COCKBURN**

- Summerhall**: Ode to Joy (How Gordon got to go to the nasty pig party) ★★★★★
- Roundabout @ Summerhall**: Feeling Afraid as If Something Terrible is Going to Happen ★★★
- Summerhall**: One of Two ★★★★★
- Scottish Storytelling Centre**: Moira in Lockdown ★★★★★
- Laughing Horse @ Bar 50**: Love and Sex on the Spectrum ★★★★★
- Royal Lyceum Theatre**: Mrs Puntilla And Her Man Matti ★★

**Since you're here...**  
... we have a small favour to ask. We don't want your money to support a hack's bar bill at Abattoir, but if you have a pound or two spare, we really encourage you to support a good cause. If this review has either helped you discover a gem or avoid a turkey, consider doing some good that will really make a difference.  
You can donate to the charity of your choice, but if you're looking for inspiration, there are three charities we really like.  
[Show me the charities](#)

**PERFORMANCES**

August 2016 month

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5 10:30	6 10:30
7	8 10:30	9 10:30	10 10:30	11 10:30	12 10:30	13 10:30
14	15 10:30	16 10:30	17 10:30	18 10:30	19 10:30	20 10:30
21	22 10:30	23 10:30	24 10:30	25 10:30	26 10:30	27 10:30
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**LOCATION**



**THE BLURB**

When Dani, a precocious nine-year-old, loses her hair to leukemia, she embarks on a magical journey to get it back. Simultaneously hilarious and heartbreaking, *Dani Girl* is a tale in the face of death, hope in the face of despair, and the indomitable power of the human imagination.

Up to **60%** off theatre tickets [Click here >](#)

**BroadwayBaby** performing arts across the UK and beyond since 2004. Popular Articles: HOW TO SELL YOUR SHOW, THE BOBBY AWARD, WRITE FOR BROADWAY BABY, WEST END TICKETS. Popular Sections: WEST END, LONDON FRINGE, EDINBURGH FRINGE, BRIGHTON FRINGE. Contact Us: Ticket Hotline: +44 (0) 207 492 1606. Press Releases: [pressreleases@broadwaybaby.com](mailto:pressreleases@broadwaybaby.com)