

Navigation 

Heated Rivalry: The Unauthorised Musical Parody — Edinburgh Festival Fringe

by Admin on Monday, 17 August, 2026 in Edinburgh 2026, Onstage, Review



Joseph Dann and Zheng Xi Yong in Heated Rivalry The Unauthorised Musical Parody at Udderbelly at Underbelly, George Square. *Picture: Alex Brenner*

Heated Rivalry: The Unauthorised Musical Parody continues at Udderbelly at Underbelly, George Square until 30 August 2026, before transferring to Underbelly Boulevard Soho, London from 7 October to 1 November 2026.

Star rating: **five stars** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

That the Fringe now hosts three separate musical stage parodies of *Heated Rivalry* says a lot about their source; the Crave/HBO Max series arrived in November 2025 as a modestly budgeted, six-episode production and left the following February as the most-watched acquired scripted series in HBO Max's history, its audience passing 10.6 million US viewers and more than doubling after the finale.

Stars Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie have been swept up in the phenomenon just as fast, their joint press tour turning into a hot bed of viral clips and memes. Now, a second season, greenlit within weeks of the premiere, is already in production.

The online commentary trying to account for this wild reception has been nearly as prolific as the social media fandom it describes. Critics across outlets from *The Cut* to the *Harvard Crimson* have called the show *Sex and the City* for gay male viewers – a glamorous fantasy life full of fortunes – or, more relevantly (given that roughly seven in ten viewers are women, according to Nielsen ratings), have claimed that straight women just love watching soft gay porn performed by actors with perfectly sculpted, white-hot bodies.

It is precisely the overheated, internet-native devotion that a Fringe parody is built to satirise, and of the three productions taking aim this August, ***Heated Rivalry: The Unauthorised Musical Parody*** arrives with the strongest pedigree: a sold-out Off-Broadway run at The Culture Club, twice extended, and a cast largely carried over into the show's forthcoming UK transfer.

Dylan MarcAurele (book, music, lyrics and orchestrations; also the writer behind Fringe favourite *Pop Off, Michelangelo!*) wastes no time establishing the show's register. The narrator, Susan – a stand-in for the fandom's army of besotted, middle-aged devotees – opens proceedings by cheerfully cataloguing exactly what has brought everyone to the theatre, and the tone rarely dips below that pitch for the next 70 minutes.

Shane Hollander, golden boy of the Canadian ice, and Ilya Rozanov, his swaggering Russian rival-turned-lover, are compressed into a plot built almost entirely for punchlines: scrambled chronology, a roster of scene-stealing walk-ons (a cameo appearance for 'Ilya's ass' among them), and a pop-driven score that at one point detours, unmistakably, into a Y2K-era Europop hit for a party sequence – a needle-drop the audience clocks instantly and loudly approves of.

Alan Kliffer, who originated the production Off-Broadway and directs here as well as serving as an executive producer alongside Christian Palomares and Sean Nyberg, keeps the whole thing moving at a clip that never lets a joke overstay its welcome.

What elevates the show above pastiche is the cast's evident vocal capability. Zheng Xi Yong plays Shane with an exaggerated, near-feral innocence that never curdles into meanness. Joseph Dann's Ilya – a professional stage debut for the performer – pairs a genuinely rich baritone with comic instincts sturdy enough to swing between meathead bravado and something closer to tenderness.

Andrew Berlin and Sylvie Stenson do the show's heaviest structural lifting, cycling through a run of supporting roles – Ilya's father and Shane's mother chief among them – with the kind of quick-change stamina Fringe runs demand. As Susan, May Tether anchors the whole enterprise, narrating with a straightfaced commitment that makes the character's escalating fervour funnier with each appearance.

Brooke Engen and Tiffany Engen's choreography and Mateo Chavez Lewis' music direction give the ensemble numbers their snap, while Sully Ross' scenic design, Brendan McCann's costumes, Devin Cameron's lighting and Germán Martínez's sound design do a lot with the compact demands of a Fringe venue.

The production leans hard into audience participation and a fair amount of exposed skin, both squarely aimed at a Fringe late-evening crowd; it's a broad, knowingly silly hour sung well enough that the silliness earns its keep.

Moreover, thanks to its self-reflexive, inside-Broadway humour – reminiscent of *Forbidden Broadway* and, more recently, *Stranger Sings!*, the Off-Broadway musical parody of the hit Netflix series – you don't need to be familiar with the TV series to fully understand and enjoy it. I know this for a fact, because I wasn't!

Patrick Honoré

SHARE THIS POST:



📍 Alan Kliffer, Andrew Berlin, Brooke Engen, Christian Palomares, Dylan MarcAurele, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Edinburgh Fringe, Heated Rivalry, Heated Rivalry: The Unauthorised Musical Parody, Joseph Dann, Mateo Chavez Lewis, May Tether, Sean Nyberg, Sylvie Stenson, Tiffany Engen, Udderbelly, Underbelly, Zheng Xi Yong

◀ A History of Paper – Pitlochry Festival Theatre

National Youth Music Theatre – West Side Story ▶

FOLLOW US



London Theatre Tickets

Select show

How many tickets?

Find Tickets

SEARCH THE SITE

Search...





THE website for theatre programmes through the years



MUSICALS **PLAYS** **BALLET**
VARIETY **OPERA**

New stock added every week

MUSICAL THEATRE REVIEW OFFER

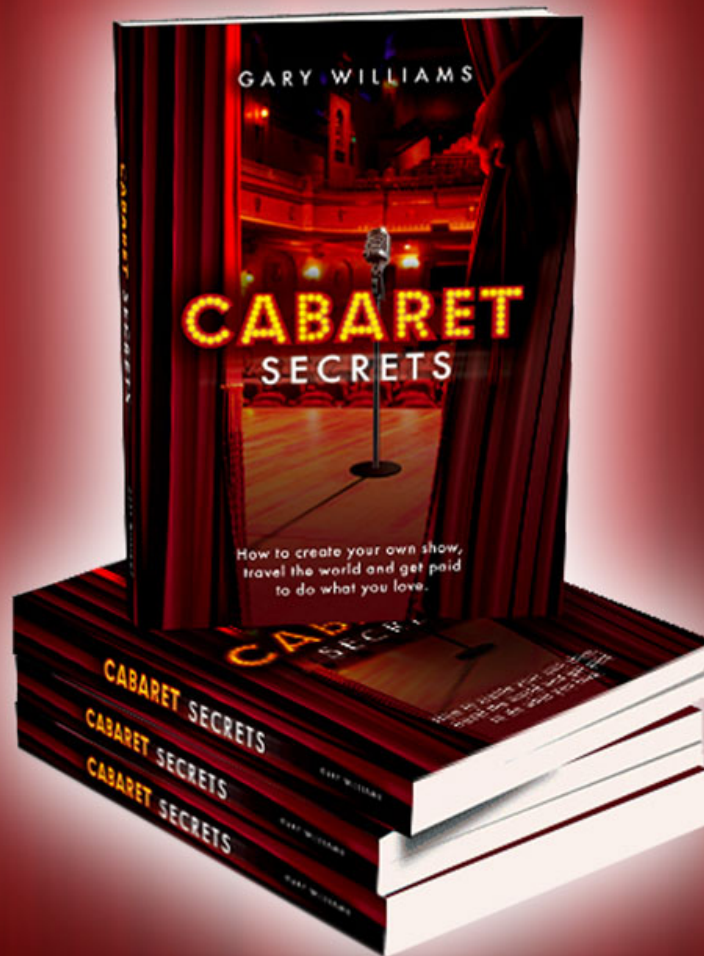
**Buy 3 or more programmes and get
10% off total buy**

Coupon Code: mtr10

www.oldtheatreprogrammes.co.uk

"An invaluable guide"

PLAYBILL



Download your free sample
cabaretsecrets.com

PHOTAGE.CO

HALF-PRICE SPRING SALE

Mounted and framed
photographic prints
& greetings cards

www.photage.co/shop

**Top 10
Blog 2020**

vuelio

CATEGORIES

- Backstage

- [Edinburgh 2026](#)
 - [Feature](#)
 - [Interview](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [Onstage](#)
 - [Review](#)
- [Special Feature Sponsored](#)
 - [Uncatergorised](#)
 - [Worldwide](#)

You can unsubscribe at any time by clicking the link in the footer of our emails. For information about our privacy practices, [click here](#).

LATEST	POPULAR	COMMENTS	TAGS
	Doing Time with Lavinia – Edinburgh Festival Fringe TUESDAY, 18 AUGUST, 2026		
	Five Questions With: Tyrone Huntley TUESDAY, 18 AUGUST, 2026		
	National Youth Music Theatre – West Side Story MONDAY, 17 AUGUST, 2026		
	Heated Rivalry: The Unauthorised Musical Parody – Edinburgh Festival Fringe MONDAY, 17 AUGUST, 2026		
	A History of Paper – Pitlochry Festival Theatre MONDAY, 17 AUGUST, 2026		

All contents © Musical Theatre Review, 2013 - 2019. All rights reserved. Published by Musical Theatre Review, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, UK. ISSN 2632-4318