How Hard Could That Be?
2018 Toronto Fringe Review
Karen Seeley, Mooney on Theatre – July 7, 2018

The Toronto Fringe Festival offers up an energetic one man show with How Hard Could That Be? (TA Productions), now playing at the Tarragon Theatre Extraspace. That one man is Trent Arterberry, and he takes you along with him as he looks back on his life as a mime.

Arterberry uses mime to enact the highlights of 25 years of touring. His physicality is perfect for the job. I have seen mimes in my day, but I think this play is the first time I really looked at a mime performance and thought about how it really, really looked like the mime was in a box. I didn't know that mimes could be so interesting. His birth re-enacting is a marvel to see. His rubbery face conveys a huge repertoire of emotional representation.

In addition, Arterberry was very creative in the ways he used his body to enable the audience to imagine the scene before them. No extra set or scenery was needed. There were minimal lighting effects, and the sound that was used were mostly songs, like when he imagined himself being a rock star.

I thought that his act was charming, and he was engaging. You could see why he would be a hit with children. He trusts his audience to be imaginative and go along with him on the ride.

While he has funny stories, he is not afraid to reveal his failures as well. It is surprising just how hard it is to look at a sad mime, but he also showed how touring made him sad. Even through bad times, he kept smiling and keeping his energy up. He's a man who knows the show must go on, and he is open enough to share, warts and all.

It is amazing that Arterberry was able to maintain a career in miming for 25 years. One of the reasons I wanted to see the show was to find out what his secret was. He does reveal it (and I won't spoil the surprise by telling you what it is), but while he looks to the past, he never gets to the present. So I was left wondering why his story seemed to stop in the past and why he didn't say what he expects to do in the future.