

CLIVE WOLFE reports on COLLEGE THEATRE

Strong student showing on Edinburgh Fringe

IT'S Edinburgh Festival Fringe time again (judging by the high winds and rain) and there seem to be about the usual number of student groups performing; but a welcome feature is the number doing children's shows — five at least. By an amazing coincidence, Bradford University (returning, after a year's break, with their usual attractive programme) are presenting "Tales for Junk City" at exactly the same time, 5.30 pm daily, as the National Student Theatre Company's pantomime "Jack and the Beanstalk" — written and directed by the effervescent Kjartan Poskitt, who's off on a tour of the Northern USA in September with his new two-man revue "Both Ends Up", after two weeks on the Fringe at the Cathedral Hall. The other groups in the kids' market are Cambridge Mummers (always worth a visit), Manchester Umbrella (another most enterprising group) and Newcastle University who, I'm sorry to note, have changed their name to NU Theatre Company (from Society), thus losing their individualistic NUTS.

Bristol Revunions follow last year's superb programme with probably the catch of the decade: two plays by Woody Allen, "God" and "Death", balancing these with a Czech dissident play by Pavel Kahout, "Poor Murderer". They have moved to the Wireworks, which should put that new venue firmly on the map after its difficult beginnings last year. The Phoenix Festival Company, surely the most unashamedly commercial student group on the Fringe — and why not, the way money is nowadays? — presents probably the safest bet available: a new musical version of "Lysistrata" called "Liz".

"Fuzby (Chicken Supreme)". (Another Umbrella writer of note, Ben Elton, is responsible for one-and-a-half other new shows: "Golly Bobby, you're so Dashing and Divine" (musical) and "Angels out of Tune".) Edinburgh University are showing "Stageplay", and the core of the scratch NSDF group which took up the BTI challenge to create a non-verbal piece on the spot are performing at the Demarco Gallery. Called Seventy-Nine Watts, their group has now evolved "Travels Without a Phrase-Book" (12.30 pm daily). The NSDF's first-ever televised production, "Toys of Age" (which won the Best Production and Best Lighting awards there) is in the NSTC programme at the Cathedral Hall, though without the original Thin One (Gareth Price) for family illness forced him to withdraw only two weeks before the Edinburgh opening.