

By Laura Cappelle July 18, 2019

THEATER REVIEW

## At Avignon Festival, Competition Comes From the Fringe

An underwhelming official lineup led many festivalgoers to branch out into the less well-known complimentary program.



Léa Girardet drew on her passion for soccer in “Le Syndrome du Banc de Touche,” a witty, inspired one-woman show that is one of the breakout Off hits this year. Credit Pauline LeGoff

Yet the Off is replete with similarly scaled productions, many of them more stimulating. Take “Le Syndrome du Banc de Touche,” a witty, inspired one-woman show that is one of the breakout Off hits this year. At the Théâtre du Train Bleu, the actress Léa Girardet drew on her passion for soccer to explore her real-life experience as an unsuccessful bench player — in the world of film and theater. It’s an unlikely premise, and yet from sexist directors to the trials of unemployment, Ms. Girardet’s monologue (directed by Julie Bertin) is refreshingly earnest and funny.

That’s Avignon at its best — taking the road less traveled, without giving away the destination.

**Avignon Festival.** *Various venues, through July 23.*

**Festival Off d’Avignon.** *Various venues, through July 28.*