



High hilarity in High Tea

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★★★★★

Think of a child's imagination on steroids. Now, blend in a healthy dose of ridiculous, a little silly, lots of charm, more than a dash of daring and you've got James and Jamesy's new London Fringe show, *High Tea*, on at London Convention Centre.

The Vancouver duo whose show, *2 for Tea*, took home the Patrons' Pick at the 2013 London Fringe, have returned with a sure-fire Fringe circuit hit, an extraordinarily funny and courageous show that depends heavily on audience participation to succeed. Succeed it does and everyone should be thankful *High Tea* is being staged at the Fringe's largest venue, since it's questionable whether the London Convention Centre's 320 seats will be enough to meet demand.

This show is outrageously funny, magnificently written, combined with brilliant performances by Aaron Malkin (as James Brown) and Alastair Knowles (as Jamesy Evans). It is a beautifully choreographed show that engages the audience for the full 60 minutes, never lagging.

Of course, the show begins with James arriving at Jamesy's flat for their weekly tea party. It quickly devolves from a tea party into an epic catastrophe when the fourth wall separating actors from the audience explodes and floods the theatre with laughs and gags that never allow the audience to get

comfortable or even anticipate what's coming next.

Without trying to spoil the fun, let's just say the show plays off Noah's Ark and the movie *Titanic*. For cripes' sake, there's even sexual tension between these two characters.

Knowles' Jamesy, dressed in riding pants and tight, waist length woman's jacket, delivers his trademark exacting and exaggerated movements, for instance always placing his foot on the table to pour tea. Plainly stated, Jamesy is an eccentric idiot with an overactive imagination, obsessive compulsive disorder and a competing attention deficit disorder. James, a very large man in dress shirt, jacket, pants and bowler hat, is the perfect antidote to Jamesy's imagination and whimsical ways, caring and protective, loyal and subdued 'floating' along with whatever spills out of Jamesy's imagination.

That more than 250 people in the theatre unanimously opted to participate with little or no encouragement and gave a roaring standing ovation, speaks to the outstanding performances of these two men. There are great shows at every Fringe festival, some by surprise. This is one those surprises, one of those gems that comes around far too infrequently.

My advice is buy a ticket as soon as possible.