

Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW Portrait Gallery Tickling Jock by Night ****



Did we all learn something new about the wonderful John Byrne this evening? Probably not. But Byrne in conversation with fellow Scot AL Kennedy was a hot ticket and the surroundings of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery made it something rather special.

The theme this evening was comedy in light of the current Tickling Jock exhibition, and there was plenty of stand up in the first half to entertain us. Byrne would not really be drawn much on the comic scripts he wrote for Rikki Fulton in Scotch and Wry, but he does confess that the acid test on humour comes when the writer himself is rolling over the floor with mirth at the wondrously funny words just written. He must have been permanently on the floor ...

Not content with being a writer of considerably note, we are of course surrounded by his first occupation: his art with portraits of himself, Robbie Coltrane, Tilda Swinton and Billy Connolly all hanging in the Portrait Gallery. The first half of the evening is a bit of a comedy half hour with Jo Caulfield, Simon Munnery, John Robins, Markus Birdman, Sally-Ann Hayward and Scott Agnew who wowed us as Chic Murray (having wowed us as one half of Francie and Josie the other week too..he's the tall one....) all giving us a flavour of what their own individual shows are like.



The content is unquestionably good taking a meander down the yesteryears of Byrne's Slab Boys and Tutti Frutti and his art.

Byrne is a major Scottish art persona who cycles around the Edinburgh streets as though he is anything but. And that is why we love him so.

He had the good grace to express to AL Kennedy at the end of the interview that it was a pity there had not been time to discuss her (considerable) range of work. Funny he is, and of course Kennedy is a stand up comedian in her own right too. A good night out? Oh yes.

However, if the Gallery wishes to continue appealing to its own audience to come out to play at the Fringe (and forgive us but most are pensioners) then they have to do something better with the sound system and the lighting.

